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Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community

Testimony before the Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on H.R. 5817
The Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2006
September 28, 2006

Chairman Pombo, members of the House Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity and honor to speak in support of H.R. 5817, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2006.

My name is Fumiko Hayashida. I am 95 years old and the oldest living survivor of the first group of Japanese Americans taken to internment camps in World War II.

Before I begin, I wish to thank Congressman Jay Inslee for his original bill that created the National Parks Service study for the Bainbridge Island Japanese American memorial, and again I thank him and Congressman Mike Simpson for co-sponsoring H.R. 5817.

This is only my second visit to Washington DC. The first and last time was in 1993, when I was invited to attend the unveiling of a historic photograph of me and my daughter Natalie at Smithsonian Museum's exhibit "A More Perfect Union" that chronicled the World War II internment of Japanese Americans.

My American story is not unlike the story of millions of other Americans. In the 1890's, my parents Tomokichi and Tomoye Nishinaka came from Japan to America. They first set foot on American soil in California, and soon after they settled on Bainbridge Island in the heart of Puget Sound in Washington state. They shared the dream of everyone who comes to America: the hope of a new life full of opportunities and possibilities.

I was born on January 21, 1911, the middle child of six children. Our family grew strawberries, and like most farming families, the money from our annual harvest was our only income for the entire year. It was hard and risky work.

I was 28 years old when I married Suburo Hayashida in 1938. Like my parents, we started growing our own strawberries and began to create our own family. My first son Neal was born in 1940, my daughter Natalie was born in 1941, and later that year I became pregnant with my third child Leonard. Our future looked bright and my parents' dream of new opportunities and possibilities was beginning to come true.

My whole world changed on December 7, 1941.

Like all Americans, I was shocked when I heard the news that Japan had attacked the United States of America at Pearl Harbor. I remember that day very well. It was a quiet Sunday morning. Our family was gathered at home reading the Sunday paper, when my brother-in-law ran into our house and said, "Did you hear, the war has started. Japan has attacked America."

My first reaction was of disbelief and anger. I wondered to myself: What is wrong with Japan? I was so mad at Japan. I thought that Japan must know that they can't win a war against America. I did not know much about Japan, but I knew that we were a much stronger country.

My disgust soon changed to fear, for I realized that I now had the face of the enemy. I was very scared of what people might want to do to us. Rumors began to fly. Will we be arrested? Will angry people come and vandalize our homes, ruin our farms, or do us bodily harm?

My fears started to come true. The government started coming to our homes, looking through our possessions, confiscating some items and asking lots of questions. Because some families wanted to show to the government people that they were patriotic Americans, they sadly destroyed many cherished and valuable family heirlooms and possessions – some passed down from several generations – that looked too "Japanese."

Some of the elder men and leaders of our community, including two of my brothers-in-law, were taken away. There were never any charges, trial or legal process of any kind, they were just taken away. Since they were our first generation, they

were not citizens and for that reason my husband and I always believed that we and our children would always be safe. After all, we were all born here. We are citizens of the United States of America.

I was wrong. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which set in motion the plans to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry from the west coast of the United States. It became official on March 23, 1942, when US Army soldiers came to Bainbridge Island and started nailing Civilian Exclusion Order No.1 posters on walls and poles throughout the island.

The government poster said we only had six days to get our lives and property taken care of before we too were to be taken away. It was a confusing and scary time. Our strawberry crop had to be tended to and our property looked after, so we gave power of attorney of our entire lives to our Filipino employees.

Nobody knew where we were going, how long we would be gone or if we could ever come back. While our destination and future was uncertain, I was certain that it would not be for long, because I believed America would defeat Japan in a matter of weeks, or a few months at most.

On the morning of March 30, 1942, the Army trucks rounded us up with soldiers armed with rifles and bayonets. We could only take what we could carry or wear, so we layered up our clothes and had to make hard choices on what items we could fit into a single suitcase. My daughter Natalie was only 13 months old, so I also had to carry her as well.

When we arrived at the Eagledale Ferry Dock at the end of Taylor Road, a Seattle newspaper took a picture of me holding my purse, my little Natalie and her stuffed toy animal. I am humbled that this photograph has been used in numerous historical exhibits, including the Smithsonian Museum's "A More Perfect Union" and as the image for the Bainbridge Island "Nidoto Nai Yoni – Let it not happen again" memorial.

It was a very sad day. When all 227 Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans – more than two-thirds of us American citizens – walked down the Eagledale Ferry Dock and onto the old ferry, we became the first of some 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent to be forcibly removed and exiled from western Washington, western Oregon, all of California and part of Arizona. We arrived in Seattle, boarded an old train and rode two days with the blinds shut to the hot California desert. It was a horrible trip. I had two young children and in 1942 there was no such thing as disposable diapers.

On April 1, 1942, we finally arrived at Manzanar in Owens Valley, California. Most of the barracks were still being constructed. I was shocked at our living conditions. It went against our cultural traditions of modesty and privacy. Our entire family was crammed into one small space, with thin walls that didn't reach the ceiling. You could hear every word, family discussion and quarrel. We ate in large mess halls which broke our tradition of private family meals. We all shared one common building with latrines and showers that had no dividing walls. It was so humiliating that some people would wait until late at night to use the latrines and surround themselves with cardboard boxes. The walls were just covered by tar paper, and dust came up everywhere through the cracks between the boards.

Even under these conditions, I gave birth to the first Bainbridge Island baby born in Manzanar, my son Leonard. As an adult, he served in the US Army in Vietnam and was wounded by friendly fire. He came back a changed man and never fully recovered from his war experience. He died this past February.

About a year later, along with most of the Bainbridge Islanders at Manzanar, we voluntarily transferred to the Minidoka internment camp in southern Idaho to be closer to friends and family from the Seattle area. My sister was there and she was raising her five children by herself. Her husband was rounded up by the government shortly after Pearl Harbor and taken to a special detention camp in Texas, because he was the editor of the North American Post Japanese language newspaper in Seattle. Our family spent the rest of the war in Minidoka. The camp conditions were the same as in Manzanar, but it was much colder in Idaho than California.

When the war finally ended and we were freed from Minidoka, no one wanted to talk about our painful years in internment camps. We buried our pain, suffering and shame, choosing to try to forget the past, persevere and for the sake of the children move forward with our lives.

We returned to Bainbridge Island to find that we lost everything. Our farm and strawberries were not well maintained and we had to start from scratch. We tried to make a go of it, but having three young and growing children, we had to find a more stable income. After a year my husband got a job at Boeing in Seattle, but the long ferry and bus commute from Bainbridge Island became taxing. We decided to leave Bainbridge Island and buy a home in Seattle, where I have lived to this very day.

The years we experienced in Minidoka and Manzanar changed not only our lives, but the years of internment during World War II changed the lives of all 120,000 Japanese Americans who were forcibly exiled by the United States government.

I am grateful that Presidents Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton have apologized for this shameful period in American history, and that the US Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and the modest reparations that followed. These are powerful statements from our nation of healing and honor.

As the very first place where the World War II internment story literally began, the passage of H.R. 5817, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2006 would be another powerful statement by the United States of America that we must learn and never forget the lessons from this unfortunate chapter in American history.

Only a small fraction of the Japanese Americans who experienced the internment are still alive. My husband died in 1983. We never celebrated our golden anniversary. Only my youngest sister and two of my children are alive today from my immediate family.

I am an old woman in the 95 th year of my life. I hope to live long enough to see the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial earn the honor and recognition from our federal government and become a unit of the National Parks Service. I urge you to please urgently pass this measure so that all Americans can learn from and take to heart the spirit of the memorial's name: "Nidoto Nai Yoni – Let it not happen again."

APPENDIX

Bainbridge Island WWII Nikkei Internment and Exclusion Memorial Committee

Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap Interfaith Council v Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community

P.O. Box 10355 Bainbridge Island Washington 98110 (206) 855-9038

Nidoto Nai Yoni "Let it not happen again" Memorial fact sheets

Organization description

In 1998, the Bainbridge Island World War II Nikkei Internment and Exclusion Memorial Committee (Memorial Committee) was formed as a partnership of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community (BIJAC) and the Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap Interfaith Council (Interfaith Council). The Memorial Committee functions as a subcommittee under BIJAC's non-profit 501(c)(3) status. The title ***Nidoto Nai Yoni*** translates to "Let it not happen again."

Created in 1952, BIJAC is dedicated to promoting the history, culture and contributions of the Japanese American community. The Interfaith Council represents 19 churches and congregations of different faiths, comprising more than 1,000 members, with the goal of working together to promote goodwill and common ground of the greater community and beyond.

Historical background

On the morning of March 30, 1942, armed soldiers escorted 227 Bainbridge Island men, women and children – two-thirds of them United States citizens – to the Eagledale ferry landing. They boarded a ferry and arrived in Seattle, where they were taken on a three-day train ride, with the window blinds shut and no announcement about where they were going. The destination: Manzanar, a remote internment camp in California's Mojave Desert. Most spent about one year living there, before being transferred to the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho.

They were exiled by Presidential Executive Order 9066 and Civilian Exclusion Order No. 1, because they were *Nikkei* – people of Japanese ancestry. With only six days notice, they were forced to hastily sell, store, or make arrangements for all of their possessions, businesses and property. They were allowed to take only one suitcase and what they could carry or wear. They were the first of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans to be forcibly removed from their homes and experience three years of unconstitutional internment.

Vision and message of the memorial

The site of the memorial will be at the historical location of Taylor Road and the former Eagledale ferry landing. The vision is for a memorial area that is evocative and contemplative with the power to instruct future generations about the injustices of the past and the fragility of assumed rights. Perhaps most importantly, the memorial will commemorate and honor the strength and perseverance of the people involved and celebrates the capacity of human beings to heal, forgive and care for one another.

Project overview

Designed by nationally-recognized architect Johnpaul Jones of the Seattle firm Jones & Jones – designer of several award-winning major projects including the new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. – the centerpiece of the memorial design is a long walkway towards Eagle Harbor, recreating the walk taken by those islanders who were forced to leave their homes in 1942. Visitors will be literally walking on the same path in “the footsteps of history.”

The design elements include a 272 foot-long “story wall” that will contain the names of all 272 Japanese American residents who lived on the island in 1942. In chronological fashion the wall will tell their American story. At the end of the story wall near the harbor’s edge, a 150 foot pier – one foot for each of the 150 people who returned to Bainbridge Island – will rise from the same spot of the former Eagledale ferry dock, where visitors can experience a literal and symbolic departure from the land and freedom. Future phases include a 5,000 square-foot interpretive/research center, a meeting room, a contemplative seating area, sculptures and other historical designated areas.

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Project costs, construction and fundraising

The total projected cost for the memorial project is \$5 million

\$1 million for five acres of land in Pritchard Park – \$4 million for project development

\$2.44 million has been raised to date:

\$1 million: Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development grant for land acquisition

\$1 million: Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development grants for development

\$163,000: City of Bainbridge Island

\$140,000: Private cash and foundation donations

\$140,000: Donations of services, materials and labor

Development of the memorial is a joint project of the Bainbridge Island WWII Nikkei Internment and Exclusion Memorial Committee and the City of Bainbridge Island, who is responsible for applying for and approving building permits, advertising and awarding of construction bids, and oversight and implementation of actual construction.

Construction phases

(Only Phase 1 and 2 are currently funded)

Phase 1 - \$500,000

New access road; bus and passenger drop-off loop; 24 parking spaces; pathways; wooden boardwalk over wetlands; creation of new wetland; grading of bed for future story wall, a traditional wood-framed 20x20 foot pavilion and entry and exit gates. The pavilion and gates have been designed and will be constructed by the non-profit Timber Framers Guild in September, 2006.

Status: Phase 1 is fully funded; construction began in April, 2006 and will be completed in fall 2006.

Phase 2 - \$500,000 (estimated)

A 272-foot long "Story Wall" of stone and wood containing interpretive and historic materials.

Status: Phase 2 is fully funded. The building permits for the story wall are projected to be approved by fall 2006, bids to be advertised and awarded spring 2007, and construction projected to begin fall 2007.

Phase 3 - \$2.75 million (estimated)

A small cluster of buildings including a 5,000 sq. ft. interpretive center, meeting room and restrooms.

Status: Unfunded. Conceptual and final designs of the interpretive center cluster are being developed.

Phase 4 - \$250,000 (estimated)

A 150-foot departure pier at the end of the story wall walk.

Status: Unfunded. Design is being finalized and will eventually be sent to the US Army Corps of Engineers for approval.

Promising funding sources

The site is under consideration by the U.S. Congress to become a satellite unit of the National Parks System, which could provide up to \$400,000 for interpretive materials as well as funding for full-time staffing for site interpretation and maintenance support. The Memorial Committee was invited and has applied for a grant from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation that is seeking \$1 million, or 20% of the total cost of the project.

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Recent accomplishments

US Reps. Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Mike Simpson (D-Idaho) have introduced H.R. 5817, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2006 that would make the memorial site a satellite unit of the Minidoka Internment National Monument, as recommended by the Department of the Interior under Public Law 107-36, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Study Act of 2002.

The Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Study Act of 2002, H.R. 3747, was approved unanimously by the U. S. Congress and was signed into law by President Bush on December 19, 2002. During the public comment period of the study, nearly 99% of the 1,300 comments received were in favor of the Bainbridge Island site's historical legacy to become a satellite unit of the National Parks Service.

American Forests has named a 100 year-old Western Red Cedar tree at the site of the former Eagledale Ferry dock to the National Register of Historic Trees as a living witness to the events and lives that have shaped our nation. It is only the second tree on the West Coast to receive the honor.

The memorial has received broad, unanimous support from the Washington State Legislature, Suquamish Tribe, Japanese American Citizens League, American Legion Colin Hyde Post #172, Trust for Public Lands, the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners, Washington State Human Rights Commission, Bainbridge Island City Council, Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Parks District Board, Bainbridge Island School District Board, Bainbridge Island Land Trust, Bainbridge Island Historical Society, Bainbridge Island Rotary Club and many other organizations and numerous individuals.

On March 30, 2002, the 60 th anniversary of this date in American history, a four-foot tall granite marker was dedicated

and unveiled at the site where the memorial will be constructed. A dozen remaining survivors, Washington Gov. Locke, US Rep Jay Inslee (D-WA), state and local elected officials and more than 600 community members and supporters attended. Part of the inscription reads “May the spirit of this memorial inspire each of us to safeguard constitutional rights for all. **Nidoto Nai Yoni.** “Let it not happen again.”

Historical significance of the project

The historic significance of the memorial site is beyond question. History always recognizes “first places” and the mere mention of them tells the story – such as Kitty Hawk or Plymouth Rock. Not only were the Bainbridge Island Nikkei the first to be forcibly removed, they were also the first group to occupy the Manzanar internment camp in California on April 1, 1942.

About eight months later, the majority of the Bainbridge Islanders transferred to the Minidoka internment camp in Idaho to be with relatives and friends from the Puget Sound area. Being among the last to arrive at Minidoka, they were assigned to live in the last group of barracks. When the war ended, this also meant that they were also among the last to leave.

Thus, the Bainbridge Island Nikkei story literally completes a full circle on the history of the WWII internment of Japanese Americans by being the first to be forcibly removed and among the last to gain freedom and return to their homes.

Interestingly, of the ten major internment camps, only Manzanar and Minidoka have been recognized as national memorials or monuments. With the Bainbridge Island site under consideration by the federal government as a unit of the National Parks Service, it would become the third nationally-recognized internment historic site and become the literal and symbolic beginning and ending to the Japanese American internment story.