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Testimony of Montana(Tana) Marumoto

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At the time of Pearl Harbor, my younger sister and I lived in Seattle, WA. She was a 17 year old high school girl and I was 22. Our parents had passed away four years earlier and we managed by working in homes.

Our parents and five children had lived on a farm in Havre, Montana until my parents' death. When my father passed away in 1938, the farm that he had leased about 15 years earlier, was immediately taken away. He had leased that farm with plans to purchase it but because he was still considered "alien", he could not. He had served in the Spanish American War as a cook and had been promised citizenship if he would do so--but the U.S. Government reneged on that promise. The only times I can recall my father ever swearing are the times when he became angry at the U.S. for lying to him about that.

My sister and I had many friends in Seattle and because of the loving situation of the place I worked, the lonesomeness of losing our parents and home was easier to bear. After my sister finished high school, I very much wanted to study to become a nurse and I was saving what little I could towards that day.

Pearl Harbor changed all of that to one of shock, anguish, terror and shame! My sister was terribly mistreated by her teacher and classmates and my brother and sister were thrown in jail in Montana. Immediately after his release, he joined the army.

Word spread that we would all be removed from Seattle, Tacoma & other places. Because of the curfew, it was not easy to see the many friends--one family in particular whose father we also called "Papa". We were horrified and saddened to hear that the FBI had come and taken him away as a dangerous alien. Sweet, gentle little Papa who worked hard in his little tailor shop, stayed home and worked in his little garden--he did not do anything but that! His family was frantic as were other friends whose fathers had also been taken away.

My sister and I didn't know what to do. We didn't have a home to go to any more. Our friends wanted us to go wherever we were sent to with them as "family", but I was not sure that the government would allow us to do that. Also, my employers-The Wakemans-were frantic for us. I had worked for them for 2 years and I was treated as a part of the family. They decided to adopt us-my sister and I-but I knew that we would not be free to go anyplace and all of our friends would be gone.

I decided that we would go to Montana. It was terribly hard to leave the Wakemans, whom I loved, and all of our friends. Just before we left for Montana, our friends learned that their father was in a prison camp in Montana. My memory fails me as to the exact location whether it was outside of Butte or Missoula. We got off the train to try to see him. We got to the location by taxi and when we saw the prison, we were sick with with fright for "Papa". I recall what seemed to be a big barn with a dirt yard all surrounded by coils and coils of barbed wire, guards with guns who interrogated us, made us open our coats to show that we did not have weapons, searched our purses and the packages that we had brought him. There was such joy of seeing him alive although thinner and shrunken-looking. He was not warmly dressed and it was very cold there yet. All that he wanted to hear was of his family and were they all safe. He did not complain but it broke our hearts to have to leave him there in that place.

When we arrived in Helena, Montana, a telegram awaited for me at our friends' home. A wealthy lumberman and his wife had seen me on the train and liked me. They learned of the circumstances and offered me a position in Minneapolis, Minn. I took that position and soon sent for my sister. It was there that I met my husband. He was stationed at Camp Savage and attending the Military Language School. We were married for 3 months and then he was assigned to the South Pacific for 3 long years. So many months that I did not know whether he was living or not.

Before he left for overseas, he asked permission for us to see his mother and father who were incarcerated in the Minidoka Prison Camp.

When we reached Twin Falls, ID we shared a taxi to Minidoka with other Japanese American soldiers who were also seeing their families before going to overseas assignments. We drove through miles and miles of the most barren and desolate country until we finally got to Minidoka. We saw bleak rows of barracks and tarpaper flapping in the wind. Barbed wire surrounded the camp, guard stations, machine guns and guards with guns! They searched the men in U.S. Army uniforms, checked and interrogated us all-before we could go in to see the soldiers' families who were under guard there! It seemed impossible that was happening and I felt again, deep pain and humiliation for all of us-and especially for those imprisoned there.

When the people in Seattle had held meetings and the decision had been made that we would all do as the government asked us to quietly as our contribution to the war effort and to prove that we were loyal to our country--I was sure that not anyone had foreseen this type of outcome.

My husband's parents, his little nieces ages 2 & 4, and his brother-in-law were overjoyed to see us. The mother of the girls, who was my husband's older sister, had to be left behind in Portland in a TB hospital. She was not to see her girls for 3½ years. The girls missed their mother terribly--especially the older one. Their grandmother who lovingly helped the father care for them, told me of the hardships they were enduring. She yearningly spoke of Portland, the hotel that they had to give up and of being held prisoners although they had done nothing to be there.

Added to the sadness with the girls already being separated from their mother, was to be the very human act of their father--thru loneliness for his wife, and the uncertainty and despair of camp-life--he became involved with another woman and he left the camp and his little girls behind. The family's life was shattered by that and the parents and girls suffered for it in camp and the girl's mother in the hospital. ^{Later,} That shattered marriage even impacted our lives because my husband felt a sense of obligation to his whole family.

My brother, George Washington Suyama, who enlisted ~~immediately~~ immediately after the war started, was driving a truck between Helena, Montana and Spokane, WA when Pearl Harbor happened. When

he reached Spokane, he was stripped of his job and they refused to pay him. Since he did not have a radio in the truck, he had not heard what had happened. He turned himself in to the Spokane Police Dept. They took up a collection for his fare home. When he got back to Helena, the apartment manager threw him down the stairs, confiscated his belongings and had him thrown in jail. As soon as he was released, he enlisted. He studied to become the first Police and Prison Sargeant of Japanese descent in the U.S. Army.

He spent his furlough with me and my sister-in-law in Indiana. For the first time, he really learned of the events after Pearl Harbor, the removal and incarceration of all people of Japanese descent, the hardships, treatment etc. He was especially disturbed to know that my husband's parents and family were incarcerated behind barbed wires with guards.

After he returned to Camp Crowder, MO, he wrote saying that he had requested transfer to active overseas duty. I wrote him begging him not to--my husband was already in the S. Pacific, my sister-in-laws husband serving as medical officer in Europe and the fact that our parents had died just four years before--and that I was afraid. But he wrote again saying that he was not doing enough and that he never wanted his brother and sisters ever having to be ashamed because of Pearl Harbor.

He trained as a 100th Battalion, 442nd Combat Infantry replacement. He was sent to Europe. We received a few letters where he expressed the wonder of marching through the pages of the history books he had studied. He asked us to send cigarettes to use as barter for food.

Then, that telegram came! So soon! Our brother was missing in action in the Vosges Mtns of France. He had volunteered to help rescue the Texas Lost Battalion, was last seen when he was hit and falling off of the tank that he was standing ^{or} to direct the tanks into position. The unit had to retreat because of heavy artillery fire. When they regained the position, they could not find him. Our friend, who was from Montana, looked in hospitals--everywhere--he was never found. A year later, they declared him no longer living. Our younger ^{brother} volunteered, I know, hoping to find him, but the war department said that he was the only remaining ^{male} member of our family so they commended him but would not take him.

For 2 years, those letters and packages that we had sent to him--came back. He had not received any of them

Yes, he had done enough--he had given his life.

Yet, after 15 years, our older son's junior high teacher was teaching her students that the reason for our removal and incarceration was because we were traitors! For the rest of his school years, he was to suffer the backlash of that totally untrue statement. He was to suffer physical abuse on Pearl Harbor Day while in high school and to require hospital care. Those incidents had a deep effect on our son.

I have been called "liar" by co-workers when I have told them that my husband served in the South Pacific. I also am still asked what army my husband served for 5 years and my brother gave his life--was it the Japanese army?

What kind of reparation for the unconstitutional removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans, their parents and families? No one can give back to my sister-in-law and her daughters that family life that would have been theirs--were it not for the evacuation and incarceration. No one can posthumously compensate my In-Laws for the suffering, shame, loss of income and opportunities --because of incarceration. No one can bring back my brother who felt that he was not doing enough --because of the incarceration.

In this country and this society of ours, hurt, pain and suffering are made whole by monetary awards. Surely, the deep pain, suffering, loss of income, loss of homes, loss of property--shattered lives deserve awards to make them whole.

Recently, a superior court ruled that an insurance company must pay 2 Black women 3½ million dollars because it discriminated against the 2 Blacks because they had Jewish attorneys and unfairly delayed their suit for damages in the amount of \$30,000 for 2 years.

With decisions such as this racially motivated case--as was the case of the incarceration during WW 2, sums that have been mentioned --\$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000--seems like an insignificant sum for innocent Japanese Americans and families who have borne the stigma and shame of Pearl Harbor for all of these years.

It is time for the courts to clear us of wrong-doing in the American Public's eye and to make us whole.

I have been subtly terminated by a federally funded agency for objecting to racist acts and name usage. I have been forced into early retirement by unbelievable and cruel subtleties of racism--again in a federally funded agency. Racism continues on the West Coast in many forms.