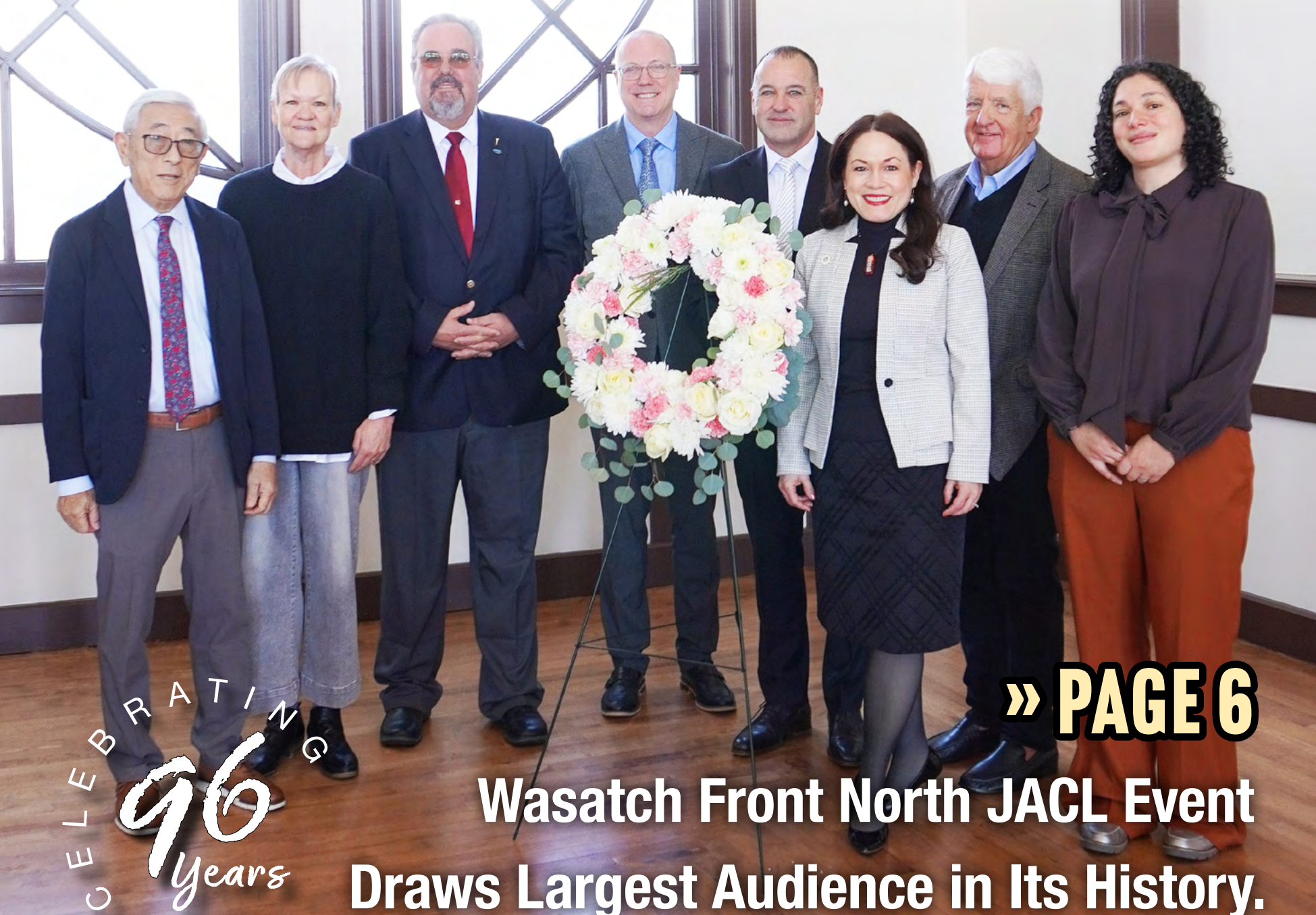


# PACIFIC CITIZEN

## SPECIAL *DOR* ISSUE



CELEBRATING  
**96**  
Years

» **PAGE 6**

**Wasatch Front North JACL Event  
Draws Largest Audience in Its History.**

Wasatch Front North JACL 2025 Day of Remembrance dignitaries (from left) Master of Ceremonies Floyd Mori, former national president of the JACL; Director of Tourism Box Elder County Joan Hammer; Box Elder County Commissioner Lee Perry; DOR keynote speaker and Director of the FDR Presidential Library William A. Harris; Brigham City Mayor DJ Bott; Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget Sophia M. DiCaro; former Utah Congressman Robert W. Bishop; and Brigham City Museum Director Alana Blumenthal PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

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**JACL Faces  
Budget Crisis;  
Must Trim \$350K.**

» **PAGE 4**  
**Day of  
Remembrance  
Coverage Starts.**



# BUDGET WOES BEFALL JACL

Executive director charged with cutting \$350K from organization's budget by April 1 national board deadline.

By P.C. Staff

At its March 1 national board meeting in the organization's San Francisco headquarters building, the JACL national board was faced with hard decisions based upon a hard reality: a budget deficit in 2025 that is expected to total \$500K, very much threatening the 96-year-old organization's future existence.

Largely attributing to the budget shortfall is a miscalculation of personnel expenses, fundraising goal shortfalls and other unrealized aspirational revenue, which left JACL's national board with no option other than to direct Executive Director David Inoue with the harsh task of cutting \$350K from the organization's current budget by April 1 following a nearly six-hourlong executive session.

"Unfortunately, we have not realized some desired revenue with a steady future stream," said Inoue in a statement to the *Pacific Citizen*. "We have narrowed the deficits with some generous bequests, but bequests do not have the reliability that they will always be there year after year. The other component of the deficit is a miscalculation of personnel expenses to total approximately a \$500K future annual deficit. With a recently received bequest, we are expecting a deficit of around \$200K for this year. As a result, the board has charged me with finding \$350K in savings in expenses going forward to put us on better financial footing for the long term."

Inoue's report also addressed the growth of the anti-DEI — diversity, equity and inclusion — movement that has swelled under the current administration. With JACL having become more dependent on corporate largesse from such entities as AT&T, Comcast



and State Farm in recent years, it's an area of concern regarding fixing JACL's current financial situation.

The organization received a bequest of nearly \$300K in January; another late-year 2024 bequest of \$290K was also received that helped lessen 2024's deficit figure. However, during the meeting, the board concurred that it cannot rely on bequests to bail JACL out of its budgetary woes.

"Going forward, our members must realize that the organization is not sustainable if we continue on our current path without making any adjustments on our spending. Using our investments to cover the budget deficit or hoping for outside help could extend our deficit spending for a few more years, eventually depleting our cash and forcing us to close due to unmet obligations and grantors," said JACL President Larry Oda to the *P.C.* "The steps the national board has taken to reduce the 2025 and 2026 budgets by \$500,000 would eliminate the financial hole we are facing. The board feels that JACL would still be whole and able to fulfill its mission, perhaps at

a reduced level."

Among the reductions being proposed are staff furloughs/cuts and the elimination of various staff benefits including retirement allocations and parking, in addition to potential reductions in programs that the JACL administers and oversees.

"The cuts to staff will require significant reshaping of the organization as a result of potential staffing cuts and changes to some programs and priorities. At a time such as this facing the challenges from the current political climate, this will be all the more difficult," said Inoue, who continued further, "The purpose of making these changes is to help make sure we can make it to our

centennial with a stronger financial basis. It does introduce risk into whether we can fully function as an organization with deep cuts."

The upcoming annual National Convention in New Mexico is also slated to run at a deficit of \$100K, an amount already configured into 2025's deficit and approved by the board in a motion made during the March 1 meeting.

Important takeaways from Membership VP Dominique Mashburn's report, which included updates on the Otoshidama, Annual Giving and Legacy Giving initiatives, had to do with JACL's overall membership numbers — and the status quo appears to be concerning. Despite recording 87 new JACL members since the Jan. 20 inauguration, which according to Mashburn's report had the current membership total at 7,008, the Q3 2024 total was 7,369, and the Q4 2024 total was 6,962.

Regarding the JACL's search for a director of membership and fund development position (see [tinyurl.com/mvj5zw6b](https://tinyurl.com/mvj5zw6b)) that was approved at the 2024 National Convention in Philadelphia as a way to help turn around JACL's financial woes, the search continues. ■

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# REALITY BITES

By David Inoue,  
JACL Executive Director

If you're not familiar with the movie "Reality Bites," it was a mostly forgettable movie set in the early to mid-1990s to capture the malaise that many Gen X young adults found themselves in at the time. The movie highlighted issues of LGBTQ identity, even as JACL was itself debating the issue as an organization. At that time, JACL was also arguably at one of the highest points in our history. Redress had passed just a few years earlier, and our hopes were to expand membership by as many as 1,000 new members. And yet, we faced a budget crisis, with the board calling for drastic measures to address a projected deficit expected to be \$187,000 for 1994 and as much as \$280,000 for 1995.

For 2025, we find ourselves in a very similar place. Despite some significant gifts to end 2024 and begin 2025, we are expecting to end 2024 with a deficit of \$180,000 and a similar deficit for 2025, even with the large gift received, which cannot be counted on for future revenue. Just as in 1994-95, there were concerns about what might be called soft revenue, or nonguaranteed. Going forward, beyond 2025, soft revenues in the budget combined with underestimated personnel expenses creates a permanent deficit of \$500,000.

We rely significantly on our investment savings and withdrawals from funds such as the Lifetime Membership account and the Legacy Fund endowment as some of that guaranteed money. We are grateful to our corporate partners, some of whom have supported JACL for decades and provide a clear stream of funds. Membership revenues have remained stable in the face of declining numbers of members, and we are grateful for those who join at our premium levels, especially the 44 individuals and couples who support JACL as Millenium Club members.

Among the challenges we face are the anti-DEI movement, which has had a chilling effect on corporations that support organizations such as our own. As we seek reassurances from our corporate partners, engaging new partners or expanding funding from our current partners becomes more challenging.

The revised membership classifications effective at the beginning of this year will hopefully infuse

more funds as members choose to join annually at the Bronze, Silver or Gold levels or commit to a Lifetime Membership at the newly created Sapphire, Ruby and Diamond Life Membership levels.

Ultimately, we need to recognize that while our strength as an organization is in our membership and the local connections our chapters and individual members have with other community partners and their local and federal policymakers, revenue will not always be able to remain as stable as it has for the past several years.

We need to transform into a more philanthropically oriented organization, increasing money received through donations, whether it is through the support of our existing members or finding individuals who might not choose membership but value the work that we do.

Perhaps you might want to support the *Pacific Citizen*, one of the oldest continuously published Asian community newspapers. Or maybe it is because of programs for youth such as Kakehashi or our fellowship programs. Or maybe you, yourself, are an alumnus of our Leadership Summit, which will be convening in Washington, D.C., this month to train another cohort of JACL members on how to engage in advocacy nationally, locally and work in alignment with our community advocacy partners. Or maybe you want to see JACL take a leadership role in D.C., such as with our recent lawsuit to stop the actions of Elon Musk and DOGE that are decimating our government and its ability to serve the people of America.

At its March 1 meeting, the national board made the decision to trim \$350,000 in expenses. At this level, these cuts will severely impact our ability to accomplish many of the things just listed. Staff will be affected.

We need your support now, more than ever. If you value the work that JACL does as an organization, please go online to [www.jacl.org/donate](http://www.jacl.org/donate) to declare your support for JACL and the work that we do.

Reality bites, but it doesn't have to bite as much with your support.

**David Inoue is executive director of the JACL. He is based in the organization's Washington, D.C., office.**

## Kakehashi Project participants' courtesy call with Ginowan City Mayor Atsushi Sakima

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HAYLEY ANN AGENA



# STRONG TIES

A Kakehashi Project participant recounts the lasting connections made from her experience in Japan.

By Hayley Ann Agena,  
Group A

In December, I traveled to Japan as a delegate of the Kakehashi Project with 70 other Nikkei young adults. For seven days, I connected with my Japanese heritage, forged lifelong friendships and gained new perspectives on the deep cultural and historical ties that bind us all.

The trip began in Tokyo, where we spent one night before venturing to the Okinawa Prefecture for several days of immersive activities and experiences. As a part of Group A, I dove into the heart of Okinawa's unique culture with workshops, lectures and personal exchanges that offered insights into life on the island.

One of the highlights was visiting the University of the Ryukyus, where we participated in exchange workshops with local students. These discussions taught us firsthand about Okinawan culture, history and modern-day challenges.

We also had the honor of participating in a courtesy call with the Mayor of Ginowan City, Mr. Atsushi Sakima, who shared the local perspective on Okinawa's role within Japan and its relationship with the United States, particularly in light of the

**Hayley Ann Agena (right, second from bottom) and her new Kakehashi friends eat dinner in Tokyo.**



ongoing presence of U.S. military bases on the island.

The most poignant moment for me was visiting Chibichiri Gama, a cave where many Okinawans sought refuge during the Battle of Okinawa. It was a reminder of the devastation wrought by the war and the resilience of those who hid there in search of survival. Visiting this site gave me a broader understanding of the hardships Okinawans endured.

While the workshops and visits were unforgettable, the personal connections truly made the trip come to life for me. My homestay party was greeted warmly and generously by my host family, the Nakaharas, an elderly couple from Yomitan Village. Seiji, a retired welder, and his wife, Setsuko, a housewife, have lived in Okinawa their entire lives and raised children and grandchildren who live across the Okinawa Prefecture.

Now in their early 70s, they enjoy hosting guests from other countries to share the significant history and beauty of Okinawa. Their rich connection to their culture was evident in the stories they shared about their own upbringings and the traditions they hold dear.

Through them, I gained invaluable insights into daily life, cultural practices and their pride in their heritage. Some of my most treasured memories include Seiji teaching us to play the *sanshin*, the traditional Okinawan three-stringed instrument; when Setsuko made *sata andagi* with us, which taught me about the origin of the "Okinawa dango" I grew up eating at Obon festivals; and harvesting sugar cane with friends I made on the trip.

The most meaningful part of my trip came toward the end of my homestay when the Nakaharas shared the Okinawan proverb: *Ichariba chode* (いちゃりばちよーで). Translated, it means, "Once we meet, we are friends for life." In Okinawa, *ichariba chode* encapsulated the warmth I felt in every shared meal, conversation and experience that connected us.

*Ichariba chode* goes beyond the surface level of friendship. It reflects an openhearted approach to human relationships, which values the present moment and the connection formed, regardless of how much time you have spent together.

» See TIES on page 10



# DECIDEDLY DISTAFF DOR

L.A.'s Day of Remembrance program puts the lens on JA women.

By George Toshio Johnston,  
P.C. Senior Editor

Jan Tokumaru  
was the event's  
final speaker.

It's an honor to stand before you today as we remember, reflect and celebrate the unwavering spirit of Nikkei women."

When Sharon Oda said those words Feb. 15 at the 2025 Los Angeles Day of Remembrance, it was a distillation of the event's theme, "A Legacy of Courage: Nikkei Women Persevering Through Incarceration and Beyond."

Befitting that theme, most of those who appeared on the stage in the *kaikan* of the Nishi Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin were women. The change of the usual venue, the pavilion of the Japanese American National Museum a few blocks west, was due to planned renovations.

The program played to approximately 300 in-person audience members and 100 livestream viewers and began with introductory remarks from Go For Broke National Education Center Programs and Education Manager Hwal Lee, who in turn introduced the next two presenters, L.A. DOR committee members Elizabeth Morikawa, JANM public programs associate, and Matthew Weisbly, Japanese American Citizens League education programs manager.

As part of the customary camp roll call, the duo took turns introducing individuals or descendants of individuals who were incarcerated at the 10 World War II-era concentration camps operated by the War Relocation Authority.

Comprising the procession, followed by the respective camp and its number of incarcerated, were:

- Reiko Rikumaru Nimura, Camp Amache, Colo. (7,318)
- Carrie Morita, Gila River, Ariz. (13,348)
- Hal Keimi, Heart Mountain, Wyo. (10,767)
- Richard Murakami, Jerome, Ark. (8,497)
- Pat Sakamoto, Manzanar, Calif. (10,046)
- Wendy Nagatani, Minidoka, Idaho (9,397)
- Steve Nagano, Poston, Ariz. (17,814)
- June Hibino, Rohwer, Ark. (8,475)

- Willie Ito, Topaz, Utah (8,130)
- Kyoko Nancy Oda, Tule Lake, Calif. (18,789)

Included also in the procession were Sachi Murase, who represented the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and Military Intelligence Service; Elsa Kudo for the Crystal City, Texas, Department of Justice camp; and Kay Oda, who represented the Tuna Canyon Detention Station in Los Angeles.

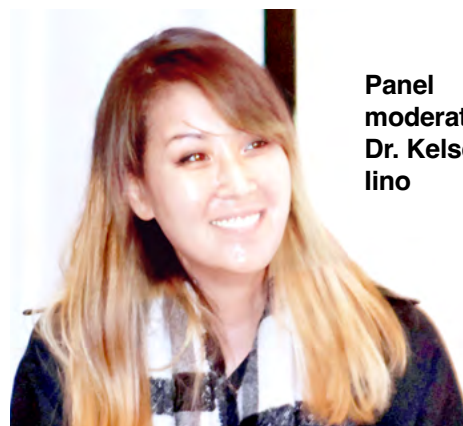
Weisbly and Morikawa also name-checked the other detention facilities — citizen isolation centers, Immigration and Naturalization Service and Department of Justice camps, as well as the Swedish cruise ship M.S. Gripsholm — where ethnic Japanese, including U.S. citizens, were held by the federal government.

"If you're able, please stand now," said Morikawa, "as we take a moment to honor all who were forcibly removed and lived in America's concentration camps, as well as those Japanese Americans who lived outside of the military zones and suffered from the racism of hatred heightened by the executive order. We also pay tribute to the thousands of Japanese Latin Americans and German and Italian Americans who were incarcerated by the U.S. government."

Following the procession was a panel discussion — interspersed by videos — moderated by Dr. Kelsey Iino. She was introduced by Morikawa, who said, "She is an elected board of trustees member of the Los Angeles Community College District, president of her faculty union and has worked over 17 years as a counselor at El Camino College. Kelsey has served multiple organizations . . . currently as a board member of the Astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Committee, the El Camino College Foundation and the Little



(From left) Dr. Kelsey Iino, Sara Omura, Yesenia Cardenas, Nobuko Miyamoto, Karen Magaña and Traci Kato-Kiriyama



Panel  
moderator  
Dr. Kelsey  
Iino



Speaker  
Nobuko  
Miyamoto

Tokyo Service Center."

On the panel were Sara Omura, a senior at Whitney High School in Cerritos, Calif.; Yesenia Cardenas, a torchbearer for the Go For Broke National Education Center, an Air Force National Guard paralegal and outreach counselor at California State University, Northridge; Nobuko Miyamoto, a singer-songwriter, dance and theater artist who was recently the subject of the documentary "Nobuko Miyamoto: A Song in Movement"; Karen Magaña, a fifth-year Ph.D. candidate at the University of California Los Angeles' Department of Education; and Traci Kato-Kiriyama, a writer/actor, community organizer and director/founder of Tuesday Night Cafe.

Iino introduced the first video, which preceded and prompted the discussion that followed. It was testimony, in Japanese with English subtitles, of an Issei woman named Tetsu Saito, filmed at the Los Angeles Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians hearing, during which she described the hardships she encountered as a result of Executive Order 9066. It was followed by another video of Esther Arakaki Taira, who expressed wonderment at how her Nisei mother, Nancy Arakaki, endured and overcame the challenges of being incarcerated while raising three children.

When Iino asked Omura how Taira's "expression of her mom speak to you in your understanding of the camp experience?" she answered that what stood out to her were the themes of sacrificial love and "*kodomo no*

*tama ni*," the Japanese saying that means "for the sake of the children." Iino then introduced a video featuring Mary Yamada, who served in the Cadet Nurse Corps.

In the video, Yamada recalled the dismay and hurt she felt when she, as a commissioned officer, was barred from joining her unit when it went to serve in the United Kingdom because "they were not accepting Japanese nurses." Iino directed her question to Cardenas regarding her thoughts when "Mary Yamada explained that she was rejected from the Cadet Nursing Corps and denied work as a nurse due to her race." For Cardenas, Yamada's position was, "I'm proud of who I am. You may not want me, but I'm here. I'm not leaving, and I'm not giving up."

Iino then introduced Miyamoto, who prefaced the screening of her re-edited short film, "Gaman," and said, "It's very important what we're doing now because they still want to disappear us, but we're not disappearing." When that video ended, Iino then introduced the next video, titled "My Name Is Elsa," the subject of which was Elsa Kudo, a Japanese Latin American woman whose family was living in Peru before WWII. Despite having committed no crimes, Kudo related how her father was apprehended at the order of the United States in January 1944. Eventually, the Kudo family was uprooted and sent to the United States.

Iino addressed her next questions — what about the Kudo family story resonated with you, and do these Japanese Latin Americans and your own Ph.D. research overlap? — to Magaña, who answered, "What strikes me the most is the ongoing legacy of state violence against immigrant families . . . in the name of national security."

"The Kudo family was forcibly removed from their home in Peru, incarcerated in the U.S. concentration camp and stripped of their legal rights. Unfortunately, that story is not just a historical tragedy, it is a pattern that continues today."

Traci  
Kato-  
Kiriyama



Karen Magaña



Sara  
Omura



Maiya  
Kuida-  
Osumi





➤ Iino then introduced more archival CWRIC footage, this time featuring Manzanar Committee founding member Sue Kunitomi Embrey, circa 1981. Using Embrey's testimony as a springboard, Iino asked Kato-Kiriyama what she was working on now "during these critical times?"

"I'm continuing to work on a piece related to those Commission hearings through which we just got to see Sue Embrey," she said. "It's a play called 'Tales of Clamor' that was developed with NCRR. And we are... going through a multiyear residency in Chicago to also recognize the testimonies that were done there and to incorporate that and work with local Chicago actors," Kato-Kiriyama reported.

As the panel wound down, it was Miyamoto who gave a somber assessment of the status quo under the current administration. "It may not get better, easily or soon," she said. "I never thought I'd see this day, actually. I thought we would keep making progress."

Iino then handed off the program to the next two speakers, L.A. DOR committee members Oda and Richard Katsuda, who took turns talking about the important roles Japanese American women played during and now after the incarceration period. "They turned barren barracks into homes, sewed scraps into clothing, planted gardens in the dust and found ways to nourish both body and spirit," she said. "They organized schools, published newspapers and advocated for dignity where there was none to be given."

"But their resilience did not end when the camps closed," Katsuda said. "With nothing but determination, many started over, working tirelessly to rebuild lives, businesses and neighborhoods."

They then focused on one woman in particular who had an outsize impact on the fate of imprisoned Japanese Americans: Mitsuye Endo, one of four Japanese American plaintiffs whose legal challenges reached the Supreme Court during World War II — and hers was the only case that, at the time, proved victorious (see Jan. 24-Feb. 6, 2025, *Pacific Citizen* or [tinyurl.com/bdh2r56r](https://tinyurl.com/bdh2r56r)).

"The Supreme Court ruled in her favor," said Oda, "leading to the closure of the counts, the Court unanimously ruled that the U.S. government could not continue to detain a citizen who was 'concededly loyal' to the United States."

Omura returned to the stage with Maiya Kuida-Osumi, a sophomore at the University of California, San Diego, with both having appeared at the Los Angeles Day of Re-

membrance in 2020 (see Feb. 21-26, 2020, *Pacific Citizen* or [tinyurl.com/y8ju8jhi](https://tinyurl.com/y8ju8jhi)). The pair shared reading the "creative nonfiction letters" Kuida-Osumi wrote in the voice of her great-grandmother, describing the travails she had encountered, with Omura giving voice to the words of Kuida-Osumi's great-grandfather.

She closed the presentation with the following poignant dispatch: "I don't know how long we'll be in this barren desert of Crystal City, but frankly, it doesn't make much difference now. My daughter is dead, and nothing matters, and yet everything matters. Kumi, Taka, Fumio and Machi all depend on my support and guidance and strength, and we are still in prison behind barbed wire, fighting to survive. Love, Hideko."

Oda and Katsuda then paid homage to community members and friends who had died in the year since the 2024 Day of Remembrance. Memorialized were Gann Matsuda, Grace Watari Oga, Akira Hirose, Kurt Kuniyoshi, May (Hinoki) Mineta, Norihiko Takatani, Hisako Terasaki, Keith Terasaki, Grant Ujifusa, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Mario Gershon Reyes, Karl Nobuyuki and Harry Kawahara.

Katsuda then introduced L.A. DOR Committee member Jan Tokumaru to deliver the program's closing thoughts and a call to action. "As we look at our government today, we must remember how fear and racism can be so dangerous and overwhelming," she said.

"There is a growing politics of fear where immigrants are demonized and scapegoated. The Alien Enemies Act, used to round up and imprison Issei during World War II, is again being raised, now threatening all immigrants. In the spirit of advocating for democracy, we must call on ourselves to stand up for immigrants, transgender people and other marginalized groups."

VIPs in attendance included Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi and his family; staff representing the office of Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez; ABC Unified School District Board of Trustees President Ernie Nishi; and Pasadena Community College District Board of Trustees member Steve Gibson. Scout troops in attendance were 361, 3106, 738, 764 and 683 (BSA) and 12135 (GSA).

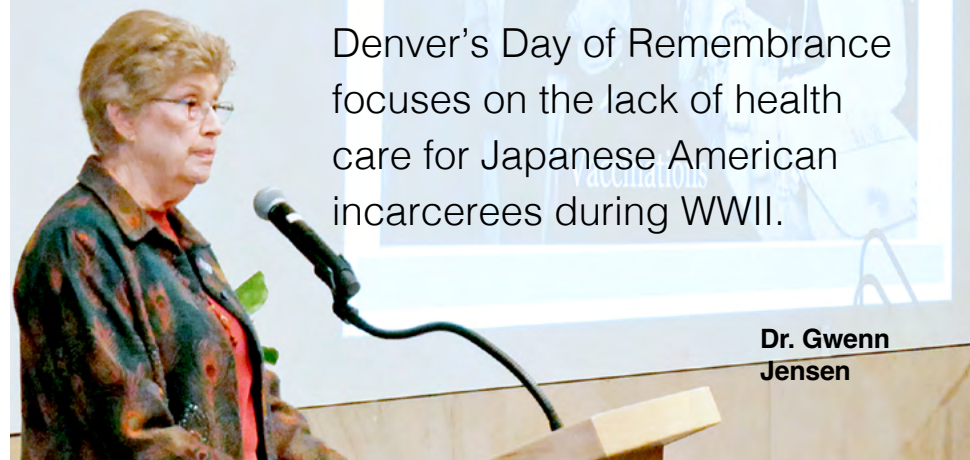
**To view a recording of the 2025 Los Angeles DOR, visit [tinyurl.com/3ud9kb7a](https://tinyurl.com/3ud9kb7a). To read Pacific Citizen's coverage of the 2024 Los Angeles Day of Remembrance, visit [tinyurl.com/3cpj8ma](https://tinyurl.com/3cpj8ma). To view a copy of the event's program, visit [tinyurl.com/45tpr73d](https://tinyurl.com/45tpr73d).**



View of the 2025 DOR audience

## THE TOLL OF INCARCERATION

Denver's Day of Remembrance focuses on the lack of health care for Japanese American incarcerated during WWII.



Dr. Gwenn Jensen

By Gil Asakawa,  
P.C. Contributor

Mile High JACL has held Day of Remembrance events for decades to mark the signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942, which led to the Japanese American wartime incarceration.

The topics covered by guest speakers in Denver have typically covered the history of incarceration, postwar resettlement and, in recent years, the need to remember incarceration in a new era of anti-immigrant hate and family separation.

But on Feb. 16, the Denver chapter of the JACL put the spotlight on a topic that educated the audience of approximately 200 people about a history that simply isn't often covered: health care in the camps and the years of postwar resettlement.

Dr. Gwenn Jensen, a Colorado-based medical anthropologist and oral historian, discussed the toll that the forced incarceration had on individuals' physical and mental health. She also shared stories of the Japanese Americans who were impacted as a result and gave many examples of health issues and how they were addressed, even with macabre humor.

"In one of the Arkansas camps, dysentery was just called Jerome disease," Jensen said in her talk to the audience. "At Santa Anita (the race track used as a temporary camp), it was called the trots because they were in horse stalls. And then at Manzanar hospital, staff would comment from time to time, the twins are here, Diana and Rita. As time went on and the kitchen staff became more knowledgeable, food handling problems diminished, but episodes persisted throughout the life of the camps."

Jensen's extensive research found facts that have mostly gone unreported. "Contaminated milk supplies were system wide, except for Heart Mountain. The milk at Gila River was never free of bacteria such as E. coli. Diet was a challenge for diabetics in camp — people were routinely served five starches at a meal," she said.

In addition, Jensen cited stories from her oral history interviews. One woman's mother, who was diabetic, died in Poston. "The diet of rice, macaroni and potato was hardly a suitable diet for a diabetic. The stress of going into camp, the poor diet and worry hastened her death," the woman said,

The constant presence of dust from land that had been cleared of all vegetation to build the camps caused respiratory problems and exacerbated pre-existing lung conditions or caused asthma.

Dust plagued all the camps except Jerome and Rowher, the two, Jensen noted, "that were built on swamplands. The trouble with the swamps was the risk of malaria from the mosquitoes, which were endemic. Jerome had 12 of the 14 reported cases of malaria."

Jensen's research uncovered other ways the land affected the health of incarcerated, including arsenic and lead and other toxins in the soil and therefore the dust that permeated the camps.

There was also a shortage of doctors and nurses, which allowed a doctor who used forceps to pull out babies and damaged their skulls to keep being employed. The staffing issues were exacerbated by the lack of equipment. In one case, incarcerated provided a common drill for surgeons to use instead of a surgical drill.

There were ways to cope with the stressors of camp life. Many people dealt with the situation by keeping busy, either with jobs in camp or even landscaping or gardening. "Gardens were present in all of the camps," she said. "Besides producing fresh produce, the gardens had a calming effect and gave pleasures to not only the gardens, but the viewers."

Jensen motioned to the table along the wall where students from the University of Denver's archeology department, who conduct digs at Amache, displayed some artifacts they had found at Amache in southeast Colorado.

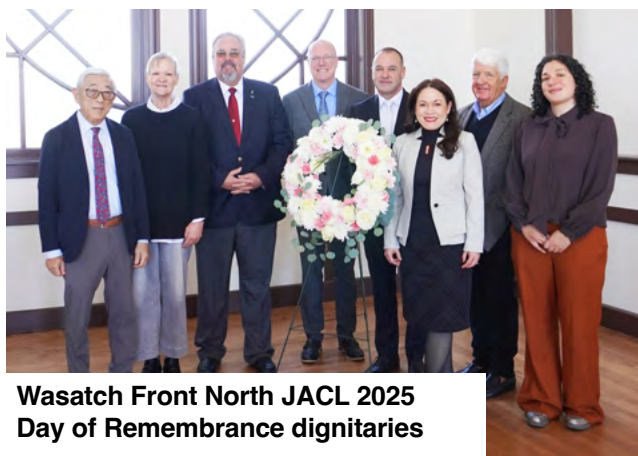
"Gardening soothes the mind and reduces stress," Jensen noted. "Archeologist Bonnie Clark, who has a table over here, uncovered multiple garden features at Amache and concluded for people who had been displaced multiple times, the act of literally putting down roots and providing psychological stability — health impacts extended beyond the end of World War II."

Jensen closed her talk with a reminder that though the Nisei didn't communicate about their experience, it's important to talk about this experience and acknowledge the trauma.

"The Japanese American incarceration represents a historical racial and cultural trauma that is long and had long-term health impacts," Jensen said. "On the well-being of survivors, which my research confirmed, it

» See TOLL on page 9





Wasatch Front North JACL 2025 Day of Remembrance dignitaries

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

# WASATCH FRONT NORTH JACL HOLDS *DOR* OBSERVANCE WITH LARGEST ATTENDANCE IN ITS HISTORY

Event coincides with the grand opening of the first Japanese pioneer exhibit at the Brigham City Museum.

William A. Harris, director of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, speaks on "The Japanese American Incarceration and the FDR Presidential Library: Our Shared Histories."

PHOTO ANDEAN VISUAL



A view of the iconic Brigham sign

By Patti Hirahara, P.C. Contributor

In the State of Utah, three JACL chapters — Mount Olympus, Salt Lake and Wasatch Front North — rotate to hold a Day of Remembrance program each year to commemorate the signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942.

For 2025, it was the Wasatch Front North JACL chapter's turn to hold the event, and it was approached by the Brigham City Museum if its members would like to partner in holding the Day of Remembrance portion of the program to coincide with the grand opening of the museum's first exhibition, "Uncovering the Journey: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County."

A meeting was set at the Idle Isle Restaurant in Brigham City, Utah, with the Wasatch Front North JACL board of directors on Oct. 3, 2024, to see the feasibility of collaborating on an event. I attended the event with Norio Uyematsu, who is a member of the Salt Lake JACL chapter though he resides in California, along with Floyd Mori, who represented the Mount Olympus JACL chapter, to see how an event could be possible with only four and a half months to put all of the pieces together.

I had already secured the keynote speaker in 2022, William A. Harris, director of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, N.Y., to

make his first trip to Utah to participate in the event.

Uyematsu and Brigham City Museum Director Alana Blumenthal had already visited the FDR Presidential Library in May 2024 to brief Harris on their plans. During their visit, they were also given a tour of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, which was the first presidential library to be built in the United States.

For their visit, the museum brought out an original Chiura Obata painting. In May 1943, shortly after the first lady's well-publicized visit to the Gila River camp in Arizona, a delegation from the JACL visited the White House to express its gratitude for her concern for the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

During their visit, the JACL presented a painting of the Topaz, Utah, camp to Eleanor Roosevelt. She displayed the painting in her New York City apartment until her death; it is a tie to Utah that resonates to this day in the FDR archives.

The Wasatch Front North JACL had a productive meeting with the Brigham City Museum staff, and they all agreed with Uyematsu's proposal to do the event in Brigham City, Utah, where his family resettled after WWII in 1945.

Uyematsu offered to help promote the event in the *Pacific Citizen* and provide financial support, and I became an adviser to both the Wasatch Front North JACL's DOR and the Brigham City Museum's Japanese pioneer exhibit, which

was more than two years in the making.

With not much time to spare, the Wasatch Front North JACL decided on the Brigham City Academy for its DOR program. It is a historic two-story venue on Brigham City's Main Street and was only a five-minute drive to the Brigham City Museum/Brigham City Community Center for the museum's grand opening.

Under the guidance of DOR Coordinator Kris Yamada, the Wasatch Front North JACL created its own web page to promote event registration and worked with the Mount Olympus and Salt Lake JACL chapters.

The Wasatch Front North JACL chapter hired Iron Gate Grill Catering to prepare the luncheon and had Hill Billy Hand Pies provide the dessert. It also worked with Drewes Floral and Gift for the flowers to utilize as many local Brigham City businesses as possible.

Joan Hammer, director of tourism for Box Elder County, also provided assistance to ensure the group had whatever it needed from the county.

Two weeks before the event, registration for the first Utah Day of Remembrance in Brigham City/Box Elder County hit capacity at 263, and a waiting list was established.

Attendees came from California and Colorado, as well as from across the State of Utah, to hear Harris speak on "The Japanese American Incarceration and the FDR Presidential Library: Our Shared Histories," in which he gave an overall assessment of how the FDR Presidential Library looks at this time in history today.

With Feb. 19, falling on a Wednesday this year, the event was changed to Feb. 15 to allow more attendees to come and participate and, for some, make their first trip to Brigham City, Utah.

On the day of the event, attendees listened on how EO 9066 created what would become the forced removal and mass incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens. For many, this story was not well known, as Japanese Americans and those of Japanese descent were not forced to relocate during WWII.



A capacity crowd of 263 filled Brigham City Academy in Brigham City, Utah, for the 2025 Utah Day of Remembrance, sponsored by the Wasatch Front North JACL. William A. Harris, director of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, traveled from Hyde Park, N.Y., to keynote the event.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA





Wasatch Front North JACL chapter members (from left) KayLene Yamada, Alex Hirai, Shauna Riley, Marion Hori, Brigham City Museum Director Alana Blumenthal, Akie Hirabayashi, Candace Flowers-Zumbrun, Mackenzie Hirai, DOR coordinator Kris Yamada, Suzan Yoshimura and former JACL National President Floyd Mori. Not pictured are Larry Grant, Robert Kiyomura, Geoff Russell, Boone Nakasone and Randy Sugihara. PHOTO: ANDEAN VISUAL



Ed Tazoi, son of the late WWII 442 RCT Distinguished Service Cross recipient Jim Tazoi of Garland, Utah, joins *Pacific Citizen* contributor and event adviser Patti Hirahara with honored guest and Salt Lake JACL member Norio Uyematsu.

PHOTO: ANDEAN VISUAL



Kelly Asao, president of the Salt Lake JACL, with Floyd Mori of the Mount Olympus JACL chapter and Norio Uyematsu

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

VIPs who attended the event included:

**Scott Bassett**, board member, Topaz Museum

**Robert Bishop**, former congressman of Utah's 1st Congressional District

**Sherrie Hayashi**, board member, Topaz Museum, and former director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX coordinator and former director, Utah Labor Commission

**Dean Hirabayashi**, president, National JACL Credit Union, and board member, Topaz Museum

**McKenzie Hirai**, board member, Topaz Museum

**Daisuke Igarashi**, San Francisco bureau chief of the *Asahi Shimbun* in Japan

**Dave Jeffries**, Brigham city councilman

**Rosemary Lesser**, former Utah House representative

**Jeanette Misaka**, member, Advisory Council, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation

**Terry Schows**, former director, Utah Department of Veterans Affairs.

Utah JACL chapter presidents who attended the event included:

**Kelly Asao**, president, Salt Lake JACL chapter

**Ethan Hirabayashi**, co-president, Mount Olympus JACL chapter

**Marion Hori**, co-president, Wasatch Front North JACL chapter

**Richard Mano**, co-president, Mount Olympus JACL chapter

**Shauna Riley**, co-president, Wasatch Front North JACL chapter.

Reactions from those who attended the event reveal how they felt about the first DOR in Brigham City/Box Elder County history.

**Sophia DiCaro**, executive director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, State of Utah: "It's my absolute pleasure and honor to welcome you to today's event, not only to speak on behalf of the Governor's Office, but also to be here to honor my heritage as a

second-generation Japanese American. On Feb. 19, 2022, Gov. Cox signed Senate Bill 58, Day of Remembrance Observing the Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II, and this bill designated an annual Day of Remembrance on Feb. 19 and added this annual day to the state's official calendar for commemorative periods. This Day of Remembrance now serves as a special gift that enables us to reflect back on our history, appreciate the present and preserve something special for the future. On behalf of Gov. Spencer Cox, Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson and the great State of Utah, I express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all of the contributors who put in the hard work to hold this event on this special day."

**Brigham City Mayor DJ Botts**: "It is a distinct honor for Brigham City to host the DOR and accompanying museum exhibit. What a humbling experience to remember, discuss and revisit EO 9066. I am most inspired by the living examples of forgiveness our Japanese American citizens/friends continue to exhibit in the face of the injustices of history. They are truly inspiring."

**Box Elder County Commissioner Lee Perry**: "Box Elder County is so proud of our Japanese American community and all they bring to our community, including one of our former County Commissioner's, Frank Nishiguchi, who served from 1987-92. I believe this is the largest gathering of the Japanese American Citizens League ever held in Box Elder County. . . . We hope many people will come visit our museum and the amazing 'Uncovering the Journey' exhibition of our Japanese American brothers and sisters in Box Elder County."

**Former JACL National President from Utah and Master of Ceremonies Floyd Mori**: "The opening of the Brigham City Museum exhibit of the history of Japanese Americans in Northern Utah was an inspiring way to celebrate the Day of Remembrance. Much appreciation to Norio Uyematsu and Patti Hirahara for spearheading the development of the program. Congratulations to the Wasatch Front North chapter of the JACL for hosting this outstanding event to commemorate and remember the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII. It was an honor to participate in this DOR program."

## 'UNCOVERING THE JOURNEY: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County'

Norio Uyematsu inspired the Brigham City Museum to create "Uncovering the Journey: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County," which opened on Feb. 15 with 2,000 square feet of exhibit space.

According to Brigham City Museum Director Alana Blumenthal, "The opening of this exhibit is a proud moment for our museum, our staff and our city and Box Elder County. Researching and curating it brought us together with so many members of the community, and I hope that having it on display for the next few months will connect us with even more. We are honored and humbled by the spirit and generosity of the Japanese American community in working with us on this project. We hope that everyone will come and see the exhibit to learn more about the integral role these Japanese pioneers played in shaping our shared history."

Uyematsu, who resettled in Brigham City, Utah, in 1945, enlisted into the U.S. Army at the age of 17. His Army footlocker and photos are on display in the current exhibit. He was named to the Orange County Register's 125 Most Influential Persons in Orange County, Calif., for 2024, and his interview was just released by the FDR Presidential Library for its 2025 Day of Remembrance observance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AY-D-mGIR2k>. In addition, his story was the lead article on the front page of the *Asahi Shimbun* in Japan on March 6.

The "Uncovering the Journey" exhibit will run thru June 21. The Brigham City Museum is open from Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday from 1-5 p.m. Admission is free.

— P.H.



Norio Uyematsu with Alana Blumenthal next to his Army footlocker and photos on display

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

(From left) Mark Uno, son of late judge and former JACL President Raymond Uno, joins Wasatch Front North JACL co-presidents Marion Hori and Shauna Riley at the 2025 Utah Day of Remembrance.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA





# D.C. *DOR* Program Kicks Off IREICHŌ NATIONAL TOUR

Highlights include a panel discussion and monument book of 125,284 names of those forcibly incarcerated during WWII.

By P.C. Staff

**T**onight's program is a time for reflection and an opportunity for all of us to engage in meaningful dialogue. Fortunately, we have a distinguished panel to lift up issues of importance and concern to help us, through their voices, connect with this powerful and, yes, touching and, yes, beautiful history. . . . They will inspire us to continue to work toward justice and reconciliation," said Rodney Slater, chair and president of the National Archives Foundation, as he welcomed the audience and those streaming the program to Washington, D.C.'s 2025 Day of Remembrance event on Feb. 18.

Only days before, the event was scheduled at the National Archives Building. But following the sudden dismissal of original event moderator Dr. Colleen Shogan, archivist of the U.S., along with several key Archives staffers, by the Trump administration on Feb. 7, the program shifted to the Navy Memorial Visitor Center.



**D.C. DOR panel participants (from left) moderator Dr. Anthea Hartig, Dr. Duncan Ryukens Williams, Shirley Ann Higuchi and Ann Burroughs**

PHOTO: DAVID INOUE

Programming partners the National Archives Foundation, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Japanese American National Museum, Irei National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration, JACL, JACL D.C. chapter, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation continued to sponsor the event.

Slater introduced new moderator Dr. Anthea Hartig, Elizabeth MacMillan Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, who introduced the event's panel speakers.

In her opening remarks, Hartig spoke about anti-Asian and anti-immigrant sentiments having played a key role leading up to the decision made on Feb. 19 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 9066, as well as

the significance of the Ireichō and its own role in helping with the healing process in the many years following the forced incarceration.

Speaking of the Ireichō, Hartig said, "This remarkable project humanizes the number with the names and then the very healing act of stamping and memorializing the people that the government wrongly tried to erase. Take a moment with me and center your breath and remember both the survivors who we have with us and all those who did not survive."

Dr. Duncan Ryukens Williams, director of the USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture and project director of the Irei Project, spoke about the history of the Ireichō "Book of Names" and that "everyone who stamps a name is contributing to healing the past. This is our belief. We ourselves are

the monument. . . . We need to get to every name being acknowledged."

Next to speak was Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi, who also spoke of the Ireichō's significance to the Japanese American community.

"I stand before you as a Sansei daughter of incarcerated at Heart Mountain . . . and I think this project is so important because for us, the descendants and current survivors, it gives us an opportunity to step into the shoes of our parents and grandparents and say that we are here, we were here and that we matter," said Higuchi.

JANM President and CEO Ann Burroughs also echoed the enormous power in memory and honoring the past as the Ireichō begins its national tour.

"A life, a family, a story, a history, and every stamp placed on its pages is an affirmation that you were here, you mattered, you have not been forgotten," she continued. ". . . Each name stamped — we refuse to forget. Monuments are not just about the past, they are about the future we choose to share."

The Ireichō "Book of Names" is embarking on a 20-month national tour, after which it will be formally gifted by the Irei Project to JANM.

**For more information and to make an appointment to stamp the Ireichō book, visit <https://ireizo.org/tour/>.**



**Members of the Salt Lake JACL at the Wasatch Front North JACL DOR in Brigham City (from left) Tina Misaka, Miss Utah County Erika Dalton, Karie Minaga-Miya, Jeanette Misaka, President Kelly Asao, Sheldon Marumoto, Katherine Marumoto, Cindy Yamada Thomas, Stephanie Sueoka and Cameron Sueoka.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KELLY ASAO

➤ Summing up the day's event was keynote speaker Harris, who said after the event, "As Americans, we share the history of incarceration. The new exhibit, and the spirit of Brigham City and Box Elder County, evidence the best qualities within us to make connections and find ways forward. It is an important story to tell about the people of a community putting their faith and American ideals to work for the cause of the common good.

"On the 75th anniversary of the signing of EO 9066 on Feb. 19, 2017, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum opened a new photographic exhibition entitled 'Images of Internment: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.' The FDR Library cannot change the devastating reality of incarceration, but it can, however, work to

ensure that it is not forgotten by education by participating in events like this."

The JACL National Education Committee provided attendees the "Power of Words" handbook, which was a gift from the Gregory Marutani Gassho Education Trust. The handbook offers a new resource in learning factual terms about the incarceration.

The Utah Day of Remembrance was an amazing opportunity to hear speakers talk about what happened 83 years ago in our country and teach those about this tragic time in American history. There are not many left who lived in the Japanese incarceration camps during WWII, but in combining the new Japanese pioneer exhibit at the Brigham City Museum, the younger generations will learn about the sacrifices and accomplishments the Japanese community has had here to become part of the Box Elder County community. ■

## AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL

### 2025 TOUR SCHEDULE

- CLASSICAL JAPAN HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . **WAITLIST** . . . Mar 16-27  
Tokyo, Mt Fuji, Yamanashi, Shizuoka, Hiroshima, Kyoto.
- TREASURES OF IRELAND TOUR** (Carol Hida). . . . . Apr 7-15  
Dublin, Limerick, Killarney, Blarney.
- KOREA HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . Apr 10-23  
Seoul, Bullet Train, Gyeongju, Busan, Jeju Island, Jeonju, Daejeon, Nami Island, Seoul, DMZ, K-Drama sites.
- JAPAN SPRING COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . May 11-23  
Tokyo, Ashikaga Flower Park, Yamagata, Sakata/Shonai, Akita, Morioka, Sanriku Railway coastal train ride, Hanamaki Onsen, Matsushima, Nikko/Kinugawa Onsen, Tokyo.
- MUSIC CITIES HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida). . . . . May 12-19  
New Orleans, Memphis, Nashville.
- GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . Jun 15-25  
Tokyo, Hakone, Hiroshima, Kyoto. Craftmaking hands-on experiences.
- HOKKAIDO SUMMER HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . Jul 13-25  
Hakodate, Lake Toya, Noboribetsu, Otaru, Sapporo, Wakkanai, Rishiri Island, Asahikawa, Furano, Tokyo.
- DANUBE RIVER CRUISE** (Carol Hida) . . . . . **WAITLIST**. . . . . Aug 27-Sep 9  
Pre-cruise in Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Weissenkirchen, Linz, Passau, Vilshofen, Post-cruise in Prague. **Bonus Discount - Limited Time Offer.**
- JAPAN AUTUMN COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . Oct 16-27  
Tokyo, Sado Island, Kanazawa, Amanohashidate, Tottori, Matsue, Tamatsukuri Onsen, Hiroshima.
- KENYA WILDLIFE SAFARI HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida) . . . . . **WAITLIST**. . . Oct 15-29  
Nairobi, Amboseli-Nakuru Lake-Masai Mara National Parks, Mt. Kenya Safari Club, Sweetwaters Tented Camp, Jane Goodall Chimpanzee Sanctuary. **FINAL TOUR**
- OKINAWA HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) . . . . . Nov 13-23  
Naha, Onnason, Islands of Ishigaki, Iriomote & Taketomi.

For more information and reservations, please contact:

AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL  
312 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Suite 240 \* Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Tel: (213)625-2232 \* Email: [americanholiday@att.net](mailto:americanholiday@att.net)  
Ernest or Carol Hida



# Day of Remembrance IN IDAHO

The program is held at the Idaho State Museum, which is currently hosting 'Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American World War II Experience.'



**The traveling exhibit at the Idaho State Museum will be on display until March 16.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BOISE VALLEY JACL

**BOISE, IDAHO** — Nearly 150 people attended the Day of Remembrance program and proclamation signing at the Idaho State Museum on Feb. 17. Presenters at the event included Idaho Gov. Brad Little, photographer Shane Sato and Mitch Maki, CEO of the Go For Broke National Education Center.

This is the 24th year that the Boise Valley JACL has partnered with the governor's office to hold a Day of Remembrance ceremony. It was an opportune time to hold this year's event at the Idaho State Museum, as it is currently hosting the traveling exhibit "Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American World War II Experience" until March 16.

During the event, Sato spoke of his two-decades-long effort to capture portraits of Nisei WWII veterans. Sato's emotional journey to memorialize these veterans has resulted in two coffee table books, "The Go For Broke Spirit: Portraits of Courage" and "The Go For Broke Spirit: Portraits of Legacy," which feature photographs of more than 150 Japanese American veterans.

In addition, Maki spoke of the courage, sacrifice and patriotism of the Nisei Veter-

ans. He spoke of one veteran in particular, Sgt. Kazuo Masuda, who was recognized at ceremonies held by President Ronald Reagan.

When asked why Masuda would fight for a nation that had treated him and his family so badly, Maki quoted Masuda as saying, "Because this is the only way that I know that my family can have a chance in America."

Gov. Little, prior to reading and signing the Day of Remembrance proclamation, spoke of his personal connection to Nisei veterans in his hometown of Emmett, Idaho.

He mentioned the Hosoda family, from Emmett, who sent four boys into the service, including three with the famous 442nd RCT. Earl and Max Hosoda were killed in action, while George Hosoda fought in and survived all four campaigns in France and Italy. Another brother, Yoshimi, became a 1st Lieutenant in Germany.

The governor also recognized Teri Kawahara, who was in attendance at the event. Kawahara, a Minidoka survivor, is the wife of Harry Kawahara, a decorated 442nd veteran and recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal. Harry passed away last year at the age of 100.

Friends of Minidoka and the National Park Service were also present, with representatives handing out information and answering questions.

## TOLL » continued from page 5

also caused immediate adverse health effects and preventable illnesses and deaths. It's hard to put an exact number on the magnitude of health consequences that arose during and after the detention, but there's no doubt that it was imprinted on the lives and psyches of those who were imprisoned.

"Most of the people I've interviewed over the years are gone now, but the trauma of their incarceration lives on, not only in their children and grandchildren, but in public policy, as much as the Nisei kept silent about their trauma and tried to give their family a normal life, the legacy of that trauma carried forward. There are now ongoing studies examining the intergenerational trauma on the next generation and the health consequences."

Denver's DOR event ended with the screening of a powerful 14-minute documentary by Barbara Kagawa Shore titled "Missing Pieces," which was produced in 2023 as a Visual Communications Digital Histories project, about two of Shore's relatives who died while incarcerated.

The documentary is currently making the rounds of film festivals.

Following the screening of Shore's film, the California-based filmmaker, who had traveled to Denver for the presentation, joined Jensen and Dr. Patricia Biggs, a former National Parks Service employee at Manzanar who now lives in Colorado and is involved in the efforts to help maintain Amache, which was designated a National Historic Site last year, for a panel discussion moderated by Mile High JACL President Dylan Mori.


As a poignant coda to the Day of Remembrance, Sen. Julie Gonzales (D-Colo.) read a special resolution written by Mori and Sakura Foundation President Stacey Shigaya, which called on Colorado Gov. Jared Polis to oppose President Donald Trump's use of the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, which was used to imprison Japanese Americans during WWII, against immigrants and refugees today. That resolution passed the Colorado Senate three days later after a reading in the Colorado Statehouse.

## 'LEGACY IN MOTION: HONORING YESTERDAY, INSPIRING TOMORROW'



The University of California, Berkeley, Nikkei Student Union held its Day of Remembrance ceremony on Feb. 21 at the campus' Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union. The event, held in the Tilden Room and sponsored by Japanese American Women Alumnae of UC Berkeley, reflected on the theme "Legacy in Motion: Honoring Yesterday, Inspiring Tomorrow" and featured guest speakers Kaz Mori (Jerome), Jun Hamamoto (Tule Lake) and Adena Ishii (Amache/Granada), as well as a performance by Cal Taiko. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon the "lessons of the past and build solidarity across different communities." Pictured are members of the Berkeley NSU.


PHOTO: COURTESY OF RACHEL HOKI AND PARKER BRIDGES



# DEFINING






# COURAGE

**FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025 at 8:00pm**  
**Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley, CA**  
 An Immersive, Live Show that Dares Us to Live Courageously



FEATURING: Trio Barclay, Daniel Ho, Harold Payne, and the Cal Chamber Chorus

TICKETS at [DefiningCourageShow.com](https://DefiningCourageShow.com)



## TIES » continued from page 5



Seiji and Setsu Nakahara (top row, center) welcomed Kakehashi participants (top row, from left) Hayley Ann Agena, Kiyomi Takemoto and (front row, from left) Michelle Murakami, Gina Samec and Mackenzie Searles for a homestay visit.

This saying resonated with me, especially in my interactions with my fellow Kakehashi participants, with whom I formed strong ties. Once we met, we became lifelong friends, bound by a common heritage, shared experiences and a commitment to understanding and preserving our histories.

Although we had only spent a short time together, we formed lasting connections. In many ways, *ichariba chode* defined the entire Kakehashi Project experience. From the moment I arrived in Okinawa to the final farewell, I felt the genuine warmth of the people I met, not only with the individuals I met in Okinawa but also in my group of fellow Nikkei.

Through conversations on bus rides, shared meals, stories and laughter, we built a community. It reminded me that while we may come from different parts of the United States and the world, the connections we form through understanding, respect and shared heritage are unbreakable.

As a fifth-generation Japanese American with Okinawan ancestry, this journey was profoundly personal. I had always felt connected to my heritage, but this experience allowed me to understand my Okinawan identity on a heightened level. This trip helped me realize the intricate ways in which culture, history and identity intersect, and it gave me a greater appreciation for the challenges faced by the Okinawan people, particularly their ongoing struggle for autonomy and the complexities surrounding the U.S. military presence on the island.

As my group's time in Okinawa came to a close, we traveled to Tokyo, where we reunited with the other participants who had visited Hiroshima Prefecture. Visiting the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum

and other historical sites helped further solidify our sense of identity and our shared responsibility to honor our ancestors and carry their stories forward.

This trip exceeded my expectations by connecting me to my roots and reshaping my understanding of my place in the world. It strengthened my sense of pride in my Japanese and Okinawan heritage and my commitment to preserving and sharing these histories.

I returned home from the Kakehashi Project with lasting friendships and a deeper understanding of what it means to belong — to honor my ancestry that shaped me and carry forward the history and stories of those who have influenced my identity.

Most of all, I returned with the understanding of *ichariba chode*: Once we meet, we are friends for life — a bond that transcends time and distance that is rooted in shared heritage and mutual respect.

*Hayley Ann Agena is currently a graduate student working toward her M.S. in higher education counseling and student affairs at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo.*



Hayley Ann Agena (front row, center) and her fellow Kakehashi Project participants harvest sugarcane in Yomitan.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HAYLEY ANN AGENA

A NATIONAL GUIDE TO NOTABLE COMMUNITY EVENTS

# CALENDAR

## NATIONAL

**2025 JACL National Convention**  
Albuquerque, NM  
July 17-20

**Price: Registration Information**  
Forthcoming

Save the date for this year's JACL National Convention in the beautiful city of Albuquerque! This year's event will feature plenaries, special events and the annual Sayonara Gala. Full details, including how to register, will be released shortly. Stay tuned!

**Info: Visit** [www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org).

## NCWNP

**Qi Baishi: Inspiration in Ink**  
San Francisco, CA

**Thru April 7**  
Asian Art Museum  
200 Larkin St.

**Price: Museum Admission**

The work of Qi Baishi (1864-1957) remains an inspiration to audiences worldwide.

**Info: Visit** <https://exhibitions.asianart.org/exhibitions/qi-baishi-inspiration-in-ink/>.

## PSW

**56th Manzanar Pilgrimage**  
Independence, CA  
April 26; 11:30-2 p.m.

**Manzanar National Historic Site**

This year's annual pilgrimage will include the Manzanar at Dusk program as well as the Ireicho "Book of Names" national tour stop. More details about the pilgrimage event will be released soon.

**Info: Email** [info@manzanarcommittee.org](mailto:info@manzanarcommittee.org).

## CCDC

**Art of the Word: 'Once Upon a Book' — Featuring the Illustrations of Grace Lin'**

Fresno, CA

**Thru June 29**

Fresno Art Museum  
2233 N. First St.

**Price: Museum Admission**

This exhibit features Grace Lin's original illustrations from "Once Upon a Book," co-written with Kate Messner.

**Info: Visit** <http://www.fresnoartmuseum.org/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/>.

## PNW

**'Taken From Their Families: Japanese American Incarceration on Angel Island During WWII'**

Portland, OR

**Thru April 16**

Japanese American Museum of Oregon

411 N.W. Flanders St.

**Price: Museum Admission**

This exhibit, which features the stories of 24 individuals, explores the lesser-known history of Angel Island during WWII. The former immigration center was used to process prisoners of war and Nikkei community leaders living on the West Coast and Hawaii.

**Info: Visit** <https://jamo.org/angel-island/>.

## IDC

**The 48th Utah Asian Festival**

Salt Lake City, UT

**June 7; 11 a.m.-8 p.m.**

Grand Building of the Utah State Fairpark

155 N. 1000 W

This festival connects new Americans, immigrants and refugees to the more historic ethnic groups in the community and is a chance for all to support Utah Asian communities.

**Info: Visit** <https://utahasianfestival.org>.

## EDC

**National Cherry Blossom Festival**

Washington, D.C.

**March 20-April 13**

Tidal Basin

Visitors are invited to celebrate the beautiful cherry blossom trees first gifted to D.C. in 1912. Come see exciting installations, events, food offerings, parade, Cherry Blossom run and so much more!

**Info: Visit** <https://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org>.

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# In MEMORIAM

## Kanji Sahara Dies; Envisioned Camp Memorial Wall

JACLER of the Biennium awardee was active in SoCal JA community.

By P.C. Staff

**D**r. Kanji Sahara, a rocket scientist who post-retirement became a Japanese American community activist and in recent years was particularly active in advocating for the creation of a World War II Camp Wall at Columbia Park in Torrance, Calif., died Feb. 15. He was 90.

The Japanese American Citizens League honored Sahara with its JACLER of the Biennium award in 2018. The recognition is given to a member who has "contributed the most to the strength and growth of the JACL" during a particular biennium. He was also a Nisei Week Pioneer Award recipient in 2023.

Sahara's Japanese American community activities included serving as president of the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center and as president of both the San Gabriel Valley JACL and the Greater Los Angeles JACL.

He was also a member of West Covina Taiko and Anglers Fishing, as well as a charter member of the Japanese American National Museum, where he had also served as a docent. Sahara was also a member of the Manzanar Committee and a regular attendee of Los Angeles Day of Remembrance and participated in the annual camp roll call that recognized those who had been held in the several government-run incarceration centers. He represented the Jerome War Relocation Authority Center in the 2024 Day of Remembrance ceremony.

In addition to being active with the Historic Wintersburg Preservation Task Force, Sahara was also on the board of the Tuna Canyon Detention Station



**Kanji Sahara (left) is presented with the 2018 JACLER of the Biennium award from JACL National President Gary Mayeda.**

PHOTO: GIL ASAKAWA

Coalition. Much of Sahara's recent Japanese American community activity was focused the World War II Camp Wall, set to open in early 2026.

The wall is envisioned to contain the tens of thousands of names of all ethnic Japanese, most of whom were U.S. citizens, who were, after the forced evacuation from the West Coast, incarcerated in several government-run centers that resulted after President Roosevelt inked Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942 (see Feb. 4, 2022, *Pacific Citizen*).

"Kanji was a real visionary," his friend Nancy Hayata, president of the WWII Camp Wall Committee, said to the *Pacific Citizen*. It was a reference to the role Sahara had in what eventually became the plan to build the memorial wall in Torrance. Going back to his involvement with the Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition, with which he served as vice president, Hayata said, "There was a point where Tuna Canyon [Detention Station Coalition] thought that they might be able to purchase land where

Tuna Canyon was. There were talks of what we were going to put there, and the board decided it'd be really nice to put in a peace park.

"The project actually started out with him wanting to list all the names of everyone that was in Tuna Canyon at the peace park. Then he said, 'You know, we should have a wall for all of the camps and list everybody's name there.'

"When it turned out we couldn't, or didn't get the land at Tuna Canyon, Kanji's concept didn't die. He felt he came up with a really great idea, and he flew with it."

It could be said that Sahara's journey to conceptualizing the camp wall began with the advent of World War II, when he was a child who was incarcerated with his family. Similar to the thousands of families and individuals of Japanese ancestry living along the West Coast that the federal government forcibly removed to assembly centers, then to the various camps, the Saharas were moved to the racetrack at Santa Anita in California, then to the

two War Relocation Authority centers at Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas.

The son of Shosaku and Aya-ko Sahara, Kanji Sahara was himself born in Hiroshima, Japan, on April 4, 1934, when his mother and older sisters, Mariko, Sumire and Toshiko, went to visit an ailing relative. He was six months old when they returned to Los Angeles, and he grew up in what was then known as Uptown, which is in between the Pico-Union neighborhood and Koreatown.

After camp, the Saharas moved to Chicago. Kanji Sahara graduated from high school in 1952, the same year he became a naturalized U.S. citizen. In an oral history interview with Densho, he said, "The McCarran Act allowed the Japanese to become citizens. So right away, I did that. And then my father did that too, he became a citizen. ... So now I could apply for a job that required security clearance."

Before that, however, he needed to enroll in and complete his post-high school education. Sahara graduated with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology. His career in the defense industry took him first to New York, where he worked for Sperry Gyroscope Co. He told Densho: "I think I worked at Sperry Gyroscope for about a year and a half, and meanwhile I was going to night school at nighttime, and it was sort of getting hectic. But I thought I should go full time. So that's when I decided to quit work and come back to Chicago and go to Northwestern."

Sahara subsequently earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern University and later worked for General Dynamics' missile systems. Because of industry consolidation, Hughes bought General Dynamics, after which Tucson, Ariz.-based Raytheon became the owner — where he and his wife, Jane, lived from 1994-98, before he retired and moved to Southern California.

Mitch Matsumura, president of the Greater Los Angeles JACL and member of the P.C.'s Editorial Board, said, "Kanji will always be remembered by

the countless organizations he tirelessly supported."

Hayata said, "It is with honor and respect that the World War II Camp Wall nonprofit board carries on the dream of Kanji Sahara. We feel the loss of his presence and leadership. ... He leaves the world a better place in his efforts to teach about this incident in history, and that it must never happen again."

"On behalf of the residents of the city of Torrance, we are saddened to hear of Dr. Sahara's passing," said Torrance City Councilmember Jon Kaji. "We are committed to ensuring that his vision for the World War II Camp Wall becomes a reminder that the civil rights of all people must be protected."

Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition President Nancy Oda said, "Kanji's bright light will shine forever." In a statement, the TCDSC said it is "deeply saddened by the passing of Kanji Sahara, former vice president, community activist and visionary extraordinaire. A key figure in keeping the history of World War II's incarceration alive, it was his passion to expand the mission of the TCDSC to highlight the detention of persons of Japanese, German and Italian descent and to prevent injustice of any kind. This passion has been indelibly stamped upon all who knew him."

"Kanji worked tirelessly to ensure that the incarceration story is never forgotten and serves as a warning of what happens when its lessons are ignored. A deeply loved and revered member of the JANM family, his knowledge and dedication to connecting this history to the present and shaping the future will be profoundly missed," said JANM President and CEO Ann Burroughs.

Sahara was predeceased by his wife, Jane. He is survived by their children, Richard (Lydia) Sahara and Judy (Ben) Tang, five grandchildren, sister, Toshiko Sahara, and other relatives.

At press time, a memorial service for Sahara had been planned for March 8 at Faith United Methodist Church in Torrance, Calif.

**Adachi, Shunji, 91**, Honolulu, HI, Nov. 9, 2024.

**Furuichi, Satoko, 86**, San Francisco, CA, Feb. 9.

**Hayashi, Beverly Anne, 75**, Kent, WA, Jan. 24.

**Iwatsubo, Sophia Okamoto, 100**, Richmond, VA, Nov. 1, 2024.

**Kohara, Setsuko, 94**, Garden Grove, CA, Jan. 19.

**Murakami, Paula Kaye, 75**, Spokane, WA, Feb. 4.

**Shigenaga, Dale, 77**, Las Vegas, NV, Feb. 13.

**Yamada, David R., 88**, Montebello, CA, Jan. 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 \$25/ column inch.

#### CONTACT:

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# 'KILO WAT' Premieres

A play about the life of basketball star Wat Misaka is featured at the University of Utah.

By Floyd Mori

A world premiere play about the life of basketball star Wataru (Wat) Misaka was presented at the University of Utah during the weekend of Feb. 14-16 at Kingsbury Hall to sold-out audiences.

"Kilo Wat," written by Aaron Asano Swenson, directed by Jerry Rapier and featuring Bryan Kido and Ken Kushida, depicts the life and extraordinary career of Misaka, a Japanese American native of Utah who went on to become the first nonwhite basketball player and first player of Asian descent in what is now the National Basketball Assn. The play also touches on the history of the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Misaka was born to Tatsuyo and Fusaichi Misaka, immigrants from Japan, in Ogden, Utah, on Dec. 21, 1923, the eldest of three boys. Being a good athlete, he was a leader on his high school basketball team, which won a state championship in 1940 and a regional championship in 1941. Wat then attended



Wat and Katie Misaka in an undated photo

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FLOYD MORI

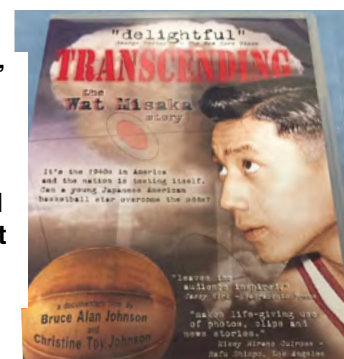
Weber Junior College in Ogden, Utah, before transferring to the University of Utah. He was a stand-out college basketball point guard at merely 5-foot-7-inches tall.

The University of Utah basketball team finished the 1943-44 season with an 18-3 record. The team was invited to both the NCAA Tournament and the National Invitation Tournament, where it did well in New York City.

When Misaka returned from the tournament in New York, his mother told him that he had a letter waiting for him: He was being drafted into the U.S. Army. Therefore, Misaka had to put his university studies and basketball career on hold while he served in the Army's Military Intelligence Service in Japan during



"Kilo Wat" is a play about the life of basketball player Wat Misaka



A DVD cover of "Transcending: The Wat Misaka Story"

the occupation after the end of WWII.

After returning home from the service, Misaka again played basketball for the University of Utah. He was drafted in 1947 by the New York Knicks basketball team. Although he was cut from the team after playing in only three games, he broke a color barrier in professional basketball.

When he left the Knicks, Misaka had an offer to join the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team. However, he decided against that option and instead headed back to Utah to finish his engineering degree at the University of Utah. He then worked as an engineer throughout his life and became a championship bowler, as well as an avid golfer.

Misaka married school teacher Katie Inoway in 1953, and together, they had two children, Henry "Hank" Misaka and Nancy (Cary) Umemura. Their grandchildren are Joel Umemura, Kennah Misaka and Erin Misaka. Wat Misaka passed away in Utah on Nov. 21, 2019, at the age of 95.

Wat supported numerous causes throughout his lifetime. He also was also a longtime member of the JACL.

Several additional books and videos have been written and produced, respectively, about Misaka's life. "Transcending: The Wat Misaka Story," is a documentary film produced by Bruce and Christine Toy Johnson. It is available online.

Anyone wishing to have the play "Kilo Wat" presented in their area may contact the director at [jerry@planbtheatre.org](mailto:jerry@planbtheatre.org). Misaka's story is also included in the book "The Japanese American Story" at [www.thejapaneseamericanstory.com](http://www.thejapaneseamericanstory.com).

*(On a personal note: I was able to attend a ceremony with Wat and his son, Hank, when Wat was recognized by President Barack Obama at the White House. My wife and I were with Wat and Katie when Wat was honored by the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden. It was a privilege, honor and pleasure to call him a friend.)*



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