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The Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December seventh, 1941. I was fourteen, in the tenth grade at North Hollywood high school. On the evening of that day, my father was picked up by two men from the FBI. We didn't understand and we understood.

We didn't understand because there were no charges stated. They didn't say, "We're arresting you for plotting to overthrow the United States government," or "for preaching sedition from the pulpit on Sunday." They just took him.

But we also understood. We understood because we had become used to the irrational behavior of racial prejudice in California. At fourteen, I was aware of a number of things. I knew my parents could not own land. I knew there were places we could not live. I knew that a college education would not get me a professional job. I knew that neither my parents nor my two brothers and sister could become naturalized citizens of America because they were born in Japan. I knew that we were a poor, marginal people, who had to work very hard to survive. We didn't expect much from life. So, a gestapo-like arrest fit the pattern.

I turned fifteen in March, 1942. The big ^{thing} ~~think~~ in my life was the prospect of competing in the San Fernando Valley regional high school gymnastics tournament. It was to occur after Easter vacation. But in the week preceding the vacation, our family went to downtown Los Angeles to register for evacuation. As I went on vacation, I told my coach that I probably would not be back. And I wasn't. We left, I think, on a Wednesday. We traveled by bus with a soldier at the

front. We were poor so we didn't have much to lose. We had good Christian friends who stored our furniture. What things we had to sell such as potted plants -- my brother was a gardener -- we mostly gave away. Of course, most people were not so fortunate. Many had no friends to store their things. The government, in its own twisted logic, offered to store things but would accept not liability for the things stored. "We'll take care of it, but it may not be there when you want it back." Many were told in writing that they could only take what they could carry. Again, not true. But once they arrived at the bus depot with only what they could carry, the damage had been done. Some received as little as twenty four hours' notice; most, I would say, 2 or 3 days' notice. Those who had businesses or farms or major property to dispose of lost a great deal. It was a cruel time.

Our resettlement area, camp Manzanar, came complete with⁸ barbed wire fence on the perimeter, guard towers and was located in a desolate part of eastern California. The area had limited vegetation and very high winds. We were subjected to fierce dust storms. When we arrived we were given a blanket, an empty mattress, and a bucket. We filled the mattress with straw. We had no windows for a while. That plus large cracks in the floor made things extremely dusty. Drinkable water was found only in barrels placed at intervals. Toilet facilities were outhouses which were very unpleasant to be in or around. And the food was terrible. Later, we were given clothing which turned out to be leftovers from World War I.

I don't think it's at all far-fetched to call these camps concentration camps. The government called them relocation centers. They didn't like terms like "internment" or "detention." We were "evacuated" to "relocation centers" and when we left, we weren't released, we were "relocating." George Orwell's Newspeak. But they certainly were ^{like} not the camps for the Jews. There were no mass killings or gas chambers. But a Volkswagen is every bit an automobile as a Cadillac. There were 10,000 of us on a one mile square patch of land. We lived a basic life and were guarded by a contingent of military police. When we worked we earned about five cents an hour, far below the minimum required by international law for prisoners of war. ^{One} ~~of~~ of the many ironies of the situation was that those of us who were American citizens had less political representation than aliens who were citizens of Japan. They could appeal to the Japanese government, through the Spanish embassy; we couldn't appeal to anyone. We were victims of our own government.

The camps were ~~to~~ ^{the} creation of the total government. President Roosevelt initiated the evacuation process with Executive Order 9066. The Congress of the United States passed enabling legislation. And the Supreme Court, on hearing a test case, ruled in its favor, citing the principle of a clear and present danger as sufficient reason to bypass normal Constitutional guarantees.

Well, were we a clear and present danger? Was there a military necessity to clear the Western Defense Command, the area along the West Coast, of all persons of Japanese ancestry? Well, there are two facts which contradict this. First, there was not a single case of sabotage

committed by persons of Japanese ancestry. That's pretty impressive. I tend to assume that given 120,000 people, there are bound to be a few far-out folks who will do or die for the father-or-mother-land. But we got caught by that twisted logic again. People in high places argued that the absence of sabotage was the all the more reason to expect sabotage in the future. We were saving it up, as it were, to fulfill our devious destiny. So eloquent and influential a person as Walter Lippman put forth this logic. How do you escape? Should we have committed acts of sabotage? To prove we were loyal?

But then, you might well surmise, no one knew anything about the Japanese community. The whole thing was a big surprise. How could ^{much} the government have known/about the Japanese community before the war? We were a tiny minority. We kept pretty much to ourselves. We were ^cinscrutable, had a foreign language, had strange customs and mysterious practices. But surprise! The government did, in fact, know about the loyalty of the Japanese communities. This is the second fact. In October of 1941, the State Department had a Curtis B. Munson conduct an investigation of the loyalty of persons of Japanese ancestry on both the West Coast and Hawaii. The Munson Report was circulated in November of 1941, before Pearl Harbor. The Report certified a remarkable, even extraordinary degree of loyalty. And the Report was kept secret until 1946.

The facts clearly contradict the argument that our presence on the West Coast constituted a clear and present danger and that therefore the Constitutional guarantees to due process and habeas corpus could be abridged.

The camps were finally closed in 1945. At about the same time, another Supreme Court test case was made, ^{this time} ~~this time~~ bearing on the question of unnecessary ~~detention~~ ^{detention}. This time the Court ruled against the camps.

And now we come to reparations.

Reparations is making amends for a wrong or injury, or compensation for crimes committed by a nation against individuals, according to Webster's. The model to use is the reparations paid by West Germany to Israel for the crimes committed by Germany against the Jews. I believe we should take such reparations as a sign of hope for the German people. The final solution administered by Hitler finally becomes a question, a problem for the German people.

Similarly, the gross violations of the Constitution by the United States government in forcibly removing and detaining 120,000 persons without any due process and solely by reason of race is a crime against these people. Reparations should be made to repair the injury suffered. As an American, not as a Japanese American, but as an American, I believe reparations would help restore my faith in America. My faith in ~~A~~ America is not unqualified. I believe we still have a long way to go in securing equal justice for all Americans.