

# The Asian Reporter

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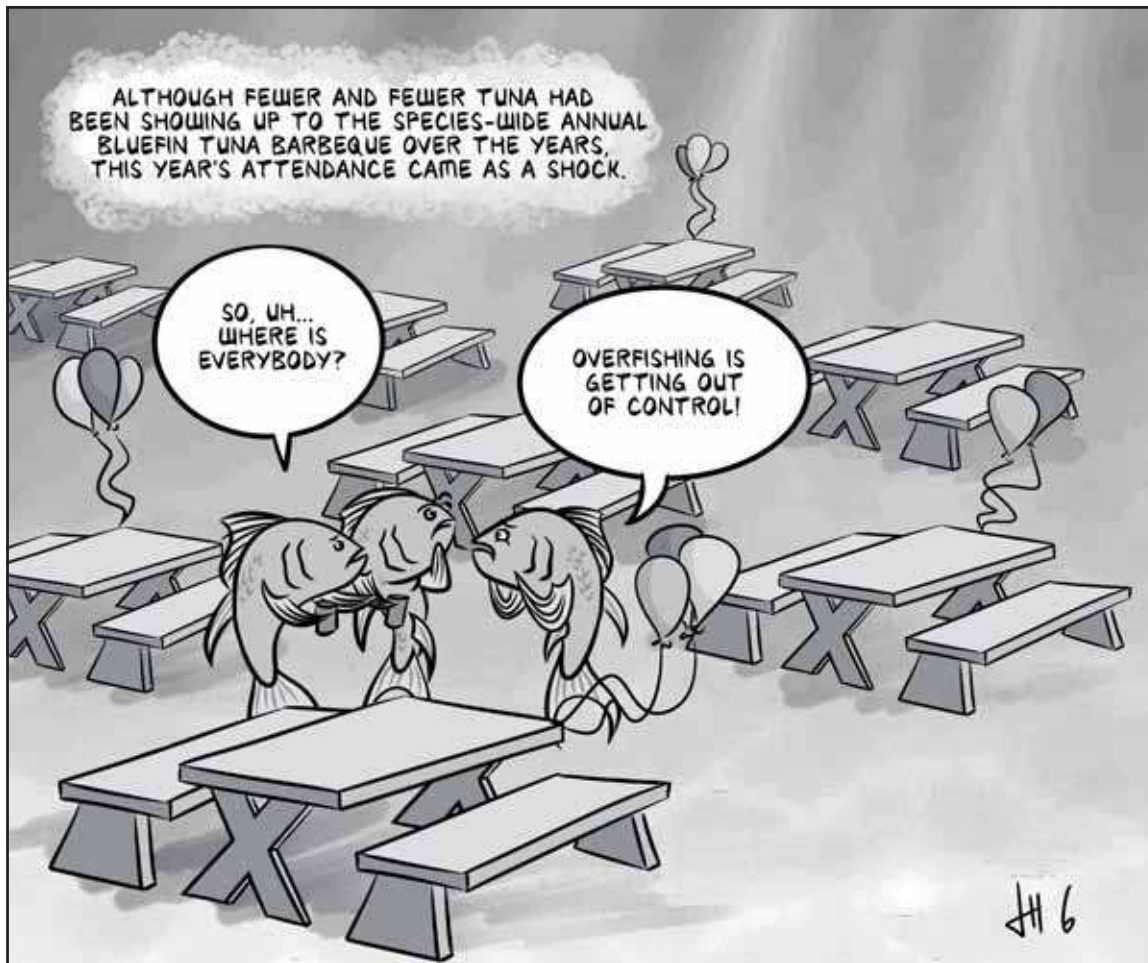
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**TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA**



■ Polo

## Celebrating civil-rights pioneer Minoru Yasui Honoring civil-rights activist Peggy Nagae

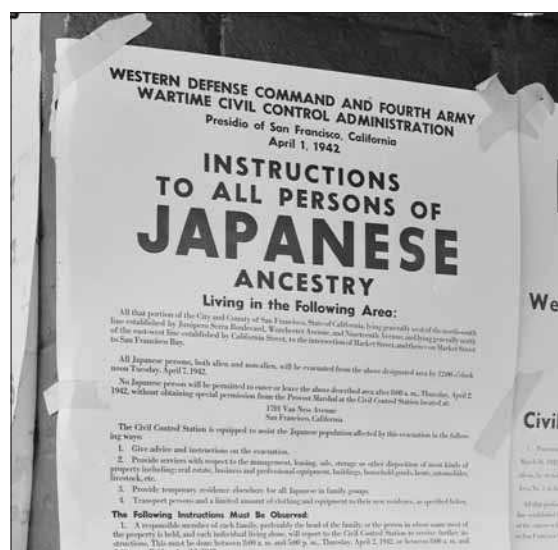
**H**ood River-raised, Portland lawyer Minoru Yasui did everything right. Of course he did. He met his immigrant elders' super-duper expectations of studying hard, of working late. He did good for his family and his community, he did right by their elegant ancestors and our blessed America. Min completed U of O's ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps); he earned a U.S. Army Infantry second lieutenant commission. He then earned a doctorate in law.

There wasn't a thing Min Yasui should've or even could've done different. There was no wrong in being born Asian American in 1916; his family had no part in Imperial Japan attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941; there's no fault in being a lawyer believing in the United States Constitution. Indeed, Min Yasui did not back away, he didn't deny any of these truths. Not ever.

Less than a week after the tragic bombing of the U.S. Naval station at Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested then released Mr. Yasui. Our government suspected he was an enemy alien. The feds confiscated his property. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the removal of more than 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry from their cozy homes, from their vigorous businesses. Portland's robust Japantown vanished in three weeks. On March 28, 1942, edgy lawyer Min Yasui deliberately stayed out late, breaking the military-imposed nighttime curfew ordinance targeting only Nikkei Portlanders. He turned himself in. He was again released on bail.

When the federal internment authorities ordered him to report for removal to one of many internment camps for Japanese Americans, Min Yasui refused. He told them he was going to break another law, the one prohibiting his ethnic community from travel, by going back to his family's Hood River farm.

**Making a better and bigger Us**  
Seventy-five years later, every student of Anglo-American Constitutional Law reveres the Supreme Court case of *Yasui v. the United States of America* (1943). We love the man, we're awed by what he did to the rule of law. By what he gave to democracy. Three quarters of a century after Mr. Yasui's stubborn refusal to get off the sidewalk, after his ignoring travel prohibitions, after his



*"Peggy leads with her heart. She consistently and selflessly deflected credit to everyone else on every team she was on. But these honors for Mr. Yasui would NEVER have happened without Peggy's vision, her determination and leadership."*

-- "Voices of Change" award committee

refusal to report for imprisonment, President Barack H. Obama posthumously awarded his Oregon family the 2015 Presidential Medal of Freedom.

On the evening of May 6, 2016, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) will present the Minoru Yasui "Voices of Change" award to local lawyer and national civil-rights activist, inspiring lecturer and prolific writer, Peggy Nagae. No one is more deserving.

Boring-born and raised Ms. Nagae was lead attorney in the decades-long *coram nobis* effort to overturn Mr. Yasui's 1942 criminal convictions — prosecutions for him being Japanese American. She later led national efforts which ultimately led to Mr. Yasui's Presidential Medal of Freedom award, and then to the congressional declaration, passed unanimously in both Oregon chambers, making March 28 Minoru Yasui Day, in perpetuity.

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