

My name is Kiyoshi Patrick Okura. I am presently employed with the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) located in Rockville, Maryland. I am the Staff Director for International Programs at the present time; however, I served as the Executive Assistant to the Director of NIMH for a period of seven years (1971 to 1978).

I was born in Los Angeles, California, and spent my early years in Wilmington, California, where I attended grade and high school. I then attended the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) from 1928 to 1935 receiving my BA degree in Psychology in 1933 and my MA degree in Psychology in 1935.

Following graduation, I was employed as a Research Assistant for the Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission (1935-1936) and as an Administrative Assistant for the Los Angeles County Department of Charities (1937-1939).

From 1939 to 1942 I was employed by the Los Angeles City Civil Service Commission as a Personnel Technician. I was the first Japanese American to be hired by the City of Los Angeles in an administrative capacity. There were approximately 20,000 employees working for the city in 1938 where 50,000 or more Japanese Americans resided. In the three and a half years I was given two promotions and was well launched on my career in the personnel field.

Then came World War II and Pearl Harbor. I was conscious of the fact that possibly my parents might be interned as they were aliens or "enemy" aliens since we were at war with Japan, but never did I dream that American citizens, regardless of their ancestry would be incarcerated without due process of law. I felt that probably hearings would be held as was done

in England to determine the plight of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

My father, James Momoto Okura, was arrested by the FBI on the night of December 7, 1941 at approximately 11:00 P.M. after the Federal Agents has ransacked his home looking for documents and other articles that might prove that he was dangerous. My father was a Veteran of the Japanese-Russia War of 1905-1907 and was decorated by the Japanese Government for his outstanding record with the highest Medal of Honor given by the Government.

He came to the United States in 1908 following the Japanese-Russia War and settled in Galveston, Texas, and became a rice grower for several years. He then returned to Japan in 1911 and married my mother and brought her back to Texas to live. However, my mother did not like the rough life of living on a rice farm, so they decided to return to Japan and left Texas to go to Los Angeles. While in Los Angeles, my mother learned she was with child so decided to remain in Los Angeles. I was the first child and was born on September 26, 1911 in Los Angeles. By 1941 there were 8 children in the family (5 boys and 3 girls).

During World War II three of my brothers served in the U.S. Army and one, the youngest, was killed in Action while rescuing the Texas Lost Battalion with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He was 21 years old. One brother was drafted into the Army before Pearl Harbor and served six years as a Dental Technician. The other brother volunteered out of the Jerome Relocation Camp for Military Intelligence and served for three years.

My life has been somewhat different than the average Japanese American Nisei in that I have been a strong advocate for equal rights since my freshman year at UCLA in 1928. I spent seven years at UCLA receiving my education in Psychology, and was in the first Graduate Class (1935) in the

history of UCLA and the first Japanese American Graduate student. I also was the first Nisei to receive a Major Athletic Award at UCLA in 1931 and 1932 (baseball).

Following Pearl Harbor we were all placed under a curfew and restricted to within five miles of our residence. Since I lived in Wilmington, California, and I worked in the City Hall in Los Angeles, which was 25 miles away, I needed a special permit to travel to work each day. Practically every day I was stopped by self-appointed vigilantes and questioned as to why I was traveling outside the five mile limit and why I was out after curfew hours. For a period from December to April I was continually harassed by the police and other self-appointed authorities at home, at work, and on the streets.

The harassment continued as follows:

The following is quoted from "Nisei the Quiet American" by Bill Hosokawa.

"The Nisei did not have to go looking for harassment. The experience of Kiyoshi Patrick Okura is a startling example.

"Early in February 1942, shortly before Executive Order 9066 was issued by the President, Drew Pearson charged in one of his broadcasts which appeared on the front pages of the Los Angeles Times and Examiner the next morning 'that a Japanese American, passing himself as an Irishman named K. Patrick O'Kura, had wormed his way into the Los Angeles City Government, had familiarized himself with the city power and water system, and had installed a ring of fifty saboteurs within the Bureau of Water and Power who were poised to blow up the entire system when word came.' Like so many loosely made charges, Pearson's "revelations" held a measure of truth. Okura, jokingly had been called the Japanese Irishman by his friends. He had conducted examinations among applicants for jobs like cable splicer, lineman, and reservoir keeper in the Bureau of Water and Power. And over

a period of three years some fifty Nisei had entered the Los Angeles City Civil Service system and were working in various departments.

"When Pearson's charges were published in the Los Angeles newspapers the next morning some one on Mayor Bowron's staff apparently became very nervous. Okura received a telephone call from the Mayor's office suggesting that it might be a good idea for him to resign thus setting an example for the other Nisei on the city payroll. Okura demanded to know on what grounds his resignation was being sought. The official replied delicately that the resignation of all Nisei might save the city a good deal of embarrassment. Okura then declared he had done nothing wrong and would not resign, reminding his caller that the proper procedure for discharging a civil service employee was to bring charges before the merit board.

"A few days later Okura was summoned to the Mayor's office and Bowron himself asked for Okura's resignation. Again, Okura refused. When word spread, the entire staff of twenty-five in Okura's department announced they would resign en masse if he were fired. Soon, however, it became apparent that evacuation orders would be issued shortly, and so Okura asked for and was given a leave of absence for the duration of the War. Although his skills were badly needed by federal agencies, word of the furore apparently destroyed his chances of government employment. He and his wife, Lily, were evacuated to the assembly center at the Santa Anita race track, then relocated to Boys Town near Omaha, Nebraska, where he was employed as a psychologist."

Aside from Drew Pearson's attack, Congressman Dies of Texas and his Un-American Activities Committee devoted two pages of their report on my personal integrity, my character, and my unpatriotic activities all by innuendos, guilt by association, and because of my father's record and

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activities. The FBI, Army Intelligence, Navy Intelligence had no record of the accusations made by both Drew Pearson or Congressman Dies when I checked with these agencies.

As a result of these accusations and the publicity that followed the U.S. Civil Service Commission for a period of approximately 20 years (1945-1965) denied me the opportunity of filing an application for federal employment. I was repeatedly told that I was ineligible for federal employment. It was not until 1970 that I was given an opportunity to be considered for a federal appointment and this was primarily based on my thirty years of professional experience on local community level. I am convinced and truthfully believe that my professional career was set back ten to twelve years because of Executive Order 9066 and the incarceration that followed. At age 60 I was able to attain the level of my professional career that should have happened when I was 45 or 50 years of age under normal conditions.

Psychological and Psychiatric Consequences of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

During the past thirty years psychologists, psychiatrists and other social scientists have been doing research on the psycho-social consequences of incarceration and victimization and violence. There is adequate and ample evidence to show that certain forms of punishment, interrogation procedures and deprivation of liberty have long term adverse effects on the mental health of the individuals concerned.

Clinical observations on adults and children suggest an association between traumatic events and late sequelae such as cardio-vascular changes (hypertension) endocrine changes and a variety of symptoms both psychological and somatic. Brain damage can result in intellectual, behavioral and emotional disturbances. Delays in cognitive and emotional development of children subjected to incarceration have also been described. Any vegetative system or organ can be influenced by acquired conditional connections between the individual and his surroundings. All individuals are subject to these effects although the threshold level of traumatic stimuli may vary.

A general conclusion is that long term adverse effects on mental health, possibly appearing after a latent period, should be expected in victims of serious violence and incarceration. The World Health Organization made a study recently on Psychosocial Consequences of violence and incarceration and recommended that this expectation should be taken into account when assessment of physical and psychosocial disability of victims are made in planning for adequate comprehensive services.

Some of the outstanding research done in Denmark, Holland and Norway clearly indicate a distinct symptomatology, physical and mental, in the survivors of concentration camps. For those Japanese Americans who remained

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in the camps for the duration of the war (1942-1946) four years can be considered survivors.

Whenever people are confronted with unavoidable long-lasting stress, there exists a very persuading similarity in the late sequelae. The burden of the proof of the connection between traumatic experiences and subsequent symptoms of psychological or psychiatric nature should not be the responsibility of the victims of incarceration or the applicant in such procedures. The experience of trying to cope with the late sequelae of WW II stresses the importance of early measures, the necessity of follow up and the sympathetic reaction of health and mental health personnel, since these were frequently conspicuously absent in the case of the relocation survivors. This experience also illustrates the tendency of society as a whole and doctors to use the defense of denial in the face of emotionally unacceptable facts. The WHO study points out that this led to denial of legitimate claims for compensation and help, to the withdrawal of survivors into close peer groups, to the exacerbation of suspicion and feelings of isolation and to the feeling by survivors that they were "witnesses without an audience" and that only fellow survivors could understand their story and suffering. This process of denial and alienation has important implications for helping other victims of lesser human tragedies.

If the Commission had the time to listen to the testimony of my peer group who were incarcerated, I am sure that the Commission will find that we suffered a great deal of psychological and psychiatric damage.

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