

# These times call for acts of courage

It's not a time to be complacent. The horrifying sequence of actions from the Trump administration has lurched open collective awareness of the mistreatment of countless people trying to cross the U.S. border.

It was only three weeks ago when Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley focused the glare of social media on the cruel immigration policies targeting people who are escaping poverty and violence that in no small part results from

U.S. aggression in the first place. Central America has certainly suffered under U.S.-backed dictatorships and U.S.-trained human rights abusers.

Locally, protestors mobilized on June 17, shutting

down the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office on Portland's South Waterfront by building a barricaded encampment, OccupyICE, that inspired more actions around the nation.

As of press time, riot-gear clad Department of Homeland Security officers were moving in to disperse the camp. Several people were arrested.

But for more than a week, this camp bustled like a little town, tents lining either side of railroad tracks in a valley formed by the ICE detention center to the west and multiple businesses to the east. There was a medical tent, a mental health tent, a child care tent, a quiet tent, a supply tent, and a kitchen where people dished up dollops of homemade guacamole. Protestors held general assemblies and vigils and work groups, posting signs throughout the camp to guide people on how to live respectfully among each other.

And then on Monday, June 25, the assault on people attempting to enter the United States continued when the Supreme Court upheld Trump's executive travel ban, with the majority of justices disregarding Trump's clearly expressed goal of targeting people who are Muslim.

The children of three people who challenged the World War II persecution of Japanese Americans filed an amicus brief to remind the courts that by "refusing to scrutinize the government's claim that its abhorrent treatment of Japanese Americans was justified by military necessity, the Court enabled the government to cover its racially discriminatory policies in the cloak of national security."

In the cases of their fathers – Hirabayashi, Yasui, and Korematsu – the Supreme Court upheld a presidential executive order that discriminated against people based on race

and national origin. In the rearview mirror, even Chief Justice John Roberts wrote of the wrong-headedness of the Korematsu decision, writing that "the forcible relocation of U.S. citizens to concentration camps, solely and explicitly on the basis of race, is objectively unlawful and outside the scope of presidential authority."

But it is audacious to take a stand against a decades-old decision while refusing to act against a bigotry-laden travel ban now.

For those of us in Portland, the case of Minoru Yasui in particular shines a light on local resistance with national implications. Hood River-raised, University of Oregon Law School-educated, and the first Japanese-American member of the Oregon State Bar, Minoru Yasui set up his law office in the Foster Hotel on the very block that Street Roots now operates.

And it was from the historic Foster Hotel – now Musolf Manor, low-income apartments run by Innovative Housing – that Yasui walked out into the evening on March 28, 1942: an act of civil disobedience against government curfew laws targeting people of Japanese ancestry.

He walked south through Old Town – then known as Japantown – to a police station on Southwest Oak Street and Third Avenue, insisting that the police officers arrest him.

He was determined that his civil disobedience challenge the racist laws. His journey was a long one. He suffered incarceration and then, as

his court case went forward, solitary confinement. He took his case to the Supreme Court – and lost.

Eventually, President Obama awarded Minoru Yasui the Presidential Medal of Freedom and two years ago, the Oregon state legislature designated March 28 Minoru Yasui day.

But 76 years ago, Minoru Yasui was courageous, denounced and alone, challenging the racist laws of the federal government.

We need hundreds and hundreds of acts of courage right now. Let your voices be heard – all of you who have put your bodies on the line to challenge brutal immigration policies, including people who are homeless, already vulnerable to police actions, who camped at Occupy ICE in solidarity with brothers and sisters seeking asylum in this country.

Let your voices be heard alongside the ACLU attorneys who are fighting to get representation to asylum seekers detained at Sheridan Federal Prison.

Let your voices be heard, all of you organizing year after year when cameras are not trained on your work. Let us see you and learn from you.

Let each effort toward justice reverberates far and wide. The time has come for all of us to step out into that night and make a stand!



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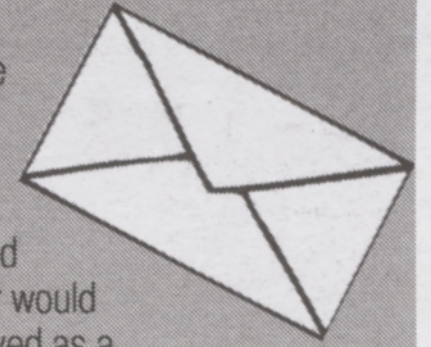
By Kaia Sand

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If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, [joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org). We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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