



PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL · Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928

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Board Member MESSAGE

By Amanda Shannahan

As Japanese Americans, reparations are a familiar concept. After my own grandmother passed away, I inherited the framed letter of apology acknowledging the injustices done to her and 120,000 others of Japanese ancestry during WWII. In addition to the letter, she also received \$20,000 as a survivor of the Tule Lake concentration camp. While in no way did this money make up for the trauma and loss of dignity she experienced, it was still a meaningful step towards healing for her, our family, and our community. For as long as I can remember and up until she sold her home, that framed letter hung in her dining room on display for all to see.

Black Americans, however, still have not received any form of reparations to address 250 years of slavery and persisting systemic racism. It is past due for the discourse around reparations for descendants of Africans who were enslaved to gain traction among lawmakers and the public, and for meaningful action to be taken to address the generations of oppression experienced by Black people in the United States. In order for our country to begin to heal, we must acknowledge these injustices and compensate Black communities for stolen labor and lives.

The legacy of slavery continues to impact

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Tadaima - Virtual Pilgrimage

June 13 - August 16

Hiroshima/Nagasaki - Virtual Program

August 6th

6 p.m.

Register at www.oregonpsr.org

JACL National Virtual Board Meeting

August 15

Nikkei Community Picnic

August 16

Canceled.

Portland JACL Virtual Board Meeting

August 20

6:30 p.m.

Labor Day

September 7

Nikkei Virtual Town Hall on Black Lives Matter

TBD September

The Annual Jerry Inouye Golf Tournament

Sponsored by Japanese Ancestral Society

Canceled.

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Black communities today. The Covid-19 Pandemic, for example, has further shed light on health disparities impacting Black Americans (Sandoiu, 2020). We also need to be talking about racial disparities in access to education, employment, and housing, just to name a few. In Oregon, just 68% of Black students graduated on time in 2017-18 compared to 80% of white students (Oregon Department of Education, 2019). These inequities are based in historical injustices, including slavery and Jim Crow segregation, and are sustained through present day policies and practices that are inherently biased.

One possible path to reparations for Black Americans is through legislation. Recently, the JACL reaffirmed our commitment to supporting the passage of H.R. 40, which would create a commission to study the impacts of slavery and make recommendations to Congress for reparations. Many are likely familiar with the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which was a similar body established in 1980 by Congress through which Japanese Americans achieved redress and reparations (Densho Encyclopedia).

H.R. 40 was first proposed in 1989 by the late Congressman John Conyers, Jr. Conyers continued to propose the bill each year until his resignation in 2017 (Robinson, 2020). The bill was reintroduced in 2019 by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee.

As Bergman, et al. (2020) point out in their recent Op-ed titled "The Time for Reparations is Now", local governments have also had success moving reparations initiatives. For example, the city of Evanston, Illinois passed legislation in 2019 establishing a reparations fund for African Americans with tax revenue from cannabis sales. The California Assembly

also recently approved a bill that would create a task force studying the impacts of slavery and identifying what reparations could look like for African Americans in California. These efforts may provide useful blueprints for achieving reparations on a local level.

Over the past weeks I have been moved by the growing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement and the thousands of people showing up in the streets, in webinars, and in conversation addressing anti-Black racism. As a nation, though, we cannot truly begin to heal until we have reckoned with our past and provided compensation for people impacted by historical injustices. Now is the time to support and elevate the call for reparations for Black Americans and for our country to continue down the path towards reconciliation.

You can sign up for JACL Updates on H.R. 40 at: <https://jacl.salsalabs.org/hr40signup/index.html>

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Bill to Set Up Reparations Task Force". June 17, 2020. <https://www.blackvoicenews.com/2020/06/17/california-assembly-passes-bill-to-set-up-reparations-task-force/> Accessed July 6 2020.

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Helping the Community

Oregon State alumni **Annie Migaki ('76)** has made over **260 masks** during the stay-at-home order to send to friends and loved ones.

When we asked her how it got started, this was her response:

"This project started around mid-March when Iko No Kai (A senior lunch program located in SE Portland) was shut down due to COVID-19. Gerry Migaki ('75) & I have volunteered in the kitchen at this program since we both retired.

In order to notify all the patrons who normally come in, I worked with the manager of the program to put together phone and email list to try and contact everyone to let them know that it has suddenly shut down so they won't show up expecting lunch.

My niece, Kristen Dozono, who is a realtor but also volunteers as a server on Tuesdays knew quite a few of the community and was concerned about their welfare as well as the rest of the Japanese community.

She contacted me for the list and started calling all the patrons, as well as others in the Japanese community to ask them how they are doing and if they needed a mask, which

was in short supply all over the city. Kristen spearheaded this project, enlisted volunteers to make and deliver masks to people who needed them. They were all grateful for the concern that she had cared to contact them.

Annie has mailed masks to Sequim WA, La Grande OR, Santa Rosa CA, Penn Valley CA, Lexington KY, Seattle WA, San Francisco CA, Eugene OR, Glen New Hampshire, New York City NY and Milbridge ME besides delivering to the Portland/Vancouver area. She said that this has been a great time to brush up on her sewing skills!

Great work Annie!

(this article appeared in the OSU alumni newsletter)



Marleen Wallingford wearing one of Annie's creations.

Newsletter Update

By Chris Lee

Last month we ran a survey to gather your input and to help us understand the needs of our members as it relates to the monthly newsletter. I want to thank everybody that participated digitally and by mail for taking the time to respond. I also want to summarize some of the results as part of this month's update.

It should come as no surprise that everybody that sent a response agrees it is important for Portland JACL to continue having a regular newsletter. Part of our mission is to celebrate Japanese American culture and promote community events. Our newsletter is usually full of pictures, event write-ups, important announcements, a monthly calendar, the Iko no Kai menu, orders forms and other communications. Even during COVID we have still had to cut things some months or gone over our page count. It turns out that even during a global pandemic there is a lot going on in the JA community here in Portland!

As for the other responses, there were not too many surprises for me or the board. This is encouraging since it means that we are generally on the right path. Having the

survey data doesn't make our job any easier, but it is a reassuring.

For those that are curious about the other questions. There is some interest in a quarterly paper newsletter, but also some concerns on timeliness, which are shared by many. The email newsletter has been very well received; however, there are some members that would be left out if they do not have a computer or lack access to internet. This has been our biggest concern from the beginning and the reason why our board has been focused on this challenge for so long.

One possible option which received a generally favorable response is for people to pay to receive a paper copy of the newsletter similar to how The Pacific Citizen is distributed. It would take a bit more coordination on our end but may be necessary to help balance our annual budget. Ultimately, for our next step we have created a newsletter committee which will look a bit closer at the survey results and recommend a plan before the end of the year.

Thanks to all that took the survey last month!



L to R: Roger Iwasaki, Charlotte Lehan, Rich Iwasaki, Mike Irinaga discuss grave marker locations at the Japanese Cemetery on July 10, 2020.



L to R: Charlotte Lehan, Rich Iwasaki, Mike Irinaga and Sharon Takahashi discussed the areas that needed grave identification at the Japanese Cemetery at Rose City Cemetery on July 10, 2020.



Charlotte Lehan, a former Mayor of Wilsonville recently did some grave dowsing at Japanese Cemetery to identify unmarked graves.

Essays from the Scholarship Winners

Ayu Kashiwa

Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship Winner

Mountainside High School, Sophia University

Perhaps the most important sponsoring organization that has impacted me is Shokookai. For the past twenty years, my father has worked for companies that were the members of Shokookai. As a result, I have attended many Shokookai events and went to Portland Japanese School. Every Saturday for the last 13 years I have attended Portland Japanese School in Hazelbrook Middle School in Tualatin, Oregon. I feel very fortunate that I have had this opportunity because of Shokookai, to continue learning Japanese language, math, and cultural events.

As I mentioned before, Shokookai's support of Portland Japanese School has been invaluable to me. I have been able to learn and maintain Japanese speaking, writing, and reading. Without Shokookai's support, Portland Japanese School may not have existed. And I would have lost touch with many aspects of the Japanese language. I feel confident that I can communicate fluently in all parts required for communicating in Japanese. This has allowed me to have another skill that I can use in the future, either in the job market or on a personal level with my relatives who still reside in Japan. I'm lucky that Shokookai has invested in maintaining this school over the years, as well as keeping the high caliber of the academic standing of Portland Japanese School. Plus, it gives me an opportunity to be around other Japanese students who are either here permanently or part-time. I'm able to learn from their experiences as well.

Shokookai has also allowed me to participate in a variety of community

affairs. These events are a chance for the Japanese community to come together and participate in sports, or other social events. I have joined many over the years and find that it is a good chance to socialize with other Japanese and learn more about my culture. Also, I not only get to learn more about my culture, but I can also give back to my community through volunteer activities like cleaning up the beaches or planting a variety of greenery. Shokookai also collaborates with other groups such as the Japanese Ancestral Society. In this instance, I cleaned and cared for the head stones of both Japanese and Japanese Americans who died in Oregon. Through this activity, I learned more about the history of Japanese immigrants in Oregon. It was interesting to make a connection that did not seem relevant at the time, but now I find it more interesting.

I think all of the sponsoring groups are important for the Japanese community as well as the American community. Many of these organizations sponsor events that invite Americans to join in. For example, the annual Mochizuki celebration teaches Americans about mochi making, origami, Shuji, and other Japanese customs. Furthermore, the Japanese Women's Society includes both American and Japanese women who want to understand each other better. America is made up of people from all races and backgrounds. It is important to keep the history of Japanese in Oregon alive, as well as cultural events. They both are important in creating this diverse society we live in.

Akane Shiota

Portland Shokookai Scholarship Winner

Liberty High School, Oregon State University

Even though I've always thought of myself as an introverted person, I've learned that I still enjoy being an active part of my community. Ever since I was little, I've been attending services at my Buddhist Temple which got me in contact with people from an early age. I was able to see a wider community than just myself and my immediate family and build relations with others. Despite the roots of this realization existing for many years, it was only when I entered high school, joined my robotics team, and began working in community outreach that I was finally able to understand that my choices were based on my upbringing. On another level, being a part of the Oregon Buddhist Temple has allowed me to connect to my past, to ground myself with what I know to be my history and past, before pushing myself onward to accomplish my goals and support future generations.

When I first volunteered at my temple's festivals, I was able to immediately connect my actions to a positive effect on others. I found that I enjoy helping others and it has led me to volunteer even more and connect to a wider community. On my robotics team I volunteer to teach others about STEM and specifically our team. I have gone to Maker Fairs in Portland and Hillsboro, and presented our robot to community members. Outside of the robotics team I have tutored other students both unofficially and with the National Honor Society chapter at my school. By volunteering during Obon at my temple I gained experience in interacting with younger children that showed me how much I enjoy teaching others. I worked as a summer camp counselor and taught young students STEM lessons and skills, like soldering

Essays from the Scholarship Winners

and computer-aided drafting. I have also mentored elementary schoolers on their own LEGO robotics team.

Knowing my culture and my heritage has allowed me to know myself better. Understanding the dedication of my predecessors, not just in my own family, to work in the country for a better future for the next generation pushes me to do my best. Knowing that my father, my grandparents, my great grandparents, strove to build something intergenerational gives me the responsibility and goal to make them proud while also doing the same for the next generation and to help others. I am also comforted by the feeling of commonality with others and my family, which allows me to relax and gather myself before moving on to achieve my highest goals.

My family and my faith group have supported me and helped me to grow into the person I am today, a person I can be proud of. Even though I still am reserved, I love to help others, and volunteering and taking part in activities at my temple let me learn that about myself. I've gone on to help others in my school, my city, and my state. I want to keep going, expanding the positive impact I can make. The Oregon Buddhist Temple and my family has also kept me grounded in who I am, making me want to try to do my best for myself, for them, and for the generations to come.

Essays from the Scholarship Winners

For me, my dream career has always been about helping others and supporting those who can't support themselves. That is why I want to pursue health to become a nurse practitioner, so I am able to apply my love of the sciences to a field of study where I am still able to directly help people who need it most.

My desire to help people definitely sparked from a young age. My mother was born prematurely, and throughout the time I had known her she was on various medications and a tank of oxygen. In late 2017, separate from the problems with her lungs, she was diagnosed with ALS, a neurodegenerative disease that disallows normal body function. She died five months later. As well as the

Kayla Asakawa

Gresham-Troutdale JACL Scholarship Winner
Mountainside High School, Oregon State University

death of my mother, my father earlier in the year was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer to which he had to go through surgery and intensive chemotherapy. Such monumental events in my life truly made it clear what I needed to pursue. The sadness of not being able to see my mother function and her overwhelming struggles encouraged me to go out into school and study science and to push myself. Taking higher level IB biology and human anatomy and physiology, although difficult, is steering me into the career pathway of my dreams. I want to study hard to support other families who have had difficult experiences with health, as my family has.



Portland JACL Board members had viewed the documentary **13th**. This refers to our Constitution's 13th amendment which gave freedom to African American slaves except if they are engaged in a crime. This film explores how they were targeted after Reconstruction and began to fill our prisons. Today approximately 38% of all inmates are Black (approximately 13.5% of our population identifies as African American) and the US has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. The Board participated in a virtual discussion of our prison system and the criminalization of Blacks as what writer Michelle Alexander has called the new Jim Crow.



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