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Testimony of SUMI MARY MITSUDO KOIDE

My name is Sumi Mary Mitsudo Koide. I live at 134 Lefurgy Avenue in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. I am a physician and an Associate Professor at the Albert Eistein College of Medicine in New York.

It was with great reluctance that I decided to testify. I have read detailed accounts of the testimony at the previous hearings held across the country and I have viewed the videotape of parts of the San Francisco hearings. I was very moved by the many poignant, and heart-wrenching experiences of the previous testfiers. I was also impressed with the learned and persuasive testimony of the Constitutional scholars and lawyers, psychologists and sociologists. It was my feeling that I had little to add.

However, my sense of responsibility to three groups of individuals dictated by obligation to testify. Firstly, the memory of my deceased Issei parents, who suffered the harrassment, humiliation, and helplessness of the internment experience, but who continued to believe in the possibility of a better life for their children. Secondly, my three Sansei children, who not only believe in the democratic ideals of freedom and justice and equal protection before the law but demand their rightful place in this society. The future of not only the Japanese Community but

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the future of all Americans, including all racial, ethnic and religious minorities, that never again, at a time of real or imagined national stress, will the constitutional rights of any citizen or legal residents be violated.

I was 12 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. My family consisted of my parents, 3 older sisters and older brother. We lived in Alderton, Washington, a small farming community in the beautiful Puyallup Valley at the foot of Mt. Rainier. My father, Sotaro Mitsudo, was a hard working,but poor, tenant farmer. He and my Mother, Asa Uyeda Mitsudo, were denied, by law, the privelege of becoming citizens and owning property. The farm was a family affair, as were all the farms in that area. They grew strawberries, rasberries, rhubarb and many vegetables. We would farm from early morning to dusk, seven days a week with time off for the children to attend school.

This hardworking, frugal, country life was interrupted forever in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The testimonies of others have related more eloquently than I could, the long litany of the violations of our civil and human rights; the curfews, the FBI raids on our homes, the unannounced arrests and the disappearance of the leaders of the Japanese Community, the daily harassment of the hostile community around us, and the growing rumors of our possible detention.

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My parents faced the prospect of our detention in disbelief.

My Father worked in the fields, right up to the day before evacuation hoping against hope that there had been a mistake. But he was wrong. He left his fields of repening strawberries and rasberries, almost ready to be harvested.

Then the evacuation order became a reality. We were given one week notice to abandon our home and life as we knew it. We arrived at the Puyallup Fairgrounds Assembly Center with only the belongings we could carry. We lived there for 3 months, in the crowded, hastily constructed barracks and converted horse stables and fairbooths. Then the journey to the more permanent concentration camp at Minidoka in desolate southern Idaho.

I remember the train finally coming to a halt at the railroad siding in the sagebrush desert. As we got down off the train, we were greeted by the cold, unsmiling, curious stares of caucasian Americans of that area. I remember thinking to myself, "I bet they expected all of us to wear glasses, have buck teeth and maybe horns."

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I remember the bus ride through the stark, desolate, semi-desert countryside to the camp. There were mile after mile of Army-style tar-papered barracks, 12 to a block, arranged around the central mess room and shower, toilet, laundry building. I remember our small room, hardly 20 x 25 feet in which we crowded seven cots, a table and benchesx made out of packing crates, and a Franklin-style pot-bellied stove. That was home for over three years. I remember the wooden barracks which were hardly protection against the eternal wind, the sandstorms and s owstorms, the bitter cold in the winter and the torrid heat in the summer. I remember the primitive outdoor toilets and the communal bathing facilities. I remember the large, barren, mess halls with rows of wooden tables and benches. And, of course, I remember the shock of

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seeing barbed wire fences and the sentries patrolling with guns.

The adults were all prevailed upon to work at the jobs necessary to the operation of the camp. My father became a cook at a nearby mess hall. My mother first worked as a waitress at a mess hall and then worked at mopping the floors at the hospital laundry room. My brother and I used to help her after school because we thought the work was too hard for her. There were four of us of school age. We kept busy going to the hastily organized school. We walked two miles through the camp to school which was a block of tar-papered barracks. There was home work to be done in the evenings. I remember my parents' desperate attempts to keep the family together against the delinquent influences of crowded camp life.

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Many activities were organized to keep everyone busy, both adults and children. I remember the athletic leagues, i.e., basketball and baseball games. xq Churches were established, libraries were organized with donated books andmagazines.

Worse than the physical discomforts were the psychological problems of living life indefinitely in limbo, keeping busy day after day, a life without purpose, and the uncertainties of not being able to hope and plan for the future. The most difficult part of those years of imprisonment was living one day after the other without purpose, direction or even hope. We Japanese Americans, a hard-working enterprising, self-supporting group of people were placed in the untenable position of total dependency and helplessness. I remember x my mother's deepening

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melancholia as the months and years progressed. My father escaped into the fantasies of writing prose and poetry to assuage his feelings of loss and despair.

Our family unit slowly changed. My two older sisters were married to young men they had met in the camp and subsequently departed for Salt Lake City to try to live a more normal life outside the confines of the camp. They suffered job and housing discrimination and personal indignities but they were strong within and survived. Later, their husbands were drafted into the U.S. Army. How ironic it was for them to be sending packages of goodies from the Army PX to cheer up their relatives in a concentration camp when they needed moral support too.

Many many families in the camp had men who volunteered formilitary service. Their actions were met with mixed emotions, happiness that they were

willing to serve, but fear and sadness that they would be risking their lives in combat while we, their relatives were in a concentration camp. We wept to see them leaving the camps for the inevitable troop trains to the ports of embarkation. Even worse was the flood of telegrams informing families of men missing in action, or killed in action. What agony it was to be receiving these messages while living in the American concentration camps established for potentially disloyal Americans.

During all those years, I do not recall my parents ever expressing hatred for the United States. I do remember their overwhelming feelings of rejection and abandonment by the U.S. government. They clung to their age-old habit of self-discipline. They encouraged us to study hard at the make-shift schools, play hard on the athletic fields and to participate in community activities. Even in their despair, they must have been anticipating and preparing