

Chuck Yamamoto

Your job is to read and talk about this role that you've been assigned, which is described on this sheet. Decide as a group whether you will read the role sheet out loud together or quietly to yourself as individuals. When you are all finished reading, discuss whether you think (staying in your role) that the Japanese Latin American abduction, internment, and displacement were just or unjust. Come up with specific reasons for why or why not. Then discuss whether the JLAs should receive redress. ("Redress" means to set something right or to repair something. "Reparations" means the repairing or restoring of something.) Why or why not? What specific redress is most appropriate? This can be a combination of options. The options are as follows:

1. *No redress/reparations at all*
2. *U.S. government apology only*
3. *Commitment to public education campaign*
4. *Monetary reparations*

Be ready to say why you chose specific options if your group chose to give redress.

You are 90 years old. You were born in a village in northern Japan in 1909. You grew up doing a lot of farmwork to help support your family. As a teenager, you started to hear success stories about Japanese immigrants in Peru, and in 1930 when you were 21 you got on a ship to migrate there. You started a successful new life—first as an elementary school teacher, later running a small shop. You learned Spanish. You married a Peruvian woman and began a family. Peru became what you called your "second motherland."

In 1941, racism against Japanese people increased in Peru when the United States declared war against Japan. You heard that many people saw Japanese Peruvians as "enemy

aliens." The U.S. government even circulated a blacklist, called the "United States' Proclaimed List of Blocked Nationals" with names of people with Japanese backgrounds that the United States thought were dangerous. These people were ordered to be arrested and deported to the U.S. internment camps. Your name was on it. You had no idea why.

There was no way you were going to let anyone deport you. Your wife, a Peruvian citizen, was expecting your third child. With her help, you hid every time the police came to your house. But in January of 1944, five armed detectives came while your family sat down for dinner and forced you to leave with them. The detectives took you to a jail cell in Lima, which smelled of urine. No one told you why you had been arrested.

U.S. soldiers carrying rifles put you onto a ship. It was then that you finally understood that you were a prisoner of war. You were one of 1,800 Japanese Peruvians taken from Peru between 1942 and 1944.

You were taken to a detention center in Panama controlled by the U.S. military, and your passport was confiscated. You spent the next three months in Panama doing unpaid labor. While in Panama, the U.S. government said that you could reunite with your family only if they joined you in the detention camp.

In July of 1944, you were taken to an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas, with more than 3,000 people. In addition to Japanese Latin Americans, there were also people of German and Italian descent who had also been deported from Latin American countries. (Germany and Italy were also enemies of the United States during World War II.) However, most were Japanese Americans. The American soldiers called it a "camp," but nothing about the place felt like a vacation. You were surrounded by barbed wire

fences and armed guards and no way out. Still, no one told you why you were there. Your only joy was that three months after entering this prison, your wife and children arrived, eager to be with you even if it meant they would stay in this prison for who knows how long.

In the summer of 1945, the war ended, but you and many JLAs were not allowed to leave the internment camp until it closed in 1947. The U.S. government considered you an “illegal alien” because you had no immigration visa or passport, though they had taken away your passport when they seized you as a prisoner of war. Until the U.S. government could decide what to do with your deportation orders, you and your family were transferred to a food production plant in New Jersey to work. You hoped to one day get a green

card and become a legal permanent U.S. resident. You and the 346 other Japanese Latin Americans who stayed in the U.S. after the war finally won the right to stay in 1952. In 1960, you became a U.S. citizen.

You feel that you have three homelands now. At the same time, you believe that if there had been no war, you would have stayed in Peru forever and become a citizen there. You loved Peru dearly. In 1988, Japanese American internees received an apology from the U.S. government and \$20,000 to compensate them for their years of imprisonment. But you didn’t get anything because you were not a Japanese American during World War II but a Japanese Peruvian. You want some justice. But what kind of justice and from whom? Mostly, you don’t want this to happen to anyone ever again.