

I AM NOT STANDING BEFORE YOU TODAY BECAUSE I WANT TO SUE OUR GOVERNMENT. I AM NOT STANDING HERE TODAY BECAUSE I WANT AN APOLOGY. I AM HERE TO TELL YOU HOW I CAME TO BE IN THE UNITED STATES. I WAS BORN IN CHANCAY, PERU. I AM THE OLDEST OF SIX CHILDREN. MY PARENTS MIGRATED TO PERU FROM OKINAWA. BECAUSE MY FAMILY WAS POOR, I HAD TO QUIT MY EDUCATION AND GO TO WORK WHEN I WAS FIFTEEN YEARS OLD. I WORKED IN A GROCERY STORE FOR A WHILE. I THEN GOT A JOB AT A BAKERY: THE PAY WAS NOT VERY GOOD BUT I HAD ROOM AND BOARD THERE. I WAS ASLEEP ON FEBRUARY 1943. SOME PERUVIAN POLICE CAME TO ARREST MY EMPLOYER. MY EMPLOYER PULLED A FAST ONE BY BRIBING THE POLICE AND OFFERED ME AS A SUBSTITUTE! I WAS PUSHED AWAKE. I DID NOT KNOW WHY I WAS ARRESTED AS I HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG. I WAS TAKEN TO A JAIL IN LIMA. SOME OFFICIALS TOLD ME IF I HAD SOME MONEY THEY MIGHT HELP ME OUT. MY FAMILY SOMEHOW FOUND ME IN JAIL. MY MOTHER CAME MANY TIMES TO TRY TO SEE ME. SHE DID MANAGE TO GET A FEW CLOTHES TO ME. I WAS IN THAT JAIL FOR TWO DAYS BEFORE SEVERAL MEN AND I WERE HERDED LIKE CATTLE ONTO AN OPEN TRUCK. WE WERE LOADED ABOARD A SHIP IN THE PORT OF CALLAO. I STILL DID NOT KNOW WHY, FOR I WAS NOT CHARGED WITH ANY CRIME NOR WAS I GIVEN A TRIAL. I DID NOT KNOW WHERE I WAS GOING. WE WERE AT SEA FOR ABOUT FOUR DAYS. WHEN THE SHIP CAME TO A STOP WE WERE HUSTLED INTO AN AMERICAN ARMY TRUCK. IT WAS COVERED WITH CANVAS. I MANAGED A PEEK OUT OF THAT HOT, HUMID TRUCK. WE WERE IN A CAMP SURROUNDED BY BARBED WIRE WITH GUARDS AT THE CORNER TOWER. ONE OF THE MEN ASKED WHERE WE WERE. WE THOUGHT WE WERE IN THE UNITED STATES. HE WAS TOLD WE WERE IN THE AMERICAN PRISON CAMP IN PANAMA, BECAUSE THE CAMPS IN THE U.S. WERE FULL. WE WERE TO BE USED FOR PRISONERS OF WAR EXCHANGE. WE WERE PUT TO WORK CLEARING THE JUNGLE AROUND THE CAMP. ONE EXTRA HOT, HUMID DAY WE HAD TO DIG A LARGE PIT. I HAD A TERRIBLE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS TO BE MY GRAVE. AS SOON AS THE PIT WAS DEEP ENOUGH FOR THE GUARDS, WE HAD TO RUN BACK TO CAMP AND CLEAN THE OFFICERS OVER-FLOWING LATRINE. AS WE CARRIED THE BUCKETS OF HUMAN WASTE TO THE PIT, WE RETCHED AND WERE SICKENED BY THE INDESCRIBABLE STENCH. THE GUARDS WHO KEPT A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY LAUGHED AND JEERED AT US. WE ALWAYS HAD TO RUN TO AND FROM OUR WORK AREA. THE OLDER MEN WERE SO TIRED THEY COULD NOT RUN FAST ENOUGH TO PLEASE THE GUARDS SO THEY WERE POKED AND SHOVED BY THE GUARD WITH BAYONETS.

over



WHEN IT WAS TIME TO TAKE MY FINGER PRINTS, MY FINGERS WERE SO BLISTERED AND RAW THEY HAD TO WAIT. I HAD A FEW WONDERFUL DAYS OF REST WHEN MY ONLY PAIR OF SHOES WERE SO WORN OUT I COULD NOT WEAR THEM AND THEY DID NOT HAVE BOOTS SMALL ENOUGH TO FIT ME. WE HAD SET TIMES FOR A DRINK OR TO RELIEVE OURSELVES. SOME GUARDS DID HAVE COMPASSION. THEY RISKED A REPRIMAND FROM OFFICERS WHEN THEY LOOKED AWAY IF ANY ONE OF US STOPPED FOR A MOMENT OF REST. SOMEONE USED TO SLIP SOME COLD FRUIT JUICE INTO OUR DRINKING WATER. AFTER THREE MONTHS OF HARD LABOR IN THAT HOT, HUMID CAMP, WE WERE AGAIN HUSTLED ONTO AN AMERICAN ARMY TRUCK AND TAKEN TO A SHIP. I USED TO HEAR WONDERFUL STORIES ABOUT THE UNITED STATES AND AFTER DAYS IN PANAMA I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER. IT TOOK ABOUT A WEEK TO REACH SAN FRANCISCO. FROM THERE WE WERE PUT ON ARMY TRUCKS TO MY FIRST CAMP AT SHARP PARK, CALIFORNIA. FROM THERE I WAS TRANSFERRED TO MISSOULA, MONTANA, THEN TO KOOSKIA, IDAHO, TO KENNEDY, TEXAS, KOOSKIA AGAIN, THEN TO SANTA FE, FORT STANTON, BACK TO SANTA FE AND THEN ANOTHER MOVE TO A JAIL IN TERMINAL ISLAND, CALIFORNIA. MY WORLD FELL APART! I WAS IN JAIL AND WAS TO BE SHIPPED TO WARTIME JAPAN. WHAT WAS TO BECOME OF ME NOW? FROM MY CELL WINDOW I COULD SEE SHIPS GOING IN AND OUT OF THE HARBOR. AS EACH SHIP CAME IN I WAS SURE IT WAS THE ONE THAT CAME TO GET ME. THEN CAME WAYNE COLLINS - TO SAVE ME! I WAS SO HAPPY, I CRIED OUT IN JOY! I WOULD SOON BE BACK IN PERU WITH MY FAMILY. SOON AFTER THAT CAME NEWS THAT PERU DID NOT WANT US BACK, AND MORE TERRIBLE NEWS THAT THE UNITED STATES TOLD ME THAT SINCE I DID NOT HAVE A PASSPORT, I WAS AN ILLEGAL ALIEN. ALL THIS TIME I WAS NEVER ACCUSED OF A CRIME, NEVER HAD A TRIAL. NOW I WAS ACCUSED OF ENTERING THE UNITED STATES ILLEGALLY. SO HERE I WAS IN JAIL WITH NO PAPERS AND NO COUNTRY. THE UNITED STATES THAT GOT ME AND HUNDREDS OF OTHERS HERE NEVER HAD ONE THOUGHT, NO ONE, NOT ONE PERSON EVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT TO DO WITH US ONCE THE WAR WAS OVER. I WAS VERY LOW IN SPIRITS AS I WAS TAKEN TO ANOTHER CAMP. CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS. I SOON FELT BETTER AS I MET PERUVIAN-JAPANESE FAMILIES AS WELL AS JAPANESE OF THE UNITED STATES. NOT LONG AFTER I GOT TO CRYSTAL CITY I WAS TOLD THAT SEABROOK FARMS IN NEW JERSEY WANTED ABLE BODIED MEN TO WORK IN THEIR FACTORY. I JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO BE FREE. I MET MY WIFE TO BE - LAURA AND HAVE TWO BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS, A GRANDSON AND ALSO KOKO YAMASHIRO, WHOM I CALL MY SON. I WORKED HARD, STUDIED MY ENGLISH WHENEVER I COULD, BECAME AN AMERICAN CITIZEN AND AM PROUD OF MY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.



THE FIRST FEW YEARS WERE HARD FOR EVERYONE, WE SKIMPED AND SAVED AS MUCH AS WE COULD FOR I WANTED TO TAKE MY WIFE, LAURA, AND THE GIRLS TO PERU TO SEE MY FAMILY. BEFORE WE HAD ENOUGH SAVED FOR THE TRIP MY FATHER AND A BROTHER DIED! WE DID VISIT PERU SEVERAL TIMES.

I LOVE MY BEAUTIFUL NEW COUNTRY SO VERY MUCH THAT I DO NOT WANT HER TO EVER USE PEOPLE IN SUCH AN INHUMAN WAY AGAIN.

AND NOW, I WANT TO THANK PUBLICALLY C. HARVEY GARDINER WHO DID AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF RESEARCH ON HIS BOOKS - " THE JAPANESE IN PERU-1873-1973" AND HIS NEW BOOK "PAWNS IN A TRIANGLE OF HATE". HE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR MANY PEOPLE TO KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF. HE GAVE ME COURAGE TO SPEAK UP BEFORE YOU TODAY.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.