

## SPEAK

(/speakout)

# City of Portland Must Acknowledge Role in World War II Internments

Thursday, February 04, 2016

By Lawrence J. Maushard (/author/itemlist/user/51906), Speakout (<http://truth-out.org/speakout>) | Op-Ed

This February marks the 74th anniversary of a horrific chapter in Portland history that must be finally, honestly dealt with by the city and its newspaper of record.

Portland, Oregon is the kind of liberal haven that often epitomizes the best the United States has to offer: a thriving arts and music scene, a wide-ranging nonprofit service industry, a remarkable homegrown barista culture, decent public schools, abundant natural wonders, an international reputation for urban planning and home of the reigning Major League Soccer Cup champion Portland Timbers.

However, if Portland is to ever become truly world class, it needs to finally atone for (among other transgressions) its role in the ethnic cleansing, internment and internal exile of its entire Japanese American population during WWII. Back then, the Rose City stood out as a hotbed of vicious racism that couldn't get its Japanese Americans - most of whom were American citizens - rounded up and removed from the city fast enough.

"The support for removal expressed at the Portland hearings was not atypical, but



This image is taken directly from the pages of The Oregonian on April 29, 1942, showing officials from the previous day posting signs from the United States War Relocation Authority throughout Portland ordering all individuals of Japanese descent to report to the Portland Assembly Center (concentration camp) within seven days, according to a website exhibit of the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center. At the time, The Oregonian ran almost daily updates on evacuation information, instructions, photos and commentary.

the Portland hearings (of the House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration - better known as the Tolan Committee) did differ from those held in San Francisco and Seattle in one important way - the absence of organized opposition," wrote Ellen Eisenberg in "As Truly American as Your Son": Voicing Opposition to Internment in Three West Coast Cities (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20615369>). "Small but organized groups opposing the removal participated actively in the San Francisco and Seattle hearings, but in Portland no organized group defended Japanese Americans or questioned the need for mass internment."

No organized group. No one. Nada. Nil.

The following pro-internment highlights are taken from Eisenberg's scholarly article:

- Portland Mayor Earl Riley presented a statement (to the Tolan Committee hearings in Portland) urging quick evacuation both Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens.
- At its February 1942 meeting, the Portland City Council completed the revocation business licenses (to Japanese nationals) and then passed a resolution urging the federal government to proceed with mass internment, and urged the immediate internment "Japanese nationals and persons Japanese descent irrespective American citizenship" for the duration the war.
- As early as December 19, 1941, Multnomah County Sheriff Martin Pratt instructed Japanese American citizens and Japanese immigrants to pay their personal property taxes for 1942 in advance.
- Those speaking in favor of internment (at the Tolan Committee hearings in Portland) included Palmer Hoyt, publisher of *The Oregonian* newspaper, who submitted a pro-evacuation editorial.

This wasn't a city reluctantly following orders from Washington to carry out a noxious war-time directive. No, it was more like a town hell-bent on proving its patriotic bona fides by unleashing its worst racist elements in a manner not far short of direct physical assault.

It appears that almost no one outside the Japanese American community itself was willing to make a public stand against the internments - no one except for one woman, Azalia Emma Peet of neighboring Gresham, according to Eisenberg. Only Peet, a Methodist missionary who had lived in Japan, apparently had the courage to publicly question the internments.

During the first days of the Portland Assembly Center internment, *The Oregonian* newspaper went so far as to print a propaganda feature photo page of smiling young internees effortlessly going about their daily lives: hanging laundry, playing ball games, etc. One of those shown is Jack Yoshihara, who had been a sophomore on the

1941 Oregon State Beavers championship football team. But Yoshihara had not been allowed to play in the January 1, 1942, Rose Bowl game won by the Beavers (their only Rose Bowl victory) due to wartime travel restrictions limiting Japanese Americans to 35 miles of their home.

## Oregonian

### From Hell's Pounding Land Planes

THE JAPANESE EVACUEES AT THE PORTLAND ASSEMBLY CENTER ARE BEING PREPARED FOR THE GREAT TREK TO HOMES ACROSS THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS. THE YOUNG JAPANESE GIRLS, AS WELL AS THE BOYS, ENGAGE IN DAILY GAMES ON THE CENTER'S DIAMOND. ONE OF THE INTERNEES SHOWN AT THE PORTLAND ASSEMBLY CENTER IS JACK YOSHIHARA, WHO HAD BEEN A SOPHOMORE ON THE 1941 OREGON STATE BEAVERS CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL TEAM. BUT YOSHIHARA HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO PLAY IN THE JANUARY 1, 1942, ROSE BOWL GAME (WON BY THE BEAVERS, OSU'S ONLY ROSE BOWL VICTORY) DUE TO WARTIME TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS LIMITING JAPANESE AMERICANS TO 35 MILES OF THEIR HOME.

### Japanese Evacuees at Assembly Center Settle into New Life Before Their Great Trek to Homes Across Cascade Divide



In this May 10, 1942, issue of The Oregonian, the de facto propaganda photo feature caption reads, in part, "The young Japanese girls, as well as the boys, engage in daily games on the center's diamond." One of the internees shown at the Portland Assembly Center is Jack Yoshihara, who had been a sophomore on the 1941 Oregon State Beavers championship football team. But Yoshihara had not been allowed to play in the January 1, 1942, Rose Bowl game (won by the Beavers, OSU's only Rose Bowl victory) due to wartime travel restrictions limiting Japanese Americans to 35 miles of their home.

Nearly 4,000 innocent men, women, children and seniors from Portland and beyond were imprisoned behind the closed wire and the armed guards of the Portland Assembly Center (an Orwellian moniker if there ever was one) on the present-day site of the Portland Metropolitan Exposition Center. This took place from May through September in that first full year of US involvement in WWII.

Only there was no Expo Center back then. It was, in fact, the Pacific International Livestock Exposition. That's right, a cattle yard. The camp facilities were hurriedly constructed atop manure-laced soil that reeked throughout much of that long, hot summer of 1942.

Executive Order 9066 (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5154>) issued on February 19, 1942, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt set off a series of actions ultimately forcing more than 110,000 Japanese and Americans of Japanese descent into isolated military-style camps in Western desert areas for the duration of the war. Prior to their final destinations, the internees from California, Oregon and Washington State were first ordered to report to temporary Assembly Centers, a total of 16 locations up and down the West Coast. The Portland Assembly Center was one of those feeder concentration camps.

About half of the local deportees are said (<http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal>

/2010/6/4/oregon-nikkei-history/) to have relocated elsewhere and never returned home.

What Portland City Council can do today is pass a new resolution - an official apology - that will formally and officially rescind those made after Pearl Harbor, especially those urging the federal government to proceed with mass internment of "Japanese nationals and persons of Japanese descent irrespective of American citizenship" for the duration of WWII.

And The Oregonian should post a front-page editorial recognizing its full support of the unjustified internments, identify how it became a government propaganda tool and formally and explicitly apologize to the entire city - and especially the still-living residents who experienced this foul chapter of our collective American experience.

In its infamous February 26, 1942, editorial directly addressed to the Congressional hearing that day in Portland, "For the Tolan Committee," The Oregonian commentary mostly opines about details pertaining to one of its two main points: "As we see it, it is absolutely essential that the (Japanese) aliens be evacuated, and that they be transferred inland beyond the Pacific coast forest belt."

The editorial notes that Oregon had about 4,300 "Japanese, of whom some 1,900 are aliens." Of course, that means the majority of the people in this matter were, in fact, American citizens.

The editorial goes on to say:

"In the matter of the Japanese who are American citizens, the problem is far more difficult. It is a hard decision, in view of our traditions, to take action against men and women upon whom citizenship has been conferred. But we cannot overlook the fact that dual citizenship has been discovered in a number of instances - and America is fighting for its life. The Army will have to decide in this particular. All we can say is that the Army must not be wrong.

There is no mention of right or wrong, of guilt or innocence here - just that "citizenship" normally offers some type of defense, according to our "traditions" (with no mention of law or legal standing) against the coming unnamed evacuation and internment "action." Tellingly, the commentary says nothing about natural-born American citizen children of Japanese parents, only adults whose citizenship has been "conferred," in other words bestowed by a supposedly generous people willing to offer such an important status.

The editorial leaves no doubt that it supports the "hard decision" to remove (and thereafter intern) all Japanese Americans, citizens or not. But the paper, finally, in the end, shockingly abdicates its editorial responsibility by stating the military "will have to decide in this particular." But the piece concludes that "the Army must not be



wrong." In other words, it has to get this right. With everything just noted, even though it won't spell out the words, there is no doubt what The Oregonian has decided is the right decision.

On November 24, 2015, President Barack Obama presented ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-yasui/min-yasui-wins-presidenti\\_b\\_8577976.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/holly-yasui/min-yasui-wins-presidenti_b_8577976.html)) to the family of the late lawyer and civil rights leader Minoru "Min" Yasui the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Yasui began his lifelong pursuit of human rights by challenging wartime ethnic curfews in Portland, was jailed and interned at the city's very own concentration camp.

If the president can recognize the life's work of Minoru Yasui, it is well past time that the city of Portland and its newspaper of record officially recognize and apologize for their role in this miserable local racist nightmare.

Even Roanoke, Virginia Mayor David Bowers has apologized ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/roanoke-mayor-internment-camps\\_us\\_564f7128e4b0258edb316857](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/roanoke-mayor-internment-camps_us_564f7128e4b0258edb316857)) for his recent remarks citing the WWII internments as part of his twisted reasoning to deny Syrians refugees access to that town. Time for our Portland institutions to finally atone for their far worse injuries.

*This piece was reprinted by Truthout with permission or license. It may not be reproduced in any form without permission or license from the source.*

## LAWRENCE J. MAUSHARD (/AUTHOR/ITEMLIST/USER/51906)

Lawrence J. Maushard is an author and journalist living in Portland. More of his work at [www.maushard.wordpress.com](http://www.maushard.wordpress.com) (<http://www.maushard.wordpress.com/>)

### RELATED STORIES

*Portland Photo Distracts From the Real Problems of Race (/speakout/item/27798)*

*By José-Antonio Orosco, Truthout (<http://truth-out.org>) | Op-Ed*

*Portland Blocked Fossil Fuels, What Now? (/speakout/item/33801)*

*By Arun Gupta, YES! Magazine (<http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/portland-fossil-fuel-resolution>) | Report*

Show Comments

Mr. Arnold. Would you recommend that there be any tribunal or board set up to repatriate them to this area, as those cases are investigated and found to be hardship cases?

The Mayor. No; I wouldn't for this reason: I don't think that it would be possible for any board, irrespective of whom the personnel may be composed, that could, by interviews or other methods of investigation, be 100-percent correct in ferreting out the good from the bad.

The Chairman. How about loyal Italians and Germans, mothers and fathers, say, 60 or 75 or 80 or 100?

The Mayor. I can't see that age would make any difference. We know that there are people more alert and with keener minds, at 60, 75, and 80, than a lot of people that are 25 and 30.

The Chairman. What about invalids and cripples?

The Mayor. I don't know as that would make any difference.

They still would have contacts, if they wanted to use them.

The Chairman. Of course, we are just thinking out loud with you now. We are not trying to cross-examine you.

The Mayor. No; and I am not arguing.

The Chairman. We are not like England, and we are not like Germany, and we are not like Italy. Here, we have a country of all

NATIONAL DEFENSE MIGRATION 11305

nationalities, and some of these days, Mr. Mayor, this war is going to be over, and we will still have to live with them. At the same time, as you indicated, it is war, and your thought is that there is only one thing to do, and that is to evacuate them, whether they are Japanese aliens, Germans, or Italians.

Is there anything else, Mr. Mayor, that you care to say, that we have not covered?

The Mayor. Well, only this: I hope that we shall receive orders at an early date — I would like to have them today, if possible — to evacuate all Axis aliens and second generation Japanese from this area, as soon as possible. We feel — and I think that I am speaking the sentiment of the great majority of our people — that they are definitely a hazard, and that the longer they are permitted to have the freedom that they now have, the more danger there is to themselves personally, and the greater is the hazard that is created for our defense situation.

One of your advance men asked me what I thought should be done with them. I don't believe they should be abused. I think that they should be put to productive labor of some character, and be properly remunerated for it, so that they would be making a contribution to our defense problem. We have acres and acres and acres of beets in the interior that, for the lack of farm labor, probably will not

be harvested. More acres would be planted if they had the labor.

Most of these people are good at that sort of work, and I do not feel, sir, that they should be left in this area.

#### WOULD REMOVE ALIENS FROM STATE

The Chairman. You wouldn't recommend that they be moved out of the State, would you?

The Mayor. Well, there are portions of the State very close to the Idaho line that might be a good place to place them, but I would feel better, and I think that our people would feel better, if they were taken far into the interior and on the other side of the Rockies.

The Chairman. How do you think those people in the interior States are going to accept that situation? For instance, if we send them, into Kansas, Montana, or Nebraska, I wonder how they are going to receive them?

The Mayor. Well, I don't know — rather, I don't feel that that should be our concern. We are in a war. How would they feel if we leave those people here and because we have left them here, we have left the gate open for them to attack the people of Kansas, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and the other States. Now, it is for their protection.

The Chairman. In other words, I think that you will agree with me, that we are in the most vulnerable part of the United States today. Is that right?



The Mayor. Yes, sir.

The Chairman. Thank you very much. Mayor Riley. We appreciate your coming here, sir.

The Mayor. I took the privilege of bringing with me. Commissioner Bowes, who, for a year or more, has been the Governor's chairman, on the distribution of labor, and so forth. I have not asked the commissioner if he has anything in mind; I don't know that you care to, but knowing that you are interested in the problem of migratory

11306 PORTLAND AND SEATTLE HEARINGS

labor, I thought possibly the commissioner might have something that you would want.

**Ellen Eisenberg** <eeisenbe@willamette.edu> 3/2/16

to me

Lawrence,

This is a powerful piece, and I think you are right on the mark in your analysis. I had not seen the recent story in the Oregonian, so I thank you for bringing this to my attention. I think that it is very appropriate to call on them for a (very late) apology-- and on the city council too, if they have not already taken such a step. In addition to the federal government's formal apology back in the Reagan years, a number of universities (including Willamette) have formally recognized the Nisei students forced to leave school due to the policy (in 2011, Willamette dedicated a memorial to the students forced to leave our campus in 1942). It would be interesting to find out whether newspapers and/or city councils in other states have taken such actions.

Just one suggestion for you regarding the paragraph that reads,

There is no mention of right or wrong, of guilt or innocence here - just that "citizenship" normally offers some type of defense, according to our "traditions" (with no mention of law or legal standing) against the coming unnamed evacuation and internment "action." Tellingly, the commentary says nothing about natural-born American citizen children of Japanese parents, only adults whose citizenship has been "conferred," in other words bestowed by a supposedly generous people willing to offer such an important status.

Japanese immigrants (all Asian immigrants) were ineligible for naturalization by virtue of their race. It is for this reason that the Japanese immigrants (Issei) were "aliens"-- despite being in this country for decades, they could not become citizens. Thus, I believe that, despite the language of "conferring" citizenship, the paper is actually referring to the Nisei, the 2nd generation Japanese Americans, who were, in fact, citizens by birth.

One other note, and one request--

My book, *The First to Cry Down Injustice? Western Jews and Japanese Removal during WWII* (published in 2008) may also be of interest to you as it expands on these themes. And could you send me a link when your piece is published and if/when the Oregonian actually does apologize? I don't subscribe to the Oregonian and I don't want to miss it.

All the best,

Ellen Eisenberg

Dwight & Margaret Lear Professor of American History

**Moore-Love, Karla**

March 15

**From:** Lawrence Maushard <maushard@gmail.com> ✓  
**Sent:** Friday, January 27, 2017 2:42 PM  
**To:** Moore-Love, Karla  
**Subject:** Request for City Council address

Karla Moore-Love,  
City Clerk, Portland, Oregon

I wish to address the City Council at the earliest available opportunity. Please schedule me for the next time slot, please.

I am a writer and journalist who has worked on the local Japanese-American internments in WWII and their continuing legacies.

I wish to briefly address the Mayor and Council members about the past actions taken by the City of Portland to support the internments.

I wish to ask the Mayor and Council members to set in motion the procedures for the City of Portland to officially recognize and rescind its war-time resolutions and most importantly to officially apologize for those actions.

Thank you so much for your kind consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Lawrence J. Maushard  
Portland, Oregon 97206  
[maushard@gmail.com](mailto:maushard@gmail.com)  
503-754-9827

Request of Lawrence J. Maushard to address Council regarding local  
Japanese-American internments in WWII (Communication)

MAR 15 2017

PLACED ON FILE

Filed MAR 07 2017

**MARY HULL CABALLERO**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By  Deputy

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Eudaly		
Wheeler		