



# PACIFIC CITIZEN



» **PAGE 6**

## ***OKAERI***

**‘Welcome Home:  
The Nisei Legacy  
at Shofuso’  
exhibit debuts in  
Philadelphia.**

» **PAGE 5**

**HMWF Honors  
Pioneers.**

» **PAGE 8**

**Pilgrims Gather  
at Minidoka.**

The lantern  
ceremony at  
Shofuso in Phil-  
adelphia

PHOTO: ROB BUSCHER



Save Our Seniors Network supporters David Monkawa (left) and David Maldonado hold up an enlargement of a letter from JACL and SOSN supporting an investigation of Covid-related deaths at the Kei-Ai Los Angeles facility as Margaret Miyauchi-Leong looks on.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



# JACL ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR INVESTIGATION INTO KEI-AI

## PSWD governor appears with Save Our Seniors group during JACL Convention.

By P.C. Staff

Shortly after the afternoon workshop titled “SOSN: Save Our Seniors Network” finished on July 22 at its Japanese American National Museum venue in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo as part of the JACL National Convention, the group held a news conference outside of the site of the Go for Broke National Education Center.

Joining the news conference was Japanese American Citizens League Pacific Southwest District Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa. In a short statement, he said, “National JACL and the Pacific Southwest District of the JACL support (Rep.) Judy Chu and the Save Our

Seniors Network with the calls to increase the investigation into Kei-Ai and its treatment of its citizens and its seniors.”

Related to the news conference was the release of a letter jointly issued by JACL and SOSN. (To view the letter, visit [tinyurl.com/2tum9ncv](https://tinyurl.com/2tum9ncv).)

Yoshikawa’s reference to Kei-Ai and Rep. Chu (D-Calif.) was in part related to a Nov. 17, 2022, letter she sent to Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, administrator at Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (To view the letter, visit [tinyurl.com/2n6e3yae](https://tinyurl.com/2n6e3yae).)

The letter, co-signed by Reps. Maxine

Waters (D-Calif.) and Jimmy Gomez (D-Calif.), expressed “deep concern with the quality of patient care at Kei-Ai Los Angeles Healthcare Center in Southern California and to request a review of Kei-Ai, its owners and its pattern of substandard patient care.”

The letter also alluded to complaints of “abuse, neglect or rights allegations,” as well as Covid-related deaths at Kei-Ai facilities.

The news conference was held as part of SOSN’s years-long efforts to shine a spotlight on what it believes are problems that arose following 2016’s \$41 million sale of the nonprofit Keiro Senior Healthcare facilities to the for-profit San Diego-based real estate development

firm Pacifica Cos. LLC.

With the sale, the former Keiro facilities were rebranded. Two of the facilities are now known as Kei-Ai Los Angeles Healthcare Center, located in Lincoln Heights, and Kei-Ai South Bay Healthcare Center, located in Gardena, Calif. Also rebranded were Sakura Intermediate Care Facility (formerly Keiro Intermediate Care Facility) and Sakura Gardens (formerly Keiro Retirement Home).

Stipulated in the 2016 sale was a five-year moratorium preventing changes to the status quo of the operations. Before the moratorium expired on Feb. 1, 2022, SOSN sought to extend it because of alleged violations to the agreement, as Pacifica seemed poised to evict residents of the Sakura ICF so that it could convert it into apartments. (See [tinyurl.com/2z4ttmpd](https://tinyurl.com/2z4ttmpd).)

Said Save Our Seniors Network Legislative Director David Maldonado in a statement: “We are ecstatic and welcome JACL support. This is a huge advance for the seniors, their families and the community. For those who lost their loved ones at Kei-Ai and also for those who were evicted from Sakura Intermediate Care Facility and were offered Kei-Los Angeles as an alternative. I’d like to remind the community that the JACL supported the seniors at Sakura Intermediate Care Facility and opposed the evictions back in 2021.”



PSWD Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa (left) awaits his turn to announce the JACL’s support to “increase the investigation into Kei-Ai.”

### CORRECTION

For the feature in the July 14-27, 2023, issue of the *Pacific Citizen*, former P.C. staffer Harry Honda and his wife, Micki, had two daughters.

## PACIFICCITIZEN 2023 SPRING CAMPAIGN

JACL MEMBER?  Y  N  \$50  \$100  \$150  \$200  OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Address 1 : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number : \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_

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



### JACL MEMBERS

CHANGE OF ADDRESS  
If you’ve moved, please send new information to: National JACL 1765 Sutter St. San Francisco, CA 94115 (415) 921-5225 ext. 26  
ALLOW 6 WEEKS FOR ADDRESS CHANGES. TO AVOID INTERRUPTIONS IN DELIVERY, PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR POSTMASTER TO INCLUDE PERIODICALS IN YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS (USPS Form 3575)

JACL Members Not Receiving Your Pacific Citizen?  
Please contact Tomiko Ismail, JACL Membership/Database Administrator, at (415) 921-5225, ext. 26, or email [tismail@jacl.org](mailto:tismail@jacl.org).





# ‘THE IMPACT OF TAKING BOLD ACTION’

Panelists recall JACL’s landmark 1994 decision to support same-sex marriage and the impact it had on their lives and the organization from that point onward.



Panelists (from left) Jon Kaji, Ruth Shikada, Bill Kaneko and Trisha Murakawa, all former JACL national staffers, reunited to discuss the impact — then and now — of the organization’s 1994 decision to support same-sex marriage.

By Annakai Geshlinder, Contributor

PHOTO: ANNAKAI GESHLINDER

In the nearly 30 years since the JACL National Council passed a resolution to support same-sex marriage at the organization’s 1994 Convention in Salt Lake City, the memories of that campaign for Jon Kaji, Bill Kaneko, Trisha Murakawa and Ruth Shikada are a mixed bag of pride in having done the right thing — and personal trauma.

The four, who at the time held

national-level positions in the JACL, reunited for a workshop titled “The Impact of Taking Bold Action,” which took place July 22 at the Japanese American National Museum’s Tateuchi Democracy Lab during the 2023 JACL National Convention in Los Angeles.

For this quartet, the word “impact” was not just about helping steer the JACL toward taking such a forward-looking stance on the

issue of same-sex marriage at a time when no other national civil rights organization of similar stature had done so. The impact of that bold action was one that would also exact a toll on them personally, within the Japanese American community and upon their once-active roles in JACL.

“I wanted to live my values,” said Murakawa on her decision to leave the JACL in 1994 in protest of the organization’s growing division over the issue of same-sex marriage.

That year, the organization was in the “post-redress phase,” said Kaji, who served as secretary/treasurer at the time. A presidential apology for incarceration during World War II had been issued, and checks had gone out to Japanese Americans around the country. Kaji recalled that following the tremendous achievement of the redress movement, JACLers were wondering, “What’s next?”

When in April 1994 the Hawaii State Legislature voted to outlaw same-sex marriage, Kaneko brought the issue to the JACL National Board.

At the time, Kaneko was national vp of public affairs and a member of the Honolulu chapter. On Feb. 12, 1994, he introduced a measure in support of same-sex marriage at the organization’s national board meeting.

The decision sparked varying responses. Some board members opposed the idea, stating the issue of same-sex marriage was not within the realm of the JACL’s goals or pertinent to enough members to

necessitate a motion. Others voted in favor, believing it was a civil rights issue and one relevant to the lives of many members. The final vote before the board: 10 in favor, two against and three abstentions.

Following the motion’s passage, tensions over the issue erupted. “When the board took a position, all hell broke loose,” Kaneko remembers. Longtime staffers stepped down, including those who supported and opposed the JACL taking on the issue.

“As a Christian, I believe the issue of same-sex marriage is a moral issue and not a civil rights issue,” said Allen Kato of the national legal counsel, who resigned in May 1994 in protest of the board’s decision. “I believe homosexual marriage is morally wrong.”

As debate heated up, the Mountain Plains District voted against supporting same-sex marriage. Not long after, the Pacific Southwest District, where panelist Shikada (then Ruth Mizobe) was governor, became the first district to declare support for the issue.

In May 1994, the Mount Olympus chapter hosted a meeting of the JACL National Council in Salt Lake City. When the Mount Olympus chapter sponsored a resolution to rescind the JACL’s support for same-sex marriage, Murakawa immediately began preparing for the convention in August.

“We knew we were going to have to do some serious community organizing,” she said. Proponents teamed up with the Los Angeles LGBT Center, Human Rights Coalition

and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to garner more support for the issue.

Panelists recalled working on the ground, starting up one-on-one conversations across the country about why they felt same-sex marriage was a civil right. They printed 20-page packets with arguments in support and distributed them to every chapter in the country, Kaneko remembers. The fight taught him the nitty gritty required for working toward a political goal. “You can’t just take a position, and let it happen,” he said. “You have to work.”

When August rolled around, the Mount Olympus chapter hosted the National Convention. Not knowing which way the vote would swing, the morning of the National Board meeting brought high emotion and nerves. The deciding moment came when former San Jose chapter president, Congressman Norman Mineta, took the podium — something highly unusual for a member in the midst of a debate, Kaneko said. “When he took the podium, you could hear a pin drop.”

What happened next completely flipped the feeling in the room. In a moving speech, Mineta reminded listeners that Rep. Barney Frank, the first Congressman to voluntarily come out as gay, had been a leader in the fight for redress in Congress — and that Japanese Americans thus owed him respect. “Did we ever question his sexual orientation when he was helping us?” Kaneko recalls Mineta asking the audience.

» See ACTION on page 10



## REIMAGINE EVERYTHING

# Lessons From Hawaii for Keeping Elders Safe in a Disaster

By Craig Gima

The wildfires on Maui are a stark reminder that a disaster can happen at any time and that thinking about and planning for a fire, hurricane, tsunami or other disaster is imperative, especially for *kupuna* (elders) and their caregivers.

Preparation for a disaster involves preparing and practicing a disaster plan and stocking and maintaining a disaster supply kit in case you need to evacuate.

Fires are especially dangerous for elders. Older Americans are 2.5 times more likely to die in a fire than the general population. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Fire Administration have tips for *kupuna* and organizations that help to reduce risk of fire death.

Those tips include having a working smoke detector and practicing an escape plan for fires. The American Red Cross has its Sound the Alarm program to provide smoke detectors at no cost to *kupuna* and others who need them.

The website also has tips on planning an escape route from a fire.

Elders and their caregivers should have an emergency plan for any natural disaster, including power outages and earthquakes in addition to fires, hurricanes and tsunami. One of the keys to a successful plan involves creating a support network of family, neighbors and friends.

Family caregivers may not be able to reach a loved one in an emergency, especially during an evacuation. Caregivers of people with dementia will also need more than one person to watch over a loved one to help keep them calm and make sure they don’t wander away.

You should also keep an emergency grab bag with medications, important papers like passports and power of attorney, medical instructions and phone numbers and contact information, phone charger or batteries, etc. A larger bag should contain water and food. FEMA and Red Cross have recommendations on what your emergency kit should contain.

Hawaii emergency management officials recommend having a

14-day supply of food and water for each person in a disaster supply kit. That’s significantly increased from what’s suggested for the mainland and previous recommendations in Hawaii of three to seven days of supplies. The concern is that harbors could become unusable in a disaster, and Oahu could run out of food before the ports can be reopened.

If you need to evacuate your home, don’t assume that the nearest school will open as an emergency shelter. Some facilities that had been designated as emergency shelters in the past are now in expanded flood or tsunami zones. See if a relative or friend’s home in a safe area can be used as a back-up shelter, and it’s a good idea to line up more than one back-up shelter in case the first one is not available.

Check your home to see if it is engineered to survive a severe storm and if it is outside of tsunami and flood zones. If you live in a concrete building on an upper floor, you may be better off to shelter in place during a storm or tsunami.

People whose loved ones are in a care home or nursing home should ask

to see the facility’s disaster plan. Get the phone number of and get to know the person in charge of evacuating residents. If the facility’s disaster plan is not adequate, urge or help them to update it or find another facility that can handle an emergency.

Help your friends and neighbors prepare for a natural disaster. AARP has prepared a guide to help people, organizations, church and community groups create fun, informative workshops such as a document photocopying event to make sure people have copies of vital documents in an emergency; an event to prepare basic emergency supply kits; and a workshop to develop an evacuation plan. Download our plans at <https://createthegood.aarp.org/volunteer-guides/operation-hurricane-prepare.html>.

Read the full story on AARP.org for more tips and links to resources: <https://states.aarp.org/hawaii/make-a-plan-keep-kupuna-safe-in-a-fire-or-other-disaster>.

Craig Gima is the communications director for AARP Hawai’i.



# 'State of Ethnic Enclaves' Across the Nation

Panelists discuss lessons learned from Philadelphia Chinatown, Little Saigon in San Jose, Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and San Francisco Japantown.

By Emily Murase, Contributor

Jails, freeways and corporate sports stadiums are not exactly the stuff of strong neighborhoods. In fact, ethnic enclaves are particularly susceptible as targeted locations for these, as explained by panelists of the July 22 JAACL National Convention plenary session entitled "State of Ethnic Enclaves."

Panelists included Kristin Fukushima, managing director of the Little Tokyo Community Council; Huy Tran, a board member of the Vietnamese American Roundtable; Dr. Mary Yee, founder of Asian Americans United; and myself, as I served as moderator of this very special session.

Yee kicked off the panel with a comprehensive presentation titled "Saving Chinatown: Philadelphia's Continual Struggle, 1966-2023." Born in Vermont and raised in Boston Chinatown, Yee's tireless community organizing efforts contributed to the successful defeat of large infrastructure projects including the Vine Street Expressway, a Phillies baseball

stadium, the Foxwoods Casino and a federal prison that would have had disastrous impacts on Philadelphia Chinatown that, established in 1871, is among the nation's oldest and now most endangered.

Yee explained that the current Philadelphia 76ers' proposal to build a \$1.3 billion downtown basketball arena poses an existential threat to locally owned Chinatown restaurants and businesses; the 76ers proposal is opposed by more than 90 percent of the Chinatown community.

In closing, Yee invited the audience to join the Coalition to Save Philadelphia Chinatown and sign a support petition (<https://apipennsylvania.org/chinatown/>) hosted by the Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance Pennsylvania.

From one of the oldest Asian enclaves to a relatively new one, San Jose's Little Saigon serves more than 100,000 Vietnamese residents who call San Jose home. In fact, San Jose has the most Vietnamese residents of any city outside of Vietnam.

Tran stated that as a board member of the San Jose-based Vietnamese

American Roundtable, he works to educate, advocate for and mobilize the community on quality-of-life issues that impact them.

Tran explained that the immigration experience of Vietnamese Americans is rooted in trauma. When Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, fell to North Vietnamese forces at the end of the Vietnam War, a mass exodus ensued.

While societal elites had the resources to leave Vietnam in the early days or first wave, the vast majority of people left in the chaotic and desperate second wave. An estimated 1 million Vietnamese people attempted to escape the repressive North Vietnamese regime by boat; only about 800,000 survived the perilous journey to safety in refugee camps and, eventually, new host countries like the U.S.

As an immigrant, Tran started out as a hotel bellman, eventually organizing his colleagues to improve labor conditions. Today, Tran is a partner with Justice at Work Law Group, a social justice and worker's

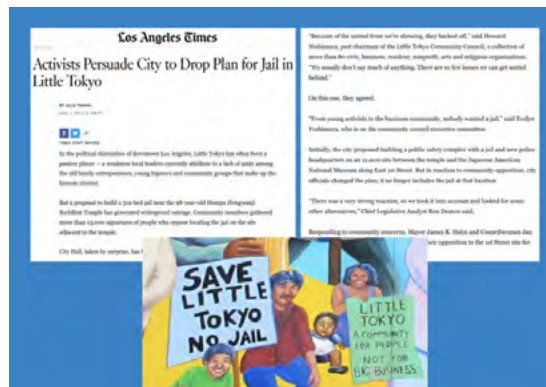
» See NATION on page 12



Plenary participants included (from left) moderator Emily Murase, Mary Yee, Huy Tran and Kristin Fukushima.

PHOTO: KRIS IKEJIRI

A slide from Mary Yee's presentation about efforts to prevent an arena from being built near Philadelphia's Chinatown.



Kristin Fukushima recounted how the local community rallied against a jail proposal in Little Tokyo.



## Answer Keiro's Community Survey!



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).





Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation board members and speakers gather for a photo during the Heart Mountain Pilgrimage.

PHOTOS: RAY LOCKER



Sen. Alan Simpson gives a Boy Scout salute.

Members of the Marshall-Williams family with Lynn Perry (second from right)



Bacon Sakatani accepts his lifetime achievement award from HMWF Board Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi.

Jeanette Misaka with her lifetime achievement award



Authors panel participants (from left) Douglas Nelson, Eric Muller, Frank Abe and Shirley Ann Higuchi



# HEART MOUNTAIN WYOMING FOUNDATION HONORS PIONEERS

Lifetime achievement recipients Jeanette Misaka, Bacon Sakatani and Judge Raymond Uno are among those recognized during the annual Heart Mountain Pilgrimage.

By Ray Locker

Pioneers who built the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation from a dream of former incarcerated and historians were honored with lifetime achievement awards during the organization's annual pilgrimage in late July.

Jeanette Misaka, Bacon Sakatani and Judge Raymond Uno received the Douglas W. Nelson Lifetime Achievement Medals on July 29 in recognition of their years of work in preserving the memory of the Japanese American incarceration at Heart Mountain and ensuring that it never happens again.

Misaka, Sakatani and Uno helped raise money for the HMWF in its early years and collected archives and artifacts for the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, which opened in 2011.

Nelson, the vice chair of the Heart Mountain board, also received a similar award for his 25 years of service to the HMWF and his groundbreaking book that led the way for future historians studying Heart Mountain and the incarceration.

Nelson first discovered Heart Mountain in 1968 while he was a history graduate student at the University of Wyoming; he also became the first scholar to research what had happened there during World War II. His book,

"Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp," was republished by Heart Mountain earlier this year.

The Heart Mountain Pilgrimage, conducted July 27-29, attracted more than 260 registrants, who attended panels on mixed-race identity, multi-generational trauma and books about the incarceration, as well as participated in tours of the multiple exhibits and projects being developed at the site.

More than 60 percent of the visitors were attending the pilgrimage for the first time, and many came with questions about their families' incarceration experiences. The HMWF started a program offering family research sessions for members interested in learning more about how their family members were incarcerated, what happened to them in camp and where they went after the war.

The foundation introduced its research work during its opening session on July 28 with a panel featuring actors Tamlyn Tomita and Ally Maki, who are Heart Mountain descendants making their first visit to the camp site.

They appeared with Los Angeles documentarian and newscaster David Ono as they learned more about their family members who had been incarcerated. Tomita's paternal great-grandparents were at Heart Mountain, where her great-grandmother, Take Tomita, died in April 1945.

Three of Maki's grandparents were incarcerated at Heart Mountain, while her maternal grandfather, Bryan Honkawa, met her grandmother when Honkawa and his mother visited Heart Mountain from their home in Billings, Mont., not long after it opened in August 1942.

Heart Mountain plans to offer similar family research for members later this year or in early 2024.

## Construction Tours

Pilgrimage attendees also had a chance to tour the underconstruction Mineta-Simpson Institute, the new facility that will host conferences and other activities dedicated to promoting the values displayed by the late-Sec. Norman Mineta and former U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson. The two first met as Boy Scouts behind the Heart Mountain barbed wire and remained friends until Mineta's death in May 2022.

Simpson toured the institute building with HMWF Board Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi. The foundation will celebrate the Mineta-Simpson Institute's grand opening during next year's pilgrimage.

Along with the conference center, the new institute will feature a wing dedicated to LaDonna Zall, the long-time former Heart Mountain board member who watched the last train filled with incarcerated leave Heart Mountain on Nov. 10, 1945.

Zall, who died in 2021, was Heart Mountain's first curator, and the new

wing will hold artifacts and archives.

## Compassionate Witnesses

The HMWF gave its annual LaDonna Zall Compassionate Witness Award to members of the extended Marshall-Williams family, the descendants of some of the original residents of the Los Angeles neighborhood known as "J-Flats."

Before, during and after WWII, the J-Flats neighborhood, also known as "East Hollywood," was home to Japanese Americans and Black Americans, such as the Marshall family. Rufus and Crystal Marshall ran a catering business and were close to their Japanese American neighbors, who were forced from their homes after the signing of Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942.

When their neighbors, like the Hoshizaki family, were incarcerated first at the Pomona Assembly Center and then Heart Mountain, the Marshalls watched over their homes and belongings. Takashi Hoshizaki, a Heart Mountain board member, remembered how the Marshalls brought apple pie and ice cream to his family while they were at Pomona.

Crystal and Rufus Marshall's daughter, Barbara Marshall Williams, and her daughter, Karen "Kiwi" Burch, and niece, Robin Waller, received the award on behalf of the family.

## "Making a Neighborhood"

The award presentation coincided with the opening of "Making a Neighborhood," a new exhibit about the history of the J-Flats neighborhood from its founding through the various communities that found a home in it.

Samanta Helou Hernandez, a current J-Flats neighborhood resident, wrote much of the exhibit and took many of the photographs of the neighborhood and its residents, including Takashi Hoshizaki, who still lives in his family's former home.

The exhibit also contains a vintage kimono owned by one of the Marshalls' neighbors, which the Marshalls watched while the family was at Heart Mountain.

The "Making a Neighborhood" exhibit will remain in Heart Mountain's temporary exhibit space until next spring.

## Authors Panel

Nelson was part of a panel of Heart Mountain authors that included author and documentarian Frank Abe, a Heart Mountain descendant, and Eric Muller, a University of North Carolina law professor and one of the creators of the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center's permanent exhibit.

Muller talked about his new book, "Lawyer, Jailor, Ally, Foe: Complicity and Conscience in America's World War II Concentration Camps," which tells the stories of War Relocation Authority attorneys who worked at Heart Mountain and two other camps. The book uses fictional techniques to re-create the conversations held by camp attorneys and incarcerated.

Abe's book, "We Hereby Refuse," tells the story of resistance inside the various camps, including Heart Mountain's draft resisters and Mitsuye Endo, who waged the only successful legal challenge to the Japanese American incarceration during WWII. ■



Julia Ishiyama and Prentiss Uchida led pilgrims on a Heart Mountain Hospital tour.



Heart Mountain "babies" blow out birthday cake candles during the pilgrimage's Sayonara Banquet.



Pictured are (from left) David Ono, Ray Locker, Ally Maki, Tamlyn Tomita and Shirley Ann Higuchi.



Okaeri curator Rob Buscher speaks at the exhibit's opening reception at Shofuso on Aug. 12.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ROB BUSCHER



A panoramic view of a 10-mat installation view

# 'OKAERI (WELCOME HOME): THE NISEI LEGACY AT SHOFUSO'

## Behind-the-scenes notes from the curator of the new Philadelphia exhibit

By Rob Buscher, Contributor

Philadelphia is the sixth-largest city in the U.S., but its Japanese American population numbers under 3,000. With this in mind, I have long sought the opportunity to present a public exhibition related to Japanese American history in our local region to educate Philadelphians about topics with which they might otherwise be unfamiliar. This recently materialized as the new exhibit that opened on Aug. 12 titled, "Okaeri (Welcome Home): The Nisei Legacy at Shofuso."

Before starting my role at Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia, I had no understanding of the pivotal role that Philadelphia's Nisei leaders played in preserving and maintaining the Shofuso Japanese House and Garden. In my first week on the job in August 2021 as I was perusing our organizational archives, I stumbled upon a typewritten 1983 board roster from the Friends of the Japanese House and Garden that included several names I recognized of now-deceased Nisei leaders of the JACL.

A few days later, I found an envelope of photos taken in the mid-1980s showing Nisei civil rights leader Judge William Marutani at the 25th anniversary celebration of Shofuso. In another photo from a different event,

I recognized Sansei Teresa Maebori, a current board member of the JACL Philadelphia chapter.

Following a few email exchanges with Maebori, I realized that there was more to this story than was publicly known. I shared some of my preliminary research in the 2021 P.C. Holiday Issue and to what extent the Nisei may have viewed their work at Shofuso as activism, which was largely based on conjecture at that point.

Thankfully, the research phase of this project has unearthed many incredible finds that prove the Nisei did see their work as activism. It also allowed us to better understand the role that Japanese art and culture played in Philadelphia's redress movement.

Much of the credit goes to Lauren Griffin, Okaeri Project research assistant and assistant curator of the Okaeri exhibition, who discovered many of the key documents that led to these conclusions. We were able to bring Griffin into the project starting in November 2022, when we were awarded a grant from the Japanese American Community Foundation. She was previously employed as a docent at Shofuso, and as luck would have it, was in the process of finishing her M.A. in public history at Temple University.

Griffin began by cataloguing the Friends of the Japanese House and Garden archives that are currently housed in the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia

offices, since the two organizations merged in 2016. Her archival survey spanned about five months, and by the end of April 2023, we had discovered enough about the origins of the Friends to create a comprehensive historical timeline from 1981-99 of the main accomplishments and activities the Nisei leadership engaged in during this period.

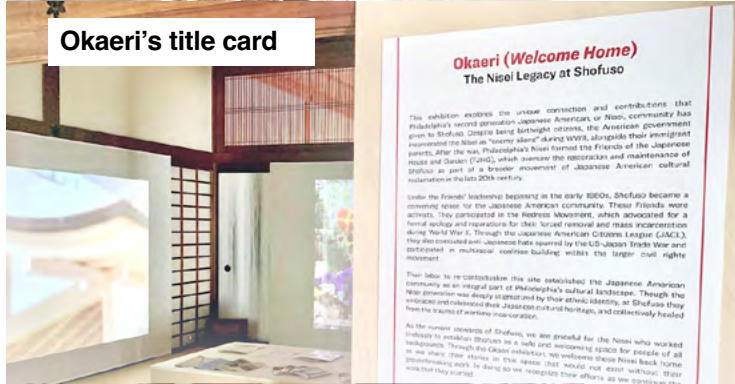
Griffin also spent time researching at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and Fairmount Park Commission, where she found some incredible materials detailing the early history of Shofuso from its arrival to Philadelphia in 1957 to the 1976 bicentennial celebration when restoration work on the house first began.

The story that we began to piece together was one of institutional neglect and lack of cultural competency within the Philadelphia city government, who neither understood nor cared about the treasure that the Japanese people had gifted them.

Shortly after the bicentennial, Nisei Mary Watanabe organized a group of concerned citizens who wished to prevent Shofuso from falling into a state of disrepair. They formally established the Friends of the Japanese House and Garden in 1982, electing her board president. As an active member of JACL Philadelphia and past executive director of the Asia/Pacific Coalition (an early Pan Asian American civil rights organization), Watanabe was a central figure in the organizing that happened at Shofuso until her death in 1994.

From Watanabe's archival writings in the board minutes and general correspondence, we see a leader who recognized the need for

Okaeri's title card



Mary Watanabe views garden blueprints in 1983.



Judge William Marutani presents a lecture of civil rights issues and Japanese Americans as part of the Shofuso Winter Lecture Series in 1987.



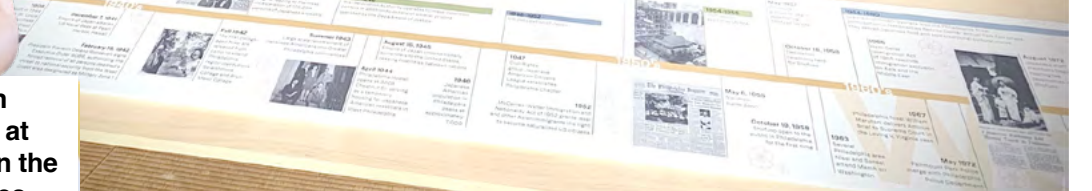
Grayce and Hiroshi Uyehara (far right) welcome the roofers from Japan as they begin restoration to Shofuso in 1999.



Lauren Griffin at work in the archives.

Okaeri Timeline

An exhibit timeline







Okaeri artifacts display redress ephemera (right) and Seabrook ephemera.

Shofuso as a physical space for the Japanese American community to convene itself in the postwar era.

A document written by Watanabe in 1989 outlines her vision of what Shofuso meant to the people of Philadelphia: “The House and Garden is a recognition of the multicultural society, which is uniquely American — a symbol of people, regardless of origin, that have come together as one nation. For Americans of Japanese heritage, JHG provides a place to celebrate the arts, crafts and holidays of their ancestors. It is a place to share a culture with other Americans. Its uniqueness as an art form contributes to the richness of American culture.”

In Watanabe’s own words, Shofuso was a place for Japanese Americans to engage in reclamation of their ancestral culture. While many Nisei were so stigmatized by the wartime incarceration that they fully shunned Japanese culture, Watanabe and the other Friends actively celebrated the culture of their immigrant parents through their work at Shofuso.

In addition to our research team’s interpretation of these and other archival documents, we also had the benefit of hearing directly from many of the now-deceased Nisei leaders through a series of oral history videos recorded by the JACL Philadelphia chapter in 1994.

In addition to Mary Watanabe and her husband, Warren, other Nisei participants in the 1994 oral histories who were actively involved with the Friends group include Judge William Marutani, Tak Moriuchi and Grayce and Hiroshi Uyehara. Listening to the voices of these departed Nisei speaking to us through the archive gave a new dimension to the project, and we began exploring

ways to integrate their stories into a public exhibition.

Thanks to additional support from the Japanese American Confinement Sites grant-funded JACL/Densho Oral History project, our team was then able to conduct a dozen new oral histories with Sansei elders from the JACL Philadelphia and Seabrook chapters, many of whom are the children of the Nisei leaders who were active at Shofuso.

The oral history documentation spanned the months of May-June and was captured by videographer and JACL New York member Brett Kodama. We then condensed these oral histories from 1994 and 2023 into a 30-minute clip loop that contains select quotes exploring the wartime incarceration, postwar resettlement, civil rights advocacy and topics related to identity and Japanese cultural practice.

Another component of the Okaeri exhibit materialized when the estate of Isao Okumura, the head carpenter who led the installation of Shofuso in Philadelphia, mailed us a collection of 8mm home movie film reels.

Unsure of what they contained, we had them digitized sight unseen and were thrilled to discover over 10 minutes of footage shot during Shofuso’s 1957 installation in Fairmount Park.

In reviewing the digitized footage, I recalled another video shot in 1999 by videographer Keiichi Kondoh, which documented the roof restoration that was paid for in part by individual contributions from Philadelphia’s Nisei population.

These two videos together with a slideshow of digitized photographs showing daily activities of

the Friends from 1981-99 form the basis of a three-channel projection installation as the main on-site interpretive element for the Okaeri exhibit.

Situated in the 10-tatami mat room at Shofuso, the 1957 Okumura footage is on the left, opposite of the 1999 Kondoh footage on the right, with the slide show in the center. The 30-minute oral history clip loop plays aloud on speakers along with original audio of the roofers working in Kondoh’s footage.

The 10-mat tatami room also contains a custom-built low-rise table that encompasses the projector setup, presenting a clean view of the traditional Japanese interior that allows exhibitgoers to focus on the material being projected.

The table surface also doubles as a reading area for visitors to sit on the tatami floor and peruse the exhibit catalog or simply immerse themselves in the multimedia installation. Additional reading materials are available to visitors including a glossary of terminology, including definitions of euphemistic language used by the WRA and preferred terms by the Japanese American community to describe wartime incarceration, as well as several primary source documents from the mid-1940s related to Japanese American resettlement in the Philadelphia area.

Other on-site displays include the exhibit title card located just outside of the 10-mat installation, which describes the Okaeri exhibit and acknowledges our funders, and a large-format graphic timeline depicting key events related to the exhibit that is located in the adjacent room of the house.

The last physical components of the exhibit are two museum-quality display cases containing artifacts related to the wartime incarceration (camp art and photos taken in camp), redress brochures and publications (owned by members of the Friends group) and certain key documents related to the Friends that spanned the same time period.

This room also contains a reproduction of the “evacuation notice” and wooden planks that were signed by the Japanese carpenters and roofers who build Shofuso in 1957 and restored the roof in 1999, tying together elements from the projection installation with a physical presence in the house.

Included in the display case is a class photograph of FJHG Board Member Reiko Nakawatase Gaspar alongside her elementary schoolmates at a Japanese garden in Poston Camp 1. To me, this is one of the most significant pieces of the exhibit, showing if only by chance how this one woman gravitated back to the traditional culture of Japan, despite the incredible hardships that the Japanese American community’s association with Japan brought on her and her family.

Gaspar was a West Philly public school teacher who also served as JACL Philadelphia board president in the mid-1980s. While active in both FJHG and JACL, she co-curated a special exhibition alongside Mary Watanabe titled “The Japanese American Experience” at the Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies — the first such exhibit in Philadelphia. Gaspar’s personal copy of the exhibit catalog is included in the display case alongside her childhood photo.

As we were installing the projectors at Shofuso, I began testing random videos from our Google drive and stumbled upon a 1987 video recording of a tour given by Gaspar. While we had digitized dozens of her photographs and researched extensively her involvement in the Friends group, this was the first time I had seen footage of her or heard her voice. It sent shiv-

ers down my spine, in the best possible way, to feel as if her presence was with us in that moment.

Yet, this was essentially the intent of launching our exhibit when we did on Aug. 12 in tandem with Philadelphia’s Obon Festival, held just outside of Shofuso. The title of our exhibit was chosen to both recognize the community home that Shofuso became for the Nisei generation, but also to invite their stories back into the cultural memory of the site.

For these reasons, Obon Festival was chosen as the launch date to recognize the Nisei leaders of FJHG as our movement ancestors in the work this organization continues to do at Shofuso.

One of the many exciting discoveries we made in the research phase was a letter from 1989 from Seabrook Buddhist Temple thanking the Friends group for providing seed funding for Hoh Daiko, the taiko troupe still affiliated with the temple. The letter references the donation being made in advance of the Obon Festival held at Shofuso that year, where Hoh Daiko was invited to present their debut performance.

Gaspar grew up in Bridgeton, N.J., where her parents both worked for Seabrook Farms. Longtime Seabrook JACL leader Ellen Nakamura, who also served as president of the Seabrook Buddhist Temple in the 1980s, was involved in several cultural festivals and activities at Shofuso, including a kimono exhibit and ikebana flower workshops. These connections run deep.

In an earlier phase of this project, we invited in Hoh Daiko and the Seabrook Minyo dancers to help coordinate the Bon Odori at our 2022 Obon Festival held outside of Shofuso. This was before we understood the historical ties between our organizations, but given the new details of our shared history that emerged from the research, their participation took on new meaning as we continue fostering the connections among current generations of Japanese American cultural practitioners and community leaders from Philadelphia and Seabrook.

We ended the evening with a lantern ceremony on the koi pond where participants enjoyed a koto performance by JASGP board member Mirai Yasuyama. In the background was the faint sound of oral history, welcoming the spirits and stories of our Nisei forbearers back to Shofuso.

“Okaeri (Welcome Home): The Nisei Legacy at Shofuso” is on view during regular opening hours at Shofuso through Dec. 10. Visit the exhibit website to learn more at <https://lokaeri.japanphilly.org/>.

Reiko Nakawatase Gaspar (third from left on the bridge) as a child in 1944 with her classmates at Poston Camp 1’s Japanese garden located outside the school barracks.



Reiko Nakawatase Gaspar at the 1987 Fall Festival



# IREICHŌ IS A POWERFUL LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE JA INCARCERATION EXPERIENCE

Conventiongoers at the recent JACL National Convention were invited to pay their respects and honor family members.

By Gil Asakawa, Contributor

One of the highlights of last month's JACL National Convention in Little Tokyo was the opportunity for attendees and their families to not only visit the Japanese American National Museum but also visit the small, walled-off area in the museum's lobby for Ireichō, the scared book of names of every person of Japanese ancestry who was incarcerated during World War II.

Those names include those not just the well-known 10 concentration camps but also the Justice Department camps where community leaders were imprisoned, as well as everyone who was held in temporary "assembly centers" such as converted horse racetracks.

There are 125,284 names painstakingly handwritten into the Ireichō book's 1,000 pages. As reported previously in the *Pacific Citizen* (Oct. 7-20, 2022, issue), Japanese Americans whose family members were incarcerated can reserve 15-minute appointments to stamp an acknowledgement next to their survivors' names. The *hanko*, or stamp, is simply a blue dot of ink, and each person or group that makes a reservation can stamp up to six family members.

For JACL, JANM made available all the blocks each day of the convention for members to reserve time. Viewing and stamping the Ireichō didn't require a museum membership, which was helpful to JACLers who may have traveled across the country for the first time to JANM.

Duncan Ryuken Williams, the driving force behind Ireichō, explained the back story during "Irei Project: The Making of the National WWII Japanese Incarceration Monument," the convention's plenary session held at JANM's Main Hall on July 21. He's a Buddhist priest and professor of American studies and ethnicity and religion, as well as the director of the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture at USC.

He explained the powerful symbolism of the book of names as a Buddhist tradition and how the project was based on the Buddhist origins of the monolith memorial at Manzanar. That first "Ireito" and an "Ireihi" memorial placed at Rowher are echoed in Williams' three-part project, which includes not just the Ireichō book but also an Ireizo searchable online directory of every name and, eventually, Ireihi light sculptures to be placed at all confinement sites.

Every aspect of the Ireichō exhibit at JANM, which has been extended through the end of 2024 (after which it will tour nationally), is purposeful and symbolic, Williams told the plenary session audience.

"The beauty of the Ireichō is in its thoughtful curation of Japanese traditions using five elements," he explained. Wood (the paper in the book), earth (representatives were asked to bring soil samples from each confinement site for the opening of the exhibit), fire (represented by ceramic pieces embedded in the inside front and back covers), metal (the gold font on the cover) and water (the blue stamp).

At JANM, Marian Yoshimura points to Tule Lake, which is engraved on wooden planks featuring the names of each site where Japanese and Japanese Americans were forcibly incarcerated during WWII. The display also features soil samples taken from each respective site.

Marian Yoshimura, Gil Asakawa's mother-in-law, stamps the Ireichō book in memory of her husband, Hitoshi Yoshimura, who passed away in 2021.

A close-up look at the three hanko marks made in memory of Hitoshi Yoshimura, among the many thousands of names contained in the Ireichō.

PHOTOS: GIL ASAKAWA

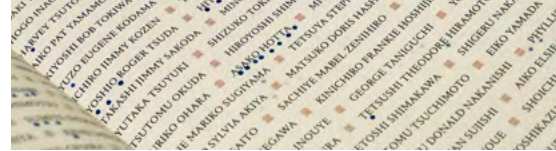
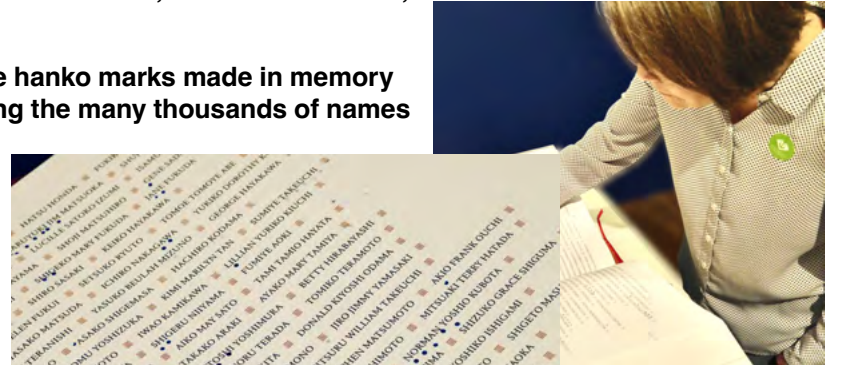
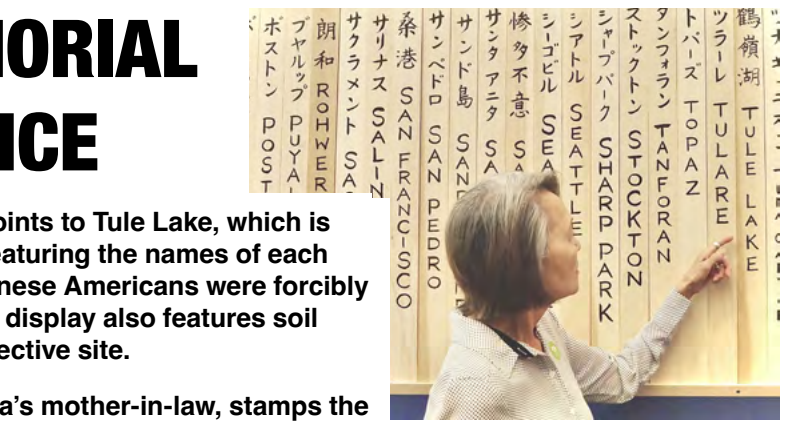
"Even though generally speaking, the concept is a Buddhist one, it kind of transcended religious affiliation," Williams added. "For Japanese Americans, the book is a tribute to those who've gone before, especially those who recently passed away."

The Ireicho book is just part of Williams' master plan.

"Later this year, in October, we'll be launching a different kind of monument — it's going to be an online monument and archive that you can see from anywhere around the world," Williams promised. The challenge, he says, is to design it so that it is more engaging than a searchable database or a phone book.

"It needs that kind of reverential feel and yet also has the function that people really want, which is being able to look up people you know," he said. The book currently has just names organized by year of birth.

"A lot of people have asked us, 'Hey, we want to know which camps,'" he said, and it will have more context for each person. Currently, there is a beta version online that is basic and not yet as engaging as he'd like that would connect to much more information about each incarcerated's life. The third part of the project will be



of paper and helped the family members turn to the right page to find the correct name.

Once the volunteer finds the right name for the family visiting the book, the representatives are given the *hanko* stamp. It seems a simple step to put a dot underneath the name of someone who was imprisoned 80 years ago — including people who are still alive and are the ones doing the stamping — but the process is surprisingly powerful, and moving, bringing tears to family members who are there to remember a loved one who may be gone, but with this tribute, not forgotten.

Any Japanese American whose family experienced the wartime incarceration should definitely plan to see the Ireicho and add their own stamps to this book that symbolizes so much for so many.

For more information on the Ireichō, visit [www.janm.org](http://www.janm.org).

## JACL Announces Legacy Fund Grant Recipients

A second round of funding for eligible chapters is now open.

By Legacy Fund Grant Committee

The JACL's Legacy Fund Grant Committee, led by PNW District Gov. Sheldon Arakaki and IDC District Gov. Lisa Olsen, is excited to announce two recipients for the first grant cycle of 2023. Congratulations to the following two chapters and their desire to further the mission and vision of JACL in their local communities:

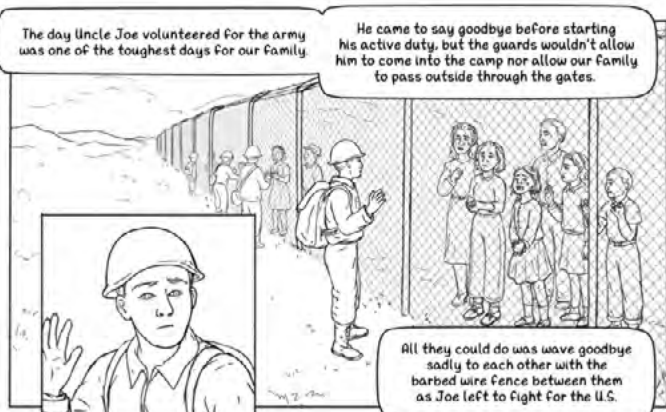
- The Wisconsin chapter with Amy McCullough and Ron Kuramoto, who proposed an "Essay Contest: Legacy of the Japanese American Incarceration"
- The Washington, D.C., chapter with Linda Sato Adams as project lead and president, who proposed, "Inquiry Through Images," an extensive graphic novel project.

A second round of Legacy Fund Grants for eligible chapters in good standing is now open.

The application deadline is Oct. 1. Grants for approved projects vary from up to \$4,000-\$8,000 and are intended to provide "seed" money to start new projects/programs and should not be viewed as the sole source of funding.

The primary goal of Legacy Fund Grants is to support new projects at the local level that result in programming that will increase the membership and enhances and strengthens capacity to further the organization's vision and mission.

For more information, visit <https://jacl.org/legacy-fund-grants>.



Washington, D.C., chapter project: "Inquiry Through Images"

ARTWORK BY VICKY YUH



Grace Ishida of Portland, Ore. (right), joins Patty Koto and her brother, Tom, who are Idaho residents, at the Minidoka Pilgrimage. All three are members of the Idaho JACL. Patty and Tom's dad, uncle and grandparents lived in Shoshone, Idaho, before the war and were not incarcerated. The photo at left shows their grandfather, Tojiro Koto, who in 1920 opened Tom's Café in Twin Falls. The Koto building exists today as Koto Brewing Co. and is where the pilgrimage welcomed attendees on opening night.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF PATTY KOTO



Minidoka Pilgrimage organizer and Seattle JACL's Erin Shigaki protests the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Farm.

PHOTO: RYAN KOZU

# MINIDOKA PILGRIMAGE 2023

Survivors gather to recall a painful past as the future presents a threat to the site's existence with a proposed wind farm.

By Nancy Ukai, Contributor

Fujiko Gardner was a toddler when she was incarcerated during World War II at Block 21 at Minidoka, located in southern Idaho. She has vivid memories of eating cow's tongue, sliced thin, that was served at the mess

hall, recalling also that "they always had rice."

Her father changed during the war, Gardner said. "When he had to give up everything, I think it destroyed him mentally. . . . My father was very quiet, and pretty soon, the quiet turned into anger," she recalled.

Gardner was among four Minidoka survivors who related childhood memories before an auditorium filled with 225 pilgrims from age 4 to survivors in their 80s who had traveled to Idaho to attend the first in-person pilgrimage at Minidoka since 2019. The 17th pilgrimage, held from July 6-9, was co-chaired by Seattle JACL chapter member Erin Shigaki and Stephen Kitajo.

Mary Abo, also of the Seattle JACL, was a 4-year-old in a camp nursery school. "I remember crying so much that my mother had to come get me," she said. Her father was "so upset about the situation" that he said, "I'm not going to do anything. He played baseball."

Along with lectures and camp walking tours, protesting the construction of



PHOTO: EUGENE TAGAWA

a commercial wind farm project next to the former concentration camp also was a part of the four-day program.

Minidoka is a unit of the National Park Service and is designated as a National Historic Site. Yet, the integrity of the historic landscape is under threat due to a proposed wind farm. Massive turbines would desecrate the sanctity of a sacred place for Japanese Americans. Pilgrims were urged to add their name to a sign-on letter to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.

Additional programming included a keynote lecture by Yonsei poet Brandon Shimoda on "Living Ancestors" that brought listeners to their feet. The event then ended at the camp's Honor Roll for the 73 soldiers who were killed in action during WWII.

Pilgrims also toured the Minidoka site, where a smudge/blessing ceremony for Minidoka survivors was led by Elder Hubert B. Two Leggins



Minidoka survivors (from left) Fujiko Gardner, Seattle chapter; Kay Endo of Portland; Mary Abo and John Shigaki, Seattle chapter, recall childhood memories during WWII.

PHOTO: NANCY UKAI

and his son, Noel Two Leggins, of the Apsáalooke (Crow) Tribe.

During the ceremony, the spiritual leaders told the pilgrims that when they feel a lump form in their throat that rises from the sadness of being on land layered with buried pain, they said, "Don't swallow it. Leave your sadness here."

It can be visited on the next return to Minidoka. ■



## LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

# Six Ways to Promote Physical Health

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

As we age, we naturally lose muscle mass. Physical decline begins in the decade of the 50s, much earlier than previously thought. Researchers with Duke University's School of Medicine suggest that physical decline begins in the decade of the 50s and worsens as we age, especially for those who don't exercise (source: [www.aarp.org/healthy-living-2016](http://www.aarp.org/healthy-living-2016)).

"Don't wait until you are 80 years old and cannot get out of a chair," said Katherine Hall, lead author of the study. "The good news is the ability to function independently can often be preserved with regular exercise. Remember, for the healthiest aging, we need to do the things that optimize health — so that the brain and body work at their best for now and for the future."

In this article, we will cover six proven ways to promote and maintain physical health as one ages that I found on [www.betterhealthwhile-aging.net](http://www.betterhealthwhile-aging.net). According to Dr. Leslie Kernisan, MD MPH, "They all have a solid track record. They are also good 'bang-for-the-buck,' in part because they provide real benefits to just about everyone who adopts them." In addition, many of these actions overlap with the recommended actions for brain health.

### 1. Exercise regularly — and include strength training twice weekly.

**Why:** Exercise helps older adults maintain their strength and mobility, plus it improves just about every physical health outcome you can imagine, provided you don't overdo it or get injured. Walking daily is not enough! Research suggests that strength training (e.g., weight lifting or other exercises that strengthen

muscles) is especially beneficial as we age. Without strength training, muscles weaken as we age, which can lead to anything from falls to difficulties with daily activities.

A 2014 research study in JAMA found that a structured exercise program — involving sedentary adults aged 70-89 — reduced the risk of "major mobility disability." Exercise also tends to improve mood, which has positive effects on the rest of the body. Note: Research has shown that even less-than-recommended exercise brings health benefits. So, remember it's better to do a little bit every day than nothing at all. In fact, the most important thing is to find something that you can keep doing. Walking is relatively easy for many.

If you only have time for one exercise, do a set of squats. Squats strengthen all of the muscle groups in your legs, including your calves, quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes, as well as muscles in your lower back and core. Those muscles provide the foundation for most activities of daily living, such as getting off the toilet, climbing a set of stairs and simply standing up from a chair (source: [www.aarp.org/healthy-living/info/2022](http://www.aarp.org/healthy-living/info/2022)).

### 2. Don't smoke.

**Why:** Smoking tobacco is bad for just about every aspect of physical health. It's especially damaging to

the lungs but also increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes and various forms of cancer. Many tobacco-related diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, can cause difficult symptoms for years.

Fortunately, even after an older adult has developed smoking-related health problems, quitting smoking will reduce symptoms and one's chance of a premature death: One study found that quitting smoking between ages 55-64 added four years to one's life expectancy. Many people need to try quitting a few times, so don't let a past failure to quit stop you from trying again.

E-cigarettes do help some people quit smoking. Although we don't yet know what the long-term effects of vaping are and using e-cigarettes, preliminary research suggests that it's better to use e-cigarettes than it is to smoke.

### 3. Get enough sleep.

**Why:** Studies have found that chronic sleep deprivation is linked to increased cardiovascular disease, increased levels of inflammatory blood markers and decreased immune function. Being sleep-deprived also causes fatigue, which can make it hard to be physically active (and is bad for mood, too).

Note: Aging does cause sleep to become lighter and more fragmented and may cause people to need

a little less sleep than when they were younger. That said, chronic sleep difficulties or often waking up feeling tired is not normal in aging. Older adults often suffer from true sleep problems that can be treated once they are properly evaluated.

### 4. Avoid chronic stress.

**Why:** Feeling chronically stressed has been linked to physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and decreased immune function. Research suggests that this may be because stress can accelerate "cellular aging" and also may promote inflammatory markers in the body.

Note: Common causes of stress in older adults include financial stress, relationship stress, work-related stress and caregiving stress. To reduce chronic stress, it's best to combine general approaches (such as improving sleep, exercising, meditation, relaxation strategies, etc.) with approaches that can help you cope with your specific source of stress.

### 5. Maintain a healthy weight.

**Why:** The main reason is that obesity is a major risk factor for disability in late life. (Strange but true: As people get older, the link between obesity and premature death gets weaker, a phenomenon sometimes called the "obesity paradox in aging.") Obesity — usually defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30



**ACTION » continued from page 3**

The National Council voted not to pass the Mount Olympus chapter's resolution to rescind support for same-sex marriage: 38 voted for, 50 against, four chapters split votes and 11 abstained.

It was an emotional time, Murakawa said. The moment the vote was over, people within the JACL began coming out to her and others. "To see these folks among us for the first time in their lives be validated by a community outside of their own LGBT community, on a national level, was the most wonderful and compelling and beautiful thing," she said. "People who have held that secret about themselves inside their entire lives."

"I was at that '94 convention, and the passage for supporting the Hawaiian same-sex marriage bill was one of my greatest JACL experiences," said Jim Oshima of the Contra Costa chapter, who attended the panel at this year's convention.

Following the vote, tensions continued to mount. Denny Yasuhara, JACL national president at the time, fired five national staff members (including the newly appointed national executive director), all of whom had supported same-sex marriage — which "we saw as pay-back," Kaji remembers. It was "gutting the national staff, and there was

really nobody left to do the work of the organization," Shikada said.

In protest of the retaliatory firings, in August 1995, Shikada and Murakawa decided to resign from the JACL. Bitter backlash ensued. "It was painful," Shikada said. "I withdrew from the community." Still, the experience only affirmed her desire to continue organizing for justice and "really guided me as I moved through my professional career." She has been working in local government for the last 30 years, including as an assistant city manager for the city of Santa Clara. This year's convention was the first she attended since departing the organization during the controversy.

Looking back, Shikada sees a period of groundbreaking change. "We brought forward a lot of issues that were ... kind of pushing the envelope a bit," she said. "And it was uncomfortable for people."

Coming out in support of same-sex marriage in a homophobic society was not something easily done. During this period of change for the JACL, Kaji attended a summer camp held by his church. There, he watched as others gave him the silent treatment, acting like he didn't exist. "Each of us, some of us in our own way, had to pay a price," Kaji said.

The panelists were not the only

ones to pay. While Murakawa, Shikada and Kaji moved on to other endeavors after departing the JACL, the organization was deprived of their enthusiasm and leadership for 30 years.

When organizing to support the resolution for same-sex marriage, Murakawa was vp for planning and development. She, too, feels her time with the JACL rooted her, preparing her for future work. She now works as the chief problem solver for a communications firm, dealing with water, transportation and

waste. She also serves as a trustee of the El Camino Community College District and organizes for the well-being of foster and formerly incarcerated youth. "Pretty much everything that I do for a living, I learned from my experiences in community organizing through the JACL," Murakawa said.

Following the struggle, Kaneko went on to advocate for the rights of migrants from Micronesia, as well as founded the Hawaii Institute for Public Affairs, an influential public policy institute. He also helped

several leaders win public office, including former Congressman and Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie. Kaji went on to win a seat on the Torrance City Council.

Like the others, Kaji believes his experiences in the same-sex marriage fight gave him the building blocks to understanding civic engagement and community-building. "You're not going to get this sitting in a classroom," Kaji said.

"If we as an organization didn't take this step, I don't know where we'd be today," he said. ■

or more — worsens arthritis.

It's also been linked to many health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and glucose intolerance, certain types of cancer and sleep-related breathing disorders. Studies have found that when overweight or obese people lose even a modest amount of weight — such as 5 percent-7 percent of one's current weight — this can improve physical health and symptoms.

**6. Eat a "healthy diet."**

**Why:** Diet undoubtedly affects certain aspects of physical health. A healthy diet is one that doesn't provoke negative health effects, such as being prone to take on extra weight, developing insulin resistance, developing atherosclerosis or having uncomfortable symptoms in the belly or bowels.

Frail older people often need extra calories and protein, since malnutrition becomes more common as people age. Research also suggests that eating enough protein is important if you are working on strength training, as the muscles can't grow stronger without enough protein.

*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.*



**It is important to maintain one's physical health as we age in order to reduce the onset of various health-related issues.**



**STACI TOJI, ESQ.**

**TOJI LAW, APC**

Estate Planning for the Generations

3655 Torrance Blvd., Suite 300 | Torrance, CA 90503

(424) 247-1123 | staci@tojilaw.com | www.tojilaw.com

**LIVING TRUSTS | WILLS | POWERS OF ATTORNEY**

**RESERVE SEATS NOW!**

*Aloha Edition*

## DEFINING COURAGE

★ Celebrate the Legacy of True American Heroes ★

& Support the Relief Efforts for Maui

Defining Courage is a journey into the legacy of the Nisei Soldier, Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in the segregated units of the 100th IB, 442nd RCT, MIS, and 522nd FAB. Considered the greatest fighting units in American military history, most have never heard their extraordinary stories.

This special edition honors Hawai'i with additional stories about their history. Plus, traditional music will be performed by Grammy Award-winners, Daniel Ho & Tia Carrere. Plus...

Stunning Cinematography, Live Music/Choir,  
Historic Film & Eyewitness Interviews

Our friends on Maui are "defining courage" under tragic circumstances. Let's stand with them and send love and support. 100% of the proceeds will be donated to the Hawai'i Community Foundation.

★ **Saturday, September 9, 2023 - 7pm** ★

The Marsee Auditorium, Torrance • Tickets @ [DefiningCourageShow.com](http://DefiningCourageShow.com)

Presented By

*Thanks to all our partners!*



# In MEMORIAM

**Arakawa, Marie Keoho, 93**, Kaneohe, HI, Feb. 23.



**Bungo, Shirley Natsumi, 78**, San Jose, CA, July 26; B.A., English, M.A., education; she is survived by her husband, Ron; children, Kelly and Jennifer; sons-in-law, Sergio and Dennis; gc: 4.

**Fujii, Mark M., 59**, Honolulu, HI, Jan. 15; 2 B.A.s, University of Hawaii; he is survived by his wife, Colleen; stepson, Anthony Pirl (Marian); sister, Stacey Fujii; and brother-in-law, John Walz.



**Fujimoto, Kazumaro 'Kent,' 91**, Dunedin, FL, March 16.

**Fukuhara, Joe Susumu, 90**, Oceanside, CA, April 14; veteran, Army; his activities included Japanese Language School Kyodo System, Rafu Chuo Gakuen, Hiroshima Kenjin-kai, Little Tokyo Lions Club, Little Tokyo Business Assn., Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee and Japanese American Community Credit Union; he was predeceased by his sister, Shizumi; he is survived by his wife, Yoriko; daughters, Christine Reiko (McDaniel), Eileen Michiko (Giese) and Janet Shizue (Fukuhara); sister, Emiko (Yagyū); gc: 4.

**Hama, George Kiyoshi, 92**, Lake Forest, CA, May 11; he was predeceased by his wife, Grace; he is survived by his sons, Allan Michael Hama, Mark (Mariko) Hama, Vincent (Amber) Hama and Ryan (Emiko) Hama; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 5.

**Inouye, Yuriko, 84**, Monterey Park, CA, May 5; she is survived by her husband, Yoneo; children, Mark Inouye, Craig Inouye and Leane (Delan) Sumimoto; sisters, Ivy Arashiro and Wendy Prestholt; she is also survived by nieces, nephews and other family members; gc: 3.

**Kawamoto, Sayoko Omori, 100**, Springfield, VA, Jan. 28; she was predeceased by her husband, Yukio; son, Craig; and siblings, Emiko Uyesugi, Michiko Omori and Yuriko Hughes; she is survived by her children, Sherin (Allen) Ferguson, Don (Margaret) Kawamoto and Brian (Robin) Kawamoto; daughter-in-law, Cindy.



**Miyagishima, Paul, 79**, Midvale, UT, March 12; he was predeceased by his siblings, Carl and Katherine; he is survived by his wife, Diane; sons, Greg and Steve (Kris); sisters, Julia Wada Valentine and Charlotte (George) Higa; sister-in-law, Dana Walch; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews; gc: 4.

**Segawa, Yuriko, 87**, Torrance, CA, May 27; she is survived by her husband, James; sons, Daniel (Karen), Kevin (Joyce) and Brian; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 5.

**Tsukamoto, Hiroe, 62**, Los Angeles, CA, June 12; B.A., English, in Japan; M.A., consumer economics, Kansas State University; she is survived by her husband, David Dominguez; mother, Chieko Tsukamoto; sister, Kaori (Hiroshi) Yoshizaki; she is also survived by a niece and a nephew.

**Yamada, Misao 'Nancy,' 98**, Hilo, HI, March 3.



**Yamada, Roy Kenji, 78**, North Richland Hills, TX, March 5; he is survived by his wife, Barbara Ann; and sons, Kennard, Donovan, Edward and Jack; gc: 3.



**Kimura, Fumiko, 93**, Tacoma, WA, March 29; B.S., chemistry, and M.A., fine arts, both from University of Puget Sound; author of the 2021 book "Persimmon and Frog"; she was predeceased by her husband, Yoshikiyo; son, Raymond; and siblings, Gene and Fusae; she is survived by her children, Richard (Marcia), Howard (Florence) and Jeanne (Mark); brother, George; gc: 5; ggc: 4.

**Kita, Shiro 'Bill,' 93**, Camarillo, CA, April 23; he is survived by his wife, Mitsuko "Marian" Kita; children, Duane (Lyn) Kita and Connie (Jim) Smith; he is also survived by many relatives.



**Linscomb, Miyoko Janet, 88**, San Pedro, CA, July 17; she was predeceased by her husband, Joseph Philip Linscomb; she is survived by her sons, David (Mary) Linscomb, Chris (Heidi) Linscomb and Mark Linscomb; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 4.

**KUBOTA**  
Sharing. Community. Legacy.  
久保田葬儀社  
T 213-749-1449  
F 213-749-0265  
911 Venice Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90015  
www.kubotamortuary.com

**福井 FUKUI MORTUARY**  
Five Generations of Experience  
FD #808  
707 East Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Ph. 213/626-0441  
Fax 213/617-2781  
Gerald Fukui  
President

## Steadfast JACLer Homer Yasui Dies at 98

Last sibling of the famous Yasui Nisei siblings of Hood River, Ore.

By P.C. Staff



**Homer Yasui**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE YASUI FAMILY

Homer Yasui, the last surviving sibling of the nine children of the storied Hood River, Ore., Yasui clan born to Issei immigrants Shidzuyo and Masuo Yasui, died on July 25. He was 98. According to family sources, he had survived "three different types of cancer" and died of lung cancer.

In a statement issued after his passing, Densho.org said, "In addition to sharing his life story through oral history interviews with Densho and countless other public appearances, he helped found the Oregon Nikkei Endowment (now the Japanese American Museum of Oregon), wrote a series of autobiographical vignettes for his extended family and tended to an expansive archive related to his family's incarceration experience, including his brother Minoru Yasui's widely known legal battle."

Reflecting on Yasui's life and JACL résumé, Chip Larouche, former Pacific Northwest District governor, described Yasui as "an exceptional fellow" who had served as president of the Portland JACL chapter in 1973 and from 1980-81, followed by a stint as the PNW district governor during the run-up to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.



**Setsy and Chip Larouche enjoy lunch with Homer Yasui in June 2023.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SETSY AND CHIP LAROUCHE

In his email to the *Pacific Citizen* about Yasui, Larouche added:

"His kindness and helpfulness were 'world class,' whether he was helping the new Japanese American Museum in Oregon get on its feet or whether he was showing you how to properly harvest matsutake mushrooms from his 'secret' location in the mountains."

A 1949 graduate of Philadelphia's Hahnemann Medical College, Yasui would practice surgery for 29 years, retiring in 1987. Prior to that, during WWII he had been imprisoned at the Pinedale Assembly Center near Fresno, Calif., then transferred with his family at the Tule Lake WRA Center, also in California. By September 1942, he was able to leave the concentration camp to attend the University of Denver, and in 1945, he enrolled at Hahnemann.

Yasui and Miyuki "Miki" Yabe, of Pasadena, Calif., were married in 1950 in New York after he completed a medical internship in Milwaukee, Wis. He finished his three-yearlong general surgery residency in August 1954. Upon learning that he would be drafted into the Army Medical Corps, Yasui instead opted to join the Navy and would be stationed in Iwakuni, Japan.

After being discharged from the Navy in October 1956, Yasui, with family in tow, moved to Portland, Ore., and would reside in the same house for 47 years. He joined the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1958 and would spend 12 years with a Marine Corps Reserve engineer battalion. He retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of captain in 1984.

Since 2015, Miki and Homer Yasui had been living at the Lakeshore in Seattle to be closer to their two daughters. Prior to that, they lived at the Cherrywood Retirement Village in Portland, Ore., in 2003.

Yasui was predeceased by his wife, Miki, who died on Dec. 14, 2018; their son, Allen Masuo Yasui; and his eight siblings. He leaves behind his three surviving children, Barbara, Meredith and John, plus eight grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and dozens of nieces, nephews and other extended family.

Donations in Yasui's memory may be made to Portland JACL, the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, Densho or the Oregon Historical Society. A memorial service will be held at a later date. ■



**NATION » continued from page 4**



**San Francisco Japantown has launched an initiative to create a history mural, shared Emily Murase.**

rights law firm. He observed that the Little Saigon community faces the same problems of racism, limited economic and political access as the other ethnic enclaves, but that collaborations offer a way forward.

Collaboration is an organizing principle for the Little Tokyo Community Council, stated Fukushima. In her presentation, titled “Home Is Little Tokyo,” Fukushima explained that Japanese American cultural values and behavior like collaboration shape Little Tokyo.

Established in 1999 by the executive directors of the Japanese American National Museum and the Little Tokyo Service Center, Irene Hirano and Bill Watanabe, respectively, the LTCC is a nonprofit coalition of residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses and other stakeholders dedicated to protect, promote and preserve Little Tokyo.

Fukushima’s own career has been heavily shaped by the Japanese American community. Starting out as an intern at the *Pacific Citizen*, she worked for the JACL Pacific SouthWest District, the Intercollegiate Department of Asian American Studies at the Claremont Colleges and co-founded Kizuna, a Japanese American youth development and empowerment organization. Most recently, she served as project manager for Sustainable Little Tokyo.

She discussed the many strengths of the 139-year-old Little Tokyo, including the contributions of the Issei generation, perseverance through the wartime incarceration and aftermath, the vibrancy of historic and new businesses and its continuing role as a “hub for culture, history, spirituality/religion, food, shopping and community.”

And yet, like Philadelphia China-

town, Little Tokyo was also targeted as a location for a new jail. The community quickly organized to oppose a 2002 proposal for a jail to house 512 inmates adjacent to the historic Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple that has been in the community for nearly 100 years and counting. By 2005, the City of Los Angeles abandoned the proposed location.

Fukushima concluded her presentation with the successful development of the Little Tokyo/Arts District Metro Station, complete with rail connections to Long Beach and Santa Monica, as well as continued efforts for community control over Little Tokyo.

I had the opportunity to speak about “San Francisco Japantown, Past, Present & Future.” Dating back to 1906 at its present location, San Francisco Japantown became, in 2013, the first Cultural District to be designed by the city.

Like Little Tokyo, key historical events impacting Japantown were the wartime incarceration and urban renewal of the late 1960s and early ’70s when 8,000 residents, including 1,500 Japanese Americans, and dozens of locally owned businesses were bulldozed to make way for the Japanese Trade and Cultural Center with little input and plenty of opposition from Japantown community advocates.

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting shutdowns also posed a severe threat to Japantown. According to a 2021 report by the Japantown Community Benefit District, vacancy rates as of May 2021 reached as high as 43 percent among the three buildings that compose the Japan Center Mall. Yet, by May 2023, occupancy reached nearly full capacity throughout Japantown.

Similar to Philadelphia Chinatown and Little Tokyo, San Francisco Japantown became a target for a quasijail facility. Late last year, the Japantown Task Force learned that the California Department of Corrections was seeking to locate a new parole office in a recently listed Japan Center Mall space. Community advocates quickly organized and, with the help of Assemblymember Phil Ting, the proposal was dropped.

More recently, the community was able to defeat proposals that would have threatened Japantown’s sustainability as a historic and cultural asset.

I shared that the JACL San Francisco chapter has launched an initiative to create a Japantown history mural along the Geary Expressway.

The mural is intended to illustrate the people, places and events that contributed in significant ways to San Francisco Japantown’s history. Supporters of the mural project are asked to sign a peti-

tion available at <https://chnng.it/gSz5tZqCLB>.

As part of closing reflections, the panelists noted the many similarities between and among Philadelphia Chinatown, Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, Little Saigon in San Jose and San Francisco Japantown, with even more opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

All agreed that the JACL National Convention presented a valuable opportunity for these communities to share their experiences. ■

**Huy Tran shared this slide of Vietnamese refugees escaping South Vietnam by boat.**

PHOTO: PHIL EGGMAN



**ELS** Judd Matsunaga’s  
ELDER LAW SERVICES OF CALIFORNIA  
A Professional Law Corporation

- Medi-Cal Planning
- Asset Protection for Long-Term Care
- Living Trusts & Wills
- Powers of Attorney
- Trust Administration
- Probate



**JUDD MATSUNAGA**  
Attorney at Law

*Home & Hospital  
Appointments Available!*

**Multiple Office Locations**  
Torrance • Los Angeles • Pasadena  
Encino • Fountain Valley • Westlake Village

**800-403-6078**  
[www.elderlawcalifornia.com](http://www.elderlawcalifornia.com)

**MOBILE BANKING APP IS NEW & IMPROVED**

**NEW FEATURES**

- 1** User Friendly - access your account with fingerprint or facial recognition.
- 2** Apply for a Loan - one of the quickest, easiest loan applications you’ll find!
- 3** Convenience - added cross account and money transfers.
- 4** Easy Access - links to credit card portal, bill pay and remote deposit.
- 5** Updated Bill Pay - enhanced mobile friendly features.

**It’s free, easy, secure, and available 24/7/365!**

**National JACL Credit Union** Download the app today!  
800-544-8828 [www.jaclcu.com](http://www.jaclcu.com)

**NCUA**  
PRIMO (DIE-P-COMBLE29)