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DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

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Statement by: George I. Fujimoto
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regarding his status and experiences during the 1940's.

In early 1942 while I was a senior at Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass. my parents were forced into an internment camp at the racetracks in Puyallup, Washington. Their only 'offense' was being of Japanese origin. They had been resident aliens, ineligible for citizenship due to Asian ethnicity, for 33-37 years in this country. Our family clothing business was abandoned after 21 years in business due to the forced internment. Our only equity was in the stock on the shelves since the premises were leased, and that equity was essentially lost. Although only a third of my college support came ^{from} family (rest from jobs, loans and scholarships) that support was critical.

About this time my draft classification was changed from 1 (student) to 4E (alien) without my knowledge at that time. Also travel restrictions were imposed on those of us Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Upon graduation from Harvard in June, 1942 all jobs applied for in industry were refused me without any stated reason, although I graduated in the upper third of my class. All except one application for admission into university graduate schools were turned down. The University of Illinois replied that they could not admit me because there was an Air Force Base near Urbana, Illinois. The one exception was the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor where they not only admitted me but offered me a Fellowship. While studying at the University of Michigan, I along with all the other Americans of Japanese origin (that I knew of) were singled out and called in by the Provost Marshall' Office of the U.S. Army for interrogation. They would not disclose to me why we were called in. From the nature of the questioning I would presume they were investigating our loyalty.

In 1947, upon receiving a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Michigan, all my applications for a position in chemical or pharmaceutical

industry were turned down. (DuPont, Monsanto, Merck, etc.). All the other graduates also receiving their doctorates in chemistry were given many interview trips to the various industrial laboratories as well as receiving many offers of employment. I was the only non-Caucasian graduate and did not even get a single interview trip.

From all my applications I received only one offer for employment (20-30 applications), a temporary one as a post-doctoral Fellow at the California Institute of Technology, so accepted it. In 1949, upon completing my Fellowship at Caltech, I was turned down on all my applications for a professional position in the chemical or pharmaceutical industry. The only professional position for which I received an offer was a Research Instructorship at the University of Utah College of Medicine on an annual basis. It was enough of a job for me to get married.

I would like to mention some observations about the greater Boston area during 1941-1942. During my four years as an undergraduate at Harvard I heard of only three Issei or Nisei families settled in this area. They had been here for 15 or more years. One of these was headed by Dr. S. Fujishiro, an orthodontist on the clinical staff at Harvard. He worked tirelessly for the less privileged, established a residence for single Asian domestic workers in the area, opened his home to local students, especially to annual New Year's feast and otherwise helped students in need. In early 1942 he was incarcerated in the Charles Street Prison for no reason other than being of Japanese citizenship as far as I could ascertain. He was later forcibly expatriated to Japan on the Gripsholm, expatriated since he had settled here for life. It is my understanding that he was immediately imprisoned in Japan, perhaps because of his commitment to America and peace, and died in prison there. Could this kind of treatment ^{have} been inflicted on German or Italian aliens in this country, aliens in spite of the fact that they are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

I ask that the protection afforded by the Bill of Rights in our Constitution not be allowed to be abridged by Executive Order (or any other order) again.

