

Jane Anne Yambe

Seattle, Washington 98133
Newsletter Editor
Washington Athletic Club

Unlike many of the persons whose testimony you will hear, I was never in camp. I am a Sansei, third-generation American of Japanese descent born 13 years after the implementation of Executive Order 9066. But that order, with its far reaching consequences has touched my life and the impression it has left with me is what I want to share with you.

First of all, from the time I was old enough to attend school, people have asked me what I was. Classmates asked: "Are you Chinese? Or, are you Japanese?" Strange kids I'd never see again asked. And the answer "American" never seemed to satisfy.

Nice women in the grocery store or on the bus asked, Then they'd tell me about a nice neighbor of theirs who was "Japanese" or a former neighbor or friend of a neighbor. A few told me of their travels to Japan and how much they enjoyed "my people."

My eating habits were also of interest. "Did I eat rice everyday, or ugh, seaweed? Did I use knives, forks and spoons at home, or did I use chopsticks?"

J. Yambe - add one

Occasionally I've been complimented on my good command of the English language.

A few of my peers looked my direction for answers when we'd study about Japan in Social Studies. At one time I almost felt guilty when we read about Pearl Harbor.

Even before I was aware of terms like "identity crisis" I could not help but conclude that there was indeed something different about me.

Sociologists will tell you that persons of my generation have in general assimilated quite well into American society, taking on the values and perceptions of our non-Japanese-American peers and I am inclined to agree with them.

But to many, the fact I look "Japanese" and therefore different, makes it difficult for them to look beyond the packaging, and in a way I don't blame them.

When my classmates and those nice women asked me what I was they just wanted to know what category and compartment to place me into, what label to apply as they ordered the complexities of this world in a manner they could easily cope with.

Once they got the answer they were looking for, they probed no further.

J. Yambe - add two

As I see it, this is very like the problem we face with Executive Order 9066. It seems we have been content to accept just the fact that it happened and some of us haven't even got that far.

Stepping out of my own personal frame of reference, it may be that given the myriad of information people are asked to cope with on a daily basis, that it is too much to expect that they will take the time to go beyond those simple explanations and labels they have picked up along the way and attempt to really address and elicit the sometimes complex realities that exist.

But what kind of consequences do we as a society pay for this lack of effort? Are they accepted voluntarily with full knowledge of their price? Or, are they foisted upon us by default?

My classmates, the nice women and I share an educational heritage which includes The Constitution, The Bill of Rights and the belief that possibly of all nations in the world this was one where individual liberty and freedom were most prized, revered and fought for.

Executive Order 9066 and the legacy it has left has shattered the reality of those documents. So long as they remain I cannot but think of them as ideals only - nice words on paper - applicable only when convenience dictates.

J. Yambe - add three

But those words, those ideas, are worth fighting for, as the lives of countless men and women throughout our history and the very presence of the individuals at these hearings can attest.

I come hear to ask you, to ask my country, to spare the extra time and address the wrongs committed under Executive Order 9066 - the suspension of Constitutional rights without due process and the incarceration of citizens by reason of their race and ethnic background.

I believe direct monetary compensation to those whose rights were violated would acknowledge the wrongs and provide a meaningful symbol for both those of us alive today and the generations to come.

But it reality should show that The Constitution and The Bill of Rights as they are written are unworkable, unenforceable to the letter, then let some consideration be given to rewriting them or modifying them with the appropriate clauses.

A disclaimer to the effect that "these rights are guaranteed only in times of peace when military necessity does not conflict" would negate both the need for the hearings you are holding as well as any legal justification I have for demanding your attention.

J. Yambe - add four

It has been a number of years since I left school and I'm afraid that many of my classmates and the nice women I met so long ago still compartmentalize me in the back of their minds as a "Japanese."

If push ever comes to shove, it would be too much to ask that they cast away years of mistaken assumptions and beliefs.

Learning, and people and therefore nations are capable, occurs only by first coming to reality - ours and yours. Injustices, and I believe Executive Order 9066 to be an injustice, can only be rectified by the remembering, the examination, the understanding and then the vigilance and full commitment to ensure that it never occurs again.

Forty years ago America found the expediency of "national defense" too pressing to evaluate many of the beliefs and assumptions concerning my parents and grandparents. And forty years ago, Executive Order 9066 would have included me.

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