

JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF OREGON

AUTUMN 2021 | VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 1

UNVEILING THE NEW JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF OREGON AT NAITO CENTER



The Japanese American Museum of Oregon celebrated our grand opening with a virtual celebration on May 6, 2021. We welcomed our first visitors a week later on May 13th!

If you missed our virtual opening, you can link to the recording on the front page of our website (www.jamo.org).

Come see our beautiful new space and powerful new exhibits at Naito Center—411 NW Flanders Street in Portland, Oregon. Highlights of the new exhibitions include a recreation of a Minidoka barrack featuring historic wood from the Minidoka post office, Minoru Yasui's actual jail cell from the old Multnomah County Jail where he spent nine months in solitary confinement, and the Minidoka interactive touch screen where you can search by family name and see the location of where incarcerated lived.

We're open Fridays through Sundays 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM by reservation.



A FOURTH "G"



▶
The first visitors welcomed through the doors of our new museum on May 14, 2021 were (left to right) Ken Sumida, Fran Sumida Palk, Akemi Takahashi and Tetsuro Takahashi



This past year has been a historic year. Fortunately for us, it will not be the pandemic that defines it, but it will be the year that we opened the new Japanese American Museum of Oregon.

Grace, Grit and Gaman is the title of our opening exhibition in the community gallery. It shares the rarely revealed story of the grace, grit and gaman displayed by multiple generations of Japanese American women and the unique challenges they faced in their own ways, on their own terms and in their own time. During its creation, it was affectionately referred to as the 3Gs, but the title aptly sums up what it took these past few years to open a new museum while navigating a global pandemic.

Grace came in the form of a multitude of blessings, from the generosity of donors to the dignity of those that paved the way before us to carry us through. As critical elements of the project were achieved, we were **delayed** as a result of the pandemic **but not derailed**—we were indeed blessed.

Grit was the fortitude and toughness to meet the challenges, move past the setbacks and continue with determination. Every step of the way, it was the grit of the generations that came before that inspired us.

Gaman to persevere, endure and overcome the hardships, difficulties and obstacles we faced. Difficult yes, but paled in comparison to what our country and what the world has been confronted with.

But reflecting back, we really need to add a fourth "G" for **Gratitude**. Gratitude to everyone from our founders, volunteers, donors, Friends of the organization, past and present board and staff, funders, collaborators and

partners. Each and every one has been part of the foundation that the organization was built upon and what made it possible to accomplish what at times seemed impossible—impossible if not for the 4Gs that lay at the heart of those endeavors.

Grace, Grit, Gaman, and Gratitude will be the words that define this moment in time. These words describe what sustained us, inspired us, and kept us going during those days we were struggling to catch our breath and move forward. It is what it will take to continue facing uncertain days ahead. But of the four and at this point of the journey, we will be forever filled with gratitude to the many of you who made this dream of a community come true.

A new, vibrant museum experience awaits you, so please come visit us!

With deep gratitude,
—Lynn Fuchigami Parks



SPECIAL CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We'd like to express our sincere appreciation to all those who made the magic happen behind the scenes for our new museum and for the virtual opening celebration.

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AldrichPears Associates, Ltd.
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YES, I WANT TO JOIN!

My support will help ensure that the history, art and culture of the Nikkei are preserved and shared with the community for generations to come.

- | | | |
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GRACE, GRIT & GAMAN: JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMEN THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

Opening with our new museum is *Grace Grit & Gaman: Japanese American Women Through the Generations*, an exhibit that shares the rarely revealed story of the grace, grit and *gaman* (Japanese for perseverance) displayed by Japanese American women. Curators Dr. Linda Tamura and

Marsha Matthews explored this hidden history through diaries, oral histories and photographs from the Japanese American Museum of Oregon permanent collection and elsewhere. Additionally, community members were interviewed about the discrimination and stereotyping they have faced as Japanese American lawyers, teachers, students, artists and businesswomen.

On June 23, from a panel discussion was held on Zoom featuring Dr. Linda Tamura as moderator and including Dorothy Sato, Julianne Sato Parker and Vicki Nakashima. See our website for a link to the discussion.

Grace Grit & Gaman: Japanese American Women Through the Generations
May 7, 2021–December 31, 2021

—Lucy Capehart





Photographs courtesy of Curtis Suyematsu

WITH DEEP GRATITUDE TO ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORTED OUR LIGHTING THE LEGACY CAMPAIGN

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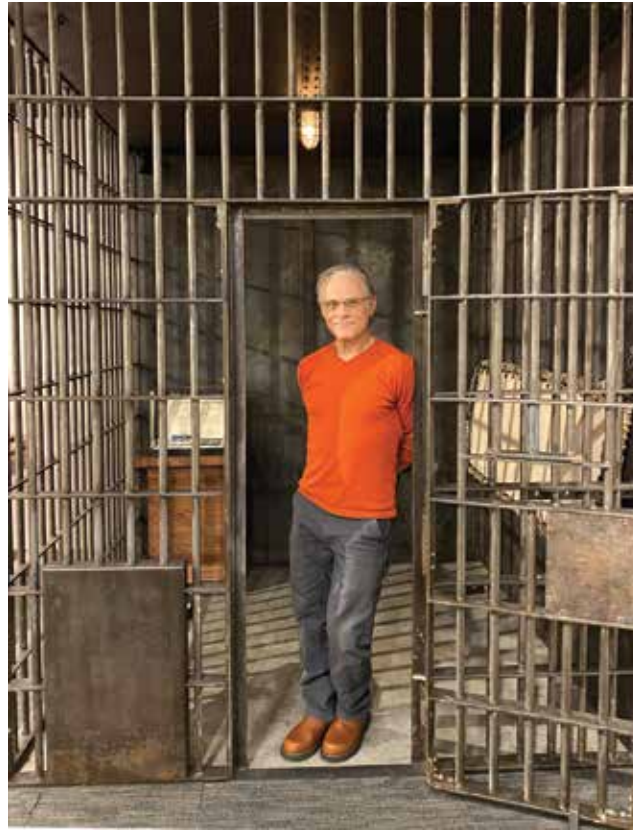
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MINORU YASUI'S HISTORIC JAIL CELL

One of the most highly anticipated and talked about artifacts shared in our museum is the historic jail cell where Minoru Yasui spent nine months in solitary confinement in the Multnomah County Jail for purposely violating the WWII military curfew imposed on people of Japanese ancestry.

The formidable task of preserving and moving Min's jail cell to our new museum was nothing short of monumental. Circumstances and people came together at just the right moment beginning with identifying the cell and its location in the jail through Min's own written descriptions. It was as if he'd left clues for his daughter, Holly, to later find. From there it was Nan Waller, then presiding judge of Multnomah County, who had the idea that somehow the cell should be preserved—but who would be crazy enough to take this on? Min's lead attorney in his appeal to the Supreme Court, Peggy Nagae, brought this to our attention.



Top: Standing in the doorway of the jail cell is Portland artist, Brian Borrello who painstakingly reconstructed the cell after its removal from the Multnomah County Courthouse.

Bottom: The Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to Min Yasui in 2015.

No matter that at the time we hadn't yet determined the location of our new museum nor had any clue as to how to achieve this feat. Fast forward four years—with coordination of a dozen entities and individuals ranging from Multnomah County Commissioners to preservation architects and artist Brian Borrello—and the cell was extracted, moved, re-assembled and literally built into our museum so visitors can now stand within its bars to view his Presidential Medal of Freedom and hear audio in his own voice sharing what it was like to be incarcerated there. In this case, Min's cell is an artifact that literally speaks to you.



Acquiring the cell was a no-brainer for our museum as we were already the stewards of his Presidential Medal of Freedom. Min is the only Oregonian to receive this award.

Min's Presidential Medal of Freedom citation states, "Minoru Yasui's example endures as a reminder of the power of one voice echoing for justice." This extraordinary exhibit will assure that Min's voice and legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.





PASSBOOK



Frank Hachiya
1920-1945

THE UNEXPECTED UPS AND DOWNS OF EDUCATING DURING A PANDEMIC

Although JAMO's Museum galleries were closed from March 2020 to May 2021, our educational work has grown in new and surprising ways. As in-person group tours and classroom visits gave way to virtual presentations, we were able to broaden our geographical reach while continuing to work closely to educators to meet the needs of their students. JAMO speakers Lynn Grannan, Chisao Hata, Joni Kimoto, Jean Matsumoto, and George Nakata along with myself delivered talks and conversations via Zoom to student and adult audiences throughout the Portland metropolitan region and as far away as New York, London, and Tokyo.

As the museum opens to the public, we are excited to unveil new educational experiences for visitors. First is our Biographical Passbook project which

is designed to demonstrate to visitors the variety of different experiences of Japanese Americans in Oregon. All visitors to the museum will receive a Passbook upon entry. Each book contains a short biography of one Japanese American Oregonian who lived during the World War II era. The passbook supplements the permanent exhibit, enabling visitors to see how large-scale events depicted in the exhibit impacted Japanese Americans on an individual level.

The museum purchased two telepresence robots from Double Robotics to use in the museum for virtual tours, research, and programming. The acquisition of these robots is thanks to a generous grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. Stay tuned to see how we implement this new technology into our museum outreach.

Finally, we have created a new guided tour experience which will hopefully be implemented this fall, or as soon as we are able to welcome large groups into the Museum. Museum docents and tour guides can expect to receive new tour materials and updates about tour guide training later this summer. If you are interested in becoming a tour guide, please email Jennifer Fang (jennifer@oregonnikkei.org).

Thank you to all docents, speakers, and volunteers who have helped keep our educational programs running during this unprecedented time. Your hard work ensures that the story of Oregon's Nikkei is one that is remembered by students and adults alike.

—Jennifer Fang



“As an American citizen ... I felt that we owed at least the obligation as a citizen to tell our government they are wrong, that is the sacred duty of every citizen because what is done to the least of us can be done to all of us.”

— MINORU YASUI



The Oregon Rises Above Hate organization dedicated a billboard in Old Town Chinatown/Japantown on June 29, 2021.



One of the highlights of our new museum is a replica of a Minidoka barrack living quarters. The vignette, designed by Aldrich Pears Associates is constructed with wood from what was

once the Post Office at the Minidoka incarceration camp in Idaho. The design committee thought using authentic wood from Minidoka would create a powerful exhibit. Procuring it was quite an adventure.

On July 15 in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, staff member James Rodgers (Project Coordinator) went by trains, planes and rental truck to bring back over 1,300 board feet of lumber to be used in our new permanent exhibit.

After flying to Boise then renting a truck in Twin Falls, James drove 65 miles to Carey, Idaho where the wood had been stored in a salvage yard for over 40 years. There he met Wade Vagias, NPS Superintendent of Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve, Hagerman

THE MINIDOKA BARRACK

Fossil Beds National Monument and Minidoka National Historic Site. Wade not only made the donation of the wood possible from the NPS administrative side, but also helped load the truck.

James drove the truck loaded with wood through the night to Portland and then on to Pacific Studio Design and Fabrication Company, in Seattle. Pacific Studio fabricated the components of the barrack in their Seattle studio. The construction was made difficult by the restrictions of Covid. Many Pacific Studio employees were working from home.

The barrack vignette includes not only authentic lumber from the Minidoka Post Office but also artifacts from the museum's collection that were made by incarcerated

Janice Okamoto donated a desk made from scrap lumber by her father Hisashi Okamoto. A greasewood sculpture, donated by Yoichi "Cannon" Kitayama, also made at Minidoka

sits atop the desk. The washboard used by Rose Niguma's family while they lived at Minidoka is also in the vignette.

The living spaces incarcerated occupied were constructed of green lumber covered in tar paper. The unseasoned lumber quickly dried out and let in the constantly blowing dust that had to be swept out daily. Barrack "apartments" were heated by a coal stove and came with army cots and a bare light bulb that hung from the ceiling. Families used scrap materials found around camp to make tables, chairs and dressers.

The barrack vignette is a physical reminder of the hardships the incarcerated endured while at Minidoka.

—Lucy Capehart



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Kiyo Endecott
Office Manager

Friday through Sunday
11 AM to 3 PM
By Reservation

Adults: \$8
Seniors (62+): \$6
Students: \$5
Children 11 & under and
Friends of JAMO: Free



Consul General Masaki Shiga (far left) and Consul Hiroaki Sato (far right) toured the Japanese American Museum of Oregon on June 24th.