

I REALIZE THAT SOME WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE ORIGINAL DECISION TO INTERN US ARE STILL DEFENDING THEIR ACTIONS. I SUPPOSE IF I HAD MADE AS BIG A MISTAKE AS THEY DID I WOULD ALSO BE RELUCTANT TO ADMIT IT. I DO NOT THINK THEY WERE EVIL MEN. BUT THEY WERE CAUGHT UP IN A WEB OF RACISM AND FEAR THAT BLINDED THEM TO THE TRUTH AND SET THEM ON THEIR FOOLISH COURSE.

THEIR BLINDNESS WAS MONUMENTAL. GENERAL JOHN L. DEWITT, HEAD OF THE WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND A KEY FIGURE IN THE INTERNMENT, ACTUALLY MANAGED IN SPEAKING OF THE FACT THAT NO DISLOYAL ACTS HAD BEEN COMMITTED BY AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY TO SAY "THE VERY FACT THAT NO SABOTAGE HAS TAKEN PLACE TO DATE IS A DISTURBING AND CONFIRMING INDICATION THAT SUCH ACTION WILL BE TAKEN."

SO MUCH FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY.

BUT I COME BACK TO OUR PREMISE, • AS THE COMMISSION
REPORT MADE PLAIN -- WE WERE NOT TRAITORS, WE WERE
FARMERS AND BUSINESSMEN, HOMEMAKERS AND TEACHERS, WE
WERE NOT SECRET AGENTS. NEARLY TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND OF
US WERE FOURTEEN YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER. NEARLY SIX
THOUSAND OF US WERE BORN IN CAMP.

AND ONE THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY TWO
INTERNEES DIED WHILE IN CAMP, A FIGURE WHICH DOES NOT
INCLUDE PEOPLE LIKE MY FATHER-IN-LAW, SAIJIRO HINOKI,
WHO OWNED A DRY CLEANING STORE IN COLUSA, CALIFORNIA AND
WAS A LEADER OF THE LOCAL ROTARY CLUB.

THE FBI ARRESTED MR. HINOKI EARLY IN 1942, AND FOR
TWO MONTHS TOLD HIS FAMILY NOTHING ABOUT WHERE HE WAS OR WHY
HE WAS BEING HELD. FINALLY, THE FAMILY WAS TOLD HE HAD
BEEN SENT TO A DETENTION CAMP IN BISMARK, NORTH DAKOTA.
THOSE WHO KNEW HIM SAID MR. HINOKI NEVER REGAINED HIS LOST
WILL TO LIVE. HE DIED A FEW YEARS AFTER LEAVING CAMP.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE, AS THE COMMISSION FOUND, THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO DISTRUST THE AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY. BUT EVEN IF THERE HAD BEEN REASONS TO SUSPECT THE LOYALTY OF SOME INDIVIDUALS, WHICH I STOUTLY DENY, WHAT EXCUSE IS THAT TO LOCK UP 120,000 INNOCENT AND LOYAL AMERICANS WITHOUT A TRIAL, WITHOUT REGARD TO THE CONSTITUTION?

WE DID NOT LOCK UP GERMAN AMERICANS. WE DID NOT LOCK UP ITALIAN AMERICANS. NOR DID WE EVEN SERIOUSLY CONSIDER INTERNING AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY ON HAWAII, WHERE THE MILITARY DANGERS WERE THE GREATEST.

WHY IS IT THAT WE JUST HAPPENED TO LOCK UP AN ETHNIC GROUP SUBJECT TO DECADES OF BLATANT AND CRUEL DISCRIMINATION? BECAUSE THIS WAS THE GROUP THAT POPULAR OPINION -- AND INDEED THE CALIFORNIA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION -- DEMANDED TO HAVE LOCKED UP.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I COULD SPEAK ON THIS SUBJECT FOR QUITE AWHILE BUT MY TIME IS LIMITED. I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT SOME OF THE LOYAL AND BRAVE MEN I KNOW; MEN WHO LEFT THE INTERNMENT CAMPS, TO FIGHT BRAVELY TO DEFEND THIS NATION, AND WHO RESCUED THE LOST BATALLION OF THE 36TH TEXAS ARROWHEAD DIVISION.

I COULD TELL YOU OF THE OLD WOMEN TORN FROM THEIR HOMES OF DECADES AND FORCED TO LIVE IN COLD, SPARTAN BARRACKS ONLY TO OBLIGE THE PREJUDICE OF GREEDY NEIGHBORS.

AND I COULD TELL YOU OF COMMUNITIES SUCH AS MY HOME TOWN OF SAN JOSE, WHICH STOOD BY US AND WELCOMED US HOME. AND THE MANY TOWNS UNLIKE SAN JOSE WHICH, REEKING WITH PREJUDICE AND FEAR FOUGHT TO PREVENT FORMER INTERNEES FROM RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES.

BUT LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY FAMILY. MY FATHER WAS NOT A TRAITOR. HE SOLD INSURANCE FROM A SMALL OFFICE IN OUR HOME ON NORTH FIFTH STREET IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA. MY MOTHER WAS NOT A SECRET AGENT, SHE KEPT HOUSE AND RAISED HER CHILDREN TO BE WHAT SHE WAS, A LOYAL AMERICAN. WHO AMONGST US WAS THE SECURITY RISK? WAS IT MY SISTER ETSU, OR PERHAPS HELEN OR AYA? OR PERHAPS IT WAS MY BROTHER AL, A SOPHOMORE PRE-MED STUDENT AT SAN JOSE STATE.

OR MAYBE I WAS THE ONE, A BOY OF TEN-AND-A-HALF WHO THIS POWERFUL NATION FELT WAS SO DANGEROUS I NEEDED TO BE LOCKED UP WITHOUT A TRIAL, KEPT BEHIND BARBED WIRE AND GUARDED BY TROOPS IN HIGH GUARD TOWERS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS.

WHAT WAS IT I HAD DONE THAT MADE ME SO TERRIFYING TO THE GOVERNMENT? MURDERERS, ARSONISTS, EVEN ASSASINS AND SPIES GET TRIALS. BUT NOT YOUNG BOYS BORN AND RAISED IN SAN JOSE WHO HAPPEN TO HAVE ODD SOUNDING LAST NAMES. IS THAT WHAT THIS COUNTRY IS ABOUT?

CHISELED IN THE MARBLE OVER THE SUPREME COURT IT DOES NOT SAY EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW EXCEPT WHEN THINGS GET STICKY. IT SAYS EQUAL JUSTICE. AND THAT IS WHAT WE ASK FOR, MR. CHAIRMAN. NO MORE. NO LESS. WE HAVE WAITED FORTY-TWO YEARS. THE TIME HAS COME.

I ASK ON BEHALF OF THE 60,000 INTERNEES WHO HAVE DIED WITH THEIR HONOR CLOUDED. I ASK ON BEHALF OF THE 60,000 STILL ALIVE AND SEEKING JUSTICE. I ASK ON BEHALF OF ALL AMERICANS WHO BELIEVE THAT OUR CONSTITUTION REALLY DOES MEAN WHAT IT SAYS. THAT WE ARE CREATED EQUAL.

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE, WE ARE ALL SUPPOSED TO WEAR THESE PINS IDENTIFYING US AS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. SOME MEMBERS DON'T BOTHER TO WEAR THE PINS. I SUPPOSE THEY THINK THE PINS ARE INCONVENIENT OR SILLY. YET I ALWAYS WEAR MINE BECAUSE I CHERISH MY SEAT IN THIS HOUSE, AND I CHERISH THE IDEA THAT A FORMER INTERNEE CAN NOW SIT IN THIS HOUSE AND DISCUSS THIS LEGISLATION WITH HIS PEERS.

I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE, MR. CHAIRMAN, BY READING A BRIEF EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO FRIENDS IN SAN JOSE WRITTEN BY MY FATHER AND PUBLISHED IN THE SAN JOSE MERCURY HERALD. ALTHOUGH MY FATHER CAME HERE IN 1902, HIS ENGLISH WAS NOT PERFECT, AS YOU WILL HEAR, THE LETTER BEGINS:

"WE ALL FELT SO STRONG WHILE WE ARE STAYING AT THE STATION WITH YOU AND MANY OTHER FRIENDS BUT THE TRAIN STARTED AND WITH THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD BYE THEN BECAME SO LONESOME AND WHEN I LOOKED SANTA CLARA STREET FROM THE TRAIN, I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE THE LAST LOOK AT MY BELOVED HOME CITY.

MY HEART ALMOST BROKE OUT AND SUDDENLY HOT TEARS JUST POURING OUT.

WE WHOLE FAMILY CRIED OUT AND COULD NOT STOP UNTIL GET OUT OF OUR LOVED COUNTY."

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MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS BODY WILL
RECOGNIZE THE MERIT, IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS
CASE.

AND FOR THE OLD ONES WHO ARE DYING, I ASK THAT
WE ACT WITH FIRMNESS, AND WITH SPEED.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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