

Tour

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the government began rounding up Japanese families, seizing their money and businesses, and interning them. The Oregon Exposition Center was where many ended up.

At the time, the center was the site of many agricultural events, and was hastily prepared for the influx of Japanese, explained Valerie Otani, an artist who built two traditional Japanese gates outside to remember the event. The gates are lined with newspaper plates, brandishing headlines like, "Portland to be First Jap-Free City."

"While it's a sad place, it's a significant place for our community," she said.

Otani said over three thousand Japanese filled the center, which was lined with barbed wire, who were allowed to take only what they could carry in their arms, and were assigned to stalls that previously housed animals.

"There were flies everywhere," said Otani, who described it as unbearably hot in the summer, and saturated with a strong stench leftover from the animals.

Back on the bus, the tour headed toward downtown passing by PGE Park, where the KKK once held rallies.

"It's another one of those ghosts," said Hess, who explained

that anti-black sentiment marked Oregon from its inception. Its original 1857 state constitution was the only one to ever explicitly exclude black people.

Although the exclusion provision was seldom enforced, its legacy continued well into the 20th century as racist public accommodation practices became common, including sundown laws, which excluded people from a town after nightfall, said Hess.

The Klan also built up the largest presence west of the Rocky Mountains, with estimates ranging from 35,000 to 200,000 members, she said. Its membership included a governor, numerous other elected officials, and police chiefs from across the state, who wielded considerable power in the state before they withered during the 1920s.

As the tour wrapped up, the bus traveled through southeast Portland to the site of a more recent flareup of racial violence, where Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant, was beaten to death by skinheads in 1988 - a reminder that white supremacists continued to have a presence well into the 20th century.

Hess mentioned that it's no accident that Oregon is one of the whitest states in the union, and that the north and northeast parts of the city have been hubs of the black community for a reason. Historical powers have shaped the city she said, and, "basically, we live with the aftermath of those powers."

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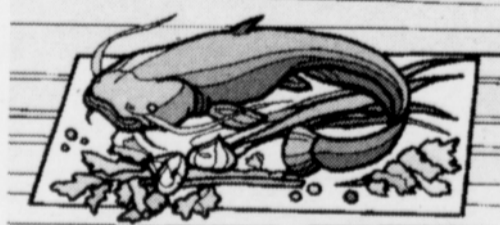
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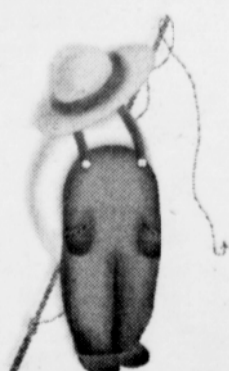
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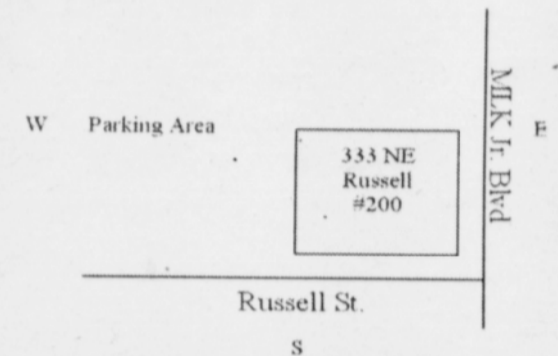
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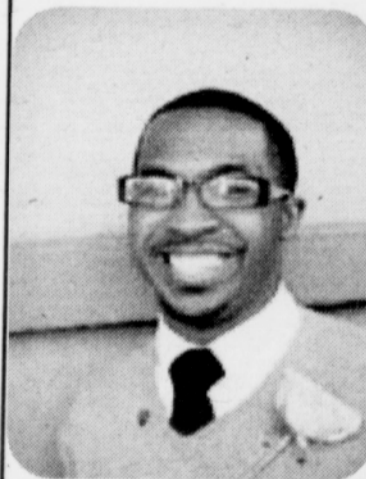
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