

September 9, 1981

Members of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians:

I am Akio Yanagihara. I live at [redacted] in Seattle. Our family consisted of my maternal grandfather, father, mother, myself, and four younger sisters. The youngest was 17 months old when we left Seattle for Puyallup.

My grandparents had 10 acres on Vashon Island, where they raised strawberries, loganberries, apples, cherries, and peaches. Because of Alien Land Laws in effect in Washington State until 1966, they couldn't own land. My grandfather couldn't use my mother's name because she was born in Japan.

He had to use a go-between to buy his farm. One day an Island businessman came to his farm and told my grandfather to move because he'd bought the farm at a tax sale. My grandfather checked into it and found that the taxes hadn't been paid. This happened some years before 1939. He had to buy his farm back from that Island businessman.

Grandfather lost his farm again for nonpayment of taxes. This time he was interned at Hunt, Idaho, and had no means to pay the taxes. Had he told my parents at that time, possibly my parents could have saved the farm. I believe his pride got in the way of asking Dad for any help.

We went to Puyallup on a rainy day on April 30, 1942. I had but six weeks to go to finish the fourth grade at Bailey Gatzert School. When school opened on October 19, 1942, in Hunt, Idaho, I was assigned to the fourth grade. I got no credit for any part of the school year in Seattle. I lost one year. This alone cut my career earning capacity by one year.

Now concerning redress:

1. I want this disgraceful event in our history to be required

subject matter for all students studying U.S. history. I want this study to include why internment of U.S. citizens was possible without due process of law. This means getting into the racism prevalent on the West Coast against Orientals. Unless we get into the reasons, this needless tragedy can occur again. I cite the Iranian crisis in 1979. People were ready to ship all Iranians back to Iran. I want this so that people like Lillian Baker cannot stand before this Commission and deny there was any barbed wire or armed sentries around the perimeter of the camps. We know better.

2. An official acknowledgment and apology for this wrong committed by the U.S. government against me signed by the President, all the Justices of the Supreme Court, and all members of Congress.

3. Monetary redress paid to individuals in a meaningful amount which you, the Commission, will determine. I want monetary redress because an apology without it is only lip service. In our society, money in a substantial amount is the only thing the American people understand.

In my case, my salary 17 years from now to make up for the year of school I lost. If wage inflation were to average 10%, it would be \$133,680.63; \$97,858.08 if inflation should average 8%, \$71,218.45 if inflation would be 6%. That makes \$25,000 some have mentioned look like a small token that it is. These figures consider only one thing. Nothing for pain and suffering or loss of property.

4. Monetary redress can be accomplished by individual check-off on the income tax return similar to the \$1 contribution for the

Presidential Election Campaign Fund. Payments should go first to those 65 years and older and to their heirs, then to those 64 to 55, etc. Any unclaimed funds should be distributed to trust funds established in the various cities, i.e., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, based on local population in 1942.

5. I am opposed to redress solely through a trust fund. I fear the politics to control such a fund would dissipate it and we would be denied meaningful redress.

Thank you.

Alvin Yanagihara
9-7-81