

## JAPANESE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1801-24th Avenue South  
Seattle, Washington 98144  
Phone: 206/323-5990

Pastor: RICHARD T. NISHIOKA

Seattle, Washington 98103

August 14, 1981

To: The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of  
Civilians: The Honorable Joan Z. Bernstein, Chairperson,  
the Honorable Hugh B. Mitchell, the Honorable Arthur  
Goldberg, Father S. V. Gromoff the Honorable William  
Marutani

Madame Chairperson and distinguished members of the Commission:

My name is Richard Takaji Nishioka. I am an American citizen by birth. I was born in Los Angeles, California on July 9, 1932. My parents are also American citizens by birth. They were born, reared and educated in the State of Hawaii. My grandparents immigrated to the United States from Japan sometime before or at the turn of the century.

I am married. My wife is also a third generation American citizen and we have four fourth-generation American sons.

I am an ordained minister of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. I am a member of the Presbytery of Seattle. For the past fourteen years I have served as pastor of the Japanese Presbyterian Church of Seattle, Washington. The church began as a mission of the First Presbyterian Church of Seattle, Washington to newly arrived immigrants from Japan seventy-four years ago. Its first pastor was the Rev. Dr. Mark A. Matthews and its first Associate Pastor (who actually ministered as pastor to the fledgling congregation) was the Rev. Orio Inouye.

It is a privilege for me to add my voice to that of my fellow Americans seeking redress for grievous treatment resulting from Executive Order 9066.

Under this exterior of a middle-aged man, husband, father and minister of the gospel, is a nine-year-old American citizen child. In the years prior to World War II, in the years during World War II and in the many years since World War II this child has always had a deep and abiding respect for his country, for his government and for the Constitution of the United States of America. He is deeply devoted to the phrase: "...with liberty and justice for all...with liberty and justice for all."

In May of 1942 I was (along with my American family) forcibly removed from my American home, my American neighborhood, my American public school, and my Christian church by orders from my American government. I was escorted by armed guards, transported by train and bus to a makeshift, temporary federal penitentiary called Poston, Arizona (Judge William Denman says:

"...under conditions in major respects as degrading as those of a penitentiary and in important respects worse than in any federal penitentiary." tenBroeck, Barnhart, & Matson: Prejudice, War and the Constitution; University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles). In Poston, Arizona I experienced confinement inside a barbed wire enclosure patrolled by armed military police. I was warned that if I was caught going through the fence or caught outside the barbed wire fence I would be shot and killed by the military police ("At Camp Gila in the summer of 1943 they (the military police) shot and killed a Nisei (second generation American) who strayed outside the barbed wire." Prejudice, War, Constitution p. 257). In Poston, Arizona I experienced one year of protective custody, one year of punishment, one year of inmate status, one year's loss of precious freedom, one year's denial of "liberty and of justice." Later as an adult it finally dawned upon me that I had been arrested without having been served a warrant, without hearing the charges, without access to legal counsel, without trial in a duly authorized court of law as required by the Constitution of the United States.

The confinement of American citizens in the American government's prison camps came eventually to be modified by a program of conditional release. My parents applied for release. They easily passed the security check, because they had been cleared by military and law enforcement intelligence services even before they had been committed to the Poston, Arizona prison camp (Prej., War, Const. p. 301).

In May of 1943 I (along with my parents and younger sister) were paroled (Prej., War, Const. pp 99, 141, 149). We were paroled and permitted to travel to Chicago, Illinois where we lived, worked and went to school until it was declared that the Pacific coast was no longer restricted to American citizens of Japanese descent. In May of 1945 we departed from Chicago and returned to Los Angeles. We eventually settled in Santa Ana, California.

Deep down inside of me there is a nine-year-old, loyal, law-abiding American citizen child crying out for release from the false accusations and the false arrest that have saddled him with shame and false guilt for all of his youth and adult life. He is a child asking his government to set him free from a prison record, from former inmate status, from the condition of being a parolee.

Back in the early months of 1942 General John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command was continually questioned by the Justice Department as to his reasoning for requesting the authority to remove Americans of Japanese descent from the Pacific coast and lock them up behind barbed wire stockades. He indicated that Americans of Japanese descent had committed no crimes of treason, espionage or sabotage. "Then why?" asked the Justice Department did he want to order the mass arrest of all Americans of Japanese descent. This is General John L. DeWitt's answer



(a direct quote): "The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken" (Prej., War, Const. pp 110, 289). General John L. DeWitt declared that the proof of my guilt was the absence of evidence. The proof of guilt by the absence of evidence became the basis for Executive Order 9066 which sent American citizens away to serve prison sentences.

In his Final Report Gen. John L. DeWitt supplies his reasons for issuing orders for my detention and internment. They are as follows:

- 1) He lists me as a member of "an enemy race." (Prej., War, Const. p. 110)
- 2) He loosely connects me with a vague responsibility for the bombing of Pearl Harbor and western Pacific conquests of imperial and military Japan. (Prej., War, Const. p. 139)
- 3) He makes it appear that I transmitted information to the enemy that enabled them to make a submarine attack on Goleta, California, on Feb. 23, 1942; an incendiary aerial bomb attack on Mt. Emily near Brookings, Oregon on Sept. 9, 1942; a submarine shelling of Astoria, Oregon, on June 21, 1942 (Prej., War, Const. p. 139). The Astoria, and Mt. Emily incidents took place after I had been committed and imprisoned behind barbed wire.

If Gen. John L. DeWitt's conclusions were true, then the woes that I would have to bear are bad enough. But the fact that they have never been proven true, but continue to be accepted as true, is even worse.

It is my cherished hope that for myself and for my fellow Americans victimized by cruel and unusual punishment for non-existent felonies, that the United States government will strike down the program for World War II relocation and internment as a military blunder. Then may the American citizen child in me breathe free once more - as free as he breathed the day before he inhaled the pollution of internment and the shame of witnessing the desecration of the Constitution of the United States.

Respectfully submitted,

*Richard T. Nishioka*

Richard T. Nishioka