

# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

TESTIMONY OF IWAO KOSAKA

To the Commission on Wartime Relocation  
and Internment of Civilians

Seattle, Washington  
September 9, 1981

Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Commission,

My name is Iwao Kosaka. I was born in 1914 in Honolulu but was taken to Kure City in Hiroshima by my parents. In 1937 I returned alone to Honolulu. I spent the next four years studying English in the mornings and teaching Japanese in the afternoons to support myself.

During these four years, my grandmother, older brother and two younger sisters died in Japan. Worried about the rest of my family, I returned for a visit in June of 1941. However, relations between the U. S. and Japan were worsening dramatically and return passage became extremely difficult. I finally managed to return to Hawaii on the Tatsuta Maru towards the end of October of 1941. The war broke out soon thereafter. I became a laborer since the Japanese language schools were closed.

I was classified 1-A by the Selective Service and needed permission to travel by the Draft Board. I went to the first physical examination for induction held at the Honolulu Armory in 1940 with two friends who also taught at the language school. My friends were both inducted, served with the famed 100th Battalion and died in combat. I was rejected because of my extreme near-sightedness and was classified 4-F.

Suddenly in July, 1942 the FBI ordered me to report to the Honolulu office. Once there, they took me directly to the Immigration Station without even giving me a chance to change my clothes. About a week later, I was taken to Sand Island Detention Camp. While at the Immigration Station we were treated like prisoners - including compulsory cleaning and dishwashing.

I had not burned my draft card and had broken no laws here in America. I did receive my education in Japan but that was due to circumstances beyond my control. I had gone to Japan just before the war but who would not have been concerned about his family after the series of deaths?

I had indeed taught in a Japanese language school but that was to earn a living. I told the FBI that I had received military training while in school in Japan but that was compulsory for all but the handicapped.

The Sand Island Camp was surrounded by two concentric circles of barbed wire and armed guards kept watch 24 hours a day.

One night the air raid siren sounded and lights flooded the camp. Guards surrounded the camp to see that we could not escape. Any attack from the skies would have left us as a most inviting target. The internment centers were supposed to provide American citizens protection, according to some, but how could this be true?

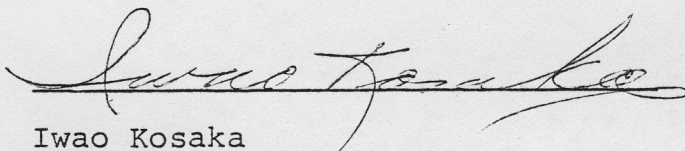
Life in these camps was exactly like being in prison.

I hope the members of this Commission will understand the deep frustration and disappointment we internees have had to endure. I hope the suffering of the Japanese Americans will be preserved in these Congressional records and that this kind of mistake never happens again.

There is a Japanese poem:

Nagaraeba	If you live long enough
Mata ano koroya	You will recall the olden days
Shinobare mu	Then, even the bad times
Ushi to mishi yo zo	Will become fond memories
Ima wa koishiki	

These old scars, after all these years, can be healed and the old pains can be translated into stories of beauty. Now, some thirty years after the end of World War II, it is not too late to recognize the injustice and provide appropriate redress. I recommend \$25,000 per internee.



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