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My name is Robert Sadamu Shimabukuro and I reside in Portland, Oregon where I work as a furniture designer and woodworker, and part time chef. My testimony, as a Nikkei who has no claim to any compensatory settlement, attempts to rebut the following arguments against monetary compensation:

- 1) That everyone suffered during World War II, that everyone was asked to make sacrifices - therefore, there should be no monetary compensation.
- 2) That monetary compensation "cheapens" the experience.
- 3) That the money will be coming out of an extremely tight budget. . .the where's the money coming from argument.

In looking at these arguments, I would like to emphasize that I am not a so-called psychological "expert", I have no formal training in psychiatry, that I am speaking from personal observations as a Japanese American who grew up in Honolulu and came to know the Nikkei community in the mainland United States only recently.

The tragic experiences of many of those incarcerated have been well-documented for you. You have heard people testifying about the loss of home and property, the separation of family members, the shame and fear of being Japanese, and the general abuse suffered by the Nikkei community at large during and immediately after WWII. You have heard from legal

experts, government officials, and private citizens about constitutional violations and racist hysteria. However, not enough attention has been paid to one of the more crucial tasks of this commission - that of quantifying human suffering.

While this commission has dealt with property loss as a basis for compensatory payment, little has been said about the psychological effects of incarceration itself. This is in part due to the reluctance on the part of many Japanese Americans to talk about their experiences. While it is easy to document the loss of a tractor, it is difficult to document a frame of mind; but the effects are none the less real. I am referring to a frame of mind that has seen such gross injustices that the loss of constitutional rights seem minor, and, in some ways, irrelevant (a mind-set, I might add, that is not healthy in a democratic society). I am referring to a spirit of creativity and cooperation and hope that has been replaced by timidity, resignation, indifference and silent suffering. I hear statements such as, "Well, I was in camp only for four months - so it wasn't that bad," and I wonder what an Anglo-American reaction would be if he was falsely incarcerated for four months. I hear someone not willing to testify about his experiences because he felt that his testimony would be tainted because he had a prison record . . . a prison record caused by his violation of a camp curfew law.



The hesitance to talk about their experiences, the reluctance to relive a painful experience, the tears that flow while relating their stories, point out that the silent suffering has taken its toll, and suggests that many more stories could be told. However, there is a great desire to keep a low profile, to draw as little attention as possible, in order that old wounds not be reopened.

To say then that everyone suffered during the war, that everyone was asked to make sacrifices is to circumvent the issues involved. After all, we are talking about basic constitutional rights. Do you really want to go on record as saying suspension of basic constitutional rights are okay in wartime because everybody has to deal with blackouts and gas rationing? Do you really want to go on record as supporting a stance that incarceration because of race is permissible as long as others are experiencing hardship also? Does the commission really want to go on record as saying that people being penned up as animals because of racist hysteria is all right as long as we have people dying on a battlefield?

The second argument against monetary compensation - that it "cheapens" the experience is a little more difficult to answer. This argument comes in the form of the government "buying off" its victims, i. e., that no amount of money will make up for the injustice. While on a metaphysical level this argument may be true, it does not fully address the legal questions. Nothing, and I repeat, nothing can replace, or fully repair the damage done, but compensation

is a way that this legal system has worked out the complex set of questions arising whenever a loss has incurred. If someone loses his eyesight because of irresponsible behavior and negligence, juries tend to award that person "compensation" knowing fully well that money can not replace eyesight. On the question of "buying off" victims, if the government offers monetary compensation in a condescending manner ["How much will it take before you shut up?"] then most Nikkei will see compensation as such. If, on the other hand, a sincere and honest attempt is made to "compensate" victims, that steps are also taken to insure that it will never happen again, not only to those Americans of Japanese ancestry, but to any other groups, be they Blacks, Jews, Europeans, Southeast Asians, or Iranians, then that is the spirit in which the compensation will be accepted. If the government has to pay a substantial amount, that would be one way of insuring that the government will think twice before it does it again. If the settlement is cheap, then the government will more than likely do it again. Monetary compensation cheapens the experience only if the settlement is cheap.

As I understand it, this commission is to make recommendations to Congress; therefore, I'm not sure that this is the place to answer the third argument, that is, "where would the money come from?" The commission should make recommendations as to what the settlement should be, not where the government should get the money. But, as a personal opinion, I do not



I don't see any problem with the money coming out of the Defense budget, since the Department of the Army played an important role in the incarceration. I don't see any problem with taking a relatively small amount out of the MX missile program or the proposed neutron bomb program. As far as I am concerned, if we cannot protect our own people from our own government, what hope can we possibly have to protect ourselves from foreign governments.

Compensation takes many forms. In this culture, money is the form in which damages are paid. It seems to me much more humane than to use the "eye-for-eye" approach, (incarcerate the public officials and citizens responsible for the internment camps) or, in another vein, to ask for hara kiri on the part of those officials responsible for the camps for compromising their offices. If you don't believe in monetary compensation for Japanese Americans, then you believe that it is permissible to allow a double standard to exist, one for Americans, another for a subclass of Americans - those of Japanese ancestry.

People have testified here with great hesitance and anxiety but with a lot of courage and have come out of the closet, so to speak, in order that similar mass incarcerations do not reoccur. It would be another tragedy if all that takes place here is a parade of victims spilling their guts out only to have a report to Congress that was empty and void of any real solutions.