

STATEMENT

My name is Floyd Schmoie. I reside at [redacted] Kirkland Washington. I am a biologist and have taught biology at the University^{ia}s of Washington, Seattle, and Hawaii, Honolulu. At each institution I had numerous colleagues and students of Japanese ancestry.

During the First World War, 1918-1919, I served with the American Friends Service Committee, The American and French Red Cross, and the Hoover Commission doing relief and reconstruction work with civilian war victims in France, Germany, and Poland.

In January of 1942 I left my teaching at the University of Washington to work again with the American Friends Service Committee with victims of the Second World War, chiefly German Jewish refugees from Europe and Japanese American evacuees from the West Coast.

I became Regional Secretary for the Northwest Office of the AFSC located in Seattle.

Having for years known hundreds of people of Japanese ancestry as classmates, students, neighbors, personal friends and relatives (by marriage); and having full confidence in the loyalty, honesty, and integrity of all those I knew; my first concern as an agent of The American Friends Service Committee, and as an individual, was to do what we could to prevent this unnecessary uprooting, removal and confinement of this large segment of our population.

When, due to the fears, hysteria, prejudices, and in some cases, greed, of the times, it became impossible to prevent evacuation we turned our efforts to helping to make the internment as bearable and as ^{least} damaging as possible, and to facilitating their release and return home, or resettlement, as easy as possible.

In this effort, along with many other friendly people and agencies, I spent all my time from early 1942 until 1946.

Much of my time was spent first, in the Assembly Centers located at Portland, Oregon, and at Puyallup, Washington, and later in the Relocation Centers at Tule Lake, California; Minedoka, Idaho; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. These were the areas of concern assumed by our Seattle Office. Other office of AFSC attempted to serve the seven other Relocation Centers.

On occasion I made brief visits to these other Centers. All were very much alike in that all were located in desert area far from centers of population,

Most were in areas of harsh climate...cold winters and hot summers...and each was constructed of flimsy wood and tar-paper barracks surrounded by high barbedwire fences, guard towers, armed guards and patrols, and governed under strict regulations.

Due largely to the initiative and ability of the internees food and health services, recreational and educational facilities were adequate.

Although these camps were called "Relocation Centers" and were designed by the WRA (War Relocation Authority) as temporary internment during the process of relocation, the process was a slow and painful one.

There were many reasons for this: First the fear, hysteria, and prejudice, on the part of the surrounding community; and second, the reluctance because of fear, on the part of the evacuees, to face this situation.

College students who found acceptance at mid-west and eastern colleges and Universities found the easiest transition. Other young men and women with skills, all American citizens and with American educations, were the next most readily accepted and relocated.

It was the older generation, often poorly equipped in language, skill, and stamina, who found the situation most difficult. Most of these remained in the camps for the duration (three and a half years), and most, even then, found the return to normal life very difficult. This was true even of the small numbers who were able to recover their former homes. Our office helped wherever we could, both by trying to educate the community to acceptance and with physical assistance in restoring homes and land.

For these people the war did not end with the surrender of Japan in 1945. For many it never ended. Many lives were shortened or lost by mental breakdown, death by suicide, disease, or exposure. Some diseases such as spotted fever, malaria, and tuberculosis were directly related to the location or living conditions of the camps.

However, without doubt, the most severe damage was mental and emotional, a result of fear, uncertainty, lack of privacy in camp, and the denial of liberty, civil rights, and economic opportunity.

This is all directly attributed to the totally unnecessary and ruthless uprooting and confinement of these people, the most of whom were American citizens, none of whom were guilty of any of any crime, and to the physical and emotional conditions under which they were forced to live during confinement.

During my work with the American Friends Service Committee and with similar relief and reconstruction agencies, during and following five wars in Europe, the mid-East, Japan, Korea, Egypt, East Africa, and Southeast Asia, I have been a prisoner myself, or have visited refugee and concentration camps as a relief worker.

As a result of this experience which extends over more than 60 years, I can state positively that in no excessive way have I found these camps different from the relocation centers in which our Japanese American neighbors were interned during the recent war.

Each, whether Mow Mow in Kenya, Palestinian in Gaza or Jordan, or Japanese American in Wyoming or California, denied its residents liberty, basic and Constitutional civic rights, and social and economic opportunity.

I do, of course, exempt from the above generalization the German extermination camps, which I never saw but of which we were all painfully aware.

In my opinion it is not possible at this late date for our government or the American people to make any adequate apology or compensation to our surviving Japanese American neighbors and fellow citizens for this terrible and unnecessary mistake; but it is nevertheless high time that our government and our people acknowledge our mistake and admit the injustice, in order that we will remember, and resolve, never/^{again} to inflict such treatment upon any people, citizen or non-citizen, in this land.

signed *Floyd Schmoee*
Floyd Schmoee.

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Seattle, Washington.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE
COMMISSION ON WARTIME INTERNMENT AND RELOCATION OF JAPANESE AMERICANS
DURING WORLD WAR II.

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