

TESTIMONY FOR THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION  
AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

Condensed and Revised from Submitted Written Testimony for  
N.Y.C. Hearing, November 23, 1981

To the Members of the Commission:

I am a nisei and a professional social worker, and was employed in this capacity pre-evacuation. As the chief evacuee social worker in the Granada Relocation Center, I established the basic organization for the Social Services, pending arrival of the Caucasian staff. During my internment from May 1942 to April 1944, I personally heard of the suffering and struggle to adapt to communal conditions. I witnessed and shared the trauma experienced by the mentally/physically handicapped and socially deprived. My testimony focuses up on this group and is written from notes I then recorded. The War Relocation Authority case records substantiate this testimony.

To Cite a Few Case Situations:

Among the physically handicapped were the children covered by the U.S. Crippled Children's Service. These children were further disadvantaged by the loss of their accustomed medical services, delays in corrective surgery and in prosthesis evaluations, and hospitalization in Denver without benefit of family support. The impact was anxiety, fear, and insecurity upon the whole family.

A 14 year old boy, crippled by infantile paralysis, was scheduled for another corrective operation; and, a young male was due for a brace adjustment. Postponement for five or more months ensued.

An one year old girl and a younger infant, both with cleft lip and cleft palate required surgery. They were separated from their parents for about two weeks.

The medically ill, especially the non-aggressive aged, were faced with obstacles in their effort to adhere to prescribed health regimes. The sand/snow storms and the housing/bathing facilities as well as procedural regulations regarding special dietary needs and medical/surgical supplies were deterrents to their health care.

A middle-aged woman, who pre-evacuation had undergone surgery exposing her nostrils, was virtually confined to her room - socially ostracized and greatly susceptible to infection.

Relocation shattered the protective environment of home and neighborhood for the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed. Irreversible damage arose out of the displacement. Non-evacuated patients remaining in West Coast institutions were "abandoned" by family.

A 16 year old girl with reported mentality of a six year old unwittingly hurt young children at play and struck a waitress. Such problems were previously non-existent. Her intellectual and social achievement reflected the family nurturing and potential. She had regressed and become a "trouble".

A mentally ill, college educated woman with a previous psychiatric history was functioning well in her familiar surroundings. The adjustment to communal living was unsurmountable, resulting in decompensation.

Ethnically, psycho-social problems were contained within the family. Incidence of illegitimate children was insignificant. I helped three young women from the Center to go to Homes for Unwed Mothers in Denver for their confinement. There were others.

A very young girl's impassive behavior, inconsistent with her sexual experience, distressed and shamed her parents into secluding themselves in the barracks.

Children of interracial marriage develop coping mechanisms against relentless taunting. One device is choice of friends.

A 16 year old son of a Japanese father and Mexican mother (not in the Center) ran away "to get away from all the boys who are always fighting" him. Pre-evacuation, he had almost no contact with the Japanese people.

The agony of caring for the dying and the dead was heightened by the starkness of the Relocation Center. The WRA provided burial only in the deserted grounds; interment costs elsewhere were borne by family. Parents, spouses, and children of Japanese ancestry who traditionally placed their loved ones to rest with dignity and due respect were unable to fulfill their responsibility and inherent privilege.

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11/17/81  
Date of Signature