

My name is Lynn Fuchigami Longfellow and I'm the Executive Director of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, a non-profit that has a Japanese American history museum and the Japanese American Historical Plaza also known as the Bill of Rights Memorial, both in Portland. Our mission is to preserve & share the history & culture of the Japanese Americans in Pacific NW, educate the public about their experience during WWII and to advocate for the protection of civil rights for all.

I am also here as a Board member of the Portland JACL and Japanese Ancestral Society. Both the JACL and ONE have submitted written testimony and I usually speak in a more official capacity, but today I'd like to share a more personal story as to why this resolution is so important to my generation.

Hopefully many of you will remember the moving testimony last year from George Nakata and Lilly Irinaga for Minoru Yasui Day. Nothing is more powerful than their stories and those that experienced the unjust incarceration first hand. But as someone from the following generation (Sansei) I would like to share my family's story in hopes that you'll see the multigenerational impact that the incarceration has had.

My family was incarcerated in Amache (Granada) Colorado. My grandfather was 60 when he entered camp, my grandmother 54. They lost their 20 acre farm and beautiful house where they had spent most of their life and raised their family. They should have been able live out the rest of their life and enjoy a comfortable retirement. Instead, because of EO9066 they were given 5 days to sell what they could and pack up and take only what they could carry. In camp, while working to help turn the desolate surrounding land into fertile farmland, an accident occurred where he and other workers fell from a truck and he permanently injured his back. Later, my grandmother suffered a stroke from the stress and heartbreak. They never recovered physically and when the war ended they were each given \$25 to start their life over. My father and 9 uncles served in the segregated units

of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and Military Intelligence Service (MIS) that were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal---to this day, the most decorated unit in military history for their size and length of service. These men served and fought and died for the very country that held their families imprisoned behind barbed wire. They did it to prove that they were loyal and worthy Americans. But just to be worthy, they knew they had to be exceptional. And this carried over to the Sansei, postwar.

And we grew up with you have to be better or try harder just to be equal. You have to be perfect to be equal. I never thought I was anything but an American but I remember kids calling me a Jap, I recall the sting when kids looked at me and pulled at the ends of their eyes and yelled "Mommy mommy my pigtails are too tight!" I can remember being called a liar by my classmates in 7th grade when I stood up to tell them what happened to my family during WWII because this history was never taught in the classroom---luckily I had a teacher that verified I was telling the truth. And as long as I remember and even today, people still say what a shame it is that you don't speak Japanese or never learned the language. They don't understand that beginning with our grandparents, they told our parents to speak English, and because of the fear and shame that came with the incarceration, they had to disassociate with being Japanese or any thing Japanese. So family history and heirlooms were destroyed. People never talked about the past, there was a huge disconnect between generations. We grew up not wanting to be different, to assimilate.

What a tragedy that so much rich culture and heritage was lost through shame. Heartbreaking really, which is why I do the work I do today and inspired my father to serve as the Chief Counsel for the Attorney General's office for the State of Oregon.

We have a short memory. In 1982 a Congressional Commission condemned the incarceration declaring that it was not justified by military necessity but was

instead based on “race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership.” Yet our country’s principles of democracy once again are being threatened in the name of national security. And we must not forget that we are a country founded by immigrants that came because there were no walls. Diversity is what makes our nation unique and what makes us great. America cannot be the land of opportunity for just some.

You have before you Senate Resolution 14 that summarizes its significance and importance of why it should be supported. Raising awareness and education is key to fighting fear and prejudice. Acknowledging the 75th Anniversary of Japanese American internment and recognizing National Day of Remembrance is not just about remembering and reflection.

As the resolution states, we must “remember the lessons and blessings of liberty and justice for all”, but more important, this comes with the responsibility to defend it and never forget the lessons we learn from history both good and bad. The Japanese Americans did not let this dark chapter in America define them, and we as a country must not be defined by fear and its darkest instincts. We must be ready to defend the rights, liberties, freedom and ideals that are the foundation of our country.

I was here last year when Senators Thomsen, Representative Clem and Johnson introduced the Minoru Yasui Day Bill. It passed unanimously in both the House and Senate. We are so proud that Oregon’s leaders continue to stand tall---there is no failure of political leadership here as there was in 1942. Supporting Senate Resolution 14 shows that Oregon is a state that stands up for liberty and justice for all.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Fuchigami Longfellow