



# PORTLAND JACL

SUPPORTING CIVIL RIGHTS SINCE 1928

The Portland JACL supports Senate Resolution 15 which calls upon our elected representatives to acknowledge the historical significance of February 19, 1942, the date Executive Order 9066 was signed. This order gave the military commander in charge of the defense of the west coast, the authority to use whatever means necessary to protect the coast from enemy invasion. It was deemed a military necessity to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry from the west coast.

The following information was obtained from the Tolan Commission Report which was gathering information about the effect the EO would have on the Japanese American community. There were approximately 405 Japanese families who lived in the areas of Salem, Milwaukie, Hood River, Gresham, Banks, Hillsboro, Gaston and Vancouver. The value of the crops that they raised was almost three million dollars in 1942 or a little over \$42 million dollars today.

In the Portland area, there were 340 families which represented about 1,000 people in a city of 350,000. The Japanese operated 100 hotels and apartments, 64 grocery stores and fruit stands and professionals like doctors and dentists and other businesses like tailors, laundries and produce dealers.

It was a great economic sacrifice that all of this had to be left behind when all Japanese, regardless of citizenship status, were told, we had to leave our homes, businesses and farms. This was done despite the fact that the FBI had investigated the Japanese American community before the war and found no credible evidence of sabotage.

This experience was not talked about for years in the Japanese American community. It was considered a shameful part of our past, that despite our sacrifice, we were still considered enemies and disloyal Americans. That generation of Japanese Americans suffered in an atmosphere of distrust and hate because they looked like the enemy.

These people were our great grandparents, grandparents, and parents. They left their communities peaceably in the hopes that their cooperation would demonstrate their loyalty to the American government.

The segregated Japanese American military unit, the 442 and the Military Intelligence Service, showed through their bravery and valor in war that they were indeed loyal Americans. After all of the disruption of lives, in the end, not one Japanese American was ever found guilty of sabotage or treason.

This happened only 75 years ago. Our first generation Issei are no longer with us. The painful memories are still alive in our second generation Nisei elders. We cannot let the memory fade of a presidential executive order which disrupted a whole community because of their ethnic heritage.

Marleen Wallingford  
President Portland JACL