



JACL

Japanese American Citizens League

Anti-Semitism Widely Condemned

Swastika on Sacramento Kings Mural Denounced by Florin and Sacramento JACL

Sacramento, CA - - A hateful Nazi swastika twice defaced NBA player Omri Casspi's picture on a downtown Sacramento Kings mural on September 8th and 16th and twice met with widespread local condemnation, including from the local Sacramento and Florin Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Chapters. Omri Casspi is the popular first Israeli NBA player who debuted with the Sacramento Kings in 2009 and is of the Jewish faith.

Upon each incident, City of Sacramento maintenance crews quickly painted over the small swastika on Casspi's forehead. The Sacramento Kings mural is located on 16th Street between Q. and R. Streets.

The swastika is a despised symbol of the anti-Jewish hatred of the German Nazis during World War II. It has been perpetuated by right wing groups and skin heads in the U.S. and other countries.

Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, the Sacramento Kings, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), city police, and many others denounced the bigotry. The ADL added \$1,000 to the crime alert reward fund, backed by another \$1,000 from King's co-owner Joe Maloof to make a total of \$3,000. Anyone with information is asked to call Crime Alert at (916) 443-HELP.



Picture of Sacramento Kings player Omri Casspi on a mural twice defaced by a swastika in September.

For Japanese Americans and the local JACL Chapters, this attack raised many memories including for Sacramento JACL Chapter President Miko Sawamura. She recalled how their Sacramento JACL office, Temple B'nai Israel, Sacramento NAACP, and the home of Sacramento City Councilman Jimmie Yee (a Chinese American) were all firebombed in 1993. "This incident is a reminder that we need to continue sending a strong message that bigotry is not acceptable in our Sacramento community."

Later in 1999, hate-mongers firebombed 3 Jewish temples in Sacramento and murdered a gay couple in the Northern California town of Redding. Japanese Americans continued their support of Jewish Americans, plus worked closely with the gay and lesbian community, including raising donations for a temple rebuilding fund.

Marielle Tsukamoto, President of the Florin JACL Chapter in Sacramento, has been an activist in many redress education and interfaith efforts, including working with the Jewish community. As Marielle explained, "This shows we have to start moving towards better understanding and acceptance, not just tolerance."

Anti-Semitism continues unabated in the U.S. In the latest 2008 "Hate Crimes Report", the FBI disclosed that hate crimes are on the rise in recent years. Of the 7,783 hate crimes reported, 17.5% (1,606) were due to religious bias. Of these, a large 65.7% were anti-Jewish.

Additionally, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Bureau of Justice Statistics the real number of hate crimes in the U.S. is actually 15 times as many as those reported to the FBI. Crimes based on race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and disability are much more prevalent than commonly believed.

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States and was founded in 1929. The JACL strives to ensure that civil liberties are upheld for Asian Americans and others who are targeted by acts of injustice and intolerance. The Sacramento and Florin Chapters are located in the Sacramento area and are among the JACL's 110 chapters around the U.S. For further local information, you may contact Fumie Shimada and Andy Noguchi, Civil Rights co-Chairs of the Florin JACL Chapter at andynoguchi@hotmail.com