



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
2000 MAIN STREET, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA 92648-2702

**OFFICE OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER
SEAN JOYCE**

February 28, 2022

Jon Vander Ark, President and Chief Executive Officer
Republic Services, Inc.
18500 North Allied Way
Phoenix, AZ 85054

Dear Mr. Vander Ark,

I am writing to inform you of a structure fire that occurred at 7642 Warner Avenue, Huntington Beach, CA, on February 25, 2022. The fire destroyed an historic building at the Wintersburg property, which has resulted in the irreplaceable loss of an important historic structure on a property of vital historic heritage to the Japanese-American community.

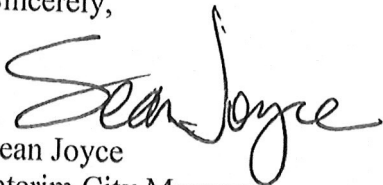
Regrettably, the fire that destroyed the building comes as no surprise to those who continued to register their concerns about the continued deterioration and risk of fire damage to the property owned by Republic Services. The significance of this historic site and its structures cannot be overstated. The National Trust for Historic Preservation says of Historic Wintersburg:

Historic Wintersburg parallels the rise of Orange County as a major agricultural and economic hub, and today it is among the only surviving Japanese American properties acquired before California passed anti-immigrant land laws in 1913 and 1920. Everyone associated with the Furuta farm and the Wintersburg mission was incarcerated during World War II, as were all Japanese Americans in Orange County. This historic site is a reminder of our nation's civil rights history and the struggle for social justice that many immigrant communities continue to face today.

In light of the destruction resulting from this recent fire, I believe there is an urgency to immediately commencing discussions between the City of Huntington Beach and Rainbow Environmental Service.-Republic Services to discuss how, together, we might transfer the property to the City and/or its partners in historic preservation so that we may preserve and restore this historic property and its structures and properly honor the site and Japanese Americans of Orange County, the State of California, and of the United States of America.

I look forward to speaking with you at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss how we can meet our mutual interests for the property on behalf of those we each serve. I can be reached at (714) 375-8465.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Joyce". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "S".

Sean Joyce
Interim City Manager

c: Huntington Beach Mayor & City Council
Dave Hauser, Market Vice President, Republic Services



LITTLE TOKYO
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

February 28, 2022

City of Huntington Beach
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Dear Mayor Delgleize and City Council Members,

The fire and unpermitted demolition on Friday, February 25, of the 1910 Wintersburg Japanese Mission's manse at the Historic Wintersburg property comes after years of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian hate, orchestrated harassment on social media, and threats to preservationists. The documented public use and publication of anti-Japanese graphics, comments that the preservation of the property "celebrates Pearl Harbor," deliberate cyber harassment targeting Historic Wintersburg on a daily basis, and obviously orchestrated cyber harassment on December 7 each year are a clear picture about who the hate was targeting—the Japanese American community in Orange County.

City officials and Republic Services were made aware. The city and Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services also were notified in writing for years of concerns about security and maintenance to prevent vandalism and fire risk. Currently, the historic structures are un-boarded so open to vandalism and fire risk. Security is completely inadequate. Simple maintenance such as weed abatement is not being conducted. The Little Tokyo Historical Society toured the National Treasure heritage site in April 2017 so it is unfathomable that the conditions of the site still have not been addressed for improvement.

We strongly demand the following actions on the part of the City Council:

- 1) We are calling for a thorough investigation for arson and for the ongoing negligence and purposeful demolition-by-neglect by Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
- 2) We also are calling for the right of Japanese Americans to enter the property with permission to collect ash and artifacts, to honor and save what is left of a sacred site where the Mission and manse stood. In case it is not understood, this is a significant heritage property and a place of spiritual meaning. Our 100+ year history was quickly erased by the fire and unpermitted and purposeful demolition of the 112-year old historic and Japanese American heritage structures by Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
- 3) We also call on the City to help facilitate a *genuine* response from Republic Services corporate officers in Phoenix, Arizona, to move forward the discussions for purchase of the property by historical organizations for historic preservation (Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, and Historic Wintersburg).

Sincerely,

Michael G. Okamura
President



Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)

Headquarters: 1765 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115 Tel: (415) 921-5225
DC Office: 1629 K Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20006 Tel: (202) 223-1240
www.jacl.org

March 1, 2022

Mayor Barbara Delgleize and the Huntington Beach City Council
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Sent via email

Dear Mayor Delgleize and Huntington Beach City Council,

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was devastated to learn of the fire and unpermitted demolition of the 1910 Wintersburg Japanese Mission's manse at the Historic Wintersburg property that took place on Friday, February 25, which was the culmination of years of deliberate neglect. Historic Wintersburg were named one of America's Most Endangered Historic Places in 2014 and designated a National Treasure in 2015. Preserve Orange County named it one of Orange County's Most Endangered Historic Places in 2017.

Since 1929, the JACL has worked tirelessly to preserve the history, culture, and legacy of Japanese Americans. For 93 years and counting, the JACL has supported, honored, and advanced policies that safeguard the interests of those who are Japanese Americans, and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry. We maintain a strong presence in the Huntington Beach area with several chapters serving the area.

As an organization that actively works towards preserving and honoring the legacy of those Japanese Americans who were wrongfully incarcerated during WWII, the allowance of the Historic Wintersburg site to fall into such disrepair and the catastrophic loss of the Japanese Mission's Manse particularly upsetting.

We join others in urging several immediate actions by the city of Huntington Beach:

1. We are calling for a thorough arson investigation in light of the ongoing negligence and purposeful neglect by property owners Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
2. We call for the opportunity for Japanese Americans in partnership with appropriate historians and archaeologists who have a connection to this site to be granted permission to collect ash and artifacts, to honor and save what is left of a sacred site where the mission and manse stood. For Japanese and Japanese Americans, this is a significant heritage property and a place imbued with spiritual meaning.
3. We also call on the City to help facilitate agreement between Republic Services and local organizations for historic preservation (Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Historic Wintersburg) to arrange for

purchase of the property on which the historic buildings stand so they may be preserved.

We hope that the city and community of Huntington Beach will do its part to recognize the important place Historic Wintersburg holds in the history of Huntington Beach, Orange County, and our nation. The site is of particular interest for the Japanese American community. For me, as a Japanese American, and as a Presbyterian, this site is of particular importance personally.

If Huntington Beach continues to allow these historic landmarks to fall further into disrepair, they will be lost forever. Please take action to ensure future generations can learn the story of Historic Wintersburg.

Sincerely,



David Inoue
Executive Director

cc: Sean Joyce, Interim City Manager
Mary Urashima, Historic Wintersburg in Huntington Beach



March 1, 2022

Dear Mayor Delgleize and City Council Members:

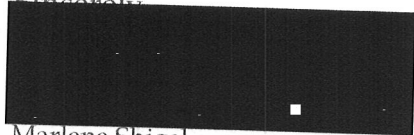
The fire and demolition on Friday, February 25, of the 1910 Wintersburg Japanese Mission's manse at the Historic Wintersburg property comes after years of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian hate, orchestrated harassment on social media, and threats to preservationists. The documented public use and publication of anti-Japanese graphics, comments that the preservation of the property "celebrates Pearl Harbor," deliberate cyber harassment targeting Historic Wintersburg on a daily basis, and obviously orchestrated cyber harassment on December 7 each year are a clear picture about who the hate was targeting.

City officials and Republic Services were made aware. City officials and Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services also were notified in writing for years of concerns about security and maintenance at the property to prevent vandalism and fire risk. Currently, historic structures are unboarded and open to vandalism and fire risk. Property security is completely inadequate. Simple maintenance such as weed abatement is not being conducted.

We urge several actions on the part of the City Council:

- 1) We are calling for a thorough investigation for arson and for the ongoing negligence and purposeful demolition-by-neglect by Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
- 2) We also are calling for the right of Japanese Americans to enter the property with permission to collect ash and artifacts, to honor and save what is left of a sacred site where the Mission and manse stood. In case it is not understood, this is a significant heritage property and a place of spiritual meaning.
- 3) We also call on the City to help facilitate a genuine response from Republic Services corporate officers in Phoenix, Arizona, to move forward the discussions for purchase of the property by historical organizations for historic preservation (Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Historic Wintersburg).

Sincerely,



Marlene Shigekawa
President
Poston Community Alliance

BOARD MEMBERS

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Landscape Architect



Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium

March 3, 2022

City of Huntington Beach
2000 Main St.
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Dear Mayor Delgleize and City Council Members,

The Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium (JACSC) is deeply concerned by the fire and unpermitted demolition on Friday, February 25, resulting in the loss of the oldest two of the three historic structures of the Historic Wintersbug Japanese Mission: both the 1910 Japanese Mission and the mission's manse, also built in 1910. The loss of the historic church and manse is great, as the site holds national significance as a National Treasure, and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Beyond this value from a preservation standpoint, it holds deep significance and meaning to the greater Japanese American community as a unique cultural landscape of our pre-war communities.

The mission of JACSC is to preserve, protect, and interpret historic sites, artifacts, and experiences, and to elevate the social justice lessons of the Japanese American WWII experience to highlight ways that civil and human rights abuses put the rights of all Americans at risk. Our members represent a national network of organizations passionately dedicated to individually and collaboratively preserving the history of the Japanese American experience.

We are aware that this tragic loss was preceded by years of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian hate, orchestrated harassment on social media, and threats to preservationists. The documented public use and publication of anti-Japanese graphics, comments that the preservation of the property "celebrates Pearl Harbor," deliberate cyber harassment targeting Historic Wintersburg on a daily basis, and obviously orchestrated cyber harassment on December 7 each year are a clear picture about who the hate was targeting.

Moreover, City officials and Republic Services were made aware of this rise in anti-Asian targeting on Historic Wintersburg and were also notified in writing for years of concerns about security and maintenance at the property to prevent vandalism and fire risk. Currently, historic structures are unboarded and open to vandalism and fire risk. We are deeply troubled by the inadequate property security and lack of maintenance, which leaves the site open to further degradation.

We urge several actions on the part of the City Council:

Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium

- 1) We are calling for a thorough investigation for arson and for the ongoing negligence and purposeful demolition-by-neglect by Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
- 2) We also are calling for the right of Japanese Americans to enter the property with permission to collect ash and artifacts, to honor and save what is left of a sacred site where the Mission and manse stood. In case it is not understood, this is a significant heritage property and a place of spiritual meaning.
- 3) We also call on the City to help facilitate the purchase of the property by historical organizations for historic preservation (Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Historic Wintersburg) from Republic Services.

Please include us in future communications pertaining to this matter, as our national network of stakeholders is invested in Historic Wintersburg and the response of the City.

Sincerely,



Mia Russell
Manager



JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

100 N. Central Avenue Los Angeles, California 90012
TEL 213.625.0414 FAX 213.625.1770
WEB janm.org • janmstore.com • DiscoverNikkei.org

March 3, 2022

City of Huntington Beach
2000 Main St.
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Dear Mayor Delgleize and City Council Members,

On behalf of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), I share our great concern and regret surrounding the devastating loss of the Japanese Mission historic church and manse at Historic Wintersburg as a result of a fire and unpermitted demolition on Friday, February 25. The loss of these two structures dating from 1910 resounds greatly with our institution, as our mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience.

Amidst the recent rise of anti-Asian prejudice and hate sweeping the nation, Historic Wintersburg and its preservationist community have been targeted by ongoing harassment and threats. City officials and Republic Services were made aware of anti-Asian targeting on Historic Wintersburg and were also notified in writing for years of concerns about security and maintenance at the property to prevent vandalism and fire risk. It is deeply troubling that the Historic Wintersburg site is currently open to additional vandalism and fire risk, which follows a history of inadequate property security and lack of maintenance.

We join the call for these immediate actions by the City of Huntington Beach:

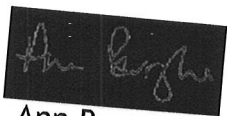
- A thorough investigation for arson and for the ongoing negligence and purposeful demolition-by-neglect by Rainbow Environmental-Republic Services.
- Granting permission for Japanese Americans to enter the property with permission to collect ash and artifacts, to honor and save what is left of a sacred site where the Mission and manse stood. In case it is not understood, this is a significant heritage property and a place of spiritual meaning.
- Facilitating the purchase of the property from Republic Services by organizations dedicated to historic preservation (Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Historic Wintersburg).

As recently as 2018, JANM expressed to you our concerns that the sale of the Historic Wintersburg property would jeopardize the future of the historic site, which is both a National Treasure and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. As a site purchased prior to California's 1913 Alien Land Law, Historic Wintersburg is an extremely rare and priceless piece of Japanese pioneer history, and is of importance

to the multicultural history of California, the greater Japanese American community, and indeed to the cultural landscape of our national history. It is unfortunate that these expressed concerns would turn out to be prescient.

I urge you to take swift and significant action to preserve the remaining Historic Wintersburg site and structures for future generations.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Ann Burroughs".

Ann Burroughs
President and CEO