TESTIMONY OF DR. MARY ODA

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My name is Mary Sakaguchi Oda. I live in North Hollywood, California, and I am a Physician and Surgeon, a M.D.

Pre-evacuation: I lived with my family just behind the house where I now live, in a 4 bedroom house on 2½ acres of an apricot orchard owned by my family. We also owned 15 acres of farmland in the Valley which was rented to another Japanese family. My family farmed 30 acres on leased land, 10 acres adjacent to our home and 20 acres about 2 miles away. In 1941, I had graduated UCLA and entered the University of California School of Medicine. At the time evacuation was announced, I was almost finished with the first year in Medical School, and in order to get full credit for the year, was given special oral exams by my professors. Since we were allowed to bring only what we could carry, I brought only a small suitcase and my microscope. I was mentally prepared for camp because shortly before the announced evacuation, five of my classmates and I pleaded with Robert Gordon Sproul, then the Chancellor of the University, to allow university students to remain in school instead of being forced to go. Dr. Sproul gave us no hope, saying that no exceptions were to be made, and the university could no nothing.

My family, in the meantime, was given about two weeks to sell all the farm equipment, including the Fordson tractor just newly purchased for about $1,200 dollars, and a Caterpillar tractor with all the accessory equipment, three horses and mules, three trucks, one 4-door passenger car, and three sport coupes. In our backyard we had a 500 gallon gas tank and pump because of the large amount of fuel consumed by all the vehicles. My father was unable to sell the farm equipment except for the tractors, so they were left behind. Our crops were sold for $1,100 dollars, the tractors for $200 dollars. The buyer of the crops rented the house but never forwarded the rent knowing he could not be evicted. Our farm was rented also, but again, rent was never paid for the three years we were away. Household goods were stored in a small storage building. When my family returned, everything was gone except my piano music. My oldest brother took the Dodge truck to Fresno where a former neighbor, a Caucasian, used the truck and returned it to us three years later. The 4-door Plymouth was left with a dentist friend, who on our return three years later, flatly told my family he had sold it. To have the kind of farm business my family owned at the time of evacuation would, in today's inflated dollar economy, cost half a million dollars.

My family consisted of 4 boys, 3 girls and our parents. The eldest brother was a practicing dentist in Gardena, having just graduated USC Dental School in 1941. The second was a

third year dental student at USC; the third a second year medical student in Milwaukee. My older sister was a UCLA graduate, helping on the farm and working part-time on the local paper, the Kashu Mainichi. Then came myself and younger sister, a sophomore at UCLA, and a younger brother in the 10th grade.

My reaction to the order to evacuate was one of numbness --I couldn't feel anything, no rage nor anger. Prior to that order, our movements were restricted by the curfew laws. We had to be off the streets by 7 p.m. I could not study in the library with my classmate, but the curfew prepared me for the complete and total restrictions of camp life later.

My family's losses were considerable. My father was far-sighted enough to record our immediate losses, which added up to over $10,000. I, personally, lost two years in Medicine as my fellow classmates graduated two years before I. My third year dental student brother was less fortunate. Between the draft and camp, he lost 5 years. When he was drafted as a private in the U.S. Army, he was greeted by his USC Dental student classmate who was a Captain in the Dental Corps. Neither my Medical student brother nor Dental student brother was given the free education their fellow classmates received. My brothers were both classified as 4-C--enemy aliens.

My family became separated by the evacuation and we never again lived as a family. My oldest brother volunteered for the U.S. Army immediately after Pearl Harbor but was turned down. He was told that the U.S. Army did not need any Japanese

American dentists. When it was announced that Area III in the interior would not be evacuated, he moved his practice from Gardena to Del Rey in central California. When Area III was evacuated, he was sent to the Gila River Camp. My dental student brother stubbornly remained in his room for one week, was picked up by the FBI and sat in the County Jail for 3 days. He was released from jail and taken by two military policemen to the nearest Assembly Center in Santa Anita. Third brother was in the second year at Marquette Medical School. That left my parents, three girls and a younger brother. After living in a comfortable 4-bedroom house, the cramped 8-cot room was stifling. We shared the room with an elderly couple in their 80's, a Christian minister and his elderly wife. The room had no inner wall, but open studs exposing 2x4's and the floor was wooden with ½ inch gaps between the planks where you could see the earth below and through which the winds blew up layers of sand and dust everywhere. We slept on straw which we stuffed into bags--this was our first chore upon arrival into camp. There was no other furniture. Later my little brother made makeshift chairs and a table from a pile of scrap lumber. Several months later linoleum was laid down, cutting down the thickness of the dust that settled after the winds blew, which was often. The bathroom was communal with no partitions between the toilet seats which numbered about a dozen. The shower was also communal. There was a total lack of privacy for such basic intimate functions.

We left for camp at a bus stop in Burbank on a gray, cloudy day and just before we got on the bus it began to rain. A mother of two, standing next to me, said: "See, even God in heaven is crying for us". At the time I felt numb and bewildered by what was happening, but today, when I remember this, the tears come readily. The trip was long; the landscape barren and desolate. My first reaction to camp was one of dismay and disbelief. A medical school classmate had told me enviously that the newspapers had reported that we were to be placed in comfortable homes. Our new home looked exactly like a prison camp--the barbed wire, watch towers, military police with guns you all know about.

In camp every able bodied person was expected to work. I got a job paying $16 dollars a month working in a hospital, doing history and physicals, drawing blood samples, following the doctors on rounds. While working in the hospital, I was witness to the death of an innocent bystander, a teenage boy, who was one of the crowd shot at by the soldiers in the watchtower. He was the third victim, died in spite of intravenous sodium sufadiazine. Had it not been for the surgical skills of Dr. Goto, several others also would have died who were shot at. There were 10 injured. I developed severe palpitations, my pulse racing at 110-120 a minute. It took many years for me to realize that this was a psychosomatic reaction to the submerged anger and frustration I felt at being forced to leave school, my home, and having my family divided. On the surface I was not aware of these feelings because there were

10,000 others in the same boat.

The emotional toll taken on my family was considerable. My younger sister suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in a mental institution for 5 months. The physical toll was even greater. My older sister developed bronchial asthma in camp, a reaction to the terrible dust storms and winds. The asthma became intractable and she died at the age of 26. My oldest brother, the dentist, had consumed a quart of milk daily most of his young life. In Camp, adults were not allowed to have milk, only children under 5. He ate the pickled vegetables and rice daily, the dried fruit preserved with sulfur and developed intestinal obstruction. Because by this time there were no competent surgeons left in camp, he was shipped to the Los Angeles County General Hospital, where he died after surgery. He had developed cancer of the stomach at age 30, 3 years after the evacuation. My father, too, was sensitive to the winds and dust, developed constant nasal irritation and died of nose and throat cancer. All three had entered the camps in good health died within 7 months of each other, 3 years after evacuation. Their deaths could be attributed to the stresses of the disruption in their lives, the extremely poor diet, exposure to the terrible winds and dust in camp. Ten years later, I saw identical diet given to retarded children in the State Hospital for the mentally retarded. The cost then was 13¢ per patient per day. My father's loss of the fruits of 45 years of toil in this country, the psychological effects

of forced imprisonment had taken their toll on all three. In spite of this, before he died he said he did not regret coming to this country because in no way could he have sent 7 children through the University, 5 through medical and dental schools, in his native Japan.

Speaking of early, untimely deaths, I have observed in my medical practice an extremely high incidence of high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer among the survivors of camps. Life expectancy seems to be shortened by 10 to 15 years among us Japanese Americans. One-third of my small circle of friends and peers are dead. A high percentage of World War II veterans are dead, many died in their late 40's and early 50's. Of medical schoolmates - all physicians who survived the camps - 2 out of 12 are dead and one has survived a stroke.

Camp life further fragmented our family life. We could no longer eat together, share meals or talk to each other. We each had our separate jobs, separate friends. We were resigned to life in camp and to make the best of it. When I heard that students would be allowed to leave, I wrote to all 96 medical schools in the country except 5 on the west coast. I received replies from several which stated they could not consider my application because they had military installations on their campus. The implication of my return address, Manzanar, was that I was a potential spy or saboteur. I was finally accepted into the Women's Medical College of PA. which, being all female, did not have military installations

on their campus. My mother cashed in her life insurance policy to pay for my tuition, room and board for one year, the sum of $1,000.

On the question pertaining to the loyalty oath, all my family wrote yes/yes. There is a Japanese saying, "umi-no-oya yori mo sodate no oya" meaning, your adoptive parents are your real parents. America was the country of my parents' adoption and therefore was our family's country. All my three living brothers served in the Armed Forces. My oldest brother volunteered to serve immediately after Pearl Harbor but was rebuffed and again volunteered from camp but was turned down. My husband was among the first 14 who volunteered from Manzanar as a special group destined to become the linguists so vital for America's final victory. One bigot on a TV show asked, "If you were so badly treated, why did you volunteer to fight for this country?". My answer is: our situation was analagous to that of battered children. We were the battered children of this country who in spite of unspeakable treatment by their parents, still love their motherland and fatherland and still strive to please them. Why? Because they know no other parents.

Post evacuation: The ones who suffered the most after the war was over were our parents. My father, when dying, said he was going back to North Hollywood to farm again. Had he lived, he couldn't possibly have started over again at age 68. With my father's and oldest brother's deaths, and the other members of my family being unable to support

my mother, she went to work as a farm laborer. What money we received for the sale of farm equipment, crops, prior to the evacuation was spent in camp on necessities over the 3 years. Her salary was $12.00 a month working as a nurse's aide on the TB ward. So, after living in this country for 34 years, raising 7 children, my former school teacher mother who taught school in Japan for 7 years before coming to this country, was working on a farm doing stoop labor. She carried the ashes of my father, brother and sister with her for several years. When she received the government's token compensation for the family's losses, the $1,800 dollars paid for the gravestone under which the three are now buried.

The most difficult problem for me to overcome as a result of the evacuation was the anger and bitterness which has gradually surfaced over the past 39 years. When the photographs of camp were shown at the Pasadena Art Museum some years ago, I burst into tears and could not stop the tears from flowing. All the pent up emotion held back for so many years was released. The numbness of the evacuation was finally lifted. Because of the humiliation and shame, I could never tell my four children of my true feelings about that event in 1942--I did not want my children to feel the burden of shame and feeling of rejection by their fellow Americans. I wanted them to feel that in spite of what was done to us, this was still the best place in the world to live.

The evacuation, coming as it did when I had become of

legal age, was the most traumatic experience of my life. It made me realize first hand that democracy can be an illusion and "constitutional rights" a meaningless phrase. Until the Commission was established, I had justifiable doubts about the integrity of government in this greatest country on this earth. I had lost faith 39 years ago, suffered hardship of an emotional and physical nature because of evacuation. I had lost my support, part of my family--father, brother and sister. Perhaps the worst part of it was the realization of the indifference of many fellow Americans toward the humiliation and shame of the experience we suffered, the utter lack of compassion and understanding. There are some bigoted individuals who liken our incarceration in the prison-like atmosphere of the camps, to a fun-filled summer camp. They also say that we were there for our protection. If so, why were the guns pointed towards us rather than away from us?

The only way the government can right this wrong is by monetary compensation. We served as hostages in this country when the tides of war were against us; we were imprisoned without trial. No amount of compensation can repay us for the shame and humiliation, the lost lives, the lost time. Without monetary payment in reparations, this investigation is without meaning. Only monetary compensation may serve as a deterrent in preventing a repetition of the same error in the future against another ethnic group.

The treatment we received makes a hollow mockery of the noble inscription at the based of the Statue of Liberty - "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses - yearning to be free - the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, then these the homeless temptress tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the Golden Door." Executive Order 9066 had made 110,000 Japanese Americans the "tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to be free - the wretched refuse of our teeming shores." The Senate Sub-Committee must lift its lamp beside the Golden Door.