

**MOM'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH – SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
COMMENCEMENT – June 12, 2011**

Dear Father Sundborg, President of Seattle University and his entire staff, including:

Dr. Isiah Crawford, Provost of Seattle University,

Members of the Board of Trustees,

Members of the Class of Two Thousand and Eleven, their family and honored guests,

and to **all others within Seattle University**, involved in the effort to award these honorary degrees to us, I wish to express my deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks on behalf of **all** the Japanese American students receiving honorary degrees today.

I'd like to give **special thanks** to Lori Bannai, Associate Director of the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality, and her co-chair, Dale Watanabe of the International Student Center. Lori and Dale spearheaded this effort, along with leadership from Mark Niles, Dean of the Law school, and support from everyone at the School of Law.

To everyone here in attendance today, thank you for being witness to this most humbling honor.

It has been almost 70 years since I last attended Seattle University, but the memories of that dark time, remain clear to this day.

For the students here, imagine if you will...being your current age and having a **curfew** imposed upon you, limiting where and when you could be outdoors.

Then, being ordered to pack your belongings into one suitcase and one duffle bag, all in one week. And finally, saying goodbye as you leave your school, your home, your friends, and life as you know it, as you board a train, not knowing **where** the final destination is, or **what** awaits you at the end of the tracks.

Now imagine being asked to do all of this, by your own country, as an American Citizen.

With courage and obedience, we followed our orders to prove our loyalty as law abiding American citizens, to the United States.

It wasn't until the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, that the United States of America finally issued an official apology to the internees. That apology helped to heal our hearts.

And now, with Seattle University conferring honorary degrees to us today, it helps to bring our lives full-circle...back to that time so long ago, when we were students just like you, looking forward to a quality education and a bright future.

Congratulations to all of the graduating students here today...you are all the future of America. You've all studied many different subjects in books, listened to hours of lectures, and have taken numerous classes to achieve your degrees.

But what can't be learned from books or lectures, are the more important **human qualities** of grace, kindness, and compassion towards our fellow human beings. My hope is that you all go forth, embodying these human qualities, to ensure that this **American** story is not forgotten.

Again, to all graduating students, families, and guests in attendance, thank you for bearing witness to this most humbling honor. And to everyone at Seattle University, on behalf of the Japanese-American students receiving our honorary degrees today, **thank you.**