

# PACIFIC CITIZEN

CELEBRATING 92 YEARS

 HAPPY  
*new*  
20*years*  
21  
  
 YEAR  
OF THE  
OX  


**INSIDE:** JACL NATIONAL  
BOARD GREETINGS



# Vandals Hit S.F.'s J-town, L.A.'s Little Tokyo

Property is damaged in two historic Japanese enclaves.

By P.C. Staff

The Year of the Ox arrived like a bull in a china shop for San Francisco's Japantown and Los Angeles' Little Tokyo as acts of vandalism struck both historic ethnic enclaves.

Security video showed two cherry trees, planted in the mid-1990s adjacent to San Francisco's Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC, aka the Center) in Japantown, torn down to their trunks by a man over the New Year's holiday.

In Los Angeles, meantime, several Little Tokyo buildings sustained damaged windows, according to published reports. Victimized were several businesses and Japanese American community organizations including the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center and the Japanese American National Museum, which also had some windows damaged last August. (See [tinyurl.com/y6jcrqbv](https://tinyurl.com/y6jcrqbv).)

According to Matt Okada, the JCCCNC's director of special events and communication, the damage to the cherry trees occurred on two



These stills from the JCCCNC's security camera video show the perpetrator tearing off and walking away with limbs from one of the two damaged cherry trees.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE JCCCNC

separate nights.

"There were two incidents on Friday, Jan. 1, the first one being around 1 a.m. and the second one around 1:25 a.m.," Okada said. "He came back on Sunday, Jan. 3, around 3:30 a.m. and finished the job."

The vandal, described as a male African American over 6 feet tall and weighing more than 300 pounds, was shown in security camera video using just his hands to tear the trees asunder. Video stills show him wearing a dark hooded jacket.

"It's astonishing the lengths the vandal went to, to destroy each limb

from the trees," said Haruka Roudebush, the Center's senior programs manager. "Some of the early news reports used language that suggests the limbs were cut off of the tree, but they were actually ripped off by hand, one by one, with considerable effort. I can't think of any reason why anyone would want to do this, but I'm so grateful how much immediate support has come from the broader community in response to this vandalism."

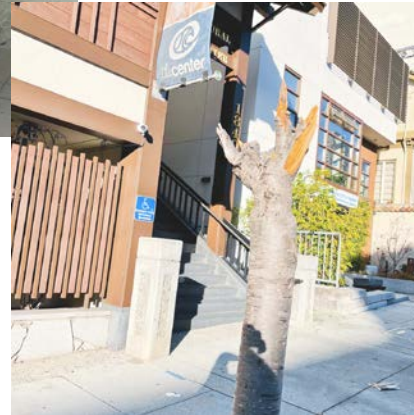
Okada was doubtful whether the trees could survive and speculated that the trees will need to be replaced. He added that the Center will be working with the city and county of San Francisco, with the city being entity that is actually responsible for the trees, to assess whether the trees can be saved or will need to be replaced.

A GoFundMe campaign to raise funds to replace the trees was launched with a goal of raising \$5,000. To date, nearly \$31,000 has been raised.

"We've received a tremendous outpouring of support," said Okada.

This photo shows the extent of the damage to one of the cherry trees planted in San Francisco's Japantown

PHOTO: DAVID TOSHIYUKI




"It's been very moving."

In Los Angeles, an arrest has been made in relation to the acts of vandalism, which took place Jan. 5, 2021, and Dec. 18, 2020, according to the *Rafu Shimpo*, whose report pointed to a mentally ill homeless person as the suspect. The newspaper also reported that among the businesses victimized were the Kajima Building, Cafe Demitasse, the San Pedro Firm Building and the California Bank & Trust.

In another act of vandalism in San Francisco, a street memorial near 2nd and Mission streets to deceased hit-and-run victims was desecrated.

Japanese national Hanako Abe, 27, and Elizabeth Platt, 60, were killed on New Year's Eve while crossing the street. Arrested for the incident was Troy McCalister, 45, described as a parolee and multiple offender, who was driving a stolen car that struck and killed the two victims. He was charged with DUI and vehicular manslaughter. ■



**FA-KAJI FAMILY**

Hoping for brighter days in 2021.

Thankful for the ongoing justice work of Berkeley JACL.

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The P.C.'s mission is to 'educate on the past Japanese American experience and preserve, promote and help the current and future AAPI communities.'

*\* Your donations will help build and preserve a cohesive library of the Pacific Citizen to educate future generations.\**

*'I'm glad to see the Pacific Citizen growing and evolving with its website, and especially LOVE the much easier-to-navigate digital archives. It's a treasure trove for JAs to learn about our community's history, and for scholars and journalists looking to connect the past with the present. Thanks for the improvements, P.C.!'*

— Gil Asakawa



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## A MOTHER'S TAKE

# I CHOOSE TO SAY NO TO RESOLUTIONS

By Marsha Aizumi

Last month when I was trying to come up with a thought for “A Moment in Time” for the P.C.’s annual holiday issue, I listened to Whitney Houston’s “One Moment in Time” song for inspiration.

The music video was filled with Olympic moments where people were affirmed that they were “more than they thought they could be.” Then I watched Kevin Costner’s eulogy at Whitney Houston’s funeral. This amazing singer was haunted by not being enough . . . not pretty enough, not a good enough singer. She would struggle with “did people really like her?” She didn’t want to disappoint those around her. She wanted to be perfect.

So, even though Whitney’s

music and story did not seem to fit the message I wanted for the holiday edition, I thought it was an appropriate inspiration for this column to start 2021. This is the time for hopeful New Year’s resolutions.

On Jan. 1, I thought about losing weight, exercising more, finding time to meditate, eliminating sugar, gluten and dairy from my diet . . . but by the following week, those thoughts vanished from my consciousness.

Also, my mom used to say that your house will always be as clean throughout the year as it is on New Year’s Day. I used to try to clean everything because I wanted to have a perfect house. I realize that clean enough is good enough. It doesn’t have to be perfect!

Like Whitney Houston, I, too, have been haunted by perfection and not

being good enough. It is hard to live in a society that values beauty of face and body and not being different. For me personally, it is hard to grow old with those values surrounding me at every turn . . . in television, movies and magazines.

I live faced with those expectations every day as I look at myself in the mirror. The person that looks back at me now has more wrinkles, age spots, droopy eyelids and marionette lines extending from her mouth. My body has more lumps and bumps, my hair is grey (though I continue to dye it) and often falls out when I shampoo it. I am no longer young.

But one of my favorite children’s books is “The Velveteen Rabbit,” a story about a stuffed rabbit. I especially love this passage:

*“Weeks passed, and the little Rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him just as much. He loved him so hard that he loved all his whiskers off, and the pink lining to his ears turned grey, and his brown spots faded. He even began to lose his shape, and he scarcely looked like a rabbit any more, except to the Boy. To him he was always beautiful, and that was all that the little Rabbit cared about. He didn’t mind how he looked to other people, because the*

*nursery magic had made him Real, and when you are Real shabbiness doesn’t matter.”*

I remember as my parents began to age, I didn’t love them less because they were no longer young. I actually loved them more because as I matured, I realized how much they had given me, not just in material items, but in helping me become a better person.

In some ways, I am like the Velveteen Rabbit. I have lost my shape. I have less hair, and the hair I have has turned grey. I have grown older. But today, I am more real than I ever have been.

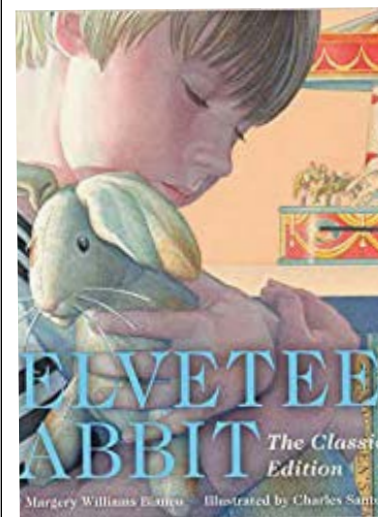
Where I once tried to hide what I felt, today I always try to say what is true for me with kindness and an open mind. And yet even though I often judge myself, I have to remember it is not how I look that matters as much as how I love and how much I am loved.

I have been so fortunate to have the husband I have and the children that may not have been born out of my body, but my heart. I also have so many wonderful family and friends who surround me with so much joy.

So in this new year, I am not making any resolutions. I am going to live my life with more kindness and

gratitude. What I do want to say is that I wish all my readers health and peace until we can all get vaccinated. And I hope that all of you know that every word I write comes from my heart, and I hope it goes into yours. Happy New Year everyone!

*Marsha Aizumi is an advocate in the LGBT community and author of the book “Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance.”*



“The Velveteen Rabbit”



## LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

# AGING IN PLACE

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

Get it — “Home is where the heart is.” Even in cases where physical or cognitive decline make it difficult to live independently, seniors vastly prefer aging in place to moving into a long-term care facility. At home, you can live your life as you see fit. You also enjoy a sense of dignity unavailable to many other seniors you know.

As a senior, this year’s New Year’s resolution might be to remain at home for another year. Seniors who age in place enjoy a sense of independence and comfort that only home can provide. Of course, you need to “age in place” safely. That means looking into two things: (1) senior proofing a home and (2) a medical alert system.

Senior proofing a home requires making changes to ensure the home is safer and fall proof. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that 3 million elderly people are treated in emergency rooms for fall injuries each year. When a senior falls, he

or she is likely to suffer traumatic brain injuries, cuts, fractures and broken bones.

Whether you are the senior aging in place or the family member caring for your elderly parent(s), it’s best to make any needed modifications throughout the house to senior proof the home. Senior proofing a home is different for every senior because every person has a different set of disabilities, e.g., visual disabilities, cognitive disabilities, mobility and much more.

Senior proofing a home might require changes such as home modifications like a walk-in tub. Other tips:

- Get rid of throw rugs.
- Install grab bars and rails.
- Declutter living spaces.
- Install better lighting.
- Rearrange furniture.

A “Fall Prevention Checklist” can be found online at <https://seniorsafetyadvice.com/fall-prevention-tips>.

“But Judd, that’s a lot of money. I can’t afford it.” If you’re a senior

and own your home, there’s a good chance that you own your home “free and clear” (or you owe a small equity line of credit). You’re sitting on your nest egg. If your home needs to be “senior proofed” so that you can age in place safely, you may consider tapping into the equity in your home and pull enough money out to fix it up.

Chances are, you have seen the TV commercial featuring spokesperson and actor Tom Selleck. In the American Advisors Group commercial, Selleck says, “I wouldn’t be here if I thought reverse mortgages took advantage of any American citizen. A reverse mortgage loan isn’t some trick to take your home. It’s a loan, like any other. The big difference is how you pay it back.” “But my children won’t let me get a reverse mortgage.” Well, then ask your children to pay for the home modifications to allow you to remain at home. If you pull out \$50,000 to add a walk-in tub, a wheelchair ramp and other things, chances are your home will appreciate in value.

Secondly, any senior who wants to live at home independently should protect him/herself with a medical alert system. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 out of every 4 older adults falls every year. Of those falls, 20 percent are serious, resulting in a broken bone, head trauma or similar injury.

Furthermore, falling once doubles one’s chance of experiencing another

fall in the future. And since there’s no way to completely prevent falls, it’s crucial to provide immediate help when a fall does happen.

This is where home medical alert systems can be invaluable.

Medical alert systems typically consist of two components – a base station and a wearable device. When the user presses the help button on the wearable device, a call is initiated to a monitoring center. The user is connected with an operator who can help to assess the situation and dispatch emergency services right away. Some systems will come with extra features like GPS monitoring and automatic fall detection.

According to the ADT website, it’s as simple as: (1) Press Button: Press the personal help button to send an emergency alert to ADT. Fall Detection pendants can automatically send an alert if a fall occurs; (2) We Respond: ADT senior-sensitivity-trained monitoring professionals will communicate over two-way voice; and (3) You Get Help: At the push of a button, ADT’s highly-trained professionals alert caregivers, loved ones and/or emergency responders.

I asked Daniel Okazaki with ADT for help.

“My parents and many of my friends who are older, are starting to have occasional moments but still want to have their independence and

live in their homes. Additionally, most loved ones do not have the time to consistently be there to watch over or just be there should an emergency or situation happen. The medical alerts (especially the mobile one) allow the peace of mind that there is someone monitoring if they fall.

“With a push of the button, ADT can be there to calm, help, dispatch and alert. It is not only good for the peace of mind and freedom it can provide the individuals; it also can be lifesaving or minimize serious conditions that can occur from a fall. That, of course, saves everyone money, but also helps prevent potentially long hospital stays or having to leave their home.” I asked Daniel if I could put his name and number in the *Pacific Citizen*, and he said he would be happy to answer any questions that any P.C. reader might have about medical alert systems. Daniel is also the president of the San Fernando Valley JACC and can be reached at (818) 430-8305.

*Judd Matsunaga is the founding attorney of Elder Law Services of California, a law firm that specializes in Medi-Cal Planning, Estate Planning and Probate. He can be contacted at (310) 348-2995 or [judd@elderlawcalifornia.com](mailto:judd@elderlawcalifornia.com). The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Pacific Citizen or constitute legal or tax advice and should not be treated as such.*



# IT'S CRITICAL THAT WE ALL CONTINUE TO DO OUR PART IN 2021

By Jeffrey Moy,  
JACL National President

Happy New Year! For me, a new year always brings excitement around new possibilities and after an exhausting 2020, I was certainly ready for 2021.

At the same time, it seemed clear that the somewhat arbitrary changing of the calendar year would not resolve the major issues we faced in 2020. Sure enough, the short time we've spent in 2021 has already had plenty of ups and downs.

Like many of you, I found myself simultaneously excited by record-breaking voter turnout in Georgia and horrified by the hateful, violent and seditious actions of white supremacists in our nation's capital.

Seeing this attack, in the city that had been my home for nearly 12



years, reaffirmed the critical work we must do to heal as a nation as well as the need to balance hope with continued vigilance against intolerance and injustice.

Given how challenging 2020 was, I'm thankful to our members, the

National Board and staff for continuing to find ways to move us forward.

Internally, we continue to integrate new technology that will make us more efficient and effective. I was proud of the way our staff brought important information and wonderful speakers into our homes through a variety of events; the JACL Women in Leadership panel in the fall and year-end member call featuring George Takei were particular highlights for me.

The National Board is focused on ensuring our staff have what they need to be successful, and I look forward to a year that should see continued improvements in our operations.

Education will continue to serve as a central pillar of our work, and we look forward to strengthening partnerships and revising our own curriculum to ensure that we incorporate the complex experiences of our community.

We look forward to launching an ambitious fundraising campaign this year to support all of this important work, which we expect to share more information about this spring.

I've also been inspired by the different ways our chapters have

come together to support each other, whether through virtual events, at-in-person socially distanced rallies or providing bentos for our elders and others at increased risk of COVID.

I know we're all hoping to get back to in-person events at some point this year when it's safe to do so, and the National Board and staff will continue to assess the viability of an in-person convention.

While we may need to consider a virtual convention this year, we are being very intentional in our process knowing that this is such an important touch point for our community. We expect to have more updates in March.

I'm thankful to be part of a community whose members strive to be thoughtful and intentional when discussing the issues we are facing as a nation. In a time when oversimplified, polarizing comments are the norm, having thoughtful discussion is more valuable than ever.

With that being said, I'm also thankful that we are able to move from discussion to swift action, particularly when we see blatant injustice. As a civil rights organization, it is our duty to mobilize against injustice, advocate for better policies

and hold our elected officials to a high standard.

I'm proud of the actions we have taken locally and nationally, something our chapter structure uniquely positions us to do, and it's critical that we all continue to do our part.

I know at times it can feel overwhelming, which is why we are continuing to focus on improving the ways we share information and resources. But ultimately, I find it reassuring to be a part of this community during a time when we could all use some support.

Ultimately, even with so much fear and uncertainty in the air, I'm looking forward to facing the challenges of 2021 together with you all. Please continue to keep an eye out on opportunities to plug in; as always, the *Pacific Citizen* and the weekly digest are great places to learn about upcoming events and important work going on around the country.

We are always looking for our members to step up in different ways, so if there is something you are interested in, such as a board or committee role, I encourage you to reach out and learn more.

Thanks again for all that you do. I wish you the best in the year ahead. ■

## WE HAVE HOPE AGAIN



By David Inoue,  
JACL Executive Director

As we closed out 2020 with a first-time ever all-member call, it represented the culmination of a year of adjustments. JACL members from across the country gathered together to hear from Rep. Doris Matsui and thank her and Rep. Rob Bishop for their leadership introducing the Japanese American Confinement Education Act.

For many, the highlight of the evening was a conversation be-

tween George Takei and members of our NYSC — Sheera Tamura, Kendal Takeshita and Mariko Rooks. For me, the small group meetings with members was the highlight. We closed the year with tremendous optimism for 2021.

Then came Jan. 6. All the worst fears for what might happen with the continued and increasing lies about the election came to fruition. Several hundred insurgents overran the Capitol police and claimed control of the U.S. Capitol building, feely roaming the rotunda and the Senate chambers.

For anyone who feels the respect and reverence for the true soul of our nation and what the Capitol represents, this was a gut punch. Initially, all we saw was the ugliness, the anger and hatred in the actions of the rioters.

But now we are hearing the stories of how people tried to preserve the idealism of those halls. People like Capitol police officer Eugene Goodman, who led the mob away from the Senate chambers. D.C. Metropolitan Police Department officer Daniel Hodges, who was pinned against a door in another viral video, said of the experience, "We're the ones who saved Congress that day, and we'll do it as many times as necessary."

Eventually, a semblance of order was restored, and Congress was able to reconvene to certify the Electoral College votes. In the midst of that

though, Rep. Andy Kim went to a then nearly-empty rotunda and joined the police officers still there, cleaning the mess from earlier.

This moment of servant leadership was most powerful in that it contrasted the care that the Congressman showed for the Capitol with the disregard of the earlier mob. His own words stated it best, "I know exactly what my job is right now, which is to do everything I humanly can to restore some decency and some kindness and some civility back into our politics."

And so we have hope again. Hope that the coming year will be able to break through some of the gridlock. Hope that we can come together as a country and defeat COVID. We will need that hope to accomplish our goals this year.

As noted already, we have the Japanese American Confinement Education Act to pass in Congress. With momentum from the past summer, we have the best chance in years of passing HR 40 to bring redress and reparations for centuries of anti-Blackness in our country.

And we hope to bring to an end the Alien and Sedition Act, which has been the basis for centuries of discriminatory policy, including our own community's wartime incarceration and, most recently, the Muslim ban.

We now have hope that we can achieve passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act,

the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and the Jabara Heyer NO HATE Act. And perhaps we can pass something as fundamental as a comprehensive COVID relief bill.

Perhaps it is overly optimistic to believe all these goals are possible, but in the wake of Jan. 6, one can only hope that we can rise from this. To cut through the lies and recognize that there are not two sets of facts, that the Constitution applies to us all equally and some do not have greater rights than the

rest of us to protest or be free from police violence.

For me, that is the symbolism of the Capitol dome, the heart of our democracy. Even after 20 years of living in Washington, D.C., every time I see the Capitol dome, whether walking on the mall or flying into Reagan National airport, I feel a sense of reverence for the building and the work that happens there.

I hope that we as a nation can all return to that reverence and respect for our country. ■



# JACL IS WORKING DILIGENTLY TO NAVIGATE ITS FINANCIAL COURSE IN 2021

By Matthew Farrells,  
JACL National Secretary/  
Treasurer



**H**appy New Year! I wish you all a safe and healthy start to the year. Let's just say 2020 was nothing less than extraordinary – with the widespread disruption of our work and personal lives. At JACL, our activities and programs were also impacted significantly and, to a large degree, our financial results for the year as well.

As JACL's newly appointed Secretary/Treasurer, it is my duty to understand these impacts and work with my fellow board members and staff to ensure we are managing well the organization's finances during these challenging times.

I am happy to report that as we close the books for 2020, the lower expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic has largely offset the loss in revenue for the year. In a year without an in-person convention, it was challenging to drive fundraising revenue from sponsors. Additionally, without implementing some of our endowed programs, the organization was unable to recognize the revenue earmarked for these programs.

On a positive note, membership revenue and annual giving fundraising preliminarily are bright spots for revenue generation, exceeding our initial expectation for the amount of funds raised.

When looking closer at expenses, the obvious items of meetings/conferences, travel and travel-related expenses were also largely under our budgeted amounts for the year. These expense items are generally viewed as our variable expenses, and the fact that these items were significantly under budget is logical given there was no in-person convention in 2020 and the restrictions on travel due to state and local government regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The organization's value is largely driven from its human capital, our staff, and is defined as a fixed expense for the organization. I am extremely pleased our staff was able to pivot seamlessly from in-

person to a work-from-home environment and that the organization is supporting our employees with mitigating the expense associated with working-from-home through reimbursement.

When summarizing 2020 from a financial perspective, despite our obvious challenges, we are highly focused on our goal of preserving the financial stability of the organization and working diligently to monitor, assess and navigate our environment into 2021.

As we look ahead to 2021, I am cautiously optimistic for a successful year and a return to our normal way of life with an in-person convention and programs. This will present further opportunities to connect with sponsors, meet with existing, new and prospective members, officially launch our educational fundraising campaign and better support our legacy planning initiatives in person.

Additionally, I'm thrilled to work with a new development director on these initiatives, which will help further bolster our ability to drive revenue for the organization. As Secretary/Treasurer, that is one of my primary goals — to ensure we end the year neutral relative to our budget.

In summary, as I reflect on 2020 and look forward into 2021, I cannot be more grateful for the board and staff who support me in this role. Those fellow National Board members and staff who serve on the Finance Committee and the newly formed Development Team truly are the heroes who protect the organization's finances, and I could not fulfill my duties without them. So, thank you.

I'm proud of what we have collectively accomplished in 2020 and am looking forward to a renewed and successful 2021! ■

## Education Remains a Top Priority in 2021

By David Lin,  
JACL VP of Planning &  
Development

**A**s we begin the new year, I want to wish you and your family a safe, healthy and prosperous 2021 and welcome you to the New Year's issue of the *Pacific Citizen*!

First, I want to thank President Jeff Moy and the National Board for appointing me to the position of VP of Planning & Development for this biennium. This is indeed my honor and a privilege to serve the JACL in this capacity.

In 2021, my three focus areas are as follows:

### • *Scholarship Program*

I am sure that you have seen the recent JACL announcement of the 2021 National Scholarship and Awards Program. The JACL annually offers approximately 30 college scholarships for students who are incoming college freshmen, undergraduates and graduates, as well as those specializing in law and the creative/performing arts. There are also financial aid scholarships for those demonstrating a need for financial assistance.

Starting this year, the application forms for the scholarship program are completely online, and you can access the program information on

the JACL website ([www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org)) by clicking the "Youth" tab on the menu bar.

My sincere thanks to Scholarship Program Committee Co-Chairs Sharon Uyeda and Bill Tashima, members of the committee and Matt Weisbly for his excellent staff support.

### • *Legacy Fund Grants Program*

Under the leadership of Roberta Barton and Toshi Abe, the Legacy Fund Grants Committee has been working hard to finalize this year's application materials and the funding cap for each grant.

Since the intent of this program is to provide "seed" money to start new programs, committee members have provided many suggestions and valuable input to further enhance the program and make it more impactful to support JACL's mission and Strategic Plan.

I want to thank Roberta and Toshi for their leadership, members of the committee for their contributions and Patty Wada for her outstanding staff support.

### • *Education Fundraising Campaign*

I am also honored to assume the responsibility for leading the Education Fundraising Campaign, which many of you have undoubtedly heard about. Our thinking is that we should leverage JACL's unique position in



telling the story about the tragedy of the Japanese American incarceration during World War II and share these important lessons widely, especially in today's political environment.

Our current plan is to coordinate closely with existing JACL educational initiatives and programs in making a direct appeal to all JACL members and members of the Japanese American community at large. Please be on the lookout for more information when we launch the campaign during the second quarter of 2021.

In closing, I thank all of you for your continued dedication and commitment to JACL, since it is members like you who provide the solid foundation for this organization to accomplish the JACL mission of advancing the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all those who are victimized by injustice and bigotry.

Once again, please accept my gratitude for this opportunity to serve the JACL and best wishes for 2021! ■



By Sarah Baker,  
JACL VP for Public Affairs

**H**appy 2021! With the start of a new year, I trust you all are finding a sense of hope and renewal as we usher in some much-needed change in our country. As for me, with the recent national events kicking us off, I am reminded that just because

## We Will Find Our Way Through Adversity Together

we have entered a new year, that does not mean we get to start with a blank slate. There is still so much continued work to be done on so many levels, and I hope that everyone is up to the task.

As I have mentioned in previous columns, I am not one for New Year's resolutions. That being said, I did take a lot of time at the end of December to reflect on 2020 and both the benefits and challenges that came with it.

We are in an unprecedented time period, facing unprecedented hardship on a multitude of fronts. But with these challenges comes growth, determination and a whole lot of ingenuity. I have been so impressed by our community, our strength and our resilience.

While 2020 was hard, and 2021 may not be much easier, I am heartened knowing that we will find our way through adversity to

a brighter future.

In reflecting on the past year, what I keep coming back to is how grateful I am to work with you all. While our work is never easy, it is certainly made lighter knowing that I have such outstanding people by my side.

Thank you, always, for everything that you do. The JACL is an incredible organization because of its members, and I am so thankful to know and collaborate with all of you.

Looking ahead to 2021, if there is one thing I know for certain, it is that we can't predict the future. There is no way to know what will happen next. But one thing I do know is that whatever happens, we are in it together.

So, here's to you, here's to us and here's to the new year. *Okage sama de* — I am what I am because of you. ■



# JACL WILL REMAIN RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ITS MEMBERS AND OUR COMMUNITY AT LARGE



By Saki Mori,  
JACL VP of 1,000 Club,  
Membership & Services

**G**reetings and Happy New Year from New York City to *Pacific Citizen* readers and the JACL community.

Despite the uncertainty that still takes hold of the country and our attention, I am grateful that we are in a new year. I step into a role of overseeing JACL's membership greatly expanded and well taken care of by my predecessor, Haruka Roudebush, which is no easy task in it of itself.

In 2020, our JACL community met the challenge of a relentless pandemic, political instability and a general sense of uncertainty on a daily basis. Chapters across the country learned how to convene in new ways with new technologies.

They also worked together with community members to ensure the health and well-being of our local JACL membership and the wider Japanese American community by distributing bentos and masks, as well as continued to share the stories and memories of our collective history to guide us through this pivotal moment of American history.

Even though we were unable to march in Washington, D.C., for Tsuru for Solidarity to close detention centers and prisons, members and chapters conducted local activities, and we kept in solidarity to protect Black Lives, as well as reminded our community to participate in the U.S. Census and vote in quite possibly the most important General Election of our time.

This is not to ignore the fact that our community experienced significant loss and grief with our members and friends succumbing to COVID-19. We still don't know when there will be a definitive end to this pandemic, and every day brings something new for us to react and respond to.

During this time, it is important

for JACL to remain steadfast in its mission and also responsive to the needs of our JACL community and membership and the community around us.

To ensure this, I have three goals to guide my work to support JACL members and chapters:

- Provide a space for community and learning for chapters to serve their members and work together to address the challenges that come forth
- Identify and ensure key resources and capacities for chapter leadership to be confident in operating in such uncertain times
- Continue to strive for deeper engagement amongst and across members, chapters and JACL

leadership.

In the most recent January 2021 National Membership Committee meeting, several meeting participants noted that they are already planning for the spring matsuri and sakura/cherry blossom season.

This brought a sense of light and hope that we have not felt in a very long time. Even though most of these celebrations will be more virtual in nature, it is inspiring to see our members thinking forward into the future with the traditions that we hold dear and have kept our community together across history, time and geographic location.

May we start the year with hope and heart, and I wish you all blessings, peace, health and joy for 2021. ■

## WOW! 2020

By Chip Larouche,  
JACL Governor, PNWDC



**F**or those of you with a good memory (not me!) you might recognize that the title above for this article is identical to the one I used last year to wish everyone a Happy New Year. I use the same Wow! this time, not as an exclamation that we've arrived, but more of a relief that we survived!

I don't think I'm going out very far on a limb to say that we just got through a very bad year in America and the world. By the time this article gets published, we'll have a new president in office, not a moment too soon for many of us, and hopefully the vaccination process for COVID-19 will be in at least second gear and accelerating so that we can begin to looking forward to doing normal things like eating in a restaurant, traveling somewhere and even something as

simple as hugging the grand kids.

I'm generally considered a hopeless optimist, almost to a fault, and I'll admit that the year 2020 tested my positivity in a very significant way.

Nonetheless, I'm grateful for a few things that happened last year. The Pacific Northwest District membership actually grew by 2 percent, thanks to chapters that managed to stay pretty active by using creative tools like Zoom, continuing to publish newsletters to keep the membership informed and making calls to their members to check up on them when most of them were staying home (which continues!) in order to stay safe themselves and not contribute to the spread of the virus.

We also had quite a bit of racial unrest this past year, and I'm very proud of our chapters for combining GOOD BEHAVIOR (remember that BEHAVIOR MATTERS) with creative ways to show support for the Communities of Color that really needed that support in a year that was marked with violence on many fronts.

Another GOOD thing that happened in 2020 was the announcement that the Nisei Soldiers are finally going to have a U.S. postage stamp that commemorates their exceptional courage and bravery. It will highlight the slogan "GO FOR BROKE," and the stamp was designed by art director Antonio Alcalá. The USPS hasn't announced the date of release yet, but when the stamps are available, I suspect that

the Japanese American community will be purchasing them in large quantities, me included!

Although the "GO FOR BROKE" slogan specifically belongs to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the description that accompanied the stamp's announcement made it clear that it "recognizes the contributions of Japanese American soldiers, some 33,000 altogether, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II."

JACL is still planning to hold a National Convention this summer (current dates in July), but there's also planning afoot to perhaps push it into the fall. Most of the National Board is a bit ambivalent about whether we can pull this off. Most of you remember that we had to cancel the 2020 Convention because of COVID precautions, and at this time, it remains unknown how well the vaccination process will develop and how safe it will be to start meeting again face to face.

Let me close by saying that as an old-timer on the National Board, I've been very pleased that we have some great young leaders taking charge and have also been impressed by the board's performance during this especially difficult period.

My fourth term as governor will end in November 2021, and since the PNW Bylaws have term limits (a good thing in my opinion) and I'm "termed out," it will be time to retire. To paraphrase the words of Gen. McArthur, like a good soldier, I'll probably just fade away.



May the New Year  
ring in  
Hope, Health  
and  
Happiness to all!

**FRESNO CHAPTER, JACL**



*Happy Holidays*

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Regardless, I hope the year 2021 is good for everyone reading this article, and I hope to have the opportunity to meet a large number of you face to face in the not-too-distant future. I'm still looking forward to the year 2029 when JACL will celebrate its 100th birthday.

In keeping with the spirit of the time, I remove my mask momentarily, maintaining my social distance, and raise my glass to toast all of you as we start a new year. *Kampai!* ■



By Michael Asada,  
JACL Governor, EDC

During this upcoming Year of the Ox, I would like to extend my sincere best wishes to everyone for a Happy New Year (*Akemashite Omedetōgozaimasu*).

According to ChineseNewYear.net, 2021 will be a turbulent year for the Ox. So, the Ox should cultivate relationships with friends and family to navigate and overcome any hardship. While this might sound ominous for 2021, rest assured, JACL will weather the challenges because we have always nourished relationships internally and externally.

I am grateful for the national

leadership and staff for their selfless commitment to sustain a vital pulse for this timeless organization. Clearly without your passionate efforts to promote our cause as an advocate for social justice, our vocal support for violations in civil rights for all Americans would not be heard.

In addition, many kudos go out to the *Pacific Citizen* editorial staff and contributors. You have ensured that our voices on various human rights issues as well as chapter news remains at the forefront of all of our readers. Thank you for your dedicated service and professional manner.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word unprecedented as "never done or known before." Clearly as I sit down to compose my thoughts about any highlights during this past year and any goals for EDC in the new year, I reflect back upon how this word was so appropriate and yet how it was so overly used in so many contexts.

Without doubt, 2020 will be remembered for so many things. Foremost is the impact that COVID-19 had on everyone throughout the world and the devastating loss of loved ones to this cruel pandemic. What we know is that this

disease does not discriminate and attacks anyone regardless of race, age, economic status, religious beliefs or politics. Our lives will be forever changed, and we will need to adjust to a new normal.

The annual JACL National Convention became a virtual event and resulted in the shift of a paradigm for our chapters to conduct their activities. We all became technically proficient in the use of Zoom as a means to communicate with our members and remain connected. Chapters began to "think outside the box" like conducting virtual book talks and cultural events via video calls (Keiro Kai, Mochitsuki, etc.).

Yet, as 2021 unfolds, we find ourselves in another "unprecedented" start to a new year, which clearly demonstrated how divided this country really is and how the mission of the JACL is perhaps even more relevant now, than it was in the past.

We need a universal mind-set of respect for our fellow citizens, the protection of civil liberties for ALL AMERICANS, and we need to adopt an attitude of understanding to build a better America.

What I have come to appreciate with greater understanding is

how time and people become the essence of one's life. Generally, behavior science deals primarily with human action and often seeks to generalize about human behavior as it relates to society. For someone like me that views things from an engineering/scientific perspective, sometimes the human relationships are taken for granted and not embraced as it should be.

There is a Japanese saying, *Ichigo Ichie*, which translates to "Every meeting will never happen twice so one must make every effort to give full focus and appreciation to the moment (once in a lifetime)."

Therefore, as I look forward to the new year despite its challenges, I will continue to cherish the relationships that I have with you and make every effort to embrace the opportunities to share more time with you in 2021.

Hopefully, we will have an effective vaccine in place soon so we can make that happen. A virtual convention is better than none, but nothing replaces the real opportunity of sharing fellowship together. See you in Las Vegas for our upcoming National Convention . . . whenever that may be. ■

## Our Chapters and Members Will Continue to Persevere

By Toshiki Masaki,  
JACL Governor, MDC

Happy New Year, everyone! As I look back at the most challenging year in our recent memories, I am nevertheless extremely thankful that so many of our chapters and their members persevered and found the ways to quickly adapt to the new environment and continue with their activities.

In fact, some of the chapters started new programs related to Black Lives Matter and other topical challenges that we faced in 2020. Also, I'm so proud of the JACL National Board for managing to conduct its board elections virtually, for the first time in the history of JACL. And I'm sure what we collectively learned in 2020 in dealing with so many challenges will serve us well in the coming years as we will surely encounter new challenges.

We were obviously all disappointed that we couldn't get together at our semiannual MDC meetings as well as at the annual National Convention, but we managed to stay connected via Zoom and other means and are looking forward to days when we can meet in person again.

Finally, I'd like to thank MDC officers and their chapter presidents for their continued enthusiastic engagement. It has been an incredible experience and pleasure serving as the MDC Governor for the last two years and also working with the JACL National Board members, whom I've grown to respect and learned so much. ■

## CCDC WILL FOCUS ON MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

By Dale Ikeda,  
JACL Governor, CCDC

Happy New Year from the Central California District Council. The pandemic made 2020 a challenging year. Nevertheless, we chugged along under the capable leadership of CCDC Gov. Joy Goto.

The first main event was our annual Day of Remembrance, which was held on Feb. 16, 2020, and was conducted at the Fresno County Historical Museum, located on the Fresno Fairgrounds.

Marion and Rev. Sab Masada were our Distinguished American Awardees for the Spirit of Education for their countless hours of sharing their story of incarceration during World War II. Rev. Sab passed away this summer.

Jeff Aiello and Elizabeth Laval, also awardees, were our keynote speakers, and they talked about the documentary "Silent Sacrifice: Japanese American Internment in the San Joaquin Valley and

Beyond," winner of a Regional Emmy for Best Documentary.

Here's the link: <https://www.pbs.org/video/silent-sacrifice-Omarqy/>. CCDC was a sponsor, and JACLers Jeanette Ishii, Rev. Saburo and Marion Masada and Deborah Ikeda and I were consultants on the project.

Jeff and Elizabeth also previewed "Unbroken Honor," a one-hour documentary on the Nisei veterans of WWII, which is still in development. JACLers are assisting in that effort as well.

CCDC has a museum exhibit at the Fresno Fair, "Japanese Americans in the San Joaquin Valley," highlighting the contributions of Japanese Americans in Central California. The Fair is also the site of the Fresno Assembly Center Memorial, an exterior plaza with interpretive storyboards and bronze plaques listing the names of more than 5,300 internees.

The DOR was quickly followed with a showing of the documentary on Sec. Norman Y. Mineta's life,

"Norman Mineta and His Legacy," held at Fresno City College on Feb. 18, 2020. The showing and reception was co-sponsored with a number of community partners, including State Center Community College District and Central California Asian Pacific Women's Network.

Mitch Maki, CEO of the Go for Broke National Education Center, director and co-producer Dianne Fukami and co-producer Debra Nakatomi participated in a fireside chat after the showing that was moderated by Laura Tsutsui, a Yonsei working at our local public radio station. The program was funded, in part, by a JACL Legacy Fund Grant.

The Legacy Grant was also used to co-sponsor the showing of another documentary, "Alternative Facts: The Lies of Executive Order 9066," on Sept. 27, 2020. It was followed by a discussion with director Jon Osaki. CCDC co-sponsored "Alternative Facts" with California State University,



Fresno, and the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno.

We also conducted a Zoom book interview with John Tateishi on his latest release "Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American Reparations" with Sec. Mineta as a special guest on Dec. 9, 2020. Gov. Joy Goto introduced the participants and managed the Q & A while I served as moderator.

This year, we will have a virtual Day of Remembrance on Feb. 13, at 1 p.m., on Zoom. Karen Korematsu will be our keynote speaker. CCDC and its chapters will continue their scholarship programs with an annual luncheon planned for May 16. We are also planning

»



» our annual Memorial Day service on May 31 at the Nisei Veterans Memorial at Roeding Park.

Our biggest challenge is membership recruitment and leadership development. Over the years, there has been discussion of dissolving

CCDC due to decreasing membership, chapters dissolving or slipping below the 25-member requirements and the unsustainable recycling of chapter and district officers.

We used to have nine active chapters in CCDC. We are now down to Clovis, Fresno, Livingston-Merced,

Sanger, Reedley and Tulare County, with the prospect of losing two or more additional chapters. We will focus the next two years on addressing these challenges by focusing on engaging our youth.

Jenna Aoki (NYSC rep) and Kelly Aoki (past-NYSC rep for CCDC),

in collaboration with the Yonsei Memory Project (Nikiko Masumoto and Brynn Saito) and the CCDC Board organized the Central Valley Nikkei Summit in 2019.

This event brought to our valley the idea of a networking and storytelling event sponsored by CCDC

with Larry Oda (past JACL National President) and Ko Nishimura. We are working to develop these events for rollout either virtually or hopefully in person in 2021.

Stay safe and help is on the way with the Biden administration and Covid-19 vaccines. ■

## OUR CHAPTERS REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE

By Carol Kawase,  
JACL Governor, NCWNP

In reflecting on the past unpredictable, unprecedented “Moment in Time,” I’ve determined the word that best summarizes this chaotic year as “REmode.” Albeit a conjured term, in my mind, it best describes the 2020 year for our district.

I commend all of the NCWNP District chapters for rising to the occasion and switching gears to “REmode.” Chapter boards and members rose to the challenge created by the pandemic, re-evaluating what was most important to keep their chapters viable, reconnecting with members who initially became isolated and re-creating programs to meet the restrictions that were,

at times, instituted erratically. I have been impressed with the many creative ways the chapters remained flexible and innovative.

REevaluation came in the form of assessing chapter business, communications and event programs. Many chapters were able to continue chapter board meetings via video conferencing or phone conferencing, navigating technology, all while adhering to Robert’s Rules of Order and California’s Nonprofit Governance for the Covid Era. Facebook, websites, e-newsletters, email list serves, online document sharing and Zoom board officer installations became the new normal to keep their board and members informed, engaged and effective.

REconnection with senior members who don’t necessarily have

the strongest support or greatest technology resources to prevent isolation was important to many chapters. As a result, socially distanced visits, technology training, phone tree calls and drop-off gifts were instituted. Local small businesses that were suffering were tapped to participate in collaborative events, such as restaurant drive-thru fundraisers and product purchases that were then donated or used as fundraising items.

REcreation of programs incorporating social distancing came in the form of virtual and drive-thru events. A wide variety of offerings became available to not only the local chapters’ members but also opened to the rest of the district — online seminars, book readings, trivia contest, speaking presenta-

tions, documentaries, outdoor garden and cemetery cleanups, recipe shares, raffles and online silent auctions, senior exercise classes, panel discussions, award ceremonies, letter-writing campaigns, flu shot drive thru, mochi tsuki instruction video, soba noodle bowl kits, museum collaborations. We learned a lot from each other’s experiences and ideas.

A New Year’s message from leadership is expected to be inspirational, however, this year, I was inspired by the district’s chapters, board officers and members. They taught me to recognize the value of being flexible, persistent, and upbeat in “This Moment in Time.”

Given that the pandemic is probably going to consume most of



2021, I am confident that chapters will take their 2020 successes and make 2021 even better, all while incorporating REmode.

I look forward to seeing innovation at work for a renewed, reinvigorated Year of the Ox. ■

## TODAY IS OUR GENERATION’S MOMENT TO STAND

By Lisa Olsen,  
JACL Governor, IDC



was a blessing, but I missed face-to-face interactions.

IDC continues to thrive regardless that many of the social/cultural events that embody the spirit and family community of the Intermountain District Council were canceled or held online to protect everyone during the pandemic. Missed meetings and convention reinforced how much personal interactions mean to me, and I look forward to a time when we can meet safely again.

Despite missing personal interactions between chapter members, these challenges brought opportunities to learn new technology, such as Zoom, which enabled us to connect with each other in an entirely new way and interact with JACL members across the nation.

In many areas, being quarantined and working from home this year meant that there were more meetings and opportunities to participate in trainings and webinars — not less. This made the time apart more meaningful for me, and I am grateful for these interactions

even if I personally dislike interacting via Zoom meetings.

Many IDC chapters continued to support civil rights by participating in peaceful protests, releasing statements, contacting senators and representatives and supporting online programming. Even though we faced elevated infection rates in many of our states, members continued to fight for equal rights and treatment for others.

I am thankful for the JACL National Board and the work they do for this organization. I am thankful for those who have invested their time and energy mentoring me. The mentoring process is invaluable as the next generation of leaders emerge and build from our existing foundation.

I am also grateful for the chapters and members in IDC who participated in whatever way they could during this past year. It wasn’t easy to ensure that members were safe as they participated in peaceful protests, unity walks, graveside cleanups and serving others.

I am also thankful for the

IDC Board and the support they give to me and our local chapters. I value the support of my local chapter, who bring even more meaning to my service in JACL.

This work in civil rights is more relevant with each passing day in 2021. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Our Issei and Nisei are remembered and honored because of how they stood in moments of challenge and controversy. Some stood behind barbed wire, some stood on the battlefield, some stood in protest and some stood in solidarity. I am honored to take part in the tradition of upholding our rights and beliefs that our previous generations created.

Today is our generation’s moment to stand. Where and how we stand might differ from person to person, but the understanding that we stand for civil rights for all is the tie that binds us together in JACL. ■

## Let’s All Work Together

By Nancy Takayama,  
JACL Governor, PSW

On Feb. 13 at 2 p.m., the Day of Remembrance Los Angeles “Uniting With Other Communities to Keep Democracy Alive” will be held virtually.

The DOR-LA planning committee is made up of nine organizations, all of which have worked together “united” in their belief in educating the public in the forgotten American history.

The last administration tried to divide our nation. We are a strong democracy. We will fight and educate all, for our Americans and immigrant families who believe in our Constitution. We will stand together with our fellow Americans, immigrants, other civil rights organizations and communities to show we are a “United” America.

Let’s all work together. ■



Greetings and Happy New Year! Joshua J. Marine stated, “Challenges are what make life interesting. Overcoming them are what make life meaningful.”

The year of 2020 was filled with so many new challenges that life was definitely interesting. Being able to work from home during the pandemic



## THE P.C. IS A VITAL COMPONENT IN JACL'S MISSION



By Rob Buscher,  
Pacific Citizen Editorial Board  
Chair

Like so many of us whose businesses have been negatively impacted by Covid-19, the staff of our *Pacific Citizen* newspaper had to greatly adapt their work culture to function within the new remote environment necessitated by the pandemic.

Ever nimble, our staff was able to rise to the occasion and continue delivering a professional-quality newspaper to the JACL National membership and other subscribers, despite not being able to work face-to-face in nearly 10 months.

Although *P.C.* revenue from individual contributions was down from the 2019 year-end totals, our main area of earned income — ad sales — is actually up from last year's total. This is an incredible testament to

Business Manager Susan Yokoyama, who despite the wholesale cancellation of community events that typically make up a large portion of *P.C.* ad sales, was able to find new sources of advertising revenue.

However, as we enter Year 2 of the global pandemic, it will be more important than ever for us to support the *Pacific Citizen* during our annual Spring Giving campaign. I know times are tough for many of us whose livelihoods have been jeopardized by the pandemic, but for folks who are able to give at this time, your contributions will help the *P.C.* continue publishing nationwide Japanese American content of the highest caliber that might otherwise not reach the public.

This last year, we saw the power

of community-centric journalism in action. The *P.C.* devoted nearly an entire issue to coronavirus prevention in the early days of the pandemic. As the pandemic worsened, the *P.C.* covered the intense anti-Asian sentiments that led to a spike in hate crimes throughout the country. In the aftermath of George Floyd's tragic murder at the hands of the Minneapolis police, the *P.C.* staff and guest contributors gave compelling analysis of the most significant civil rights reckoning of our times.

Our work is a crucial component of the JACL's mission, especially now when the pandemic has prevented us from building community in-person — the *P.C.* enables us to have discourse remotely among readers who span a wide geographical area,

and across generations. No other Japanese American newspaper does what the *Pacific Citizen* does in its nationwide reporting. This will be especially important in the year to come as our country contends with the aftermath of a historic attack on our democracy with the Jan. 6 Capitol Insurrection.

The political divide has always existed in our country, among the JACL membership, and the *P.C.*'s readership. But if ever there was a time for healing, it is now. I know that the *P.C.* can play an important role in the healing that must take place within our own Japanese American community, but only with your continued support and writing contributions.

Thank you to all our readers, and we look forward to continuing the conversation in 2021. ■

## THE NY/SC: CONNECTING AND ENGAGING YOUTH ACROSS THE NATION

By Justin Kawaguchi and  
Mieko Kuramoto,  
JACL NY/SC Co-Chairs

Happy New Year to the JACL! We, Justin Kawaguchi and Mieko Kuramoto, are delighted to ring in the new year as co-chairs of the National Youth/Student Council. Despite this being one of the most difficult years most of us have ever faced, we are so proud to look back on the ways in which the youth of the JACL have taken this moment to pause, reflect and be present for one another.

We focused our energies in 2020 on being a strong community for one another to turn to. Although the year kicked off with the usual busy agenda and packed Convention-planning schedule, we made it through only a few months as planned before Covid-19 disrupted everything.

Our in-person events were postponed, then canceled, National Convention didn't take place and each member of the NY/SC experienced significant personal changes as quar-

antine orders were imposed.

As the two of us write this, we realize that our end-of-year recap looks like nothing we could have imagined a year ago — but nonetheless, what we have been able to achieve is something to be proud of.

In the winter and spring, the NY/SC collaborated with the organization Tsuru for Solidarity, a direct action network of Japanese Americans fighting against immigrant detention.

Members of the NY/SC hosted paper crane "fold-ins" on their college campuses with their local chapters, and later, over Zoom with youth from all over the country.

We used those opportunities to speak to our peers about the impact that incarceration had on our community and why it is so critical to defend individuals and families subjected to inhumane imprisonment.

During our retreat in the spring (just prior to the shutdown), the members of the NY/SC took a moment to reflect on our own families' experiences of detention and the deep impact it left on our lives, families and the communities we grew up in.

That exercise left a lasting impression. There is an empowerment that comes with speaking about your own story, and we decided to extend an invitation to JACL youth across the country to tell their own narrative.

We designed the 2020 Digital Storytelling Competition around the prompt "How does the past influence your present?" and were thrilled to accept submissions from a number of talented young artists.

After careful consideration — and many tough choices! — we were thrilled to select Sam Hamashima and cousin-team Jessica Bukowski and Kristin Sato as the two winners.

These stories made us think differently about being Japanese American — they were heartfelt antidotes to an isolating summer.

The year also saw a swell of calls demanding justice. Following the tragedy of George Floyd's murder, members of the NY/SC saw a need to equip young people, activists and organizers with the tools to address anti-Black rhetoric and attitudes that we see in our own community.

We initiated a collaboration with

Next Generation Nikkei in Chicago, Tsuru for Solidarity, Northern California Nikkei Community Interns and a variety of other individuals to pull together a webinar on anti-Blackness in the Japanese American community called "Building Your Toolkit: Addressing Anti-Blackness in the Japanese American Community."

The workshop featured a variety of segments, including one on history, solidarity-building, community partnerships and strategies for approaching conversations with compassion.

Finally, we finished off with our biannual retreat — virtually! We also welcomed our three new members (Mariko Rooks, EDC; Seia Watanabe, PSW; and Claire Inouye, At-Large).

As we enter 2021, we are optimistic for what the future will hold. Following a recent visual rebranding, we are excited to engage young people in social media campaigns that prompt questions of justice, racial equity and finding one's own voice.

Internally, we continue to evaluate our existing organizational structure and ways in which we can optimize youth reps' individual talents and



create an effective, impactful body. Each Youth Rep is hard at work to create regionally based programming that will engage local members.

Please keep an eye out for virtual programming in the upcoming months and communication from the NY/SC representatives. You can follow us on Instagram @jaclnysc and Facebook to stay up to date with our initiatives, and please reach out if you have any questions.

Happy 2021 everyone, and we wish you a happy, healthy new year! ■



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# DECEMBER DEATHS OF OCHI AND IMURA LEAVE 2020 ON A DOWN NOTE

Their lives are remembered for achievements and lasting legacies.

By P.C. Staff

Last year saw several barrier-breaking Nikkei women die, and before it ended, two more distaff Japanese Americans were added to that mournful list: attorney Rose Matsui Ochi on Dec. 13 at 81 and former California Legislature staffer Georgette Imura on Dec. 17 at 77.

Ochi, who was already battling health issues, was fighting COVID-19 for the second time when she died in Los Angeles, just two days short of her birthday.

Imura succumbed to lung cancer in Sacramento, Calif., after a three-year battle with the disease.

Ron Wakabayashi, who served as JACL's national director when Imura was at the California Legislature, praised Imura and her colleague, Maeley Tom, for their work that helped the Asian American community.

Imura, who was born Georgette

Yamamoto in 1943 while her family was incarcerated at California's Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center, was known as a politically savvy behind-the-scenes operator at the state capital and began her career in 1967 working for state Sen. Leroy Greene.

"Georgette was a workhorse. She would look at it like, 'How do we get this implemented, what do we need to do?'" said Wakabayashi. "All of the logistics and the planning — if I wanted to carry something out, it would be Georgette."

Imura also worked for Assemblywoman Yvonne Brathwaite and Assemblyman Julian Dixon. Later, she became Calif. state Sen. Diane Watson's chief of staff, and following that, she served as the director of the Office of Asian Pacific Affairs for state Sen. David Roberti when he was the Senate president pro tempore.

During her career, Imura noted the dearth of Asians involved in state politics and with another Asian

American woman and fellow state legislative staffer, Maeley Tom, co-founded the Asian Pacific Youth Leadership Project, a workshop designed to familiarize Asian and Pacific Islander Americans with California's political process, and inspire and encourage participation in public service and politics. Imura would also mentor younger Asian Americans, and she later used her leverage to help with the Japanese American redress movement.

Tom and Imura also helped lead the successful opposition to the appointment of U.S. Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.) from becoming California's state treasurer. Lungren who was the vice chairperson of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, opposed the monetary component of Japanese American redress.

Wakabayashi also credited Imura and Tom with raising awareness at the state and federal level to what is now known as hate crimes toward Asians, aka anti-Asian violence.

After a 28-year career in the California Legislature, Imura became a political consultant via Liberty Con-



Georgette Imura (pictured at bottom) is pictured with Maeley Tom and Ron Wakabayashi.

Imura had a 28-year career in the California Legislature.

sulting and helped pass legislation to preserve the state's remaining Japantowns. She also served on the boards of several community organizations.

Georgette Imura is survived by her husband, Roy Imura, sons Todd and Aaron and four grandchildren.

Meantime, Ochi's place in history was sealed on Aug. 10, 1988, the day President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. During the ceremony and with Ochi present, Reagan said, "And now in closing, I wonder whether you'd permit me

one personal reminiscence — one prompted by an old newspaper report sent to me by Rose Ochi, a former internee. The clipping comes from the *Pacific Citizen* and is dated December 1945."

Reagan's allusion was to an article published in the *Pacific Citizen* about the posthumous presentation of the Distinguished Service Cross by Gen. Joseph Stilwell to the family of Kazuo

»

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» Masuda, who was killed in action as a member of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 1945 article also mentioned Reagan's presence at Masuda's ceremony.

Even without that call-out by Reagan, Ochi's actions and achievements in her nearly 82 years of life would be notable.



### Rose Ochi broke many barriers in her public service career.

Born Takayo Matsui in East Los Angeles, Ochi spent some of her childhood peripatetically, first when her family was uprooted to the Santa Anita Detention Center in California, followed by incarceration at the Rohwer WRA Center in Arkansas, where she was given the moniker "Rose" by her teacher. She acquired the surname Ochi after marrying Thomas Ochi.

Prior to earning her law degree in 1972 from Loyola Law School, Ochi graduated from UCLA in 1959 and earned an M.A. from California State University, Los Angeles, in 1967. She served as a public school teacher in both the Montebello Unified School District and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

After earning her law degree, Ochi was a founding member of the Japanese American Bar Association (JABA), and she served on the L.A. County Bar Association's board of trustees. She also was a presidential appointee to the National Commission on Immigration & Refugee Policy; the attorney general-appointed vice chair of the Department of Justice's National Minority Advisory Council and an appointee to the L.A. County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee.

Under Los Angeles Mayors Tom Bradley and Richard Riordan, Ochi was the executive director of the Mayor Office of Criminal Justice Planning. She also was staff attorney at USC's Western Center on Law & Poverty.

Under President Jimmy Carter, she served on the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy or SCIRP. Under President Bill Clinton, she served as the associate director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and later was the director of the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, unanimously approved by the Senate.

Later, Ochi would serve as the executive director of Cal State L.A.'s California Forensic Science Institute. She also became the first Asian American woman police commissioner when she was appointed to the Los Angeles Police Department's Police Commission.

Ochi also was involved in JACL at the local, regional and national levels.

In 1986, she ran for JACL national president, narrowly losing at the Chicago National Convention to Harry Kajihara, 62-1/2 to 59-1/2.

Working with Manzanar Committee co-founder and chair, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, Ochi provided the legal expertise needed to help with having the former WRA Center become a national historic site.

The Japanese American National Museum, meantime, thanked Ochi for her "contributions to our community and our nation." JABA also lauded Ochi, stating, "Rose Ochi's life and contributions to the Japanese American community, the City of Los Angeles, and our country are remarkable and deserve remembrance.

Although Ochi and her husband, Thomas, never had children, Wakabayashi said through her work, Ochi mentored many younger people who she treated as though they were her surrogate children, including Darlene Kuba, who created a tribute website to Ochi at [forevermissed.com/rose-takayo-matsuiochi/about](http://forevermissed.com/rose-takayo-matsuiochi/about).

In the interim since her passing, there have been many political tributes to Ochi's life. The latest came on Jan. 13 from Los Angeles City Councilman Kevin de Leon, who introduced a motion to name the intersection of E. First and San Pedro streets Rose Ochi Square.

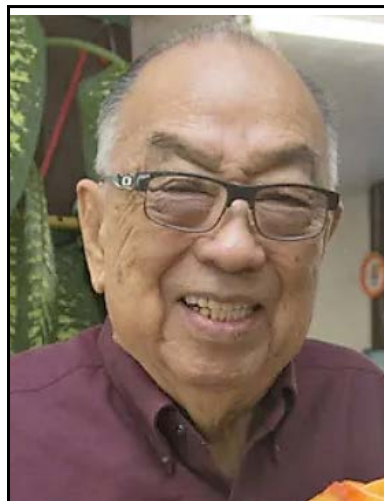
On Jan. 11, when the California Legislature adjourned, it did so in memory of Ochi. Said Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi: "Rose Ochi was a strong, beautiful woman who broke many barriers as the first Japanese American woman to serve in the highest levels of public service under President Bill Clinton and Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, among many other leadership roles she served in. She inspired and supported many women and men like me to continue her legacy of service."

Recalling the lives and contributions of both Imura and Ochi, Wakabayashi praised them as "bad ass," and lamented, "I'm lost without them now."

# In MEMORIAM

## TRIBUTE

### HIROSHI NAKAGAWA



Hiroshi "Nick" Nakagawa, the proprietor of the only surviving florist shop from the historic south Phoenix "Japanese Flower Farms," died on Jan. 2, 2021, in Tempe, Ariz. He was 97.

Until July of 2020, when he was diagnosed with a small brain tumor, Nick lived independently, running the business, driving and visiting family. Following radiation treatments, he continued to work until late November, when health complications led to a pulmonary embolism. He died peacefully at home, with family caring for him.

Nick was born on July 1, 1923 in Lewiston, Idaho, where his father was a farmer. The family lived in Utah before settling in Arizona in the 1930s to continue farming. Nick was one of 11 children and the eldest son (an older brother predeceased him, dying at seven months old). He and his family were imprisoned during WWII at the Poston, Ariz. incarceration camp along with thousands of other Japanese Americans. Nick graduated high school by correspondence course while in Poston. He enlisted in the U.S. Army during the war but had to return home to help care for his family when his father fell ill.

After the war, Nick and his family returned to farming along Baseline Road. Due to his father's poor health, a lot of responsibility for taking care of the family fell on Nick, and he used his connections and business sense to make deals to purchase land and expand the farm (some deals were made on his word and a handshake!). Other Japanese American families also farmed there, and some, like Nick, experimented with new techniques and seeds to help agricultural researchers. Eventually the area became a major tourist attraction, known for acres and acres of beautiful, fragrant flowers. Nick was one of the first farmers along Baseline Road to ship his flowers out of state and was the first to enclose his building and install air-conditioning. In the 1960s he built a pagoda-style tower so tourists could climb to the top and view the surrounding flower fields. He married in 1960 and he and his late wife, Tatsuko (Tats), ran every aspect of the business from farming to flower design. After a devastating fire in the 1990s Nick and Tats rebuilt the business with help from neighbors and friends. Today it is the last remaining flower shop on Baseline Road. Until this Thanksgiving, Nick was there every day and enjoyed visiting with customers and friends who would stop in at the shop.

In recent years, Nick was honored by the Arizona State Florists Association, which gave him its Crystal Crescent Award in 2017; spoke to college students and community members about the history of the Japanese flower farms; and recorded stories with KJZZ and the South Mountain Community College Oral History Project. Those who were fortunate to know Nick appreciated his sense of fairness, hard work, perseverance and kindness.

Nick was loved by many, especially his children and grandchildren. He was a wonderful friend, father and grandpa who was fond of sports, occasional casino gambling, following the stock market and solving sudoku puzzles (which he did daily). He is survived by his children Mark, Kathy (Tim Eigo) and Naomi (Keith Taylor); grandchildren Willa and Thea Eigo; as well as siblings, cousins, and many nieces and nephews.

Services will be held at a later date. Donations in his name may be made to the Japanese American Citizens League-AZ Hiroshi and Tatsuko Nakagawa Scholarship Fund or the Arizona Buddhist Temple. Condolences for the family may be left at the Resthaven/Carr-Tenney Mortuary and Memorials Gardens website at: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/phoenix-az/nick-nakagawa-9980304>.

**Akiyama, Robin, 63**, Los Angeles, CA, June 2, 2020; she is survived by her husband, Hideo; children, Christopher and Stacy; mother, Gloria Hess; sisters, Julie and Lesly; gc: 1.

**Goya, Mitsuko, 94**, Gardena, CA, Aug. 24, 2020; she was predeceased by her husband, Hideo; she is survived by her children, Yoshihide (Irene), Doris (Bill) Yamano, Nora and Wayne (Wendy); sister, Hideko (Kenzo) Oshiro; gc: 6; ggc: 2.

**Hamachi, Michael, 63**, Torrance, CA, May 18, 2020; he is survived by his wife, Diane Tasaka; daughters, Lauren (Angelo) Espiritu, April and Lynsey; siblings, Dale (Kari), Candace (Pat), Allison and Ann; mother, Naomi Ishibashi Hamachi; gc: 2.

**Iba, Nobuko, 101**, Los Angeles, CA, May 19, 2020; she was predeceased by her husband, Harry; she is survived by her children, Joan (Kay) Kobayashi, Larry (Phyllis) Iba and Dennis (Laurie) Iba; gc: 5; ggc: 6. ■

### PLACE A TRIBUTE

"In Memoriam" is a free listing that appears on a limited, space-available basis. Tributes honor your loved ones with text and photos and appear in a timely manner at the rate of \$20/column inch.

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## REIMAGINE EVERYTHING

# QUESTIONS REMAIN ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS VACCINE AS IT CONTINUES TO ROLL OUT ACROSS THE U.S.

By Ron Mori

As we welcome a new year, there continues to be much optimism regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. However, there are also many questions around the ongoing rollout of the vaccine.

Most states have started offering vaccines to older adults — those 65 and over, 70 and over, 75 and over or 80 and over, depending on the state — but getting a vaccination

appointment can be confusing and also a challenge.

State and county vaccination sign-up websites have crashed under the tremendous e-traffic, and health department phone lines have been overwhelmed. Scheduling coordination and issues, along with evolving state and local distribution plans, have led to a slow vaccine rollout.

More than 27 million doses of vaccines have been shipped across the country, but fewer than 10 million

people had received their first dose as of Jan. 13.

And distribution varies from one state to the next, even though the federal government is asking states to begin vaccinating people at least 65 years of age and people of any age with serious medical conditions.

The CDC is recommending states prioritize health-care workers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities — where nearly 40 percent of the nation's more than 373,000 COVID deaths have occurred. Most are doing this, though Florida and Georgia have added adults 65 and up to their top priority group, known as "Phase 1a" in many state vaccine plans.

Vaccine distribution after phase 1a is where many states vary in coordination and public communications. The CDC recommends that vaccines gradually become available to older adults — with adults 65 and up accounting for 8 in 10 deaths attributed to COVID-19 — and certain types of essential workers such as police officers and grocery store workers.

A CDC advisory panel is recommending states place people at least 75 years of age and "frontline essential workers" — including teachers, police officers, grocery store workers and postal employees — in their second phase of vaccine distribution

(1b). But formal vaccine plans are being drawn up by individual governors and state health officials, who aren't obligated to follow CDC recommendations to a T.

However, the majority of states are currently grouping older adults in their second phase of vaccine distribution, referred to as "Phase 1b." But the definition of "older adult" varies: I live in Virginia, and neighboring Pennsylvania is focusing on adults 75 and up, while West Virginia is vaccinating adults at least 80 years of age.

Keep in mind that these plans continue to change. Older adults younger than 75 or 80 may eventually find themselves prioritized higher than where they currently sit, especially given the new federal guidance to prioritize those 65-plus.

Many state plans suggest older

Americans will likely be vaccinated in the first half of the year.

"There are complexities involved, and there's going to be some learning as we go here," said Megan O'Reilly, vp for federal health and family issues at AARP.

AARP is fighting for older Americans to be prioritized in getting the COVID-19 vaccines because the science has shown that older people are at higher risk of death.

For the latest coronavirus news, advice and updates, and how AARP is advocating for nursing home residence, visit [aarp.org/coronavirus](https://aarp.org/coronavirus).

*Ron Mori is a member of the Washington, D.C., JACL chapter and manager of community, states and national affairs — multicultural leadership for AARP.*

## THE COVID VACCINE IN YOUR STATE



The COVID-19 vaccine rollout for all Americans varies by state.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF AARP

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