



# PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL - Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928



• SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOLUME 27 ISSUE 9 •

## Board Member MESSAGE

By Jeff Matsumoto

As I move through the “dog days of summer” and begin to prepare for the oncoming 2021-22 school year, I am reminded that we are still fighting COVID-19 and repeat what has only been stated before: wearing a mask, hand washing and social distancing are just some of the ways we can fight this deadly virus. I also know becoming fully vaccinated helped reopen schools last Spring and that it will help me stay out of a hospital and avoid any type of intensive care.

As the new (school) year approaches and I plan the lessons for my second grade students, I am looking at our curriculum with a critical eye towards finding the missing pieces that represent our communities of color. It is easy to share my family's story of the injustice of Executive Order 9066, the prejudice and war time hysteria. But, what of the stories of our allies? Those that kept safe our possessions, property and tended to our farms. How do I promote the courageous acts of Minoru Yasui, Oregon's first recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

In addition to Japanese American history, I am also thinking of ways I can incorporate curriculum that includes and honors all our communities of color. We need to acknowledge the history of Indigenous people and those lands that we live and work on. And, too, we must recognize that American Indians are a vibrant part of

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**August 29 - September 25**

**Tadama 2021**

**A community virtual pilgrimage**

Registration Opens: August 15, 2021

**September 11 - 14**

**JACL/OCA Leadership Summit**

Washington, DC

**September 18**

**Japanese American Experience Curriculum and  
Resource Guide for educators (Virtual)**

9am - 1130am

**Nichiren Buddhist Temple has cancelled its  
September Fall Bazaar due to Covid-19  
concerns.**

Edited by Chong Sim (simc0186@gmail.com)

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Our Oregon communities today, part of the collective fabric of today's society.

As I am reflecting on my students' curriculum this year, I suggest you do the same with your child's, grandchild's or even your own school materials. Ask yourself "Where are the people that look like me? Where are people of color being represented?" Anticipating the answer, the next question might be "What is my school board doing about it?"

Locally, regionally, across the state and nation, school boards are making decisions about equity initiatives. And these decisions can impact students' safety, inclusivity, self-worth and understanding of the world. The demands on students can be daunting. This upcoming year may be even more so. As they move forward, let it be with truth and facts so they can learn to navigate their world with compassion and belonging. We need to be active participants in the creation of the just and equitable society we wish to inhabit.

## ❖ Join the Board! ❖



Nominations for the Portland JACL Board and Officers remain open through October 15. If you are interested, please contact **Jeff Matsumoto** ([jeff@pdxjacl.org](mailto:jeff@pdxjacl.org)). Below are some of the general duties of board members.

**Expectations of Board Members:**

- Attend board meetings regularly
- Write 1 -2 articles per year for the monthly newsletter
- Support the organizational work of the Portland JACL ([pdxjacl.org](http://pdxjacl.org))

**Important Dates for the 2021 Election (2yr. term):**

- **October 15** - last day for nominations for Officers and Board
- **November 1** - voting begins via the Portland JACL Newsletter (see November 2019 archived newsletter as a sample)
- **December 10** - voting ends, election report to the board no later than 12/20

**Again thank you for your consideration,**

The Nominations Committee  
Jeff Matsumoto  
Jillian Toda-Currie  
Wynn Kiyama

# ❖ Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombing ❖

## Memorial Prayer

爾の時に宝塔の中より 大音声を出して 歎めて言わく  
善哉善哉 釈迦牟尼世尊 能く平等大慧・教菩薩法・仏  
所護念の妙法華經を以て大衆の為に説きたも う。是  
の如し 是の如し。釈迦牟尼世尊 所説の如きは皆是れ  
眞實なり。

Namu Butsu, Namu Ho, Namu So. Namu  
Rinengusoku Mizo-u Dai-mandala Go-honzon,  
Namu Kuonjitsujo Honshi Shakumuni-butsu, Namu  
Mappo U-en no Dai-doshi Nichiren Dai-satta no  
Go-hozen ni oite eko shi tatematsuru.

On this very solemn day, do we gather to  
sincerely observe the 76th year memorial of the  
countless victims who perished instantly when  
an atomic inferno was unleashed upon them in  
Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and again three days  
later, on Aug. 9, upon Nagasaki. This also includes  
those who survived the initial blast, but only to  
be tormented by its scars, whether overt or not,  
for years until they passed away. We can only  
imagine the anguish of those survivors who were  
haunted by the likelihood that their ordeal would  
somehow resurface in their children, if not, in their  
grandchildren, and their children for generations  
to come.

Let us also be reminded of the consequences of  
the countless nuclear tests that were conducted  
in the Pacific. To this day, its devastation and  
contamination to our environment is nearly  
irreversible. The people of the Marshall Islands  
underwent the same fate as the survivors of the  
bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, suffering,  
if not from radiation-related cancers, they are  
haunted by being compromised genetically for  
generations. Compelled to forego their land,  
they have lost their culture, and have been left to  
fend for themselves, only to be forgotten.

This is the karma that we have cast upon  
ourselves. We must all assume responsibility. The

only innocent ones are those who fell victim to  
nuclear radiation. Our Earth supports life. How  
rare this is. Life is the most precious of all things  
in the Universe. Let us not forget that life and our  
ecosystem should never be negotiated, be it  
either by man's selfishness or arrogance. Today,  
we solemnly remember those who suffered and  
passed away. Let them be showered by the  
sweetest of flowers and the most fragrant of  
incense. We pray in unison for their everlasting  
peace.

On this occasion, do we also beseech the spirits  
for forgiveness. Guide us, and anoint us with  
compassion, wisdom, and courage to join our  
hands and hearts with our fellow men, to care for  
the survivors of radiation exposure and correct  
whatever injustice that was done in the past.  
Provide us with the resilience to control our greed  
and ignorance, the strength to defend against  
intolerance and hate, and the patience to deal  
with rash judgements and actions. Let us all pray  
that no sentient being will ever again undergo  
the pain of nuclear destruction.

There is a saying,

**ヒロシマを知ることとは未来を考えること**

**"To know Hiroshima, means to think about the  
future."**

That is, it behooves us to closely examine what  
happened on that morning in Hiroshima, to see  
it as it is, and to think about how we must pursue  
our future. Life is unique and irreplaceable. Let us  
respect and preserve its sanctity for our children,  
our children's children, for generations to come.

南無佛、南無法、南無僧、  
南無妙法蓮華經

**Rev. Eisei Ikenaga**

## ❖ Never Again Is Now: Reflections from a Yonsei ❖

By Tiffay Koyama Lane

As an elementary school teacher, each year my classes and I dive deeply into Portland history. This has included studying the forced removal and incarceration of approximately 120k Japanese Americans and immigrants during WWII. We learn about the once thriving Nihomachi (Japantown) that existed in what we now call the Pearl District. We listen to testimonies from internees and read various books that shed light on the incarceration experience. I share that both my grandma and grandpa's sides of my family were incarcerated. Doing this history unit alongside my class has helped me fill in the gaps in my own family story because, like many other interned families, they did not talk much about this traumatic history. However, in the classroom, with my professional teacher hat on, relying on various primary sources and books, I've been able to somewhat keep this history at an arm's length.



**Tiffany Koyama Lane**

Now, with my own children, I can't maintain emotional distance through curriculum development any longer. This history is my history. My family legacy. It comes from my mother, and my mother's mother and father, and it echoes back into the generations before them. But it is now, too. It is imprinted in my body - and in the bodies of my children.

Similar to many other parents, having my own children prompted me to reflect on family traditions. I hope to pass on to them and wonder about my obligations to teach them their history. One tradition that has been deeply meaningful to me is from my own childhood. The Obon festival is about honoring our ancestors, and I remember making mochi and rolling sushi with my grandma. I can close my eyes and be back in my grandma Eiko's quiet, calm kitchen where you could hear the large clock ticking with the smell of delicious rice filling my nose. Watching her hands—which experienced so much: camp, waitressing, helping at the Koyama farms, raising her 5 children—folding in sushi ingredients in the bamboo rolling mat. I make a point to make these same dishes with my children even though our kitchen is much louder, smaller and messier. I smile as I see Mochiko flour all over my children's faces and delight in the fact that they love to eat their mochi like I did at their age: plain, lightly fried, dipped into shoyu mixed with sugar.

My children are watching closely as I find ways to connect with the JA community through telling stories, joining groups, and showing up for community events. These efforts to further embrace my Japanese heritage have rippled through my whole family, even beyond my children and partner. My uncles and second cousins are thrilled when I share old documents I find from camp. My mother and I have gotten closer as I ask questions about the stories she heard growing up and her perspective on topics like intergenerational trauma and healing. I can feel my family knitting together in deeper





**Clockwise from top left, Eiko Koyama, Chiyoko Otagiri, Lili Koyama, Tiffany Koyama Lane**

ways, and I observe my children watching this all happen.

About a year ago, my oldest child announced to our family that he had a predicament regarding kindergarten: he really wanted to go to the same school where mama taught, but he also wanted to learn Japanese. This would mean entering the lottery at Richmond elementary school, a dual-language Japanese immersion program. This was a big deal. The elementary school I teach at is just down the street from our home. For years, we'd been imagining walking the same halls together, seeing each other throughout the day, ending the school day as a family. That the daily experience of my children would mirror my own had been both a comfort and an expectation.

But he was so sure of his convictions: **he wanted to learn Japanese.**

Fast forward a year. He will be entering Richmond in the fall as a kindergartner. We are

all thrilled and a bit astonished as to how we got here. He will spend half the day learning in Japanese. Instead of mirroring my day-to-day experiences, he will get to have the cultural and racial mirrors of Japanese history, culture, and community, reflecting back into generations of my family experience and projecting forward into future generations. When my mom and I talk, we are both a bit stunned and inspired by my son. At just five years old, he knew the direction he wanted to guide his own life. Now, he will get the chance to reclaim many parts of our Japanese heritage that even we didn't get exposed to due to the lack of opportunities and the need to assimilate for survival.

This summer, our family took a long road trip. The confluence of studying JA Portland history with my students and raising my own children led me to want to travel to Topaz Relocation Center and Gila River internment camp to learn more about my family's experiences and stand on the very land where my family was incarcerated. I watched my children walk around what remains at Topaz as they looked for archeological clues about the life their forebearers were forced into. My children seemed comfortable doing mind learning and heart learning—as in, they were excited to ask logistical questions about history and also were open to feel and wonder about how our ancestors felt. I found myself following my thoughts through the museum as he asked probing questions about the life sized photographs of people who looked like us standing in line ready to board a bus to a camp with only what they could carry.

Parenthood has been one of the most humbling things I have experienced. As an elementary school teacher, I entered this journey thinking I was oh-so-prepared, but my kids continue to teach me that I am not in control of much. While I continue to bumble my way down this parenting journey, I know there are two things I need to hold fast to: modeling how to embrace my own personal identity journey and listening to my children as they show us the way.

## ❖ Essays from the Scholarship Winners ❖



**The winner of the Matt Masuoka Scholarship was Owen Strid of Century High School.**

Every year during May, my family would put up Koinobori in front of our house in celebration of Children's Day. As a kid, I loved seeing the intricately detailed carp reacting to the occasional breeze. Every time a friend would come over, I would proudly boast about my Koinobori. Yet as I grew older, things began to change.

It was around middle school where I began to grow insecure about my differences. As a Japanese American, I had drastically different traditions, and values from everyone else. When I brought bento to school, people would often comment or question my lunches. These reactions came from a place of curiosity, but as an introvert, I never appreciated the attention. However, some of my peers would have more malicious intentions and would make fun of my lunches. This, combined with the usual teenage angst made me grow insecure about my

Japanese heritage.

I began asking my mom to make me sandwiches instead of more traditional Japanese lunches. I distanced myself from Japanese culture and tried to make myself more "American". I would soon learn that the attempts to blend in would be futile. My insecurities only grew, and my classmates would find something else to make fun of. By the end of middle school, I was an empty shell that had pushed away everything of value to please those that would never accept me.

However, after entering high school, I grew more confident in myself. I was able to surround myself with people that would uplift me instead of put me down. During this time, I fell down a hole of anime and manga. From there, I regained an interest in my culture, and I stopped trying to hide my differences.

Looking back, I only wish I had gotten over my insecurities faster. I wish I had studied Japanese more seriously. I wish I had taken advantage of my yearly trips to Japan. Last year, I was unable to visit Japan due to covid-19, and my chances of going back this year are slim. It is now that I realize how enriching going to Japan was for me. I miss my grandparents, I miss the cramped but lively cities, and I miss the amazing food and culture.

Knowing two languages, and being exposed to multiple cultures has introduced me to hundreds of unique experiences that no one else could have. Being a Japanese American had its fair share of challenges, but it has been an experience I would not trade for another.

***Congratulations!***



## ❖ Essays from the Scholarship Winners ❖



**The winner of the Gresham-Troutdale JACL/Mary Yamaguchi Fund Scholarship was Carson Nitta of Lincoln High School.**

The holiday season has always been my favorite time of year growing up, and not just because of the presents. On Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years day, family and friends from the Japanese side of my family would gather for a feast. Within the span of 6 weeks, there were four celebrations where I bonded with family over amazing meals. It is always incredible to see the vibrant and mouth-watering arrangement of food. My fondest childhood memories come from eating dishes such as matsutake gohan, sukiyaki, or curry with extended friends and family. Missing out on family gatherings this past fall due to the pandemic made me realize how important they were to me, and how much they impacted my upbringing. Although I was fortunate enough to see some family while helping prepare bentos for everyone to come pick up, not eating the meals together was definitely an experience that is

difficult to miss.

Because of these memories and experiences, I have developed a strong passion for food. I always look forward to the next meal, trying new things, or going out to new places. When my extended family purchased the business, I started working at Ota Tofu to further immerse myself in Portland's food community. I've learned a lot about the traditional Japanese methods of making tofu—soaking soybeans, adding coagulant to soy milk and pressing the curds into sheets of tofu, and cutting them into perfectly square blocks. This process was difficult at first due to the language barrier between myself and some coworkers, but I have been able to develop these skills over time. I even find joy in the more menial parts of work, like cleaning dishes or packing tofu into boxes, because it is imperative to the overall process. Although I am getting paid for my work, it never really feels like work because of how satisfying it is to be part of the process. Nearly all of the money is going to savings for college so I can further my education beyond high school. Despite it being mostly manual labor, it is labor I enjoy. I know first-hand how great it feels to be made a delicious meal, and working at Ota has allowed me to do the same for others, helping out the many Asian restaurants around town that use our tofu and the many customers who come in regularly to buy from us.

I strongly believe that understanding the food and meal traditions of other cultures is important to further appreciate different cultures, and growing up surrounded by Japanese food in a mixed household has allowed me to become more open to trying new things. This in turn has opened my eyes to many different cultures, such as through my study of Arabic. My ethnicity and my upbringing have led me to associate myself with many different groups of people, as I hope to continue learning more about different foods and cultures in college.

## ❖ Join the Portland JACL Advocacy Committee! ❖

The Portland JACL Advocacy Committee, composed of general members and board members, guides the advocacy and civic engagement priorities of the organization. We work to energize and empower our community into action- creating volunteer opportunities and spaces for members to come together to learn and dialogue. We know that we are stronger together, so we also value building relationships with other communities of color and working collaboratively with partners who share our commitment to social justice and promoting human and civil rights for all.

### Some examples of recent efforts:

- Hosted a Nikkei community conversation on the Black Lives Matter movement and why we need to be involved
- Organized our members to participate in monthly PDX Car Caravan protests against police brutality
- Hosted Get Out the Vote letter-writing parties, a ballot initiative info session, and other voter engagement efforts leading up to the November 2020 election
- Co-hosted Day of Remembrance 2021 on Redress and Reparations in partnership with the Vancouver NAACP
- Presented a workshop on the Model Minority Myth in partnership with the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
- Participated in letter-writing and phonebank campaigns in support of HR 40

To learn more and to get involved, please email [president@pdxjacl.org](mailto:president@pdxjacl.org)

### Current Board Members

**Co-President**  
Chris Lee

**Co-President**  
Amanda Shannahan

**Vice President**  
Jeff Matsumoto

**Treasurer**  
Jillian Toda-Currie

**Secretary**  
Heidi Tolentino

**Membership Chair**  
Setsy Larouche

**Board Members:**  
Sachi Kaneko  
Lynn Fuchigami Parks  
Connie Masuoka  
Marleen Wallingford  
Jenny Yamada

If you would like to contact the Board,  
their email address is **First Name@pdxjacl.org**



## ❖ The People Who Do Something ❖

***Chisao Hata shared with us the August 1981 issue of our Portland JACL Newsletter. Our president, Homer Yasui was asking members to contribute their time and energy to the organization. The message resonates today.***

By President Homer Yasui

Portland JACL, like most if perhaps to all of the 112 chapters comes in for its share of criticism by the majority of the Nikkei population. But an organization such as ours which believes in advocacy for civil and human rights must be willing to accept brickbats, slurs and innuendoes. We cannot, figuratively afford to run the flag up the pole, and wait to see if everybody is going to salute it, before we make a move. This is not to say that we will not listen to the complaints, weight them, and then make our move. This is not to say that we will not listen to the complaints, weigh them, and then make our value judgments. Of course.

Even within our own chapter we have dissent. We also have plenty of members who pay their dues and do nothing else. We accept that as being part of human nature and it is still sometimes hard to take. But for the remainder of this column, we'd like to point out some of the positive aspects of being JACL.

Whether one is indifferent to, and severely critical of, or a partisan of JACL, there is one facet of our organizational activities which is noteworthy. And that, simply put, is that our organization most probably is perceived by the larger America society as being a media major spokesperson for our local Nikkei community. Now, with the publicity regarding the redress issue about by the media, our chapter is almost every week being asked to address this question. Most of the time, it takes the form of radio talks or interviews, but television and the private media are also involved. In the middle of July, George Hara was

interviewed by Paula Gunness of Channel 2 TV, at the site of the old Portland Assembly Center. Subject: Incarceration.

On August 11, Walt Sakai and Joyce Hata Cawthorne appeared for two hours on a radio and telephone talk show on radio KXL. The topic of course, was Redress and the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Joyce and Walt were outstanding and fielded even the hostile telephone calls with great dignity and reason.

Beginning o August 18, Bob Shimabukuro and Yuki Ogawa will be the Nikkei representatives on the Portland Citizens Advisory Board to make recommendations in the selection of a Superintendent of Portland Public Schools. Tentatively, eight meetings of this Board have been scheduled. Again, this request for the representation was funneled through the JACL.

Our chapter was responsible for earning \$1,872.95, which was forwarded to the Spokane JACL chapter to assist in their already successful campaign to have an Asian American Studies program established at Washington State University. Of course, this money came from many individual donations, but it was the Portland JACL that organized and executed the plan to earn this money.

And so it goes. It is those earnest and dedicated individuals who make our chapter thrive. They aren't out to reap glory and honor for themselves, and maybe it's not even for the benefit of our chapter. That really doesn't matter so very much. What really counts, however, ism that they are contributing their bit to make our society, and our Nikkei community better than it was yesterday. We call that community involvement.



## Photo Corner



Tracey Yotsuuye and Jeannine Shinoda who is the new director of Ikoi No Kai welcomes diners back to Ikoi No Kai hot lunch program on Aug 9, 2021.



Chisao Hata introduces Rev Ikenaga at the memorial to the victims of the atomic bombing in 1945.



Rev. Ikenaga officiates at the memorial for the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at Portland's Japanese American Historical Plaza.



Safety training workshop at Oaks Park.  
Photos by Rich Iwasaki



Iko no Kai - SEPTEMBER 2021

1333 SE 28th Ave / 503-238-0775

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
		1 X	2 Tuna Burger	3 Dry Curry
6 Labor Day CLOSED	7 Chicken with Eggplant, Sesame and Miso	8 X	9 Potato Croquette	10 Teriyaki Chicken
13 Hambagu/ Japanese Meatloaf	14 Pork/ Shrimp Shumai	15 X	16 Yakisoba/ Fried Noodles	17 Fried Fish
20 Nasu Hasami Age/ Deep Fried Stuffed Eggplant	21 Beef and Broccoli	22 X	23 Tenshin Han/ Crab Omelette	24 Karaage/ Fried Chicken
27 Birthday Sushi	28 Tonkatsu	29 X	30 Hakusai/ Stuffed Cabbage Rolls	

Cooks: Naomi Molstrom-M Kyoko Adcock-Tu Rieko Shimada-Th/F

New Lunch Prices: \$8 for seniors 65+ / \$9 for under 65 / \$ 5 kids

**Reservations preferred / Walk-ins welcome!**

\* For reservations please call and leave a message or email:

(ph) 503-238-0775

(email) ikoinokai7@gmail.com

\*\* vaccination card and signed COVID waiver will be required in order to dine indoors

(Please include the date you are attending, your name, contact phone number, and number of guests). Lunch will start promptly at noon so arrive early to check in and pay prior to lunch service. We will be encouraging all patrons to wear masks during all times other than when eating and drinking.





**PORTLAND JACL**  
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## ❖ Yamaguchi Hotel to be Demolished ❖



The former Yamaguchi Hotel which recently housed the Blanchet House at NW third and Glisan will be torn down. On July 28th, the Portland City Council voted unanimously to approve the demolition of this very significant building to the Japanese American/AAPI community and a contributing building in the New Chinatown-Japantown Historic District.

Masaye Yamaguchi served as the midwife for the Asian community, and is said to have delivered babies as far away as Hood River. This untold chapter of Oregon women's history has deep cultural significance. The Japanese American Museum of Oregon, Portland JACL and Restore Oregon whose mission is to preserve places that reflect Oregon's diverse cultural heritage strongly opposed the proposed demolition.