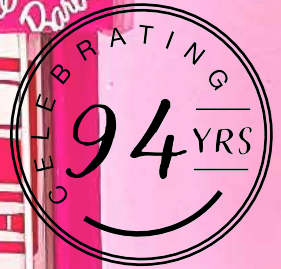


# PACIFIC CITIZEN



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# THINKING PINK

**Barbie  
Continues to  
Inspire Fans  
Around the  
World.**

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Traveling JACL  
New Mexico  
Exhibit in Oahu

» **PAGE 5**  
SF Peace Plaza  
to Undergo  
Renovation



# Barbie

Social media influencer Azusa Barbie with just some of her many items devoted to Mattel's iconic doll.

# JACL Receives Legacy Impact Award at OCA Gala

JACL is honored at OCA's 50th anniversary National Conference gala in Washington, D.C.

OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates awarded JACL its Legacy Impact Award during its 50th Anniversary Gala at the Capital Hilton on July 15 in Washington, D.C. The gala was held in conjunction with the organization's July 12-16 national convention themed "Organize. Connect Act!" with the aim of empowering, connecting and mobilizing AAPIs throughout the nation to build a better future.

In attendance to receive the award were several JACL representatives, including National President Larry Oda, Executive Director David Inoue, JACL Program Director Cheyenne Cheng, JACL Fellows Bridget Keaveney and Michael Tanaka, as well as former Executive Director and National President Floyd Mori and former JACL Washington, D.C., reps Kristine Minami and Bob Sakaniwa.

"For 94 years, JACL has been a leading light in the AAPI community," said OCA President Linda Ng in a statement. "They have led and

represented Japanese Americans through some of the toughest times in our nation's history, including the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II, anti-miscegenation laws, hate crimes and harmful anti-Japanese stereotypes in the media. There is no questioning the impact JACL has had on the day-to-day lives of the entire AAPI diaspora. They are truly deserving of this award."

"It is an honor to be recognized by such an esteemed organization as OCA," said JACL Executive Director David Inoue. "We have had the privilege of working with OCA on many issues throughout their 50-year history. To have peers honor you like this is truly touching. We look forward to another 50 years of working together in solidarity."

Other AAPI pioneers who were honored at the gala were MSNBC/NBC News anchor Richard Lui, NBA player Jeremy Lin, NARAL Pro-Choice America President Mini Timmaraju, OCA-New Jersey past president Virginia Ng and actor



Tamlyn Tomita.

The organization's five-day conference included three town halls highlighting coalition building, equitable access to health care and well-being and civic engagement, as well as 20 breakout sessions and visits on the Hill.

Founded in 1973, OCA is a "national, member-driven social justice organization of community advocates dedicated to advancing the social, political and economic well-being of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders."

Pictured at OCA's 50th Anniversary Gala where JACL was awarded the Legacy Impact Award were (from left) Michael Tanaka, JACL Daniel K. Inouye fellow; Bob Sakaniwa, former JACL Washington, D.C., rep; Bridget Keaveney, JACL Norman Mineta fellow; Thu Nguyen, OCA executive director; Cheyenne Cheng, JACL program director; Linda Ng, OCA national president; Larry Oda, JACL national president; David Inoue, JACL executive director; Floyd Mori, former JACL executive director; and Kristine Minami, former JACL Washington, D.C. rep.

PHOTO: RUI BARROS

# JACL Concludes Annual National Convention in Los Angeles

The organization pivots last-minute due to hotel workers strike and is 'Rooted in Community' in all sense of the word.



Despite an ongoing strike between Unite Here Local 11 and approximately 60 Los Angeles-area hotels after their

contract expired June 30, JACL pivoted its convention plans and ended its own contract at host the DoubleTree by Hilton in Los Ange-

les' Little Tokyo to embrace several local venues and community help during its annual National Convention the week of July 19-23.

Stepping in to help host convention throughout Little Tokyo thanks to JACL staff and local

leadership were the Japanese American National Museum, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, the Biltmore

Los Angeles, Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and the Terasaki Budokan during a week that included the organization's national board meeting, national council meeting, plenary and panel discussions, a welcome reception, Sayonara Gala and live performances of "Defining Courage" and "Question 27, Question 28."

Full coverage of JACL's National Convention will be featured in a special issue of the Pacific Citizen's Aug. 11-24 issue.

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The P.C.'s mission is to 'educate on the past Japanese American experience and preserve, promote and help the current and future AAPI communities.'

\* Your donations will help build and preserve a cohesive library of the Pacific Citizen to educate future generations.\*

"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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## A MOTHER'S TAKE



Enjoying Okaeri Queer Obon are (from left) Mia Barnett, Keith Nishida, Scott Oshima, Mariko Rooks, Rino Kodama and Gia Ichikawa

PHOTO: WILLA CUTOLO

## A HISTORIC EVENING

By Marsha Aizumi

A historic event took place in Little Tokyo on June 17. It was called “Okaeri Queer Obon.”

One of the goals Okaeri’s leaders envisioned over five years ago at a strategic planning retreat was people going to Obon and being able to be themselves. They could hold hands or show affection. They could drop their guard, come with their partners and be focused on the intent of Obon, which is to celebrate our ancestors, especially those from the queer and trans community. For one night, they could show up as their true selves without fear of judgment.

I loved this idea and hoped that 100-200 individuals would join in on Queer Obon and the odori dancing. I hoped there would be smiles on faces, whole families would come together and joy would fill the air. What I didn’t expect was that there would be 400 people that came out to join in this moment.

There is a saying that if you find a need and fill it, you have found something that your community yearns for.

It reminds me of the movie “Field of Dreams” with Kevin Costner, where he was told, “If you build it, they will come.”

But the need is not the only thing

that determines people coming. I also believe it is the spirit of the people involved and the unselfish passion they bring.

The lead organizer was Mia Barnett, who is also one of Okaeri’s co-chairs. Along with Scott Oshima and Keith Nishida, also co-organizers of the event, there was so much support from the community.

Azay provided food, supported by Masumoto, Tanaka, Yasutomi, Kashima, Koda, Tamai, Yaipapis family farms and Fujiya Market. Milk+Tea as there, Changing Times brought resources for suicide prevention, APAIT was there with their testing van, PFLAG San Gabriel

Valley brought their touchstone activity and Okaeri tabled as well.

Sean Miura and traci kato-kiriyama from Tuesday Night Project were our emcees. Rino Kodama created all the wonderful social media to draw people to Queer Obon.

Rev. Ko’e Umezu, Rev. John Iwihara and Rev. Keisuke Lee-Miyaki guided us through a memorial service in English and Japanese.

Gia Gunn and Mariko Rooks were our dance practice leaders.

A highlight was a performance by Gunn and then her aunt, Elaine Miyamura, who flew in from Chicago. Jan Mita joined as well. I watched with both pride and awe. Also bringing in their energy to celebrate our queer and trans community was Mujo Dream Flight.

It is our hope at Okaeri to continue with this wonderful event and bring our Nikkei LGBTQ+ community together in love, hope and courage, which are our core values.

One of the attendees shared with me that “Okaeri was one of the most culturally euphoric days of my life.” When you see the intersection of

all, and you are fully embraced, I can imagine how uplifting that can be.

If you would like to learn more about Okaeri, visit us at [www.okaeri-losangeles.org](http://www.okaeri-losangeles.org).

*Marsha 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.”*



Traditional Obon dancing to honor our queer and trans ancestors

PHOTO: WILLA CUTOLO



## LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

## HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

If you have noticed some “concerning things” about your aging parent, you’re probably right. Our brains, like the rest of our body, change as we grow older. It’s quite common to notice increasing forgetfulness in your aging parent as they age. It may also take longer for them to think of a word, recall a person’s name or how to drive home.

Cognitive decline, also known as cognitive impairment, in older adults refers to the concern of or difficulty with a person’s thinking, memory, concentration and other brain functions beyond what is typically expected due to aging. It can come on suddenly or gradually, and it can be permanent or temporary.

Problems with memory or thinking that hasn’t yet been diagnosed by doctors could be one of the earliest signs of clinical dementia. According to WebMD.com, some of the most common signs of cognitive decline include:

- Forgetting things more often
- Forgetting important appointments or social engagements

- Losing your train of thought or a thread of conversations, books or
- Experiencing difficulty finding your way around familiar environments
- Becoming more impulsive or showing increasingly poor judgment
- Your family and friends notice changes
- Feeling increasingly overwhelmed by making decisions or understanding instructions

If this describes your aging parent (or yourself), relay your concerns to your parent’s doctor. The doctor needs to know about the symptoms and problems to get your parent evaluated for possible underlying dementia. Most concerns about an aging parent do track back to underlying medical problems that should be identified and addressed.

That said, many primary care doctors don’t have the time or experience to provide the optimal evaluation and support. If his or her doctor doesn’t seem very helpful, consider a specialty consultation with a neurologist, memory center or geriatrician. This should enable you to get a better understanding of what brain and body problems might be affecting your aging parent’s behavior.

As the loving, caring adult child, you may have brought up your concerns to your aging parent. However, your aging parent has probably resisted any help, especially if it is related to their abilities or threatens their identity. Other common points of resistance are changing their living situation, changing what they are doing, accepting assistance, giving up a usual activity or receiving unpleasant information.

Almost always, there will be a trade-off between parent’s autonomy and their safety and well-being. On the one hand, you want to respect your parents’ wishes and not tell them what to do, i.e., parents’ wishes shouldn’t be ignored. On the other hand, it would be unethical to put your parents (and others) in danger, e.g., continuing driving. Don’t underestimate the effort this balancing act requires.

What makes things worse, memory loss tends to worsen resistance. The safety issues are either not as obvious to them or not as important as feeling independent. An impaired brain is very poorly equipped to understand and appropriately respond to declining abilities since insight and judgment are affected. Suspicious thoughts, paranoia and even delusions can occur if the brain is unwell or deteriorating. Or, they just keep forgetting about all the problems you are noticing.

According to board-certified geriatrician Dr. Leslie Kernisan, resistance to change and assistance in common in ALL older adults — whether or not they have memory problems. She says that older adults want to feel strong and independent. Making changes or accepting assistance challenges their preferred identity. So, resistance is common.

She says that it is a mistake to focus on explanations trying to get a parent to understand thinking once they understand they will cooperate. Memory loss diminishes one’s ability to understand. You can also lose insight and judgment. But not emotions — they think there’s something wrong with them, causes embarrassment or possibly anger.

Also avoid relying on logic. Logic never works well when it comes to emotionally charged subjects. And it especially doesn’t work if people are experiencing any difficulties with memory or thinking. So, don’t expect your mom to be logical, and don’t rely on logical arguments to convince her, it only leads to vicious cycles of arguments and frustration.

According to Kernisan’s website, [www.betterhealthwhileaging.net](http://www.betterhealthwhileaging.net), if you notice your parent resisting something — STOP insisting or trying to convince. Instead, switch to validating and learning. Focus on connecting, i.e., empathy, not explanations. An empathetic connecting approach means you:

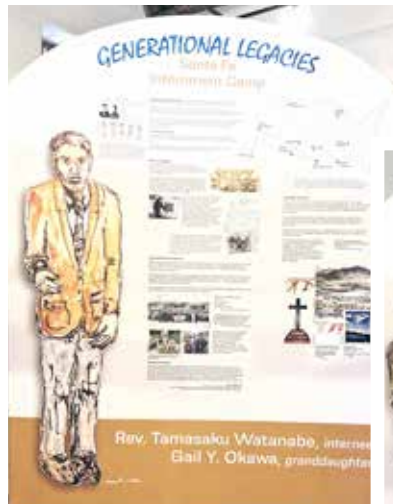
- **LISTEN** before you make suggestions. What’s their vision of how you could or should be helping?
- **FOCUS** on understanding how they see things. What’s your parent’s/s’ take on the issues you’re concerned about? Have they voiced any specific concerns, complaints, worries or problems?
- **VALIDATE** their feelings. In other words, do you have a sense of their goals and priorities? Their fears or concerns?
- **REMEMBER** that it’s their life, and they may have different priorities than you do.
- **APPRECIATE** how important dignity and autonomy is to them.

Do they seem open to outside help? Once you get better at “connecting,” your parent will feel better about you (and about them). You’ll better understand what matters to your parents. And you’ll be building relationship capital and valuable intel for later. As a bonus, their brains will work better when they experience less conflict.

*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](mailto: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.*

## New Mexico JACL Traveling Exhibit Opens in Hawaii

'Generational Legacies: The Santa Fe Internment Camp' is on display in Oahu through Aug. 31.



**New Mexico JACL's "Generational Legacies: The Santa Fe Internment Camp" traveling exhibit consists of four panels that highlight the wartime experiences of three individuals who occupied the SFIC — Rev. Tamasaku Watanabe, Shoichi Nojima and Hal West — as well as an overview of SFIC history.**

PHOTOS: GAIL OKAWA

An unlikely World War II connection between tropical Hawaii and arid New Mexico is highlighted in a traveling exhibit currently on display at Hawaii's Plantation Village on Oahu through Aug. 31.

Originally created to portray representative human stories of the WWII imprisonment of Japanese resident aliens (Issei) in a Department of Justice-run U.S. concentration camp, "Generational Legacies: The Santa Fe Internment Camp" was funded in part by a JACL Legacy Fund grant in 2021-22.

It had accompanied "Stories, Memories and Legacies: The Santa Fe Internment Camp and Its Historical Marker," a symposium/pilgrimage commemorating the 20th anniversary of the SFIC Marker's controversial establishment, which was co-sponsored by the New Mexico JACL and held at the New Mexico History Museum in April 2022.

On March 4, the Hawaii exhibit opening accompanied "The Many Infamies of WWII," a book launch

and talk on "Remembering Our Grandfathers' Exile: U.S. Imprisonment of Hawai'i's Japanese in WWII" by Dr. Gail Y. Okawa. Okawa's maternal grandfather, Rev. Tamasaku Watanabe, was arrested in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, along with hundreds of other Issei in the Islands and on the West Coast, and exiled to U.S. Army and DOJ incarceration camps in Texas and New Mexico, including Santa Fe. Hawaii's Plantation Village stands only a few miles away from the WWII site of the Honouliuli Internment Camp on Oahu.

Consisting of four panels, the exhibit is on loan from the New Mexico JACL and highlights the wartime experiences of three individuals who occupied the SFIC — Rev. Watanabe, Shoichi Nojima, an internee from Seattle, as well as Hal West, a guard from Santa Fe — and their descendants, Okawa, Nikki Nojima Louis and Jerry West, respectively, who portray the experiences of their relatives and the hundreds of Issei unjustly



incarcerated in Santa Fe during WWII through writing, readers theater and art.

A fourth panel provides an overview of SFIC history, and the reverse sides of the panels depict the artwork of Kango Takamura, a mainland Issei artist, who was also forcibly incarcerated in Santa Fe and documented prison life in his paintings.

After it closes in Hawaii, the exhibit will be returned to New Mexico and available to others interested in the less-known Issei incarceration story.

*For more information and photos, contact Gail Okawa at [gyokawa@yahoo.com](mailto:gyokawa@yahoo.com).*



## Answer Keiro's Community Survey!

Keiro 

Keiro is partnering with Vantage Research & Consulting, Inc. to conduct a community-wide, 10-15 minute online survey designed to assess the needs and preferences of Our Community. This survey will allow us to explore sustainable solutions to support the community's older adults in the future.

Please answer the survey if you are...

- Part of the Japanese American and Japanese community AND
- Residing or have a close loved one in Los Angeles, Orange, or Ventura Counties

### How to Participate:

- 1 Submit your name and email address to [keiro.org/survey](https://keiro.org/survey) by August 31, 2023.
- 2 Look out for an email between August 1 and September 5 for the survey link. All surveys must be completed by September 15, 2023.

Contact **213.873.5700** or [survey@keiro.org](mailto:survey@keiro.org) before July 28, 2023 to request a mailed survey. Scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/survey](https://keiro.org/survey). For questions, email [survey@keiro.org](mailto:survey@keiro.org).





The current Japantown Peace Plaza sign



Casual and informal seating in Peace Plaza; numerous pavement stones have been cracked through the years, some by illegal skateboarding.

Japanese American monument from the California Landmarks Project



A close-up photo of the entrance to Peace Plaza, with its sign for "Peace" written in kanji

# PEACE PLAZA UNDERGOES MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR FACELIFT

The \$33.5 million renovation plan promises big changes ahead for San Francisco Japantown.

By Emily Murase, P.C. Contributor

Since 1968, the Peace Plaza has been the heart of San Francisco Japantown and, at 55 years old, it is scheduled for a \$33.5 million face-lift conducted by the City and County of San Francisco, in partnership with the Japantown community. Groundbreaking is slated for mid-year 2024.

The Peace Pagoda, now an iconic symbol of Japantown, was designed by renowned Japanese architect Yoshiro Taniguchi and gifted to the people of San Francisco from the people of sister city Osaka. Incorporating an eternal flame from the celebrated Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine in Osaka, the original Peace Plaza was part of the Japanese Trade and Cultural Center, built in 1968. While the Japanese Trade and Cultural Center opened to great fanfare, it was the centerpiece of the controversial Western Addition Area-1 Redevelopment Project, which led to the eviction of 8,000 residents, including 1,500 Japanese Americans, according to researcher Shizue Siegel. In addition, hundreds of Japanese American-run businesses were either moved or shuttered, including Evergreen Fountain, the Fuji Hotel, Nippon Goldfish and Yamato Auto Repair, among dozens of others.

In response to planned further evictions, Japantown community members formed the Committee Against

Nihonmachi Eviction (CANE). Despite organized community opposition, Japantown lost many longtime residents and businesses, even further injuring a community devastated by the wartime incarceration.

Notwithstanding, CANE community advocates went on to play pivotal roles in other social justice issues in Japantown and beyond. CANE is celebrating its 50th anniversary on Aug. 19 at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (*for more information, visit <https://cane50.org/>*).

Despite its controversial beginnings, the Peace Plaza has remained important open space and a central venue for community celebrations; rallies; the annual Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival, now in its 56th year; the annual Nihonmachi Street Fair, which is celebrating its 49th year on Aug. 5 and 6; the Soy and Tofu Festival, now in its 11th year; Japan Day; and many other community events.

An earlier renovation of the Peace Plaza took place in 2001. It was intended to repair persistent and damaging leaks into the Japan Center Garage and make other improvements, but its renovation was troubled almost from the start and eventually led to a city lawsuit against the contractor for shoddy construction. Despite a significant settlement, the funding was not directed to the Peace Plaza.

In a case report to the Historic Preservation Commission dating back to 2014, the San Francisco Planning Department stated: "The original design of the Peace

Plaza was substantially modified by the 2000-01 renovation. . . . The integrity of the Peace Plaza has been degraded by [these] alterations."

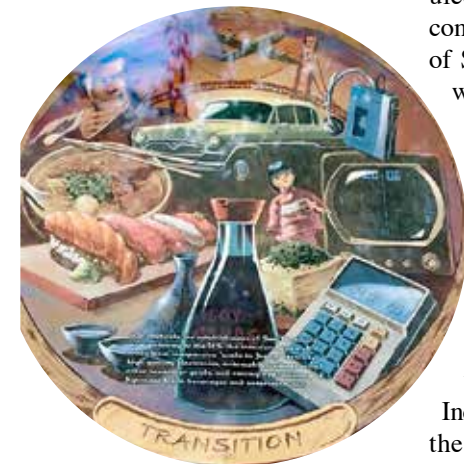
Yet, significant additions have been made to the area. Funded by the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, a nine-foot tall tripartite bronze monument to the Japanese American experience was erected at the edge of the Peace Plaza in 2005 as part of the California Landmarks Project.

Illustrated panels titled "Introduction," "Transition" and "Innovation" depict the origins of San Francisco Japantown, the transition to contemporary Japantown and one focused on creativity rooted in "anime and manga" hang on the wall along the Japan Center West Mall.

In 2015, the San Francisco-based Japantown Foundation launched a movement to restore and invigorate the Peace Plaza after years of neglect. The obstacles were not insignificant. The effort required close coordination between multiple city agencies, including the Recreation and Parks Department, which owns the Peace Plaza, the Municipal Transportation Authority that is responsible for the Japan Center Garage, which lies directly underneath the Peace Plaza, the Planning Department, and the Department of Public Works.

A Peace Plaza Committee, co-chaired by Jon Osaki, executive director of the Japanese Community Youth Council, and Richard Hashimoto, president of the Japantown Merchants Assn., was formed

» See FACELIFT on page 8



Illustrated panels about San Francisco Japantown and its cultural history are located next to planted cherry trees on the West Mall. They include "Introduction," "Transition" and "Innovation."



A rock memorial plaque commemorates Japantown Peace Plaza's renovation in 2001.



San Francisco Japantown's Peace Plaza today; the Peace Pagoda was donated by the people of Osaka, Japan, in 1968.

PHOTOS: EMILY MURASE

Diversity was a well-represented theme in the “Barbie” movie.

PHOTOS: WARNER BROS. PICTURES



# Barbie



The “Barbie” film featured Asian American characters played by (from top) Ritu Arya, Ana Cruz, Kayne and Simu Liu.

# THINKING PINK

From Barbie’s Japan roots to her current turn as an onscreen boxoffice winner, the beloved Mattel toy continues her generational longevity as an inspiration to fans around the world.

By Athena Asklipiadis, Contributor

After a month of Barbie and the color pink saturating the media with the release of Warner Bros. Pictures’ “Barbie” movie, I decided to sit down with both native Japanese and Japanese Americans to get their take on all the hoopla. I also wanted to delve as deep as I could to research Barbie’s beginnings in Japan in the 1950s, as well as think about the current diversity in the Barbie line.

Ever since I could remember, my favorite color has always been pink, and if you asked me why, I guess it must have come from my love of Barbie, a fixture in my childhood and the childhoods of many young girls.

Barbie has always been a part of my life.

I became a “Barbie collector” at the ripe old age of 11. My first two collector dolls were part of Barbie’s “Dolls of the World” series in the 1990s. I went back and forth with myself internally on whether or not I wanted to keep them in the box untouched or rip the boxes open and play with them.

I ended up deciding to keep them unopened, and before I knew it, I had collected more than 100 dolls and dozens of unboxed dolls, doll houses, furniture playsets and accessories. One of the two I originally started my collection with was a 1995 Japanese Barbie wearing a gorgeous lilac floral kimono.

Barbie to me growing up was not only Japanese in ‘95, but she was also Greek like me as well, as that same year came the “Grecian Goddess.” Then she was a graduate like me in ‘98 when I graduated middle school. Barbie was all the things I was and all the things I could be.

At that time, I had no idea about the backstory of this famous doll or about the thousands of fans and collectors around the world that adored her. I fortunately was able to see a Barbie who represented me and my culture, but that was not always the case in the brand’s early years for the children of the 1960s, ‘70s and most of the ‘80s.

When Barbie was first launched in 1959 by Mattel, it quickly became the most popular doll in the next few years. My uncle, Stephen Yahiro, a single young man in his 20s at that time, decided to wait in a long line

at a department store to get one of the coveted new dolls.

He thought it would make a great gift for one of his young nieces. That Christmas, he decided to give the Barbie doll to his niece, Ginger, and other choice toys to her siblings. But little did he know, his good deed would almost ruin Christmas!

While Ginger and her brothers opened their gifts in delight, her younger sister, Coreen, was opening her gift, a toy vacuum — a common age-appropriate gift at the time for a toddler. To everyone’s surprise, little Coreen burst into tears, wishing she, too, had gotten a Barbie.

My dear uncle, who has now passed, would chuckle telling that story over and over to me, saying that he would always remember that Christmas when Coreen had a tantrum over Barbie, throwing her toy vacuum aside in tears.

In those early days, likely due to its heavy and effective marketing, it is clear that there was not one little girl who did not want a Barbie.

But before the Barbie craze began, the doll’s concept was just an idea. Created by Ruth Handler and her dream team at Mattel, Barbie was based on a risqué German doll, Bild Lilli. An adult woman doll for children instead of a baby doll was a new thought, and quite frankly, a risk.

Jack Ryan, a toy designer, was responsible for the engineering and doll’s patent. Ryan, with the help of Mattel’s Frank Nakamura’s Japanese language skills and design background, took the designs to Japan to toy manufacturer Kokusai Boeki Kaisha to create the doll prototypes and start mass production.

Post World War II, Japan’s labor was much more affordable. Chronicled in the book “Barbie and Ruth” by Robin Gerber, “The factory workers who assembled the doll came in from the Japanese countryside,



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ATHENA MARI ASKLIPIADIS



Pictured (from top):

Athena Asklipiadis has been a lifelong Barbie collector. She is shown with her beloved Asian Barbie collection.

Pink-loving Athena in 1991

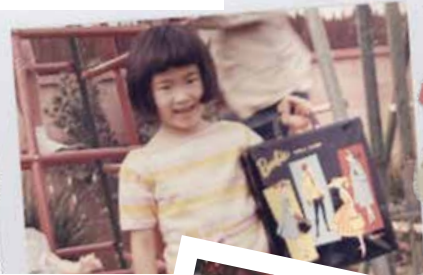
A close-up look at Athena’s Japanese Barbie from 1995

Today, Athena and her family live out their Barbie box dreams.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ASKLIPIADIS FAMILY

**Naomi Hayase's original Corvette was a gift her brother bought for her in the U.S.**



**Sisters Coreen Fujinami (née Yahiro) (above) and Ginger Tuhulski (née Yahiro) with their Barbie cases in 1962**



**The Yahiro sisters still have their Barbie cases and original dolls today.**

willing to work for low wages until harvest time. They lived in company-run dormitories and ate at company cafeterias. In August, they quit en masse to harvest rice.”

The book goes on to illustrate that after some failed first attempts, with material changes and even Barbie at one time shocking the staff by returning from Japan with nipples, the doll was finally revised and ready to be released. The first 300,000 Barbie dolls were put on store shelves and were a hit, according to History.com.

When it comes to Barbie's first infamous fashionable wardrobe, we have designer Charlotte Johnson to thank.

Johnson, a skilled designer who had experience in children's clothing, was hired by Handler and Mattel. According to Gerber's book, "Johnson found a Japanese woman in her neighborhood to sew the tiny samples. But as the line developed, Ruth's production staff told her that all the zippers, snaps, buttons, darts and hemlines made the clothes far too detailed to be manufactured cost effectively in the United States.”

Johnson ended up following the doll manufacturing team to Japan, living in Tokyo and getting Barbie's miniature looks just right with the help of Japanese locals.

During her time in Japan, Johnson lived at Tokyo's acclaimed Imperial Hotel, designed by famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Coincidentally, in my 20s, I worked for Imperial Hotel's Los Angeles sales office from 2009-11. It was there that I learned about this interesting connection Barbie had with Japan. At that time, the hotel had a Barbie installation that was part of a historic timeline display to pay homage to Johnson.

According to Iori Hamada from the Imperial Hotel's Public Relations Department, he shared that Johnson "had a sewing machine in her room and stayed from December 1957 for about a year.”

Hamada also went on to say that Johnson often spent her time in the luxurious hotel lobby sitting and observing the comings and goings of hotel guests who inspired her designs of about 22 of Barbie's first outfits.

In recent years, the Imperial Hotel still remembers Johnson's contributions by commemorating anniversaries of the doll line. Most recently, in 2019, the hotel celebrated the 60th anniversary of Barbie with an "Afternoon Tea" menu that ran for a limited time, as well as a doll exhibit. Johnson's assistant in Japan, Fumiko Miyatsuka, a Kokusai Boeki employee, wrote her own book detailing her relationship with Johnson and Barbie. In her book "Barbie and I," Miyatsuka shares the process of designing the first 22 sample outfits.

Meeting Johnson was Miyatsuka's first experience working with and getting to know an American, and it was not easy as there was a language barrier. Surprisingly, with no English skills on Miyatsuka's end and very little, if any, Japanese on Johnson's end, the two were still able to deliver quite the wardrobe.

Miyatsuka was not only instrumental to the doll's first looks, but she was also behind the infamous art design of the shoe-box-style casing in which early Barbies were sold.

Barbie would be produced in Japan until the 1970s for U.S. consumers, but it was not sold and marketed widely to Japanese children.

For little girls living in Japan then

like Naomi Hayase, she was keenly aware of the doll due to her family spending time living in the states. But to her dismay, she found Barbie extremely hard to find.

Dolls like Licca-chan and Jenny were all the rage in Japan in the 1980s, but Hayase knew she still wanted Barbie. Going to school with and living near ex pats, Hayase would see more and more new Barbies at friends' houses.

She was attracted to the doll because it was so visually different, and there were so many more varieties of accessories, clothes and shoes.

"I just thought Barbies were just so much cooler and prettier," Hayase shared. She also said that the only way to get a doll was to visit an import or U.S. military base store or get one from someone you knew visiting from the U.S. — not an easy feat.

But Hayase's luck would change when her brother went off to college and when her father had business that took him to the U.S. She remembers begging for Barbie dolls and accessories every time her family would travel to and from the U.S.

One fond memory she has is of her brother returning for Christmas

break with a pink Barbie corvette in tow. He got loads of attention in the airport trekking around the big pink box through security. Ladies at the airport swooned, saying he was so sweet to be bringing home such a cute gift for the holidays.

The newest Fashionista dolls are now of various races, body types (now tall, petite and curvy) and even disabilities. Ginger and Coreen, who are grandmothers now, definitely are thinking about the next generation.

Ginger Tuhulski, who now lives in Texas, recently went through her collection with her daughter and granddaughter, rediscovering her favorite dolls she had stored away.

Coreen Fujinami, who now lives in San Diego, shared her thoughts on Barbie's new diversity.

"Playing with dolls is imaginative play, what you want to do, say, experience (dating Ken!), so for Asian girls and boys to be able to do that with dolls who look like them . . . well, they can dream big!"

But the journey to inclusivity did not happen overnight. Despite Barbie's birthplace technically being Japan and it being manufactured there until the 1970s, it took many years before the public saw the first Asian Barbie.

Although Black Barbie's debut was in 1968, it wouldn't be for another 13 years that America would see an Asian doll. In 1981, "Oriental Barbie" was the first Asian Barbie introduced to the U.S.

The Asian Barbies today have since come a long way from the once-tokenized foreign friend of Barbie. There have been numerous iterations of Japanese Barbies through the years, from traditional kimonos to a historic Maiko to a 2020 Tokyo Olympics skateboarder Barbie.

But best of all, having an array of diverse dolls without cultural stories just appearing as regular American girls makes being Asian American not an exception. Seeing an Asian Barbie as a career woman or seeing a "curvy" (plus-size) Asian Barbie doll was not something I grew up with, and I am so thankful that Mattel has realized that not all diverse dolls always need an explanation to existing. They can simply just be.

But at the same time, the brand has been good in the last several years at celebrating cultural heritage months and creating historic dolls that represent particular trailblazers as well. Dolls modeled after greats like Maya Angelou, Frida Kahlo and the recently released Anna May Wong from the "Inspiring Women Series" have been popular. Mattel now seems to be getting it really right.

Another smart move by Mattel is getting behind the recent production of the "Barbie" movie directed by Greta Gerwig. Not only did the blockbuster amass a whopping \$162 million its opening weekend — the largest-grossing film by a female director — it has charmed Barbie and non-Barbie fans alike.

The film, much like the historic doll, takes audiences on a journey to learn what it means and what it takes to be a woman today. Without giving the movie away, I will say that it does a good job at addressing and repairing the often-scrutinized, very white and very thin Barbie stereotype while also reinforcing that women can do anything.

Not only were there Barbies of color that embodied that, but also a lead role was given to Chinese-Canadian actor Simu Liu. Liu playing a Ken alongside other Kens of color without race or culture being discussed was a great way that the film normalized minorities.

» See PINK on page 9

**Ginger holding her original Barbie and Ken dolls**



**Barbie superfan and influencer "Azusa Barbie" lives a life completely inspired by Barbie and all things pink.**





**Bugler Staff Sgt. Craig Basarich, U.S. Army Band, plays "Taps" at the National WWII Memorial.**

PHOTO: NICOLE YAMADA

# JAVA Holds Day of Affirmation Wreath CEREMONY

The fourth annual event paid tribute to the legacy of the Japanese American men and women who served in World War II.

**The mural at Camp Ritchie in Cascade, Md., believed to have been painted by Nisei soldier Nobuo Kitagaki**

PHOTO: LANDON GROVE



**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — It was a weekend of commemoration and celebration for the Japanese American Veterans Assn. as it held the fourth annual Day of Affirmation Wreath Ceremony at the National World War II Memorial on July 15, followed by a luncheon held the next day at the Army and Navy Club in the nation's capitol.

With overcast skies offering some relief from the noonday sun, JAVA members and friends, along with curious tourists, reflected on JAVA President Gerald Yamada's remarks, which paid tribute to the returning Nisei World War II soldiers whom President Harry S. Truman reviewed on the White House Ellipse on July 15, 1946.

President Truman's salute on that historic afternoon to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice — and you have won. Keep up that fight, and we will continue to win — to make this great Republic stand for just what the Constitution says it stands for: the welfare of all the people all the time," affirms that all the Japanese American soldiers, men and women who served during WWII are America's heroes and removes any doubt that they are loyal citizens of the United States of America and was the source of JAVA's now annual tradition.

Said Yamada in his remarks: "Thirty-three thousand Japanese Americans served. We honor them today and every day as America's heroes. We especially remember the almost 800 Japanese American soldiers who died during the war represented by eight of the gold stars on this Memorial's Price of Freedom Wall."

As onlookers reflected on Yamada's words, which called to mind the legacy created by the 33,000 Japanese American men and women who served in WWII, the military escort and wreath bearers represented three generations of the family of local centenarian, former JAVA Executive Director and RCT 442nd veteran Terry Shima.

Serving in the military escort were Terry Shima's son, Mike Shima, who was assisted by his son, Eric Shima. Following in his father's legacy of service, Mike Shima served in the U.S. Army. One of the wreath bearers was

Eileen Shima Roulier, who is Terry Shima's daughter. The other wreath bearer was Mike Shima's daughter, Kelly Shima, who was assisted by her son, Donovan Trexler. The group processed with the wreath to the Price of Freedom Wall. After a moment of silence in front of the wall, the sound of "Taps" brought a somber close to the ceremony.

Commemoration activities also included a luncheon at the Army and Navy Club in downtown Washington, D.C. In addition to a welcome address by Yamada, the program featured guest speaker Landon Grove, director and curator of the Ritchie History Museum, who shared with the group a fascinating history of Camp Ritchie.

Although Camp Ritchie, located in Cascade, Md., had its start as a training base for the Maryland National Guard, during WWII, U.S. soldiers, the majority of whom were immigrants, were trained in German, Italian and French to decode enemy communications and interrogate prisoners of war captured in Europe. One class of approximately 500 Nisei also trained at Camp Ritchie.

In the late 1990s, the camp was closed and fell into disrepair. It is now in private hands and is being developed with historic preservation as a priority.

Grove detailed the museum's intense efforts to carefully reconstruct the history of the camp. Part of that effort, he added, includes gathering artifacts and memorabilia.

One of the Ritchie History Museum's projects that Grove spearheads is fundraising for the eventual restoration of a previously boarded up and neglected mural at a nearby Camp Ritchie building believed to have been painted by Nisei soldier and "Ritchie Boy" Nobuo Kitagaki.

Considering that many of the installation's buildings were vandalized by graffiti and suffered from water damage, fortunately, other than areas of flaking paint, the mural survived intact.

Before concluding his talk, Grove invited all to make the 90-mile drive from Washington, D.C., to Cascade and visit the museum.

The luncheon concluded with high praise and appreciative applause for Grove and his work at the Ritchie History Museum. ■

## FACELIFT » continued from page 5

under the auspices of the Japantown Task Force. Community advocates, merchants, residents and other stakeholders participated in dozens of community focus groups to develop a Peace Plaza Vision Plan, beginning with the following mission statement:

*Lead a community-engaged design process for the Peace Plaza so that Japantown will thrive as a culturally rich, authentic, and economically vibrant neighborhood which will serve as the cultural heart of the Japanese and Japanese American communities for generations to come.*

The Vision Plan was formally adopted in 2019, and a design team composed of project managers from the Recreation and Parks Department, landscape architects from the Department of Public Works and, at the insistence of community stakeholders, a community design consultant, who was hired to advocate for authentic Japanese design principles and the preferences of community stakeholders, was formed.

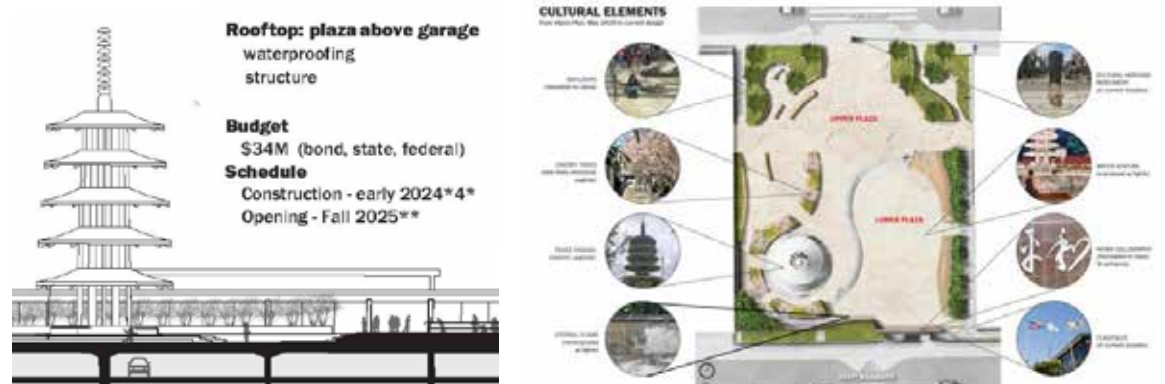
In 2020, the voters of San Francisco approved the Health and Recovery

Bond that allocated \$25 million to fund the Peace Plaza renovation. During the pandemic, the design team worked remotely to conduct extensive analysis of the elements proposed in the Vision Plan.

The first element to be identified as a problem was a proposed water feature. The original Peace Plaza included a large reflection pool in front of the Peace Pagoda, which was removed in the 2001 renovation. Given the continuing problem of significant water leaks into the garage below, the design team eliminated the water feature, much to the disappointment of community stakeholders.

The designers explained that, given the garage underneath, the Peace Plaza should be considered a rooftop garden and, as such, has many structural constraints, particularly weight. Lighting options were introduced as a possible substitute.

In January 2022, the Recreation and Parks Department announced a significant shortfall of \$8 million due to rising construction costs. The new estimate for the renovation topped \$33.5 million. Community advo-



**Current concept plans of the renovation see Peace Plaza as a rooftop garden due to the parking structure currently located beneath the site. Cultural elements play a key role in the renovation.**

cates then turned to state and federal sources for help.

In September 2022, California State Assemblymember Phil Ting, chair of the Budget Committee, announced \$6 million in state funding to support the renovation.

At the press conference, Ting pointed to the importance of the funding in terms of restorative justice, saying: "This isn't just about modernizing a public space. It's also about making amends to Japanese Americans who were forced out of Japantown not once, but twice. The state should

be a partner in these efforts to make things right, and I was determined to fight for this funding."

Then, in April 2023, Speaker of the House Emerita Nancy Pelosi announced \$3 million in federal funding to close the funding gap. In a Tweet following a press conference at the Peace Plaza, Pelosi stated, "San Francisco's Japantown Peace Plaza speaks to our city's unity to #StopAPIHate and embrace of our beautiful diversity. Community leadership in its revitalization ensures that it will remain a beacon

of hope for our city and for visitors from around the globe."

Now fully funded, the Peace Plaza renovation is on track for construction bids this fall.

To hear monthly updates on the Peace Plaza renovation, the public is invited to attend the Japantown Task Force Peace Plaza Committee meetings, held every fourth Tuesday of the month from 5-6 p.m.

Agenda and Zoom link are available at the Japantown Task Force website at [www.japantowntaskforce.org](http://www.japantowntaskforce.org). ■





# Heart Mountain Exhibit Celebrates Neighborhood Where Japanese and Black Americans Found Solidarity

## 'MAKING A NEIGHBORHOOD' TELLS THE STORY OF LOS ANGELES' J-FLATS AND THE BOND ITS RESIDENTS FORMED DURING WWII.

By Ray Locker, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation

When Executive Order 9066 forced Japanese Americans living in the Los Angeles neighborhood known as J-Flats from their homes and into incarceration camps during World War II, their African American neighbors came to their aid.

The family of Rufus and Crystal Marshall stored their neighbors' belongings, protected their homes and brought them food during their incarceration at the Pomona Assembly Center. The Marshalls' dedication meant that many of the neighborhood's incarcerated had something to return to when they gained their release from their forced incarceration.

"Making a Neighborhood," a new exhibit now open at the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center in Powell, Wyo., tells the story of the neighborhood's rise and the alliance between Black and Japanese Americans who were prevented by racist covenants and discriminatory lending practices from moving to many parts of greater Los Angeles before and after WWII.

Curated by Samanta Helou Hernandez, a Los Angeles journalist and photographer, and Heart Mountain Executive Director Aura Sunada Newlin, the exhibit traces the history of the neighborhoods and the people who have lived since its first settlement in the late 1800s.

George Washington Albright, who was born into enslavement in Mississippi before the Civil War, developed some of the early parcels of land in the neighborhood. He was Crystal Marshall's father.

The HMWF will combine the exhibit with the presentation of its LaDonna Zall Compassionate Witness Award to three members of

the Marshall family — their daughter, Barbara Marshall Williams, granddaughter Karen "Kiwi" Burch and great-granddaughter Robin Waller. The award, named after longtime Heart Mountain curator and board member LaDonna Zall, will be given during the Heart Mountain Pilgrimage.

Funding for the exhibit came from an endowment created by Heart Mountain board member Takashi Hoshizaki, one of the Marshalls' neighbors before and after the war. The exhibit will remain in the museum's temporary exhibit space until April 2024 and be developed into digital and traveling exhibits.

The HMWF preserves the site where some 14,000 Japanese Americans were unjustly incarcerated in Wyoming from 1942-45. Their stories are told within the foundation's museum, the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, located between Cody and Powell.

*For more information, call the center at (307) 754-8000 or email [info@heartmountain.org](mailto:info@heartmountain.org).*

## PINK » continued from page 7

The Imperial Hotel has continued to honor Barbie and its connection to her throughout the years. In 2019 to celebrate Barbie's 60th birthday, it featured a special tea Barbie-themed menu.

Two of the main Barbie characters were also of various Asian heritage — Ritu Arya, who is of Indian descent, plays Journalist Barbie, and Ana Cruz Kayne, who is of Filipina and Jewish descent, portrays Supreme Court Justice Barbie.

The highly anticipated film is also a great excuse for friends to get together. Fujinami plans to go with her childhood friend, Mary Anne, with whom she played Barbies about 60 years ago.

She shared, "We're going to go see the 'Barbie' movie together — it should be fun to reminisce. . . . I have great memories playing for hours as a child. I'm sure those memories will be rekindled by this film."

Barbie superfan and influencer "Azusa Barbie" was equally thrilled with the film's debut.

The pink-haired, pink-wearing beauty did not just dress up that way for the Hollywood premier, she wears everything pink and Barbie on a daily basis and has the closet to prove it!

Yahoo News, who interviewed her in 2017, shared that Azusa, real last name Sakamoto, had a collection that was estimated at \$70,000 at that time. She shared with me that she now has a collection of more than 500 dolls and 300 Barbie-branded



shirts and sweatshirts.

But her wardrobe is just the beginning. Azusa's entire apartment is Barbie inspired. From pink frying pans to custom Barbie bathroom tiles, Azusa has managed to DIY her way to creating her own personal dreamhouse and dream car. This supercreative yet humble Barbie fan went from full-time nail tech to living her dream.

"Twenty years ago, I was telling people that I wanted to move to L.A. to be a Barbie influencer, but no one really understood or believed me except my best friends. Now, my dream came true, and I'm literally living with Barbie," said Azusa. "I could live without Barbie or I could be happy without Barbie, but I'm sure Barbie definitely made my life trillions of times better!"

Like Hayase, Azusa Barbie also grew up in Japan, but instead of hoping for Barbie to come to her, she came to Barbie.

Azusa first got the Barbie bug at the age of 19. "That's the time when Japan started selling Barbie apparel for grown-up girls," she shared. Thereafter, Azusa moved to the U.S. to be closer to the doll.

Azusa's amazing style and home design skills have since captured the public's attention, and she has garnered over 102K followers on Instagram and over 163K subscribers on YouTube. Her photos and videos even have caught the attention of Mattel.

"After I got a blue check on my Instagram account in 2019, Mattel started sending me products," said Azusa. "They just found me on Instagram and YouTube. I never reached out to them. Since then, I'm so happy to have a very good relationship with Mattel." Most recently, she was invited to be a part of HGTV's "Barbie Dream House Challenge."

Azusa now spends her time living as a true "Barbie girl in a Barbie world," traveling often between the U.S. and Japan. Azusa hopes to expand the Barbie fan community in Japan, and she currently runs the Barbie Fan Club JAPAN, as well as the Barbie Convention in Tokyo.

In addition to her online career and commitment to the collector community, Azusa most recently started a new business venture.

"I now own a small business of making and selling doll-sized miniature items," she said. "(Barbie and I) have so many things in common, like we both are independent, have multiple careers, always happy and full of girl power, and we often wear PINK!"

All in all, echoing the heart of the "Barbie" movie's message, Azusa seems to sum up what Barbie truly is to many.

Barbie is a global symbol of diversity. Behind her style and beauty (and a whole lot of pink), we as women can be and should be seen as multidimensional. We can do it all. ■



Tokyo's Imperial Hotel during the 1950s, where Charlotte Johnson stayed for a year while designing Barbie's first looks.



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# In MEMORIAM

**Arakaki, Stanley Kenso, 95,** Honolulu, HI, Feb. 2.

**Danbara, Masue, 89,** Los Angeles, CA, June 6; she is survived by her children, Lee Danbara (Sumi) and Donna Alvarado (Bob); brother, Ron Amasaki (Lylis); she is also survived by friends and other relatives; gc: 6; ggc: 4.

**Fujimori, Miyoko, 90,** Gardena, CA, May 2; her activities included serving as a Girl Scout leader; she is survived by her husband, James; children, Michael (Yuriko) Fujimori, Daniel (Maryse) Fujimori, Brian (Diane) Fujimori and Nancie (John) Fukushima; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends; gc: 7; ggc: 1.



**Fukuoka, Maybell (née Pong), 95,** Naperville, IL, March 15; she was predeceased by her husband, Tommy; son, Steven; she is survived by her son, Stanley (Tracy).

**Ginoza, Helen Yukiko, 87,** Honolulu, HI, March.



**Isobe, Jane Yoshie, 91,** Waipahu, HI, Feb. 9; she is survived by her daughters, Cindy Gamiao (Jesse), Sophie Castillo (Jeff) and Lisa Sakauye (Jaron); sister, Jean Rosalez (Rosie); gc: 3.

**Kawahara-Chester, Chris, 71,** Milton-Freewater, ID, March 7; she was predeceased by her brother, Dewey Kawahara; she is survived by her children, Justin (Rachelle), Travis (Dawn) and Beau (Shelby); siblings, Patti Harris, Wanda (Randy) Martinat, Amy (Ike) Rhoads, Cindee (Bob) Yamamoto and Scott (Danielle) Kawahara; parents, Harry and Teri Kawahara; she is also survived by many friends and family members; gc: 6.



**Kawakami, Mary, 110,** American Fork, UT, May 31; founder, Mary Kawakami's College of Beauty; she was predeceased by her husband, Charlie; daughter, Marilyn; daughter-in-law, Anne Kanomata Kawakami; and siblings, Smiley Amano, Yomi Kotoku, Mizuko Waki, Teruji Waki, George Waki, Sam, Utao and Mitsuo; she is survived by her children, Ben Kawakami, Paul (LaVee) Kawakami and Smiley (Pier) Sciume; sisters, Wilma Kimura, Betty Jean Mayeda and Kemie Oda; gc: 5; ggc: 12.



**Kawamoto, Louise, 105,** Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 8; during WWII, her family and she were incarcerated at the Gila River Internment WRA Center in AZ; she was predeceased by her husband, George; siblings, Helen (Jack) Okano, Mary (Kazuo) Kajiyama, George (Nancy), Howard (Shiz, Paula), Jim (Sally, Jeanette), Harry (Chita) and Robert (Mary) Horii; she is survived by her sisters-in-law, Paula, Jeanette and Mary; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and grandchildren.



**Kobayashi, Susan Mariko, 59,** San Francisco, CA, Jan. 31; B.S., Brown University; MBA and MA, University of California, Berkeley; her activities included serving on the boards of the Japan Society of Northern California and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California; she is survived by her husband, Chuck Han; children, Mina and Dylan; brothers, Mark and Dale; and parents, Ann and Paul Kobayashi.



**Matsuoka, Lori Leilani Reiko, 59,** Kapolei, HI, March 26; she is survived by her husband, Millard U. Matsuoka; children, Bronson Iseri, Bronson Matsuoka (Kelly), Millard Matsuoka Jr. (Julie), Aubrey Iseri and Abigail Matsuoka; gc: 8.

**Miyaki, Amy, 97,** Albuquerque, NM, Feb. 19; she was predeceased by her husband, Frank; son, Ronald Miyaki; daughter-in-law, Janet Miyaki; siblings, Eiko Faircloth, Nobuko Hayworth and Joe Toda; she is survived by her sons (and their spouses), Michael Miyaki and Russell Miyaki; gc: 5; and many ggc.



**Miyashiro, Warren, 94,** Los Angeles, CA, May 26; he was predeceased by his daughter, Joan.

**Muranaka, Tomio, 95,** Arleta, CA, March 16; veteran, Army; during WWII, his family and he were incarcerated at the Rohwer WRA Center in AR; he was predeceased by his daughter, Elaine Rillamas; sister, Yoshiko Kosaka; and brother, Shig (Mits) Muranaka; he is survived by his companion, Lois Morishita; children, Craig Muranaka, Neil Muranaka and Gwen Muranaka (Eric Hayashi); son-in-law, Keawe Rillamas; sister, Teri (Richard) Uyehara; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 2.



**Nakahata, Alice Kiyomi Kajitani, 87,** San Francisco, CA, Feb. 27; during WWII, her family and she were incarcerated at Gila River WRA Center in AZ; alumna, University of Calif., Berkeley, and University of Calif., San Francisco; activities included Japanese American Women Alumnae of UC Berkeley (board member, president), Bishop's Committee of Christ Church and Marin JACL; she was predeceased by her husband, Donald; she is survived by her sons, Andrew (Alison), Peter (Laura) and John (Pam); gc: 6.

**Nakamura, Peter Mamoru, 88,** Juneau, AK, Jan. 28; during WWII, he was incarcerated at the Minidoka WRA Center in ID; B.A., University of Oregon; M.D., Oregon Health & Science University; he was predeceased by his wife, Lois; and siblings, George, Bill, Mitz and Ida; he is survived by his children, Kristin (Kouros) and Kevin (Hanna); siblings, Harry and Lily; gc: 1.



**Omori, Alan, 63,** Chicago, IL, Jan. 17; he was predeceased his father, Thomas Omori; he is survived by his wife, Melissa; children, Elaine and Alan; brother, Michael (Bill Ferguson) Omori; and mother, Toyoko Omori.

**Ota, Yoko, 81,** Honolulu, HI, Feb. 17.

**Saiki, Jeanne, 101,** Madison, WI, March 22; B.A., University of Hawaii; she was predeceased by her husband, Toshio, and her 7 siblings; she is survived by her two sons and daughters-in-law.



**Shimizu, Ernest, 69,** Waipahu, HI, Jan. 28; alumna, University of Hawaii.

**Tsuji, Kenneth, 66,** Chicago, IL, March 28; he was predeceased by his parents, Chiyeko and Fred Tsuji; he is survived by his sister, Colleen (Paul Wanderski) Tsuji; cousins, Wes (Susan) Fujii and Elaine (Will) Jarvis; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

**Wada, Eugene Tomio, 71,** Lynwood, CA, Dec. 31, 2022; he is survived by his wife, Susan; sons, Derek Wada and Daniel Wada; brothers, Eric Wada, Dean (Gloria) Wada and Tim (Susie) Wada; he is also survived by many other relatives.

**Yamamoto, Dorothy, 98,** Sacramento, CA, April 13; her activities included Sacramento Hiroshima Nikkeijin Kai, the Buddhist Church of Sacramento and the Sacramento Tanoshimi Kai; she was predeceased by her husband, Junichi; she is survived by her son, Eiji (Kathy); gc: 2; ggc: 3.

**Yamamoto, Naomi, 85,** Sacramento, CA, Feb. 6; she was predeceased by her husband, Mike Masakazu Yamamoto; and son, Chips Yamamoto; she is survived by her son, Kent Yamamoto.

**Yokoyama, Taro, 88,** Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 26; B.S., Okayama University; M.D., Okayama University Medical School; and a Ph.D.; recipient, Japanese Order of the Sacred Treasure, Golden Rays with Rosette; he is survived by his wife, Rita; sons, Steven, David and Eric; gc: 3.

**Yoshimura, Hideko, 102,** Colusa, CA, Jan. 23; during WWII, her family and she were incarcerated at the Granada WRA Center (Camp Amache) in CO; she was predeceased by her husband, Akiji; and siblings, Emi Shimizu, Koe Hinoki and George Hinoki; she is survived by her daughter, Lani Yoshimura; siblings, Earsei Hinoki and May Mineta; she is also survived by many nieces and nephews. ■

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REIMAGINE EVERYTHING

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

By JR Fujita

When I think about this year's JACL National Convention theme of "Rooted in Community," I reflect on how I build connections in community through my personal and professional work. I stay involved and contribute through many forms of volunteerism and community outreach, such as leading activations at resource fairs and workshops to participating in networking mixers, special events, conferences and international virtual programs.

Often, I am asked by my fellow community members how I discover and learn about the variety of engagements I participate in, and this answer varies widely. I am active on numerous social media platforms, I sign up for organizations' newsletters, I stay connected with my personal network and I research online to find events of

interest to me or where I know I can have an impact.

I also seize the moment and take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves because I know such opportunities may not arise again, or if I say "no" too often, the invitations might stop altogether.

So, how can you, too, become more connected and rooted in your community? In addition to recommending the above actions, I will make it easier by mentioning two readily available resources you can leverage right now to identify opportunities in your community.

AARP, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people ages 50-plus to choose how they live as they age, has a platform that lists events for you to participate in from the comfort of your own home.

You can visit AARP's Virtual Community Center at [aarp.org/vcc](http://aarp.org/vcc) to find FREE, interactive

online events and workshops that are designed for people of all ages to learn, grow and engage in community.

Offerings on the VCC include fun events on financial security, exercise and wellness, family caregiving, cultural connections, visiting local parks and outdoor spaces, technology-focused workshops and more.

In addition to the VCC, AARP lists volunteer opportunities and free, intergenerational in-person activities in your local community at [aarp.org/nearyou](http://aarp.org/nearyou). In-person

activities may include volunteering with local AARP offices and participating in community events like sporting games, workshops, movie screenings, exercise classes and resource fairs.

Not only can staying rooted in your community and engaged in events like those listed on the AARP Virtual Community Center and AARP Near You be fun, it can also be beneficial to your health.

According to a study by the Global Council on Brain Health, people who have good social networks live longer and are

physically and mentally healthier than people who are socially isolated. Connecting with other people is stimulating and challenging and often adds meaning and purpose to our lives.

When we are rooted in our communities, we participate in fulfilling activities that make us happy and let us discover or renew our passions and purpose in life.

*JR Fujita is a senior state and community engagement specialist for AARP and is based in Sacramento, Calif.*



Staying engaged and active with one's community can have positive effects on health and mental well-being.

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ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE HAWAIIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER

graduation



Link to Program



Class of 2023 CULVER CITY HIGH SCHOOL



JANM's Nakamura Goes Back to School

Culver City High alum keynotes AANHPI graduation.

When California's Culver City High School decided to hold its first-ever supplemental graduation ceremony on June 1 for its Class of 2023 students of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander heritage, the logical choice to serve as the keynote speaker was fellow Centaur Tad Nakamura, Class of 1998.

For the award-winning filmmaker, returning to his alma mater's iconic Robert Frost Auditorium more than two decades after graduating was extra special, since Nakamura was in late 2022 named director of the Japanese American National Museum's Frank H. Watase Media Arts Center.

Also addressing CCHS AANHPI students was Culver City Unified School District Superintendent Quoc Tran, who was named to the position in 2021. For many of the seniors, it may have been the first time they heard their district's chief discuss his harrowing experiences as a Vietnamese refugee during his youth.

1) CCUSD Superintendent Quoc Tran 2) Tadashi Nakamura 3) Melia Handley performs the Ka Uluwehi o Ke Kai hula. 4) Culver City High School Class of 2023 students after the AANHPI graduation

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



L.A. Press Club Fetes Ono

TV newsman gets lifetime honors.

On June 25, KABC Channel 7's David Ono received the Los Angeles Press Club's Joseph M. Quinn Award for Lifetime Achievement at the group's annual awards gala at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel. Also honored were Los Angeles Times reporter Alene Tchekmedyian with the LAPC's Guardian Award for First Amendment Contributions, actors Gary Sinise with the Bill Rosendahl Public Service Award for Contributions to Civic Life and John Leguizamo with the President's Award for Impact on Media, TV journalist Giselle Fernandez, also with the President's Award for Impact on Media, and filmmaker Bernard-Henri Lévy with the Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism.

1) Daniel Blinkoff, David Ono and Tamlyn Tomita 2) Ono gives his acceptance speech. 3) Ono and KABC President and GM Cheryl Kunin Fair

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Venice Holds Obon Festival is back on track.

The Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple held its annual observance and matsuri on July 15-16, attracting large crowds for odori, games and, of course, the varieties of food.

1 & 2) Celebrants participate in bon odori. 3) Rev. Kory Quon and his daughter, Kaci

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



VJCC Beats Summer Heat

Annual fest spotlights center's clubs.

The Venice Japanese Community Center held its annual natsu matsuri on June 24, with demonstrations ranging from kendō and karate to more genteel exhibitions of shodō, bonsai, photography and more.

1) A perfect throw results in a sudden bucket shower. 2) Mason Beard shows off his shave ice. 3) Marina Bonsai Club member Shigeko Iwasaki

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

