Online Forum Reaches Out to HIV-Positive APA Youth

By CAROLINE AYOAGI-STOM
Executive Editor

It started off as a simple case of the flu but 21-year-old William Ching's symptoms weren't getting any better. On a hunch he decided to go and get tested for HIV. Within days he received the news he had been dreading: he tested positive for the virus.

For the next few weeks William, a senior at UC Berkeley, stayed locked up in his room barely able to eat or sleep. Thoughts about his mortality and a future cut short filled every waking moment.

"It was a complete shock. I'm still trying to cope with it," said Ching.

Worshipping Under a New Blended Identity

By LYNDRA LIN
Assistant Editor

CHATSWORTH, Calif.—Sunday services are usually filled with song at the Chatsworth West United Methodist Church. Between prayers, the congregation of Japanese Americans and Caucasians sing their praises with eyes downcast and hearts open.

It's a unity that has been a long time coming.

For years, the JA congregation was a part of its own church, the West Valley United Methodist Church, which paid a monthly fee to share facilities with the mostly white Chatsworth United Methodist Church located at 10024 Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Both churches also shared the same pastor who would give the same sermon to the Chatsworth group at 9:30 a.m. and then again to West Valley at 11 a.m.

In May, the two churches officially merged and became the Chatsworth West United Methodist Church. The move was beneficial for both sides, said Rev. Ruy Mizuki, who has headed the church. "We are mindful of history and working to do a better job," said Ron Charles, Santa Anita president.

Critics are not convinced that the racetrack will preserve its JA history. During WWII, Santa Anita was home to the Okimoto kids (right) and thousands of other JA families.

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Song Birdie

This Hmong American wants to be a pop princess.

JACL Supports 'Jena 6'

The national JACL expresses concern over the unfair treatment of the 'Jena 6.'
Letters to the Editor

Re: Nat'l JACL Resolution on Watada

As a former Judge Advocate in the Marine Corps, I was pleased to see that the national board’s Aug. 21 resolution regarding 1st Lt. Ehren Watada did not discuss double jeopardy or other peculiarities of military law.

I am pleased that the resolution stayed on the fairness issue which is also deeply ingrained in me as a Sansei who is a Vietnam combat veteran who served alongside many AJAs, Asians, Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and native Americans.

With respect to military law, I believe it was EDC Governor Kristine Minami in the discussions preceding the vote on the resolutions who urged that the board understand that court-martials and military law are different from civilian criminal proceedings. Kristine of course is correct. The Uniform Code of Military Justice enables the creation of court-martials for the military. The UCMJ is legislation by Congress and therefore, court-martials are sometimes referred to as Article I courts or legislative courts.

While I do not agree with what Watada did in refusing orders and losing mission, I must in good faith acknowledge that he volunteered to serve in the Army, has served honorably as an officer in regular Army for four years and three months, has served a full tour in Korea, has trained with the Striker combat teams, and has volunteered for combat in Afghanistan. He is not in pretrial confinement and is presently performing his assigned duties.

I hope the best for Ehren and believe that he will serve whatever sentence is adjudged him by the court-martial as he has previously indicated he would. However, I am mindful that post-9/11 convictions will exact a heavy price on him when he returns to civilian life.

I ask that the board also remember the many AJAs, Asians and Pacific Islanders and men and women who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan — at my last count over 75 patriots of Asian-Pacific Islander descent have made the ultimate sacrifice, 20 of them from Hawaii.

WATADA

Ernest M. Kimoto
Kailua, Hawaii

A Demonstration of Courage

Actions by the national JACL board to approve the resolution in support of 1st Lt. Ehren Watada are to be lauded as demonstrations of courage. Many of us who have analyzed the issue have come to the same conclusions as former national director John Tateishi.

Specifically, as U.S. citizens, whether serving in the military or not, we are all entitled to our civil rights, including the right to free speech, as outlined in the Constitution. Furthermore, anyone acting in the capacity as a member of our Armed Forces has the responsibility to consider the actions they take as being representative of what we the people wish of them to do. We cannot abrogate this responsibility on the basis of “just following orders” to be risk violating our moral obligation to the people of other nations as it is unmistakably delineated in the Nuremberg Principles.

Like it or not, serving in the military can mean being in the position of deciding to take another person’s life or not, and the moral ramifications of this act obviously need to be weighed most carefully. Undeniable, too, whether one believes we were simply mistaken or deliberately misled in pursuing this conflict, is our breach of the principle against waging a war of aggression, in this instance, against the Iraqi people.

Lt. Watada had studied these issues and correctly concluded their wrongful nature. Now, the national board has declared likewise. It is up to the rest of us to endorse these actions, for they form a critical element of the solution towards our stopping the bloodshed on both sides of the war that continues unabated at this time. And ending this conflict is definitely the best way that we can support our troops and bring them back home.

Don Ino
San Francisco, Calif.

JACL Should Take a Neutral Stand on Watada

I cannot believe that the national JACL has taken further steps to “support support for Lt. Watada.” 1st Lt. Ehren Watada volunteered for the Army and by doing so the Army has every right to assign him to wherever its service is needed.

The action taken by Watada is a complete contradiction to the principles upon which the JACL was originally founded.

In my opinion, the JACL should take a neutral stand in this regard because it involves a Military Code of Justice and Watada is a member of the Armed Forces, not a civilian. He will be given a fair trial under the military court. As for this double jeopardy and all these other legal arguments, let the professional lawyers iron this out in court.

I was extremely distressed to learn that members of the NCWNP district have “pushed for a stronger show of support for Watada.” After sponsoring a wonderful “Salute to the Veterans” on Aug. 12, the very act of supporting Watada is another slap in the face to these veterans who were honored by this “Salute.”

Now with the Watada episode the JACL has been involved in another faux pas which will undoubtedly have an additional effect on its membership role.

Leo H. Hosoda
WWII and Korean War Veteran
Roseville, Calif.

A JACL Name Change

I was extremely distressed to see the initials of “JACL” taken further steps to be used in the pursuit of happiness. It is a name which all of us can readily use and identify with. JACL is the name by which we are most recognized, not our full name. I agree with National Director Floyd Mori that it may be time to use the acronym JACL with some progressive tagline showing our representation of the entire APA community.

It has been 25 years since the tragic killing of Vincent Chin, and the entire APA community must never forget how colorblind (or ethnically blind) hate can be. I feel that our community’s changing demographics show the need for the JACL to be a more inclusive APA organization.

David Kawamoto
San Diego JACL

If We Must Change, Let’s Keep it JACL

I’m a firm believer in interracial/interfaith affairs, but it fills me with regret to think of changing the name of an organization that has been so important in the lives of Japanese Americans. If you feel you MUST change, why not simply JACL? At least most of us know what those initials mean.

We can still cooperate with other similar organizations even if we keep our Japanese designation. After all, my grandchildren may be only half Japanese, but they KNOW and are proud of being Japanese background.

In other words, I would prefer to keep the entire name as is but if a change is a MUST, then let’s at least keep it JACL! It does not preclude cooperation with other ethnic groups.

Fujiko Kitagawa
Via e-mail
So. Calif. JA Community Center Hoping to Rebuild

For decades, the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center brought the JA community together. The years have taken its toll on the popular social hall.

By LYNDA LIN Assistant Editor

Since the 1960s, the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center’s social hall has hosted countless bingo games, serene Ohigan ceremonies and sweaty Aikido practices for the local Japanese Americans who used the center as a hub of cultural and community activities.

"I grew up here," said Pearl Omiya, the ESGVJCC executive director. Omiya, a Yonsel, has been involved with the community center since she was five years old because her parents thought it was important to soak up some culture.

Now, the social hall located at 1203 West Puente Avenue in West Covina is a shadow of its former self. Years of water and termite damage have worn down the multipurpose room built in the 1930s forcing the ESGVJCC board members to officially close the doors of the social hall in July 2007.

“It’s a sensitive building. Every time someone touches it, it seems to fall apart,” said Omiya.

A Community Gathering Point

Dry rot and termite damage on the social hall’s roof and beams were first discovered and repaired about 10 years ago, but repair efforts were as successful as bailing water out of a sinking boat. During storms, rainwater would seep through and form unsightly brown stains on the ceiling. A Buddhist temple service was leaked on, said Omiya.

In the back of their minds, ESGVJCC officials knew the social hall was structurally damaged, so they kicked off a fundraising campaign in September 2006.

Finally in June 2007, a structural engineer confirmed their fears — the social hall was not up to earthquake safety codes, so the ESGVJCC staff and board members decided the only logical plan was to completely rebuild.

They’re hoping to build a bigger, better and soundproof social hall with an additional 1,500 square feet for all their JA organizations to enjoy.

The goal is to raise $1.5 million, said Glenn Nakatani, ESGVJCC board president. They need to reach 40 percent of their fundraising goal in order to start construction. They are currently at about 30 percent.

The community center needs an extra nudge in donations to start rebuilding.

The center has been central to Nakatani’s family since Glenn first took his daughter Jamie to Buddhist temple services 15 years ago. Over the years, Jamie enrolled in Aikido and Japanese school and practiced jump shots with her basketball team members in the community center gym.

“Is it the center worth it?” Nakatani wrote in this September’s ESGVJCC newsletter. “And wouldn’t it be a travesty if we let the center fade away? Where would our kids and seniors go?”

The community center has faced its share of crises since 1936 when Eijiro Machida donated the original 40 acres of land located in what is today the Westfield West Covina Mall. The center bustled with cultural activities until the outbreak of war when it was turned into a grammar school run by Ted and Hazel Roberts, who took care of the center until JAs returned home in 1946.

In 1964, the city of West Covina used the power of eminent domain to force the community center out of its original location to make room for the mall. Now in its current location on Puente Avenue, the ESGVJCC faces the current battle to rebuild and remain viable.

A Home Away from Home

“I hated Japanese school! I took it for granted,” exclaimed Omiya, who nevertheless graduated from the ESGVJCC Japanese language school and went on to teach English in Japan after graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles. When she returned home, the community center seemed to be frozen in time.

“Not much had changed.” She was hired as the ESGVJCC operations manager in 2005 and promoted to executive director in December 2006. From the beginning, she started tackling maintenance problems, especially in the social hall.

“Now that I work here, I have a whole new appreciation for the building. It got used every single day,” said Omiya.

The social hall’s closure has resulted in a virtual game of musical chairs.

The Gakuen Japanese Language School classes, which were held in the social hall, are now relocated to the gym and breezeways.

“The students for the most part make the best with what they have,” said Omiya.

Where would our kids and seniors go?

— Glenn Nakatani, ESGVJCC president

The West Covina social hall (top) was built in the 1930s. It was closed in July because of water and termite damage.

Idaho Commissioners Mull Over Proposed Controversial Feedlot

Residents and former internees are concerned that the proposed feedlot will bring pollution to nearby Minidoka national monument.

By Pacific Citizen Staff

Over a two-day period of marathon public hearings, Jerome County Commissioners in Idaho took up the controversial issue of a proposed 13,000-heifer feedlot that has become a contentious issue not only for locals but also nationally.

The commissioners are taking up a feedlot application submitted by Big Sky Limited Partnership. Owner Don McFarland hopes to build a controversial feedlot in the eastern end of the county.

McFarland’s attorney John Lothspeich took less than 15 minutes to present his client’s case to the commissioners, noting that all laws and regulations had been followed throughout the application process.

But the majority of those attending the hearings were opposed to the proposed feedlot. Locals expressed concern about the pollution such a feedlot would bring to the area. Former World War II internees worry that the close proximity of the feedlot to the Minidoka Interment National Monument would have an adverse effect on those visiting the historic site.

The Minidoka Interment National Monument is an American story … and part of the heritage of Jerome County,” said Neil King, National Park Service superintendent, in the Times-News. The NPS currently oversees the historic site.

King noted that although only a few thousand people currently visit the Minidoka site each year, the NPS is working to develop the site and it could attract close to 80,000 visitors annually in the near future. The proposed feedlot would be about two miles from the historic site.

Former WWII internee Gus Tanaka, 84, presented written testimony at the hearings. Karen Yoshitomi, PNW regional director and a descendant of former internees, submitted a photo of her mother and grandparents as evidence and urged the commissioners to vote down the proposed feedlot.

Janell Stewart lives near the proposed feedlot and testified that she worries about the health effects her family could suffer if the feedlot is built.

“It’s your responsibility to protect me and my family,” she said to the commissioners as reported in the Times-News.

After two days of lengthy public hearings, the Jerome County Commissioners are now reviewing the 500-page case file of testimonies and documents.

The commissioners are scheduled to deliberate the application on Oct. 9 and at that time a final decision could be announced. The meeting will be open to the public although testimony will not be allowed during that time.

Either way, a lawsuit is likely to be filed by those who are unhappy with the commissioners’ pending decision.
Pentagon: Dropping Yee's Porn, Adultery Reprimand was a Mistake

By GENE JOHNSON
AP Legal Affairs Writer

SEATTLE—The Pentagon’s inspector general has concluded that for the most part, the Army properly handled the case of a Muslim Army chaplain who was detained for 76 days and then cleared in an espionage probe.

A two-page, unclassified executive summary of the inspector general’s review released Sept. 19 cited two mistakes: That a general exceeded his authority by throwing out Capt. James Yee’s reprimand for adultery and downloading pornography; and that a deputy public affairs officer violated policy by writing a letter to The New York Times about the case.

"In my view, what was reported was utterly ridiculous," Yee, 39, told The Olympian newspaper. "It’s a huge cover-up. That’s why independent investigations are necessary. People conducting this investigation were not unbiased."

Yee’s attorney, Gene Fidell, told The Associated Press the document was “preposterous” and that he was never contacted by the Defense Department’s Office of the Inspector General. The office launched its investigation in mid-2004 at the request of Democratic lawmakers who questioned whether Yee was unfairly targeted because of his religious beliefs.

“What kind of investigation is this?” Fidell asked. “Why is it took them three years? Three years, and they come up with two pages? This is a deep insult to Congress, not to mention Chaplain Yee. Congress had a right to expect more, better, sooner.”

Yee, who had been based at Fort Lewis south of Tacoma, was arrested in 2003 and charged with mishandling classified material and other crimes in a suspected espionage ring at the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, but the criminal charges were dropped as the Army determined there was no such conspiracy. He was then reprimanded for adultery and downloading porn.

General James T. Hill, commander of the U.S. Southern Command, threw out that reprimand in early 2004, saying, "I do not believe, given the extreme notoriety of his case in the news media, that further stigmatizing Chaplain Yee would serve a just and fair purpose.”

Hill’s decision exceeded his authority under Army regulations, the summary said, but no corrective action was recommended.

Lt. Col. Bill Costello, a deputy public affairs officer with the Army's Southern Command in Miami, wrote a letter to the editor of The Times in March 2004 defending the handling of the case. Doing so violated policy, the summary said. It recommended that Costello's command consider whether he should be punished.

The inspector general’s review was launched in mid-2004 at the request of Democratic lawmakers who questioned whether Yee was unfairly targeted because of his religious beliefs.

“Why was this gentleman put in prison for 72 days?” Fidell asked. “If this stuff was really classified, why didn’t they charge him? Why didn’t they persist?”

Yee said the documents were actually notes he had taken on the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.

“They weren’t classified. It’s to cover the war crimes at Guantanamo,” he said.

A Pentagon spokesman said no one was immediately available after hours to discuss the summary.

Yee received an honorable discharge in January 2005, followed by an Army commendation for “exceptional meritorious services.” He wrote a book about his experience at Guantanamo, “For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire.”

Stamp Committee to Review Nisei Veterans Stamp Proposal

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

A grassroots campaign to honor World War II veterans with a postage stamp recently received news that their proposal will be officially reviewed by the Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee.

In a letter dated Sept. 24 to Wayne Osako, campaign coordinator and nephew of five Nisei soldiers, USPS Stamp Development Department Manager Terrence McCaffrey relayed the good news.

“You may be pleased to know that this proposal will be submitted for review and consideration before the Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee. The Committee is responsible for reviewing stamp proposals and making subject and design recommendations to the Postmaster General.”

The Nisei WWII soldiers stamp proposal will be considered for stamps printed in 2010 and subsequent years. Stamps for 2008-2009 have already been selected by the Postmaster General.

The grassroots campaign is encouraging supporters to continue sending in letters of support to the Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee and to sign their petition at www.minori tyvetstamps.org for those who have yet to do so.

Letters of support should be mailed to: Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee, United States Postal Service – Stamp Development, Attn: Mr. Terrence McCaffrey, 1735 North Lynn Street, Suite 5013, Arlington, Virginia 22209-6432

"Let’s keep up the pressure, and really make a good push now," said Osako.

The Nisei WWII soldiers stamp series proposal will also feature the Tuskegee airmen and the Navajo code talkers.

The mostly JA units that served in WWII received more than 18,000 individual decorations, including 21 Medals of Honor, 559 Silver Stars, 4,000 Bronze Stars and an astounding 9,486 Purple Hearts.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which suffered more than 800 casualties during the war, is considered the most highly decorated combat unit of its size and length of service in U.S. military history. Its members received eight Presidential Unit Citations.

For more information: www.minorityvetstamps.org.

Wisconsin Hunter’s Murder Trial Revives Fears of Racial Tension

WAUSAU, Wis.—Jury selection is underway for the trial of the Wisconsin man who killed a Hmong man after a clash in the woods.

James Nichols, 29, is accused of shooting and stabbing 30-year-old Cha Yang of Green Bay, whose body was found Jan. 6 in a wildlife refuge where both were hunting squirrels.

Nichols claims the killing was in self-defense, but prosecutors contend he disliked Hmong hunters.

Nichols is charged with first-degree intentional homicide, hiding a corpse and being a felon in possession of a firearm. If convicted of murder, the mandatory punishment is life in prison.

The case raised fears about racial tensions between white and Hmong hunters.

In 2004, deer hunter Chai Soua Vang of St. Paul, Minn. fatally shot six white hunters. He said the whites shouted racial epitaphs at him and one opened fire first.

Mattel Apology Overdue but Will Boost Confidence in China Exports

BEIJING—China’s state media recently welcomed U.S. toy maker Mattel’s apology over its recalls of Chinese-made toys.

Mattel apologized in Beijing for recalling 21 million toys this summer, the majority of which had small magnets that could fall out and be harmful to children if swallowed.

Mattel admitted the problem was a design flaw — not the fault of Chinese manufacturers.

However, the recalls also included hundreds of thousands of toys with hazardous lead-tinted paint. Mattel said it pulled more of those toys than necessary and made Chinese manufacturers look bad.

Suspects Perpetuated Hate Crime Against APA High School Student

AVON LAKE, Ohio—Two Avon Lake High School students vandalized an APA classmate’s car by scratching a racial epitaph and smearing fecal material and urine on her vehicle.

The Sept. 21 incident occurred while the victim, a school marching band member, was performing at an away football game.

The two male suspects, 17 and 15, were suspended and removed from school. They now face expulsion hearings and criminal prosecution.

APA Students Condemn Police Arrest as Race Based

NEW YORK—A Columbia University APA student group is calling for a thorough investigation into why a black student was arrested for an incident at a bowling alley.

Sohn was stopped by police officers on the corner of 114th Street and Broadway. He was holding an open beer can. According to witnesses, one of the officers asked the mostly APA crowd, “Have you had too much sake tonight?”

Sohn was released but charged with four misdemeanors.

The Columbia University Asian American Alliance condemns the incident and says it may point to a larger issue within the NYPD and its treatment of minorities.

Asian Fishermen are Targeted in a Series of Hate Crimes

TORONTO—Since April, Asian fishing aficionados have faced a series of attacks, some locals disparaging call “nipperpiping.”

Sometimes they are thrown over a bridge along with their equipment.

According to published reports, an Asian fisherman was fishing near Westport when a white pickup truck slowed on the bridge and a woman told the group to go away because it was not a fishing site. The fisherman moved under the bridge.

Later, four men carrying axes and baseball bats chased at the fisherman and swung the axe within an inch of his face.

Local police have launched a hate crime investigation into four such incidents near Lake Simcoe.
APAs in the News

By Pacific Citizen Staff

San Jose JACL to Recognize Community Leaders in Upcoming Dinner

The San Jose JACL has selected the honorees for its upcoming community recognition dinner on Oct. 27. The 2007 recipients are: John Hayakawa, Tom and Helen Masuda, Jack Matsuoaka, Tom Oshidari, Terry Oshidari, Aki Toyoshima (posthumously) and Sue Toyoshima. The San Jose Taiko will also be honored.

The honorees were selected for their dedication to upholding the mission of the San Jose JACL: education, civil liberties, community partnerships and social/cultural activities.

SF Suspends Jew, Names New Interim Supervisor

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom suspended Supervisor Ed Jew on charges of official misconduct and named an interim replacement to the board of supervisors.

Newsom named deputy finance director Carmen Chu as Jew’s temporary replacement on the board.

The district attorney has already charged Jew with nine felony counts of perjury and vote fraud on the question of his residency.

The FBI has also filed a criminal complaint against Jew, charging him with one count of federal mail fraud for allegedly soliciting bribes from local storeowners.

Jew has pleaded not guilty to all the state and federal charges.

Four APAs Among ‘Genius Grants’ Recipients

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation recently awarded 24 new genius fellowships to artists, engineers and others who display creativity, originality and potential to make important contributions in the future. Each will receive $500,000 over the next five years. Among the winners are:

- Cheryl Hayashi, an associate professor in the department of Biology at UC Riverside, My Hang Huynh, a chemist at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico; Shen Wei, the founder and artistic director of the Shen Wei Dance Arts in New York City; and Yoko Matsuoaka, an associate professor in the department of computer science and engineering at the University of Washington, Seattle.

JCCH Gala Honored Hawaii Educators

The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai’i honored four educators in Hawai’i’s community and a corporate honoree at its Sept. 29 “Celebration of Leadership and Achievement Dinner.”

The JCCH recognized educators Jane O. Komeiji, Richard H. Kosaki, Ph.D., Margaret Y. Oda, Ed.D., Dennis M. Ogawa, Ph.D., and corporate honoree Island Insurance Companies Ltd. at its gala event of the year. The Maliki Japanese Language School also received special recognition.

Chiang Receives Leadership Award

Calif. State Controller John Chiang received the 2007 Leadership Award from KHEIR (Health, Education, Information and Research), a service agency providing multicultural and culturally sensitive healthcare to the underserved and uninsured residents of Los Angeles and neighboring communities.

Chiang was presented the honor Sept. 20 for his commitment to his community and increasing access to healthcare.

Living Legacy Receives $10,000

The Americans of Japanese Ancestry World War II Memorial Alliance awarded Japanese-American Living Legacy $10,000 to continue their educational program on JA soldiers killed in action during WWII.

The funds will also be used to develop and maintain the Alliance’s website.

The JA Living Legacy projects preserve the memories and experiences of WWII JA soldiers.

JACL Expresses Concern Over Unfair Treatment of ‘Jena 6’

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

The JACL expressed concern over the apparent unequal treatment of six black youth from Jena, La., known as the “Jena Six” who have been charged with the beating of a fellow white student.

Thousands of people converged in this small city Sept. 20 in a massive show of support for the six youth.

Five of the black teenagers were initially charged with attempted murder in the beating of a white classmate but that charge was reduced to battery for all but one, who has yet to be arraigned; the sixth was charged as a juvenile.

The six teens were charged amid racial tension that had been growing after the local prosecutor declined to charge three white teens who hung nooses in a tree on their high school grounds.

The JACL’s National Youth Student Council, which represents the voice of JACL members under the age of 25, declared the issues surrounding the Jena Six of particular relevance, as it involves clear violations of civil rights with regard to race and youth in a school setting.

“As student and youth representatives of the JACL, we empathize with the black students in Jena as we have also been the target of discrimination and racism on school playgrounds and inside classrooms. We hope that this incident sheds light on the critical state of race and youth in our society,” said Brandon Mita, a representative from the Youth Student Council and law student at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

The JACL did not condone the violence, but instead expressed its disappointment with the way the case has been handled by school officials, local law enforcement and the Louisiana judicial process.

“Equal treatment and fairness under the law remains the critical concern of the JACL,” said National Director Floyd Mori. “The Jena Six case is troubling and has overtones of the Vincent Chin incident where the victims have more reason for concern than the perpetrators of hate.”

The beating victim, Justin Barker, was knocked unconscious, his face badly swollen and bloody, though he was able to attend a school function later that night.

The district attorney who is prosecuting the teens, Reed Walters, denied that racism was involved in the charges.

He said he didn’t charge the white students accused of hanging the noose because he could find no Louisiana law under which they could be charged. In the beating case, he said, four of the defendants were of adult age under Louisiana law and the only juvenile charged as an adult, Mychal Bell, had a prior criminal record.

“It is not and never has been about race,” Walters said. “It is about finding justice for an innocent victim and holding people accountable for their actions.”

“This is the most blatant example of disparity in the justice system that we’ve seen,” Rev. Al Sharpton told CBS’s “The Early Show” before arriving in Jena. “You can’t have two standards of justice.”

“We didn’t bring race into it,” he said. “Those that hung the nooses brought the race into it.”

U.S. Senate Democrats Try to Advance Hate Crime Bill; Opponents Say It Will Fail

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 would strengthen existing federal hate crimes law, something JACL is in strong support of.

By Associated Press and P.C. Staff

WASHINGTON—The Senate used a legislative maneuver Sept. 27 to try to advance a proposal to help U.S. states prosecute attacks on homosexuals, but opponents predicted it would fail.

They attached a hate crime measure to a must-pass bill to fund the war in Iraq in an effort to force President George W. Bush to sign it into law. Opponents, citing Bush’s earlier veto threat of the hate crimes legislation, predicted it ultimately would fail.

“The president is not going to agree to this social legislation on the defense authorization bill,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican.

“This bill will get vetoed.”

Attaching hard-to-pass legislation to must-pass bills is a well-established strategy used by lawmakers of both parties, no matter who controls the chamber. Success means forcing squeamish lawmakers to technically vote for controversial policies embedded in massive spending bills — then hold them accountable at re-election time.

Nonetheless, the Senate agreed by voice vote — with no dissenting votes — to attach the hate-crimes provision to a pending defense authorization bill that designates billions of federal dollars to the Defense Department and the Iraq war.

The bill is named for Matthew Shepard, a gay college freshman who was beaten into a coma in 1998. He died five days later.

The White House had no immediate comment Sept. 27.

The national JACL has long been in support of the hate crimes bill better known as the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007. The organization has been encouraging its chapter members to ask their Senators to vote for the bill.

“The JACL strongly supports the passage of this amendment,” the JACL stated in an action alert. “The JACL was founded out of a need to protect those suffering under discriminatory practices directed toward minority Asian populations in 1929. Today, the JACL continues to fight for victims of hate through supporting measures such as this Kennedy-Smith amendment.”

The White House has contended that state and local laws already cover the new crimes defined under the hate crimes proposal and that there is no need to provide federal sanctions for what could be a wide range of violent crimes.

The hate crimes amendment is especially tempting for majority Democrats because of Bush’s weakened status — he has less than 16 months left in office — and some support for the measure among Republicans.

But given Bush’s veto threat against the provision, it seemed headed for a familiar fate. The Senate in 2004 attached similar legislation to the same authorization bill, but it was stripped out in negotiations with the House.

Republicans were careful not to attack the intent of the legislation, focusing instead on what they said was the “non-germane” nature of the amendment to the overall spending bill.
Heart Mountain Foundation Launches Campaign for Interpretive Center

The Heart Mountain, Wyoming Foundation (HMWF) has launched a campaign to raise funds for a $5.4 million Interpretive Learning Center to be placed on original Heart Mountain Relocation Center land purchased by HMWF. Heart Mountain was recently designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.

Other recent on site HMWF accomplishments have included the restoration of the original Honor Roll containing names of those who served in the military during WWII from the Relocation Center and a multi-station self-guided Walking Tour dedicated to the memory of Setsuko Saito Higuchi. HMWF privately raised $275,000 to purchase the land, reconstruct the Honor Roll and build the Walking Tour.

Honorary campaign co-chairs are former U.S. Sec. of Transportation Norman Mineta and former U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson. Mineta was an internee along with his family and then met Simpson at a Boy Scout Jamboree held at the Relocation Center. Both later served in Congress at the same time and have remained friends for over 65 years.

The Interpretive Learning Center (ILC) will provide an overview of the wartime relocation of Americans of Japanese Ancestry, including the background of Asian prejudice in America and the factors leading to the enforced confinement of West Coast Americans of Japanese ancestry. Special emphasis will be given to constitutional issues, civil liberties and rights, diversity, education/training and ethnic understanding.

The ILC will also provide visitors with a more intimate connection to the personal stories of the internees and local residents during WWII. The Center will include a theatre, two re-created barracks living quarters, interactive exhibits and research capabilities, as well as a reconstructed sentry station at the park entrance, and a recreated guard tower in its original location.

Its location next to Yellowstone National Park will make it an important and accessible cultural and historic learning resource for thousands of tourists who visit the area every year.

HMWF fundraising co-chairs include Douglas Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Hon. Raymond Uno, retired judge of the Third District Judicial Court of the State of Utah, and Shirley Ann Higuchi, assistant executive director for Legal and Regulatory Affairs at the American Psychological Association and past president of the District of Columbia Bar.

HMWF has already raised $784,000 toward the Center and expects to have enough funding in place by the fall of 2008 to allow a formal ground breaking to occur. Key naming opportunities are incorporated into the Center, with information available upon request.

Requests for fundraising packets or for information may be directed to HMWF at 307754-2689 or pwolfe@wavecom.net.

More information may be accessed on the HMWF Web site at www.heartmountain.net.

Nina Fallenbaum Selected as New Masaoka Fellow

Nina Kabori Fallenbaum is the recipient of the 2007-2008 Mike M. Masaoka Congressional Fellowship, the JACL announced recently.

Fallenbaum will spend approximately three and a half months beginning early in 2008 working in the Congressional office of Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawaii. She will learn about policy-making and public service first hand.

Fallenbaum received an undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies from UC Berkeley. She is currently attending Meiji Gakuin University for a master’s in public policy.

The fellowship is named for Mike M. Masaoka (1915-1991), who spent a lifetime of outstanding public service for the causes of the JACL and Japanese Americans.

The JACL established the Mike M. Masaoka Fellowship Fund in 1988 with its main purpose to develop leaders for public service and provide opportunities for college seniors or graduate students to work for a U.S. senator or member of the House of Representatives.

Want to be the Next Fellow?

College students who are interested in the fellowship should check out the JACL Web site at www.jacl.org.

The next deadline for applications is April 1, 2008.

The fellowship provides a stipend of $10,000. Applicants should be members of the JACL.

U.S. Dept. of Commerce Unveils Official Mineta Portrait

By Pacific Citizen Staff

The U.S. Department of Commerce recently unveiled the official portrait of the Honorable Norman Mineta who served as its Secretary from July 21, 2000, to Jan. 19, 2001, when the Administration changed. He was then appointed U.S. Sec. of Transportation under the new Bush administration.

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez, the current U.S. Secretary of Commerce, unveiled Mineta’s portrait on Sept. 17. The portrait will hang alongside the various Secretaries of Commerce who have served over the years.

Mineta’s portrait represents the family, history, and accomplishments of the Secretary over the years. In addition to Mineta, it shows a photo of his family at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, where they were interned during World War II. It also features Sather Gate on the U.C. Berkeley Campus from which Mineta graduated before joining the U.S. Army.

In honoring Mineta, Gutierrez noted his life of extraordinary service to the nation and his devotion to opportunity and justice. Although Mineta served for only a short time as U.S. Secretary of Commerce, he was instrumental in his work on oceans, fisheries, and NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration).

Mineta was the first Asian American to be appointed to a Presidential Cabinet and became the first person to switch directly from a Democratic Cabinet to a Republican Cabinet when he was appointed to the post of Sec. of Transportation under President George W. Bush. Mineta resigned his position last year and to date he is the longest serving Sec. of Transportation in the history of the country. He currently works for the renowned public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton in Washington, D.C.

Mineta’s portrait unveiling was held on the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 by the House of Representatives, which occurred on Sept. 17, 1987. Mineta was a driving force behind its passage. The Redress bill was later signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1988.

Speaking at the event were Sussy Smith, Mineta’s chief of staff at Commerce; Glenn Roberts, who wrote the Redress legislation; and Chris Stroebel, who was director of Legislation for Congressman Mineta in 1988. Former California Congressman Don Edwards, who helped get the Redress legislation through the judiciary committee, also attended the ceremony.

In addition to his wife Doni, Mineta’s sister, Etsu Masaoka, and Etu’s son-in-law and granddaughter, Richard and Michelle Armano, attended the unveiling.

Fresno Chinatown’s Secret Tunnels

Fresno, Calif.’s Chinatown has a secret: tunnels underneath the neighborhood.

Archaeologists are beginning to map out the brick-walled passages using ground-penetrating radar.

Chinatown Revitalization Vice President Kathy Omachi (left) said they will try to match the findings with the memories of older residents who remember the neighborhood in its boom days.

OCT. 5-18, 2007
**NAT'L DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Many Thanks for a Successful Gala**

By FLOYD MORI

Although you may have already read about the JACL gala dinner, I want to add my thanks and comments. While it is impossible to mention everyone, I want to express my personal thank you to all who supported the event in any way.

When John Tatsae (former national director) and I began talking about doing a gala in the nation’s capital, we realized it would be a huge task. However, we felt that the JACL needed the exposure that a gala would bring, and it could be a means of raising additional funds for the organization.

Norman Mineta, who has been generous to the APA communities, consented to be the honorary chair. A committee was formed and the planning began. Debee Yamamoto was willing to serve as co-chair of the event. She was invaluable in that capacity and was later hired to be the JACL director of public policy.

There were some mistakes and criticism, but all in all, the inaugural national JACL gala was a success. We wanted it to be different and memorable and hoped people would be enlightened and inspired. Some commented that it was the best gala they have attended. They may have been overly kind, but it did turn out well.

Thanks to George Takei for being an excellent master of ceremonies. Tamaki Kawakubo came from her tour in Germany and performed exceptional violin solos during the program. Japanese American Veterans Association (JAV) members — Brigadier General Bert Mizussawa, Joe Ichiyama, and Grant Ichikawa — posted the colors with General Mizussawa’s boy scout sons leading the Pledge of Allegiance. David Lin from AT&T offered remarks on behalf of the sponsors.

The hosts were pleased about the gala being represented by vice president Yance Yoshikawa and our good friend Leslie Moe-Kaiser, among others. Sen. Daniel Inouye and Karen Narasaki were eloquent and gracious. Ambassador Kato had to be in Japan and sent a video of his acceptance. Sen. Larry Craig, who was helpful with Minidoka, was unable to attend and was presented with the award later in his office.

A number of out of towners supported the event including Bronze Sponsors: JACL President Larry Oda with his wife Ann, and Vice President of State Affairs Michael Udink, and the Washington, D.C. chapter, under the direction of President Craig Uchida, and other EDC chapters buying tables and turning in force.

We are also grateful for the support from our coalition partners, our friends in D.C.’s APA community and the many staff members from Congressional offices who attended. Of course, we owe much gratitude to the planning committee and volunteers and to those who purchased tables, individual tickets, and ads.

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**Oregon Family's License Plates Deemed Offensive to APAs**

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

MERRILL, Ore.—A Merlin family has been ordered to turn in the vanity license plates for their cars because the state finds their Dutch name can be interpreted as offensive to Asian Pacific Americans.

The plates, UDINK1 and UDINK2, are on the vehicles of Mike and Sheila Udink and their son Kalei.

Two of the plates are five and seven years old. One was issued last year.

Last summer Kawika Udink's application for Udink4 was rejected and the state ordered the other three plates returned.

The plates were now invalid and the 90-day temporary registrations sent to the family in June are also likely expired, according to David House, spokesman for the state Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division.

The plates were deemed offensive by a 10-person DMV panel that approves custom, or "vancy" plates, which cost an extra $80.

House, who serves on the panel, said the reasons were the sexual references that can be associated with the name, which can be treated as a verb.

"DINK" has several derogatory meanings," wrote panel member Yonne Bell. She said it also can be a racial slur, especially toward Vietnamese.

House said the "U" in the front could be construed as "You.

It seems unclear to Mike Udink, whose name is Dutch. He says it is a common name in The Netherlands.

"Since when can a panel dictate whether your name's offensive or not?" asked Udink, a lineman for Pacific Power.

The family wonders why the plates were fine for years, then recalled.

"Somebody pointed it out to us," said House. "We get dozens of complaints every day. We can miss things, and we have. Sometimes we let it go and see if we get complaints."

House said the state has the right to censor license plates, because the state­owns them. Family names, it appears, are not immune.

"When people drive down the street nobody knows your name," House said.

"We know some people have names that match something. We’ve also had a lot of references to ecstasy that we’ve pulled back in the past five years, because it became a nickname for a drug," he said. Michael Udink’s second cousin, Dennis Udink, of Price, Utah, tried to get a rule change allowing family names to be exempt but failed.

The DMV denies requests for any combination of letters and numbers that may be viewed as objectionable, in any language, by use of phonetic, numeric or reverse spelling, or when viewed as a mirror image, or that would alarm or offend a reasonable person, although some spellers have gotten through.

Intimate body parts or sexual or bodily functions are taboo as are references in an alarming or offensive manner to race, color, gender, ethnic heritage, or national origin or to alcohol or drugs or paraphernalia.
It's a Wanderful Life

One of my fellow teachers, who is in the same English-language teaching company as I am in Japan, had just come back from an English-language-teaching stint in the Czech Republic for adult students. Another fellow teacher had already taught English language to fifth-graders in Honduras, where she lived on a salary of $500 a month and was once nearly mugged in broad daylight. The teacher whom I shadowed for a week had already taught English in Central America. I am living now with my relatives, in the house where my mother grew up. She lived here until at the age of 24, she went on a trip to the United States, where she met her future husband. She returned to Japan, married him, and had three children, including me. Yumi with fellow English teacher Jillian Leeder (right) in Japan.

However different our upbringings and back­grounds, we all more or less fit a very similar profile. We have wanderlust. We probably don't have much money. We are somewhat fresh out of college and have absolutely no idea what to do for our careers—or we do, and we don't want to confront it quite yet. We want to buy ourselves a year or two or three before we inevitably confront the economic reality of even more formal schooling— or moving back home to our parents.

In Japan, I imagine that such a Western sentiment would be considered indulgent and ridiculous. Once you graduate from college in Japan, it is rather formulaic: work for a big company, get married, and have half-Japanese kids. For some people, this lifestyle becomes addictive. They were only going to have this lifestyle for a year or two or three before they inevitably confront the economic reality of even more formal schooling—or moving back home to our parents.

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Because for the American viewing public who wanted speed but didn't understand Grand Prix racing, NASCAR was a more accessible entertainment option. One sports writer who loved Grand Prix racing for its demands of finely tuned machines, intricate skills and high risks wrote back in the early days of NASCAR on television, it's the dumbing-down of high-speed auto racing, perfect for American white audiences, not just from the south, but all over the country.

Unlike the Indy, Cart, or Champ racing circuits, which attract international drivers from Formula One racing, NASCAR has always been exclusively American. It's always been and still is a good old boys sport, and with the occasional exception of someone like Jeff Gordon (from Vallejo, Calif.).

So when Toyota announced it was entering cars in the NASCAR circuit, it was little wonder that the reaction would be so immediate and negative. This wasn't like when Honda entered the Grand Prix circuit, or when both Toyota and Mazda entered cars in European Rally series, both truly international sports.

And this wasn't a foreign car manufacturer breaking new ground so much as stepping on sacred ground. If they had thought about it, they would have seen that the reaction could only be negative. Again, it was so predictable.

There's something much more troubling about NASCAR fan reaction to Toyota's announcement. It's not just the good old boys in the South who reacted but was all over the country, and it's not just guys who follow NASCAR: women are also a huge part of the fan base.

What's happened is a barometer of attitudes in this country, and the barometer seems to be turning anti-Asian, reminiscent of the anti-Japanese sentiments of the 1980s. In my seven years as the JACL's national director, I saw evidence of a growing anti-Asian sentiment across the country, and this is only symptomatic.

It's difficult to know what caused it: the explosive increase of the Asian population in the U.S in the past 30 years, APAs gaining in the job market (up to a point), a growing xenophobia against immigrants of color, or any number of factors. Whatever they are, they've raised the ante on us once again, and this is something we're just going to have to deal with. Once again.

John Tateishi is the immediate past JACL national director.

Yumi Sakugawa is currently teaching English in Japan.

NASCAR: A Barometer of America

Earlier this year, Toyota entered three racing teams in the NASCAR circuit and was caught off guard when their entry created a backlash by other sponsors and teams and by fans. They mistakenly thought they would be welcomed on the famed racing circuit, especially with one of their teams owned by NASCAR icon Michael Waltrip.

The negative reaction by other teams was based on the unfounded assumption that Toyota would invest undue amounts in the development of their cars' racing engines to give them an edge, despite NASCAR's strict uniformity rules. But it was the fan reaction that Toyota completely misjudged, even as they undoubtedly were being advised by a large mainstream PR firm.

Back in the late 1970s, when Toyota agreed to invest over $1 billion to create over 3,500 jobs by putting a plant in Kentucky, they were baffled by the reaction of Kentucky residents and the outcry of the UAW in the area. After all, they were bringing money and jobs to the area and couldn't understand why there was so much negative reaction at their announcement.

The South, with all its southern hospitality and southern gentility, was still the South. And Toyota thought all they had to do was announce their arrival and they would be greeted with open arms.

The result was predictable in the 1970s when there was so much Japan-bashing focused on the auto industry. And once again, Toyota has been caught off guard with the hostile and volatile reaction to their announcement that they were entering the NASCAR circuit.

What Toyota doesn't seem to realize about NASCAR is that it's a southern sport, something that belongs to the good old boys. It's an exclusively southern as anything is in that region. Just listen to the drivers. They almost all speak with heavy southern accents.

Stock car racing on dirt tracks began back in the days of prohibition, when moonshiners in the South used to drive at break-neck speeds over backcountry dirt roads to avoid law enforcement. Some of them were amazing drivers who used to get together to race each other when they weren't busy delivering their moonshine. Over the years, stock car racing remained a southern sport run on oval dirt tracks until television saw entertainment value in it and made it a multi-billion dollar industry.

At the time NASCAR hit television, many of the cars still ran with Confederate flags painted on their roofs and hoods. For the American viewing public who wanted speed but didn't understand Grand Prix racing, NASCAR was a perfect entertainment item. One sports writer who loved Grand Prix racing for its demands of finely tuned machines, intricate skills and high risks wrote back in the early days of NASCAR on television, it's the dumbing-down of high-speed auto racing, perfect for American white audiences, not just from the south, but all over the country.

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This Birdie Can Sing

She may come from a small Minnesota town, but this 19-year-old Laotian American carries a big voice.

By Lynda Lin
Assistant Editor

It was supposed to be Birdie’s time to shine.

Sept. 23 was the night the 19-year-old songstress was going to raise her voice as the headliner at the Trocadero, a popular restaurant and nightclub in downtown Minneapolis, Minn. Clad in a red leather outfit, she was going to silence the critics with her powerhouse voice.

“It was my show,” she said breathlessly over the phone days after the event. But like a lot of things in Birdie’s life, her debut was marred with drama — not the epic kind, just lies and broken promises. She was only able to perform half of her 12-song routine. Plus to add insult to injury, every time she walked offstage for a breath, the house DJ would start playing over her music.

“We all had our hands in the air like, ‘what?’”

But while onstage, Birdie looked out to the crowd of 300 mostly Asian Pacific American faces and felt right at home.

Birdie (born: Souphak Xaphakdy) has found some relative fame in Minnesota thanks mostly to the Twin Cities’ exploding Hmong population. She’s seen cars drive by blasting her songs and fans recognize her on the streets when she is “hustling” her newly released debut CD “Underground Pop Xposed.”

To be successful in the Twin Cities, you have to have charisma. Birdie oozes it. She chats with patrons at Hmong stores, dishes out a few compliments and then simply asks people to buy her CD — most do without question.

“Asians just buy it. They don’t even ask about the genre until after,” said Birdie, who describes her music as mostly R&B and pop. “You know, like Beyonce.”

Birdie wants to become the first Laotian American pop star, but in a country that most likely first got to know Laotians through the animated Fox television show “King of the Hill,” Birdie knows the odds are stacked against her. But then again, she’s used to it.

While pregnant with Birdie, her mother Somphiane and father Kaemphet fled their war-torn Laos for America in 1988. Birdie was born in Sacramento, Calif. Soon after, the Xaphakdy family moved to Minnesota to join relatives who had also made the journey from native soil to their adopted homeland.

Birdie’s family settled in Magnolia, a Southern Minnesota town so small it lacks its own gas station and high school. Birdie attended Luverne High School, about seven miles outside of Magnolia. In a small town, there were small town rivalries. When Birdie was six, a neighborhood boy started spewing racial slurs at her.

“He was saying things like, ‘go back where you came from,’ ” said Birdie. “He even broke my new chair — brand new from Goodwill. My mom was so mad. She went over to the boy’s house and talked to the boy’s mom. He had to apologize.”

The self-described shy girl would come out of her shell when her father, a Lao folk singer who singing racial slurs at her. To her, her dad was a music producer.

“My father was a music producer. I thought that she had a lot of potential,” said Davis. “I wasn’t sold on her until I saw her work ethic. She is very hardworking and focused. She is also very intelligent and understands that a lot of the glitz and glam you see on TV is for show.”

Last fall, Birdie moved to the Twin Cities to attend community college. She worked at UPS “punching in zip codes” until her 18th birthday. Then she contacted Davis and began working on her album fulltime.

The resulting “Underground Pop Xposed” is filled with catchy original tunes that show off Birdie’s range. She croons about love and heartache in ballads like “Beautiful” and “Behind the Moment,” but easily slips into hip hop and melodic techno.

But the standout song is “Text Wars,” an ode to modern love that Birdie wrote with a friend after trading angry text messages with her boyfriend.

Birdie’s next few gigs are local. She’s performing at weddings and other community events and then simply asks people to buy her CD — most do without question.

“Birdie’s time to shine. To learn more about the plan and how to become a member please call the JACL Health Trust at 1-877-848-4875.

A bit about Birdie

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BlueCross of California

REAL NAME
Souphak Xaphakdy

HOMETOWN
Magnolia, Minn.

DEBUT
"Underground Pop Xposed"

DOWNLOAD
"Text Wars"

Listen to songs from Birdie’s album ‘Underground Pop Xposed’ at: www.birdieonline.com
FOOTBALL
High School Coach Improperly Recruited Samoan Players

FRESNO, Calif.—An assistant football coach at a U.S. high school led his team to a string of victories by improperly recruiting more than a dozen players from American Samoa and offering them housing, according to an investigation by local sports authorities.

The six-month probe alleges a Samoa-based relative of the coach began meeting with the students’ parents as early as 2004, and persuaded them to send their sons from the remote South Pacific island to Stockton, a city 50 miles south of Sacramento. Once there, the coach is accused of housing the students at his home, with his brother or with other coaches.

Fourteen students and their families flew to California on tickets purchased by the coach’s mother, and were put up in motels for a week paid for by Franklin High School personnel, authorities said. The coaches helped the parents get fake utility bills to establish their sons’ residency, and the Yellowjackets gained a new set of recruits to advance their standing within the league, officials said.

“If we find that’s true, we want the superintendent to fire the coach,” said Randy Saco, a regional commissioner of the California Interscholastic Federation, the governing body for high school sports in the state. “Our goal is that everybody has to play by the rules. That’s the essence of what high sports is all about.”

While not criminal, athletic recruiting at the high school level is not permitted by high school sports governing bodies in the U.S., along with exercising “undue influence” to coerce young students to switch schools, sports authorities said.

Still, administrators in the Stockton Unified School District questioned the report’s focus on students from one ethnic group.

Dozens of students of Samoan descent play on other teams in the Central Valley area, and all three Samoan students enrolled at Franklin High School are in compliance with the rules, said Superintendent Jack McLaughlin.

“We viewed this in the beginning as kind of an attack on a culture,” McLaughlin said. “We did not violate anything.”

If Saco finds the school violated the rules, Franklin High may have to forfeit games when the accused students were on the team or could be suspended from playing in section championships, the federation said.

Stockton Unified School District officials must respond by Oct. 5.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
Kwan Named to U.S. Delegation for Opening Ceremonies

WASHINGTON—It’s another Olympics for Michelle Kwan.

The five-time world figure skating champion will be part of the U.S. delegation for the opening ceremonies at the Special Olympics World Summer Games this month in Shanghai, China. The 10-person delegation was announced recently by President Bush, and includes baseball Hall of Famer Ernie Banks.

Also named to the delegation were Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of the Special Olympics; Timothy P. Shriver, chairman of the Special Olympics; Clark T. Randt, U.S. ambassador to China; and John H. Hager, former assistant secretary of education. U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings will lead the delegation.

Kwan, who won a silver medal at the 1998 Olympics and a bronze in 2002, makes occasional diplomatic trips as the country’s first “special sports envoy,” a position created to improve the U.S. image abroad. She visited China in January, and was in Russia in early June.

SUMO
Suspicious Death the Latest Problem for Japan’s National Sport

TOKYO—Already reeling from the antics of a rogue grand champion, Japan’s national sport of sumo now has to deal with a suspicious death.

Japanese police are considering charging the trainer of a 17-year-old sumo wrestler who died earlier this year on suspicion that a beating during a practice session may have caused the fatality.

Tokitsukaze (real name: Takashi Saito), collapsed after practice on June 26 while preparing for July’s Nagoya Grand Sumo Tournament.

The boy’s father, Masato Saito, wants to get to the bottom of exactly what happened to his son.

“Firstly, I want to know the truth,” Saito said at a press conference Sept. 27. “I don’t want this kind of accident to happen to anymore — I want my son to be the last one.”

Police have questioned the trainer, Tokitsukaze, 57, and other wrestlers after deciding Saito’s injuries did not appear consistent with those sustained in practice.

On Sept. 28, Japan’s education ministry ordered a full-scale investigation into the matter.

Senior vice minister of education Kenshiro Matsumura said there could be possible punishment against those implicated in the case.

Fellow wrestlers told authorities Saito had injured himself while training.

According to the boy’s father, members of the Tokitsukaze stable called his family and offered to cremate Saito’s body before the family got to see it. The Saito family declined and the body was sent to Saito’s house.

The family was shocked to see cuts and burns on his body.

According to Saito, his son fled from the training facility twice, once in mid-June and again on the day before his death but did not tell his father that he had been bullied or assaulted.

Adding to the suspicion is the fact that Tokitsukaze’s mobile phone, which could have contained information about the situation surrounding his death, was broken in two and it remains unknown who broke it.

The coroner listed the numerous bruises and wounds as the likely cause of death.

The Saito case is just the latest blemish for Japan’s national sport.

Grand champion Asashoryu is serving a two-tournament suspension for playing in a charity soccer match, earlier this summer in his native Mongolia, after skipping an exhibition tournament. He claimed he was injured.

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AG5315
PACIFIC CITIZEN
10 OCT. 5-18, 2007
William Ching (right) frequently talks to college students about the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. He recently founded the HIV Youth Project.

HIV PROJECT
(Continued from page 1)

who learned of his status this past July. "I felt alienated too ... from the gay community and the Asian American community. People don't talk about it."

But dread soon turned to resolve and William started scouring the internet for support and understanding amongst his peers. Surely there were fellow HIV-positive APA youth who were dealing with the same struggles?

Sadly, he couldn't find anything. Although there was a profusion of information on getting tested and prevention, it was largely directed at an older, white audience. True, there were APA groups dealing with HIV/AIDS and some youth sites but there was nothing combining the two.

"HIV is still viewed as a gay, white disease," said William. He soon heard the same frustrations echoed by some of his APA friends who were HIV-positive. It was the impetus William needed to launch the HIV Youth Project (www.hivyouthproject.org), an online community forum and support group for HIV-positive APA youth, women, and communities of color.

"I want to put a face to HIV, that APA youth are not invincible to it. It happens."

A Second Coming Out

William's homosexuality wasn't a secret; he had come out to his family and close friends a while ago. But when he learned about his HIV-positive status it was information he kept to himself initially. But the disease has a way of becoming a large part of your life. The hardest part was telling his family.

"It's been more like a second coming out process. I have to live with it for the rest of my life," he said. "It made my homosexuality more real for [my mother] ... but it also brought her closer to me."

One of the first people William confided in was his friend Henry Lao, 23. Henry had disclosed a year earlier that he had tested positive for HIV. Ironically almost a year later, their roles had been reversed.

William and Henry had both interned at the Asian & Pacific Islander (API) Wellness Center in San Francisco and had learned a lot about HIV/AIDS in the APA community. It was an irony not lost on Henry.

"I felt like wow, I am a statistic," said Henry, a recent UC Berkeley grad, of testing positive in August 2006. "I am the people I've been trying to help."

The API Wellness Center notes that from 2000 to 2004 the HIV rate among APIs 18-29 years old in the San Francisco area rose from 2.6 percent to 3.8 percent. Health officials in the New York area have reported new cases of HIV have increased by a third among those under 30 and has doubled among teens in the past six years.

Like William, Henry had a hard time finding resources for APA youth when he was first diagnosed. He tried to attend a few support groups offered by the APA community but most of those in attendance were older men. Why wasn't there a support group for him and his peers?

With the HIV Youth Project, Henry hopes he has finally found one. In between his full-time job at a youth homeless shelter, Henry is volunteering his time helping edit the online site. Although the project is in its infancy, they're already working on a new design and hope others will contribute their stories, even if it is anonymously.

See HIV PROJECT/Page 16

There are a lot of anti-Asian incidents in Chicago but people don't know what to do or just suck it up and move on."

— Myron Deuan Quon (below, left), Richards' attorney

H&M LAWSUIT
(Continued from page 1)

her, muttering "Ching, chong, chang" as she walked away.

"I was dumbfounded," said Richards, who was born and raised in Chicago. "When he first said it, I couldn't believe it, but even when I went up to him, he wouldn't stop. He just went on and on and. . . . I'm not naive about racism, but for him to say it disgusts me. He didn't understand how degrading it was."

Since then, she has contacted the Better Business Bureau, the Chicago Commission of Human Relations, and the Asian American Institute for help. Numerous attempts to elicit a response from H&M management has yielded few results; Richards said she was bounced from manager to manager before receiving a call from H&M's Midwest corporate manager, who informed Richards she was also of Asian descent and that the company does not condone the employee's behavior. That did little to soothe Richards.

"I couldn't sleep [that night]. I was crying."

The incident follows close on the heels of the drowning death of Du Doan, a 62-year-old Vietnamese American fisherman who was pushed off a harbor into Chicago's Lake Michigan only weeks earlier. Many local Asian Americans believe his death is tied to anti-Asian sentiment. The man being charged with Doan's murder is a member of a skinhead group (though allegedly an "anti-racist skinhead group") and, according to authorities, is prone to violent behavior.

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Elaine Low is currently a JACL fellow in the Midwest regional office.
When merger talks became more realistic, West Valley became vocal about wanting to be around people from their own background, so they didn’t have to explain themselves and feel self-conscious about their parent, neon yellow *ikazuki* during potlucks.

From the children of JA members who were married outside of their race were generally opposed to the merger.

“What about the cultural values and the cultural ties?” said Sam Uyehara, a longtime West Valley and San Fernando Valley JACL member who was initially on the fence about the merger. He eventually supported the move, but admits that he’s still getting used to the change.

“I see it as more as a challenge….. as a way of expanding my Christian outlook. It’s more in keeping with what I believe even though I feel more comfortable with Japanese.”

But at the same time, Mizuki, a Sansei who grew up in a JA church, understands the importance of ethnic identity.

“I feel for those from both churches who have expressed feelings about how things used to be,” said Mizuki.

A Gradual Merge

A few years ago, both churches formed a joint choir and friendships blossomed across the pews.

“We’re all the same,” said George Seko of Chatsworth. West Valley was reluctant because they felt some older Chatsworth members held onto World War II beliefs that Japan was the enemy. In August, Mizuki recognized a West Valley pastor Rev. Ed McRae was all about race and tolerance.

“God opens mighty doors on small hinges,” said McRae.

A Space of Their Own

“I think people are getting adjusted,” said Mizuki. “I think they are looking forward not trying to look at the past.”

West Valley was chartered in 1987 after JA families from the San Fernando Holiness Church in Pacoima decided to start their own church in the West San Fernando Valley. Over the years, its members have found unique ways to personalize their religion.

During sermons, Mizuki would often insert illustrations about the JA experience — war and internment. He would mix in words like *gaman* without having to explain its meaning. Sometimes they would substitute the traditional communion ceremony with a Japanese tea ceremony, complete with *matagi*.

In 2001, West Valley member Susie Hirasuna painted a nativity scene with a twist — Mary depicted as a woman kneeling on tatami next to baby Jesus, who looks distinctly Asian.

A few years ago, both churches worked together and friendships blossomed across the pews. The two churches now hold services together four Sundays a year. A year later Chatsworth made a formal proposal to merge with West Valley, so both churches tried to only 500 residents and over the years, they have been working on a new joint venture and met regularly on a trial basis starting in July 2006.

It was awkward at first for members of both churches who were used to their own ways. Sunday services are usually followed with refreshments and West Valley members would sit with their own groups without interacting with Chatsworth members.

“We had to encourage them to mingle,” said Mizuki.

“We realize we have our differences,” said Mizuki. “Chatsworth is a community church that is interested in local city events. West Valley is active in the JA community… That’s the reality,” said Shigekuni. “But we have more in common than we think.”

Both churches have been making an effort to recognize each other’s history. Every Christmas, Fuyo Arimoto and May Kimura make and sell cards with Japanese motifs. Many of the buyers are from the Chatsworth church.

For Veterans Day, both JA and white veterans told their war stories to the united congregation.

“It’s wonderful because we’re friends with the other church. I thought it would be a benefit to grow new programs,” said Lila Shepler, a Chatsworth church member since 1931. Back then Chatsworth was home to many West Valley members felt that their JA church was their niche and their own community space, said Mizuki.
For about seven months in 1942, racing stopped at Santa Anita. Horses were moved out and as many as 19,348 JAs were moved into the former Los Angeles police commissioner and current executive director of the California Forensic Science Institute at Cal State University, Los Angeles. Ochi was about four years old when her family lived at the races.

"They sort of whitewashed the manure," she said about the hastily built housing.

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National
RENO, Nevada
Nov. 24—"Making a Difference in Our Communities" the NCWNP-CC-PSW JACL Tri-District Conference; Circus-Circus Hotel and Casino; registration fee $100, youth group $50 (early registration deadline is Sept 30); hotel rooms are $89.99/night with a deadline of Oct 13; events include an award luncheon, workshops, bowling, mixers, etc. Info: Thaya Mune Craig, 916/652-0093 or thaya@vtr.net.

East
NEW HOPE, Pennsylvania

TOWSON, Maryland
Sat., Oct. 20—Performance, The Four Seasons; 8 p.m.; Stephens Hall Theatre; the changing cycle of the seasons is conveyed through traditional dances and enhancing musical scores; $15/general admission, $12/seniors and students, $10/Asian Arts and Culture Center members, 875 York St.; Towson University; students; tickets, 410/704-2787 or www.towson.edu/centerforthearts.
Info: 410/704-2807 or www.towson.edu/asianarts.

Midwest
CHICAGO
Wed., Oct. 17—Public listening session are discussed and develop a grant program to preserve WWII internment camps as historic sites; 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Japanese American Service Committee, 4427 N. Clark St.; the NPS seeks public dialogue as a means of creating the most comprehensive program and hopes to engage the public in open conversation about the future preservation of internment camps. Info: William Yoshino, 773/728-7170 or midwest@jacl.org.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST
PORTLAND
Through Jan. 6—Exhibit, "Window on a Community: Nikkei Farmers of the Hood River Area"; Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 121 NW 2nd Ave.; Tues-Sat. 11-3 p.m., Sun. noon-3 p.m.; $5/general admission, free to ONLC members. Info: ONLC, 503/224-1458.

Northern California
BERKELEY
Oct. 17-Nov. 25—Play, "after the quake"; Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 2025 Addison St.; adapted from Haruki Murakami’s book of the same name; tickets begin at $27. Info and tickets: 510/667-2949, 888-4-BRT-ITIX or berkleyrep.org.

SEATTLE
Sat., Oct. 10—Genealogy Workshop: Finding Your Roots; 7-30 p.m.; Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 845 S. Beretania St.; $50 members, $60/non-members, includes a manual, lunch and refreshments; registration recommened by Oct. 1. Info: www.jchc.com, info@jchc.com or 808/945-7633.

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- Kyoto: Kinkakuji Temple "Golden Pavilion", Helan Shrine, Kiyoizumi Temple
- Himeji & Inuyama: Himeji Castle, Inuyama Castle, Meiiji-mura Open Air Museum
- Hakone & Shizukuwa: Tsumago, Waki-Honjin Okaya, Cruise Holland America, Owasudani Valley
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Civil rights groups, including JACL, say they will continue to work to restore habeas corpus.

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The Senate narrowly rejected legislation Sept. 19 that would have given military detainees the right to protest their detention in federal court.

The 56-43 vote fell four shy of the 60 votes needed to cut off debate on the bill, co-sponsored by Sens. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Arlen Specter, R-Pa. It was a blow for human rights groups that say a current ban on habeas corpus petitions could lead to the indefinite detention of individuals wrongfully suspected of terrorism.

President Bush and conservative Republicans countered that the ban, enacted last year, was necessary to stem the tide of legal protests flooding civilian courts.

The JACL, although disappointed with the measure’s failure, pledged to work to restore habeas corpus and raise awareness of the injustice done when one is held indefinitely without access to the courts.

“We’re sliding back into 1942,” said Larry Oda, JACL’s national president. “Our rights are being eroded.”

While we are saddened by the vote … the JACL was happy to note the majority of the Senate voted for cloture,” said National Director Floyd Mori. “This indicates there is bi-partisan support to restore the Great Writ of habeas corpus and with it, restoration of a basic tenet in the Constitution.”

In 2006, Congress passed and Bush signed into law the Military Commissions Act, which established a military-run tribunal system for prosecuting enemy combatants. The provision barring habeas corpus petitions means that only detainees selected for trial are able to confront charges against them, leaving most military detainees in custody without a chance to plead their case.

“We understand why there needs to be a military-run system,” said Fredrickson, director of the ACLU Washington Legislative Office. “The ACLU has worked diligently, leading a coalition of support for the restoration of habeas corpus. That tireless work is beginning to pay off and will be vindicated once habeas is restored.”

Henry was the only one who tested positive.

“My reaction was pretty calm. I felt very disconnected,” said Henry. Although he hasn’t come around to telling his parents about his HIV-positive status, all of his closest friends know. He’s also started his own blog to deal with the plethora of emotions that often surround this disease.

Henry and William are largely asymptomatic right now. They are living the typical lives of college students. Although William has cut down the number of classes he is taking at Berkeley, he hopes to eventually raise a family and attend law school. William plans to further his education, eventually entering the public health field.

Both have now introduced their stories through the HIV Youth Project, a very public coming out ceremony about their HIV-positive status. They hope that by telling their own stories others will feel a sense of comfort and security about disclosing their own status.

“We hope to create a community and open up a dialogue. That you don’t have to feel shameful. It’s an acknowledgment that there are others like you,” said Henry.

“This site is as much for me as it is for APA youth,” said William. “It’s a site run for youth by youth.”

For more information: www.hivyouthproject.org

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