

NATIONAL COMMISSION

c/o Joan Bernstein, Chair

Washington, D.C.

April 13, 1981

My name is (Mrs.) Jeanne M. Tanaka of [REDACTED], Spokane, Washington 99203. I am a Japanese American, born, raised and educated in western Washington State, until World War II. I was uprooted along with the other persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II and detained in Concentration Camps. Subsequently, I became one of those known as "Renunciants" and left with my parents and family to Japan.

I am prompted to write especially because it is my feeling that JACL still does not recognize us ex-Tuleans as fellow Americans, those of us who have returned to the United States. The Japanese Americans, it seemed to me, have somehow always divided among themselves as "loyal" and "disloyal" ever since the U.S. Government forced us to sign those questions. I had a vague feeling at that time that our government wanted to get rid of us, as many as possible and ship us all to Japan, even those of us who had never been there. They would feel justified if they could force us to sign that we were "disloyal". As I recollect, many of us found the whole thing very confusing. There was a lot of pressure inside the family, and by groups in our Block (in the camp); there were threats of families breaking up. That big insulting question was thrown at us after depriving us freedom as citizens. The government started to separate us, I felt, to foment even more antagonism among us.

I do not believe there were "loyal" and "disloyal" Americans. I do know there were angry, indifferent, or "shikataganai" (can't be helped, what's the use) Americans. A lot of the angry ones were at Tule Lake and they showed their displeasure by being difficult, contrary and spiteful, or go on hunger strikes. I wasn't sufficiently intelligent then to understand the anger, but there was one young man who told me on the way to Japan after renouncing citizenship that he felt there was nothing left for him in the United States. He felt our government was totally wrong in having originally put us into camp, pushing those questions on us, making us renounce our citizenship. There was complete chaos in Tule Lake; it was an opportune time to get a lot of the citizens to renounce so they could ship us out in huge numbers. I did because primarily I didn't want to be separated from my family; my father was not with us but at an interment camp and since my oldest brother was caught in Japan by the war, it was argued within my fa-

mily that we would most likely be deported anyway. So my assurance of staying together was to renounce. I had nowhere to place my hopes or security, and my refuge was my family. It is my feeling that many were in the same situation as I found myself. When your own country is against you and you no longer have a home to go back to, you tend to feel a need to close rank within the family.

The Commission should know that there were Japanese Americans very aware of the government's breach of the Constitution, and resisted and lashed out, but were not supported by the majority of Japanese Americans who instead branded us as "disloyal". I realize that it was not popular to resist or rebel in those days, but I feel we were doing then what we are finally doing through this Commission. Haven't peoples throughout the world resisted tyranny, injustice, oppression, but were castigated for it--some finally came out winning in the end?

There was no need to prove we were loyal, in order to retain our citizenship. We are citizens by our birthright. Every one of us, I'm sure, would have done everything in our power to protect our land from the enemy. In fact, after the war started my father gathered all us children and told us that we as farmers are the backbone of America, and we must now work hard and help the war effort of America. My brothers went around the neighborhood with their wagons collecting aluminum and we even gave up our little battered aluminum pan. I loved my country then, and in spite of everthing, I still love my country, and I want it to be a just and peace-loving nation. I pray that our leaders will be guided by Divine Wisdom rather than power or might, for I think through wisdom comes all good things.

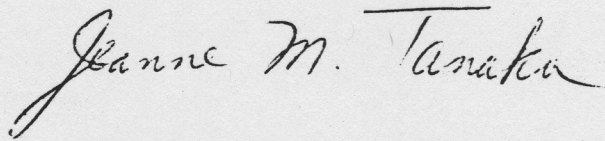
As for myself I am getting along economically in spite of being widowed for three years. My husband had foresight to try to provide for us. I know he had struggled and had very difficult times throughout his life, and it is my great sorrow that he left us so prematurely. Perhaps I could say that he was a victim of stress; however, there are so many even without these terrible circumstances that still suffer stress. What I wish to convey is that monetary compensation should be given those that are still struggling because of hardships not yet overcome, even though no amount of money will adequately compensate. I have emotional struggles of suppressing bitterness that wells up whenever injustice is seen, such as the hostage situation of late (Iran).

In closing I wish I can somehow deliver this message of pain I still

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suffer because of the division among Japanese Americans stemming from our wartime experience in Concentration Camps. I feel that whatever mistakes I made under those stressful situations are not as serious as the actions of a government that deprived us of our citizenship just because we had Japanese faces. However, I feel our government has pardoned me as a renunciant and I am most willing to pardon her for her offences. I hope the Commission will embrace the erstwhile renunciants as part of the total picture of what happened.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne M. Tanaka". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

(Mrs.) Jeanne M. Tanaka

submitted through assistance of:  
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