

ADDRESS TO THE COMMISSION ON THE
WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

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Distinguished Members of the Commission, my name is Clarence I. Nishizu.

I was born in this country and represent the elder, second generation of Japanese ancestry. My generation had to endure the brunt of the great recession and the times when we farmers received only 25 cents for a lug of tomatoes. I was the eldest son of a family with seven children. Under the cultural tradition, I had to forego college after 2 years and stay on the farm in Orange County. I had to go through those days when we were too poor to own tractors--we had only proud horses and mules.

In remembering the injustices and sad experiences evacuation has meant to me, it is impossible to state all the hardships and losses which resulted--the loss of crops during the evacuation, the litigation to defend title to family properties, the loss of my farming lands after evacuation. Evacuation has cost 20 years of my lifetime. In testifying to day, however, I wish to emphasize the economic hardships and losses to family farming operations.

I was 29 when the war started. For almost 15 years, my family farmed some 40 acres in Buena Park what is now Knotts Berry Farm and an additional 120 acres in Cypress. I had just bought new trucks and tractors. I kept on planting vegetables since I thought that I, as an American citizen, would not be subject to evacuation and internment as were the aliens of Japanese ancestry. To comply with the new military orders, I attempted to vountarily relocate to Colorado since that was the only state that welcomed us. After returning we were ordered to report to the assembly center. I made a gentlemen's agreement with the neighbor friend to take over the farm and send my proportinate returns to me while in camp.

I was also responsible, however, for making arrangements for the properties of my first generation cousins, Joe and John Yoshimura. For many years, the Yoshimuras had owned some 160 acres in Oceanside under an equitable mortgage and leased an additional 200 acres where Camp Pendleton is now located. On their property, they had their home, the chili dehydrator and warehouses. My cousins, however, were not American

citizens and were prohibited by law from becoming naturalized citizens or to own land as aliens. I was the named lessee of properties, although I did not receive any financial returns. When I, too, was order^{ed} to report for evacuation, I had to make arrangements for mortgage payments while we were away.

The Yoshimuras had been receiving financial assistance from the chili company, Gonzales and Blanco. I made many trips to Los Angeles to negotiate with Gonzalez to take over the entire operation. I was unable to persuade him to put anything in writing and he did not send one cent to my cousins during the evacuation.

The Yoshimur^s were relocated to Poston, Arizona, and I to Heart Mountain, Wyoming, with my wife and one year old daughter. While in relocation center I received my draft notice so I went to Ft. Logan, Colorado for army physical but failed to pass. Later I went to Idaho to haul potatoes and my brothers were granted leave to farm in Colorado until the yearly hailstorms on the crops forced them to give up farming in Colorado.

After the war, in 1946, I wanted to return to Buena Park to resume farming. My friend, however, had made so much money on the 40 acres he took over from me that he bought the land and I had no place to go. After I went into camp, he was to send me the proceeds of the crops I left with him, but I received nothing. I went alone from Idaho to a hostel in East Los Angeles to relocate my family and finally I found a house in San Fernando where I went into gardening.

The Yoshimur^{as}, however, were unable to regain possession of their land and we had to go to court to litigate the question of title. To our surprise, Gonzalez claimed ownership of the land by the virtue of Bill of Sale signed by Mr. Yoshimura, Sr. Mr Yoshimura, who did not understand English, testified that he had been misled by Gonzalez that the document was only for the loan. The judge found in the Yoshimura's favor.

The Yoshimura land in Oceanside was caught up in escheat proceedings and we obtained the assistance of an ACLU attorney, Al Wirin, to defend that lawsuit. I felt it was pathetic that the government, after depriving the Japanese of their livelihood, should further burden their efforts to get back on their feet. This was especially true while Yoshimura sons served loyally in the United States Army on both fronts. In 1949,

the Alien Land Law was invalidated and the Yoshimura's regained possession of this land. We formed the partnership of Nishizu Brother and Yoshimura Brothers (N & Y Farms.) After ten years of farming together, we had two successive years of heat spell and water shortage and we almost went into bankruptcy. I ended up with bleeding ulcer and had to dissolve partnership and returned to Buena Park.

The Yoshimura sons resumed farming by forming a farming corporation with Jack Linkletter. This venture failed and Mr. Linkletter took ownership of the land.

I eventually went into selling real estate and in few years I made enough money to pay my share of the indebtedness of the N & Y Farms. It took me about ten years to get back on my feet where I can live in comfort.

My two brothers and I have prospered in our real estate investments and ventures. The Yoshimura's, however, were less fortunate. Every Christmas that I see them, I feel their sorrow for the loss of properties now valued over \$3,000,000.00.

I feel that the misfortune caused by evacuation has impaired opportunities even for the subsequent generations. As for me, evacuation has meant the loss of 20 years of my fruitful life. True, one can say that other Americans have lost time and life in the war front, but in my case I was uprooted just at the time when the bud of the rose started to bloom. Had I been able to stay in Buena Park, I am sure that I would have been in a better position. Furthermore, I would have had the satisfaction that I was treated like other Americans without discrimination. The stigma of evacuation to American history cannot be forgotten. What I went through during the twenty years of hardship cannot be measured in terms of money,

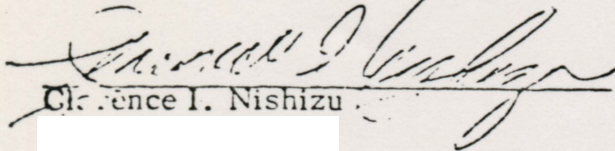
Although it is difficult to assess the probable value of my losses, I believe that monetary compensation is appropriate to redress the substantial economic losses which were caused directly by the evacuation and internment. Monetary reparations could never cover all the costs of evacuation but would at least be symbolic recognition of the wrongs and injustices which I suffered.

In all the heartbreaking injustices, I shall never lose faith in this country and its capacity to grant the Japanese Americans fair hearing and appropriate remedy.

I am truly grateful that the Commission will give audience. Again, I say I love America and am proud to be an American.

Dated this 1st day of August, 1981, at Los Angeles, California

Respectfully submitted,


Clarence I. Nishizu

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