STATEMENT OF KIKU HORI FUNABIKI

To The Commission on Wartime Relocation
and Internment of Civilians

San Francisco, California
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Members of the Commission:

My name is Kiku Hori Funabiki, a native of San Francisco.

A few weeks ago I had no intention of testifying. I am a private person. It is not my style to speak before a group and especially, to divulge publically, deep personal feelings I have not shared with my closest associates. It is also intimidating to me to appear before a group who wields so much power over my life.

Since the hearings in Washington D.C., however, I began to reconsider. Judging from the press and media coverage it seemed that public officials were excusing away the evacuation with such reasons as "honest mass hysteria", and "war brings on unconscionable acts". I could not allow these partial truths to be told to the world. I decided that I had to testify.

In tracing the history of racism against the Japanese in America, my testimony has become a tribute to my deceased father, Sojiro Hori. The memory of his courage ultimately gave me the strength to face the challenge and come forward. This is the story of one man, a fighter. But it is also a story of the early Japanese in America and their constant struggle against racism since the time of their arrival at the turn of the century. Unconscionable acts committed against these people did not erupt suddenly with honest hysteria that followed Pearl Harbor. Future generations were also not spared from the ravages of racism but that is another story.

Sojiro was a gentle man, but a man of incredible fortitude. He arrived in the United States in 1901 and resided here until his death fifty years

later. He spent the first years at menial jobs, the only type of work available to aliens. In 1906 he started an employment agency which he still operated forty five years later when he was stricken with a fatal illness. Unlike most businesses in San Francisco Japantown, the agency depended on white clients. He faced harrassment daily. He saved enough to send for a picture bride from Japan in 1908. His first child, a son, died at infancy after a hospital refused admittance to this critically sick baby. My parents were told that no Japanese were served at that medical facility. Devasted by this crushing experience, my mother, after becoming pregnant with her third child, took her two year old son to Japan for my grandmother to raise for a few years. Circumstances beyond my parents control prevented the two boys from ever coming back to enjoy a family life with their parents, two brothers, and me.

The Yellow Peril marked an urgency with my father that there had to be harmonious relations through understanding between his native Japan and the United States if there were to be peace in the Pacific basin. He espoused this concern constantly in the Japanese community and even spoke at the Commonwealth Club of Northern California in the 1920's.

With Pearl Harbor my father's world came crashing down. Soon after Pearl Harbor the FBI, in one of their ruthless sweeps routed our family out of bed in a dawn raid, searched our house recklessly, then handcuffed my father and led him away. We were not to know where, for how long, or why he was being taken away. He was an alien, yes, but only because the country in which he resided for forty years, raised a family, in whose community he served well, forbid him by law to become a citizen. That moment when I watched in wretched helplessness as my father was led away in shackles by three burly Federal agents, I was inflicted with a deep wound which has never healed. Were we so undesireable, were we so expendable, was I Japanese, was I American or wasn't I. My confused teenage mind reeled.

Left behind beside myself were my invalided mother, two brothers, and a ruined business, once successful. Since our assets were frozen after Pearl Harbor we just managed to survive the next few months until our evacuation orders came. I recall the pathetic moment when it came time to assemble for our trip to our first camp. Since my mother was totally bedridden she was carried from her bed, which had to be left in the house, to the bus on which she was loaded with other evacuees. This was her first outing in two years.

We were not to learn until our arrival at our second detention center that my father had been moved from prison camp to prison camp along with German and Italian prisoners of war. He was finally released in two years after his fifth move and allowed to join us in yet another barbed wire enclosed compound in the desert of Wyoming.

In December of 1944 the west coast exclusion for evacuees was suddenly rescinded and camps were to close within a year. My brothers and I had already left camp for the east coast. With my older brother who came west temporarily to assist, my father, now sixty-six years old, and his wife, now a victim of a stroke, returned with trepidation. Rather than an abatement of war hysteria there was now a climate of open hostility. The return of the Japanese seemed to give vent to the racial hatred built up in the Pacific coast residences. After three years of investigations, reinvestigations, clearance upon clearance, my father faced the harshest test of all, that by the American public.

The dwelling which my father built only twelve years before the war was now in shambles. In the once beautiful three unit flat lived at least a hundred people. The bank had gone back on its word that it would only rent to a limited number of responsible tenants. Mare Island shipyard workers were using the rooms in three shifts. Not one window was intact,

not one area looked like it had ever been picked up. Rats and fleas abound. Our possessions including my father's business records which were stored in a church building were either destroyed or stolen by vandals. The only shelters available to the Japanese not having homes to return to were rooms rented out in buildings belonging to the Japanese churches. These were only a fraction of the size of our camp quarters. Still, for the less fortunate, there was only the bare floor of the church social halls on which to sleep. With nothing but single minded perserverance and fortitude, Sojiro challenged a hostile society and the encroaching process of aging and began to build up once again his life, his home, and the employment agency.

I came west shortly after my older brother returned to his family in New York. My father and I began reconstructing our lives by first working at domestic jobs. In order to survive we could not be discriminating. It was a recapitulation of 1901 for my father. At night the three of us crowded into two army cots. Meals had to be cooked in a communal kitchen two flights down and partaken in our small room. Since it was a Seventh Adventist hostel we had to comply with their rule of diet. We lived this way for almost a year until my father's house was vacated. In three back breaking years my father's business began to show some profit when he was stricken with a massive stroke. Within a year he was up again, dragging his half paralyzed body to work everyday. He continued this for two years when the second stroke claimed his life. He was seventy two years old. For a man who had everything taken away from him, his home, his business, his health, his basic human rights, his dignity, even the life of his first child, my father was never deterred by cynicism, a quality I have not developed.

My father's story is not unique nor is it extraordinary. All of the tens of thousands of Japanese immigrants suffered. Collectively, their story is a heroic one of a people who traversed a journey through heinous injustices

and cruel indignities and finally through the ultimate humiliation of mass exile behind barbed wire for no crime other than being Japanese, and still perservered. As I was writing this testimony there welled up in me an enormous pride that I am Japanese American. There is a Japanese word, gambaru, for which there is no English equivalent. It means to fight, to have courage, to perservere. Gambaru is what got these people through the hardships in a land that did not want them. Gambaru is our heritage which is rooted in America, not Japan. Gambaru is a legacy which my father and his peers, courageous men and women, left us, all of us. This quality is their contribution to America. We shall gambaru.

REDRESS AND REPARATION:

It is demeaning to me to have to plead for all the things which were wrongfully taken from me. I unequivocably support monetary restitutions. As for disposition and administration, I refer to the five points cited by the National Coalition for Redress and Reparation in Washington D.C.

A conservative estimate of my father's tangible losses alone approach $90,000 at today's market value. I expect this to be paid in full. As for his tangible losses and damages I would have you, the members of the Commission arrive at a figure based on my father's story. I cannot.

To the Japanese American senator from Hawaii who would say that $25,000 per evacuee is feasible but a collective three billion dollars us unrealistic, I would respond with a question. When do we stop accommodating others? This is a question of justice, not feasibility or practicality. In a four page in-depth report on wasteful spending by the Defense Department from the April 27 issue of the U.S. News and World Report which I have here, I quote, "A minimum estimate of the cost of military waste is put at fifteen billion dollars a year in a study issued by congressional Republicans...". Beyond the wasteful spending, the President is escalating the overkill

stockpile of nuclear warheads. The staggering amount this administration proposes to allocate for military need is 1.5 trillion dollars. That is fifteen hundred billion dollars. Are we being told then that three billion dollars for human need is too much?

EXHIBIT

Finally and briefly I have an exhibit. For those who would deny the reality of internment and its prisoners, I have a piece of evidence here. It is a prison uniform worn by my father. It bears his serial number on the back. At the risk of being sent to his sixth prison camp he brought this home as a souvenir for his children. For history's sake he said. He told me that the trousers were of the same denim and that on the seat of the pants were stenciled in white paint two large letters,"P W" Prisoner of War.

Respectfully submitted,

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