

## TESTIMONY OF HANNAH TOMIKO HOLMES READ BY GERALD SATO

MR. SATO (reading): My name is Hannah Tomiko Holmes, formerly Takagi. I'm a member of the Board of Directors of Asian Rehabilitation Services, a non-profit corporation providing vocational training for all handicapped persons, with special facilities for Asian and Pacific Island Americans. I am now 53 years old, and I have been deaf since the age of two.

I am presenting this statement at the request of Mr. Paul Bannai, who expressed the lack of familiarity of the Commission members, and the public at large, with the problems faced by Japanese children suffering from deafness and other disabilities since World War II.

I want the Commission to know how Japanese children were excluded from every public institution for deaf, blind, and the handicapped on the West Coast of the United States.

I want the Commission to know how our education needs were neglected by the War Relocation Authority. I want all of you to know how some of these children never recovered from this disruption, how some were not able to resume their education, even after the war was over.

In his published memoirs, the former WRA administrator, Dillon Myer, states, "The welfare services provided for residents without adequate means of support as well as for orphans and the handicapped were similar to those furnished by the normal city."

From my personal experience and from documents which

I have secured through the Freedom of Information Act, I can show how services were not provided for the handicapped. Why were our needs not addressed by the WRA and other officials?

When the war started I was a 13-year-old student at the California School for the Deaf, a school for children ages six through twenty, sponsored by the State of California in Berkeley.

I was one of 11 Japanese students at that school who were forced to leave because of the war. A twelfth student, Ronald Hirano, was allowed to stay at the California School during the war, but I'm really not sure how that was arranged.

I arrived at Manzanar with my family in May 1942, and we began at once to try to find a way for me to return to the California School for the Deaf. However, by this time the school was not allowing anyone else to return.

There were many other children from other schools for handicapped children on the west coast. A list, prepared by WRA shows that there were 14 public and two private schools with the appropriate facilities; however, none allowed students to return during the war.

Although some education was offered to non-handicapped children at Manzanar, including classes through high school, children who suffered from handicaps had to do without. In my own case, I had no education or training at all.

A lady named E. Thomas was assigned to take care of deaf, blind, and other handicapped children; however, she didn't do anything. I remember once trying to ask her for more help, and she told me that she was just too busy.

I have obtained a report prepared by Miss Thomas about me during 1943, and you can see for yourself how inadequate was the curriculum. We were taught history and math at a level far below what we had already learned.

She never really taught us typing; I taught myself. Later the principal of the Manzanar Elementary School, E. B. Dykes, wrote a memo in which he has the nerve to say that my family did not appreciate the services of the school.

I felt terribly isolated from other children at Manzanar. I could not communicate with them. Somehow, I managed to do work at the camouflage net factory, and I tried to continue my education on my own by reading a lot.

In May 1943, my parents moved us to Tule Lake where an attempt was made to start a school for handicapped children. It was called the Helen Keller School. Unfortunately, the school proved to be unsuccessful and closed in only a few months.

Children suffering from deafness, blindness, mental retardation, and physical paralysis were lumped into one class under the supervision of a teacher from New York, who understood the needs of none of us. She did not even allow me to use sign language.

It was after we were all given the loyalty questionnaire that the school broke up, and some children were assigned to different locations. I never benefited from any of the Tule Lake school's attempts to teach me.

Now, during late 1942 and 1943 WRA officials made a half-hearted attempt to find facilities for myself and other deaf children outside of camp. An attempt was made to obtain classes for us at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

The Arkansas School said they would have a board meeting to decide whether we could be admitted, but nothing ever came of it. It's my understanding that the Arkansas School wouldn't admit black children, either.

Attempts were made to place us at the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, but these schools demanded non-resident tuition. WRA did not pay the tuition, and of course, as our families were not gainfully employed, we did not pay the tuition, either.

A similar excuse was offered by the Colorado School for the Deaf, stating that -- they stated that law prohibited me from enrolling in Colorado. I wonder if that was true.

It was not until September 1943, that my family was allowed to move to Chicago, where I enrolled in the Alexander Graham Bell School for the Deaf. Alas, the school did not use sign language, but used only the inferior oralism lip reading method of communication.

In early 1944 I finally found a place in the Illinois School for the Deaf, which was tuition-free, as my family were now considered Illinois residents, and that is where I studied until my graduation in the class of 1948.

Another California School for the Deaf student, Satoru Shiratsuki, graduated from that school earlier in 1946.

By continuing to do a lot of reading on my own in camp, I was ready to continue my education in Illinois when the opportunity finally arose. However, many other children were not strong enough to keep themselves ready, and some never returned to school at all.

Of the students from the California School for the Deaf, I know that Toru Gotori, Teruko Kubotsu and Yoshiko Kawahisa were never able to pick up the pieces and return to school again.

Choko Hayashi, a student from Seattle, never returned to school. I believe that there were many other children from the other schools who were forced to discontinue their education during camp and were never able to return to school, and that they have suffered the effects of not having an education all of their lives.

I would like the Commission to do what it can to find out what happened to these other deaf children.

I believe that monetary reparations should be paid to the evacuees. Also, reparations to persons like myself can take the form of means to make our own lives easier. The deaf Nisei today need access to more T.D.D.,

that is, telecommunication devices for the deaf. They need TV captioning facilities and hearing aids so that they can continue their education if they so choose.

Similar needs for the blind Nisei: They need Braille-writers and tape recorders and aids in their own mobility from one place to another in the city. Similar transportation needs for the crippled Nisei should be addressed.

Now, we, the handicapped Nisei, do not want to be financial burdens on our parents or our children. In providing redress in this way, you will be helping us to become independent and fully contributing members of American society at large.

Although the Helen Keller School at Tule Lake was unsuccessful, I would like to tell of one truly rewarding experience. In the early days at Tule Lake, when we still had some hopes for the school, I wrote to Helen Keller herself about it.

How surprised and delighted I was when I received a letter from Helen Keller in August 1943. As you can see from her letter, it made no difference that I was Japanese or that the United States was at war with Japan or that I was deaf while others were not deaf. The human qualities which all people share greatly outweigh our differences.

Helen Keller was our only friend, it sometimes seems. The experience of myself and other deaf children of Japanese ancestry during World War II was an example of what

happens when people forget the truth which Helen Keller states in her letter. I was Japanese and deaf, and I was denied an equal education and other rights because of my differences.

The people in WRA and the military forget that we were all human beings as well. If I could take just another minute, I'd like to read Miss Keller's letter on the record.

It's dated August 2, 1943, from Arcan Ridge, Westport, Connecticut. "Dear Hannah, How I love your beautiful, sweet letter and the love that made you write it. Truly it is wonderful that you and the children at the Tule Lake school should think so highly of me, a stranger, when you must miss your homes and many other things dear to you.

I shall never forget the tribute you have paid me, giving my name to the Tule Lake project. I am glad of the chance that the children there have to learn to read books, speak more clearly, and find sunshine among shadows.

Let them only remember this: Their courage in conquering obstacles will be a lamp throwing its bright rays far into other lives besides their own.

Often I think of the marvelous, artistic, poetry-filled Nippon I knew and loved. Always I am grateful to all the people there, blind and seeing, deaf and hearing, great and humble, who showed me every kindness and the most touching hospitality.

War, change and sorrow cannot take us from anything

really noble, gracious and helpful in our lives. You live in golden California, where I have spent many of my happiest days. I live here in New England, where the winters are cold and the skies grey, but how lovely the springs are when the birds return from the South, and the old stone walls, pastures and woods burst into rich bloom.

I wish I could show the children the garden and the rocks around which I work from half past five until breakfast weeding, raking up leaves and clipping grass. The fragrances from roses and evergreen make me feel that I truly see. The morning peace and the sweet quiet earth bring courage when I need it for tasks hard to accomplish.

With best wishes for the children in their studies, and victory over limitation, and with warmest thanks for writing to me, I am, affectionately, your friend, Helen Keller."

VICE CHAIRMAN LUNGREN: Thank you, Mrs. Holmes and Mr. Sato. Mr. Wiedman.

TESTIMONY OF RAYMOND W. WIEDMAN

MR. WIEDMAN: Honorable Chairperson, distinguished members of the Commission --

COMMISSIONER GOLDBERG: Talk into the mike.

MR. WIEDMAN: I am a citizen by birthright. I am a retired teacher and educational consultant. I reside at 1817 South Patton Avenue, San Pedro, California, zip 90732.

I am descended from the Amish of Bavaria who came at the invitation of William Penn, and from the Irish. A