SPRING CAMPAIGN
Yours, Mine and Ours

By Roberta Barton

I love my P.C. How about you? The Pacific Citizen belongs to all of us. It’s yours, mine and ours — and it deserves our support.

The Spring Campaign is a critical opportunity to show our support with meaningful financial contributions that will keep the Pacific Citizen going strong.

I have had the honor of meeting many detainees over the past few years who have become some of my most treasured friends. One of them shared a comment about the incarceration experience that has resonated with me ever since. “It’s not just a Japanese story,” he emphasized. “It’s an AMERICAN story!”

The same can be said of the P.C. This publication was born at a time when millions of immigrants streamed into America in search of the American dream — life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

And as we all know, those precious American principles continue to need our protection today. The Pacific Citizen offers a loud and strong voice in the fight to protect civil liberties at home and abroad. It accomplishes this noble mission through its award-winning coverage of the Pacific Citizen.

No entity is devoid of periodic upheaval or growing pains. This past year has been an especially challenging time for the Pacific Citizen and its small, but undeniably dedicated, staff. Undoubtedly there will be more changes around the corner as the publication continues to evolve at the crossroads of tradition and technology.

However, one thing that must not change is your commitment to the Pacific Citizen.

So, here are a few action items for everyone who reads this column:

First, make a contribution to the Spring Campaign; second, share this issue of the Pacific Citizen with your family or pass it on to a friend, neighbor, educator, colleague or community member and urge them to consider joining JACL or subscribing to the Pacific Citizen — even if he/she is not Japanese. And please, feel free to share my friend’s enlightening and powerful words of wisdom: The Pacific Citizen tells an American story, and that story is yours, mine and ours.

Roberta Barton is a Pacific Citizen Editorial Board member and vice governor of the Central California District Council JACL.

NIKKEI VOICE
‘THE RED KIMONO’
Captures the Tragedy of Internment and the Larger Context of Racial Injustice

By Gil Asakawa

For a long time, there were painfully few novels that were about the experience of Japanese Americans who were put into concentration camps during World War II. “Farewell to Manzanar,” written by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston and published in 1973, stood alone, unless you counted the powerful post-war story of John Okada’s 1957 classic “No-No Boy.”

In recent years, there have been more fictional works set during internment, most notably David Guterson’s “Snow Falling on Cedars” but also Julie Otsuka’s “When the Emperor Was Divine,” Rahna Reiko Rizzuto’s “Why She Left Us,” K. P. Kollenborn’s “Eyes Behind Belligerence” and the children’s book “Baseball Saved Us” by Ken Mochizuki and Dom Lee.

And now, there’s “The Red Kimono,” a fine novel by Jan Morrill and published by the University of Arkansas Press.

How about you?
A MOTHER’S TAKE

A Mother’s Love Redefined

By Marsha Aizumi

When I was young, I loved my parents so much that my friends often said I would never recover if they died. Today, my parents are gone, but they are still a part of my life. Love is enduring. I fell in love for the first time at the age of 16. I was rejected. I stayed in my room, listening to sad songs for days. Love sometimes hurts. At 24, I then met the man I would marry. And after 40 years together, he continues to be the one who nurtures both my heart and my dreams. All of these people and moments, I believe, taught me what true love really is. But, now I realize that love could be all those things and so much more.

In 2008, when my child announced that she wanted to transition to be a man, I was led on a journey to truly understand the meaning of this four-letter word. I searched within myself and asked if I could take a leap of faith to stand by my transgender son, Aiden. Could I let go of my daughter and all she meant to me? Could I embrace this new son and still keep the memory of my daughter alive? These were questions that I thought about late at night when the house was quiet and I lay in bed without answers. Eventually, I decided that my son would remain the same person on the inside. I embraced both parts of my son: the past and the present. I understood my commitment to my child was not just about those times of joy and laughter — it was also about moments where fear and uncertainty hung in the air. I stepped into the unknown, trusting that my heart would help me navigate this terrifying new path.

My decision brought even more into my life. Rather than focusing on what others would think about me as a mother (possibly judging me harshly), I decided to concentrate on the gifts that would come my way. I saw my younger son, Stefen, stand by his older sister as she transitioned into his older brother. My respect for Stefen grew more and more as I saw the depth of his devotion and acceptance of Aiden.

Throughout his compassion and steadfast loyalty, Stefen, a young man of very few words, made a statement about his commitment to his brother. Love is sometimes quiet and without fanfare.

When Aiden transitioned to be male, he said, “I may never find a girl who will accept me as a transgender man, but I will risk living life alone to be the person who has always lived inside of me.” It made me sad to hear those words because my dream was always that my children find someone that would adore them and end up being their life partner. Although Aiden was willing to give up on his dream of finding someone who would accept him as a transgender man, I am so grateful for his willingness to come out to the world.

Without this amazing experience, I would not have recognized the different ways that love can be expressed.

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FOR THE RECORD

Just Whose America Is This?

By John Tateishi

Whenever I hear discussions about immigration reform — which is currently the case in Washington — it strikes me that it’s as much about racial politics as it is about immigration policy. Nowadays, it’s virtually impossible to separate racial politics from what immigration policy is really about because inevitably we get into undocumented immigrants and the myths and truths about their presence in this country.

And if you talk about what most people refer to as illegal immigrants, the focus always — and I mean always — shifts south of the border. And when we get into that discussion, we lead ourselves into a quagmire so complex and racially charged that it’s impossible to separate the issue of race from the facts about immigration policy.

It wasn’t always like this. There was a time when the country hardly took notice when Congress considered immigration reform because the issues were more economically based than focused on racial categories. Immigration reform used to be about adjusting the numbers from Europe to encourage immigration as a way to tweak our economic growth, for which immigrants have always been a driving force.

Nowadays, however, there is a preoccupation on so-called “illegal” immigrants whenever discussions about immigration take place, and that often distorts immigration policy issues. Something like the Dream Act evokes strong reactions because its opponents in the stangest of ways don’t want children of undocumented workers to have the right of citizenship, even though many have spent their entire lives here in this country.

It used to be that the path to naturalization was always open to newcomers because it was viewed as accepting the responsibilities of citizenship in this country, which includes loyalty to the United States.

But it’s no longer only about loyalty and wanting to belong. As we witness the browning of America, as we become more aware of our diversity as a nation, it raises the question: What does it mean to be an American? And just whose America is this?

What does it mean to be an American? And just whose America is this?

Does someone who’s not white and who speaks English with an accent have the right to claim him- or herself an American? And if you’re born and raised here, does that make you a better American?

There’s no easy answer, though the answer may seem obvious. When we criticize unfair policies, we are often told, “Go back to where you came from,” something never directed at white social critics. It’s obviously meant as an explicit rejection of anyone who’s not white as being a legitimate American. The obvious point is that, to the person who tells us that, if you’re not white, you’re an assumed foreigner, and even if you are a citizen, you’re not as good an American because you’re not white like the speaker.

But my question is, does your skin color make you more American than I am? Or is it that you feel yourself a better American because you’re white or because you don’t speak with an accent? If so, is it fair then for me to call you a racist? Maybe. Ignorant yes, and definitely stupid, but in some cases, racist is perhaps a stretch. In others, it definitely is not.

I’ve met my share of racists in my days working for the JACL, but most who, in varying degrees, believe in their own superiority because of their skin color haven’t been

>> See AMERICA on page 16
JACL Board Forecasts Year-End Budget Deficit

By Nalea J. Ko
Reporter

SAN FRANCISCO — As the Pacific Citizen’s revenues and membership dollars continue to decline, the JACL national board’s secretary/treasurer told board members at a recent meeting to expect a year-end budget deficit of $17,000.

JACL National Secretary/Treasurer Matthew Farrells told the board at its April 27 meeting at the national headquarters in San Francisco, Calif., that the organization’s membership revenues are decreasing and the P.C.’s fundraising and grants revenues are stagnant. But the national JACL’s revenues from grants and fundraising, he says, are forecasted to exceed membership revenues.

The P.C. was projected to raise $45,600 in revenues. As of Feb. 28, according to the unaudited financial statements, the P.C. generated $32,876 in revenues, underperforming by about 28 percent.

“Since we have monthly forecasts through the year end, we’re able to put in the actuals and then calculate the year-end outlook. So, I would say we’re at green,” Farrells said about the organization’s overall financial state. “We’re projecting both revenues and expenditures to come in slightly below budget for this year. We’re forecasting a $17,000 deficit at year-end, relative to a $21,000 deficit within the approved budget, so we’re actually closing that deficit at this point in time.”

Membership income, as of Feb. 28, was $128,994. The 2012 approved budget projected $693,059 in membership revenues for the year. That’s down from $721,204 in membership revenues budgeted in 2012.

“The reason why membership revenue continues to decline is based on certain factors, including the number of members each year, as well as the cost of each member, and the type of membership those members are at is all factored into this total revenue number,” Farrells said.

JACL National Director David Lin said for the first time this year the organization is generating monthly financial forecasts to give a clearer understanding of the JACL’s financial state.

“I think what I’d like to see is we get this organization into some sort of financial discipline,” Lin said. “Hopefully, this provides an early warning system for us, right? In March and April, if we start seeing the trend going south, then we can react on that quickly as opposed to come in September [we] realize the revenues aren’t coming in, expenses are over budget — it will be too late to do anything.”

Expenditures to date have exceeded the budgeted amount by 18 percent. As of Feb. 28, the JACL’s total actual revenues are $260,553, with expenditures at $301,333.

“I would consider our position to be stable. We had a strong balance sheet. Our budget comparisons are on track, and our year-end outlook is consistent with budget,” Farrells said. “I think the board agrees that we want to focus on the revenue side of our operations versus expense side. So there’s continued focus on those opportunities. Grants/fundraising is a key theme.”

Lin echoed that sentiment.

“This is neither good or bad in a sense of the membership revenue continuing to decline,” Lin said. “But I think the key take away is that if we think our strategy is to diversify the revenue base, I think it works in the sense that we see the uptick of funds from grants and fundraising.”

The JACL National Board also discussed in executive session the status of hiring a permanent executive editor at the P.C.

The P.C. has been short-staffed since June 22 of last year when the former executive editor, Caroline Ayagi-Stom, resigned. Former assistant editor Lynda Lin also resigned in 2012. Both positions have not been filled with permanent staff. Allison Haramoto was contracted on Sept. 25 as the P.C.’s interim executive editor. She is one of several candidates being considered for the executive editor position.

“We’re recommending the approval to move forward to start the hiring process with our selected candidate. David (Lin), myself and Carol (Kawamoto) will be doing that,” said Miko Sawamura, JACL vp of general operations, who did not elaborate on the selected candidate.

Chip Larouche, JACL vp of planning and development, made a motion to authorize the JACL personnel committee to continue “the P.C. editor search.” Jeff Moy, the National Youth/Student Council chair, seconded that motion. The board voted to carry the motion.

National JACL funding for the assistant editor position was previously cut along with the JACLPacific Southwest Regional director position. The assistant editor position remains vacant despite last year’s delegate vote at the national convention to reinstate funding for that position. Candidates for that position have not been solicited.

In other business, Floyd Mori, JACL national director emeritus and convention committee chair, provided the board with an update on the July 24-26 national convention that will be held in Washington, D.C. Farrells said the convention is projected to profit $80,000.

The next JACL national board meeting will be held at the convention on July 24 in Washington, D.C.
The JACL National Board Meeting

The JACL National Board met on April 27 at its headquarters in San Francisco, Calif.

Former JACL national presidents pose with the current national president as JACL Vice President of General Operations Miko Sawamura snaps a photo.

JACL National President David Lin asks Secretary/Treasurer Matthew Farrells about the budget.

JACL National Director Emeritus Floyd Mori gave an update on the planning of the national convention.

Norman Y. Mineta Fellow Jason Hata and Daniel K. Inouye Fellow Amy Watanabe address the board.
Celebrate Redress at the JACL 2013 Convention

By Floyd Mori
JACL 2013 Convention Chair

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The JACL Convention is an opportunity to celebrate the 25-year anniversary of the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (the Redress bill). The convention will be held from Wednesday, July 24–Friday, July 26, at the Renaissance Hotel, located at 999 Ninth St. NW.

After the Imperial Navy of Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, life changed dramatically for Japanese Americans who were immediately looked upon as the enemy and regarded as noncitizens. Against the advice of some few leaders, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, which gave authority to the military commander to remove any people from a designated area. It was only executed against people of Japanese descent living on the West Coast. It was not implemented in Hawaii, where it was decried by the military commander to be unnecessary.

Japanese Americans were not protected by the Constitution, and there was no justice, as men, women and children who had done no wrong were forced to leave their homes to be incarcerated in barren, wire-enclosed camps in desolate regions of the country. Before the 10 camps were ready, people were housed in temporary detention centers at fairgrounds and racetracks. Allowed only to take what they could carry, families were required to abandon their homes, friends, pets, farms, businesses and most of their earthly possessions. Most people remained in the camps until the war ended in 1945. They were given a train ride or bus ticket and $25 as they left. Except for a fortunate few whose belongings were cared for by trusted friends, those who returned to the West Coast generally found that stored items had been stolen or ruined in their absence. Life was difficult.

The Japanese American Citizens League voted at its National Convention in Salt Lake City in 1978 to earnestly seek Redress for the victims who were incarcerated during World War II in what have been called “America’s Concentration Camps.” Years earlier in 1970, Edison Uno, a longtime activist within the JACL and a lecturer at San Francisco State University, proposed a Redress resolution at the biennial convention of the JACL. The resolution passed, but not a lot of progress was seen, except for the rescinding of EO 9066 on Feb. 19, 1976, by President Gerald R. Ford. One of the main goals of the Redress issue was to ensure that no one would ever have to again suffer the shame and indignity of being rejected and locked up unjustly by their own government.

The Redress effort took a new focus in 1978. John Tateishi was appointed as the National JACL Redress Chair. JACL leaders met with Japanese American members of Congress. Sen. Daniel Inouye suggested the Commission route be taken because he said his colleagues in Congress needed to know the stories of the Japanese Americans before they would support Redress. The Commission’s findings indicated that the incarceration was caused by racial prejudice, war hysteria and a lack of competent political leadership at the time.

Although many found it difficult to talk about those years, Japanese Americans began to tell their stories after being silent on the matter for decades. Their children and grandchildren began to hear the stories, with most learning of the experiences for the first time.

Many people within the JACL, including the Legislative Education Committee, which was activated to lobby for Redress, and other groups worked diligently to bring about the passage of the Redress bill, which provided for a presidential apology and monetary reparations for the unjust evacuation and incarceration.

Bill Yoshino, JACL regional director for the Midwest District, was very much involved as he was with the JACL throughout the Redress process. The 2013 Convention will bring together some, including the Hon. Norman Y. Mineta and Tatsutaki, who were at the forefront in the process to gain the passage of the Redress bill.

It is anticipated that others who were also involved in the Redress campaign will be able to participate in the Convention as well. Japanese American members of Congress who were important to securing Redress who have since passed on were Sen. Inouye, Sen. Spark Matsunaga and Congressman Robert Matsui.

All members and friends of the JACL are invited to celebrate Redress in Washington, D.C., by attending the JACL 2013 Convention. For more information on the JACL 2013 Convention, along with registration and sponsorship materials, visit the JACL website at www.jacl.org.
2013 JACL YOUTH DELEGATE CAMPAIGN: Engaging Young Leaders in Decision Making

By Mariko Newton

The JACL’s National Youth/Student Council (NY/SC) recently launched its 2013 Youth Delegate Campaign for the upcoming JACL National Convention in Washington, D.C. This campaign aims to increase the representation and involvement of young leaders at the annual convention by encouraging chapters across the nation to send youth members as their voting delegates.

Young leadership is critical for the future of JACL. Building the capacity of youth as agents of powerful social change will promote the growth and sustainability of the organization. Through this nationwide effort, the NY/SC calls for the full integration of young people into the decision-making process of JACL and is looking to all chapters for their support in this campaign.

“The future of the JACL depends on the decisions made in the present, but that future will be inherited by the young people in the organization,” said Kazuo Uyehara, youth representative for Eastern District Council. “Young people will not only be the next group of core members, they are also the most in touch with the changes and challenges ahead. It is therefore vital that the future leaders of JACL have a voice in the current direction of the organization.”

The NY/SC expects that the Youth Delegate Campaign will serve as a catalyst to stimulate discussion between JACL youth and veteran members about youth engagement in decision making. Our seasoned leaders may be seen as the greatest untapped resource the JACL can offer to young people. With mentorship, guidance and exchange, JACL youth members will be able to help advance the mission and vision of JACL and continue the legacy of promoting social justice and equality for Asian Pacific Americans in our communities.

“The youth members of the JACL provide a unique and diverse perspective on all of the matters that the organization faces,” said Lesli Hamamoto, co-youth representative for Central California District Council. “When the youth voice is heard and considered, the JACL becomes a more inclusive and relevant force in the larger cultural landscape.”

The campaign was initially launched in 2011 at the JACL National Convention in Los Angeles. Our goal for the 2013 campaign is to help sponsor two youth delegates by offering the NY/SC National Convention Youth Travel Scholarships, as well as attract a total of 20 youth delegates to Washington D.C., this year.

“This year’s convention promises to be an exciting and celebratory event, which will allow all generations to come together and celebrate our heritage, history and accomplishments,” said Kelly Honda, co-youth representative for CCDC. “By sending a youth delegate to convention, each participating district and chapter helps to ensure that youth are engaged, and the legacy of JACL and the spirit of the Japanese American community can persevere. I encourage all districts and chapters to make an investment and consider sending a youth delegate to the Washington, D.C., convention in July.”

Mariko Newton is the JACL National Youth Representative. She can be reached at mnewton@jacl.org. Individuals can also communicate with the NY/SC via its Facebook page at JACL Youth.

Southwest Airlines Offers Flight Discount for 2013 JACL Convention Attendees

Southwest Airlines, the official airline of the JACL and the 2013 JACL National Convention in Washington, D.C., which is entitled “Justice for All” (set for July 24-26 at the Renaissance Hotel), is offering a 15% discount to those traveling to/from Baltimore/Washington (BWI), Washington D.C. Dulles (IAD) and Reagan (DCA) airports to/from all scheduled Southwest Airlines service between July 22 and July 30 (blackout date applies on July 28).

Use promotion code “JACL2013” to apply the discount. Visit www.southwest.com/jacl to view the terms and conditions of this offer, and book your travel now.

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JOIN YOUR CREDIT UNION TODAY!
The Tule Lake Committee received a $192,467 grant from the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant program to stabilize and restore the Tule Lake Segregation Center jail (pictured). In all, nearly 18,000 people of Japanese descent were interned at the camp site during World War II.

National Park Service Grants Support Education and Preservation on Tule Lake Segregation Center

By Connie K. Ho

Isao Fujimoto was 7 years old when he and his family were interned at the Tule Lake Segregation Center in 1944. In recollecting some of his memories of his experience there, Fujimoto remembers how the land surrounding Tule Lake was later used to farm horseradish, becoming a major production area in the country — and how ironic that was since horseradish was used to make wasabi and then exported to Japan.

“What struck me about Tule Lake was that there were many ironies and contradictions,” said Fujimoto, who is a professor emeritus at the University of California, Davis, where he continues to teach a course on community development in Japan.

Fujimoto also expressed the importance of addressing specific historical issues and conservation needs related to the Tule Lake Segregation Center.

In April, National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis announced that 10 grants, totaling more than $1.4 million, would be given to preserve and interpret World War II confinement sites of Japanese Americans. The funding from the Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) Grant program can be applied to programs that support the 10 War Relocation Authority Camps that were established in 1942 or to the more than 40 different assembly, isolation and relocation center sites that held internees.

Two projects focusing on the Tule Lake Segregation Center were chosen to receive grant funding from the JACS program, now in its fifth year. To date, more than $11 million has been awarded since Congress created the program in 2006.

In particular, the program’s mission is to teach younger generations on the injustices of the World War II confinement history and to continue to inspire individuals to work toward equal justice under the law.

“The confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II is a dark chapter in our nation’s history,” said Jarvis in a prepared statement. “These grants ensure that their stories will never be forgotten.”

The Tule Lake Committee, a grassroots organization advocating for the site’s preservation, is one of the grant recipients. In the past, the group has organized pilgrimages, beginning in 1974, to the concentration camp site, located in Northern California, just south of the Oregon border.

The committee’s project is called “Restoring the Tule Lake Segregation Center Jail, Phase II,” and it received $192,467 to complete the project. The organization will focus on planning and compliance activities needed to stabilize and restore the Tule Lake Segregation Center jail. Project activities include the development of design documents and cost estimates, an environmental assessment, historic preservation compliance and preparation of a construction bid.

Phase I of the project was an architecture study called the “Historic Structures Report” that is mandatory for all
Another project selected is a traveling exhibit to support the preservation and education effort at Tule Lake. A website will also be created to include details of the museum. With Tule Lake, it is important to explain why people were sent there and why it was a segregation center. And I think there’s a lot of confusion — and I think it needs to be dealt with in a very broad, honest way. To get a clear picture, it is also good to understand how people reacted to being imprisoned — there are people getting imprisoned without any kind of trial, and there were several ways that people reacted.

Several organizations are staunch supporters of the funding to provide for the preservation and education of the Japanese American confinement sites. The Japanese American Citizens League is one of these organizations. According to National Director Priscilla Ouchida, the JAACL is working tirelessly to make sure that there is continued funding available for education and restoration.

"JAACL is a strong supporter of the preservation of all of the confinement sites, and we annually seek funding," said Ouchida of the Washington, D.C.-based organization. "Every single year, we meet with congressional members and the appropriations committee in support of continued funding for the confinement sites grant program — this is our No. 1 priority every year."

For many Japanese Americans, the impact of Tule Lake is influenced by the eras of the pre- and post-loyalty questionnaire, as well as how the loyalty questionnaire of Tule Lake intersects with individuals’ constitutional rights. Regarding the loyalty questionnaire, the experience of those who signed “yes” was very different from those who signed “no” if an individual was originally from Sacramento. If an individual was originally from another area or another camp and signed “no,” then the person was probably a “resister” and was then placed into Tule Lake when it became a segregation camp.

"I think there is real value to a traveling exhibit that provides information on the Tule Lake Segregation Center because it’s really about the constitutional issue," said Ouchida, whose mother’s family and father’s family were incarcerated at Tule Lake. “The whole story has to be told, not just about the segregation center but also the sort of discrimination within the community against those who signed off as loyals.”

The Tule Lake Segregation Center is based in Modoc County, Calif. Toward the end of 1944, this concentration camp jail was built with prisoner labor. The jail replaced the Army stockade and was used to imprison Japanese Americans who were stripped of their U.S. Citizenship in a government denationalization program focused on getting rid of dissidents, turning them into “enemy aliens,” and then deporting them to Japan.
Ventura County JACLers Participate in University Conference

By Anne Chilcott

Camarillo, Calif. — Several Ventura County JACL members took part in California State University Channel Islands’ fifth annual Conference for Social Justice in Education on April 20, where they had the opportunity to share their intimate camp experiences.

JACLers Lily Sugino, George Wakiji and Carol Asari participated in a discussion entitled “From Incarceration to Reparation: Learning Lessons From the Japanese American Experience.”

Sugino recounted her vivid recollection of being sent to the Santa Anita racetrack in Arcadia, Calif., which served as a holding place for Japanese Americans and their families while barracks were being hastily built across the country — any place away from the West Coast — to house the more than 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly removed from their homes and interned in American concentration camps during World War II. Sugino’s family stayed temporarily in a horse stable, and she remembered helping her family fill sacks with straw in order to make mattresses for their beds.

For George Wakiji, he shared with the audience his memory of finding out that his brother-in-law in San Diego, Calif., was rounded up quickly by the US. government because he was on the FBI’s “A” list, which meant he was among the most likely to be consorting with the enemy.

His brother-in-law was Harry Kajihara, Ventura County JACL member and former national JACL president, who was taken by surprise as the audience turned around to get a look at history in the flesh. For attendees, many of whom were students, the conference was the first time they had heard personal accounts from this period of American history.

During Asari’s slide presentation, which showed a picture of President Reagan signing the historic bill, Asari pointed out to the audience that one of the people pictured in the photo was actually present in the room. Harry Kajihara, Ventura County JACL member and former national JACL president, was taken by surprise as the audience turned around to get a look at history in the flesh.

The conference also hosted a lunch, and additional panel discussions were held that featured a variety of local nonprofit organizations in Ventura County that are working to improve the lives of minorities and the poor in the area.

Many thanks to Asari, who helped organize the breakout discussion on the Japanese American experience.

JACL Ventura County members also attended the conference, including (from left) Aiko O. King and Harry and Janet Kajihara. Harry Kajihara, former national JACL president, witnessed the signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 by President Ronald Reagan.

The Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive and Visitor Center Is Dedicated in Arkansas

MCGEHEE, ARK. — Actor George Takei spoke quietly and thoughtfully as he dedicated the Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive and Visitor Center, which is a Japanese American internment museum and interpretive center. The museum and the exhibit “Against Their Will: The Japanese American Experience in World War II Arkansas” were commemorated through two ceremonies in Desha County on April 16.

The museum is located at the McGehee’s historic train depot at 100 S. Railroad St. and will serve as the Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive and Visitor Center. The dedication was sponsored by the McGehee Industrial Development Foundation, and the unveiling of outdoor exhibits developed through Arkansas State University at the Rohwer Relocation Center followed.

Both projects were initiated through grants from the Japanese American Confinement Sites Program at the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

“This is a very important time for America and this community,” said Takei, who portrayed Hikaru Sulu on the original “Star Trek” TV series and motion picture. “This museum was built as a place where people could connect with each other. Today, it transports us in time and space to another time for America. It has resonances that are profoundly important.”

In 1942, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the federal government forced Japanese American citizens to leave the West Coast and imprisoned them for the duration of the war at 10 “relocation centers,” mostly in western states, with two in Arkansas — at Rohwer, just north of McGehee, and at Jerome, just south of McGehee. These were the temporary homes for more than 17,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans. Takei was interned as a young boy with his family at Rohwer.

“I was too innocent to understand what that experience meant,” continued Takei. “To say my parents, it was intimidating and infuriating. I could see the barbed wire fence outside my tarpaper-barracked schoolhouse window, as I would say, ‘with liberty and justice for all.’ My father said, ‘Our democracy is a people’s democracy and can be as good as people are.’”

The outdoor interpretive exhibits at the Rohwer site include a series of kiosks and wayside panels, with audio components narrated by Takei. The exhibits provide a glimpse into the lives of Japanese Americans once interned there. The exhibits will be maintained by Desha County.

A National Historic Landmark, the Rohwer site today includes only the Japanese American cemetery and the remains of the camp’s hospital smokestack. Preservation work at the cemetery is expected to begin later this spring under the leadership of the University of Arkansas-Little Rock.

“This is a painful chapter in our nation’s history that must not be forgotten,” said Dr. Ruth Hawkins, director of Arkansas Heritage Sites at ASU. “Added Takei: “To be an American citizen is something very important that too many people take too lightly. We must know what it means to be an American citizen and how precious our rights are. I value my citizenship profoundly. That is represented by the stories told by this museum. It tells the story of American democracy and it is profoundly important . . . gravely important.”

Actor George Takei speaks at the dedication ceremony for the Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive and Visitor Center.
First Confirmed Japanese Tsunami Debris Found in California

CRESSENT CITY, CALIF. — A barnacle-covered fishing boat that washed ashore this month in Crescent City, Calif., has been confirmed as the first debris from the 2011 tsunami in Japan to reach California shores.

The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration confirmed the boat’s origin on April 25 with help from the Japanese consulate in San Francisco, the Del Norte Trippicate reported.

In total, 27 items from among more than 1,600 reports of debris have now been firmly traced back to the tsunami, NOAA’s spokesperson Keeley Belva said. The confirmed items include a small boat found in Hawaii waters, large docks that have washed ashore in Washington state and Oregon and a motorcycle that washed ashore off the coast of British Columbia.

The 20-foot (6.1-meter) vessel that landed in Crescent City on April 7 belongs to the marine sciences program at the Takata High School in the city of Rikuzentakata.

Lori Dengler, a geologist with Humboldt State University, posted photos of the boat to Rikuzentakata’s Facebook page after translating the vessel’s handwritten characters with the help of a Humboldt State librarian, according to the Trippicate.

The boat was marked “Takata High School” and also had characters for “Rikuzentakata.”

Dengler, who had traveled to Rikuzentakata immediately after the 2011 tsunami, said the city’s global public relations officer, Amy Miller, tracked down the school and found a teacher who recognized the boat within hours of the photos being posted.

“Everything that was lost, we just never expected to find again,” Miller told the Trippicate earlier this month. Hundred’s of the city’s residents died in the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and only a handful of buildings were left standing. “That something made it across the Pacific and landed practically on your doorstep is one of those ‘you can’t make this up’ moments. Right now, everyone is in sort of a giddy state of shock.”

A soccer ball found on an Alaska island with a student’s name on it has also been traced to Rikuzentakata.

But distinguishing everyday trash from tsunami debris has proved difficult in most other cases. The Japanese government estimated that 1.5 million tons of debris was floating in the ocean immediately after the disaster.

Items that are confirmed as having come from the tsunami, like the soccer ball and boat, tend to have unique markings.

What’s next for the boat is not clear. Miller told the Trippicate that the high school would like to have it back.

“Having it back I know would be incredibly meaningful only because the school lost so much — the city lost so much,” she said. — Associated Press

Takuma Sato Becomes First Japanese Driver to Win an IndyCar Race

LONG BEACH, CALIF. — Takuma Sato became the first Japanese driver to win an IndyCar race in the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on April 19.

The win came in Sato’s 52nd career start and was the first for A. J. Foyt Racing since Aironi Dare won Kansas in 2002. The victory on the temporary street course through Long Beach was a huge accomplishment for the organization.

“It was an easy win,” said Sato, who leapt into the arms of his crew members in Victory Lane. He said one of his first post-race duties was to call Foyt.

“I hate it [that] Dad is not here,” team manager Larry Foyt said. “But I don’t think I’ve ever seen a perfect drive, and (Sato) drove a perfect race.”

The win pushed Sato to second in the IndyCar standings and was redemption for the Honda driver. Probably best known for crashing on the final lap of last year’s Indianapolis 500 while driving for Bobby Rahal, Sato also had disappointment two races earlier when he was headed to a podium finish at Long Beach, and Ryan Hunter-Reay spun him on the final lap.

But at the Toyota Grand Prix, Sato held off Graham Rahal for the win. — Associated Press

LOVE >> continued from page 3

of a wife and family, he never stopped believing in the possibility. On Nov. 8, he will marry his best friend, Mary. Love can be courageous and frightening at the same time.

And finally this journey has brought gifts to my husband, Tad, showing me how far love could reach.

I needed him as he grieved for the loss of his daughter. I felt his sadness when he struggled to find how he could transform his relationship with the little girl he adored to a new relationship with a son.

He had no clue how to begin.

For a time, he was so lost. Through tears in his eyes, he has shared with others that he loved his daughter so much. But he loves, and is proud of, his son even more. Letting go of his daughter has allowed Tad to connect more profoundly with his son.

Today, Aiden says he is closer to his dad than ever before. Love has manifested to this higher level.

I look back on how I used to define love. Without this amazing experience, I would not have recognized the different ways that love can be expressed. Risking me what love looks like, I saw it looks like standing with our son, so he would not have to stand alone.

And in that decision, we discovered how much more love could be.

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

Asian and Pacific Americans account for more than five percent of the U.S. population — more than 17 million people — and those numbers are growing. Their ancestral roots represent more than 50 percent of the world, extending from East Asia, and from South Asia to the Pacific Islands and Polynesia.

The exhibition will next open at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in September, before continuing on a 13-city national tour. “I Want the Wide American Earth” was created by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service; it is supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

“I Want the Wide American Earth” tells the rich and complex stories of the very first Asian immigrants, including their participation in key moments in American history: Asian immigrants panned in the Gold Rush, hammered ties in the Transcontinental Railroad, fought on both sides of the Civil War and helped build the nation’s agricultural system.

Through the decades, Asian immigrants have struggled against legal exclusion, civil rights violations and unlawful detention — including 120,000 individuals of Japanese descent who were interned during World War II. Since the 1960s, new communities — pan-Asian, Pacific Islander and cross-cultural in makeup — have blossomed.

The exhibition is complemented by an e-book and also features a mobile tour app, which includes interviews with authors Maxine Hong Kingston and Monique Truong, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center Director Conrad Ng, activist Deepa Iyer and U.S. retired Major Gen. Antonios Taguba.

The National Museum of American History collects, preserves and displays American heritage in the areas of social, political, cultural, scientific and military history. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For additional information on the exhibition, visit visit www.sites.si.edu/exhibitions/exhibits/asianPacificAmericans/index.htm.

The exhibition commemorates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

APAS IN THE NEWS

Senate Confirms Derrick Kahala Watson to the U.S. District Court in Hawaii

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Senate on April 18 confirmed the appointment of Derrick Kahala Watson to the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii.

Watson is now the sole person of Native Hawaiian descent serving as an Article III judge and only the fourth in U.S. history. Rep. Judy Chu (D-Pasadena), chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, released the following statement: “This decision continues a significant trend of working to ensure that our federal judiciary reflects the diversity of the American people. Judge Watson is a strong addition to the federal bench and will surely be a great public servant for the people of Hawaii. Watson most recently served as the chief of the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Hawaii.

Farmer/author David Mas Masumoto Appointed to National Council on the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Noted farmer/author David Mas Masumoto has been appointed to the National Council on the Arts. Masumoto, who resides in Del Rey, Calif., is an organic peach and grape farmer, as well as the author of several books; his latest offering, “The Perfect Peach: Recipes and Stories From the Masumoto Family Farm” will be published in June.

Masumoto was nominated by President Barack Obama in June 2012, took the oath of office in February and attended his first meeting in March. His six-year term expires in September 2018.

The National Council on the Arts, the advisory body to the National Endowment for the Arts, convenes three times a year to vote on funding recommendations for grants and recommends to the president nominees for the National Medal of Arts.

Jenny Yang Confirmed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Senate has confirmed President Obama’s nomination of Jenny Yang as a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Yang is a partner in the class-action law firm Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll. Yang also is the vice chair of the board of directors for the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center.

In a statement, Yang said, “I am honored that President Obama nominated me and the Senate confirmed me to serve as a commissioner of the EEOC. It will be a privilege to work with my colleagues at the EEOC to ensure equal opportunity for all.”

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person’s race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information.
IN HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT, MULTITALENTED WOOLFORD’S ‘THE HAUMANA’ PREMIERES AT THE LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL.

By Allison Haramoto

Keo Woolford is a man of many talents. As a successful actor-singer-writer-producer-director and hula dancer, the Hawaii-born performer’s next stop is Los Angeles, where his directorial debut, “The Haumana,” will make its world premiere at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, which runs through May 12.

“The Haumana” chronicles the challenges of an unlikely candidate who is appointed as the new “kumu” (master teacher) of a high school boys’ hula class. The film is also nominated for a Grand Jury Award in the Narrative Award category.

While in Los Angeles, Woolford took the time to speak with the Pacific Citizen on his career accomplishments.

Congratulations on ‘The Haumana.’

As your directorial debut, how did this project come about?

Keo Woolford: The idea for the film stems from my one-man show, “I Land,” about a man who finds his identity through traditional hula. I lived in London and New York for awhile, and I was surprised to find that the general view and knowledge of hula and the Hawaiian culture was limited to coconut bras and arbitrary hand-flapping. As a hula dancer, I wanted to expose people to a culture that I felt so proud to be a part of. My solo show, and now my feature film, was a way for me to do that.

You also wrote and produced this film. ‘The Haumana’ truly sounds like a labor of love for you.

Woolford: “The Haumana” is a true independent film, a microbudget, community-backed film. I took on many hats during its development and creation. Though I originally wrote the script for me to play the lead, the massive amount of work required my attention on many different levels. I chose to stay in the director’s chair because it was a new and exciting venture for me. It was more important for me to make sure that the project stayed in line with my original vision. It was one of the most challenging and one of the most fulfilling times of my life. Through it all, I had a blast!

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Who are your biggest influences?

Woolford: My gosh, there are so many for so many different reasons. I tend to be drawn to and inspired by people who chose to take risks, commit to excellence and strive to grow and evolve. I also admire people whose work inspires humanity and promotes universal truths in positive ways. This is not a judgment on anything or anyone. It’s just where I am at in my life and what I am attracted to. I believe all things are valid and have their place.

What do you hope audiences take away from your new film?

Woolford: More than anything, I would love people to be entertained. And through watching the film, perhaps they will learn a little bit about our culture and about themselves. I would love for people to see that hula is more than just a dance, that Hawaii is more than just a tourist destination and that people are people no matter what they look like or where they are from. Compassion, acceptance, understanding, respect, love. These are some of the values that we learn in hula. These values have no cultural or geographic boundaries. I hope that in a subtle way, this story conveys that as well.

What other projects do you have down the pipeline?

Woolford: I will be doing my best to promote “The Haumana,” but I also have a couple of projects I’m collaborating on as well as a new screenplay I would love to direct myself. Other than that, I have a little recurring role on (CBS) “Hawaii Five-O,” and as long as they keep me alive, I’ll hopefully be doing more of that as well.

How do you define success?

Woolford: Doing what you love and loving what you do. To be happy with who you are, grateful for what you have yet to continue to grow and evolve.

For more information on ‘The Haumana’ and the L.A. Asian Pacific Film Fest, visit laapffestpro.com/films/detail/the_haumana_2013.
Congressional Gold Medal Traveling Exhibit

Los Angeles, CA
May 4–June 9
Japanese American National Museum
100 N. Central Ave.

The traveling exhibit “American Heroes: Japanese American World War II Nisei Soldiers and the Congressional Gold Medal” honors veterans who served in the 442nd RCT, the 100th Battalion and the MIS during WWII. The L.A. exhibit was organized thanks to the Southern California Community Committee for the American Heroes, the 100/442nd Veterans Assn., Go for Broke, JACL, JAMN, the Military Intelligence Service Veterans Association of Southern California and the Veterans Memorial Court Alliance.


>>EDC

The Fourth Annual AAPI Mental Health Forum
BOSTON, MA
May 17, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Simmons College
300 Fenway

The Fourth Annual AAPI Mental Health Forum will focus on the theme: “Making the Invisible Visible: How Do We Educate, Engage, Empower and Enable Consumers and Their Families?” To register, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/AAP12013.

Info: Call Lisa Colozzo at (617) 626-0235 or email COSlalmoVO

Brazilian Jazz Performance by Emy Tseng
MCLEAN, VA
June 28, 8–7 p.m.
Civic Place Green at the Palladium
1450 Emerson Ave.

Washington, D.C.-based singer Emy Tseng will present a collection of Brazilian songs spanning four decades and eclectic arrangements of standards.

Info: Call (703) 286-9898 or visit www.emyseng.com.

>>NCNWP

The Wakamatsu Farm Festival
PLACERVILLE, CA
May 18, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm
941 Cold Springs Road

Tickets are on sale for the third annual Wakamatsu Farm Festival, which benefits the historic Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm. There will be a petting zoo, organic farm tours, exhibits on bonsai and origami and performances by native American dancers and artists, taiko performers and more.

Info: Call (530) 626-1224 or visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/Wakamatsu.

The Fourth Annual AAPI Tho Wakamatsu Farm Festival

The Fourth Annual AAPI Tho Wakamatsu Farm Festival will be a petting zoo, organic farm tours, exhibits on bonsai and origami and performances by Native American dancers and artists, taiko performers and more.

Info: Call (530) 626-0235 or email COSlalmoVO

The event also includes a silent auction and raffle prize.

Info: Contact Ron Sakano at (510) 686-0782 or Ed Oda at (510) 638-0308.

AAWAA's Exhibit 'Undercurrents and the Quest for Space'
San Francisco, CA
May 2–28
SUMArts Cultural Center
934 Brannan St.

The Asian American Women Artists Assn. and Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center are teaming up to present the exhibit “Undercurrents and the Quest for Space.” The opening reception will be held May 2 from 5–8 p.m. Admission to the exhibit is free.

Info: Call (415) 683-1414 or visit www.somarts.org.

Contra Costa JACL Casino Trip
Brook, CA
May 22
Cach's Creek Casino
14455 California 16

The Contra Costa JACL casino excursion registration is full. But they are accepting waitlist applicants.

Info: Call Mary Ann Furuchichi or Sam Uchihara at (510) 626-8020.

Author Naomi Hirahara will be on hand to talk about her newest book, “Strawberry Yellow,” the fourth novel in her series on Japanese American gardener and unwitting detective Mas Arai.

Info: Call (408) 294-3138 or email publicprograms@jamej.org.

>>PSW

Tanoshii Fun Camp
GARDENA, CA
July 15–19, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute
1964 W. 162nd St.

This year’s Children’s Day celebration is full of fun for children and families. The Tanoshii Fun Camp’s mission is to promote the legacy of Japanese American culture. Enrollment is open to students ages 7–10. There are 50 enrollment spots.

Info: Visit www.tanoshii.com or contact camp director Ray Shibata at tanoshii@comcast.net.

Children’s Day Festival
GARDENA, CA
May 19, 1–4 p.m.
Japanese Cultural Institute
1964 W. 162nd St.

This year’s Children’s Day Festival, held at the James Ito Victory garden. Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta will give the opening remarks.


>>IDC

The 2013 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage will celebrate the acquisition of the root cellar and the restoration of the hospital chimney. There will also be a dedication ceremony of the James Ito Victory garden. Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta will give the opening remarks.


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Japanese American National Museum
100 N. Central Ave.

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OBITUARIES

In Memoriam

Akutagawa, Pearl Tomoko, 98, Torrance, CA; April 13; predeceased by husband, James Susumu; daughters, Joyce Yukiko and Nancy Sumiko Pfy; survived by daughter, Marie (John) Taka; sisters-in-law, Chieko and Fumie Furushima, Kiyo Yoshieka, Itsu Yamada, Jackie (George) Masaki and Fumi; 5 gc; 12 ggc.

Chinen, Betty Kyoko, 84, Gardena, CA; May 4; survived by husband, Yoshio; children, Christine (Chris) Richard and Craig; siblings, Judy (Joseph) Hennessey of Florida and James (Shirley) Nishida; 2 gc.

Chris, Kenneth Ray, 65, Alta Loma, CA; April 23; survived by wife, Michelle; daughter, Jasmine Michelle Ishii; son, John Michael; and sister Jane (John) Balgavy; 2 gc.

Furukawa, Fumiko, 92, North Hollywood, CA; April 20; survived by her daughters, Eileen and Karen (Adolfo) Suarez; son, Larry (Carollie); sister, Kiyo (Hideo) Hikida; sister-in-law, Hisano Kudo; 3 gc.

Furuta, Kyoko, 91, Long Beach, CA; April 21; survived by nephew, Hideo (Fusayo) Yamaoche; close friend, Hatsumi Bullard.

Hasegawa, Hisaya Joe, 94, L.A., CA; April 15; he served in 442nd RCT; predeceased by wife, Setsuko; child, Kiyoko, 81, Long Beach, CA; April 12; predeceased by husband, Frank Koji; brother, Sho Takahashi; sister, Nancy Doi; survived by children, David Gai (Teresa) and Andrew (Terry) Heath; brother, Ray (Thelma) Nakamoto, Beverly Sato and the late James; brother of the late Nobuo Inohara) and Chiemi (Bob) Watanabe; brother-in-law, Hideo (Fusayo) Yamauchi; close friend of Los Angeles, Calif. In 1960, they moved to Pauma Valley, where Yoneo and his brothers purchased Pauma Vista Ranch.

Yoneo was generous, multitalented, athletic, a devoted family man and active in his community. He participated in all of his children's sporting events as a coach, teammate or spectator, served on the Pauma Valley Municipal Water Board and was a distinguished member of the Pauma Valley Lions Club for nearly 52 years. He was also a member of the Farm Bureau, a grower for both Sunkist and Calavo and a benefactor of the Zoological Society of San Diego.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, of Pauma Valley; sons, Brian Kiyoshi (Bich Ly); brother, Hiromi (Kate) Kariya of Murrieta, Calif.; and Rick Kariya of Pauma Valley; daughter, Suzanne (Roland Ramos) Kariya-Ramos of Honolulu; brother, Hiromi (Kate) Kariya of Murrieta, Calif.; and many-in-laws, nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Visitations will be from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. on Saturday, May 4, at Pauma Valley Community Church, 32077 Community Church Drive, Pauma Valley. The funeral service will follow at 11 a.m., with a reception afterwards. Private interment will be at Mt. Hope Cemetery in San Diego. In lieu of flowers or gifts to the family, contributions in Yoneo Karriya's memory may be made to the Pauma Valley Community Church (P.O. Box 945, Pauma Valley, CA 92061) or the Pauma Valley Lions Club (P.O. Box 802, Pauma Valley, CA 92061). Arrangements are by Allair-Comer Mortuary.

Mary Harumi Nakagawa

Mary Harumi Nakagawa (nee Shimojima), March 10, 1914-April 16, 2013. Beloved wife of the late Jack Yoshio. Loving mother of Carol (Bill) Yoshio and Terry (Karen) Nakagawa. Dear sister of the late George (Tom) Shimojima, Rae (Bell M.) Shimada and Herry (Haru) Shimojima. Devoted grandmother of Taylor and Kyle Nakagawa.

Visitation will be on Thursday, May 23, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Chicago, from 5-7 p.m., followed by a memorial service at 7 p.m. at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1500 W. Elsdale Ave., Chicago, IL 60680. Visit www.immanuelchicago.org.

Mary married her husband, Jack Yoshio, in 1935, in Los Angeles, Calif. In 1960, they moved to Pauma Valley, where she and her husband purchased Pauma Vista Ranch.

SOUP TO SUSHI (a special collection of favorite recipes)

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566 N. 5th Street
San Jose, CA 95112

FUKUI MORTUARY

KUBOTA NIKKEI MORTUARY

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Donations in lieu of flowers can be made to Immanuel Lutheran Church or the JACL KANSHA Project, 5415 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640. For more information, contact the Lakemont Funeral Home at (773) 472-6300 or go to www.lakemontfuneralhome.com.

MARY HARUMI NAKAGAWA

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Merrill, who is Hapa (her mother was interned during the war) and lives in Arkansas, writes, as they say, about what she knows. “The Red Kimono” is chock-full of finely observed details that draw the reader into the world of a Japanese American family living in Berkeley, Calif., during World War II. Through thorough historical research and her own knowledge and family experiences, Merrill captures what life was like during that era, and she also accurately captures the values that informed Japanese Americans as their lives were so tragically disrupted.

The story is told through the experiences of three young people whose lives become shaped by the events that followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor: Nine-year-old Sachiko Kimura and her 17-year-old brother, Nobu, as well as Nobu’s friend, Terrence Harris, a young African American schoolmate.

The power of “The Red Kimono” is in its interweaving of racial issues that run deeper than the unjust imprisonment of 120,000 people of Japanese descent. Merrill sets the intimate narrative on its edge by exploring the complex relationships of white/black/Asian/Southern values clashing amidst the chaotic social backdrop of the war.

In the days of fury after Pearl Harbor, Sachi and Nobu witness Terrence and two black friends assaulting their father, and they’re later told that their father died on the way to a Justice Department camp. Sachiko and Nobu don’t know that Terrence had just learned that his father was killed at Pearl Harbor, and he joined two of his friends in a blind fury to attack the first Japanese person they came across. Terrence, who didn’t know the man was his friend Nobu’s father, is convicted and goes to prison.

Sachi, Nobu and their Mama are left to parallel Terrence’s imprisonment as they’re rounded up and sent first to a temporary “assembly center” at Tanforan Racetrack, located south of San Francisco, and forced to live together in a hastily painted horse stall. Merrill’s writing is so evocative — it’s as if the photos we’ve seen of life in these camps have come to life. The prose is vivid and breathes with immediacy as well as historical accuracy.

“The Red Kimono” eventually follows the Kimuras on to Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas, where Sachi befriends Jubie, an African American girl who peers at her through the fence from outside the camp. Mama can’t overcome her prejudice about African Americans because of the death of her husband, so Sachi keeps her friendship with Jubie a secret; Sachi also comes to know Jubie’s family during her adventures outside the camp.

The book is an intriguing study of racial enmity and the need for forgiveness. By the unexpected conclusion, readers will feel as if the characters are part of their own family.

Merrill has written an elegant book that vividly portrays the injustice of the Japanese American incarceration experience that is rich with both Japanese American and Southern idioms and values, as well as includes the subtext of African American racial relationships.

Merrill reminds me of Scout Finch, the young girl in Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird,” which also explores issues of racial injustice and loss of innocence. And “The Red Kimono” stands up to the comparison with the literary classic. This is a fine addition to the canon, alongside “Farewell to Manzanar” and the others.

For more information on “The Red Kimono” on her to read Merrill’s blogs, visit www.theredkimono.com.

Gil Asakawa blogs at www.nikkeiview.com and is a former Pacific Citizen Editorial Board Chair, as well as author of “Being Japanese American” (Stone Bridge Press 2004).

From the fields of Utah to California’s State Capitol, Floyd Mori continues to drive social change by being a mentor for his community. Former National President of the Japanese American Citizens League, he speaks out on policy issues that affect millions of Asian Pacific Americans. A proud 23-year AARP member, Floyd dotes on his 11 grandchildren and helps displaced Vietnamese fishermen on the Gulf Coast find ways to make a living. Join Floyd today and enjoy the support and resources for life at 50+ by becoming an AARP member. Visit us at aarp.org/asiancommunity