

Oregon Senate Bill 1509

Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee

It is with both deep humility and pride of their bravery, perseverance, and heroism that I submit this testimony supporting the dedication of this memorial highway to the Oregon WWII Nisei Veterans. I have lived in Oregon since 1989, except during 1994-96 when I returned to Hawai'i as the Clinical Psychologist working with Korean, WWII, and Vietnam veterans in the inpatient Pacific Center VAMROC: Post Traumatic Stress Residential Rehabilitation Program. Personally, I have two uncles from Hawai'i who served in the U.S. Army during WWII, Kaoru Fukuyama served in the segregated 100th Battalion and was KIA in Italy and my uncle Kwanji Fukuyama who served in the 44nd Regimental Combat Team.

The experiences of the Japanese Americans in Hawai'i and Oregon were significantly different, especially because of the racism expressed in Oregon by politicians, business and community members who supported the forced relocation to the Assembly Center (former Livestock Exhibition Bldg), concentration camps, or sent to field labor in Eastern Oregon. In 2009, OSU honored in their graduation ceremony the Japanese Americans with honorary degrees who were asked to leave OSU. It was a privilege for me to contact the former Japanese American students who had been picked up and escorted by armed military personnel to Portland. These racist examples against the majority of Japanese Americans did not happen in Hawai'i. On the contrary, growing up there the "GO for Broke" battle cry, their valor, and bravery was ever present in school curriculum, celebrations, programs and media honoring them. My family's regular visits to Punchbowl-the National Cemetery of the Pacific, e.g., Memorial day mini American flags on each grave-visiting my uncle Kaoru's grave who was surrounded by veterans who were from his hometown of Kohala. They have not been forgotten in Hawai'i. During the years I have lived in Oregon, I have to say "rarely or never" have I seen an article in the news, etc. about the Nisei WWII veterans..

The 442nd soldiers were the first to liberate a subcamp of Dachau the German concentration camp, however, there are no pictures that document that event. Perhaps, it might be understandable why this is not documented as these Japanese American soldiers liberated a German concentration camp while in fact their families and other Japanese Americans were in American concentration camps. Similarly, however, the Chinese who made significant contributions toward the building of the transcontinental railroad did not appear in the photo when the last golden spike was pounded. American history's continual exclusion of Asian Americans lends toward the belief that we are perpetual foreigners who have not contributed to the building and success of America, take jobs away from white/European American, and that we should go back. This happened for me in Michigan. We have 12 members in my mother's family who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. When I was on the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian American Affairs was featured on a PBS talk show, I calmly stated That most Americans do not know or acknowledge the contributions of Asian Americans to the U.S. military. The program included a phone-in segment and a caller, stated, "if you are so angry why don't you go back", my reply was, I was born in Hawaii which is a part of the United States and where do you want me to go back to?.

The 100th Battalion/ 442nd RCT continue to be the most decorated American unit for its size and length of service. It was difficult to understand how only one Japanese American had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Upon review, it was found that Japanese Americans had been nominated for the highest award and then downgraded. These racist acts against heroic Japanese Americans were rectified when in 2001 President Clinton awarded 22 Japanese American soldiers the Congressional Medal of Honor for actions during WWII. In 2010, the U.S. Army 100th Infantry Battalion/442 RCT unit were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for their service in Europe and the Military Information Services in Europe and the Pacific. Japanese American WWII veterans impacted by racism have been slowly recognized nationally. .

Your passing of this legislation will undoubtedly show Oregon is contributing to making amends for actions against the Oregon Japanese Americans and to recognize the Oregon Nisei veterans and their contributions in WWII. Your actions will educate Oregonians and will not let their contributions be forgotten.

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Sandy Tsuneyoshi, Ph.D.
Corvallis, OR

Travesties of Justice and racism has Japanese Americans and veterans. In the 1983 report—*Personal Justice Denied*—The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that Executive Order 9066, signed by President Delano Roosevelt was “motivated largely by racial prejudice, wartime, hysteria, and a failure of political leadership,” One needs to understand the President’s racial bias when you research and find that before he was President he wrote an article in a paper in Warm Springs GA about the negative reactions to Asians on the west coast. He wrote that he understood the economic concerns (taking jobs away) but that the real reason for exclusion was that if one went to Asia and you saw a mixed Asian and Caucasian/American, 9 out of 10 times the results were unfortunate. President Roosevelt ordered the investigation to determine the loyalty of Japanese Americans and In November 1941, he received the Munson Report that determined that there was “no Japanese “problem” on the Coast”certified a remarkable, even extraordinary degree of loyalty among this generally suspect ethnic group.”—. Incredulously, even with this information, he still ordered the relocation and incarceration. The Nisei American soldiers fought for their country while their own families were in concentration camps.