

JACL RETORTS AFTER TRUMP DEPORTS

Use of Alien Enemies Act called 'unlawful': community speaks out in Little Tokyo.

By P.C. Staff

he Japanese American Citizens League issued a statement March 17 condemning President Donald Trump's March 14 use of the Alien Enemies PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO Act of 1798 to deport alleged members of a Venezuelan

criminal gang to a prison in El Salvador, despite a federal judge's order to halt the action (see related story at tinyurl.com/3dd2r555).

JACL called Trump's use of the AEA "unlawful," saying that it may only be invoked in a time of war. According to the Constitution, Congress, not the Executive Branch, has sole power to declare war, despite claims by the White House that its use of the AEA to deport illegal migrants and others is justified because it claims the U.S. in under invasion. The Alien Enemies Act of 1798 was last invoked during World War II by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It had also been used during World War I and the War of 1812.

In Little Tokyo on March 18, meantime, a news conference organized by Nikkei Progressives was held at the Norman Y. Mineta Democracy Plaza in front of the Japanese American National Museum and underscored many of the same points from the perspective of several community organizations including Hope Nakamura of Nikkei Progressives, JANM Chief Impact Officer Kenyon Mayeda, National JACL VP of Public Affairs Seia Watanabe, Tuna Canyon Detention Center President Kyoko Nancy Oda,

Speaking on behalf of National JACL at the March 18 news conference is **National VP of Public Affairs** Seia Watanabe.



Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice Deputy Director Lizbeth Abeln. Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple Rimban William

Briones and Manzanar Committee

Co-Chair Bruce Embrey.

"The Japanese American Citizens League condemns the Trump administration's unlawful invocation of the Alien Enemies Act," said Watanabe. "The Alien Enemies Act was last used to intern 31,000 Japanese, German and Italian nationals during WWII. As the Japanese American community knows, the scope was expanded to include United States citizens through Executive Order 9066, leading to the incarceration of over 125,000 people of Japanese ancestry. We fear that the Venezuelan immigrant community is now being similarly targeted through the unlawful use and expansion of the Alien Enemies Act.'

Also present for news outlets were June Aochi Berk, 92, who had been incarcerated at the Rohwer War Relocation Authority Center in Arkansas; Carrie Furya Morita, whose grandfather was detained under the Alien Enemies Act at the Tuna Canyon Detention Station in Los Angeles County and the Lordsburg POW Camp in New Mexico; and

Kathy Masaoka, whose grandfather was similarly detained under the AEA at Tuna Canyon, as well as at Bismarck, N.D.

Hours after Trump claimed that the members of Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua were invading the United States and ordered their deportation, U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg issued his ruling to halt the deportation process on March 15, but it was after the government carried out the airlift.

The judge later said that after he had learned that the airplanes carrying the prisoners to El Salvador had already left the United States, he ordered the White House to immediately halt further removals and return to the U.S. any flights that were in progress — which did not happen.

When Boasberg questioned on March 17 whether the Trump administration ignored his verbal orders that the airplanes carrying the deportees to El Salvador return, the White House contended that, according to the Associated Press, "Verbal directions did not count, that only his written order needed to be followed, that it couldn't apply to flights outside the U.S. and that they could not answer his questions about the trips due to national security issues."

The JACL stated: "We call for the administration to comply fully with the temporary restraining order and halt any deportations under the proposed authority of the Alien Enemies Act. The alleged blatant disregard for Judge Boasberg's orders to turn the plane carrying deportees around cannot be tolerated in a nation of laws. The Alien Enemies Act cannot be invoked without a declaration of war, an act that only Congress can take."

To read the entirety of the JACL's statement, visit tinyurl. com/4dasau4m.

- Associated Press contributed to this report.

ARMY RESTORES 442ND WEBPAGE

Move comes after JACL expresses dismay at erasure of 'heroic legacy.'

By P.C. Staff

day after the Japanese American Citizens League called On the Army to restore to its official website pages "honoring the history and accomplishments" of a World War II-era segregated unit comprised mostly of Japanese Americans that fought Axis powers in Europe that had been removed, the Army took steps to do just that.

On March 15, the Army announced that it had "republished an article that highlights the brave Soldiers who served in the 'Go-for-Broke' brigade," a reference to the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

But the battle to reverse getting

"disappeared" from the Army's website extended beyond just the 442nd, as it was collectively known. **Under Secretary**

of Defense Pete Hegseth's watch,

almost anything with just the appearance of being DEI - aka diversity, equity and inclusion including references to Navajo Code Talkers, Native American Ira Hayes, Major League Baseball

See 442ND on page 8

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Another Page From Our History Living in the Present

By David Inoue,

IACL Executive Director

his past January, a longoverdue oversight was partially rectified. Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi was recognized by President Joseph Biden with the Presidential Citizens Medal. Her case is often forgotten because it was settled law at the time of the Supreme Court's decision in 1945 in her favor and in a repudiation of the government, albeit late.

Endo did not benefit from the notoriety that the wrongfully decided cases of Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu and Min Yasui gained when they were reopened through the writ of coram nobis revealing the government's lies during the trials regarding the security threat that Japanese Americans allegedly created by their presence on the West Coast, but in reality just lies to support a false case. The exoneration of Hirabayashi, Korematsu and Yasui largely coincided with the revelations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, leading to the passage of redress.

And now we once again see the dichotomy of these cases playing

out in the present day. The Alien Enemies Act has been invoked by the president to justify deportations of alleged members of Tren de Aragua, a transnational criminal drug cartel based in Venezuela. As the AEA was used against Japanese nationals during World War II, President Donald Trump is seeking to target all Venezuelans for an easier path toward deportation.

As we all now know, the exclusion zones and curfews that Hirabayashi, Yasui and Korematsu were all appealing were illegally based on race, just as the deportation orders focused on Venezuelans are similarly racially targeted. Ironically, the president likely didn't even need to use the AEA to carry out what he is trying other than the likelihood he is targeting people who actually have no connection to Tren de Aragua.

This is the exact reason why blunt tools like the AEA and subsequently Executive Order 9066 were used during WWII. Label an entire group as a threat without any evidence against the individuals, and then

you can do whatever you want to keep our country safe. We have seen the Supreme Court affirm this philosophy in Japanese American court cases during WWII and again in the wrongful decision on the Muslim Ban during the first Trump administration.

And yet, we do have the Endo case to look to as a victory against the government. Hers was the individual case of someone who had worked for the government, had minimal ties to Japan and had a brother serving in the Army. Ultimately, her case was won on the basis that her due process rights had been violated. It was not the injustice of what was done to her in being sent to Topaz or that her family had lost so much, just as many other Japanese American families had, but that the government had not proven that she individually was a threat.

And this is the threat of the AEA, that it can remove the rights of any non-U.S, citizen to due process, one of the original fundamental rights in the Bill of Rights. For all the talk of those who stoke the fears of immigrants, that these laws are targeting those who are violent criminals, without the right to due process, there is no need to prove that point. Mass deportations become possible because the individuals have had their rights stripped from them.

While I am confident that the courts will rule that the Alien Enemies Act has been invoked unlawfully, we are seeing in real time the chaos and damage that this law inflicts upon those it targets. Just as the AEA followed by EO 9066 paved an easy path toward mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII, we must rely upon the due process that defined Mitsuye Endo's case to prevent our government from trampling our constitutional rights.

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



LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

DEMENTIA — Coping Strategies

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

Just because your aging parent dismisses your concerns, ignores safety issues or refuses to accept help, that doesn't mean he or she has lost mental capacity. Diminished capacity is not lack of capacity. In fact, the only person that can legally declare someone "incapacitated" is a judge. If that hasn't happened, someone who has cognitive impairment maintains all their legal rights and should be treated with respect.

However, communicating with someone who has dementia can be an extremely difficult and tricky process, especially because an elderly parent's ability to understand others and express themselves can fluctuate from day to day (or even hour to hour). When communication between the two parties gets muddied, the consequences are typically felt on both sides. Frazzled nerves can lead to lost tempers, straining the bond between the caregiver child and the aging parent.

Millions of American families face daily interactions with someone whose memory and thinking skills are progressively declining. "When there's a mismatch in communication, it can generate frustration," said Katherine Lyman, a geriatric nurse practitioner at Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. "The person with dementia may be overwhelmed; the caregiver can get upset. When you're struggling, it takes so much patience.

"Relating to someone with dementia depends at least in part on which stage of the disease they're in," Lyman continued. "If their dementia is still mild, that's different than when they're in later stages, where someone may not be verbally communicating."

Across the spectrum of cognitive impairment, certain communication strategies can smooth interactions between caregivers and dementia patients. Harvard experts suggest the following communication strategies:

• Be an active listener. Look directly at them while speaking, nod affirmatively and use other body language to let them know you're tuning in. "Try to remain fully engaged, even if it's only for five minutes," said Dr. Suzanne Salamon, clinical chief of gerontology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Active listening may also involve gently rephrasing the person's wording if something seems garbled. "Can you detect a thread that you can reframe and ask, 'Am I hearing this correctly?" Lyman said. "That may help."

- Don't confront. If, for instance, you ask Mom if she took her pills and she says yes — but you notice the medication is still in her pillbox — avoid a standoff, Dr. Salamon advised. "Instead of saying, 'I can't believe you lied,' or 'Look, you forgot,' you can wait a few minutes and say, 'It looks like your pills are still in your pillbox — why don't we take them now?' and not even refer to her forgetting. If it's not an emergency, just drop it for a few minutes and come back to it as if you haven't talked about it before."
- Agree with their reality. Trying to correct someone whose perceptions are altered by dementia never brings them back to your reality, Lyman said.
- Remove distractions. Even someone without dementia may struggle to listen and speak when the TV or radio is on or kids are running around. These stimuli are even harder to field for someone with cognitive problems. "If you're trying to have a conversation, pick a place where there's minimal distractions, a quiet place, one on one," said Lyman.
- Use shorter sentences and smaller words. Dementia patients often can't absorb much information at a time, so keep language simple. Break any tasks down into steps. "Start out with one or two sentences, since by the time you get to sentence three, they're lost," said Dr. Salamon.
- Ask yes-or-no questions. "Would you like a cup of tea?' may work better than 'What would you like to drink?" said Lyman.
- Don't interrupt or assume.

It may be tempting to try to finish someone's sentences or assume what they mean when they're grasping for words. Fight the urge. "If they're not able to find a word, ask, 'Are you meaning to say this?' or 'Is this what you're talking about?' But give them time to try to work it out," said Dr. Salamon.

- Write it down. Verbal communication isn't always the best choice. Lean on lists and schedules to help guide someone with dementia toward activities, especially those they might resist.
- Use touch. Dementia can be a lonely experience, but loving attention and touch can connect you beyond words. "Holding hands can be extremely reassuring to them," said Dr. Salamon.

Still, even if you've done your best to incorporate as many of the above suggestions and they're not working, briefly disengage before tempers fly and things are said that cause division. "If your frustration is building, that's when you tell the person, 'I'll be back in 15 minutes.' Turn on the radio or TV for them and walk away for a bit," said Lyman. "It's important to take a moment to decompress."

If you're at your "wit's end," Lyman also suggests seeking support before you "blow a fuse." Lyman often refers dementia caregivers to the Alzheimer's Assn. to join a support group. "When you're in it 24/7, it's very lonely," she said. "You think you're the only one dealing with this, and you're not. It's so helpful to meet with others who are struggling with the same things."

Finally, before it becomes too late,

make sure your power of attorneys are up-to-date. One of the simplest, least expensive and smart estate planning documents for an older adult to have is a durable power of attorney document. A DPOA is a written document where an individual authorizes a trusted friend or family member (the "attorney-in-fact") to act on the individual's behalf regarding property and financial matters.

A power of attorney allows you to choose who will act for you and defines his or her authority and its limits, if any. Make sure to also name an "alternate" agent in case the primary agent cannot act.

If you do not have a POA and become too ill to manage your personal or business affairs, it may be necessary for a loved one to petition a court to appoint a legal guardian or conservator of your property. Do not assume that being married means you do not need a POA. If you become incapaciated without a POA, the court could appoint someone you don't even know, i.e., a stranger, to control your loved one's assets. That's, as they say down South, "No bueno."

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. 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.

SFV CHAPTER INSTALLS, GUEST SPEAKER ENTHRALLS

Retired Agent 'Sam' Yakura's service is no secret at luncheon.

By P.C. Staff

hose in attendance at the Jan. 25 San Fernando Valley JACL installation luncheon were served a treat beyond the food from Rutt's Hawaiian Catering and music performed by koto ensemble LA's 33 Strings. They also got to hear

stories about what it was like to be a Secret Service special agent serving six United States presidents from John F. Kennedy through Ronald Reagan.

The event was made even more special since, unless he is somehow otherwise persuaded, it was the last public speaking engagement that Huntington Beach, Calif.-based Kazuo "Sam" Yakura, 89, said he would be giving on that topic.

Also on hand to perform the oath of office ceremony at the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center in Arleta, Calif., for the chapter's 2025 board was National JACL VP of Membership Dominique

In a role reversal, the members of the San Fernando JACL board and guests gathered to "protect" former Secret Service agent and guest speaker Kazuo "Sam" Yakura. Pictured (back row, from left) are Ariel Imamoto, Michiko Tokunaga, Kristen Fujitaki, Nancy Takayama, Geri Shiraki and Dominique Mashburn and (next row, from left) Mitzi Kushida, Patty Takayama, Marcia Mahony, May Wood, Linda Tanaka and Barbara Okita and (seated) Kazuo "Sam" Yakura.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Mashburn, as well as JACL Membership Manager Ariel Imamoto, who provided welcoming comments. The invocation was given by Rev. Erik Iki of West Valley United Methodist Church. Reprising her role as chapter president was May Wood, with the remainder of the board filled out by Linda Tanaka, Nancy Takayama, Marcia Mahony, Barbara Okita, Kristen Fujitaki, Nancy Gohata, Jean Paul deGuzman, Tomo Hattori, Lana Kobayashi, Mitzi Kushida, Michiko Tokunaga, Geri Shiraki and Patty Takayama.

As part of her remarks, Wood emphasized JACL's role with regard to civil rights. "Whether you're Japanese American, Asian

American of any kind, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, any person of color, African American — we will fight for you," she said.

Board member Tanaka followed with a heartfelt tribute to deceased chapter member and treasurer Dennis Okita.

The Los Angeles-born Yakura, the first Japanese American to serve as a special agent in the Secret Service, spent ages 6-9 incarcerated with his Issei parents at the Gila River War Relocation Authority Center. As part of his address, he educated the audience about the origins of the Secret Service, America's original federal law enforcement agency that was created initially to fight currency

counterfeiting. Now under the Department of Homeland Security, the Secret Service originally began as a part of the Treasury Department.

He also related to the audience what piqued his interest to pursue law enforcement, the Secret Service in particular. "When I graduated high school, I didn't know what I wanted to do, what to study. I was just lost. My mother wanted me to go to college, so I said, 'OK,' and I went to UCLA, but I didn't know what to study.

"I did that for a year and a half, and I said, 'I quit,' and I went into the Army, hoping to grow up and get a head on my shoulders. Two years later, I got out of the Army, and I went back to UCLA and transferred to Cal State Los Angeles, as they had a curriculum in law enforcement. The only glitch at that was you had to be at least 5-foot 9 to become a law enforcement agent or police for the city, county, state and the federal government. Well, I was only 5-foot 6."

Yakura recalled how his entrée into the Secret Service came when a CSULA professor urged him to call the agent in charge of the Secret Service's Los Angeles field office about a job. When he interviewed, he was informed that the director had the authority to waive the height requirement.

"'If there is a special case,' he said, 'I can put in an application here, and I'll send it to him with the request for waiver of my height.' Well, after a little bit of time, I received a call

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Ventura County Installation Focuses on Culture

Guest speaker David Yoshitomi carries on a family tradition at the annual luncheon.

By P.C. Staff

Iture

Guest speaker David Yoshitomi shares

his paternal family's history as guest speaker during the 2025 Ventura County JACL installation luncheon at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.

The surname of the guest speaker—David Yoshitomi—for the Ventura County JACL chapter's 45th chapter installation rings familiar to the Los Angeles County Japanese American community, there's a good reason. His father, Gerald Yoshitomi, served as executive director of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in 1981, a position he held until 1998.

A denizen of Ventura County since 2015, you might say that Los Angeles-born-andraised David Yoshitomi inherited his father's commitment to culture.

Just as his old man was the JACCC's first executive director and would become known for not only presenting more performances and exhibitions by Japanese artists than any other theatre/gallery outside of Japan, he also saw to it that the JACCC made available spaces at the Doizaki Gallery and the Aratani Theatre for such non-Japanese/non-Japanese American artists as El Teatro Campesino,

Lula Washington Dance Theatre and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

David Yoshitomi recalled seeing "productions that would range from kabuki to [Chicano comedy and performance troupe] Culture Clash...Teatro Campesino, which is a Spanish-language group — it really opened my eyes to the breadth of the arts in general." It's little wonder, then, that he was selected in 2022 by the County of Ventura's Executive Office as its first arts and culture manager.

As the guest speaker for the installation luncheon, held Jan. 26 at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum in Simi Valley, Calif., Yoshitomi told of a saga that many in attendance could relate to, namely his paternal family's journey from Japan to the United States, including evacuation and incarceration during World War II. For Yoshitomi, who describes himself as a

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AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL

2025 TOUR SCHEDULE

HOKKAIDO SNOW FESTIVALS TOUR (Ernest Hida) WAITLIST Feb 3-14 Abashiri, Sounkyo, Sapporo, Otaru, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Tokyo. Hyobaku Ice Festival, Asahikawa Snow Festival, Sapporo Snow Festival, Hvoto Winter Festival. CLASSICAL JAPAN HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida) ... WAITLIST Tokyo, Mt Fuji, Yamanashi, Shizuoka, Hiroshima, Kyoto. TREASURES OF IRELAND TOUR (Carol Hida). . WAITLIST Apr 7-15 Dublin, Limerick, Killarney, Blarney. KOREA HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida) Seoul, Bullet Train, Gyeongju, Busan, Jeju Island, Jeonju, Daejon, Nami Island, Seoul, DMZ, K-Drama sites. JAPAN SPRING COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida) WAITLIST . . 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). . WAITLIST May 12-19 New Orleans, Memphis, Nashville. GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR (Ernest Hida) Jun 15 Tokyo, Hakone, Hiroshima, Kyoto. Craftmaking hands-on experiences. WAITLIST HOKKAIDO SUMMER HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida) Jul 13 Hakodate, Lake Toya, Noboribetsu, Otaru, Sapporo, Wakkanai, 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 15-28

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PASADENA TEMPLE SAVED IN CATASTROPHIC L.A. WILDFIRES

Quick actions by neighbors credited in saving structure; 16 Pasadena Sangha members lose their homes, business.

By Ralph Honda

he catastrophic wildfires in Southern California in January nearly claimed the Pasadena Buddhist Temple — if not for the quick actions of neighbors.

But sadly, 16 Pasadena Sangha members lost their homes and a business in the Eaton Fire, according to Rev. Gregory Gibbs, resident minister of the Pasadena Buddhist Temple.

In addition, there were additional reports of Sangha members throughout the Los Angeles area who lost their homes. A precise number of those affected, including West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple members, was not immediately available.

There have been no reports of fire-related deaths among BCA members

As of Jan. 30, the wildfires in Los Angeles County have killed at least 29 people, destroyed more than 16,000 structures and burned nearly 48,000 acres, according to Cal Fire and news reports.

The weather forecasting service AccuWeather estimates the total economic loss from the wildfires at more than \$250 billion, making it one of the most costly natural disasters in U.S. history. The estimate includes costs of damage, loss of life, business disruptions, health care and other economic impacts.

The most notable of the wildfires were the Palisades Fire in Pacific Palisades and Malibu, and the Eaton Fire in Altadena and Pasadena.

The Eaton Fire, which started the night of Jan. 7, came within 75 yards of the Pasadena temple and leveled nearby homes, according to Rev. Gibbs.

The PBT praised the actions of

neighbor Elliot Sloane and his brother-in-law, Michael Murray. Sloane and his wife, Jessica, are next-door neighbors of the temple, and their backyard fence is the temple's west fence.

"On that first day, Elliot and Michael noticed that there was smoke rising from the temple grounds," the Pasadena Buddhist Temple said in a Facebook post, dated Jan. 21. "So, they ran to hop the fence, grabbed hoses and started wetting the hot spots that started from the fire on Montana (Avenue). When Lori and Alan Hatakeyama came by that day to open the parking lot gates, they found them on the roof of the Hondo, wetting down the roof.

"We know that without their selfless efforts, our temple would have also been burned," the Facebook post continued. "Their home was also threatened, but they came to help us!"

Said Rev. Gibbs: "Flying embers hit our (tea) garden and the railing around our temple. Fortunately, some of our temple leaders, along with (wife) Kyoko and I, arrived not too far behind to help Michael (Murray) and Elliot (Sloane) with watering down the grounds."

Rev. Gibbs and his wife were forced to evacuate the parsonage on the temple grounds Jan. 8 as the Eaton Fire approached the temple and later returned to safeguard the campus.

According to Rev. Gibbs and Pasadena Co-President Jeannie Toshima, the temple suffered smoke damage that will need to be professionally cleaned. The ash from the wild-fires carries toxic substances such as heavy metals like lead, arsenic, as well as asbestos fibers and microplastics.

PBT is in a residential neighborhood. Three main structures encompass the property with the primary building housing the Hondo. A short walkway leads to the building, which includes the minister's office, meeting room, kitchen and dining room, and is attached to the gymnasium. The minister's parsonage sits at the main entrance of the property.

PBT has begun the process to get estimates for remediation of repairs from fire and wind damage to temple

Other Buddhist Churches of America Southern District temples in the

Los Angeles area were also affected by the wildfires.

Ministers reported that Sangha members were forced to flee their homes because of mandatory evacuation orders.

On Jan. 9, former BCA President Rick Stambul was visiting a friend in Van Nuys, about 25 miles from Pacific Palisades, who had lost his home. Stambul said his iPhone triggered a notification for a fire alert showing an evacuation order in Oak Park, the area near Stambul's home.

"I raced home to evacuate," Stambul said. "Traffic was heavy, bumper to bumper. To the southwest, the sky was lit an eerie orange color. The smoke was disturbing, and orange embers were hitting my windshield. It was scary.

"But the most frightening part of the drive home were the reckless drivers racing on the freeway going about 80-plus mph on the shoulder of the road in an attempt to get past the slow-moving traffic," he said.

Rev. Koho Takata, resident minister of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple, said he and Assistant Minister Rev. Ko'e Umezu removed sacred objects from the Onaijin and moved them to a safer location. The West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple is on the border of the evacuation zone of the Palisades Fire.

The West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple is providing its rummage sale inventory of goods and supplies to the fire victims. Rev. Takata said the West Los Angeles temple's board of directors planned to discuss other options to aid those in need.

Relief Efforts

There has been an outpouring of support for the victims affected by the Palisades and Eaton fires.

Southern District temples are sup-

porting community programs or holding their own events.

The hazy,

polluted sky caused by the Eaton Fire is

visible in this group photo

taken on Jan. 9 in front of

the Pasadena Buddhist Temple.

Pictured (from left) are Alan Goto, Bobby

Hatakeyama, Ren

Gibbs and Rev.

Gregory Gibbs.

PHOTO: KYOKO GIBBS

Fukumoto, Alan and Lori 5

Two donation drives were organized in the West Los Angeles and downtown Los Angeles Little Tokyo communities.

Kent Marume, a member of the Vista Buddhist Temple, and his counterpart, Kiyomi Mitsuda, spearheaded the community efforts.

Contributions of water, canned foods, clothing and other disaster relief supplies were received on Jan. 11 at the Venice Japanese Community Center.

On the following day, at the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple parking lot, similar donations were received with all goods sent to It's Bigger Than Us Los Angeles, a nonprofit organization aiding fire victims and first responders.

"We received outstanding support from both the West Los Angeles and Little Tokyo communities," Marume said. "We had community members donating water, nonperishable food, toiletries, hygiene products and clothes the entire duration of both drives."

According to Marume, donations from the two events totaled approximately 15 pallets worth of goods.

"It was overwhelming to see all the donations. It filled up the lobby area of the (VJCC) gym," Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple President Tom Nakagiri said.

In San Diego, a campaign to collect monetary and in-kind donations of gift cards was held on Jan. 12. The temple received over \$3,800 in gifts. The gift cards for grocery stores, Target, Walmart, Home Depot and restaurants were sent to Pasadena.

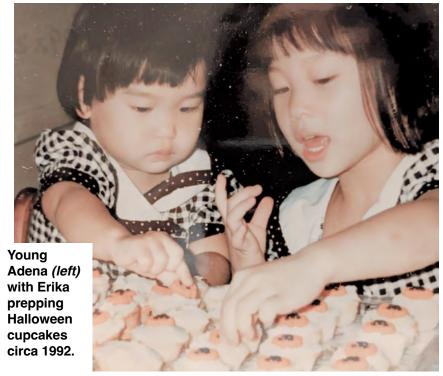
FOOD FOOD

Water, food, clothing and other items were collected by the Venice Japanese Community Center in the aftermath of the Palisades and Eaton fires to aid community members impacted by the devastating disasters.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO

» See TEMPLE on page 9







In 2018, the Alemada County Board of Supervisors honored Adena Ishii for her leadership as the youngest and first woman of color to be elected president of the League of Women Voters. Emma and Carolyn were there to celebrate with Adena.

Call Her MAYOR ISHII of BERKELEY

Breaking barriers and building bridges: Adena Ishii's historic win is built on a foundation of honesty about her past experiences with domestic violence and housing insecurity. She hopes the AAPI community is listening.

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, P.C. Contributor

uring her ascent to the mayor's office, Adena Ishii was often greeted with surprise.
Resting eyebrows would suddenly raise. Voices would fall to a hush over news that she, a Yonsei with no previous city hall experience, wanted to be chief executive of Berkeley, Calif.

People expressed disbelief in waves. Then Ishii, 34, won.

In December, she was sworn in as the first AAPI and woman of color to be elected mayor of Berkeley. Now, in the first few months on the job, she's been fielding this question: Wow, were you surprised you won?

"It's hard because, I mean, of course, I didn't know if I was going to win or not," said Adena in a video call from her Berkeley office. "And also, I wouldn't have put my hat in the ring if I didn't think it was possible."

Her history-making win puts Ishii in the rarefied space of AAPIs — that includes Norman Mineta — who have ascended to the office of mayor of a prominent U.S. city. It's an honor she greets with gratitude — and some level of disbelief herself.

How could a city like Berkeley, with more than a 20 percent AAPI

population and Asian American history woven into its social fabric since its founding, see its first AAPI mayor just *now*? And if all things were equal, would these same people have asked Mineta if he were surprised about his San Jose mayoral victory?

"Someone asked me the other day, 'Do you think you being the first woman of color and the first Asian American had to do with you winning?" said Ishii. "Actually, no, I feel like I won in spite of that fact."

How domestic abuse and housing insecurity shaped her political outlook

'I really do see myself as a public servant' — Adena Ishii

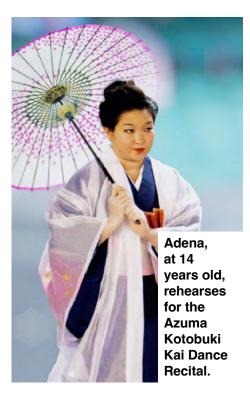
Adena, wearing an obi, wed **Andrew** Kitirattragarn in 2021 at the Rayavadee Resort in Thailand. **Pictured** (from left) are Emma, Adena. Andrew, Carolyn and Erika.

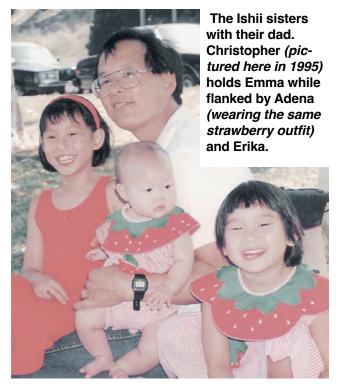




Chris Ishii (left), Adena's grandfather, is pictured here at Amache saying goodbye to his mother, Naka Ishii. before **leaving for Minnesota** to attend MIS language school at Camp Savage. Chris was first incarcerated at the **Santa Anita Assembly** Center, where he taught art and began his comic "Lil' Neebo" in the Santa Anita Pacemaker.

PACIFIC © CITIZEN IN - DEPTH March 21-April 3, 2025







The Ishii sisters celebrate Father's Day in 2012. (From left) Adena, their father Christopher, Erika and Emma

Call her Mayor Ishii. Just don't call her a politician.

"I really do see myself as a public servant," said Ishii. "I think I have always wanted to serve the public good."

Since her win, Ishii has heard from the AAPI community that her victory was the best thing that came out of a nail-biting election night.

She edged out Sophie Hahn, a candidate with the pedigree of a seasoned politician as a former Berkeley city council member and vice mayor. Her victory was often framed as an upset because Ishii was as KQED framed it, an "outsider" — as if she emerged from the thick of trees surrounding city hall and intercepted the victory.

But what's not talked about, said her older sister, Erika Ishii, are the long hours Ishii spent on the campaign trail going door-to-door and meeting voters.

"Adena has overcome more obstacles than she will ever let on, and she has been working tirelessly her whole adult life at a grassroots level to empower her city," said Erika, 38, an actor.

Before becoming mayor, Ishii was also the first woman of color elected president of the League of Women Voters, a more than 100-year-old institution. On the campaign trail, she spoke often about homelessness and public safety from a vulnerable place. Ishii is a survivor of both domestic violence and housing insecurity. Without the polish of experience in talking about her past, emotions still bubble to the surface.

More than a decade ago, Ishii moved to Berkeley to attend college. She lived with her high school boyfriend, who her family knew well, said her mother, Carolyn Abe-Ishii. They were largely unaware of the conflicts happening behind closed doors. At the time, Carolyn was

caring for her husband, Christopher S. Ishii, who was on a journey with early-onset dementia.

Already shrouded in a societal veil of secrecy, domestic violence issues can be further complicated by cultural mores.

"That was a part of it. I didn't want to be an additional burden," said Ishii. "I mean, how JA is that?"

One day, while Ishii was washing dishes, she exchanged heated words with her then-boyfriend. Water was splashed, and then he came at her. This was the turning point, she said. Ishii packed her bags and bounced around friends' houses and other temporary locations until she landed an apartment far from her college campus.

This part of Ishii's life is still tender for mother and daughter to process. Both wonder if they could have done more to protect the other. And when Ishii decided to talk openly about her past on the campaign trail, it pushed the boundaries of her mother's comfort.

What if, Carolyn worried, her daughter's vulnerability caused her more emotional pain? No mom wants to see their child in pain, said Carolyn, but then she noticed the impact of her daughter's honesty on the people who lived through the same experience.

Now, she thinks it's important that people know that not all politicians come from privileged backgrounds, said Carolyn, 70. "And you know, she had experienced some things that people in Berkeley, her constituents, had experienced."

A slate of U.S. politicians has transmuted their experiences with housing insecurity and domestic abuse to raise awareness and advocate for survivors. Former Missouri Rep. Cori Bush openly discussed how surviving domestic violence shaped her activism and work in Congress.

The contours of Ishii's political career so far follow a similar path. Many AAPI women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence, according to the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, but cases are likely underreported.

"My hope is that by sharing my story, it will help to kind of destignatize it and say you can still be a successful, thriving person despite these experiences," said Ishii. "Even someone who has a lot of family, love, care and support can fall into this type of situation."

Similarly, AAPIs have the lowest rate of homelessness at the national level, according to the Homelessness Research Institute. Data like these form a narrative that domestic abuse and housing insecurity are not AAPI issues.

Here, Ishii paused contemplatively. Then, she pushes back.

"It happened to me."

The moral authority of being Japanese American

Ishii's childhood in Agoura Hills, Calif., a bucolic city about 30 miles northwest of Downtown Los Angeles, was a classic Southern California type of Japanese American upbringing. On Sundays, the Ishii family attended Centenary United Methodist Church — a historic Japanese American church downtown — where Japanese food was the potluck staple. During Christmas, Santa was always Asian American.

For years, the Ishii sisters — Erika, Adena and Emma — joked about being Nisei Week queens, but no one tried out for court. Caring for a sick family member left little resources for that, said Erika. But Adena, who is of Japanese, Chinese and Indian descent, did *nihonbuyo* (classical Japanese dancing) for more than 13 years.





The mayor speaks at an event for East Bay elected officials at UC Berkeley.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR OF BERKELEY

8 March 21-April 3, 2025 IN-DEPTH/NATIONAL PACIFIC CITIZEN



"Adena was the cutest and most soft-spoken little bowl-cut-headed kid when she started," said Erika.

Like many Yonsei, Ishii also negotiates the push and pull of her own family's incarceration history.

Prewar, her grandfather, Chris Ishii, was a pioneering animator at Walt Disney Studios who worked on classic films such as "Fantasia" and "Dumbo." But the Second World War and Executive Order 9066 derailed his career path.

At Amache, Chris joined the Military Intelligence Service and created a comic strip called "Li'l Neebo" for camp newspapers.

"My grandfather was very set on legacy about his work," said Ishii. "I think that he really wanted to leave his mark and make sure that the Japanese American community really had something to look to for history and culture."

Ishii also finds herself in rooms with young Japanese Americans — who because of the luxury of time and the intergenerational burden of shame surrounding the WWII incarceration experience — don't feel a real connection to the past. In these rooms, bringing up the incarceration will sometimes evoke eye rolls and groans. Why are we still talking about this?

Ishii feels differently.

"I am that person that goes to all the different events and museum exhibitions, and still, I feel very emotional about it," she said.

Her past is a pain point that can connect her to other communities. She could again say: *It happened to me*. No, we can't separate families or arrest people without due process off the streets like the U.S. government did in 1942.

"I can say, 'Hey, this happened to my people, too, and we received redress and reparations," said Ishii. "That gives me sort of the moral authority to be able to say that."

Her family's incarceration history drives her sense of justice and informs her work on the Berkeley Unified School District Reparations Task Force, which she co-chairs. It

perfumes her existence. During her mayoral campaign, Ishii worked with Berkeley JACL members to organize an event called "Connecting Across Generations," which created a space for Japanese American community organizations to coalesce.

"She took the time to talk with me about the needs of the community," said Tara Umemoto, Berkeley JACL civil rights committee co-chair and past president. "And also took the time to coordinate our first event while running for mayor shows how committed she is to the community and that she understands the importance of community and connection."

The conversation for the next "Connecting" event — which took place on March 22 in Emeryville — focused on the art of kintsugi.

In 2013, Christopher Ishii died after a long battle with early-onset dementia. He was 66.

"He'd be just really proud," said Carolyn of Adena's rise to the office of Berkeley mayor.

Through her work, Ishii tells people her generation and younger that it's important to continue to talk about and understand their history. Every person is greater than the worst thing that happened to them, but without continually processing these experiences, you risk repeating them.

"I think it's important not to get complacent when things can be overwhelming. I think that sometimes it's easier just to stop reading the news and turn off the TV," said Ishii. "In my mind, what we should be focusing on is what we can do and what we do have control over. And much of the time that happens at the local level."



JACL Joins Lawsuit to Halt DOGE

The suit filed by Campaign Legal Center also represents OCA, Sierra Club, Union of Concerned Scientists.

By P.C. Staff

he Japanese American Citizens League has announced that it and three other organizations have engaged the services of a nonprofit government watchdog to sue businessman Elon Musk and the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency, aka DOGE, in federal district court, citing the legal concept of ultra vires over what has been described as a "lawless, unconstitutional power grab."

The lawsuit, filed by Campaign Legal Center on March 5 in United States District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of JACL, OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates, Sierra Club and Union of Concerned Scientists, alleges that under Musk's leadership, DOGE has acted illegally to "slash federal funding, dismantle federal agencies and fire federal employees."

According to CLC, Musk's "direction of DOGE's activities and the significant authority he exercises is entirely lawless. He has no authority under the Constitution or federal law to cut spending or terminate employees. These actions violate the constitutional

separation of powers: Congress, not Musk, has control over federal spending."

In its statement, JACL said: "Neither Elon Musk nor DOGE have the lawful authority to exercise the sweeping power that they currently wield in the federal government. However, since President (Donald) Trump created DOGE and placed Elon Musk at its helm, Musk has exercised significant unconstitutional authority and taken control over our agencies and our funding systems. This illegal and reckless control over the federal government has upended the lives of countless individuals, both within the United States and abroad."

Musk, the multibillionaire whose businesses include Tesla and Space X, was the biggest donor to Trump's presidential campaign and has been described as the world's richest man. DOGE was created by executive order after Trump returned to the White House on Jan. 20, and it has since run roughshod through several federal agencies by closing facilities, intimidating and terminating employees, accessing sensitive data and more, purportedly to curtail wasteful spending.

» See DOGE on page 10

442ND » continued from page 2

barrier-breaker Jackie Robinson, the Tuskegee Airmen, Women Airforce Service Pilots or WASPs and more went through a similar remove-andreinstate process. According to news reports, even references to the Enola Gay, the name given by its crew to the B-29 Superfortress that dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, was purged (see tinyurl.com/msjwrbpy).

Before that reversal, after learning that the webpage about the 442nd had been taken down, the JACL issued a statement that it was "deeply alarmed and disappointed" about the removal of the historic accomplishments of the Army unit comprised mostly of Nisei from the then-territory of Hawaii and the mainland United States, with soldiers from the latter cohort either enlisting or getting drafted while incarcerated at federally operated concentration camps that held ethnic Japanese, most of whom were U.S. citizens who had been forcibly removed from the West Coast.

To date, the 442nd remains the most-highly decorated military unit in American history for size and length of service, having won several Presidential Unit Citations and to its individual members, more than 20 Medals of Honor and thousands of Purple Hearts, Distinguished Service Crosses, Silver Stars and Bronze Stars earned in combat.

In its statement, JACL said, "The removal of their history from the Army's website is not just an administrative decision — it is an attempt to erase the legacy of thousands of

soldiers who gave everything for a country that doubted them."

The Pacific Citizen reached out to the Army regarding the changes to its website and received the following statement from Army spokesperson Christopher Surridge: "In accordance with a presidential executive order and guidance from the secretary of Defense, the Army recently took down the Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Heritage webpage that featured content about the 442nd Infantry Regiment and Nisei Soldiers. The Army is tirelessly working through content on that site and articles related to the 442nd Infantry Regiment and Nisei Soldiers will be republished to better align with current guidance."

The "presidential executive order" was a reference to how, following Trump's inauguration for his second term as president, he had issued several controversial directives in the form of executive orders. One such directive barred DEI programs from the federal government and military.

Similar to the removal of the history of the 442nd from the Army's site, the Air Force had also suspended use of materials in its basic training class on the Tuskegee Airmen, which was comprised of African Americans and similarly segregated, as well as the WASPs, both of which served during WWII. Mention of the Tuskegee Airmen and WASPs were later reinstated, but with all DEI references excised.

Hayes, meantime, was a Pima Indian who was immortalized as one

of the Marines seen in an iconic, Pulitzer Prize-winning photo raising the American flag atop Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima. Robinson, who broke the color barrier in professional baseball, also served in the Army during WWII, and the Navajo Code Talkers, who served in the Marine Corps, were trained to communicate using their language which proved to be a "code" unbreakable by Japanese intelligence officers

"There are still many stories available on Army websites that celebrate the bravery of the 442nd Infantry regiment that were not impacted by the Heritage webpage," according to Surridge's statement. "The Army remains committed to sharing the stories of our Soldiers, their units and their sacrifice."

The Army shared several links to Japanese American soldiers that are still extant. Among them are:

- <u>tinyurl.com/y2atbnry</u> (442nd legacy takes Soldiers from 'enemy aliens' to heroes)
- <u>tinyurl.com/4r34u6yj</u> (SLIDE-SHOW: World War II Nisei veterans receive medals, recognition)
- <u>tinyurl.com/2jfaf3et</u> (Heroic actions led Soldier to become first Nisei Medal of Honor recipient)
- <u>tinyurl.com/kjy7mbyv</u> (Go for broke: Army unit's motto now a national day)
- tinyurl.com/mr38rxn9 (442d Regimental Combat Team)
- <u>tinyurl.com/3d4ksy88</u> (The 442d Regimental Combat Team)

The entirety of the JACL's original statement may be viewed at <u>tinyurl.com/3p6a2nwk</u>.

SFV » continued from page 4

from him and was told that the director had waived my height requirement and also approved my application." With that hurdle overcome, the only things left were passing a background investigation and getting a topsecret clearance.

"He called me on February of 1963 and said, 'You can have the job starting March 18, 1963, if you want it.' I said, 'Sure, why not?""

Thus began Yakura's journey as a 5-foot-6-inch Secret Service special agent. "A month later, President Kennedy came to Los Angeles and stayed at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, and that night, my first protection duty was to stand guard at the Presidential Suite. Nice. Well, anyway, three months later, from June 16-Sept. 16, 1963, three months after coming to duty, I got temporary assignment for Kennedy compound, Hyannis Port, Mass." It was a memorable time.

History buffs will note, of course, that it was just months later that President Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963. "I was devastated," Yakura recalled. "He was our president. He was our leader. He was our protectee."

But duty called, and he was temporarily assigned to

President Lyndon Johnson's Texas ranch. "Throughout 1964, it was a very rough and stressful year for Secret Service," he said. Despite that rough first year, Yakura spent 22 years in the Secret Service, and there were pleasant memories and highlights in that time, including spending three weeks in Hawaii protecting Happy Rockefeller, wife of New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, who was at the time running for the presidency, and their three daughters. He also recalled being assigned to the detail that protected Henry Kissinger during the Nixon administration and, happily, meeting his future wife, Helene. His duties also included protecting foreign heads of state, with one of the peaks being assigned to the detail that protected Japan's emperor and empress during a visit to the United States.

Retirement from the Secret Service 39 years ago didn't mean an end to work for Yakura. He later worked stints with the Defense Investigative Service (now called the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency) and Boeing-owned Autometric Inc.

Also part of the luncheon was a video recalling the chapter's 2024 activities, door prizes and opportunity drawings.

VENTURA » continued from page 4

Ventura County JACL Co-President Megan Gately (center) holds a tablet connected to PSW Gov. Joseph Gu, who administered the oath of office to the chapter's new board remotely. Also pictured (from left) are JJ Fukumoto, Betty Katsura, Joanne Nakano, Akemi Ketchum, Samantha Wyllis-Quiñonez, Janice McCormick, Jessica Wan, Gately, Ken Nakano, Mark Chilcott, Anne Chilcott and Lily Anne Welty Tamai.



"fourth-generation Yonsei Hapa Japanese American," the speaking engagement was a family affair, with his parents Cindy Yoshitomi — a pastor with the Santa Barbara-based St. Anthony's Catholic Community — and Gerald Yoshitomi in attendance, as well as his wife, Elena Garcia-Yoshitomi, assistant principal at Ventura High School, and their sons, Eleno Sadataro, 3, and Emilio Shigeru, 1.

Regarding his job with the county, Yoshitomi said, "The question I get is, a lot of times: 'Oh, you're the arts and culture manager. Why is the county interested in arts and culture?' I think the first reason, it's an economic driver. The creative economy, which includes arts and culture, is a \$3.1 billion industry in Ventura County, and that's without any attention being paid to it by local government. It doesn't include just artists. It includes film, television, broadcast, publishing, fashion, toy design, entertainment events. So, there's so much depth to it."

Yoshitomi noted that the monetary figure was slightly

larger than agriculture in Ventura County. "And, we know what an important role the agriculture community plays here. So, it's a growing industry," he said. "I think the more important reason is the social impact of arts and culture here in Ventura County."

The board was installed by Pacific Southwest Gov. Joseph Gu via Zoom. Reprising their roles as copresidents were Lily Anne Welty Tamai and Megan Gately, with Jessica Wan and Janice McCormick as co-vice presidents, Anne Chilcott as secretary and Ken Nakano as treasurer. Sharing cemetery restoration coordinator duties were Nakano and Chilcott, with Betty Katsura serving as book club moderator.

Board members were presented certificates of recognition from Ventura County Board of Supervisors member Janice Parvin, California State Assemblymember Steve Bennett (D-Ventura) and Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.). The chapter also presented David Yoshitomi with a certificate of appreciation for serving as the guest speaker.

TEMPLE » continued from page 5

"The gift cards were a great idea," said Rev. Gibbs, San Diego's supervising minister. "I am delivering them along with other supplies and food."

He noted that PBT has received many donations from the Southern District temples and relief agencies.

"We received a great deal of supplies from Orange County Buddhist Church," Rev. Gibbs said. "Water, toiletries, clothing and snacks were received, and we have been handing them out to anybody who comes to the temple.

"We received a lot of gift cards from San Diego, and that has been very helpful," Rev. Gibbs continued. "Families have been grateful to receive gift cards to restaurants, grocery and department stores."

OCBC President Bryan Furumoto described the damage to the area when supplies were delivered to the Pasadena Temple.

"During our drive, we witnessed some of the extensive damage the neighborhood suffered," he said. "Upon arrival, we were greeted by grateful Pasadena Sangha members."

In support of its Sangha and community, the Pasadena Buddhist Temple established the PBT Eaton Sangha Support Fund.

To date, PBT has reported more than \$34,000 in monetary gifts through the GiveButter campaign.

"Our fundraiser for our Sangha support efforts blew past its online goal of \$20,000 in about 72 hours — amazing support," said Pasadena member Kathy Kumagai.

PBT is also supporting the Go-FundMe drives for Sangha members who are in need of assistance. The fundraising drives can be found on the PBT website homepage (https://www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html).

Looking Ahead

The PBT has teamed up with Azay restaurant, the Japanese Cultural Institute of Pasadena, Pasadena Nikkei Seniors and the First Presbyterian Church of Altadena to deliver meals and supplies to victims in need.

"Azay, the Japanese French restaurant in Little Tokyo (formerly known as 'Akira' in Pasadena), reached out to us in the greater Japanese American communities in the Pasadena and Altadena area to see if impacted people could have meals," Kyoko Gibbs said.

Azay, along with the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo, Mutual Trading Company, Fugetsu-Do and Yama Seafood in San Gabriel are collaborating with the assistance of preparing foods and delivery.

"Akira Hirose, the former owner of Azay, who passed away last year, was always a community supporter, and his family, widow Joann and son Philip, have continued to do so. We are sincerely grateful for their selfless giving," Kyoko Gibbs added.

The NAACP, which has its Pasadena branch office at the Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute, is also offering assistance.

"They have kindly offered their relief supplies and two attorneys who have offered their services for free to assist with homeowners' insurance," event organizer June Chin said. "It's very reassuring to be able to reach out to each other, whether it's a bento or a hug."

Approximately 470 meals have been prepared for families in Pasadena and Altadena. Volunteers have delivered the meals and other donations, while the Pasadena temple has served as a pickup location.

"It has been very challenging, both emotionally and physically," Kyoko Gibbs said. "Yet, experiencing everyone's selfless action is quite touching. We are stronger together."

Wheel of Dharma Editor Jon Kawamoto contributed to this article, which has been reprinted with permission by the Wheel of Dharma newspaper.

HOW TO HELP

BCA Southern California Wildfire Relief Fund: <u>BCA.kindful.com</u>

PBT Eaton Sangha Support Fund: https://givebutter.com/ZIFQlN

GoFundMe fundraisers for Pasadena Sangha members: https://www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html

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DOGE »

continued from page 8

JACL Executive Director David Inoue said, "JACL joins this lawsuit to stop DOGE from making reckless cuts that will directly impact national historic sites under the National Park Service that are among those where over 125,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were unjustly incarcerated during World War II.

"These sites honor those who were incarcerated," Inoue continued, "and serve as a legacy to our children so that future generations of Americans will understand the unfortunate and preventable capacity for our government to act maliciously against a group of people such as ours."

Regarding what DOGE has done thus far, OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates Executive Director Thu Nguyen said, "The reckless budget cuts at the Department of Education are a direct assault on Pell Grant recipients, student organizations and AANAPISI institutions that are vital to advancing educational equity."

Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous said, "We are taking DOGE to court to defend Americans' ability to safely and freely access the landscapes that unite us."

Union of Concerned Scientists President Gretchen Goldman said, "DOGE's actions have interfered with life-saving research and scientific collaboration on cancer, vaccines, extreme weather and more. They have pulled funding for job-boosting clean technology initiatives and fired civil servants who enforce laws that protect us from air, water and climate pollution."

Published reports have estimated that DOGE cut more than 62,000 jobs in February across 18 federal departments and agencies. Meantime, DOGE has claimed to have saved taxpayers some \$105 billion in its first six weeks.

JACL Wary of Threats to Education Dept.

Organization expresses alarm over Reduction in Force announcement.

he Japanese American Citizens League issued a statement on March 13 expressing that it is "extremely alarmed" over a series of actions by the White House that appear to presage an attempt to eliminate the Department of Education.

Citing rumors that President Donald Trump may be preparing to issue the latest in a raft of executive orders, with this one purportedly designed to dismantle the DOE, JACL pointed to a reduction in force announcement issued earlier in the week to eliminate "nearly 2,000 department staff."

JACL's statement also underscored its commitment to education, citing the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians' report, titled "Personal Justice Denied." The organization cited the report for educating Congress on the injustice of President Roosevelt's executive order that led to the mass incarceration of more than 125,000 ethnic Japanese — most of whom were U.S. citizens — into government-operated concentration camps during World War II. According to JACL, the report's educational value paved the way for the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

In its statement regarding the possibility of the elimination of the DOE, JACL said, "Rather than dismantling the system, we should attempt to save it and support students, not leave them in darkness."

The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus also released a statement on the reduction in force announcement.

In a joint statement, Chair Rep. Grace Meng and Education Task Force Chair Rep. Mark Takano said: "The Department of Education's core mission is to ensure every child, no matter where they live or how much their parents earn, has access to a quality education and has their civil rights protected. President Trump's decision to close this crucial agency will lock millions of families out of the American Dream and dim the futures of children across the country.

"Let us be clear-eyed about who will be affected by this disastrous decision. Kids living in poverty or in rural areas who rely on low-cost or free school lunches. Students with disabilities who need specialized education. Young adults who depend on Pell Grants to attend college or pursue a trade. Millions of Americans who are enrolled in career and technical education programs funded by federal Perkins grants.

"The Trump administration is denying the next generation the resources they need to succeed in order to pay for tax breaks for billionaires. It is a betrayal to students, parents and educators. This is an unlawful decision, and Congress must not cede its authority in the face of this order."

As of press time, President Trump on March 20 signed an executive order returning power over education to families instead of bureaucracies. In a statement issued by the White House, it stated, "The Executive Order directs the Secretary of Education to take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return education authority to the States, while continuing to ensure the effective and uninterrupted delivery of services, programs and benefits on which Americans rely. The Order also directs that programs or activities receiving any remaining Department of Education funds will not advance DEI or gender ideology."



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Reporter K.W. Lee Dead at 96

Investigative journalist helped free death-row inmate, forge pan-Asian coalition.

By George Toshio Johnston, Senior Editor

ubject of imperial Japan. Teen soldier. Immigrant. Outcast. Pioneer. Entrepreneur. Mentor. And, of course, journalist. The many lives of Kyung Won Lee all came to an end March 8 in Sacramento, Calif. He was 96.

Of his many lives, each of which could be the subject of a book or movie, it was the award-winning and impactful investigative journalism career of K. W. Lee, as he was known to most, for which he will be remembered and studied.

In fact, two movies inspired by Lee's journalism were made: the whitewashed Hollywood version, 1989's "True Believer," and the Emmy-award winning documentary from 2022, "Free Chol Soo Lee" (see March 18, 2022, Pacific Citizen, <u>tinyurl.com/mpa5mzc7</u>).

Both were inspired by K. W. Lee's reporting on a fellow Korean immigrant with the same last name on death row for a brazen murder that he not only did not commit, it was a slaying for which he had absolutely no involvement.

That man's name was Chol Soo Lee, who was eventually set free thanks to his namesake's dogged investigative reporting.

Though grateful, Chol Soo Lee could not adjust to life on the outside, and he fell into a life of ignominy. By 2014, he was dead at 62, leaving K. W. Lee haunted for the rest of his days.

Kenji Taguma, editor-in-chief of San Francisco-based Nichi Bei News, for which Lee contributed a column, told Pacific Citizen, "K. W. Lee clearly demonstrated the power of the pen to uncover truth and move people into action. . . . We started a K. W. Lee Reporting Fund to help support community news writing and honor the pioneering legacy of Mr. Lee."



K.W. Lee as a teen soldier in Japan's army air force

PHOTO: K. W. LEE FAMILY

California State University Northridge journalism professor and K. W. Lee Center for Leadership board member Tae Hyun Kim said, "K. W. Lee emphasized the importance of solidarity among diverse minority communities. He believed that the role of journalism was not to separate racial communities but to help them unite and speak with a collective voice."

It was during Japan's colonization of Korea when K. W. Lee was born on June 1, 1928, in Kaesong, in what is now North Korea. In that period, Koreans were forced to take on Japanese names, and during that life, Lee had to use the surname Umeda.

As a 14-year-old during World War II, he served in the Japanese army air force's special volunteer air cadet corps. He endured anti-Korean bullying from some higher-ranking superiors as he learned to become a flight radar operator.

After Japan's defeat, one of his superiors told him that his life would be better if he returned to Korea. He did, later enrolling at Korea University to study English.

Months before the Korean War began in 1950, Lee left Korea for the United States, where he and his small group of fellow Korean students found

themselves stranded once the war was in progress. He earned a B.A. in journalism from West Virginia University and an M.A. in journalism from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Lee realized that returning to Korea, where a professor and he had wanted to start a newspaper "based on the American principles of an independent press," would not be wise the professor was put to death under Korea's repressive regime. Lee became the target of possible deportation after the Korean embassy began the process of revoking his student visa after he wrote a "sarcastic editorial" about Korean strongman President Syngman Rhee.

Journalism saved him when he landed a job at the Kingsport Times News in Tennessee and yet another life began. Lee became the first Korean immigrant journalist to work for a mainstream U.S. newspaper.

Staying in the American South, by 1958 Lee found himself in West Virginia working for the Charleston Gazette. where he went on to cover



Peggy and K. W. Lee

PHOTO: K. W. LEE FAMILY

civil rights and document the impoverished lives of coal miners. He met his future wife. a white emergency room nurse named Peggy N. Flowers, when interracial and intercultural marriages were not just uncommon, they were generally unwelcome.

Hired by the Sacramento Union, Lee and family moved across the country in 1970 to California, where his investiga-







K. W. Lee and Ranko Yamada in 2018

tive journalism turned its focus Sa-I-Gu — when a not guilty on backroom deals and corruption in the government and by

state legislators.

But it was a 1973 gangrelated slaying in miles-away San Francisco, brought to his attention by an organic pan-Asian American coalition led by Ranko Yamada, that would forever change K. W. Lee's life. He would devote countless hours and typewriter ribbons on the Chinatown murder, writing more than 100 articles that helped prove Chol Soo Lee had been the victim of a gross miscarriage of justice. In 1982, he was acquitted and was soon a free man again with much credit to K. W. Lee.

Another of K. W. Lee's lives began in 1979 when he co-founded, with the help of fellow Sacramento Union staffer Steve Chanecka and future Los Angeles Times staffer Randy Hagihara, Koreatown Weekly, the first English-language newspaper focused on the Korean American community.

Although it would fail after about five years, it did serve as a template of sorts when, a few years later, the Korea Times launched its English-language edition for Los Angeles and tapped K. W. Lee to lead it.

But 1990 was a combustible time: Tensions between Korean shopkeepers and residents in Black neighborhoods in South and South Central Los Angeles were rising. Robberies of Korean-run liquor stores and homicides of storeowners became an L.A. news staple.

The slaying of Black teenager Latasha Harlins on March 16, 1991, perceived to be stealing a bottled drink by Korean immigrant shopkeeper Soon Ja Du case was gasoline; the jury found Du guilty of voluntary manslaughter, but the judge in the case gave her probation.

The match that ignited days L.A.'s Korean community as ership, at *kwleecenter.org*.

verdict was announced in the trial of Los Angeles Police Department officers charged in the beating of Rodney King.

Lee, whose position and leadership might have been able to ameliorate some of the worst results of the uprising, could do nothing more than pen a May 11, 1992, editorial titled 'Never Again" from a hospital as he awaited a liver transplant.

Laurels that came Lee's way included the Asian American Journalists Assn. presenting him with its "Excellence in Print Journalism" award in 1987 and induction into the now-defunct Newseum.

He also was recognized by National Headliners Club in 1974 and 1983, the AP News Executive Council, the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the Freedom Forum. His most-meaningful career-related accolades, however, may have been the creation of the K. W. Lee Center for Leadership in 2003 and his participation in the 2022 documentary "Free Chol Soo Lee," which won an Emmy in 2024.

It was Peggy and K. W. Lee's three children of which they were most proud. In a joint statement from Shane Lee, Sonia Cook and Diana Regan, they said, "Our Dad had an innate curiosity about people which showed when he engaged with our friends and others around him. . . . That same curiosity and empathy drove his journalism — he wasn't just searching for facts, but for the human stories behind them."

Kyung Won Lee was predeceased by his wife, Peggy, in 2011. His survivors include son Shane Lee (Sandee), daughters Sonia Cook (Victor) and Diana Regan (Alan); six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. His family asked that anyone wishing to honor him and nights of rioting came on make donations in his name to April 29, 1992 — known to the K.W. Lee Center for Lead-

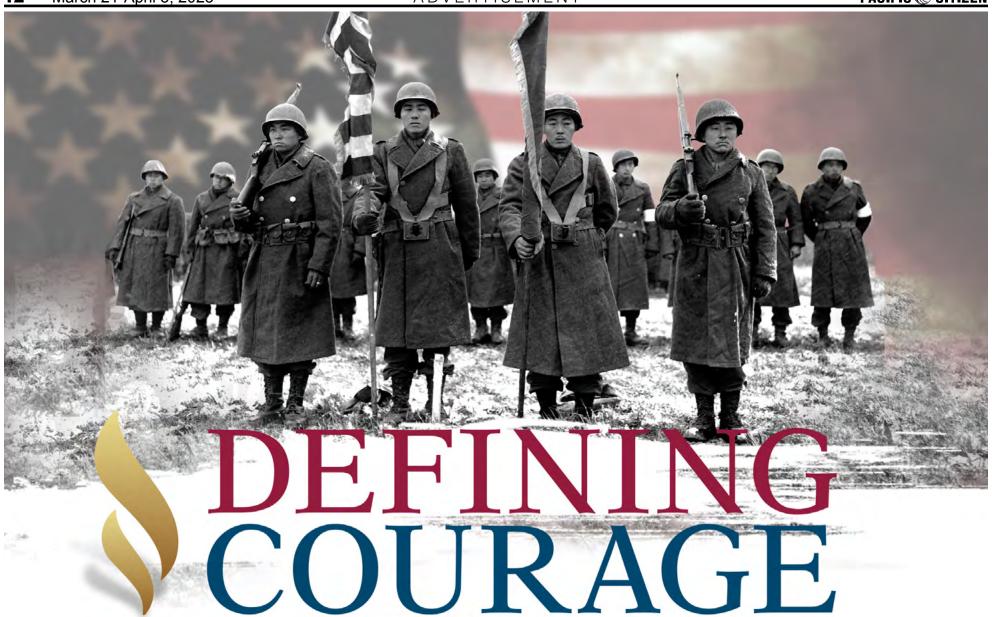
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