A new documentary revisits the groundbreaking Pan-Asian American movement to right a miscarriage of justice.

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Historic Wintersburg Heavily Damaged
JACL APPLAUDS HOUSE PASSAGE OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CONFINEMENT EDUCATION ACT

By JACL National

The JACL applauds the unanimous passage of the Japanese American Confinement Education (JACE) Act in the House of Representatives on March 15. In 2006, the Japanese American Confinement Sites Program was established for the preservation and interpretation of U.S. confinement sites where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. This original legislation was introduced by then-Rep. Doris Matsui and Mike Honda. Since the first year of funding in Fiscal Year 2009, $36 million has been provided to 265 projects in 24 states and the District of Columbia. Funding has ranged from as little as $5,000 to more than $800,000 for a single project. The JACE act provides an additional $42 million in funding for a total of $80 million. Of that total, $10 million in funding may be used by Japanese American organizations to implement education programs to ensure that present and future generations of Americans will learn from the experience of Japanese American confinement and our country’s subsequent commitment to equal justice under law.

This funding will be used for research and education relating to Japanese American incarceration, as well as the creation and disbursement of educational materials to promote a national understanding of how and why Japanese Americans were incarcerated during WWII.

JACL is thankful to Rep. Doris Matsui for her leadership in authoring and championing the JACE Act. We are also grateful to Congressman Joe Neguse, Ranking Member Russ Fulcher and the rest of the members of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands subcommittee for shepherding the JACE act to passage. We would also like to thank the 67 bipartisan co-sponsors for their support.

We call upon the Senate to swiftly pass the JACE act (S.988) to ensure continued funding to the JACS grant program.

UJIFUSA BESTOWS GIFT TO THE PACIFIC CITIZEN TO HONOR EDITOR HONDA

Redress strategist and long-time New York resident Grant Ujifusa has pledged a substantial monetary gift to the Pacific Citizen in recognition of the decades of dedication to the newspaper performed by Harry Honda, who died in 2013.

Ujifusa said he would like the funds to help the newspaper pay current and new contributing writers and freelancers to bolster coverage of news about grassroots JACL chapters and members, as well as to develop fresh topics of interest to the Pacific Citizen’s national readership.

The funds will also help defray general operational expenses incurred in the P.C.’s continuing mission to produce in-depth feature stories and content that relates directly to the nation’s Japanese American and Asian American communities.

Ujifusa also said he wanted to honor Honda for his inspiring and stalwart presence and journalism career at the Pacific Citizen. Honda’s association with the newspaper included stints as editor, reporter and columnist, as well as general manager and editor emeritus — unparalleled at more than six decades.

According to Honda’s daughter, Patty Arra, her father’s association with the Pacific Citizen began in September 1952. Until his death on July 3, 2013, he was still contributing to the paper.


Ujifusa served as JACL redress strategy chair from 1982-92, and his inside knowledge of how Washington worked was instrumental in the passage of HR 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was signed by President Ronald Reagan on Aug. 10, 1988.

For his effort on behalf of the bill, Ujifusa was made an honorary member of K Company of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. In 2012, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, by the Government of Japan for his indispensable work to pass, enact and fund the Japanese American redress bill.

About Ujifusa’s vital role in the Redress Movement, Robert Matsui called him key to the success of HR 442. Matsui described Ujifusa’s ‘Almanac of American Politics’ — and its immense prestige and clout in Washington — Japanese American redress would not have happened.

“All 535 members of Congress worry about what the book will say about them every two years, which enabled Grant to swing key Republican House members behind the bill. The ‘Almanac’ also created access to enough of Ronald Reagan’s time to tie redress to the personal memory the president had of fallen 442 hero Kaz Musuda.”

I’m glad to see the Pacific Citizen growing and evolving with its website, and especially LOVE the much easier-to-navigate digital archives. It’s a treasure trove for JAs to learn about our community’s history, and for scholars and journalists looking to connect the past with the present. Thanks for the improvements, P.C.”

— Gil Asakawa

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We call upon the Senate to swiftly pass the JACE act (S.988) to ensure continued funding to the JACS grant program.

Grant Ujifusa was awarded a commendation by the government of Japan in 2012 for his work on the Japanese American redress bill.

The P.C.’s mission is to educate on the past Japanese American experience and promote and help the current and future API communities.

* Your donations will help build and preserve a cohesive library of the Pacific Citizen to educate future generations.*
THE GOOD OLD DAYS WEREN’T ALWAYS GOOD

By David Inoue, JACL Executive Director

Lia Thomas has become a household name. If you don’t know who she is, Ms. Thomas is a swimmer at the University of Pennsylvania who now identifies herself as female having been born biologically male.

As a swim competitor, she has set numerous new women’s swimming records for her school and the Ivy League. However, there has been significant outcry that she has an unfair advantage as having gone through puberty as a male. I am pretty sure she never wanted to be thrust into the spotlight as she has been, but such is the case when some people encounter something not fully understood.

I am careful to not say trans- or gender people are something new. They are not. We have had transgender people among us for all of history — we just never acknowledged their presence or even allowed them to make themselves known. With all the vitriol now directed at Ms. Thomas, it is understandable.

What is often telling about the hate and anger directed at Ms. Thomas is the intentional misuse of pronouns. Diving into the swimming news sites covering this, and the comment sections reveal hundreds of posts by people angrily denouncing the “he” should not be allowed to compete with women.

To deny Ms. Thomas’ identity as a woman by referring to her as he is to take away her humanity and identity. Lia Thomas is one specific individual targeted in what has become a culture war, a war of values between those who want to promote hate vs. those who want to recognize the humanity of every individual person and all that they represent.

We see it being played out from local school boards to state legislatures, with policies seeking to erase the presence of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, there does not and will not change the fact that our children have friends whose parents openly identify in these categories, and some of our children will likely identify differently from the heterosexual cisgender societal norm.

As can be expected today, some reporting on the legislation have tried to downplay the severity of the legislation and taken the position that “both sides are distorting the truth” and have tried to imply that the legislation is extremely vague in what it prescribes.

However, very clearly in the text is the following: “Classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards.”

That is about as clear as can be that teachers or other instructors may not discuss sexual orientation or gender identity to early elementary students. Does the teacher then need to be silent when a child talks about their two dads?

Of course, the Florida legislature has taken it further in expanding its prohibitions on what can be discussed in school to include the Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (W.O.K.E.) Act. This is a much more expansive bill that would limit the ability of not only schools but also employers, licensing examiners, amongst many others, from teaching concepts such as white privilege and systemic racism. This could have a chilling effect on core diversity training programs at employers across the state.

Ultimately, these policies are attempts to legislate against changing societal norms. We have always existed in a white male heterosexual Christian normative society.

Debates around a woman’s right to choose, transgender rights and the existence of white privilege and systemic racism have never existed years ago because such perspectives were ignored or suppressed. The fact that we can have these conversations is a step in the right direction.

The It Gets Better campaign holds the promise that things will improve, but not if we allow legislation that continues to marginalize and suppress the stories and experiences of minority people.

Things may be more comfortable for those who have been seen as the norm, but what does that mean for those of us who are outside that definition of normal? Hopefully, after the NCAA swimming championships are completed, Lia Thomas will be able to live her best life as a senior in college, free from the harassment and vitriol from a public that fears the change that she represents because what we used to think was “normal” is no longer.

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

WHAT IS INFLATION TAX?

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

Let’s say you have a group of people, and these people buy things. Under Scenario 1, let’s say you have a group of people earning $50,000/year, and the price of a Big Mac Meal from McDonald’s, shoes from Target and a tank of gas is $5, $30 and $50, respectively. And in buying these things, they give these businesses money. In return, they receive goods and services from these businesses, i.e., a Big Mac Meal, shoes and a tank of gas.

Now, if the government were to print enough money to double the money supply, we would have twice as many dollar bills floating around — but the same amount of goods and services. All that would happen would be that the prices of these goods and services themselves would double. So, a Big Mac Meal goes from a price of $5 to a price of $10, the tank of gas goes from a price of $50 to a price of $100.

And, of course, one of the prices that would double are people’s wages. So now, in Scenario 2, you’re earning twice as much as you were before, $100,000/year. But the prices of the things you buy have all doubled as well. So, if we were to ask you are you better off in Scenario 1 or Scenario 2, the answer is you’re not, you’re in both.

It doesn’t matter to you whether you’re earning $50,000/year and a tank of gas costs $50 or whether you’re earning $100,000/year and gas costs $100 — it’s the same amount of gas.

Along comes the government, it prints enough money so all the prices double. That means that the Big Mac Meal costs twice as much, the shoes cost twice as much and you’re earning twice as much, but your savings is the same. It’s the same $200,000 sitting in your savings but only buys half ($50 percent) of what it used to.

This is what happens when the government comes along and prints lots of money. In effect, what it’s doing is draining away the purchasing power of your savings, i.e., inflation is a tax on your savings. When the government prints money and thereby creates inflation, we get the same exact effect as if the government had imposed a tax on people’s savings.

So, economists say it’s called an “inflation tax.”

Sound familiar? Beginning under then-President Donald Trump and continuing through President Joe Biden’s administration, Congress has approved some $4.5 trillion in Covid relief funding, according to CNBC (Dec. 9, 2021). One trillion is 1,000 billion or a million million — that’s a huge amount of money. A trillion is a 1 followed by 12 zeros, like this: 1,000,000,000,000.

The government benefits from inflation by paying off debt with cheaper dollars each year. Because inflation raises wages as well as prices (but wages almost always rise more slowly than prices), tax revenues increase. This gives more income to the government, which it uses to increase its debt and debt payments.

And just like our Scenario 2, the cost of food is going up. According to the Wall Street Journal (Dec. 27, 2021) food prices are estimated to rise 5 percent in the first half of 2022, while other sources point to a 7 percent increase by the end of the year. This number might be even higher if we consider that many products are also shrinking in size, which means you’re getting less for more.

Gas prices are also at record highs. Experts fear the conflict between Russia and Ukraine could disrupt oil supplies in the region, which would lead to a bump in gas prices. Russia is the second-largest oil producer in the world behind the U.S. Experts project much of the U.S. could see gas prices go up as high as $4 by early spring, and markets like California and Hawaii — where gas is already expensive — could top $5 (source: USA Today, Feb. 23, 2022).

Not surprisingly, inflation has hit a new 40-year high in January. Inflation surged 7.5 percent annually in January, surpassing the previous 40-year high set in December and marking the highest annual inflation rate since February 1982, when it was 7.6 percent. Inflation is rising at the fastest pace in decades, which means consumers are paying more for rent, utilities and groceries than ever before.

Financial institutions such as banks love inflation because the new money created to finance government debt goes to them as loans from the Fed. Because big banks are flush with cash and do not need to raise money quickly to attract more deposits, the average rate paid on basic savings accounts insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. is just 0.06 percent, according to Bankrate.

They, in turn, lend this money to consumers at a much higher rate of interest. Mortgage rates are going up, approaching 4 percent, and auto loans are approaching 6 percent. Obscene profits are possible if one borrows at, say, 1 percent interest or less and then turns around and lends that new money to a consumer who must pay 4-6 percent interest.

» See TAX on page 9

Inflation rates are at their highest levels in the U.S. since February 1982.
Better Health, Better Relationships, Better Life

By Marsha Aizumi

Two weeks ago, I was hired to be a consultant for a two-day leadership conference. The theme for our retreat was unlocking the power of emotions to connect with our teams, our schools and our families, and it was based on a book by Dr. Marc Brackett called “Permission to Feel.”

To be honest, my husband was dreading my return from this conference because he knew that I would want to talk about feelings. He would rather have five root canals than talk about his feelings. Here is an example of one of our discussions, printed with my husband’s permission:

Me: I think we should talk about our emotions more. I am reading a book about how important that is.
Tad: I think we DO talk about emotions.
Me: OK, how do you feel right now?
Tad: I feel great!
Me: But great is not an emotion. Emotions are things like happy and sad.
Tad: OK. I feel happy and sad and great.
Me: What do you feel sad about?
Tad: Oh, I made a mistake. I just feel happy (as he slowly starts leaving the room).

As you can see, our conversation was pretty short and not too in depth. And I didn’t even get to ask him what he was happy about before he started to leave the room!

Even though I was consulting at this conference, I was there to learn, too. And boy, did I learn a lot. First, I learned that all feelings matter. I was also reminded that feelings aren’t negative or positive, but just information. As I sat and listened to the speaker, I realized on my best days that I am a curious explorer of my feelings, and on my worst days, I am either judging myself or others.

I spent the conference days thinking about how I handle my feelings, especially those I consider bad: guilt, shame, sadness, disappointment, hopelessness, stress, anxiety, frustration, fear. I saw how many of these feelings as our family transitioned with Aiden early on. And I saw that every feeling I focused on seemed to grow. However, when I PAUSED, stepped back and took time to reflect and be curious, I began to understand the underlying fears why I felt so guilty, ashamed, sad or fearful. Here are a few ways I manage my feelings:

1. I take a Walk — Taking a walk helps me to pause and reflect. Being outside allows me to clear my head and focus on what truly matters to me. And what matters to me is my relationships and my health. And Mochi, my dog, loves walking, so it benefits us both!

2. I take Some Deep Breaths — It is amazing how just giving myself one to two minutes to take some deep breaths calms me down. It slows down my heart, so I feel peaceful. I have actually checked my heart rate on my Fitbit when I was feeling stressed after two minutes of deep breathing. I have also checked my blood pressure.

Both my heart and blood pressure drop significantly after just two minutes of deep breaths. For me, seeing the data and feeling more calm is worth the time!

3. Self-Talk — I now have a phrase when I react with feeling. I think . . . All feelings have just information. PAUSE . . . What does this feeling mean, and how can I manage it?

4. Reframe the Story in Your Head — What this means to me is tell myself a different story.

I used to work with someone who was very arrogant and self-centered. Even when we were no longer working together, the thought of that person still triggered negative feelings. One day, I realized that this individual made me feel small, weak, and worthless. But today, I have found my voice — as a result, that individual no longer has that effect on me. Instantly, I felt different because I changed the story in my head. That individual didn’t change, but I did!

My biggest takeaway from this conference was that it is OK to feel all feelings. In fact, it is healthier to feel all feelings and learn to manage it rather than push it down and avoid it.

Our Japanese culture even has a word for this suppression: gaman. It is funny — at our last Okaiere conference, we had a workshop called “Gaman Be Gone.”

Feelings don’t go away if we suppress it. They will come out in some way . . . taking a toll on your body, hurting the quality of your relationships or affecting the quality of your life. Choosing to recognize, understand, label, express and manage our emotions are the key to having a successful life. Knowing the response is respectful. It is a skill that can be learned and practiced. We can all live the life we dream, and it begins with giving ourselves permission to feel.

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

Successful Start for PHASE 2 OF JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS

By Phil Tajitsu Nash

Phase 2 of the historic Japanese American campaign for redress got off to a successful start this year during the days surrounding the Day of Remembrance ceremonies that Japanese American communities nationwide commemorate each year around Feb. 19.

On that date in 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which set in motion the roundup, forced removal and years-long incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans.

One high point was that for the first time in the many years that the nation’s president has issued an official proclamation to mark DOR, President Joe Biden specifically mentioned the former Japanese Latin American internnees: “We reflect on the bravery of civil rights leaders like Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi and Mitsuye Endo, and that of every Japanese American who organized and fought redress. Their efforts helped bring about the first Day of Remembrance, led President Jimmy Carter to sign the law creating the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians and spurred President Ronald Reagan to sign the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided monetary reparations to living survivors and an official apology to the Japanese American community.

“At the same time, we also acknowledge the painful reality that Japanese Latin Americans, who were taken from their homes and incarcerated by the United States government during World War II, were excluded from the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.”

The signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which granted redress to Japanese Americans who were citizens and Legal Permanent Residents when they were incarcerated during World War II, excluded Japanese Latin Americans because they did not qualify under such eligibility criteria. Even though they had been seized from their homes in Latin America and interned in the U.S., they were classified as “illegal aliens.”

Now, after a major victory in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), JLAAs are calling upon everyone to build on the gains of Phase 1 of the redress campaign with active support for them during Redress Phase 2: demanding/urging the U.S. government to honor its commitment to Japanese Latin Americans.

Another high point was that the JLA wartime experience and ongoing redress struggles were included in the nation’s three-day commemoration of the 80th anniversary of EO 9066, which was sponsored by the National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and a broad spectrum of the Japanese American community nationwide, including the Japanese American Citizens’ League (National), Japanese American National Museum, White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders; Friends of Minidoka; Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation; National Japanese American Memorial Foundation; JACL-DC; Japanese American National Museum; Denso; Tsurui for Solidarity; Risters.org; and over 20 community partners (https://www.nps.gov/subjects/japaneseamericanconfinement/day-of-remembrance.htm).

Grace Shimizu, director of the Campaign for Justice: Redress NOW for Japanese Latin Americans! and the Japanese Peruvians Oral History Project, spoke at several DOR events in February, including events at Chabot College (Hayward, Calif.), University of California, Berkeley, University of San Diego, San Diego State University and Mile High JACL (Denver) (https://jla campaña por justicia.org/2022-day-of-remembrance/).

On Feb. 24, the JLA Day of Action, people expressed support for JLA redress. Supporters called or wrote messages to the White House to express their support, signed an online petition and invited friends and family to support the Redress Phase 2 campaign (bit.ly/JLA DaysOfAction).

“We were very moved by the outpouring of support from Japanese American friends and many others as we kicked off Redress Phase 2,” said Shimizu. “It has been 80 years since our families were taken from our homes and placed behind barbed wire. Many of our loved ones have already passed away. Time is long overdue for the U.S. government to uphold international law and grant reparations.”

“Giving redress to JLA is not only the right thing to do,” said Margaret Fung, executive director of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, an early supporter of Redress Phase 2, “but it also reminds us that we must be vigilant about our civil rights and civil liberties in all times — especially in times of war and national crises.”

For more details about Redress Phase 2, please visit https://jla campaignforjustice.org.

Professor Phil Tajitsu Nash is co-president of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and teaches Asian American Studies at the University of Maryland. He participated in Phase 1 of the redress movement as a lawyer at AALDEF, a board member of the New York JACL, a researcher at the National Archives with Jack and Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, a lobbyist for the Washington Coalition on Redress and a reporter at the NY Nichibei and other community papers.
HISTORIC WINTERSBURG STRUCTURES FALL VICTIM TO FIRE, DEMOLITION

The two 1910 structures, part of the endangered Historic Wintersburg in Huntington Beach, Calif., are affected; an arson investigation is underway.

By Historic Wintersburg Preservation Group

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIF. — Shortly before 9 a.m. on Feb. 25, there was notification of a fire at endangered National Treasure Historic Wintersburg, located at Warner Avenue and Nichols Lane in Huntington Beach, Calif. Community preservationists have worked since 2012 to save and preserve this property, which holds more than a century of nationally significant Japanese American history.

A fire of unknown origin destroyed the 112-year-old manse (parsonage) of the 1910 Historic Wintersburg Japanese Mission. The nearby 1910 Wintersburg Japanese Mission was lost to demolition a few hours after the fire. Both historic structures were demolished within a few hours of the fire before an arson investigation was completed. The investigation is ongoing per the City of Huntington Beach.

The Historic Wintersburg property was named one of America’s Most Endangered Historic Places in 2014 and designated a National Treasure site in 2015 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Preserve Orange County named Historic Wintersburg one of Orange County’s Most Endangered Historic Places in 2017. In recent years beginning in early 2016, Historic Wintersburg was targeted with anti-Asian hate, social media harassment and threats, prompting police reports.

All six historic structures at Historic Wintersburg are listed in the City of Huntington Beach General Plan historic and cultural element as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, which automatically places Historic Wintersburg on the State of California list of historic and cultural resources.

With local and national partners, the Historic Wintersburg community preservation group has engaged since 2012 Rainbow Disposal and in 2014 new owner Republic Services in discussions to purchase the property for historic preservation purposes.

Republic Services has publicly stated to the media that it would work with the community effort on the sale for historic preservation purposes but have disengaged the past two years.

Republic Services raised $30,000 in funding to conduct an outside review in 2015 by a multiparty panel of historic preservationists, city planners and economic/business professionals — including participation by Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services — to demonstrate adaptive reuse options to save the property and prevent its demolition and development.

Months after that analysis, Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services reached legal settlement with the Ocean View School District, which legally encumbered the property in perpetuity, changing the circumstances and restricting development.

As a result of a 2016 legal settlement agreement between the Ocean View School District — which has a preschool and elementary school adjacent to Historic Wintersburg — and Rainbow Environmental/Republic Services, there are land use encumbrances on the Historic Wintersburg property that prevent its development and safeguard the property for historic preservation.

City of Huntington Beach planning requirements also impose restrictions that hinder development. The Ocean View School District owns land adjacent to the Historic Wintersburg property, including the entirety of Belsito Street to the south and land and/or right-of-way on adjoining and nearby streets. The school district has expressed support for the full preservation of Historic Wintersburg.

Additionally, experts in appraisal of and planning for historic properties do not consider the Historic Wintersburg property dispensable other than as a heritage park.

Over the past decade, community preservationists have contacted Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services repeatedly to provide more security and regular maintenance of the property, which has experienced vandalism, tagging, trespassing to steal items and trespassing to enter the buildings for shelter. During inspections of the property, items such as cans of kerosene and Bunsen burners have been found inside buildings and brought to the attention of Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services for removal.

The community previously provided thousands of dollars’ worth of tree trimming and brush removal — at no cost to Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services — to remove vegetation that put not just the six historic structures at risk, but also the adjacent homes, as well as the Oak View preschool and elementary school.

As recently as two weeks before the fire on Feb. 25, Republic Services and City of Huntington Beach leaders were contacted in writing with photo documentation about vandalism and lack of security and maintenance at Historic Wintersburg. They did not respond.

“I hope that Republic Services will realize their corporate responsibility,” said Mary Urashima of Historic Wintersburg. “They can be part of saving an endangered National Treasure historic place and be a better neighbor in Huntington Beach. . . . What are we to do while in reality doing the opposite.”

The Historic Wintersburg Preservation group and partners Preserve Orange County and Heritage Museum of Orange County called upon Republic Services and community leaders in Huntington Beach and Orange County to take action to save and preserve this rare and significant National Treasure. They are calling for a thorough arson investigation.

Individuals and organizations within the Japanese American community are calling for 1) an arson investigation, 2) the right of Japanese Americans to collect ash and remains from the two buildings to honor the heritage and history of a sacred site and 3) action by the City of Huntington Beach to bring Rainbow Environmental Services/Republic Services back to the table in genuine negotiations to allow the purchase of the property by preservationists and museum professionals partnered with Historic Wintersburg for the purpose of historic preservation as a heritage park.

David Inoue, executive director of the JACL, wrote in a letter to Huntington Beach Mayor Barbara Delgleize and the Huntington Beach City Council: “We hope that the city and community of Huntington Beach will do its part to recognize the important place Historic Wintersburg holds in the history of Huntington Beach, Orange County and our nation. The site is of particular interest for the Japanese American community. For me, as a Japanese American, and as a Presbyterian, this site is of particular importance personally. If Huntington Beach continues to allow the historic landmarks to fall further into disrepair, they will be lost forever. Please take action to ensure future generations can learn the story of Historic Wintersburg.”

A partial list of those calling for the above actions also include:

- Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles)
- Japanese American Citizens League (Washington, D.C.)
- Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium (National)
- Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages (national)
- 50 Objects/50 Stories of the American Japanese Incarceration (National)
- Poston Community Alliance (Poston, Arizona, confinement site)
- Little Tokyo Historical Society (Los Angeles)
- Heart Mountain Foundation (Wyoming confinement site)
- Friends of Minidoka (Idaho confinement site)
- Minidoka Pilgrimage (Idaho confinement site)
- Historical Museum at Fort Missoula (Montana)
- South East Los Angeles North Orange County (SELANOCO) chapter of the JACL (California)

An outdoor rally and press conference is set to take place on March 19 in support of Historic Wintersburg Preservation and its regional partners, Heritage Museum of Orange County and Preserve Orange County.

A new documentary shines light on an important, still-unrecognized saga.

By George Toshio Johnston, Senior Editor, Digital & Social Media

All the King's Horses
And All the King's Men
Couldn't Put Humpty Together Again

The hundreds of investigative journalist K. W. Lee would write about his fellow Korean immigrant who was imprisoned for a murder he did not commit, it began with headlined “Alice in Chinatown Murder Case.”

The allusion to Lewis Carroll's whimsical “Alice's Adventures in Wonderland” turned out to be apropos and prescient. Now 93, Lee's decade's old reporting would be an odyssey down a confounding rabbit hole that haunts him to this day.

For the man whom the warhorse reporter helped free from prison, however, the aforementioned nursery rhyme wasn't whimsy. Despite the tireless efforts of one journalist and a diverse army of Asian Americans brought together by a “there but for the grace of God go I” realization to fight the outrageous injustice visited upon him, nothing on Earth could quite rebuild the broken life of one Chol Soo Lee.

That epic story is revisited in the documentary “Free Chol Soo Lee.”

FUTURE AWARDS CONTENDER?

For first-time directors Julie Ha and Eugene Yi, January 2022 will be looked back upon as a turning point in their own respective journalism careers. After six years of work, their documentary not only premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in its U.S. Documentary Competition Selection, but also within days, it was acquired by the streaming service MUBI.

Already destined to be shown nationally on PBS, the acquisition means “Free Chol Soo Lee” will likely be screened theatrically for Academy Award consideration for next year's Oscars.

After seeing it, TV reporter-turned-communications professor Sandra Gin told Ha and Yi, "This ain't just buzzworthy, it is Oscar-worthy." Gin has some insights regarding such matters.

One of her many Emmys came in 1984 for an instalment of the Sacramento-area public affairs program “Perceptions” titled “A Question of Justice,” which covered the same subject matter, in the Historical, Cultural and Religious category.

Attorney Dan Mayeda, associate director of the UCLA School of Law’s Documentary Film Legal Clinic — which helps documentarians who provide pro bono legal services such as helping set up LLCs, drafting contracts, navigating the fair use doctrine and more — called the finished product “a magnificent documentary.”

Ha concurred, saying, “This is a landmark movement of Asian Americans. They over-turned two murder convictions to free this Korean man from death row. And it was like, why is this story not known? ... I sensed he had the story, the more I realized that it would be an important story to me. I'm in my 40s. And I had never ever heard of this story at all. I grew up on the East Coast. I'm in my 40s. And I had never ever heard of this story. The more I heard about the story, the more I realized that it would be a true tragedy to have it buried in history," Kim told the Pacific Citizen.

The story, the key eyewitness who would later testify that Chol Soo looked nothing like the man he saw committing the crime.

It was “merely” the latest murder among many in a turf battle between rival Chinese gangs.

On June 19, 1974, Chol Soo Lee was convicted of first-degree murder. His sentence: life imprisonment. But that wasn't the worst of what was in store for him.

While incarcerated at Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, Calif., he actually did kill a fellow inmate, Morrison Needham, said to have been a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, in a what Chol Soo Lee claimed was an act of self-defense.

That incident would put him on the path to Death Row at San Quentin State Prison.

DANGEROUS NAIVETE

Although he freely admitted to being a “street punk” with some petty criminal offenses on his record, there is no evidence he committed the murder. His sentence: life imprisonment. But that wasn't the worst of what was in store for him.

Although he had some street smarts, Chol Soo Lee was in for a rude awakening. It was as if the city's political, law enforcement and legal establishment, driven by the need for an expedient and tidy solution to show they had established control over the gang war (and thus continue the flow of tourism dollars), had conspired to live up to the brutal paean to official indifference uttered at the end of 1974's "Chinatown."

“All you had to do was go out on the street and you'd see two Chinese, wasn't a gang member and didn't know anything about Chinatown," said the key eyewitness who would later testify that Chol Soo looked nothing like the man he saw commit the crime.

“Forget it, Jake. It’s Chinatown.”

THE REST OF THE STORY

But that malfeasance is just one of the threads found in “Free Chol Soo Lee.” K. W. Lee's investigative reporting was another vital one.

The other thread Ha and Yi wove in was that of the many Asian Americans such as Jeff Adachi, Warren Furutani, David Kakishiba, Jeff Mori, Peggy Saika and Mike Suzuki, along with Chinese Americans Art Chen, Chris

Sandra Gin, Chol Soo Lee and Tom Nakashima met in 1983 for the premiere of the episode of KCRA's "Perceptions," the title "A Question of Justice."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRA GIN

Acquitted Chol Soo Lee thanks
Asian American support groups

Sandra Gin, Chol Soo Lee and Tom Nakashima met in 1983 for the premiere of the episode of KCRA's "Perceptions," titled "A Question of Justice."
Chow, Grant Din, Esther Leong and Susan Lew and Derrick Lim who came forward to raise awareness of the injustice that the justice system had imposed upon Chol Soo Lee.

Many among the aforementioned would go on to dedicate their lives to become lawyers or public servants to ensure there were no thumbs on the scales of justice. In K. W. Lee’s eyes and in Chol Soo Lee’s words, though, there was one particular true believer, one person above the others who took action after reading the initial newspaper reports implicating Chol Soo for the murder. Her name: Ranko Yamada, and she is one of “Free Chol Soo Lee’s” treasures, thanks to her participation in telling the tale.

Interestingly, according to K. W. Lee, many of Chol Soo Lee’s fellow Korean immigrants, inculcated by Confucian respect for authority figures, initially wanted nothing to do with him. Why, after all, would the police arrest someone if he wasn’t guilty? “Free Chol Soo Lee,” however, shows Koreans — including Chol Soo Lee’s mother — eventually joining the Free Chol Soo movement with a fierceness in what would become the first pan-Asian American community movement that had real-world results. It’s that storyline that is at the heart of “Free Chol Soo Lee.”

JOURNALISM TO DOCUMENTARIES

For Ha, her knowledge of the Chol Soo Lee story resulted from her own background and journalism career that included working for UCLA’s student-run publication Pacific Ties, as well as Rafu Shimpo and KoreAm Journal, now defunct.

“I’ve known K. W. for more than 30 years. I met him when I was 18 years old. He inspired me to become a journalist. So, I’ve known about the case for a long time. Eugene has actually known about the case for a long time through K. W. But I never thought about making a film,” Ha told the Pacific Citizen. Ha actually wanted to write about Chol Soo Lee, perhaps as an in-depth magazine feature. But after attending the funeral for Chol Soo Lee, who died on Dec. 2, 2014, at age 62, the feeling that “was something just even beyond grief” from that day would lead her down a different path: documentarian.

Yi’s path, meantime, went from studying neuroscience in college to video editing and journalism, which would lead him to KoreAm Journal, where he met Editor-in-Chief Ha.

Regarding his director partner’s journalism chops, Yi said, “I always appreciated working with her. She was an incredible editor, just so giving and so supportive in terms of all the crazy story ideas that I might have or how many words over the limit I might have been. It was always just incredible working with her. And she always seemed to be able to bring out the best from whatever project I was working on.”

When KoreAm Journal ceased publication, Ha and Yi decided it was time to focus on telling Chol Soo Lee’s story. “It literally felt like it was beckoning us to tell it,” Ha said.

With Yi’s experience in video editing and their knowledge of the existing archival materials, including K. W. Lee’s audio-tapes, Chol Soo Lee’s memoir and more, the documentary route beckoned.

FORTUITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Although the path to completing the documentary was long and far from easy, there were several fortuitous stops along the way.

One was the 2018 formation of the Documentary Film Legal Clinic at UCLA’s School of Law. At its outset, Mayeda said they really didn’t have any clients, a situation that is completely different now that the word about it has gotten around.

“I had known Julie from just casually from when she was at the Rafu,” Mayeda recalled. “I ran into her somewhere, and she mentioned she was working on this documentary about Chol Soo Lee. I said, ‘You’ve got to bring that to the clinic, it would be great to work on that.’ . . . They were one of our first clinic clients.” Ha concurred. “They helped us tremendously,” she said. “You know how much legal services can cost. . . . When you’re an independent film, you’re just struggling to balance all these expenses that you had. So, it saved us a tremendous amount of money.”

Connecting with Su Kim and her producing partners, Jean Tsien and Sona Jo, was also key for Ha and Yi.

“I’m Korean American, and it really pissed me off that this had happened,” Kim said.

“And it was very resonant to many of the experiences, I think, that we all have, a lot of Asian Americans have had. I make films, and this is what I know how to do. So, I said, ‘Well, OK, I’ll help you guys out. Let’s see what we can do.’ And so that’s how I got involved.”

VOICES OF AUTHORITY

It was Kim, for instance, who helped bring in Sebastian Yoon, who gave voice to words written by Chol Soo Lee in his memoir. She had heard about Yoon speak at an Open Society Foundations Q & A, not realizing that he had actually appeared in the documentary “College Behind Bars.”

As it turned out, Yoon’s own life experience had many parallels to that of Chol Soo Lee, such that he could relate to much of what Chol Soo Lee had experienced.

But Yoon had something that Chol Soo Lee did not — an opportunity to attend college while in prison.

The film didn’t compromise. It wasn’t sanitized. The story came through clean and truthful. The filmmakers, Julie Ha and Eugene Yi, perceived the whole with a deep regard and respect for Chol Soo and all of the players. Great job; great film.

P.C.: Was there any element that the filmmakers did not include or address?

Yamada: Not really. There was so much critical information packed into 83 minutes. Of course, there are hundreds of side stories and anecdotes that couldn’t be included, but everything essential was there.

P.C.: The pan-Asian American movement to free Chol Soo Lee included many Japanese Americans. Presuming that they were offspring (or knowledgeable) of Japanese Americans unjustly incarcerated by the federal government during World War II because of Executive Order 9066, how much do you think that this was explicitly or implicitly a recognition that Lee was the victim of unfair treatment by the political/law enforcement establishment of San Francisco and a motivation to help get him the freedom he deserved? If you believe that there was this recognition by JAs to help Lee for that reason, can you elaborate on this topic?

Yamada: I really don’t know how much identity there was in the support for Chol Soo Lee with the incarceration of JAs during WWII. The grass-roots movement for redress was developing at the same time. Many of us were involved with both issues, but I don’t believe it was a defining relationship. We talked about institutional and individual racism, about oppression in our society. We also talked about uniting with all people’s struggles. Personally, Chol Soo reminded me of my dad — not because my dad was incarcerated but because he was Kibe Nisei who returned to the U.S. at 17 and never had a chance to go to school or learn English.

P.C.: Despite the legal victory/victories that saw Lee win his freedom, it’s clear from the documentary that he was nevertheless still haunted by the traumas he endured, which made it difficult to reintegrate into the “straight and narrow life” once he was free and thus put him on a path that included drug abuse and crime and, ultimately, his tragic disfigurement from the attempted arson.

In other words, if Chol Soo was unable to save himself from himself, in retrospect, what are the lessons from the Chol Soo Lee saga we can apply to the future when someone gets a second chance, whether the problem was drugs, crime, gangs, homelessness, etc.? Yamada: This is complicated. Yes, I think he was haunted by past traumas. More so, the things he didn’t get in early life, like basic opportunities of education and a stable supportive family, can surely restrict the quality of life when at 30 you have no skill sets, no money and no real home.

Lessons? Chol Soo had about 30 years as a freed man, and it was difficult to reintegrate into the “straight and narrow life” once he was free and thus put him on a path that included drug abuse and crime and, ultimately, his tragic disfigurement from the attempted arson.

Not only was Ranko Yamada a vital part of the original drive to free Chol Soo Lee, she is a major figure in the documentary “Free Chol Soo Lee.” Yamada was kind enough to answer a few questions via email for the Pacific Citizen.

Pacific Citizen: With your first-hand experience as a community activist — arguably the original important person to speak out and reach out regarding the injustice that was inflicted upon Chol Soo Lee — what was your overall reaction to seeing the completed, final-cut version of “Free Chol Soo Lee”? Ranko Yamada: My overall reaction is a resounding “Wow.” Choosing to focus on Chol Soo Lee sounds so obvious. It was anything but obvious. There were so many layers and dimensions in Chol Soo the person, the immigrant, his cases, the coming together of support from the Korean, pan-Asian and progressive communities, endless issues and exceptional people like K. W. Lee.

Speaking the Truth

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JA COMMUNITY MEMBERS SPEAK OUT AGAINST HATE

The racist incident took place at Laguna Hills High School; Orange County community members call for a complete investigation.

MISSION VIEJO, CALIF. — During a Feb. 10 meeting of the Board of Education for the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, JACL SELANOCO Co-President Nicole Inouye presented a statement on behalf of the chapter that respectfully requested the Saddleback Board of Education to conduct a thorough/robust investigation of the racial incident that occurred during a basketball game at Laguna Hills High School.

The Jan. 21 incident involved students of LHHS who shouted racial slurs at a Black student athlete from the visiting team, Portola High School in Irvine, Calif.

In video taken during the game, shouting at Portola senior Makai Brown could be heard saying, “Who let him out of his cage? He’s a monkey!” “Where is his slave owner?” and “Chain him up.”

During the presentation of this statement, Inouye stated that JACL supported the victim’s family and hoped this incident would become the starting point whereby all members of the Saddleback Valley Unified School District community can come together, united in their resolve to create a safer and more inclusive community for all.

“The School Board has a prime opportunity to address the situation and go beyond making a public statement and demonstrate through action that the incident is not reflective of the culture of the high school or the community,” Inouye told the P.C. “I hope they will take the opportunity to critically assess and take the appropriate actions to respond and remediate. The students of today will be the leaders of the future, and all need to demonstrate the importance of treating people with respect and understanding.”

Brian Hosokawa, president of the PHS girls basketball boosters, also spoke at the meeting and posted footage of the incident on YouTube, stating that he wanted to focus on the failures of leadership that led up to this hateful incident.

Hosokawa explained that there was a “cultural problem . . . and asked the words used by this student will never be acceptable. This is a learning opportunity for our school communities that there is ongoing work to be done in building continued mutual respect and understanding,” said Superintendent Dr. Crystal Turner.

The school district also stated that the student who made the comments received “immediate and appropriate consequences”; no word on the punishment the student faced was released.

The SELANOCO chapter and members of the Japanese American community will continue to monitor the progress of the Saddleback School Board in its investigation.
Delayed due to Covid, the recreation facility finally holds a public celebration to welcome the community.

The Paul I. Terasaki Budokan is officially open to the public following a two-day grand-opening celebration hosted by the Little Tokyo Service Center that was held at the recreation facility in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo on March 11 and 12.

Bright, sunny skies welcomed the public to celebrate decades of community fundraising and perseverance to see the center’s completion; the Budokan has been operating since spring 2020, but its official grand opening was postponed due to the pandemic.

At the heart of the 51,000-square-foot multipurpose sports facility and community center, located at 249 S. Los Angeles St., is a main floor featuring an Olympic-sized basketball court, as well as meeting room spaces, underground parking, a second-story terrace and an outdoor events area with a stage.

Speakers at the grand celebration included Kevin de Leon, Los Angeles City Councilmember, 14th District; Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi; LTSC Executive Director Ryan Lee, LTSC Executive Director Erich Nakano and California Assemblymembers Miguel Santiago and Al Muratsuchi.

Marking the grand-opening celebration with an official proclamation are (from left) Terasaki Budokan Executive Director Ryan Lee, LTSC Executive Director Erich Nakano and California Assemblymembers Miguel Santiago and Al Muratsuchi.

TAX » continued from page 3

If you think things are bad now, they could very well get worse, especially if inflation continues to rise. Experts agree that it would be a good idea to pay down any high-cost credit card debt now or look into consolidating debt to a lower-interest option or personal loan to help you keep more money in your pocket for other expenses.

Furthermore, only deposit with insured institutions. Bank failures are rare — of the nearly 5,000 federally insured banks in the U.S. last year, only four failed — but smart savers will take precautions anyway. Before depositing your money with any institution, make sure it has a sign in its entrance saying its deposits are insured.

In conclusion, if your deposits exceed the $250,000 FDIC insurance limit, there are ways to federally insure deposits beyond the $250,000 limit set by the FDIC.

You may have to spread money into more than one FDIC-insured bank to insure all your money. You could also set up a trust and name beneficiaries. Each beneficiary is insured up to 250,000. Setting up accounts with different ownership categories is something you should discuss with your banker or other financial adviser.

Judd Matsunaga is the founding attorney of Elder Law Services of California, a law firm that specializes in Medi-Cal Planning, Estate Planning and Probate. He can be contacted at (310) 348-2995 or judd@elderlawcalifornia.com. The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Pacific Citizen or constitute legal or tax advice and should not be treated as such.
NCWNP

Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
San Francisco, CA
April 9-17
Price: Free

This cultural celebration coincides with the annual blooming of the cherry blossoms and the city is excited to welcome everyone back in person to celebrate this beautiful event! Hundreds of artists from the Bay Area will be there to showcase their craft and passions, in addition to delicious festival food at the Food Bazaar and live indoor and outdoor stages throughout Japantown. Info: Visit www.sfbcherryblossom.org for more information.

Nikkei Matsuri
San Jose, CA
April 24; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
San Jose Japanese American Community Center
Price: Free

The Nikkei Matsuri Foundation is pleased to host this annual event once again that provides a forum for sharing cultural exhibits and performances, as well as opportunities for many community-based charities to raise funds through cultural food-based sales in the ever-popular food court.


PSW

‘Tule Lake Stockade Diary’ Conversation with Nancy Kyoko Oda
March 26
Virtual Event
Price: Free

Sponsored by the SFV JACL, this event features John Guzman, Soji Kashikawa and Nancy Kyoko Oda in a conversation about the groundbreaking new book “Tule Lake Stockade Diary.” The diary, originally written in Japanese and translated into English, tells Tatsujiro Yoneda’s story of struggle and resilience in his own voice. Info: RSVP to mt.high.mtn@gmail.com for Zoom link for the March 26 event. To order the book, visit https://tulelakestockadediary.com.

2022 ESGVJC Annual Cherry Blossom Festival
West Covina, CA
April 23; Noon-6 p.m.
Plaza West Covina
112 Plaza Dr.
Price: Free

Join the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese American community at this springtime celebration of Japanese American culture and history. Experience music and dance performances, arts and crafts vendors and wonderful Japanese and American food.

Info: Call (626) 960-2566.

MDC

‘Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II’ Exhibit and Guest Speaker Dale Minami
Saint Paul, MN
May 21-22
Price: Free

Minneapolis History Center
345 Kellogg Blvd. W
This Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit will be on display at the Minneapolis History Center from April 23–July 3. The special event program on May 21 will feature a special program with exhibit viewing and reception, planned in partnership with the Minnesota Historical Society. Info: Contact the museum for more details.


PNW

‘Japanese American Remembrance Trail Tour’
Seattle, WA
Thru March 26
Price: Free

Sponsored by the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, Japane

EDC

24th Annual Freedom Walk
‘Dissenting Voice to EO 9066: Eleanor Roosevelt’
Washington, D.C.
April 2; 3 p.m. (EDT)
Virtual Event
Price: Free

Sponsored by the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, Japa

— D.C. chapter and Ekoji Buddhist Temple, this virtual event will welcome keynote speaker David Woliner, resident historian, senior fellow and former executive director of the Roosevelt Institute as he speaks about First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her views on EO 9066. Info: Visit https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/RN_PPVpOaTC2Gc_ARnewl to register.

NCWNP

National Cherry Blossom Festival
Washington, D.C.
Thru April
Price: Free; Tickets Available to Purchase for Special Seats for Parade

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is back to kick off the blooming of the cherry blossom trees located along the Tidal Basin. From the parade down Constitution Avenue to various cultural exhibits, food offerings, musical performances and so much more, there’s something for everyone in the family to enjoy.


FOR MORE INFO:
pc@pacificcitizen.org (213) 620-1767

EVENTS IN THE CALENDAR SECTION ARE LISTED BASED ON MAXIMUM EXPOSURE.
ah, Penelope ‘Penny,’ 85, Torrance, CA, Feb. 11; she is survived by her husband, Robert; children, Steven (Sandra Gong) Ahn, Lisa (Jon) Kuroyama and Jennifer (John) Yoshitake; sister, Hideo Hiramı; she is also survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 5.

Chikaraishi, Ben, 100, Lincolnwood, IL, Feb. 21; during WWII, his family and he were incarcerated at the Minidoka WRA Center in ID; relocating to Chicago, he completed his optometry degree; he is survived by his wife, Kiyo; children, Dona Chikaraishi (Philip Rossof), Ben Tod Chikaraishi (Phyllis Smith), James Chikaraishi (Ayk Taksit), Lynne Matsumoto (Jerry) and Nancy Chikaraishi (Marshall Arne); gc: 8.

Collins, Hideko Murakami, 95, Fayetteville, NC, Jan. 15; she was predeceased by her husband, Ken; four siblings; she is survived by her daughters, Alice Singletary (Frank) and Linda Miller; gc: 3; ggc: 8.

Fox, Kay Yamada, 93, Laurens, SC, Nov. 8, 2021; she is survived by her children, Tim Fox (Tionneee Cheryl) and Terry Fox-Cordie (John); sister-in-law, Grace (Tony); she is also survived by nieces and nephews and other relatives; gc: 3; ggc: 8.

Hanamoto, Jimmy Akira, 88, Missoula, HI, Jan. 21; he is survived by his wife, Yetsuko; children, Arthur (Lynne) Hanamoto, Barry (Linda) Hanamoto and Sandra (Gary) Yoshimasa; sister, Ruby Uemura.


Hirano, Wendy Reiko, 74, Gardena, CA, Dec. 20, 2021; she was predeceased by her brother, Rodney; she is survived by her sister, Lana; nephews, nieces, grandnieces and many cousins, family and friends.

Hunt, Chiyoko Higa, 94, Hickory, NC, Dec. 25, 2021; she was predeceased by her daughters Eiko and Fumiko; she is survived by her daughter, June Starnes (Bill); gc: 2.

Maeda, Akiko Arakaki, 90, Gardena, CA, Dec. 7, 2021; she was predeceased by her son, Kent F. Maeda; she is survived by her husband, Tom; children, Ayako Motoya, Midori (Neil) Kubota and Lance Maeda; gc: 8.

Maeda, Michael, 65, Kahului, HI, Dec. 7, 2021; a veteran (Air Force), he is survived by his parents, Cement and Helen; siblings, June (Louis) Gonsalves, Jean (Gordon) Macayla, Paul, Robert and Glenn; he is also survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Masuda, Sumako, 91, Los Angeles, CA, Aug. 7, 2021; she was predeceased by her husband, Steve Majdecki; mother, Elizabeth Nishimura, siblings, James, David, Douglas and Emi (Nishimura) LeJeune; she is also survived by 14 nieces and nephews.

Nakamura, Ruchi Jan, 84, La Habra, CA, Oct. 24, 2021; he is survived by his wife, Katherine; children, Lee (Mary) and Kimberly.

Nakamura, Wayne, 67, Kanehoe, HI, Nov. 19, B.A. and M.B.A. (UH); he is survived by his mother, Marsha Nakamura; siblings, Charlyne (Wayson Chow) Nakamura and Sandra (Mark) You; he is also survived by 2 nieces.

Nakao, Alice, 95, Brook Park OH, Aug. 12, 2021; she was predeceased by her children, Tom Jr. (Ruby) and Cindy Gorgone (Phil); siblings, Fumiko Taketa, Harry Taketa (Sally) and George Taketa (Mae); she is also survived by her sister, Kim Makii (Robert); gc: 1.


Nakayama, Tomoki ‘Tom,’ 82, Gardena, CA, Jan. 15; he was predeceased by his stepdaughter, Patricia McMurr; he is survived by his stepdaughter, Mary (Nick) Theus; siblings, Takeshi (Pat) Nakayama, Makoto (Lily) Nakayama, Yoshiko (Wallace) Fong, Kikiko Nakayama and Michio Nakayama; he is also survived by a nephew and 6 nieces; gc: 5; ggc: 10.

Otani, Dean Genshi, 65, Hilo, HI, Dec. 6, 2021; he is survived by his companion, Merle Kukona; father, George (Lei) Otani; siblings, Lori (Sam) Martin and Chris Otani; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Tawa, Kiyoko, 94, Gardena, CA, Feb. 13; she was predeceased by her husband, Masatsugu; he is survived by her sons, Ron (Suzi), Gary (Valerie) and Brian Tawa; sister, Keiko Ono; sister-in-law, Helen Shimane; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 6; ggc: 2.

Yamada, Johnny Yusuow, 92, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 8; Korean War veteran (Army); he is survived by his wife, Katsuo; children, Linda Eiko and Garrett Hideti; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Jeffrey Yoshioka Dies
The Silicon Valley JACL pillar was 63.

By P.C. Staff

Jeffrey L. Yoshioka, who helped found the Silicon Valley JACL chapter, died on Feb. 20. His funeral was held on March 6. He was 63.

Since the chapter’s founding in 2009, Yoshioka had also served as its president and treasurer. A certified public accountant who used his skills to help the chapter, he was described as its “backbone” for serving as the organizer of many of the chapter’s events and as someone who guided and encouraged younger members. He had also been active with the San Jose JACL chapter.

Among the many events he helped organize was the annual Silicon Valley JACL Basketball Tournament, which would attract as many as 96 teams and 1,000 players over two weekends.

Among his other involvements, Yoshioka participated with the JACL Health Trust, National Japanese American Memorial Committee, API Justice Coalition, the Japantown Community Congress, and he represented the chapter at Day of Remembrance and other community events. He was also a part of the Nikkei Matsumi Committee and helped coordinate the chapter’s Spam Musubi booth. The JACL’s NCWNP district honored him with its Unsung Hero award.

After graduating from San Jose’s Willow Glen High School, he earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting from San Jose State University. After obtaining his CPA license, he found employment at accounting firms owned by Rodney Kobar and George Neyama, before eventually starting his own accounting business. An outdoor celebration of life at Santa Clara University is planned for June 25, the date of his birth. For details, email siliconvalleyjacl@gmail.com. Condolences may be mailed to 2595 Plummer Ave., San Jose, CA 95125.
Omicron Is Adding Fuel to Mental Health Crisis – Part 2

Anxiety and depression are becoming chronic problems as the pandemic drags on

By Scott Tanaka

In my last article, I talked about how Covid-19 has impacted our mental wellness. It not only brought about new concerns as a result of social distancing requirements and the uncertainty of things, but it also further complicated challenges and difficulties that people were already working through before the pandemic.

Talking about mental health is not always easy. If you think therapy can help you, be persistent in finding the right therapist. If you don’t have a referral from your medical doctor or other health care providers, Psychology Today’s “Find a Therapist” and the APA’s “Psychologist Locator” are good resources. For more on the different kinds of therapy and finding one that fits your needs, see our story “How to Find the Right Therapist” (https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/mental-health-therapist.html).

Outside of traditional therapy, there are other options. AARP Friendly Voice, for example, was set up earlier in the pandemic to break through the wall of loneliness made more formidable by social distancing. Volunteers will call anyone who requests contact. If people are having a crisis — in critical need of food, health care or mental health intervention, for example — they are steered to appropriate help.

But more often, these calls are just an opportunity to have a relaxed, extended conversation with someone who’s friendly and caring. As a social worker, I found that for many of the people I worked with, they just wanted someone to listen to them. I let them know that what they were feeling was normal given the circumstances they were in. Sometimes, having a friendly and caring person to talk to is enough. And it’s OK to seek out that additional support. Those seeking a call from AARP’s Friendly Voice can reach out at https://aarpcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices/.

HELPLINES AND OTHER SUPPORT

• The NAMI HelpLine can be reached Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. ET at (800) 950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org. Volunteers can answer questions, offer support and provide practical next steps for mental health concerns. NAMI also offers 24-hour crisis support by text (text HOME to 741741) or via live chat by going to https://www.crisistextline.org/.

• The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s helpline (the Treatment Referral Routing Service) can, among other things, answer questions, offer support and provide resources. To consult with a social worker, call (213) 473-3035. To learn more about other services provided, visit https://www.ltc.org/helping-seniors/

The above list is not an exhaustive list of available resources and their inclusion is not an endorsement. You can also ask to speak to a social worker or case manager at your local hospital, health care facility or community center who can help connect you to resources in your area. Scott Tanaka is a member of the JACL Washington, D.C., chapter and is a policy, research and international affairs adviser at AARP.