

July 27, 1981

J.A.C.L. PNW.

318 6th Ave S.

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Seattle, Washington 98104

I am sending you my written testimony (do not
wish to read it) for the Redress Hearings.
My sister, Mrs. Chiyo Yasutake lives in Seattle
and she encouraged me to do so. We both
lived the experience of voluntary evacuation
and life in Colorado during the war years -

Sincerely,
Mrs. Mitsuko Yamahata

complete

I, Mitsuko (Yasukochi) Funakoshi was born in Meloland, Imperial County, California in September of 1922, where my parents were engaged in farming. After enduring many hardships, they finally gave up farming and moved to Norwalk, California, a small town which was composed of 3/4 Caucasians and 1/4 of other nationalities. My parents were very liked by the townspeople and they worked hard and soon had a very successful grocery business. They were lovingly called "Uncle" and "Auntie" by members of the community. The store was the main livelihood and it helped to send my brothers to college and me to Junior College. One of my brothers attended and graduated from the University of Southern California and the other from Woodbury Business College. My parents worked hard to send them to college with the idea in mind that they could help in the store with their added business knowledge and eventually take over the business when my parents retired.

I was attending Fullerton Junior College when the order for voluntary evacuation was given. I was to graduate in June of 1942, with only 2 months left to complete my studies towards an A.A. Degree in Teaching. At that point, my life seemed as if it were in turmoil, not knowing whether I would be able to complete my education before we were forced to evacuate; also if my father would be forced to close the business which would mean that we would not have any income. As it turned out my father did have to sell the business and take a big loss on everything and I was forced to give up my education to prepare for evacuation.

My parents and the rest of the family hurriedly packed what little possessions we could take with us and moved to Colorado, where a family friend offered to take us in, along with about 25 others, who were in the same situation as we were. We were fortunate that we had somewhere to go to otherwise we would have also ended in camp. Colorado

was one of the few states that allowed evacuees to enter. On the move to Colorado, I remember clearly stopping in a little town in Arizona to eat at a small cafe and as we walked in the door all eyes were glaring at us with suspicion and hate. Someone slipped a nickel in the jukebox to play "Let's Remember Pearl Harbor." It was hard to believe that they considered us as "enemy aliens" and not as American citizens.

After settling in Colorado, the only work available to us was hard, menial farm labor, which we did to exist. Hoping to continue my education and get my degree, I wrote back to Fullerton J.C. to inquire as to what I had to do to get my degree, but since we had to leave California with so little of our possessions, including all of my books and study materials, I could not complete the required test to get my degree. I feel that if it were not for the evacuation I would have attained my degree which would have helped me with a career.

Even though we did not go into camp but followed the orders for voluntary evacuation, I feel that it was very unjust, mainly because we of Japanese ancestry, the Japanese Americans, were not looked upon as an individual but as a Japanese to be regarded with suspicion. I am very angry that this was allowed to happen here.

Mitsuko Funakoshi

Mitsuko Funakoshi

July 25, 1981