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STATE OF WASHINGTON

COMMISSION ON ASIAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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Testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC)
September 9, 1981
Seattle, Washington

By: Elizabeth Begert Dunbar, Executive Director
Washington State Commission on Asian American Affairs

Good morning. My name is Elizabeth Begert Dunbar and I am the Executive Director of the Washington State Commission on Asian American Affairs. (CAAA). The Commission was established by the state Legislature in 1973 and has the mandate to enhance the lives of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in the state. The Governor appoints 24 commissioners from throughout the state, who represent the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indochinese and Pilipino communities. Commissioners come from various fields including education, business, government, agriculture, social services and medicine.

The Commission has addressed the subject of Japanese American Redress on several occasions in the past few years. In September, 1978, the CAAA went on record in support of

legislation to bring about redress. In November, 1979, the CAAA adopted a resolution supporting monetary compensation and also supporting the bill establishing the CWRIC. In March of last year, my predecessor testified before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs regarding Japanese American redress, supporting the establishment of the CWRIC and recommending direct redress. The Commissioners have also been involved individually in several activities at the local and state level relative to redress. In these activities, both the Japanese American Community and elected officials involved have declared that the evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans was unjust and unconstitutional. For example, our own Senator Slade Gorton, while he was Attorney General for the State of Washington, proposed a resolution which was passed by the Conference of Western Attorneys General. The resolution acknowledged that the evacuation and internment violated the Bill of Rights and went on to support compensation to Japanese Americans for losses they suffered.

Before taking any action, the Commissioners have carefully considered the historical record, the community's attitudes and their own feelings. After serious discussion, the Commission has taken the following position: The evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans was a grievous wrong and direct monetary redress is the correct remedy. Thousands of Japanese Americans

in Washington were rounded up, evacuated and imprisoned with no prior finding of guilt. They lost millions of dollars worth of property, not to mention lost income, lost culture, and physical and mental anguish. These actions were unjust and illegal, despite the Supreme Court decisions upholding such actions.

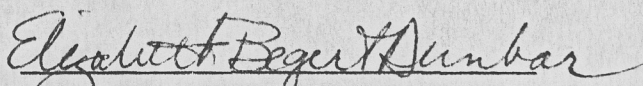
As for the proper remedy, although direct redress is not supported by all persons, the majority who have contacted our commission favor direct monetary compensation. We support monetary compensation for the following reasons:

1. We believe that the evacuation and incarceration violated constitutional rights, created both financial and personal hardships, and constituted unjustified imprisonment. For any of these violations alone, direct redress has historically been sought and obtained. When viewed as a collective injustice, the evidence is overwhelming in favor of monetary reparations.
2. We do not see direct monetary redress as repayment for these violations and losses. Rather, monetary redress will help to insure that such violations will not occur again.

I am convinced that after hearing all the testimony and reviewing the record, you will come to the same conclusions.

Therefore, we recommend that direct monetary redress be awarded to Japanese Americans who were evacuated, interned or detained, or to their heirs. The community has recommended \$10,000 and \$15 per day for each person interned. We urge you to recommend such specific monetary redress remedies to Congress in your final report.

Finally, I wish to thank you for your diligence and commitment to gathering evidence and shedding light on this dark period in American history. I hope you enjoy your stay in Washington, I am sure you will learn much in these three days. Thank you.


Elizabeth Begert Dunbar