

TESTIMONY

Oregon Legislature ... Senate Rules Committee

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By ... George Y. Nakata

10715 SW Berkshire Street, Portland OR 97225

503/644-2805 "georgenakata@comcast.net"

I commend your Senate Rules Committee for considering Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 concerning Executive Order #9066, a National "Day of Remembrance" and acknowledge the injustices suffered by our Japanese people during those dark days of World War II.

- **I was a youngster, but in December, 1941, awoke as an American Citizen ... then days later went to sleep an Enemy Alien.**
- **The Executive Order brought additional Exclusion Orders: that ordered a Curfew singling out only Japanese, placed a Family Number onto us ... Evacuation.**
- **Our family lost everything ... all our possessions, my father lost three modest businesses, our family heirlooms , my sister lost her prized full set of Japanese Girl's Day dolls.**

We were removed to the Portland Assembly Center, former North Portland Livestock Yards:

- **This facility was fresh from being home to horse stalls, pig pens, chicken coops.**
- **I can never forget - upon entering the building - the smell of livestock urine, the pungent odor of manure underneath the wooden floors ..**
- **We were surrounded by armed guards, some with fixed bayonets.**
- **We were ordered to stuff "hay" into these canvas bags to serve as "our mattresses"**
- **Pigeons and thousands of flies buzzing all around us.**
- **We ate in two shifts, held "class" - using the central arena benches.**

- **Yes, 3,767 of us ... in this barbed-wired barn during the summer of 1942.**

We were then put aboard trains ... headed East – we knew not to where? We did not travel those days ... back in the 1930s, 1940s.

- **Ended up in a Sea of Sagebrush, in remote, desolate Minidoka, about 20 miles NE of the town of Twin Falls, ID.**
- **44 Blocks, tar-papered, non-insulated Barracks.**
- **We lined up for everything: to eat, to shower, to do our laundry ... even remember lining up for our two rolls of toilet paper once a week.**
- **Minidoka - one of 10 American Concentration Camps .. scattered over several Western States.**
- **120,000 Japanese were incarcerated ...**
- **Largest singling out and stripping of Freedoms from any ethnic group ... since Slavery.**
- **Our Block #34 had no water for two weeks; I had to bring pails to Block # 36 twice a day to get our water.**
- **Eight guard towers, armed guards, barbed wires encircled the entire Minidoka camp.**
- **We worked, built our schools, dental office, playground, hospital, even dug a huge hole for our “swimming pool”**
- **President FDR himself called these “American Concentration Camps” ... referred to us as “Inmates”.**

1943 the U. S. Government/U. S Army decided to accept volunteers from camps and Hawaii into an all Japanese segregated United States Army unit.

- **They formed the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.**
- **Fought in N. Africa, Italy, France, Germany**
- **They rescued the “Lost Battalion” suffering heavy casualties.**
- **They liberated the French town of Breyere ..**
- **They liberated the largest sub-camp of Dachau ..**
- **They ended their service as the most highly decorated unit in American military history ... 9,400 purple hearts, a number of Medals of Honors, etc.**

- **Japanese American soldiers giving their supreme sacrifice all while their parents were incarcerated behind barbed wires in concentration camps back in the USA.**

Allow me to share how my parents finally became USA Citizens, back in 1952.

- **My mother did not speak English – forced to take her exam in English. Passed.**
- **75 first generation elders ... Issei ... were sworn in as new American Citizens.**
- **No prouder group of Americans. Voted in every election thereafter.**

WHY? Why were Japanese singled out? Why Exec Order # 9066?

- **With no crime committed, no trial, no due process ...**
- **Single reason: Because of Who We Are ...**

Freedom is Fragile ... We cannot be Careless with our Constitution

- **It was a Dark Chapter in American history**
- **Not found in many school textbooks**

May I suggest ... as you deliberate and consider: Concurrent Resolution # 14...

As one voice amongst those 120,000 of us “stripped of our freedom” and spending four years behind barbed wires...

**The only right action, the right move is in full support
and a strong Yes ... so America and Oregonians will not ever
forget the injustices suffered by the Japanese people way
back when ..**

Thank you...

(Testimony ... George Y. Nakata)