

From Michi Kobi

Honorable Chairman and Commissioners (CWRIC):

My name is Karl Yoneda, a native of California, raised in Hiroshima, veteran of China-Burma-India OWI Psychological Warfare Team and retired longshoreman. I am 75 and reside in San Francisco with my wife Elaine.

I, a known anti-fascist, picketer of ships loading scrap iron for Japan, after Pearl Harbor, felt my place was in the U.S. Armed Forces. Karl Akiya, a Kibei activist, and I drafted a telegram on behalf of progressive Japanese American newspaper DOHO readers to be sent President Roosevelt offering our services especially in the Pacific area since we were bilingualists.

The next morning with the telegram still in my pocket I was picked up by the FBI and kept at the Immigration Detention Center in San Francisco without any charges. Released after 36 hours, I was finally able to send the telegram.

I was one of the many among the 1,000 volunteers who were promised, by the U.S. Army and Maryknoll priests, camp construction helper jobs in Manzanar. We arrived there on March 23, 1942, that promise was never carried out.

Why did I, a CIO union organizer, go into a concentration camp without speaking out against "evacuation?" We, a number of progressive Kibei, Nisei and some Issei sympathizers decided not to fight the order, though it was in violation of our constitutional rights. The rationale being all rights would be lost if the fascist Axis (Germany-Italy-Japan) were victorious. We must do everything to insure the victory of the Allies over the Axis. We had no choice but to accept the racist U.S. dictum at that time over Hitler's extermination squads and Tojo's rapists of Nanking. We could thrash out the question of our rights after victory.

In order to carry out an Allied Victory program, some JACL leaders and anti-fascists, including myself, formed the Manzanar Citizens Federation on July 20th. A week later we held a mass meeting with the following topics and speakers:

Improve Camp Conditions by Hino Neeno; Educate Citizens for Leadership by Joe Grant Masaoka; Participate in the War Efforts by Karl Yoneda and Postwar Preparation by Togo Tanaka.

Koji Ariyoshi, Hawaiian Nisei, and I circulated a petition addressed to President Roosevelt calling for establishment of a second front and allowing Japanese Americans to enlist and/or be drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces. August 8, 1942 we forwarded 218 signatures to the President.

A Food for Victory campaign, led by Ariyoshi, resulted in his leading several hundred men and women from Manzanar to Idaho and Montana farms to save the sugar beet crop. Later, I also led one hundred to Idaho where we worked at the prevailing farm workers' pay.

Earlier a small pro-Japan-fascist group calling themselves the Manzanar Black Dragons, headed by Ben Kishi, a Kibei, and guided by Joe Kurihara, Hawaiian Nisei WW I veteran, made its open appearance. They cunningly utilized some camp administrators' insensitive attitude towards "evacuees'" complaints and tried to win followers to their "Japan Victory" activities.

A few of them drove a trash truck on which they attached a pirate and a Japanese inscribed "Manzanar Black Dragons" flags. They harrassed those they considered pro-Americans or anti-fascists. Tokie Slocum, Issei WW I hero, and I were almost run-down by the truck.

When the camouflage net project started these elements issued leaflets,

in Japanese, calling upon Issei not to let their children work on the project. They instigated rock throwing at those working on the nets - my wife came home with bruised legs and once with a bloody forehead.

We reported the attacks to Camp Assistant Manager Ned Campbell, also demanded the Black Dragon leaders be removed from camp. "You are all Japanese and will have to live together," was his reply.

On August 23rd, 14 Kibei, headed by Ben Kishi, invaded our quarters threatening me with bodily harm if I persisted in my anti-Imperial-Japan stance. This incident caused our child to have shocking memories.

A Military Intelligence Service Language School recruiting team came to Manzanar on November 28, 1942. 14 Nisei and Kibei, including me, were immediately sworn in as buck privates. From that night until departure for Camp Savage, Minnesota on December 2nd, ghoulish figures circulated around our barrack. I asked Camp Police Chief Gilkey for protection but none came. Every night, Ariyoshi and other enlistees took turns guarding us with baseball bats.

The inevitable "Manzanar Riot," during which the life of our nearly four-year-old son was threatened by Joe Kurihara and Ben Kishi, took place on December 6, 1942. My wife was there and she will testify about this tomorrow.

I would ^{like to} make it clear that those handful of pro-Japan-fascist-hoodlums never reflected the majority of Manzanar concentration camp "residents."

As a veteran, I would like to mention two incidents. The Waterfront Employers Association refused to rehire me as a San Francisco longshoreman.

Eventually I got my job back after ~~the~~ union arbitration. I was not able to find an apartment or house although there were FOR RENT signs and I was wearing a U.S. Army uniform. Landladies would shake their heads negatively through a window.

I am for a \$25,000 minimum per person reparation for those of Japanese descent who were in the camps and to the Aleuts as well.

I would like to suggest that some of the 374 billion dollar military budget be transferred for reparations and other domestic needs.

Finally, this Commission should propose legislation which makes any racist act and the establishment of concentration camps a criminal offense.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

ORAL TESTIMONY AT CWRIC HEARING
S.F. August 12, 1981

Chairperson Leahy; members of the Commission:

My name is Elaine Black Yoneda, New York City native, retired office worker and I will be 75 September 4th. My companion and comrade of 48 years, Karl and I reside in San Francisco.

Karl has already told you our rationale for not speaking out against the racist "evacuation" edict. The thousand volunteers who left for Manzanar March 23, 1942 were told by U.S. Army and Maryknoll personnel their families would be the last ones ordered out of Military Area #1.

Six days later, after radio announcements of DeWitt's Exclusion Order #3, ascertaining that our 3-year-old son, with more than 1/16 Japanese blood would have to go, on March 30 we reported to the designated address for processing. There I literally fought my way into camp, after being told "you needn't, nor will you be allowed to go, Maryknoll nuns will take care of your son!"

April 1st upon arrival in camp, what chaos! The volunteers were unaware their families had been ordered out. We were forced to use the construction crews' portable toilets. After a week with six others in a 20x25 so-called "apartment" we were assigned to a room with two others.

The latrines when ready had NO partitions, etc. When in the latrine I became aware of horrified faces among teen-aged girls. Was it the "manzanar runs" or menstrual periods which caused such reactions? NO, it was the utter lack of privacy. Something had to be done about this, so I went to Service Division Director J. W. Kidwell on April 10 and demanded doors, partitions for the toilets and shower curtains. Shrugging his shoulders, he said: "It is army specifications." Pounding on his desk, I exclaimed, "to Hell with specifications, if you don't do something soon there will be mass hysteria and maybe even suicides!" Six weeks later partitions, etc., were installed.

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Tommy's asthma, food and medication allergies, caused many camp hospital trips and confinements. We had to purchase special food, vitamins and prescribed corrective shoes for him. Because of this expense I began working as an assistant librarian at the "unskilled" rate of \$12 PER MONTH FOR A 48-HOUR-WORK-WEEK! When the camouflage net project opened, I transferred to work there. The Manzanar Black Dragons - a handful of pro-fascist-Imperial Japan adherents, led by Ben Kishi, instigated rock throwing at net workers, these bruised my legs and once caused a bloody forehead. We reported the attacks to the Admin giving them the culprits' names, if we knew them and asked for their removal from camp.

On August 23, headed by Kishi, 14 intruders came into our room. I did not understand their Japanese argument, but sat trying to calm Tommy as the hoodlums made threatening gestures toward his father.

After Karl and the other JAs were sworn into the MIS November 28, 1942 until they left Dec. 2nd, some of the enlistees took turns guarding us because of men lurking around our barrack and no requested protection was forthcoming from the front office. Families and friends were kept inside the barbed wire by armed MPs when we gathered to see the enlistees off to Minnesota, everyone there had teary eyes.

Awaiting a special permit from DeWitt, which would allow Tommy (classified a potential dangerous enemy) and me to return to Area #1, on Dec. 6th I heard JACL leader, Fred Tayama, had been viciously beaten the night before, I became very apprehensive and took Tommy to the Admin Building to inquire if the pass had come. There a crowd of about 1500 were being addressed in Japanese by Joe Kurihara, Black Dragon advisor and heard him mention the name YONEDA twice, but did not know in what context. Mr. Chester, Admin staffer came to me and warned: "Elaine, they are in an ugly mood, Joe is saying "Yoneda ran away from them to hide in the Army, but Yoneda's SON is still here so we can still get at him!"

Ben Kishi took over, he too mentioned "YONEDA." Satoru Kamikawa, Issei Japanese Section MANZANAR FREE PRESS reporter, came running over, repeating almost verbatim Chester's words. Crossing to the Camp Police Station I requested protection but again none was given. Hastily going to our room, we barricaded the door. Past midnight heard anguished screams coming from our neighbors, the Itos. I went over to them and discovered that James, their youngest son had been killed by an "P. His mother, sister Martha and I embraced.

After four a.m. unable to stand my growing anxiety, Tommy and I started toward the office, suddenly "Halt who goes there?" rang out there was a "P with drawn bayoneted rifle pointed at me. He listened to our plight and took us to the next guard, so on down until the office was reached. Those on the Black Dragons' death list and their families, about 60 in all, had already been brought in for protection. Ned Campbell, assistant camp manager, upon seeing us said: "Oh, I forgot about you." (ALL THIS OCCURRED PRIOR TO THE INFAMOUS FEBRUARY '43 questionnaire.)

After a few nights "sleeping" in the office and days in the "P quarters a mile away, some 67 of us were convoyed to an abandoned Death Valley CCC Camp. There my hair turned white. Tommy and I left, at our own expense, December 17, 1942 with his pictured permit and instructions for me to complete and return a monthly affidavit to be provided by DeWitt, attesting whether or not he had been in fights because of his ancestry or had committed any acts that might hurt national security. These reports continued until Oct. '44.

I'm relating this to bring out the lack of sensitivity on the part of some camp administrators and other agencies of the rising discontent in camp confinement and their reluctance to stem the small known hard-core Imperial Japan followers, who took advantage of this to create further dissension which led to bodily harm and murder. That some not only suffered from the illegal "relocation" into U.S. concentration camps, but by Black Dragon attacks.

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Where there psychological effects? Yes, our son had nightmares, crying out in the night: "What'll happen to my daddy if the enemy like those mean ones who came to our apartment get hold of him?" And during the "McCarthy era, at age 11, coming home from a Civics Class asking: "Will I have to go to a concentration camp again because my other grand-parents came from Russia?"

In 1952, we offered the Department of Justice Claims Division to settle our modest \$1355 loss for \$1010. In turn we were notified it was reduced to \$677.50 based on compensable items, however, the final payment was only \$460 because one spouse was deemed ineligible for any payment. Although I was confined, housed and fed as all "evacuees" as well as paid the same meager wage, never received a clothing allowance, nor repaid for the special purchases for Tommy, or subsistence and fare to return home, I was denied a share of our joint material loss.

I urge this Commission to recommend a minimum \$25,000 monetary reparations, tax free payment to all who endured confinement, (without hearing or trial in a U.S. style concentration camp) and also to the Aleuts (driven from their ancestral homes). Funds for payment could easily be transferred from the 5-year war budget of a trillion and a half dollars - we don't need any more trident submarines nor people destroying neutron bombs.

I have submitted written testimony to your office with 12 attachments. ~~Four of these are attached to this abbreviated version.~~ Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I now we must have legislation that will prohibit such racist "evacuation" and violation of Constitutional rights to happen to anyone or group in the United States, again



James D. Wilson—NEWSWEEK

Yonedas at Manzanar camp in 1942, today with sign of those times: 'Saying I'm sorry won't do'

America's Day of Infamy

As a young American patriot working the docks of San Francisco in 1941, Karl Yoneda refused to load ships bound for his native Japan. When war broke out he volunteered to do whatever he could for the American cause and was assigned to help build Manzanar, a camp in the California desert. One week later President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the detention of all Japanese-Americans—and overnight Karl Yoneda, his Caucasian wife and his son, Tommy, 3, became prisoners at the very camp he was to help build. Yoneda was lucky: eight months into his stay in a squalid 20-by-25-foot tar-paper shack, he was recruited as a translator for U.S. military intelligence. But his wife and son had to stay behind: Tommy, by then nearly 4 years old, was still regarded by the U.S. Government as a possible threat to national security.

For the Yonedas, now both retired, Manzanar is a reminder of the unjust mass incarceration suffered by 120,000 Japanese-Americans, a flagrant case of a group being stripped of its civil rights solely for reasons of race and national ancestry. Last week, nearly 40 years after the fact, a Federal commission began hearings in Washington to determine how the internment camps could have happened—and whether the U.S. Government should offer financial compensation to those who suffered.* "It was a terrible thing that happened," says San Francisco dentist Donald Nakahata, who was sent to Topaz Camp in Utah at the age of 12. "I have a grievance and simply saying I'm sorry won't do."

In its first week of hearings, the nine-

*Besides Manzanar, the government used nine other main camps and 26 smaller facilities to confine the 120,000 people, including Japanese-Americans, Japanese resident aliens and about 1,000 Aleut-Americans.

member Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concentrated on the period leading up to the internment. James Rowe, a Justice Department official at the time, testified that post-Pearl Harbor hysteria fanned fears of a Japanese invasion and subversion. Signs of the times, for example, included one that read: "Jap Hunting Licenses Issued Here." "We were scared," says Rowe, "and I think it got to everybody"—including President Roosevelt. FDR followed the advice of military leaders like Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt ("A Jap is a Jap. It makes no difference whether the Jap is a citizen or not.") and signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942 authorizing the roundup. In 1944, even as Japanese-Americans were signing up for what would become the much-decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Supreme Court backed up Roosevelt's order.

Token: Although the Emergency Detention Act, which gave FDR the power to intern, was repealed in 1971 and Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in 1975, the Supreme Court ruling still stands. But while many of the Japanese in the camps adopted the attitude of *shikata ga nai*—"so it goes"—many second- and third-generation Japanese-Americans no longer are willing to accept their imprisonment with such fatalism. So in 1979 activists began lobbying Congress, and in 1980 the commission to study the internment episode was created. "We are getting old," says Mike Masaoka, who served with the 442nd. "Maybe the last worthwhile token which we can give is to make it so this won't happen again."

The most troublesome issue facing the commission is the question of compensation. The 1948 Japanese American Claims

Act returned only about 8 cents on every dollar of the estimated \$400 million in lost homes, businesses, farms and possessions. Proposals have been made to grant each displaced family \$25,000—but to provide that amount to all those ordered to the camps would cost more than \$3 billion. Arguments about the expense do not impress some of the victims. "Restitution must be made," insists Denver attorney Minoru Yasui.

Even if the commission recommends restitution, it's unlikely a budget-conscious Congress would go along. Some Japanese-American legislators oppose such plans, agreeing with California Sen. S. I. Hayakawa that the mass relocations were "perfectly understandable"—and that no compensation is in order. Others would be satisfied with symbolic ges-

tures: one idea is to erect a memorial to the 442nd. The important thing, says Hawaii Sen. Daniel Inouye, who lost an arm fighting for the 442nd in Italy, is to "awaken this experience enough to haunt the conscience of this nation"—and to show that America has not always been the land of the free.

MICHAEL REESE with MARY LORD in Washington and RICHARD SANDZA in San Francisco

Some Corrections

- 1) I was born in California, raised and educated in Japan.
- 2) Picketing ships loading scrap iron to Japan began in 1938.
- 3) FDR signed E.O. 9066 on 2/19/42. I voluntarily went to Manzanar on 3/23 to help build camp.
- 4) I enlisted in the U.S. Military Intelligence Service 11/28/42 from Manzanar and served in CBI theatre with OWI-Psychological Warfare Team as Japanese language propagandist (not as a translator. (6,000 JAs served in all Pacific war zones.)

Karl G. Yoneda