

9.11.38

GOOD AFTERNOON MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE REDRESS COMMITTEE, MY NAME IS CORINNE MONZON LEACH. I WAS BORN, RAISED AND RECEIVED MY EARLY FORMAL EDUCATION WHILE RESIDING IN THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT OF SEATTLE. MY FATHER WAS FROM THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS AND MY MOTHER IS A TLINGET INDIAN FROM SOUTHEAST ALASKA, AND THOUGH I AM NOT OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY, I FEEL IT IS IMPERATIVE THIS COMMITTEE MUST BE MADE AWARE OF THE EXTREME SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND TRAUMA THE INTERNMENT ORDERS HAD ON THOSE WHO WERE ABRUPTLY WITHOUT THE DAY-TO-DAY CONTACT WITH FRIENDS, SCHOOL-MATES AND BUSINESS ACQUAINTANCES FOSTERED THROUGH THE YEARS. THE NON-JAPANESE PEOPLE WHO REMAINED HERE ALSO SUSTAINED LOSSES ON THE SOCIAL LEVEL WITH THE ENFORCED AND UNDIGNIFIED INCARCERATION OF OUR JAPANESE AND JAPANESE AMERICAN POPULATION.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE THE FEELING OF UTTER HELPLESSNESS, FRUSTRATION AND BITTERNESS KNOWING THE FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS SHARED BY SO MANY ONE DAY WOULD BE LIKE A GHOST TOWN THE NEXT ... AND THEN POPULATED BY STRANGERS THE DAY AFTER. I HAVE NEVER FELT SO LOST AND ALONE AS THE DAY I WATCHED THE BUSES LOAD. I WAS THIRTEEN THEN, AND THE IMPACT ON MY LIFE WAS DEVASTATING. TO THIS DAY IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARTICULATE THE SHAME AND OUTRAGE I FELT. HOW COULD OUR GOVERNMENT DO THIS TO MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW AMERICANS?

ON A MORE PERSONAL BASIS, THE INTERNMENT ACTION TOOK OUR FAMILY'S GRANDFATHER FIGURE. HE WAS OUR PAPA\*, AND HAD BEEN SINCE THE EARLY THIRTIES. HE LIVED HERE SINCE THE EARLY TWENTIES AND WAS AMERICAN IN THOUGHT, DEED, AND ACTION. WE WERE HIS SURROGATE FAMILY AND HE WAS PLUCKED FROM OUR MIDST WITHOUT RECOURSE. OUR CONCERN AND PERSEVERANCE THRU CHANNELS FOR THIS GENTLEMAN RESULTED WITH HIS EARLY RELEASE TO OUR CUSTODY FROM THE INTERNMENT CAMP. THE MUTUAL LOVE AND RESPECT ENDURED UNTIL PAPA DIED.

EMMA\*\* IS ANOTHER VALUED FAMILY FRIEND WHO WAS SIMILARLY INCARCERATED. HER FATHER EMMIGRATED FROM JAPAN TO SOUTHEAST ALASKA IN 1901: MARRIED A TLINGET INDIAN AND THE CHILDREN FROM THIS UNION WERE RAISED AS TLINGET INDIANS IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR TRIBAL LAW. EMMA WAS MARRIED TO A CAUCASIAN BUSINESSMAN AND CAME TO SEATTLE IN 1937 WHERE OUR ENTIRE FAMILY MET HER. WE ENJOYED HER ALMOST WEEKLY VISITS BECAUSE IT MEANT INDIAN FOOD, INDIAN DIALECT SPOKEN AND MUCH LAUGHTER BETWEEN HER AND MY MOTHER. HER SUBSEQUENT ARREST AS AN ENEMY ALIEN WAS AN OUTRAGE. SHE WAS TAKEN TO PUYALLUP WHERE HER FATHER AND BROTHER HAD BEEN INITIALLY SENT. FROM THERE THE FAMILY WAS SPLIT. ONE SISTER STAYED IN ALASKA: EMMA WAS SENT TO IDAHO AND HER BROTHER AND FATHER WERE SENT TO NEW MEXICO. SHE WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE CAMP TO LIVE IN SPOKANE WHERE SHE SECURED EMPLOYMENT AS A WAITRESS. ONE NIGHT AFTER WORK, SHE WAS ARRESTED AND CHARGED AS A JAPANESE SPY. THIS TOOK PLACE BECAUSE SHE WAS HAVING AN ORANGE SODA WITH A UNIFORMED SAILOR IN A PUBLIC PLACE. SHE WAS JAILED FOR ALMOST A MONTH UNTIL HER BIRTHPLACE COULD BE PROVEN. ALL THE WHILE HER HUSBAND AND HER FRIENDS COULD ONLY COMMISSERATE WITH HER AND STAND HELPLESSLY BY.

\* NISHIGUCHI, Yaichi

\*\* SAMATO-PARR-SILVA, Emma

- 2 -

THESE ARE ONLY TWO EXAMPLES OF THE THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS AND INCIDENTS THAT OCCURRED DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME. I WISH TO POINT OUT TO THE COMMITTEE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS AND NATIVE AMERICANS HAD A DEVASTATING PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON ALL AMERICANS. FIRST, WE WERE SEPARATED FROM MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES. SECOND, WE WERE MADE UNWILLING PARTICIPANTS TO AN ILLEGAL ACT. THIRD, TO THIS DAY THIS SOCIETY AND NATION LEADS A HYPOCRITIC EXISTENCE BY CONTINUALLY BELIEVING THIS INTERNMENT WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE NAZI TREATMENT AND IMPRISONMENT OF THE JEWS. MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE, BE ASSURED THESE ARE PAINFUL MEMORIES, AND EVEN WITH THE PASSING OF ALMOST FORTY YEARS, THEY ARE STILL VIVID.

I URGE THIS COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND: THE GOVERNMENT TO FORMALLY APOLOGIZE TO THE INTERNEES AND THEIR FAMILIES; THE ENACTMENT OF A REDRESS BILL PATTERNED AFTER THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT FOR THE MONETARY PAYMENT TO THOSE PERSONS INTERNED, AND THOSE BORN DURING INTERNMENT; AND THIS COMMITTEE SHOULD HELP DRAFT FAIL-SAFE LEGISLATION PROTECTING ETHNIC GROUPS AND ALL PEOPLES FROM EVER AGAIN BEING VICTIMS OF SIMILAR GOVERNMENTAL POLICE ACTION.

THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THIS TESTIMONY.