

Advisory Council – Initial Members

Russell Lee in Four Northwest Japanese-American Agricultural Internment Camps—1942 Farm Security Administration Photos

Note on value of such a council: Inspired by the many benefits derived from the employment of an international advisory team in the creation of the OCHC-produced Lois Leonard documentary film *Finding David Douglas*, we've assembled a wide-ranging council of former internees, historians, filmmakers, authors, archivists, exhibit curators, and museum directors from across the U.S. to help us explore this subject in depth and respond to project developments. They will counsel us in locating useful assets to the project, including subjects for oral histories, and locales for presentation of the exhibition and related programs. We will work with several members of the Council to develop lectures and presentations, or appear in panel discussions, over the many years we expect this exhibition and related programs to travel and appear in media contexts. Though little is expected from each member, great things are expected in concert.



Advisors and Selected Comments

Margaret Bullock, Tacoma, Washington — Curator, Tacoma Art Museum; formerly at Portland Art Museum; an excellent collaborator, she says, “As an art historian interested in the history and art history of the Northwest during the 1930s and 1940s I am thrilled to be introduced to this little known group of Lee’s work for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and to hear of your plans to travel an exhibition of selected photographs... This project seems a particularly fitting project for OCHC as a thoughtful and poignant follow-up to your highly successful traveling exhibition of Dorothea Lange’s photographs of the Northwest, also for the FSA... I believe there are a number of potential venues for your exhibition here in Washington and look forward to discussing possibilities with you.”

Elaine Kurtz Cockrell, Longview, Washington — Retired teacher and principal, Kelso, WA school district “My grandparents and father lived in Eastern Oregon on a 1934 homestead and employed Japanese who came to live at the Garrison Corner tent camp and later the Cow Hollow CCC camp... Little is known of this effort by the Japanese to show their patriotism by working in the fields, even as the relocation camps were being built and filled. At the time, the Japanese were credited with saving the sugar beet crops of 1942 and 1943... One [1942 Russell Lee] picture is of Dr. Maulding, our family’s physician, giving an inoculation to a young man in the health clinic trailer in the labor camp. These photos are truly memorable for many reasons and to many people.”

Ginger Cooper, Rupert Idaho — Secretary / curator, Minidoka County Historical Society Museum; her letter notes, “Although the Hunt Camp was located in Jerome County, Idaho, a number of its internees and their descendants eventually made their lives throughout the Snake River area and Southeastern Idaho. These descendants provided the impetus and proof the state required in order to mark the camp with an Idaho State Historical Sign and to develop a walking trail so that visitors can view the few buildings that are left. The Minidoka County Historical Society Museum will be excited to host the exhibit, and those descendants will enjoy the opportunity to view the exhibit locally.”

David A. Horowitz, Portland, Oregon — Professor of History, Portland State University, author of multiple volumes, including *The People’s Voice: A Populist History of Modern America* [2008]; his enthusiastic letter says, “A selection of Lee’s four hundred photographs of the residents, work routines, and physical surround-ings of these little know facilities, complete with original captions and a description of their social and political context, promises a revealing exploration of a fascinating chapter of regional and American History.”

F. Jack Hurley, Davidson, North Carolina — Professor Emeritus, The University of Memphis; author of *Russell Lee Photographer* [1978]. “I am writing to endorse the application of Morgen Young to do an exhibition of the photographs that Russell Lee took of Japanese American Internment Camps on the West Coast during the very early years of World War H. I believe that Morgen is well qualified to create a strong exhibit of this shameful chapter in American History and that the photographs of my late friend, Russell Lee, are uniquely appropriate to the purpose... Russ was a good enough business man to know that the Japanese Americans would get practically nothing for their homes and businesses and he was a strong supporter of the civil rights that he knew were being violated. He did the job because he felt that it was important that there be a visual record of this action and of the patience and inherent decency of the affected people.”

Lawson Fusao Inada, Medford, Oregon — 5th Oregon Poet Laureate [of only 6 in 154 years of statehood]; Professor Emeritus of English, Southern Oregon University; author, three volumes of poetry: *Before the War* [1971], *Legends of Camp* [1992], & *Drawing the Line* [1997], each including work reflecting personal experience with internment; editor, *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* [2000]. During his term as Poet Laureate Lawson traveled widely across the state, conducting workshops and giving readings in dozens of communities of all sizes. “Regarding your proposed OCHC exhibit of Russell Lee internment camp photos — a very significant subject indeed! And new to me, after decades of studying the internment experience. Moreover, the very idea of labor is certainly of interest and relevance today... It is ironic, of course, to consider how we, the “enemy,” were relied upon to provide necessary labor, on behalf of the nation, whereas today, in the ‘Russell Lee locations,’ the labor force has another status.”

Mike Iseri, Ontario, Oregon — a Japanese American community member in Malheur County, he also works with the Snake River chapter of Japanese Americans Citizens League. Mike writes: “...it is important that we are aware of our own roots. It is great importance to Japanese Americans, but also of great importance to the American public... the details of this American history may not become available to the general public. Without it, we are destined, as Americans, to repeat the mistakes of the not so distant past.”

Nancy Keeler, Boston, Massachusetts — Claire W. and Richard P. Morse Curatorial Research Fellow, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; former student of Russell Lee at University of Texas in Austin, who she calls “a marvelous teacher, and his influence was far-reaching. For me it was the foundation for an ongoing passion for the history of photography.”

Janet Komoto, Ontario, Oregon — President, Snake River Chapter, Japanese Americans Citizens League; she points out this “travelling exhibit of Farm Security Administration photographs that document the mobile Japanese internment camps in Oregon and Idaho is a project that is long overdue as the history of these labor camps diminishes with the passing of each internee and their family members and friends who are familiar with their experience... We are grateful that [Project Director Morgen Young] wants to gather and weave together a tangible project that will help educate students and the general public about a relatively unknown piece of history.”

Lois Leonard, Portland, Oregon — Co-editor and producer, *Waging War on the Home Front: An Illustrated Memoir of WWII* [Chauncey Del French, 2004], set primarily in the Vancouver, WA shipyards. She directed the just-completed *Finding David Douglas* [2012], a documentary on the Scottish botanist who brought 200+ species into the world’s scientific lexicon. Lois worked closely in OCHC’s development of *Dorothea Lange in Oregon*. She notes from deep experience: “There is an urgency to this topic as those who experienced the camps as children or adults are fewer with each passing year. It is imperative to capture their accounts now... I understand what it takes to accomplish a big goal. I believe Ms. Young and OCHC have the initiative and experience to reach their goals with the Russell Lee exhibit.”

Lynn Fuchigami Longfellow, Portland, Oregon — Executive Director, Oregon Nikkei Endowment; eager to host show following opening at 4RCC in the Endowment’s Legacy Center; she says, “Taken by FSA photographer Russell Lee, the exhibition of four hundred photographs accompanied by the accounts of surviving residents and their family members will draw overdue attention to the use of agricultural labor camps in 1942 as confinement sites of Americans of Japanese descent. It will also provide a wider historical context of the role of the Farm Security Administration during the incarceration, build a discussion around the so-called ‘Oregon Plan,’ and highlight the career of the FSA’s most prolific but least known photographer Russell Lee... By increasing public knowledge, scholarship, and building learning activities around this important Pacific Northwest story, the Oregon Nikkei Endowment finds this proposal critical to both documenting and sharing the Japanese American experience here in Oregon.”

Edward Takeshi Miyakawa, Kelso, Washington — An internee of Tule Lake Internment Camp in 1942 at seven years of age, Miyakawa is author of the novel, *TULE LAKE*. He states: “I have had the good fortune of benefiting from the work of the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission when *TULE LAKE* was selected as one of the books in *Literary Oregon, One Hundred Books, 1800-2000*. I appreciate the efforts, commitment, and historical insight involved in the outstanding projects OCHC has undertaken. I am very happy to endorse the Russell Lee traveling exhibit that will bring to light the courage, strength and endurance of Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II.”

Glen C. Morinaga, Ontario, Oregon — “I am Glen C. Morinaga, the eldest child of June N. Morishita Morinaga of Ontario, Oregon. As a young teenager, my mother and her family resided at the Garrison Tent Camp and the Cow Hollow Camp both located near Nyssa, Oregon. Four of her siblings and I believe, my mother, were featured in the Russell Lee FSA photographs... As my mother is now 84 years of age, I feel that it is very important and of utmost urgency that the process of completing the exhibit of the Japanese Labor Internment Camps in Oregon and Idaho be funded and addressed ASAP. Why? Because at this time we are losing many of the identified occupants of these camps and their stories of their experiences will soon be forever lost.”

Marnie Mueller, New York City, New York — Author, *Climate of the Country*, a novel set in the Tule Lake Internment Camp, where she was the first non-Japanese-American baby born. The novel explores the complex web of relations between a selection of internees and employees at that WWII incarceration center where her father helped develop a cooperative store. Marnie says in her support letter: “The tale of these farm workers, their courage, their travails, and their work ethic, is one that the general public knows almost nothing about. Once this exhibition is mounted, Americans will see with their own eyes what Japanese Americans contributed on the home front. Unearthing this vibrant material will also be a boon to the further dissemination of this essential piece of the American story by writers, filmmakers, and scholars who will finally have access to it. Nothing defines the history of this period better than photographs and personal remembrances; nothing brings that difficult time more vividly to the fore.”

Cris Paschild, Portland, Oregon — Director of Special Collections at Portland State University since 2008; the university recently acquired the archives of the Portland chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League; the collection details events surrounding evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans in Oregon. “As a past director of the Japanese American National Museum’s Hirasaki National Resource Center [in Los Angeles], I can speak from experience that there is a significant lack of research and representation of this aspect of the Japanese American internment period. I strongly believe that sharing more historical information on the Farm Security Administration and the practice of agricultural labor camps as confinement sites in the Pacific Northwest will be an important contribution to scholarship on this period of American history and will serve as a compelling point of connection for many communities.” Special Collections at PSU and its Portland JACL records serve “community members, academic researchers, and a diverse student body who actively engage with these historical records to enhance their understanding of local and national history. I would welcome the opportunity to point these researchers and students to this exhibit as an additional and important resource for understanding Japanese American history.”

Martha Sandweiss, Princeton, New Jersey — Professor of U.S. History at Princeton University; author of *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*, a major volume on early photography out west, and *Passing Strange*, a well-reviewed, highly complex novel on cross cultural relationships in early 20th century America. Her letter states: “Photographs Lee may have taken for one purpose become, now, images that yield visual information about a host of practices he may never have thought about. They are valuable bits of the historical record.”

Connie B. Schulz, Columbia, South Carolina — Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Former Director Public History Program, University of South Carolina; author of several state books on Farm Security Administration photography [Michigan, Kansas & South Carolina]; professor and thesis advisor for Lee Photography Project Director Morgen Young at USC. “I begin my letter of recommendation for your support of this photographic exhibit with my endorsement of Ms. Young, as I believe that the success of such a proposal depends heavily on the skills, experience, and knowledge of the professional who will be carrying it through to completion. The project itself is an ambitious and an important one... The success which the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission has already enjoyed with its earlier exhibit on the photography of Dorothea Lange indicate that there will be as large or larger an audience for the more extensive photography on the subject of Japanese internment camps by Russell Lee.”

Ilana Sol, Portland, Oregon — Director, *On Paper Wings*, documentary on the only civilian death incident in the continental U.S. from Japanese munitions, featuring individuals in both the U.S. and Japan affected by the incident and reconciliation in recent years. The film won Best Documentary award at both the Tacoma, WA and Kent, CT Film Festivals. *Seattle Weekly* described *On Paper Wings* as: “A panoramic portrait of civilians trapped on opposing sides of a conflict beyond their control.” Ilana is well versed in this history and notes: “Japanese American civilians made countless sacrifices for their country and fellow Americans during WWII. While some made the ultimate sacrifice by joining the heroic 442nd infantry regiment and other military units, Russell Lee’s photographs tell of a lesser known sacrifice, of those who stayed behind and worked in the fields of communities that had rejected them. Growing up on the West Coast with a keen interest in history, I never learned that there were any internment camps other than the ten we were taught about in school. And I certainly did not know that there were ever any camps here in Oregon. I am grateful that Russell Lee documented these camps with his photographs, but the photos will do no good unless they are shown to others and presented in the context of our local history. This exhibit aims to do just that.”

Matthew Stringer, Ontario, Oregon — Executive Director, Four Rivers Cultural Center, which featured OCHC’s *Dorothea Lange in Oregon*, a highly visible and successful stop on that exhibition’s tour. Matt’s childhood home is Nyssa, Oregon to which he returned after decades of professional work in New York City; he knows the lay of the land and cultural currents in Malheur County. In mid-2012 Matt staged a gathering of individuals impacted by the WWII internment as an early step in this effort. 4RCC will first host the *Russell Lee Exhibition*. His letter says: “Ontario, Oregon was seen as a bastion of tolerance for the Japanese in comparison to other areas in the west. This is something that our community is extremely proud of at this point in time. Ontario, Oregon has more Japanese inhabitants per capita than any other municipality in Oregon. This is the story of our people... At Four Rivers Cultural Center our mission is dedicated to enhancing respect and appreciation for all cultures, and we are especially excited about this exhibit because it meets our objectives and mission to feature this information.”

Linda Tamura, Salem, Oregon — Professor of Education, Willamette University; author, *The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon’s Hood River Valley* [1993], and *Nisei Soldiers Break their Silence: Coming Home to Hood River* [2012]. Linda’s first book *The Hood River Issei* is an essential text for this project, as she captures critical elements of the socio-political context locally and in Oregon [Hood River was Oregon’s 2nd largest Japanese-American community before WWII and her family home]. Many of those portrayed had experiences outside the traditional internment camps, including locales in Idaho and Oregon that this project will explore. Her letter notes: “As those who

experienced World War II are aging and as programs delineate their loss of civil rights, the incarceration of Japanese Americans is also gaining renewed awareness. New audiences of citizens, students, and scholars are increasingly asking questions about our cultural, socio-economic, and political diversity; the consequences for a nation's people; and what we can learn from the past to inform our policies and actions for the future.”

Gus Tanaka, Ontario, Oregon — Gus Tanaka and his mother were interned at Minidoka; his father, a doctor, was sent to federal detention camps. He is a long-time area medical doctor and resident of Ontario. His letter opens: “I am submitting this letter of support for [Project Director Morgen Young’s] request for grant in developing a documentary exhibit of the story of how Japanese Americans helped in the agricultural harvest of crops in the Eastern Oregon and Southwest Idaho during World War II, with some relocating in this region ahead of the War Relocation Authority order to evacuate the Pacific Coastal strip of the three States touching on the ocean, or being furloughed out of the Relocation centers, such as the one in Minidoka, ID.”

Marie Rose Wong, Seattle, Washington — Associate Professor, Urban Planning, Asian American Studies, Seattle University, author of *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: the Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* [2004]; her letter adds: “The OCHC will tell the story of community and the lives of individuals through a rich combination of photographer Lee’s original photograph captions and expanded with the OCHC’s documentation and interviews of camp survivors and their descendents.”



The following individuals who did not provide formal letters of support will provide valuable counsel and connections to this project.

Margaret Harman, Austin, Texas – Former Russell Lee student, Margaret led the effort to create Russell Lee scholarships in photographic studies in his honor. Margaret says, “Russell Lee was the best teacher I ever had... The Briscoe Center for American History and The Harry Ransom Center [both @ the University of Texas at Austin] might be possible venues for a traveling exhibit. Certainly one of the destinations should be in Austin! I’ll be glad to answer any questions or try to track down people in the central Texas area who could provide more information and insight. I’m also happy to help spread the word about your project – thank you for taking this on!”

Kyna Herzinger, Raleigh, North Carolina — A Yonsei raised in the Pacific Northwest, her Master’s thesis, “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Japs,” explored Nikkei identities at Minidoka. She received her M.L.I.S. and M.A. in Public History from the University of South Carolina in 2010. She now serves as a special collections and manuscripts librarian for the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Regarding recruitment of Minidoka internees to other camps, Kyna states, “In my study of Minidoka, I found that as many of Idaho’s men left for overseas service, Nikkei were granted temporary leave to provide the manual labor to sustain the area’s agricultural economy. Internees were enticed with both pragmatic and patriotic incentives to volunteer for crop harvest. A full-page advertisement in *The Irrigator* sought to recruit the ‘productive services of every employable person.’ The ad assured its readers that those who volunteered would be helping, ‘the interest of the nation,’ calling it ‘an opportunity to produce more food for freedom, thereby helping America win the war and the peace to follow.’ In short, these individuals would hire themselves out in groups for a harvest season; some worked locally while others were provided housing and fully left the confines of camp. Those that left, though, eventually had to return.”

Brian Hirai, Seattle, Washington — Son of Roy Hirai, who helped organize Japanese farmers to move to the camp in Nyssa from the Portland Assembly Center and also recruited other Japanese farmers from Minidoka; Roy Hirai later served as a judge in Malheur County. Brian Hirai is also a nephew of Paul Hirai and has provided information related to recruitment of internees to the Oregon camp.

Paul Hirai, Moses Lake, Washington — Interned at Cow Hollow camp near Nyssa as a child; moved out of the camp in 1949. Paul has identified some of the subjects in the Oregon series and has helped describe life in the camp.

Mike Hollomon, Wendell, Idaho – First United Methodist minister in a church near Twin Falls and former associate minister in Pocatello, near Shelley, another mobile internment camp site; he has worked closely with many Japanese Americans in southern Idaho and will be glad to help us make connections in the area. Mike recalls, “One of the gentlemen related to me his experiences of farming in the Blackfoot area. He and his parents would go visit their family in Japan pre WWII and had very strong family connections in Japan, but they were not locked up in the camps because they lived in Idaho but their fellow Japanese who happen to lived on the coast were locked up down the road. This man was free to farm his land and he had members of the Camp helping him work the land, he was free they were not but both were Japanese. This troubled him for years of the injustice.”

Janet Tolman Koda, Vale, Oregon — Daughter of ‘Sonny’ Yoshio Takami and Mary Akiko Ouchida Takami; her parents and numerous other relatives were interned at the Garrison Corner tent camp and later the Cow Hollow camp, both near Nyssa, Oregon; the family was the last to leave the Cow Hollow Camp. Janet recalls, “They were assembled about the same time at the Portland International Stockyard for a couple of months, in 1942. The Amalgamated Sugar Beet Company wanted laborers to help harvest the sugar beets before they froze into the ground. Most of the area men joined the military, so there were no local workers around. So, they asked for about 30 (prisoners of war) men. My father was one first group of Japanese men. There are meetings of decisions and comments are recorded in the Ontario ‘Argus’ Newspaper archives. A tent camp was set up at Garrison Corner, about 3 miles South of Nyssa. These 30 men worked out fine and another 30 was asked for. Soon, these men were asking for family members to join them from the assembly center and from other camps.” Janet and her sister **Carol** [see below] have involved many surviving internees and their descendants with the project, including: **Dange Atagi, Fumi Atagi, Anne Enoki, Junne Hirai, Patricia Imada, Jim and Yoneko Kanetomi, June Morinaga, Charlie Morishita, Russ Murata, Helen Okai, Joe and Nell Saito, Toshie Takami, Kaye Yamaguchi, Cathy Yasuda, and Ruth Yoneyama.**

Ken Ruoff, Portland, Oregon — Professor of History and Director of the Center for Japanese Studies at Portland State University; in 2005 he was awarded the Osaragi Jiro Prize for Commentary for the Japanese translation of his book *The People’s Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy, 1945-1995*. He has described this exhibition as a “worthwhile project.”²

Norio Saito, Portland, Oregon — Internee with his family as a boy at Minidoka, he has excellent contacts from his time there and the following decades, many who went to live and work in lesser known sites across Oregon and Idaho.

Carol Takami Tolman, Vale, Oregon — Daughter of ‘Sonny’ Yoshio Takami and Mary Akiko Ouchida Takami; she was interned along with her parents and numerous other relatives at the Garrison Corner tent camp and later the Cow Hollow camp, both near Nyssa, Oregon; the family was the last to leave the Cow Hollow Camp. Carol and her sister Janet have involved many surviving internees and their descendants with the project. Carol, Janet and their mother Mary Takami have identified many subjects in the Oregon series of 1942 FSA photos taken by Russell Lee.