“Oh, I know we can do it,” said Chuck Aoki about the U.S. wheelchair rugby team’s quest for gold in Tokyo.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHUCK AOKI

REDEMPTION READY

The U.S. wheelchair rugby team, led by Chuck Aoki, is hungry for another shot at gold in Tokyo.
TOKYO OLYMPICS TO ALLOW LIMIT
OF 10,000 LOCAL FANS IN VENUES

By Associated Press

TOKYO — A limited number of local fans will be allowed to attend the Tokyo Olympics, organizers announced recently as they tried to save some of the spirit of the Games where even cheering has been banned.

Organizers set a limit of 50 percent capacity — up to a maximum of 10,000 fans — for each Olympic venue, and officials said that if coronavirus cases rise again the rules could be changed and fans could still be barred all together. Spectators from abroad were banned several months ago, and now some local fans who have tickets will be forced to give them up.

The decision comes as opposition among Japanese to holding the Games in July remains high, though may be softening, and as new infections in Tokyo have begun to subside.

Still, health officials fear that in a country where the vast majority of people have yet to be vaccinated, crowds at the Olympics could drive cases up. The country’s top medical adviser, Dr. Shigeru Omi, recommended that the safest way to hold the Olympics would be without fans. Allowing fans presents a risk not just at the venues but will also lead to more circulation on commuter trains, in restaurants and other public spaces.

It’s already become clear that these Olympics Games will be unlike any others, but organizers have said they are determined to hold them and billions of dollars in broadcast rights and ticket sales are at stake.

Still, much of the fanfare that surrounds them — people from around the world rubbing elbows, a celebratory atmosphere in the host city and the showcasing of the host country’s culture — will be off the table or far more muted this year.

Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee, called the decision “the last piece for the Olympics” to proceed on July 23. But as with everything about these Olympics — the first postponed in the history of the modern Games dating from 1896, though previous ones were canceled during both World Wars — the decision raised many questions.

For one, it is not quite what it seems. Although a maximum of 10,000 fans will be allowed in any given venue, so-called stakeholders — including sponsors and sporting federation officials — will not be counted toward that total, according to organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto. Japanese media, for instance, reported that up to 20,000 people might attend the opening ceremony, over and above athletes, though Muto said he thought it would be less than that.

The decision was announced after so-called five-party talks online with local organizers, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, the Japanese government and the government of metropolitan Tokyo. A decision on the Paralympics comes on July 16.

Hashimoto, meanwhile, left the door open for a no-fans Olympics if the conditions worsen around the pandemic.

“We need to be very flexible. If there is any abrupt change in the situation, we will hold five-party meetings again to make other decisions,” Hashimoto said. “If there is an announcement of a state of emergency during the Games, all the options like no-spectator games will be examined.”

Officials said local fans will be under strict rules. They will not be allowed to cheer, must wear masks and are being told to go straight home afterward.

“We would like people to go directly home from the venue without stopping by anywhere,” Muto said.

He said 3.64 million tickets were already in the hands of Japanese residents. He indicated that was about 900,000 more than the seats likely to be available. That will mean a lottery to see who can attend.

Tokyo organizers had expected about $800 million in revenue from ticket sales, but Muto said the actual figure would be no more than half that. Any shortfall will have to be picked up by some Japanese government entity.

The University of Oxford has said these are the most expensive Olympics on record. The official cost is $15.4 billion, but several government audits suggest it might be twice that much. All but $6.7 billion is public money.

The IOC relies on selling broadcast rights for almost 75 percent of its income. Another 18 percent is from sponsors. A cancellation would cost the IOC an estimated $3 billion-$4 billion in lost broadcast income — an enormous blow especially at a time when its income flow has already been slowed by the pandemic.

> See TOKYO on page 9

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I theory. And yet, it seems too few
UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES
REMEMBERED FOR ITS
WILL BE FOREVER
CRITICAL RACE THEORY
SHOULD ALSO SUPPORT
IF YOU SUPPORT JACL, YOU
SHOULD ALSO SUPPORT
CRITICAL RACE THEORY
By David Inoue,
JACL Executive Director
It seems the greatest threat to
our country right now is no
longer Covid, it’s not the Jan. 6
insurgency at the Capitol, nor is it
climate change. The greatest threat
to the American way is critical race
theory. And yet, it seems too few
people can actually define critical
race theory. It does not assert that
we need to be ashamed of who we
are as a nation or that white people
need to be ashamed of being white.
Critical race theory is vitally
important and core to what JACL
has always done as an organization:
shed light on how racism does impact
policy and, as a result, people.
What we seek to do when we apply
the concept of critical race theory is
to see how racism often overtly
discriminates, but also sometimes
does so because of systemic
prejudice. For JACL, this is core
to understanding why it was possible to
strip 120,000 people of their civil and
human rights during World War II.
It allows us to look at how the
racism today against Asian Americans
is rooted in the same xenophobia
against Japanese Americans in the
early 20th century that also came from
the racism of the Chinese exclusion
act.
It encourages us to look at the
dynamics of how Japanese Americans
achieved redemption over 30 years ago,
yet Black reparations for the long-
ago injustice of slavery remains unachieved.
Just as anti-Asian hate persists
today, the shackles of slavery,
when looked at through the lens of
critical race theory, were never really
eradicated with the end of the Civil
War or with the newly celebrated
Juneteenth, but were reformed into
laws and policies with the open intent
discrimination against Blacks up
through their eradication in the 1960s.
Looking at our history through
this lens also requires us to look at
JACL’s own history. As we look at
the story of the civil rights movement,
how did JACL’s promotion of the
successes of our own community
feed into the development of the
model minority myth?
How did our actions as
an organization lead to the further
segregation of nearly 19,000 Japanese
and Japanese Americans into the
Tule Lake Segregation Center?
Just as we decry the historic unjust
mass incarceration of all Japanese
Americans, under the false pretense
of national security, there was no
genuine assessment of loyalty in the
segregation of Tule Lake prisoners
that led to their further separation
and intense terms of incarceration.
Today, we advocate for the
Japanese American Confinement
Sites grant program as a means of
supporting the interpretation of our
incarceration story on our terms.
We promote for the use of terms such
as U.S. citizens rather than nonalians
to eliminate the euphemisms the
government used to hide the racist
intent of its policies.
We must continue to encourage
the teaching of Japanese American
history in schools so that children
continue to learn about the
imperfections of our American history
but also the capacity of our country
to approve redress and seek to correct
past injustices.
This is what critical race theory is
really about — seeing history
through a different lens, which does
not whitewash the harms that our
government has inflicted upon groups
of people.
If any of these topics sound
familiar, it is because many of them
are the subject of plenary and work-
shop sessions at the upcoming JACL
National Convention, “Communities
Forged Under Fire,” which will be
held virtually July 15-18. We hope
you will join us in extending this
critical look at our own history for
better and worse.
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David Inoue is executive director
of the JACL. He is based in the
organization’s Washington, D.C.,
office.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IF YOU SUPPORT JACL, YOU
SHOULD ALSO SUPPORT
CRITICAL RACE THEORY

TOKYO’S SECOND OLYMPICS
WILL BE FOREVER
REMEMBERED FOR ITS
UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES
By Gil Asakawa
As I write this, the “2020”
Tokyo Olympic Games are
25 days away. It’s the second
time the Summer Games have been
held in Japan. I was a kid living in
Japan when Tokyo hosted its first
It was a big deal for all Japanese,
and for me and my family — a
Hawaiian-born Nisei dad working for
the U.S. Army, my Issei mom from
Hokkaido and my older brother and
me (a younger brother would be born
Oct. 29, less than a week after the
Games’ closing).
I was 6 years old and aware that
the Olympics were really important
for Japan. World War II was still
less than a generation in the past, and
the country had been rebuilt with
incredible energy and focus after
incredible devastation — including
a firebombing of Tokyo by almost
300 American bombers in March
1945 and, of course, the atomic
bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
in August 1945.
The timing of the Olympics was
perfect.
Japan’s government had been
remade by American Occupation
into a democracy with a constitution.
Its economy had struggled, but
industry and agriculture were back
on track. Japan was beginning to
build a reputation for electronics
and advanced technology, instead
of its earlier reputation for low-cost
manufacturing (“made in Japan”
was once considered negative). Its
cities had been repaired and rebuilt.
A 1961 hit song by singer and movie
star Kyu Sakamoto, “Ue O Muite
Arukou,” had been renamed and
became a 1963 No. 1 hit in the U.S.
as “Sukiyaki.”
Japan was going worldwide. There
was a sense of optimism in Japan
about the 1964 Olympics. It was a
coming-out party for the country as
it stepped into the spotlight of the
world stage.
To prove its industrial strength
and embrace of modernization, the
country unveiled the Shinkansen —
the Bullet Train — as the crowning
achievement of its already exten-
sive and famously reliable railroad
system.
The Shinkansen was planned and
developed in the 1950s. By 1964,
the first high-speed train line in the
world began running between Tokyo
and Osaka on Oct. 1, 1964 — just
in time for the Olympics.
My dad took us on the Bullet Train
in its early months for a thrilling
four-hour day trip to Osaka and back.
What an accomplishment!
I remember watching as much of
the Olympics as we could on our
fuzzy black-and-white TV set in
our home in the Ogikubo district of
Tokyo. I don’t remember much of
the games were postponed last year
because of Covid, will root for them
and have to send along good vibes
from home.
I hope all goes well at the Olympics
and the Paralympics a couple of
weeks later. I hope athletes stay safe
and healthy. I hope NBC’s coverage
finds ways to keep the competition
exciting and compelling for viewers
from around the world, even without
the roar of the crowds to cheer the
athletes on.
And, I wish the best of luck for
Robert Tanaka and all the American
athletes going to Tokyo and hoping
to return with medals. Gambate!
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STORIES OF RESISTANCE DRAW UPON HISTORY

A new graphic novel makes an offer that can’t be refused.

This page, illustrated by Ross Ishikawa, depicts the parents of one of the protagonists, Jim Akutsu, as father Kiyonosuke Akutsu leaves his family behind to be incarcerated by the government as his wife, Nao Akutsu, watches helplessly.

By P.C. Staff

In recent years, different aspects of the Japanese American experience during World War II have been told via the medium of the graphic novel.


The book is a project of Seattle’s Wing Luke Museum, which hired the four to tell three stories of individual resistance by Japanese Americans whose legal challenges to the effects of E.O. 9066 reached the Supreme Court, with only hers resulting in a victory. As a kid, writing in the medium was a different thing. “It took me about a year to understand the graphic novel space,” Abe said. Something that helped him was Scott McCloud’s book “Understanding Comics,” which he said explained the medium as “juxtaposed pictorial images in a deliberate sequence, where often the emotion occurs in the white space between panels.”

Inspiration also came from Art Spiegelman’s acclaimed “Maus” graphic novel. Abe allowed that having experience in other visual medium, filmmaking, also helped with the learning curve of how to write for a graphic novel.

In addition to the real-life “protagonists” of Akutsu, Kashiiwagi and Endo, “We Hereby Refuse” also depicts — using their own words, in context, Abe pointed out that as writers, he and Nimura were superstickers about making sure that what was said was true. In other words, those are their words.

And, with those individuals long deceased and unable to defend themselves, Abe said it was incumbent upon him to be “studiously fair to themselves, Abe said it was incumbent upon him to be “studiously fair to others.”

Abe also had researched the life of Akutsu, whose story of resistance (including prison time) is now seen as the inspiration for John Okada’s seminal novel “No-No Boy.” His interest in that book led to Abe co-editing “John Okada: The Life & Rediscovered Work of the Author of ‘No-No Boy’ ” (see P.C.’s Feb. 22, March 7, 2019, issue).

According to Abe, “We Hereby Refuse” was a four-year process from getting the green light to getting the first run of the book published. And, even though he read comic books as a kid, writing in the medium was a different thing.

“This book is a project of Seattle’s Wing Luke Museum, which hired the four to tell three stories of individual resistance by Japanese Americans whose legal challenges to the effects of E.O. 9066 reached the Supreme Court, with only hers resulting in a victory.”

“Non-aligned? Sir, we expected this for the immigrant generation, but American citizens pose no threat to the Army.”

If we cooperate, the Army will make every effort to be as helpful and as humane as possible.

If not, we are prepared to carry out a complete execution. Without us. Again, if we must.

Can the Army count on your grave to make this movement as efficient and uneventful as possible?

The late Sen. Daniel Inouye, who served in the 100th Battalion and lost an arm from combat before his career in politics, also had his story told in comic book fashion in the first issue of the second volume of the Association of the United States Army’s Medal of Honor graphic novel series (see P.C.’s June 26-July 16, 2020, issue).

The biggest splash, however, came in 2019 with the graphic memoir of actor George Takei’s “They Called Us Enemy,” which made the New York Times bestseller list and relayed his experience of WWII as seen through the eyes of a young boy.

Now, in 2021, is the latest entry in the Japanese American graphic novel arena: “We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration” (see Pacific Citizen’s Nov. 8-21, 2019, issue).

“This page from the graphic novel, illustrated by Ross Ishikawa, features Mitsuye Endo upon learning that she won her Supreme Court case.”

Ross Ishikawa PHOTO: BRAD KEVELIN

Frank Abe PHOTO: EUGENE TAGAWA

This page from “We Hereby Refuse,” illustrated by Ross Ishikawa, depicts a meeting between the JACL’s Mike Masaoka and the Army’s Karl Bendetsen.

Tamiko Nimura PHOTO: JOSH PHAPMENTER

Matt Sasaki PHOTO: MATT SASKI
WE ARE JUST TRENDING TOWARD GOLD IN TOKYO

At the 2016 Paralympics, the U.S. wheelchair rugby team narrowly missed a gold medal chance. Led by star Chuck Aoki, the team is hungry for redemption in Japan.

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, Contributor

n the morning of my phone conversation with Chuck Aoki, he had just returned to his Denver, Colo., home from his first real experience in a long time. Well, as normal as it can get in a global pandemic.

After a year of staying at each other from little rectangles onscreen, the U.S. wheelchair rugby team finally arrived in its Birmingham, Ala., training facility together without pandemic-related restrictions. They had the entire breadth of their isolation to imagine what the reunion would be like. Did jubilant tears spring from eyes or long-forbidden embraces linger a few seconds longer between teammates?

“No,” said Aoki with a chuckle. “We are kind of tough guys. There’s not that big, you know, emotional, “Oh my God, I love you so much!”

“We are just trending toward gold in Tokyo,” he said. “I certainly plan to come home with the gold medal.”

LIKE VISION WITH SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES

I am embarrassed to admit that I came to my conversation with Aoki assuming a universality with sports as a tactile experience — a feeling of a ball landing in the hands, the swing of a bat and the subsequent impact. I was wrong. It is so much more.

Aoki was born with a rare genetic condition called hereditary sensory autonomic neuropathy type II (HSAN), which affects his ability to feel his hands and feet. Sure, a lot of playing rugby is about feeling, but could I imagine experiencing it differently?

“A lot of what I do on the court is visual,” wrote Aoki in an email. “I try to ‘see’ plays before they happen, so that I can make my own moves accordingly.”

His parents say Aoki’s genetic condition gave him superhuman visual processing skills. He has no sensation below his elbows or his knees, so the kinds of things that newborns and infants do by touch, he had to learn to do by sight.

“I still remember seeing him pick things up,” said Andy Aoki, his dad. “And he would really be looking at it. And now I realized, it was because he had to use his eyes. His hands are more like a tool that he can manipulate.”

At a doctor’s visit when Aoki was about 8 years old, long after his HSAN diagnosis, a doctor touched his hands in several places. Do you feel this? How about this? Each time, Aoki said yes. Ask him to close his eyes, said Jennifer Nelson, his mom. The answers changed once his superhuman ability was neutralized.

“It’s just the way his brain is wired,” said Nelson, 59.

Aoki’s heightened visual acuity makes him sound like a superhero, specifically an undervalued one. Aoki is Vision, one of Marvel’s arguably best superheroes. In comic book pages, Vision is an advanced android that overcomes its programming to fight against bad guys and joins the Avengers. Vision has superhuman strength, a fast mind, superhuman speed and senses.

Wheelchair rugby is both elegant and brutal.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CHUCK AOKI

Aoki taught himself to read when he was about 2. Then, he taught himself to speed read before his 3rd birthday. At age 4, when his interest in sports took hold, Aoki started reading the sports section in the daily newspaper to follow his favorite hometown Minneapolis teams.

He read through the entire “Harry Potter” series, but he was still hungry. His passion for the fantasy genre has

BY Lynda Lin Grigsby, Contributor

After an unprecedented delay, the Summer Games are on! Here are some noteworthy AAPI athletes in the race for the medals at the Olympics (July 23-Aug. 8) and Paralympics (Aug. 24-Sept. 5).

BAADIMINTON

Beiven Zhang — The women’s singles player, who lives in Las Vegas, has competed for the U.S. since 2013. Zhang, 30, chose to play badminton at 8 after her dad enrolled her in a sports school.

Coryn Rivera — A Newport Beach, Calif., native who is of Filipino descent, she has won 72 U.S. national titles since turning professional at 16. Rivera, 29, is competing on the road cycling team, which takes place on paved roadways.

DIVING

Jordan Windle — Windle, 22, won the 2019 NCAA title for Texas where he attended the University of Texas at Austin. Windle was born in Cambodia, where he lived in an orphanage until he was adopted at 18 months by Jerry Windle.

FENCING

Alexander Massialas — Born and raised in San Francisco of Chinese, Greek and British descent, Massialas, 27, was two-time Olympian before Tokyo. The Stanford alumnus started fencing in the second grade. At the 2016 Rio Games, Massialas became the first U.S. male fencer to win two medals at an Olympics since 1904. He is coached by his dad, three-time Olympic fencer Greg Massialas.

Lee Kiefer — The 27-year-old fencer identifies as White and Filipina. In 2017, she became the first U.S. female foil fencer to earn the No. 1 world ranking. She could be the first U.S. woman to win a gold medal in individual foil. She is married to fellow fencer and Olympian Gerek Menhardt. She is attending medical school at the University of Kentucky.

Gerek Lin Meinhardt — The San Francisco native is a veteran. He started fencing at 9 after taking piano lessons from coach Greg Massialas.

Sabrina Massialas — The younger Massialas sibling, 24, is a replacement fencer in Tokyo. In 2014, she was the first-

INES-DEPTH

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDY AOKI

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHUCK AOKI

Before rugby, Chuck (pictured here at 8 years old) played wheelchair basketball.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDY AOKI

“My passion for the fantasy genre has

wife. Tokyo will be his fourth Olympic appearance. He will become the first American fencer to make four Olympic teams since Mike Marx competed in his last Olympics at Atlanta 1996. He’s also studying to be a medical doctor at the University of Kentucky.
Chuck has always been a sports lover. He is pictured here in 2004 with his younger brother, Henry Aoki (right) at a 2004 wheelchair basketball camp.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDY AOKI

PANDEMIC PAUSE

The U.S. wheelchair rugby team has been training for this moment for five years now. No one predicted a global pandemic would threaten their quest for the gold medal.

Last March, when coronavirus forced a national shutdown, Andy Aoki’s heart sank. No one knew for sure if the Olympics and Paralympics would be postponed or canceled. In the history of the modern Olympics, the games have been canceled three times because of two world wars. What would happen in a global pandemic?

For years, Andy Aoki watched his sports-loving son experience almost unbearable disappointment when his body could not keep up with his passion. Aoki was an able-bodied kid until he was almost in his teens, but injuries plagued him. One baseball season, Aoki, injured, could not play, so he came to all the games to keep score. When doctors finally cleared him to play, Aoki broke his hand right before a game.

“It was really heartbreaking,” said Andy Aoki, 61, a political science professor at Augsburg University in Minneapolis. “It just brought me to tears the kinds of disappointments he had experienced.”

During the height of the pandemic, hope often danced with uncertainty and despair. Aoki retreated to a small town outside of San Antonio, Texas, where he lived on a remote ranch with his girlfriend, Elizabeth Gregory, and her parents. He trained without access to a gym or a promise of a third Paralympic opportunity. Then in May in his hometown of Minneapolis, George Floyd’s death spurred massive protests, riots and a national reckoning with race and racism.

On the Texas ranch, Aoki could only watch.

“For Chuck, it was mostly about frustration,” said Gregory, 22. “He expressed feeling a lot of powerlessness and frustration around everything.”

Aoki’s disability taught him to adapt — another Vision-like superpower — to find out how he could control situations and set up the rest. He repositioned his energy on his studies, remotely, as a PhD student at the University of Denver in comparative politics and international relations. He worked out, sometimes with the virtual company of his teammates on Zoom. He concentrated on crossword puzzles and played with their pandemic puppy, a Cavapoo (Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and Poodle mix), named Winnie. Any reference to the word “win” is purely coincidental.

With the Olympics now on, the model for Tokyo “2021e” and slated to start July 23 (the Paralympics begin after the Olympics end), uncertainty lingers amid Japanese protest over hosting potential “super spreader” events amid an ongoing pandemic.

But all Aoki can do is train and hope.

...sustained, said Henry Aoki, 24, his younger brother: “He’s a giant nerd.”

In sports, it’s called reading the court, the ability to anticipate an opponent’s move and react accordingly. Aoki can do that quickly with more than one person at a time, in theory, because that part of his brain is more developed than the average person.

Wheelchair rugby is both elegant and brutal. Players often spin in their chairs, best described as chariots of destruction, to disorient their opponent’s move and react accordingly.

Chuck has a dog named Winnie.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM (@CHUCKAOKI)

Marybai Huking — Goalball is a team sport adapted for athletes with vision impairment. Huking, 24, was born with albinism and is legally blind. She is a Paralympian bronze medalist.

Marybai Huking

GOALBALL (PARALYMPICS)

Danielle Kang — The LPGA star, 28, started playing golf at 12. In 2020, she was the two-time and back-to-back champion at the LPGA Drive On Championship. Kang was born in San Francisco and speaks fluent Korean.

Collin Morikawa — Representing the U.S. men’s team, Morikawa, 24, only turned pro in 2019, the same year he earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration at the University of California, Berkeley. Last year, he won his first major championship victory at the PGA Championship.

Collin Morikawa

GOLFSUNISA LEE — The 18-year-old gymnast made history as the first Hmong American to ever make the U.S. Olympic gymnastics team. For one day at the U.S. Olympic team trial, the St. Paul, Minn., native had a lead on Simone Biles.

Sunisa Lee

Gymnastics

Akash Modi — The Eden, N.J., native, 26, was named as an alternate. He started gymnastics in 2001 because his parents did not want him jumping on the furniture at home.

Akash Modi

Yul Moldauer — The 20-year-old gymnast, 24, was born in South Korea and adopted as a baby by Peter and Orsa Moldauer. He is the U.S. reigning champion of the parallel bars. He grew up on a farm outside of Fort Collins, Colo. He is named after actor Yul Brynner.

Yul Moldauer

LAURA ZENG — The individual rhythmic gymnast, 21, made her debut at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Zeng was born in Hartford, Conn., and attends Yale University.

Laura Zeng

KARATE

JOANNE FA’AVESI — Known as “Nana,” the rugby sevens player, 29, won a silver medal at the 2015 Pan American Games. She identifies as Tongan, Samoan and German.

Joanne Fa’avesi

RUGBY
Membership was a gift, but Shigeru Aoki never attended meetings.

At Minidoka, Toki, Shigeru’s Nisei son, who was just finishing high school, wrote desperate letters to reunite with his father. The trauma of the family separation likely followed him through his life. In challenging times, Japanese Americans have a saying, Shikata Ga Nai, meaning, “It cannot be helped.”

It’s a phrase that traveled over oceans and rose out of the WWII camps to describe cultural norms of endurance. It picked up some negative connotations to mean complacency in the face of adversity, but in a global pandemic, refocusing energy on what is controllable seems like a healthy mindset.

For Aoki, his disability has always been his identity. But during the pandemic, when anti-Japanese hate and racial attacks surged, it gave him pause and time to reflect on his other identity — his Japanese American heritage. He watched the viral video footages getting attacked and thought: They look like me. The victims look like my dad, my brother.

The solitude of the pandemic and the sting of current events spurred an interest to explore his heritage and the AAPI experience.

“I’d like to reflect on it more and be able to teach my kids about it one day, especially given the history that, you know, my own family has had in this country,” said Aoki.

But first there’s this business of winning a gold medal.

THE PACK LEADER

Three teams stand in the way of USA’s gold medal: Australia, Japan and Great Britain.

Elite athletes have a game day ritual, a set of procedures to offer a sense of control in an otherwise unpredictable pressure cooker that is the Olympics and Paralympics. Swimming’s GOAT Michael Phelps famously straps on headphones and blasts music to tune out and dial in before a race. Phelps is a lone wolf. Aoki is the pack leader.

Aoki does the same on the bus ride over to the venue. With headphones on and music blaring, he silently “sees” his opponents’ plays in his head. He likes to make a new playlist for every major competition. The Tokyo playlist has yet to be curated, but Linkin Park, AC/DC, and Lil Wayne are on high rotation.

“The younger guys on the team are like, ‘You listen to them still? And I’m like ‘Yeah, they’re not that old.’”

Closer to the game, he checks in with the team. Then, he has a snack (usually a Nutella sandwich or chewy gummy snacks) until he pushes onto the court and slams into other players for four quarters.

Off the court, Aoki is affable, the kind of guy one gravitates to at dinner parties for a comfortable conversation. On the court, his demeanor changes — brows furrow, gaze intensifies — and suddenly, he’s very unapproachable. One minute he’s happily eating gummy snacks, then the whistle blows, and he’s a heaving beast on wheels.

“Chuck has an incredible ability to make the players around him better,” said Jeff Butler, a Paralympian teammate. “He loves adjusting strategy in real-time, and he always makes sure that everyone is on the same page and that their voice is heard.”

In Tokyo, Covid restrictions mean friends and family cannot be in attendance. It will just be Aoki and his team, a family of sorts.

Aoki grew up loving team sports and being around people. Before rugby, he played wheelchair basketball, but he had a hard time competing because of the impairments in his hands. To be eligible to play wheelchair rugby, an athlete must have an impairment at least three limbs. In wheelchair rugby, Aoki is surrounded by people and athletes who have the same challenges.

“I love the intensity, I love smashing. I love all that stuff, but really on a deeper level, it was just a community that I fit into for the first time,” he said.

In the days leading up to the Paralympics, Aoki is everywhere. He’s shooting promos for NBC and gabbing with podcast hosts about Minnesota sports. Through it all, he radiates a quiet confidence and a presence of ease that makes him one of the most recognizable athletes of the games. It’s something Aoki would not have any other way. He is trying to raise and change perceptions of people with disabilities.

A gold medal can help, but will it happen?

“Oh, I know we can do it,” he responds, without missing a beat.

A gold medal will complete the circle like a trinity of accolades for competing at the most elite level in wheelchair rugby. And for Aoki, it may not close the chapter on competing. He is not ruling out another Paralympics appearance in 2024.

“It’s just one of these things where, you know, I have a limited time where I can compete at this level,” he said. “If I can still contribute and be a meaningful member of the team I don’t want to leave.”

If all goes according to plan, at the next summer Paralympics in Paris, Aoki may push onto the court with on a higher medal count and a new pair of prestigious titles: four-time Paralympian and PhD.

By then, maybe people can call him Dr. Chuck Aoki.

**SKATEBOARDING**

Keilani Ricketts Tumanuvao — The pitcher from San Jose, Calif., is of Samoan descent. In 2019, she was a Japan Cup gold medalist.

Madilyn ‘Bubba’ Nickles — The right-handed pitcher and shortstop, 23, is a Merced, Calif., native. She got the nickname from her dad. Her mom grew up in a Chinese labor camp.

**SURFING**

Carissa Kainain Moore — The four-time world champion from Honolulu is of Chinese, Caucasian and Hawaiian descent. Moore, 28, was the youngest person to win a surfing world title. She was the first woman to compete in the Triple Crown of Surfing, Hawaii’s most prestigious contest series.

Erica Sullivan — Making her Olympic debut, she placed second in the 1500m freestyle at the trials. She is a two-time open water U.S. national champion.

Garrett Muagututia — (Men’s Indoor) The outside hitter, 33, is of Samoan descent. He was a member of the gold medal team at the 2012 Pan American Cup.

Johnny Hooper — The Southern California native is the Los Angeles native of the national team, he is the attacker.

**WATER POLO**

Justine Wong Orantes — (Women’s Indoor) The Torrance, Calif., native played indoor and beach volleyball for the University of Nebraska. She is of Filipino, Chinese and Mexican descent.

**WEIGHTLIFTING**

Mich Christenson — (Men’s Indoor) The Hawaiian, 28, is a setter on the team, a USC alum.

Harrison Maurus — Hailing from Auburn, Wash., Maurus, 21, is of Native Hawaiian descent. He holds 10 current American records.

Jourdan Delacruz — At 23, the Filipina American lifter (49kg) is a two-time Pan American champion.

**WRESTLING**

Kayla Miracle — The 2019 Senior World Team member, 25, is competing in the women’s freestyle 62 kg. She is of Japanese descent.

**FOOTBALL**

Dejah Mulipola — The Polynesian American catcher won gold at the 2019 Pan American Games. The 23-year-old is a native of Garden Grove, Calif.

Janie Takeda Reed — The left-handed hitting softball outfielder, 28, is half-Japanese American and a Pan American gold medalist.

Erik Shoji — (Men’s Indoor) Once named the best libero, Shoji, 31, grew up in Hawaii and made his Olympics debut in Rio. He is the son of Mary, a former basketball player, and Dave Shoji, a volleyball coach.

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**Huntington Beach Mercury**
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The capital and other areas are now under “quasi-emergency” status until July 11. The new rules will allow restaurants to serve alcohol during limited hours, the main outcome from the reduced restrictions.

Overall, more than 14,000 deaths have been attributed to Covid-19 in Japan, which has managed the pandemic better than many countries but not as well as some others in Asia. Its vaccination campaign remains behind many Western countries’ rollouts, with about 6.5 percent of Japanese fully vaccinated and 16.5 percent with at least one shot.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who has favored allowing fans, said before the official announcement that he would bar fans if conditions change. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike echoed that.

“If a state of emergency is necessary, I will be flexible and open to no fans in order to achieve that,” Suga said. “The Games give top priority to safety and security for the people.”

In recent polls, support seems to be increasing for holding the Olympics, though a majority still appear to favor postponing or canceling the Games, depending how the question is worded.

The Olympic Games begin July 23 and will be broadcast in the U.S. on NBC.

STORIES » continued from page 5

“I took extra care to portray these men fairly within the context of the times, while using their own words,” Abe said. Furthermore, Abe wanted to emphasize that above all, it was the government that was the true master of a Sector that forced Japanese Americans to make decisions that under normal circumstances no one would ever have to make — and suffer the consequences of those decisions.

The book shows through its actions, government divisions and the Japanese community through a succession of orders, edicts and congressional legislation. It’s the government that drives the action in this book,” Abe said, who added that, “Our ‘characters’ are forced to navigate this new terrain for only one reason, and that is their race. Their race is the only thing they have in common.”

For Abe, one of the book’s accomplishments was telling Endo’s story. The lives and stories of Akutsu and Kashiwagi are, comparatively, better known, despite Endo having been involved in a Supreme Court case. Because Endo neither spoke to the press nor discussed the case publicly, most people only know that she won her case and that’s all, unlike with Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui, whose high court losses were famously revived and revisited in the 1980s. But including Endo’s story, and that of the Mother’s Society, which he first learned of in Mira Shimabukuro’s book “Relocating Authority,” was important because it showed how Issei and Nisei women — not just men — also took a stand against the government’s oppressive actions.

One revelation depicted in the book is that the government actually offered Endo a chance to leave camp and join her sister in Illinois if she would drop her legal case — but she refused, knowing that her stance was the more difficult choice, even though that meant staying incarcerated at the Topaz WRA Center for two more years.

“I would call it the choice that defined her character,” Abe said. “What defines Endo’s character is that when presented the choice of her personal freedom or doing what’s best for all, she chose all, she chose the community.”

Although the book is still new, the first printing of “We Hereby Refuse” sold out and a second run had to be ordered. “The book is flying off the shelves,” Abe said. “I’m pleased that the book has found its audience.”

FOUR-STAR GENERAL’S FAMILY RETURNS ANCIENT BELL TO JAPAN

The family of Pensacola Gen. Roy S. Geiger returns the bell to Okinawa after holding possession of it for 74 years.

By Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. — An ancient Japanese temple bell that has been at the center of a Pensacola family for decades began its journey back to its birthplace on June 21, thanks to the generosity of the patriarch’s surviving family members.

The family of Pensacola Gen. Roy S. Geiger, a four-star general who was one of only two Marines to receive the Navy Cross for heroism in both World Wars, has held possession of the bell for 74 years.

“I see my life, when I look at the bell, my lifetime flashes before my eyes,” said Geiger’s granddaughter, Melanie Curtis. “It’s been part of me since before I was born. My girls have rung it, my grandkids rung it and my grandmother rang it for me when it was dinnertime. It’s in family pictures. It’s always been there.”

Memorabilia and other “treasures,” including the temple bell from the Japanese prefecture Okinawa, are the last pieces of Geiger’s physical war bequest that have lived with Curtis and her family.

The bell will be placed in the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum after an online ceremony that was held Monday evening in Pensacola between the Curtis family and Alex Kishaba, president of the Japanese nonprofit organization Ryukyu America Historical Research Society in Okinawa.

Back in its designated birthplace, the return of the temple bell was commemorated in accordance with the June 22 celebration of the end of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.

BELL’S JOURNEY TO AMERICA

On March 31, 1916, Geiger reported for duty at Naval Air Station Pensacola and began flight training. One year later, he became the fifth Marine to receive his gold wings.

Curtis said Geiger was given the bell from Okinawa residents after the Battle of Okinawa in World War II, the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific. In the clash, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps fought the Imperial Japanese Army from April 1-June 22, 1945, when Japanese forces surrendered their troops, two months before the Japanese capitulation following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After the 1945 battle, Geiger returned to Pensacola with the bell, where it became a family heirloom. Most recently, it hung with a gong outside Curtis’ family home in a circular driveway off of Scenic Highway.

Ten years ago, Curtis’ lifelong connection to Okinawa came to a head and he began his crusade to return the bell, which was rung to notify the Okinawan history and stories.

The cultural significance behind the bell and its role in Okinawa’s history and practice of Buddhist ideals. Kishaba defined it as a “secondary bell” that was rung to notify the Okinawan people, whether waking time at 7 a.m. or in the case of approaching opposition forces, such as that in the Battle of Okinawa.

The handles curving at the head of the bell are dragons — the symbol of Okinawa that garnishes castles in stone throughout the island. The round spheres dotting the rusted seafoam bell align with its sibling bells in the Okinawan museum and temples; however, it lacks the in-grained writings that usually tell Okinawan history and stories.

“The bell is a missing link to our (Okinawan) history — it’s a chain to our legacy. For the same of our children, they need to know their history and that’s what museums are for in the first place. Forgetting our ancestors’ history is like forgetting your parents, so we are very thankful to Melanie for sending the bell back,” Kishaba said.

Although Geiger passed away one year before Curtis was born, the war stories passed down through generations play like a broken record as she now begins a new chapter in her life, starting with letting the bell go.

“This bell is precious to them and their culture. It’s too special to them. I’ve enjoyed it, and my family has, but it needs to be shared,” Curtis said.

TRACING DOWN THE TEMPLE BELL

The bell is being returned to its designated birthplace in Okinawa.

“Tracing down the temple bell, Kishaba ventured to Pensacola in 2014 in hopes of returning the artifact to Okinawa,” Curtis said.

Curtis agreed to its repatriation and partnered with Kishaba and liaison and former U.S. Navy pilot Jeff Schneider to prepare for the bell’s crating and shipping details to Okinawa.

The decision comes just as Tokyo has emerged from a state of emergency as the curve of new cases has flattened. The seven-day average for new infections in the city is about 400 daily.

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Due to Health and Safety Concerns in the U.S. because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Please Check Regarding the Status of Events Listed in This Issue’s Calendar Section.

National

Annual JACL National Convention
July 15-18
Virtual Event
Join JACL at its annual convention, which will be held virtually featuring a National Council meeting as well as breakout sessions and more! Be sure to visit JACL’s website for complete convention information and announcements as they become available.

Heart Mountain Pilgrimage
July 20-24
Virtual Event
Price: Free
Due to lingering concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic, this year’s pilgrimage will be a virtual event — complete with a fabulous slate of planned events. There will be virtual tours of the site, live-streamed programs and educational videos shown throughout the weekend. Festivities kick off on July 23 at 6 p.m. MT with an exciting announcement about the future of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and the Interpretive Center. To help cover the costs of producing this year’s online pilgrimage, please consider supporting the HMWF with a “virtual registration” donation. Stay tuned for more information about the pilgrimage.

Tule Lake Pilgrimage
July 31
Virtual Event
Price: Free
In keeping with this year’s theme, “Incarceration — Injustice — Protest — Resistance: Then and Now,” the event will retain Tule Lake’s unique status as the only one of the 10 WRA concentration camps that was converted into a maximum-security Segregation Center. More than 12,000 Japanese American activists were punished with segregation, with thousands stripped of U.S. citizenship to enable their deportation, all because they spoke out against the injustice of their incarceration. The pilgrimage will also include a memorial tribute to Tule Lake’s beloved poet laureate Hiroshi Kashigawa. More details and information about the event will follow.

PSW
A Life in Pieces: The Diary and Letters of Stanley Hayami
Los Angeles, CA
July 9-9, 2022
JANN
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: Timed advanced tickets are required. JANN members do not need a timed ticket. Just show your membership card for free admission.
Stanley Hayami’s diary and writings from camp and during his wartime incarceration and journey to life in this presentation that reveals the hardship he and his family faced during World War II. At the age of 19, he was killed in Italy after being drafted into the U.S. Army’s 442nd Regimental Combat Team. His legacy lives on through these letters, which were donated to JANN by his family.

PNW
The 89th Annual Seattle Bon Odori Virtual Event 2021
Seattle, WA
July 17; 5 p.m.
Price: Free
As with last year’s event, the 2021 Bon Odori will be a virtual event to protect its Sangha members and Seattle community. However, there will be preordered food, cocktail and merchandise sales held via drive-thru pickup.
Info: For the livestream event, visit www.youtube.com/SeattleBonOdori. For more information about preorder, visit www.SeattleBonodori.com/sb21.

Conservation in Action: Japanese Buddhist Sculpture
Boston, MA
Museum of Fine Arts
465 Huntington Ave.
Price: Free
Don’t miss this rare behind-the-scenes look at the conservation of seven Buddhist sculptures. Visitors are invited to watch as conservators study and treat the sculptures in a public conservation studio. The wooden figures, images of Buddha, are decorated with polychromy and gilt and date from the 12th to 16th centuries. The conservation project occupies an entire gallery in the museum, allowing visitors to observe the techniques employed to carefully clean the sculptures.

EDC
Glen Kaino: ‘In the Light of a Shadow’
Thru Sept. 4
MxAA McCa
807 S. Broadway
“In the Light of a Shadow” is inspired by the connection between two protests — the tragic events known as “Bloody Sunday” from Selma, Ala., and Derry, Northern Ireland. The installation provides an immersive experience of moving shadows and evocative soundscapes and spans the entire football-field size of the Building 5 gallery. Kaino is known for his public exhibits at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Andy Warhol Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, among others.

The View From MemChurch’ by Rosanna Yamagiwa Alfaro
Huntington Theatre Company
Boston, MA
This short audio play by NE JACL member Rosanna Yamagiwa Alfaro is featured in the Huntington Theatre Company’s “Dream Boston” series. Alfaro’s play is set in Harvard Yard as two friends from the class of 1960 reunite on Commencement Day on May 25, 2023. The cast includes Emily Kuroda, Alberto Isaac and Callie Chase.
Info: To listen to the play, visit www.huntingtontheatre.org and click on the “Dream Boston” icon.

ICDC
A Celebration of Excellence
Through the Tokyo Games Dinner and Dance Gala
Denver, CO
July 27; 4 p.m.
VIP Reception
7:30 p.m.
Main Event
Japan America Society of Colorado Mile High Station
1 W. Colfax Ave.
Price: Visit website for ticket and registration information.
Join the Japan America Society of Colorado for a casual dinner, dance, wine party and silent auction along with a special tribute to women in leadership. Proceeds will be contributed to the Colorado-Japan relationship: Kelly Brough, Kim Day, Inta Morris and Consul General of Japan in Denver Midori Takeuchi. This event is sponsored by Comcast.
MEMORIAM
Ichinose, Sadami, 91, Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 20; he is survived by his wife, Sachiko Ichinose; children, Craig (Naomi) Ichinose and Karen (Wayne) Nakatsu; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 2.

Iwaki, Kyoko ‘Patsy,’ 94, Irvine, CA, Feb. 13; during WWII, she was incarcerated at the Poston WRA Center in AZ; she was predeceased by her sister, Nancy Doi; she is survived by her husband, Toshimi “Tosi” John Iwaki; children, Billy (Gloria), Lynn and Mike (Teri); gc: 4.

Marumoto, Noriyuki, 92, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, May 12; an Army veteran; he was predeceased by his wife, Kimberly (David) Barbis; sisters, Lisa Iida (Kenichi) and Dina Ringer (Brian); brothers, Tom (Betty), Sam (May) and Steve; gc: 2.

Morita, Reiko, 92, Sacramento, CA, April 29; she was predeceased by her husband, George Morita, and son, Bobby Morita; she is survived by her children, Mike Morita (Christine), Pat Morita, Terry Jaramillo and Penny Morita; brother, Ben Horita; gc: 5; ggc: 4.

TRIBUTE
KAZ NAKAMOTO
Nakamoto, Kaz, 76, San Francisco, CA, May 18, 2021, he lost his battle with cancer and passed peacefully with his family at his side. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. Survived by his wife, Cindy Morino; daughter, Remi (Derek Lau); sons, Jeremy (Jeanie) & Tony; grandchildren, Lucas, Logan, Landry, Noah, and Eimi and siblings, Lisa Iida (Kenichi) and Dina Ringer (Brian); brothers, Tom (Betty), Sam (May) and Steve; gc: 2.

Shiosaki, Fred A., 96, Seattle, WA, April 10; a 442 veteran, he was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart; he was predeceased by his wife, Lily (Nakai) Shiosaki; siblings, George, Roy, Floyd Shiosaki and Blanche Okamoto; he is survived by his children, Nancy and Michael; son-in-law, Edward; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Sugano, Norman, 69, Torrance, CA, Jan. 13; he is survived by his wife, Maya; son, Rand Sugano; siblings, Carol Mizuno, Patricia and Ted (Cindy) Sugano; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Suzuki, Willie, 87, Torrance, CA, May 15; during WWII, part of his family and he were incarcerated at the Gila River WRA Center in AZ; he later served in the Army; he was predeceased by his wife, Nancy; siblings, Joe, Dorothy, Mariko, Robert, Frank, Fred, Tom and Haruko Watanabe; he is survived by his wife, Gery Suzuki; daughter, Leslie Reno; gc: 1.

Tanaka, Kameo ‘Kam,’ 83, Kahu-lui, HI, April 1; Air Force veteran; member of the Hawaii State House of Representatives 12th District; he was predeceased by his son, Robert Yoshino Tanaka; siblings, Yoshishin, Yoshishinobu, Yoshikazu, Katsuichi, Yoshie Kamimoto and Sumiko Yoshino; he is survived by his wife, Amelia "Mellie" Tanaka; sons, Kevin (Saane) Tanaka and James (Edel Bolosan) Tanaka; siblings, Joe (Barbara) Tanaka, Tsuruyo Hoshide, Kikue (Nobuo) Kanemoto and Kathy (Mark) Miyakawa; gc: 7; ggc: 1.
Retail Drug Prices Continued to Rise Faster Than Inflation During the Pandemic

By Ron Mori

A new AARP report shows that retail prices for 260 widely used brand-name prescription drugs increased more than twice as fast as general inflation, rising 2.9 percent compared to an inflation rate of 1.3 percent, according to a new report from AARP’s Public Policy Institute.

The average annual cost for one brand-name medication used on a regular basis was over $6,600, more than $1,500 higher than in 2015. For the typical older American taking four to five prescription drugs per month, the annual cost of therapy would have been more than $31,000 last year, more than the nearly $30,000 average annual income for Medicare beneficiaries.

Although 2020 had the slowest average annual price increase since at least 2006, it was still more than twice the rate of inflation and followed several years with considerably higher average annual price increases.

AARP analyzed how these price trends accumulated over time and found that the average annual cost of drug therapy for one brand-name drug used regularly would have been almost $3,700 lower in 2020 if retail price changes had been limited to inflation between 2006 and 2020. These cost increases have had significant impact on medications used to treat common chronic conditions.

• Between 2015 and 2020, the retail prices of several widely used prescription drugs used to treat diabetes increased, such as Victoza, which increased from $7,936 per year in 2015 to $11,300 in 2020, and Trulicity, which increased from $6,567 to $9,323 over the same time period.

• Medications for asthma and COPD also continued climbing in costs, such as Spiriva Handihaler, which increased from $3,886 per year in 2015 to $5,289 per year in 2020, and Symbicort, which increased from $3,391 to $4,282 over the same time period.

Drug price increases also play a major role in Medicare Part D spending. A second AARP PPI analysis found that between 2015 and 2019, Medicare Part D spent nearly $40 billion more on 50 top brand-name drugs that was solely attributable to drug price increases that exceeded inflation.

Medicare Part D spending for the top 50 drugs would have totaled $250.8 billion over the study period — instead of $289.1 billion — if price changes had been limited to the rate of general inflation.

“On average, nearly 90 percent of the top 50 brand-name drugs had annual price increases that exceeded the corresponding rate of inflation from 2015 through 2019,” said Leigh Purvis, director of health care costs and access for AARP Public Policy Institute and co-author of the reports. “It’s unfair that drug prices keep rising, even for medications that have been on the market for decades. Americans can’t afford to keep paying the highest drug prices in the world.”

AARP has been at the forefront of calling on national and state lawmakers to take action to lower prescription drug prices and is pushing for support on a number of federal policy solutions, including:

• Price Negotiation: Allow Medicare to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs for its beneficiaries and allow other insurers to have access to the Medicare-negotiated prices.

• Inflation Based Rebates: Require drug manufacturers to pay a penalty when their prices for prescription drugs covered by Medicare Parts B and D increase faster than inflation.

• Out-of-Pocket Cap: Create a hard out-of-pocket spending cap for Medicare Part D enrollees.

To view “Rx Price Watch Report: Trends in Retail Prices of Brand-Name Prescription Drugs Widely Used by Older Adults, 2006-2020,” visit www.aarp.org/rxpricewatch.

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