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## “As Truly American as Your Son”

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### Voicing Opposition to Internment in Three West Coast Cities

ON FEBRUARY 26, 1942, Azalia Emma Peet of Gresham, Oregon, stood before the House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration — better known as the Tolan Committee — which was conducting hearings in Portland on the need for evacuation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. “These are law-abiding, upright people of our community,” Peet testified. “What is it that makes it necessary for them to evacuate? Have they done anything? Is there anything in their history in this area to justify such a fear of them developing overnight?”<sup>1</sup> Peet’s voice was a lonely one in Portland. Of the sixteen non-Japanese Americans who testified before the Tolan Committee in Portland, she was the only witness to question directly the need for evacuation on moral grounds.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the many witnesses who spoke as representatives of religious or civic organizations, Peet spoke as an individual. While the committee chair, Representative John H. Tolan from California, acknowledged Peet’s assertion that no Japanese Americans in the area had committed acts of sabotage, he argued that this did not provide clear evidence of loyalty. Responding directly to Peet, Tolan explained: “So far, there are no cases of sabotage; that is, generally speaking. Well, there weren’t any in Pearl Harbor, either, were there, until the attack came. There wasn’t any sabotage; it all happened at once. In other words, Miss Peet, if the Pacific Coast is attacked, that is when the sabotage would come, with the attack, wouldn’t it?”<sup>3</sup>

Members of American Legion Post 97 of Portland used similar logic when they argued that the lack of evidence of sabotage to date indicated the probability of future sabotage, “held in leash until a critical moment



*Beginning in May 1942, Japanese American evacuees, such as those shown here waiting to register, arrived at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition Center in Portland.*

for most telling effect.” Joining many Oregon civic organizations, city councils, and newspapers in calling for an immediate and wide-reaching evacuation of Japanese American aliens and citizens, the Portland Legion post presented its resolution to the Tolan Committee:

this is no time for namby-pamby pussyfooting, fear of hurting the feelings of our enemies; that it is not the time for consideration of minute constitutional rights of those enemies but that it is time for vigorous, whole-hearted, and concerted action in support of the Pacific Coast Committee on Alien Enemies and Sabotage toward the removal of all enemy aliens and citizens of enemy alien extraction from all areas along the coast. . . .<sup>4</sup>

By February 1942, anti-Japanese sentiments like these had become widespread on the West Coast. In five major cities where the Tolan Committee held hearings, community organizations and political leaders enthusiastically endorsed sweeping restrictions of Japanese aliens and citizens alike. The support for removal expressed at the Portland hearings was not atypical, but the Portland hearings did differ from those held in San Francisco and Seattle in one important way — the absence of organized opposition.

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.

Scholars have documented the overwhelming anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast, but they have paid less attention to the small groups that spoke out in defense of Japanese Americans and against mass internment. The experiences in San Francisco and Seattle suggest that networks of personal contacts between religious and social activists and local Japanese American communities were important in fostering organized opposition to mass internment. The keys to building such networks were a substantial Japanese American population and the presence of a large urban university. In Portland, a city with a smaller Japanese American population and no major university, these networks were lacking and no organized opposition movement materialized.

**S**OON AFTER THE JAPANESE attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Portland became a national leader in the effort to restrict the activities of Japanese Americans. As early as December 19, Multnomah County Sheriff Martin Pratt instructed Japanese American citizens and aliens to pay their personal property taxes for 1942 in advance. He explained: “the reason for collecting in advance is that much of the property in all likelihood will have disappeared before the close of another year.” On January 2, 1942, the city council voted unanimously not to renew the licenses of three Japanese businessmen, purely on the basis of their place of birth, and ruled that “no license of any kind be granted by the City of Portland to any Japanese national.” The council held firm in this policy despite the protest of Attorney General Francis Biddle that the action went against the policy of the president and U.S. attorney general that “aliens not be discriminated against.” Thus, even before public sentiment moved firmly toward mass exclusion, Portland had distinguished itself as the only city in the nation to “prohibit all business licenses to Japanese aliens.”<sup>5</sup>

At its February 19 meeting, the Portland City Council completed the revocation of business licenses and then passed a resolution urging the federal government to proceed with mass internment. The council rejected an early draft of the resolution that targeted “Japanese aliens” or “Japanese nationals” and instead urged the immediate internment of “Japanese nationals and persons of Japanese descent irrespective of American citizenship” for the duration of the war. The council then, seemingly with no consideration of the irony of their actions, accepted an invitation from



*Multnomah County Sheriff Martin Pratt (left), shown here in June 1941 with County Assessor Watson, urged Japanese American citizens and aliens to pay their property taxes early, because “much of the property in all likelihood will have disappeared before the close of another year.”*

the Americanization Council to attend its annual reception for new American citizens the following week.<sup>6</sup>

A week later, the city council’s resolution was submitted to the Tolan Committee, where it joined other community voices urging the mass evacuation of a group of people who were perceived as the enemy. Portland Mayor Earl Riley, for example, presented a statement urging quick evacuation of both Japanese aliens and Japanese American citizens. The American Legion made its strongly worded appeal; and Joseph K. Carson, Jr., a former mayor of Portland and representative of the Legion in Oregon, claimed that “it is practically unanimous [among Oregon Legion posts]

## “For the Tolan Committee”

Here in the west coast danger zone, most of us have given little thought to the discomfort that would be suffered by aliens who were transferred inland or to the feelings of inland residents who would be asked to receive these aliens. We have been engaged with the very obvious hazards involved in leaving things as they were.

Now, however, the Army has the matter in hand. And we have no doubt that the Army will move as rapidly as possible, which means as rapidly as the troublesome details of such evacuation can be worked out. Consequently we can give attention to such questions as are being asked by the congressional committee which is holding hearings in Portland today under the chairmanship of Representative Tolan of California. To what extent will local production be increased if disturbed by such evacuation? How much will this disturbance be increased if Japanese-Americans are included with alien Japanese? What about the property of these people? How far inland should they go? How does the public attitude concerning German and Italian citizens differ from the feeling toward the Japanese? What about the reaction in the inland areas when they have to receive evacuees?

For the purposes of an intelligent answer to these questions, it is necessary to bear in mind that Oregon has approximately 4,300 Japanese, of whom some 1,900 are aliens. Most of them are small farmers, more often than not, truck gardeners. A number have neighborhood groceries. Some have other businesses. Unfortunately for themselves and for the state of the public mind, they have tended to cluster in dangerous areas,

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around Bonneville Dam, around the Portland Airfield, on the hills overlooking the Oregon shipyards and the Linnton industrial district.

As we see it, it is absolutely essential that the aliens be evacuated, and that they be transferred inland beyond the Pacific coast forest belt. This is necessary not only for public safety, but for the safety and the well-being of the aliens themselves. Here they are under constant suspicion. Their businesses are disappearing. They might easily become the victims of race riots if there were sudden evidences of sabotage — if, for example, unexplained fires appeared in the northwest forests. And, besides, it is important that we remember that such fires, or other sabotage, actually do remain a possibility so long as the aliens are here. Not all of the aliens would necessarily be wrongfully accused.

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.

In regard to the reactions of the inland areas, aren't they being on the unreasonable side? They will find the Japanese likeable people, in the main loyal, and always industrious. As for the few who are suspected of being disloyal, one would think that the inland districts would want these particular persons removed from the gateways to the country. It should not be such a great chore to guard them for a while, out of harm's way.

that Japanese nationals should be interned for the duration of the emergency.”<sup>7</sup>

While the Legion’s statement was the strongest one presented at the Portland hearings, it was representative of other testimony given. Those speaking in favor of internment included representatives from the USDA War Boards (charged with coordinating agricultural production to support the war effort), the Astoria chamber of commerce, and Palmer Hoyt, publisher of the *Oregonian*, who submitted for the record that paper’s pro-evacuation editorial. A few worried over the negative effects of evacuation and internment. The Portland Council of Churches, for example, made suggestions about how to make the removal as humane as possible but did not directly question the need for evacuation. Several speakers expressed concerns about the logistics of the resettlement and its economic impact. Only Azalia Peet, who had served as a Methodist missionary in Japan, presented a clear, principled statement against removal.<sup>8</sup> The strong anti-Japanese American stance taken by the city of Portland, combined with the overwhelming support for mass removal expressed at the Portland hearings and the clear sympathy of the Tolan Committee chair for the restrictionist position, left Miss Peet isolated in her opposition.

The pro-internment sentiments expressed at the hearings paralleled those in the leading Portland newspaper. In December and January, the *Oregonian* had expressed some sympathy for Japanese Americans, but by February the paper had settled on an increasingly pro-evacuation position.<sup>9</sup> Its official endorsement of internment appeared in an editorial on February 26, 1942: “As we see it, it is absolutely essential that the aliens be evacuated, and that they be transferred inland beyond the Pacific coast forest belt.” An April 26 editorial, headlined “Protecting the Refugees,” described the American treatment of Japanese Americans as democratic and compared it favorably to the treatment of “civilian enemy nationals” by Nazi Germany. In late March, the *Oregonian* reported the court case of Minoru Yasui, who was challenging the constitutionality of the restrictions, and repeatedly referred to the American-born Yasui as “the Japanese.”<sup>10</sup> In April, in response to a letter to the editor from a Japanese American questioning his “alien” classification, the *Oregonian* editor quoted the preliminary report of the Tolan Committee when he argued that it was impossible to separate the loyal from the disloyal and, therefore, all Japanese Americans had to be “moved in the interests of national security.” In a front-page story on May 3, the *Oregonian* announced the arrival of Japanese American evacuees to the North Portland assembly center. The writer reported that internees were “bringing homey things to tidy up their new

apartments or dormitory quarters.” He failed to mention that the accommodations were stockyards that had recently housed livestock at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition Center.<sup>11</sup>

The *Oregonian*’s support for mass internment was consistent with the position taken by newspapers in many Oregon cities. The *Hillsboro Argus*, for example, published reports of Japanese Americans buying war bonds immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, but within a month the paper was becoming increasingly hostile toward Oregon’s Japanese American community, repeatedly publishing articles about the potential of attacks and supporting mass internment. In February, Salem’s *Capital Journal* lent its support to internment, arguing that while some Japanese Americans were loyal “some are not . . . and the experience of Japanese fifth columns in Hawaii, the Philippines and Singapore certainly justifies every precaution in the Pacific coast states.” Headlines such as “Problem of Jap Aliens Agitates Coast” in the February 21 *Capital Journal* served to justify actions taken against local Japanese Americans.<sup>12</sup>

The enthusiastic anti-Japanese, pro-restrictionist sentiment in the Oregon press was similar to that found in the newspapers in other major West Coast cities. One study of California editors’ reaction to relocation concluded that the press in that state “served as a government publicist.” In an analysis of editorial opinion in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Diego Union*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, Lloyd Chiasson demonstrates that even those papers that had questioned the necessity of mass evacuation prior to Executive Order 9066 — which authorized the War Department to establish areas from which “any and all persons may be excluded” — endorsed internment once the order was issued. The Seattle newspapers demonstrated a similar shift, from pleas for the tolerance of Japanese Americans in December to increasingly inflammatory, racist, and pro-internment positions by February.<sup>13</sup>

**D**ESPITE THE OVERWHELMINGLY pro-restrictionist position of most West Coast newspapers, activists in San Francisco and Seattle succeeded in organizing opposition to relocation and mass internment. In San Francisco, groups defending Japanese Americans formed quickly after December 7, and their opposition to mass removal was audible during the Tolan Committee hearings in that city in late February. The leading opposition group, the Committee on National Security and Fair Play — also called the Pacific Coast Committee on National Security and Fair Play, or simply the Fair Play Committee — emphasized the loyalty of Japanese Americans, argued



*Portland Mayor Joseph K. Carson (seated, second from left) met with Japanese government and business officers at the Maple Club in Tokyo in February 1933. Nearly a decade later at the Tolan Committee hearings, as a representative of the American Legion in Oregon, Carson stated: "It is practically unanimous [among Oregon Legion posts] that Japanese nationals should be interned for the duration of the emergency."*

against making them scapegoats for the attack on Pearl Harbor, and urged that evacuation should only be carried out on an individual basis after thorough investigation. The representatives of several religious organizations joined with the Fair Play Committee and also questioned the need for mass evacuation. The same kind of testimony was given at the Tolan Committee Hearings in Seattle, where representatives of several organized groups spoke out against mass removal. While the supporters of mass evacuation far outnumbered opponents in both cities, the opponents were well organized and clear in their criticism of sweeping, mass evacuations.<sup>14</sup>

In San Francisco, prominent individuals associated with the University of California at Berkeley took a leading role in organizing the Fair Play Committee and were visible and early critics of the government policy as it took shape between December 1941 and March 1942. The committee — which advocated that the government evaluate the loyalty of individual Nisei rather than imposing a mass evacuation — included Robert G. Sproul, the president of the University of California system; former University of California President David P. Barrows; Provost Monroe E. Deutsch; and Henry F. Grady, former dean of Berkeley's School of Commerce. Their support was undoubtedly critical in gaining an early en-



*This photo, which appeared in the May 3, 1942, Oregon Journal, shows soldiers helping “evacuees” as they move into housing at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition Building in Portland, the temporary headquarters of the Japanese Assembly Center.*

dorsement of the Fair Play Committee’s proposal by California Governor Culbert L. Olson, who was listed as the honorary chairman of the Committee when it issued its first press release in late December 1941. By the time of the hearings two months later, Governor Olson had changed his position and endorsed a mass evacuation. Sproul, Barrows, Deutsch, and Grady remained firm in their position, and they were joined by numerous Bay Area academics.<sup>15</sup>

The academics were joined by the Northern California American Civil Liberties Union (NCACLU), which quickly became a center of opposition. When the national ACLU voted that it was “constitutional to remove anyone from the coast during wartime, even in the absence of martial law” and emphasized its faith in the Roosevelt administration, the NCACLU sharply disagreed and dedicated itself to the defense of Japanese Americans against Executive Order 9066.<sup>16</sup> A number of religious leaders joined the NCACLU in testifying before the Tolan Committee against the need for mass internment. Among them was Rabbi Irving Reichert, a prominent leader in the Bay Area Jewish community. Unlike the many Jewish leaders on the West Coast who remained silent on the issue, Reichert joined the

National Archives photo



*These women are shown working in the laundry room at the Japanese Assembly Center in Portland, where they were housed temporarily while waiting for assignment to relocation centers and camps throughout the West.*

opposition early and was a founding member of the Fair Play Committee. While it is not clear whether Reichert had any personal ties to the Japanese American community, he was a member of the ACLU and a close associate of Monroe Deutsch, a member of his congregation.<sup>17</sup>

The Christian clergy who testified at the San Francisco hearings had more extensive ties with Japanese Americans. Ministers responsible for Presbyterian and Methodist church work in regional Nikkei communities, for example, testified to the loyalty of Christian Japanese Americans and questioned the need for mass internment, as did the clerk of the Berkeley Society of Friends. Methodist minister Frank Herron testified that the overwhelming majority of Christian Issei — members of the first generation of Japanese in the United States — were loyal to America, and he noted their willingness to buy bonds and send their sons to the join the U.S. Army. The Nisei — the second generation of Japanese immigrants — whom he had “known for 15 years, boys whom I married to their wives,” he told the chair of the committee, “are as truly American as your son, Congressman Tolan. . . .” W.P. Reagor, pastor of the First Christian Church of Oakland and president of the California Council of Churches, testified in

Oregon Journal photo, OHS neg., OrHi 28163



*While newspaper reports referred to “dormitories,” the quarters provided at the Portland Assembly Center were cramped and had previously been used to house livestock. This May 1942 photograph shows Hiroko Terakawa in her family’s five-person apartment playing a game with her friend Lillian Hayashi.*

favor of selective rather than mass evacuation and presented the Tolan Committee with a declaration of loyalty signed by fourteen hundred northern California Japanese Christians.<sup>18</sup>

THE OPPOSITION ALSO RECEIVED support from Louis Goldblatt, secretary of the California State Industrial Union Council in San Francisco, a CIO affiliate. In his testimony before the Tolan Committee, Goldblatt questioned the need for mass internment and argued that using racial or ethnic characteristics to determine loyalty compromised American values and could lead to a slippery slope. “Where is this to end, Mr. Tolan?” he asked.

Italians will be the next to be evacuated, then the Germans. Why stop with the Germans? According to the present Federal order Hitler could stay in San Francisco in a prohibited area and one of German nationality would have to leave because Hitler is an Austrian. So it will extend to the Austrians. It will go to the Hungarians, to Bulgarians, to Finns, to Danes. These are countries, many of them, which have declared war on us. Where is the mark to be drawn?

And, Mr. Tolan, if we follow such a procedure we can land in only one place. We will do a perfect job for those who want to sabotage the war effort. We will have the American people at each other's throats.<sup>19</sup>

While Congressman Tolan, the chair of the committee, repeatedly stated that the goal of the hearings was to listen to the opinions, concerns, and recommendations of Californians, Oregonians, and Washingtonians, his responses to witnesses such as Goldblatt made it clear that he favored mass internment for Japanese Americans. At several points, as in his exchange with Azalia Peet, he expressed his conviction that Japanese American sabotage had aided the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When Goldblatt argued that second-generation Japanese Americans should be treated exactly like second-generation German and Italian Americans, Tolan openly disagreed: "An Italian, for instance, has lived here for 30 or 40 years, has a family. That man is very easily checked up. But now supposing you have 100 Japanese and you are the enforcement officer; you are the F.B.I. man. How are you going to check them?" Later, when Goldblatt expressed his fear that mass internments would turn ethnic groups against one another, he and Tolan had the following exchange:

Goldblatt: We forget what was written on the Statue of Liberty. I have the words here. I would like to read them.

Tolan: I don't think you better. Did you ever intend to run for Congress?

Goldblatt: No; I never intended to run for Congress.

Tolan: I think you would make a very dangerous talker the way you are going here today.<sup>20</sup>

While statements in favor of mass evacuation from political leaders, American Legionnaires, and heads of chambers of commerce were common during the San Francisco hearings — and were reinforced by encouragement from the Tolan Committee members — these statements by religious, university, and labor leaders who opposed mass internment were quite audible.

The scene was much the same in Seattle, where restrictionists dominated the hearings and religious leaders and university faculty and students formed the core of a vocal opposition to mass removal. Two students and several faculty at the University of Washington testified. Jesse F. Steiner, chair of the Sociology Department, charged that plans to remove Japanese American citizens would begin "a dangerous mass movement growing out of war hysteria and differing little from the treatment of minorities by the totalitarian governments in Europe and Asia."<sup>21</sup> Two



*Gordon Hirabayashi, a University of Washington undergraduate, turned himself in to the FBI rather than comply with the exclusion order. His actions led to a test case, which was strongly supported by activists in Seattle.*

University of Washington undergraduates testified to the loyalty of their Nisei classmates and urged that Japanese American university students be allowed to continue their studies in Seattle. Their position represented the opinion of a sizable number of students on campus. Although the campus newspaper had published letters on both sides of the debate, it spoke out clearly against what it saw as irrational prejudice when one Seattle Parent Teacher Association group demanded that Japanese American secretaries be forced out of the public schools. Approximately a thousand University of Washington students signed petitions in support of the secretaries. Efforts at the university to defend Japanese Americans were supported by the administration, particularly President L.P. Sieg, who assisted

faculty activists, and Dean Robert O'Brien, who submitted a written statement to the committee and took a leave of absence to devote himself to efforts that aided Japanese Americans. Sieg even allowed Nisei members of the class of 1942 to graduate, despite missing their final quarter of classes. He personally traveled to the camps to deliver diplomas to the graduates.<sup>22</sup>

The circle of opposition at the University of Washington intersected a second circle of activists in the religious community. Floyd Schmoer, for example, resigned from the Biology Department to coordinate Seattle's American Friends Service Committee activities on behalf of Japanese Americans.<sup>23</sup> Testifying at the Seattle hearings, Schmoer recounted the history of discrimination against Japanese Americans and spoke movingly of the loyalty of the Nisei:

They are American citizens by virtue of birth and training. They are the product of our own schools. They have grown up with our own children. As with each of the immigrant groups that have made America what it is today, they have contributed their share to America's prosperity and well being. . . . Those of us who have known them well have confidence in them. We have come to value them as neighbors, as friends, and as business associates. We agree that anyone, whether Japanese, German, or American, who is proven dangerous to the community should be removed, but justice cannot be done by branding all men, who by accident of their birth come from countries now at war with America, as enemy aliens.<sup>24</sup>

Other Seattle religious leaders reinforced Schmoe's message, either through testimony before the committee or by submitting prepared statements. Rev. U.G. Murphy, superintendent of the Methodist Church, submitted a statement on behalf of the Northwest Oriental Evangelization Society, urging the Tolan Committee to allow Japanese to be supervised by white friends. "We here on the coast must live with the Japanese after this war is over," he wrote, "and we are anxious that nothing be done that would make us ashamed of the manner in which they are treated now. . . . The manner in which minority groups are handled is a final criterion of the standard of national civilization." Both Murphy and E.W. Thompson, pastor of the Japanese Methodist church in Seattle, pointedly reminded the committee in their separate written statements that the overwhelming majority of alien Japanese had only remained alien because American law forbade their naturalization.<sup>25</sup>

In carrying out a mass evacuation, Thompson warned, "we should be repeating the deed that Hitler perpetrated against the Jews. Though our policy would be gentler than Hitler's in many ways would, the basic injustice would be the same. Thus we should be conquered by Hitler's spirit and methods even though not by his military machine. We cannot fight for democracy by such methods." Reverend Thomas Gill, speaking on behalf of the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers, also questioned the need for "indiscriminate evacuation" based solely on "nationality or race."<sup>26</sup>

The Council of Churches played a leading role in voicing opposition to internment in Seattle. Speaking for the Seattle Council, Rev. Harold Jensen reinforced the message of other church leaders who had spoken out against mass evacuation and suggested several alternatives. The Council was concerned, he told the Tolan Committee, that the question of the Japanese was being isolated from that of other enemy aliens, and he suggested that this "seems to indicate definite race prejudice on the part of the groups who are most conspicuous for their endorsement of evacuation."<sup>27</sup>

The Council of Churches had also been a strong voice against mass evacuation in California. Dr. W.P. Reagor, pastor of the First Christian Church of Oakland and president of the California Council, presented a prepared statement to the Tolan Committee in favor of selective evacuation. Many Japanese in America, particularly Japanese Christians, were loyal, he testified, and he submitted a statement of loyalty signed by 1,400 Japanese Christians living in California. After delivering his individual statement, Reagor then sat with Fair Play Committee Secretary Galin Fisher, Presbyterian minister Gordon Chapman, Methodist minister Frank Herron Smith, and Quaker William C. James on a panel of religious opponents to mass evacuation.<sup>28</sup> Their position is conveyed in the following exchange with Representative Tolan:

The Chairman: Now let me get my own reaction of this committee here. First, you are not in favor of mass evacuation of the Japanese, is that right?

Reverend Chapman: That is right.

Mr. Fisher: That is right.

Reverend Smith: That is right.

Dr. Reagor: That is right.

Mr. James: That is right.

The Chairman: This panel here is in favor of treating them on the same basis as the Italians or the Germans?

Reverend Chapman: Yes.

Mr. Fisher: Yes.

Reverend Smith: Yes.

Dr. Reagor: Yes.

Mr. James: Yes.

In Portland, the leadership of the Council of Churches and other religious groups were far more restrained. No representatives from the Portland Council testified at the hearing, although it did submit a list of nine resolutions to the Tolan Committee regarding the evacuation program. In addition to urging the federal government to bear the “cost of . . . moving and resettlement,” to protect public health and cover medical costs, and to ensure that “children of evacuees” receive schooling at the “reception centers,” the resolution demanded the following:

The Federal Government should assume total responsibility for movement of any groups or individuals under military orders to evacuate.

The Federal Government should designate areas to which they may go and in which they would have complete military protection.



*Strong anti-Japanese sentiment continued throughout the war. The owner of this Gresham, Oregon, grocery store posted a sign reading “No Jap trade solicited for the duration” in early 1945, when Japanese Americans were beginning to return from the camps.*

The government should discourage the movement of groups or individual families until adequate arrangements have been made as to place and living conditions, and should also discourage their going to undesignated areas. . . .

Complete legal custodianship of finances and property of aliens and citizens should be provided. The interests of the owners should be jealously protected, to the end that absolute justice be assured aliens as well as citizens. This precaution should be taken in such a manner as to make it possible for them to return when peace is declared. . . .

Rights of families to move as a unit should be respected. . . .<sup>9</sup>

The Portland Council focused its statement on recommendations about process and logistics and made no comment on the appropriateness of relocation and mass internment. When former missionary Azalia Peet testified against mass internment, no Portland-area clergy joined her in testifying or submitting a statement to the Tolán Committee.

The contrast between the Portland hearings, where there was virtually no opposition to the emerging government policy, and the hearings in Seattle and San Francisco, where the criticism was vocal and organized, is

also evident in the degree of local support extended to three Nisei who violated the restrictions on Japanese Americans during the spring of 1942. Gordon Hirabayashi, an undergraduate at the University of Washington, refused to obey the exclusion order and on May 16, 1942, turned himself in to the FBI, provoking a test case. In San Francisco, Fred Korematsu did not intend to initiate a test case. He desperately wanted to avoid the order and remain with his fiancé, who was not Japanese American. After altering his appearance through plastic surgery, he went into hiding after the relocation began. The police arrested him on May 30, 1942, for violating the exclusion order.

Hirabayashi and Korematsu received considerable support from local activists in pursuing their cases. Hirabayashi, a Quaker who was employed by the local American Friends Service Committee, was supported by AFSC activists, including lawyer Arthur Barnett. Washington State Senator Mary Farquharson, an ACLU activist, had contacted Hirabayashi even before his act of resistance. He later recounted their first meeting:

“She said, ‘I’m checking up on a rumor that you are intending to object to evacuation; is that true?’ I said, ‘Yes, I’ve already made a stand, and I’ve written a statement.’ She said, ‘Are you planning to make a test case of this?’ ‘Well, I know that’s a possibility,’ I said, ‘but I don’t know very much about law and I don’t have any money. I’m making a personal stand. I don’t know what’s going to happen as a result of it and I’ve made no plans.’ ‘If you’ve made no plans,’ she said, ‘there’s a group here including myself who are very upset about what’s happening to our civil liberties and the status of citizenship. We’ve been looking for a case to object to these things, and we haven’t been able to find one. Do you have any objections to a group of us using your case as a vehicle to fight for citizens’ rights?’ ”<sup>30</sup>

Hirabayashi’s local support also included Ray Roberts of the University of Washington YMCA, where Hirabayashi lived.<sup>31</sup>

While Korematsu did not have the organizational connections that Hirabayashi had, he, too, was sought out by local activists who were looking for a test case. Ernest Besig, the director of the Northern California ACLU, visited Korematsu while he was in prison following his arrest. At first, the national ACLU gave support to both Korematsu and Hirabayashi, but in June 1942 the board voted to support the government’s right during wartime “to remove persons, either citizens or aliens” and withdrew its support. Nevertheless, Besig in San Francisco and Farquharson in Seattle continued to support for their local cases.<sup>32</sup>

Minoru Yasui’s experience in Portland contrasts strongly with those of Hirabayashi and Korematsu in terms of local support. Yasui — an American-born, second-generation Japanese American with a law degree from

the University of Oregon — was arrested on March 28, 1942, for violating the curfew imposed on Japanese Americans on the West Coast the day before.<sup>33</sup> Yasui, firm in his belief that the restrictions were unconstitutional as applied to American citizens, decided to make his case a test of the law. He had no support from any local organization and retained private counsel, Earl Bernard, who one historian has characterized as an experienced, independent attorney who “was not intimidated by high-profile cases or a public unsympathetic to his client.” Ultimately, their convictions were upheld by the Supreme Court and the degree of local support for the three men made no significant difference in their cases.<sup>34</sup>



*Min Yasui challenged the constitutionality of the restrictions placed on Japanese Americans in Oregon.*

**I**N TRYING TO UNDERSTAND the degree of organized opposition on the West Coast to the mass internment of Japanese Americans, one factor that stands out clearly in the San Francisco and Seattle testimony before the Tolán Committee is the existence of a network of contacts between activists and the Nikkei community. Members of the university communities in both cities clearly played a critical role as opponents to mass internment. Faculty, administrators, and students at the University of California at Berkeley and at the University of Washington were motivated not only by an abstract sense of justice but also by their direct, personal contacts with members of the Japanese American community, particularly Nisei university students. During the Tolán Committee hearings in Seattle, University of Washington students emphasized the presence of 250 Nisei students on campus and testified that they were “above all, Americans.”<sup>35</sup> Historian Robert Shaffer, in his discussion of opposition

in Seattle, emphasizes how important those personal connections were and demonstrates that the close ties that many of the university activists had to the Nisei students had informed their views. One of Hirabayashi's strong supporters, State Senator Mary Farquharson, for example, was a civil rights activist who knew the University of Washington community through her husband, an engineering professor. She had housed several Japanese American students at her home.

Those same kinds of relationships were at work in the Bay Area, where personal contacts with Japanese Americans informed many of the outspoken critics of internment. Ernest Besig, the determined executive director of the NCACLU, had had many contacts with Japanese Americans before the war began in December 1941. While national ACLU officials received their information about the issue primarily through officials in the Roosevelt administration, Besig understood the history of anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast and recognized the local pressures contributing to the support for internment. Several Japanese American NCACLU members were relocated to the camps, and Besig developed personal relationships with others, including Fred Korematsu.<sup>36</sup> The importance of these personal contacts to those who opposed mass internment comes through clearly in the testimony of Galen Fisher, secretary to San Francisco's Committee on National Security and Fair Play:

Like many other Americans who have long known hundreds of Japanese, I would testify that among their most marked traits are loyalty and gratitude. I strongly believe that the Nisei citizens will, with few exceptions, be as loyal to the United States as any other group of citizens.<sup>37</sup>

Religious leaders who testified in both San Francisco and Seattle had similar deep and personal ties to members of the Nikkei community. Floyd Schmoie, for example, characterized himself as one who has "known them [the Nisei] well," and Presbyterian and Methodist ministers speaking at the San Francisco hearings emphasized their personal relationships with Japanese American co-religionists and their familiarity with Japanese culture. Several of the ministers, much like Azalia Peet of Oregon, had spent long periods of time as missionaries in Japan.<sup>38</sup>

The San Francisco and Seattle cases make clear that while the presence of a significant Japanese American community often helped feed pro-internment sentiment it was also an important ingredient in feeding the opposition. A visible Japanese American community could be the occasion for strong responses at both ends of the spectrum. Hood River, Oregon, for example, was home to 462 Japanese in 1940, approximately four percent

of its total population. The town became notorious for anti-Japanese sentiment in 1944, when the local American Legion Post painted over the names of Nisei soldiers on its honor role. Despite Hood River's reputation for hostility, however, the *Hood River News* was notable for its sensitive treatment of Japanese Americans throughout the war, driven by an editor who had close ties with members of the Nikkei community.<sup>39</sup>

Few Oregon communities, however, boasted a Nikkei community as large as Hood River's. In 1940, California was home to 93,000 Japanese Americans and Washington counted 14,500 Japanese Americans in the state. Oregon, with a total population that was only slightly lower than Washington's, had a Nikkei population of only 4,000. Only 1,680 Japanese Americans lived in Portland, while 6,975 lived in Seattle and 5,280 lived in San Francisco.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in Oregon in general, and in Portland in particular, there were few opportunities for the kinds of personal contacts that motivated activists in San Francisco and Seattle. Not many Oregon activists could claim, as Galen Fisher did in San Francisco, to "have long known hundreds of Japanese."<sup>41</sup>

The lack of personal contacts helps explain why the religious community in Portland remained silent. The smaller Japanese American population in Oregon meant that few Oregon Christian clergy had experience working with Nikkei congregations. Likewise, in the Portland Jewish community, rabbis did not speak out against mass internment as Rabbi Reichert had in San Francisco. The *Portland Scribe*, a newspaper for the Jewish community, maintained complete silence on the issue of Japanese internment, despite its strong editorial commitment to civil rights and its diligent coverage of the war and of alien policies as they related to German Jewish aliens. Lacking contacts with the local Nikkei community, the *Scribe*, whose editorial board included the rabbis of all major Portland congregations, failed to make a connection between its general concerns about prejudice and the fate of Oregon's Japanese American community.<sup>42</sup>

An important factor that distinguished Portland from San Francisco and Seattle was the absence of a major university that had a substantial Nisei student population. In 1942, Portland State University had not yet opened its doors, and the University of Oregon, located more than 100 miles away in Eugene did not emerge as a center of resistance or criticism. In 1940, Lane County was home to only sixty-two non-whites of any ethnicity, making Eugene an unlikely site for resistance to mass internment. The problems of Japanese Americans would have seemed relatively remote to most University of Oregon faculty and students. University of Oregon President Donald Erb was not even approached to join the board

of the San Francisco-based Fair Play Committee until June 1943. He and several other faculty members at Oregon's universities gradually established individual contacts with the University of California-based committee during the second half of the war, but no Oregon academics spoke out at the Portland hearings in 1942.<sup>43</sup>

Lacking personal contacts and firsthand knowledge of the Nikkei community, both civil rights organizations and individual activists in Portland — much like those elsewhere in the nation — tended to support the Roosevelt administration and remained silent on internment. Pressure for wartime consensus and confidence in the progressive credentials of the Roosevelt Administration, Robert Shaffer tells us, led “many liberals who opposed or were uneasy with removal . . . [to try] to find as much common ground with government policy as possible, often straining for indications that they would not have to oppose the FDR Administration on this issue.” As Judy Kutulas explains in her analysis of the ACLU, “National officers, trusting the Roosevelt administration and its policies, worked with sympathetic bureaucrats and assumed that the New Dealers would protect individual liberties as best they could during a war emergency.”<sup>44</sup>

Even in cases where individuals recognized the injustice of the policy, the atmosphere in Portland made organized protest difficult. As Portland ACLU activist and lawyer Gus Solomon later recalled in an interview, despite being “deeply concerned about the Executive Order” he personally knew few Japanese Americans and was not aware at the time of any organized opposition in Portland. Although he later filed briefs on behalf of Japanese Americans who were fighting the exclusionary policies and was active in aiding the returning Japanese Americans after the war, he “guiltily recalled a near-paralysis” in the wake of the removal order in 1942. “I am sorry to say,” he told the interviewer, “that I was not involved in the beginning, when the Japanese Americans were moved into concentration camps.” With the Portland ACLU Committee “virtually extinct” in 1942, Solomon “urged the national ACLU ‘to come in with me’ to defend” Minoru Yasui, but to no avail. During Yasui’s trial, Judge Fee asked Solomon to serve as one of nine lawyers advising the court. During his service on the panel, Solomon expressed his belief that the curfew order was unconstitutional, but neither he nor any other representative of the civil liberties community in Portland spoke out publicly or organized in opposition to the curfew or the evacuation order during this period.<sup>45</sup>

Solomon’s account is confirmed in the correspondence among activists in San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland. Letters in the files of the Fair Play Committee from 1943 indicate frustration that no group had emerged

in Portland to defend Japanese Americans against what the committee considered to be racist proclamations and legislation. In March 1943, for example, the committee secretary in San Francisco wrote the Evacuee Service Council in Seattle to report that while Fair Play groups had been founded in Pasadena, Fresno, and Seattle, there still was no group in Portland. After being contacted by the Fair Play Committee, Mildred Bartholomew of the Portland YWCA wrote in April 1943 of the need for an organized group in Portland. Referring to a recent anti-Japanese American outburst in the Oregon State Senate, she wrote, "Portland and Oregon will be greatly benefited by a Northwest committee I am sure, because we have had no organization of influential citizens to turn to when such utterances . . . broke in the daily papers."<sup>46</sup> It was not until 1944 that the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Portland Council of Churches formed the Committee to Aid Relocation to aid Japanese Americans returning to Oregon.



*Azalia Emma Peet, who had worked as a missionary in Japan, was the only witness at the Portland hearings of the Tolson Committee to directly question the need for evacuation on moral grounds.*

FOR ALL AMERICANS, but particularly for those who lived on the Pacific Coast, the outbreak of war created very real fears. The climate of fear, coupled with the desire to support the federal government in a time of crisis, created tremendous pressure for people to support emerging restrictions on those groups that were considered suspect. The long history of anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast served to reinforce those tendencies. In the two to three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, public discourse moved swiftly and decisively toward support of mass internment of Japanese Americans, both aliens and citizens. Yet, even in the face of this public pressure, some Americans spoke out against the government's policies. In Seattle and San Francisco, organized opposition was fostered by the presence of a university as a center for organization. The personal relationships in religious and university communities in which substantial numbers of Japanese Americans were present were also critical to the early formation of groups opposed to mass internment. In Portland, where there was no large, urban university that had Nisei students and no substantial Japanese American population, many Oregonians — including many progressive activists — had no first-hand knowledge of Japanese Americans that they could weigh against their trust in the administration and its case for mass exclusion. As a result, voices such as Azalia Peet's were lonely ones, and the incarceration of Japanese American aliens and citizens met with no organized opposition in Portland.

## Notes

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"As Truly American as Your Son" is from the testimony of Rev. Frank Herron Smith, Hearings before the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, House of Representatives, 77th Cong., 2d sess. [hereafter Tolan Committee Hearings], San Francisco, part 29, 11240.

1. Tolan Committee, Portland, part 30, 11386. Historian Robert Shaffer argues that roughly half of the people testifying at the West Coast hearings of the Tolan Committee "supported Japanese American rights," including "almost all of those associated with social welfare organizations, universities, and, most of all, churches, along with a sprinkling of business owners and farmers who worked closely with Japanese Americans." Unlike Shaffer, who counts all of those people who express concern for the well-being of Japanese Americans or reservations about the logistics as supportive, I

have counted only those who clearly questioned the need for the mass removal as opponents of the order. See Robert Shaffer "Cracks in the Consensus: Defending the Rights of Japanese Americans during WWII," *Radical History Review* 72 (1998): 88.

2. Tolan Committee Hearings, Portland, part 30, 11332–5. Two witnesses did argue against mass internment on economic grounds.

3. *Ibid.*, 11387.

4. *Ibid.*, 11389.

5. Charles Davis, "Attorney for the Betrayed," *Oregon State Bar Bulletin* (June 1999), 15–18.

6. Portland City Council Minutes, February 19, 1942. See also Davis, "Attorney for the Betrayed," 18.

7. Tolan Committee Hearings, Portland, part 30, 11303, 11325.

8. *Ibid.*, 11390, 11386.

9. See, for example, "Nisei Are Placed in a Tough Spot," *Oregonian* (Portland), December 8, 1941, 6; "An Appeal for Fair Play," *Oregonian*, December 19, 1941, 18. As late as February 12, 1942, the newspaper reported that while 80 percent of Portlanders surveyed favored evaluation of "all enemy aliens," only 36 percent believed "native born children (including adults) of enemy aliens," should be evacuated. See *Oregonian*, February 12, 1942, 1.
10. *Oregonian*, March 31, 1942, 6.
11. *Oregonian*, May 3, 1942, 1.
12. Timothy Olmstead, "Nikkei Internment: The Perspective of Two Oregon Weekly Newspapers," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (Spring 1984): 5–21; "Purging Potential Spies," *Capital Journal*, February 21, 1942, 4.
13. Lloyd Chiasson, "Japanese American Relocation during World War II: A Study of California Editorial Reaction," *Journalism Quarterly* 68:1–2 (1991): 263; Floyd McKay, "Civil Liberties Suspended: Pacific Northwest Editors and the Nikkei," Conference on the History of the Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest, University of Washington, Seattle, May 2000.
14. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, part 29; part 30, 11526–7, 11542–3, 11557–73; Robert Shaffer, "Opposition to Internment: Defending Japanese American Rights during WWII," *The Historian* 61:3 (Spring 1999): 597–619. In San Francisco, of thirty-one non-Japanese American witnesses, eight questioned the need for mass internment of Japanese Americans. In Seattle, of twenty-four non-Japanese American witnesses, nine spoke in opposition. In Portland, two out of sixteen witnesses questioned mass internment. See Tolan Committee Hearings, parts 29 and 30.
15. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, part 29, 11199–202. Because the Fair Play Committee submitted its December statement as Exhibit A, the earlier membership list can be compared with the list on the day of the hearing. The number of individuals with academic titles increased substantially in the interval between the statement and the hearing.
16. Judy Kutulas, "In Quest of Autonomy: The Northern California Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union and World War II," *Pacific Historical Review* 67:2 (May 1998): 210–11. See also Peter Irons, *Justice at War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 128–30.
17. Ellen Eisenberg, "Civil Rights and Japanese American Incarceration," in *California Jews*, ed. Ava Kahr and Marc Dollinger (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, 2003), 110–21.
18. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, pt. 29, 11205–10, 11208, 11196.
19. *Ibid.*, 11183.
20. *Ibid.*, 11181–3.
21. *Ibid.*, Seattle, part 30, 11558.
22. *Ibid.*, 11590; Shaffer, "Opposition to Internment," 601–3.
23. Shaffer, "Opposition to Internment," 604–5.
24. Tolan Committee Hearings, Seattle, part 30, 11527.
25. *Ibid.*, exhibit 2, 11597; exhibit 11, 11607–8.
26. *Ibid.*, 11542.
27. *Ibid.*, 11565. See Douglas M. Dye, "The Soul of the City: The Work of the Seattle Council of Churches during World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 1997).
28. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, part 29, 11195–213.
29. *Ibid.*, Portland, part 30, Exhibit 4, 11620.
30. Irons, *Justice at War*, 92.
31. *Ibid.*, 90.
32. *Ibid.*, 129–30.
33. *Ibid.*, 81.
34. Davis, "Attorney for the Betrayed," 15–18; Charles Davis, "Land of the Free?" *Oregon State Bar Bulletin* (July 1999): 19–24. See also Irons's discussion of the Yasui case in *Justice at War*. Government attorneys knowingly misled the Supreme Court by exaggerating the degree of danger posed by Japanese Americans. Four decades later, the convictions of Yasui, Hirabayashi, and Korematsu were vacated. See Peter Irons, *Justice at War*.
35. Shaffer "Opposition to Internment," 601.
36. Kutulas, "In Quest of Autonomy," 212–5.
37. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, part 29, 11199.
38. *Ibid.*, 11203–11208.
39. Paul Spickard, *Japanese Americans* (Twayne, 1996), 127; Olmstead, "Nikkei Internment," 17–32.
40. Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 162, 170.
41. Tolan Committee Hearings, San Francisco, part 29, 11199.
42. *The Scribe* (Portland, Oregon), December–May 1942.
43. Correspondence, June 1943, Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play records, BANC MSS C-A 171, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, box 1.
44. Shaffer, "Cracks in the Consensus," 87; Kutulas, "In Quest of Autonomy," 202.
45. Gus Solomon interview, transcript, Oregon Jewish Museum, Portland; Harry Stein, "Biography of Gus J. Solomon," manuscript.
46. Correspondence, April 1943, Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, box 1.