A New Art Book Captures Haunting Images of JA Incarceration Centers.

‘SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME’

JACL Participates in 60th March on Washington.

CANE: 50 Years of Activism in SF Japantown
JACL Participates in 60th March on Washington

Aug. 28 marked the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington. On Aug. 26, JACL joined nearly 200 organizations and thousands of individuals in continuing the work from that march 60 years ago. Todd Endo, one of the original marchers for JACL in 1963, joined the group for the morning along with members of his family, where they were able to share addresses from three representatives from the Asian American community. Kiran Kaur Gill from SADDE was one of the first speakers to kick off the day, followed by Norman Chen of TAAF and JACL Executive Director David Inoue spoke to close out the first hour. In his remarks, Inoue called for action on African American reparations as a continuation of the ongoing work from 60 years ago to bring social and economic justice for the African American community.

“If we can pass Japanese American redress 35 years ago, we are long past due for African American reparations,” Inoue said. “We need our leaders to establish commissions to study the needs for reparations to bring racial healing to our country.”

-JACL National

Jacksonville Shooting Highlights Need to Continue the Work of Racial Reconciliation and Repair as Highlighted by the March on Washington

By JACL National

On Aug. 26, a gunman targeted and killed three people specifically because they were African American. This is another one of the countless shootings that occurred this year already, but tragically comes on a time of remembrance for civil rights history. This attack came juxtaposed on a historically symbolic day for civil rights, where JACL joined hundreds of thousands of advocates in honor of the 1963 March on Washington, which featured Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

This year’s theme, “A Continuation Not a Commemoration,” is a renewed commitment to build a nation that lives up to its ideals—one that protects and values Black lives. Following this act of racialized violence, this theme could not hold more truth toward the need to dismantle systemic racism and white supremacy in all forms.

Just as a quarter million Americans, led by King, first marched against segregation 60 years ago, this year’s March both memorialized and advocated for the continuance of his work against anti-Blackness, segregation and white supremacy. In the 60 years since the March’s beginning, our country’s legacy of racism continues to harm, disenfranchise and claim the lives of Black individuals at the hands of hate-fueled violence. In addition to re-reaching our country’s longstanding history of anti-Blackness, the shooting also underscored the critical need to ban assault weapons.

The intersection of racism and gun violence is resulting in dire consequences. This is particularly true in a state such as Florida, which has passed laws to enable and embolden gun owners to brazenly turn to gun violence as their first option.

This mixed with a series of policy changes targeting multicultural and particularly African American communities—incidents such as this are frighteningly more likely to happen. We must do better as a nation if we are to make true on the hopes and dreams of the past.

The March on Washington was held on Aug. 26; 60 years earlier there on Aug. 28, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF APIA VOTE
NEVER FORGET?

By David Inoue, JACL Executive Director

It has now been 22 years since the Sept. 11 attacks horrified and then brought together what was then a fractured country in the wake of the 2020 elections. Despite its unpopularity prior to the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush and a York Rudy Giuliani became, for a brief moment, apolitical, at least in our own country, ideal leaders who spoke for and to all of us as Americans.

A lot can happen in 22 years.

Today, we are fractured as a country more than ever, certainly more than we were in the time between the 2000 election and 9/11. Racial relations have deteriorated to the point where veiled racism is no longer disguised. White nationalism is openly talked about proudly, and being called out for racist ideology is responded to with threats of being overly sensitive and worn as a badge of honor that the woke left is attacking them.

And as for the great leaders of the day—Giuliani, the former federal prosecutor and “touch on crime mayor” has himself been indicted on conspiracy charges to attempt to overturn the last presidential election along with former President Donald Trump.

On the other hand, the George W. Bush Institute, along with 12 other presidential library institutes and foundations, for the first time ever issued a joint statement to “reaffirm our commitment to the principles of democracy underlying this great nation, protecting our freedom and respecting our fellow citizens.”

This action is unprecedented, perhaps underscored by the Eisenhower Foundation’s reasoning for not signing on that this would be the “first common statement that the presidential centers and foundations have ever issued as a group, but we have had no collective discussion about it, only an invitation to sign.” Again, this can be contrasted with the leadership from the Bush Institute, where it emphasized that the former president had indeed read the statement and signed off on it personally.

The Eisenhower Foundation’s stunning lack of awareness is really not so stunning. One would think that anyone with any understanding of the current state of our democracy and the threat that former President Trump and his supporters represent would have been more than willing to sign on to such an innocuous statement about the importance of democracy and respect diverse viewpoints.

And yet, that is the state of things today.

The conservative movement has been subsumed by the radical right who believe in a theocratic Christian nation where minorities can have some rights, so long as they don’t change the dynamic of white supremacy. Is it fear from this part of the Republican party that prevented the Eisenhower Foundation from signing? Or is it because its own leadership subscribes to the false narrative that the 2020 election was stolen? Watching the first Republican presidential debate — it is quite clear that the radical fringe is now mainstream perspective for many Republicans.

We cannot have our leaders equivocating on the sanctity of the vote or the need for an election process that was fair, honest, and conducted in public service and the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That is what has allowed the lies of former President Trump, Giuliani, Fox News and so many others to grow and spread to the majority of Republicans.

I know that those who believe the lies will not be the ones reading my words and certainly will not be agreeing with me. And that is why conservative leaders, and institutions such as the Eisenhower Foundation, who might still hold sway with some of those who might be convinced that in order to Make America Great Again, need to work together as a democracy with “compassion, tolerance, pluralism and respect for others” and not in a battle to dehumanize and destroy the other side.

That statement was nearly universally affirmed, with the exception of the one whose silence speaks just as loudly to those who need to hear this message most. Just as we needed leaders on Sept. 11, we need our leaders to step up today, for the benefit of our country, not just for political parties or to seemingly preserve a false sense of peace.

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

A New Take on ‘MADAMA BUTTERFLY’ Updates Puccini’s Opera to Modern Times

By Gil Asakawa

Even if you haven’t seen the opera, most people know the title “Madama Butterfly,” Giacomo Puccini’s famous work that debuted in 1904. It’s part of the operatic canon, a classic. But when the Boston Lyric Opera announced it would mount “Butterfly” in the fall of 2020, the world had different plans. Covid came along and shut down everything everywhere, all at once. By the spring of 2021, anti-Asian hate crimes were in the headlines, and then eight people were killed in Atlanta. Six of the victims were Asian women.

The BLO took an unprecedented step. The company reached out to Phil Chan, a dancer and activist who had co-founded Final Bow for Yellowface, an organization that calls out racist Asian stereotypes in classic ballet works like “The Nutcracker.” He also wrote a book with the same title. The BLO asked Chan to moderate a series of online discussions, “The Butterfly Process.”

The intent was never to cancel the opera, says Chan, who loves opera, including “Madama Butterfly” and Puccini’s other works, such as the equally problematic “Turandot.” After overseeing the discussions for the BLO, the chrysalis of a new, modern “Butterfly” was born. The BLO then asked Chan to helm the production.

He wrote a new libretto and is directing the opera, with the story set not in Japan of the 1890s, but instead in 1940s California. The main characters, Cio-Cio-san and B. F. Pinkerton, fall in love on the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent incarceration of more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II. She’s a Chinatown nightclub singer who’s sent to a concentration camp, and he is sent off to fight in the Pacific, not realizing she’s pregnant.

Chan admits he’s Chinese American. “You know, I’m not Japanese, my family was not incarcerated. I’m thinking am I the right person to tell this story?” he asked.

So, he relied on the BLO’s artistic advisor and dramaturg, Nina Yoshida Nelsen, who is biracial Japanese whose grandmother was imprisoned at Poston in Arizona during WWII. She co-founded the Asian Opera Alliance in 2021 and has performed in “Butterfly” dozens of times over her career. For Chan’s reimagining, she drew on her family history.

“She is the beating heart of this production,” Chan said. “Her family was incarcerated, so this is very personal. Just working with her brought out the human history of this in a very personal way.”

Bringing the JA Perspective

Nelsen acknowledges her JA roots. Her grandmother was in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and her grandmother’s family was incarcerated. But she wasn’t part of a JA community, having been born in Santa Barbara, Calif.

She recalled, “Growing up, you’re as American as you can be, and you keep your head down, and you do your work and you get good grades. We grew up with Japanese food on New Year’s Day, and there were some words that I never knew the English words for like shoyu. But I wouldn’t say that I identified as ‘Japanese’ until people started typecasting me into Japanese roles. It wasn’t until people started telling me I was Japanese that I had to look into what does that mean and what does that mean for me.”

She found that meaning in “An American Dream,” an opera that tells the story of a Japanese American and German American families during the war. Her character, which she portrays since it first opened in 2015, is much like her grandmother when she was in camp. And then during the height of Covid, she co-founded the Asian Opera Alliance.

“In the spring of 2021, right after the shootings in Atlanta, we started to see opera companies around the United States post on their social media saying, ‘We support our Asian artists,’ similar to what we saw post-George Floyd with all the Black artists,” she said. She saw one post from an opera company that made a generic call for an Asian American soprano.

That’s when she realized her career had been built on her ethnicity. “It was all ‘Butterfly,’ ‘American Dream,’ ‘Turandot.’ There was no, like, ‘Marriage of Figaro’ or ‘La Bohème’ or anything else. The only way we’ve ever seen opera is as Asian.”

Nelsen thought about it and realized over a busy decade of work that she had only sung three non-Asian roles. “I was shocked by this,” she said. “And because I knew I had been pigeonholed into Asian roles, but I didn’t know how bad it was.”

She and a friend formed the Asian Opera Alliance, which advocates for AAPI artists on its website and social media. She knew of Chan, but the two had only spoken once before she met him through the BLO, which asked her to participate in the Butterfly Process panel discussions. Now, they’re creative partners in this revamped “Butterfly.”

PHOTO: KATHY WITTMAN

See ‘MADAMA BUTTERFLY’ on page 9
ADVOCATING FOR ALL

JACL passes R1 and calls for further action for the inclusion of trans and nonbinary members in its continued support of the LGBTQIA+ community.

By Annakai Hayakawa, Contributor

A

the JACL National Council Meeting on July 20 during its recent National Convention in Little Tokyo, members overwhelmingly passed a resolution, R1, calling for increased support of transgender and nonbinary people.

The resolution states JACL National will offer all-gender bathrooms and lodging at events. This has been done before with success, said Vinicius Taguchi, president of the Twin Cities chapter and one of the resolution’s authors. A simple adjustment can be made to already-existing bathrooms, such as pasting a “Gender Neutral” sign over the sign for a gender-specific bathroom during the duration of an event or conference, he added.

For Zara Espinoza, a member of the Twin Cities chapter and Young Professional Caucus officer of the Midwest District Council who spoke in support of the resolution, R1 gets at the core of the JACL’s mission to fight for civil and human rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry. “It goes beyond bathrooms — it’s about how we are treating each other with dignity in our humanity,” Espinoza said. “Sometimes I have to remind people in power of the exclusionary messages they are sending when necessary accessibility accommodations are not provided. As Japanese Americans, we should be able to understand why it’s important to be supported and treated as fully human.”

“We can’t say we welcome our transgender and nonbinary members but say they must go somewhere when it is convenient.”

Portions of the resolution’s authors originally joined the resolution’s support for Black communities and Black Japanese Americans. The authors enjoyed working together, Taguchi said, and decided to team up again on the latest resolution.

In addition to offering gender-neutral bathrooms and hotel rooms, the resolution urges the JACL to create more educational opportunities for its members on topics like sexuality, gender identity and challenges faced by transgender and nonbinary people. It also calls for the inclusion of trans and nonbinary members in decision-making on policies impacting LGBTQIA+ communities.

Making all members of the JACL feel represented was key. “There are many Japanese Americans who are trans and nonbinary,” Taguchi said. “It is the JACL’s responsibility to acknowledge them and do what it takes for them to feel just as much a part of the organization.”

Lastly, the resolution summons the JACL to take action beyond its membership and advocate for legislation and funding in support of trans and nonbinary people’s well-being.

“I have friends who can’t go home, who can’t be with family, because of the new anti-trans legislation popping up in their states,” said Sarah “Remi” Kageyama, Eastern District Council representative on JACL’s NY/SC, who is nonbinary. When, during the council meeting the EDC proposed an amendment to the bill, Kageyama delivered a speech to the room in favor of passing the resolution. “To say that we are not experts, that we should not be guaranteed a say on issues that affect our lives so profoundly, is an outrage,” they said.

JACL members of all ages were in support of the resolution. “Passing the resolution is a call to action to our nonbinary and transgender colleagues feel welcome and comfortable,” said former Congressman Mike Honda of the San Jose chapter. While in Washington, D.C., Honda helped found the Congressional Equality Caucus in 2008, with the goal of advancing LGBTQIA+ rights. The Caucus’ three initial members have grown to 192 members today.

The JACL must use the resolution to “leverage our economic power,” said Naoko Fujii of the San Jose chapter. She hopes the JACL and its network of fellow organizations join together to take action.

The next step is to “try to see how we can strategize, so the JACL rallies our allies to do a similar thing,” she added. “We need to use our national platform.”

This article was made possible by the Harry K. Honda Memorial Journalism Fund, which was established by JACL Redress Strategist Grant Ujifusa.

FELLOWS CORNER

APALA’S CONVENTION

MOTIVATED AND INSPIRED

ME TO STAY CONNECTED

AND ENGAGED

By Bridget Keaveney, JACL Norman Y. Mineta Fellow

One year has passed since my participation in the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)’s border tour of San Diego, Calif., and Tijuana, Mexico. The program was conducted in collaboration with the University of California Los Angeles’ Labor Center, led by professor and activist Kent Wong.

As I wrote in an article that appeared in the Pacific Citizen last year, the experience left me charged and eager to expand my involvement in the immigrant rights movement. It was a transformational experience that propelled me into a year full of personal advocacy with groups such as Triu for Solidarity and Value Our Families, as well as the Congregation Action Network in Washington, D.C.

I owe so much of what I now know to the teachers and mentors I connected with in spaces that are created and sustained by organizations such as APALA. Due to that experience and my growing affinity for the organization, I became interested in attending APALA’s 17th biennial convention program in Seattle, which was held Aug. 3-6.

This year’s convention theme was “Workers Rising Together,” and it was centered on celebrating AAPI labor history and developing strategies toward collective liberation. While the idea of attending a second convention less than two weeks after JACL’s own National Convention seemed initially overwhelming, I was desperate to meet with activists who I knew would provide me with the resources and tools needed to build worker solidarity and fight oppressive systems. I was overcome with gratitude when I was awarded a scholarship to attend APALA’s convention.

As someone who hails from the Pacific Northwest, the idea of returning home and partaking in something as special as APALA’s convention was all I could have wanted and more! The scholarship required awardees to volunteer their time toward the convention. I was very fortunate to share this experience with my colleague and dear friend, Cheyenne Cheng, who also received a scholarship. The two of us couldn’t help but laugh when we learned that the bulk of the convention’s programming and our very own hotel placement was to be at Seattle’s Westin Hotel, the very same hotel chain where the JACL convention had just been held in Little Tokyo.

It was APALA, after all, who recommended we go with the Westin Bonaventure, given their contract status. I’m so grateful to have shared this experience with someone with whom I look up to. Both APALA and JACL have become a foundational part of our relationship, and I look forward to continuing to be involved in community with Cheyenne in the years to come.

JACL and APALA members Stan Shikuma, Sheldon Arakaki and Bridget Keaveney gather for a group photo.

See APALA on page 9

JACL and APALA members from left) Cheyenne Cheng, Stan Shikuma, Sheldon Arakaki and Bridget Keaveney (in white hat) march alongside activists, fellow APALA members and hotel workers in the UNITE HERE Local 8 Hospitality Workers march on Aug. 4.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIDGET KEAVENY
CANE: 50 Years of Community Activism in SF Japantown

Community convenes to celebrate CANE’s impact in helping residents and small businesses remain in the historic district.

By Emily Murase, Contributor

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Committee Against Nihonmachi Eviction (1973-2023), more than 200 people of all ages gathered at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center, or “The Center,” in San Francisco Japantown on Aug. 19.

“Originally, the event was going to be a reunion — we had organized the 20th and 30th anniversary reunions as private events,” explained Joyce Nakamura, who served as the event’s emcee. “But as time passed, our group realized that many of the issues of 50 years ago are still issues for our community today.”

She added, “To tell you the truth, we are getting old, and we wanted this story to be told since so many people don’t know this story.”

CANE formed in February 1973 when mostly Sansei third-generation student activists came together to organize opposition to urban renewal and redevelopment that was destroying Japantown, the Fillmore District and the Western Addition, where the homes and businesses of Japanese Americans, Blacks and other people of color were concentrated.

Boku Kodama, an early leader, was a student reporter for the City of color were concentrated.

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Boku Kodama, an early leader, was a student reporter for the City College of San Francisco’s newspaper, the Guardsman, at the time. “I was on assignment and walked up and down Fillmore Street. This was around 1969. I was shocked by how run-down the neighborhood had become. When I was a kid growing up in the neighborhood, Fillmore Street was bustling. Instead, I was accosted by drunk guys, hobos, actually, who rode the trains and ended up in the Fillmore because they knew they could get free housing in abandoned buildings. There was a lot of drugs and gambling.”

In 1956, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency deemed the Japantown/Fillmore/Western Addition neighborhoods “blighted” and ordered the eviction and removal of hundreds of residences and businesses to make way for the six-lane Geary Boulevard that would facilitate a speedy commute from downtown to the university, seeking involvement in social justice work in the Japanese American community, when I first started working with CANE. The experience of working shoulder to shoulder with Japantown residents and small businesses opposing redevelopment, many of whom were Nisei/second generation, was a very different experience. Until then, I didn’t see many Nisei who protested government action, fought City Hall.”

According to Nakamura and Kodama, the Japantown community split between the Nihonmachi Community Development Corp., composed of longtime Japantown property owners and many Nisei merchants still rebuilding after the wartime incarceration who supported the Trade Center, and CANE, which organized the community to oppose evictions of longtime Japantown renters, the forced removal of small businesses and the development of properties by Kintetsu International, a major travel corporation based in Japan. CANE members brought forth a resolution to the 1974 JACL National Convention in Portland, Ore., to (1) affirm CANE’s two principles and (2) pledge resources to CANE’s work in San Francisco Japantown.

Despite a lack of support from the San Francisco JACLRs affiliated with the NCDC, the resolution garnered overwhelming approval from the National Council of chapter delegates, representing 25,000 JACL members at the time, and was adopted by a vote of 68 chapters in favor and 3 against, according to Asian American studies researcher Dave Okita.

Nakamura further reported that in response to CANE’s boycott against Kintetsu Enterprises in 1975, the National Youth Coordinating Council of the JACL youth group, the JAYs, supported the boycott by staying at the Jack Tar Hotel for the duration of the JACL National Board meeting, which was held at Kintetsu’s Miyako Hotel.

Regarding the controversial split between the NCDC and CANE, Nakamura and Kodama both expressed that the Redevelopment Agency’s heavy-handed approach to urban renewal was at fault. Today, Nakamura is an active member of the JACL San Francisco chapter, where she continues to work on social justice issues.

By building a broad-based coalition of Nisei and Sansei residents, merchants, students and advocates from other communities, CANE was able to help some residents and small businesses remain in Japantown.

Lately, CANE members organized around the construction of Nihonmachi Terrace, a 245-unit low-income housing complex for seniors and physically challenged individuals; Kimochi Home, a culturally sensitive senior residential facility; and the Center.

Kodama is nearing completion of “Ganbaro: The Fight for the Final Four Blocks,” a comprehensive new video documentary he has written and directed.

Reflecting the theme “Celebrating Activism & Community, the Aug. 19 50th anniversary event featured a rousing opening by Jiten Daiko, an affiliate of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, dedicated to building community. More than a dozen members of CANE shared their reflections on the impact of the organization’s work on their personal lives, careers and the community.

Traveling all the way from Japan to speak as part of the program was Koichi Ando, a CANE member and a teacher in the inaugural class of the Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program.

The JBBP is an award-winning Japanese language program in the San Francisco public schools founded by Japanese Americans; it is also celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Other speakers included Cathy Inamasu, founder of the Nihonmachi Little Friends, also located in Japantown, which has offered Japanese bilingual and multicultural childcare since 1975.

The audience also enjoyed an electric performance by San Francisco rapper AK Black and celebrated musician Francis Wong. They also sang along with a one-day only performance by Band CANE composed of Bill Tamayo on the accordion, Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo on drums, Peter and Wendy Horikoshi on guitar and percussion and aided by Nakamura on the tambourine.

» See CANE on page 9
‘SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO TO HOME’


By Gil Asakawa, Contributor

Sandy Sugawara didn’t start out to produce a beautiful coffee-table art book filled with photographs of every Japanese American concentration camp from World War II — or what remains of them today. She also didn’t plan on enlisting a friend from a photography class, Catiana Garcia-Kilroy, to help capture the powerful images for the book.

This project began as a personal visual record of Amache, the camp where her parents spent WWII. Like many Japanese Americans, Sugawara was raised in a home where stories of camp life and the wartime incarceration experience just weren’t shared. When Sugawara’s son asked her mother about it for a school project, she said she couldn’t discuss it because it was too painful.

“But as my parents got older, particularly my mother, when she was in the hospital, and dying, she started talking about it like nonstop,” she said.

When Sugawara mentioned to her mother that she’d like to take photographs of the camps, she recalls her mom asking, “Why would you want to do that? Those are awful places. And I said because people can, you know, forget about them.” Sugawara began her self-motivated project of chronicling camp sites with her camera while her mom was still alive, including Amache in Colorado, where her parents had been incarcerated. But after her mother’s death, the project evolved to ultimately include every camp and publish the images in a book.

“It was my mother’s death that made me realize that I was really serious about doing a book that told people what these camps were like,” she said. “Once my mom died, I decided that I really wanted to make it much more serious and hopefully would tell people a lot more than just a few camp photos would.”

BOX OF LOST MEMORIES

Part of the book’s inspiration came from a box Sugawara found when she was packing her mother’s belongings.

“When I got home, I discovered a metal box,” she recalled. “And in it, my father had his wallet that he carried around all the time. I recognized it, and I thought, ‘Oh, that’s weird. My mom kept his wallet.’ And then there were some credit cards and IDs and stuff. And then I saw that he had his meal tickets from Amache and a few other camp passes. And also his Boy Scout card.”

“I am not actually a photojournalist. I’m a journalist, a reporter, but I never actually took pictures,” Sugawara explained. “And when I started taking photographs, I think I kind of stayed away from photojournalism because it felt too much like work.”

Sugawara was taking a photography class and was more inclined to shoot landscapes. In 2018, she and a friend from the class, Garcia-Kilroy, who is a development economist in her day job, began going to camp sites to shoot photos.

Garcia-Kilroy knew some of the history of the incarceration, but she had no idea of the tragic scope. “When Sandy said, ‘Well, you know, my family was incarcerated. I had no idea that it had been, you know, whole families, 120,000 people incarcerated in these camps. I had no idea where they were, just a very vague idea,’ she recalled. “So, this really needs to be more broadly known. And then from a photography perspective, I thought it was a very interesting challenge in terms of how to use photography to reflect on memory, but also subjective memory.”

Sugawara explained: “After my mom died, and I discovered my dad’s box, I decided I really wanted to do something meaningful. And I decided that photography is a way if we can make this an immersive experience, if we could make people feel what it was like to be at these places and to understand the loneliness and the isolation that maybe that would be an effective way for people who otherwise might not be interested in learning about the camps to learn about the camps.”

They didn’t plan at first to visit all 10 camps. “Some of the photographers that we talked to said it could be redundant,” Sugawara said. “If you do 10 camps, they might all end up looking alike. But we realized that, in fact, that wasn’t the case. Each camp had its own unique personality, its own unique history. And at some point, we realized, well, we didn’t want to just, you know, two camps or three camps so that it would feel like somehow they weren’t as important. So, we eventually decided that we needed to do all 10 camps.”

MAKING THE BOOK

When people think of photographs of the Japanese American concentration camps, the prevailing
imagery that’s conjured up in their minds are the classic black-and-white photographs of Ansel Adams and Margaret Bourke-White that ran in LIFE magazine during the war or the WRA government photographs that have been reproduced. One of the few books with contemporary photographs of the camps was “Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment (Volume 3),” published by Radius of text by Sugawara and Garcia-Kilroy, as well as contemporary photographs of the camps was “Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment (Volume 3),” published by Radius of text by Sugawara and Garcia-Kilroy, as well as contemporary photographs of the camps was “Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment (Volume 3),” published by Radius of text by Sugawara and Garcia-Kilroy, as well as contemporary photographs of the camps was “Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment (Volume 3),” published by Radius of text by Sugawara and Garcia-Kilroy, as well as contemporary photographs of the camps was “Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment (Volume 3),” published by Radius of text by Sugawara 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By Alan Oda, Contributor

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Following the workshop, SOSN held a news conference at which Pacific Southwest District Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa announced that JACL National had given its support for an “investigation into Kei-Ai and its treatment” of its residents (see Pacific Citizen, Aug. 25-Sept. 7, 2023, issue).

It was the latest in the continuing imbroglio that arose after Keiro’s 2016 $41 million sale of its senior care facilities that served the Southern California Japanese American community since the 1960s to a San Diego-based real estate development firm (see tinyurl.com/3ba48txs). After the sale, the new owners renamed the four former Keiro facilities under a new name, Kei-Ai.

SOSN, an organization of family members and other supporters of seniors residing or formerly residing in Kei-Ai facilities, has been at the forefront of pushing Kei-Ai to honor its commitments, including a five-year moratorium on making changes that expired on Feb. 1, 2022.

It was at the SOSN workshop that participants discussed their demands for an official investiga-

Convention Workshop Nurses Old, Continuing Concerns

The Save Our Seniors Network’s workshop keeps spotlight on Kei-Ai facilities in L.A. County.

Margaret Miyauchi-Leong’s father was also evicted from Sakura Intermediate Care Facility and suffered greatly during the Covid pandemic. PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHI JOHNSTON

Dr. Kensaku Nakayama addressed deep concerns about his mother’s care since she was evicted from Sakura Intermediate Care Facility. PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHI JOHNSTON

Panelists and participants of the Save Our Seniors Network workshop at JACL’s recent National Convention in Little Tokyo. PHOTO: RON KIMURA

By Alan Oda, Contributor

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Preserving the Classic in a New Context

Chan says again that the intent has never been to cancel “Butterfly.” “It’s about finding a new way to tell this story with a little bit more nuance, and something that addresses the American story but without changing the Puccini music,” he said. “I think that was our biggest challenge — the music is good. That’s why people like it. That’s why people buy tickets. And it’s, I mean, it’s like gut wrenching, it’s beautiful. So, how do we keep the music but not change the intention of what the work is and still make it feel artists have artistic integrity for today. This is not radical, this is not the woke Butterfly, it’s just changing the setting. “But yes, you know, it has to deal with the sexism, the Orientalism, the exotic sacrifice, the sexualization, the violence in the opera,” he continued. “It’s not perfect. I’m not saying this is like now a perfect version. But, it’s a version that at least shows the pain points so that the audience can be a little critical about it while keeping the music as is. At the end of the day, I want the audience not to notice all the work and just be able to see a beautiful story.

“I think that’s why art is powerful because it can take something that feels like it’s a history lesson and actually make it a human story and make you feel something,” he concluded. “And it’s my hope that after someone sees this story, they’ll think about how we see each other with more nuance and more empathy better.”

The Boston Lyric Opera’s “Madama Butterfly” will be staged Sept. 14-24 at the Emerson Colonial Theatre, 106 Boylston St. in Boston. The New England JACL chapter is sponsoring “Our Story: Cultural Legacies of Japanese American Incarceration,” a free conversation and performance with the BLO that will be performed in person and livestreamed online at https://bloom.org/event/our-story-cultural-legacies-of-japanese-american-incarceration/.

Gil Asakawa is the author of “Tabesnasho! Let’s Eat! The Tasty History of Japanese Food in America.”

At the conclusion of the program, Kodama announced the CANE Archive Project to document and share the history of the organization as well as the formation of a Sansei Legacy Fund that will be dedicated to the preservation of San Francisco Japantown.

Additional information about the event, including reflections by speakers in the program and a roster of the CANE 50th Anniversary Committee, can be found at the CANE50.org website.

This article was made possible by the Harry K. Honda Memorial Journalism Fund, which was established by JACL Redress Strategist Grant Ujifusa.
2023 JACSC Education Conference
Los Angeles, CA
Sept. 22-24
Price: Free

The Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium and USC Shoah Foundation Center for Japanese Religions and Culture are hosting this conference that will convene around the theme of “Memory and Monument-Making: Repairing Our Racial Karma.” All who are interested in monument-making and memory work from a comparative, multicultural and international lens are welcome. The conference will also include various speakers, sessions and evening activities.

Irei — A National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration
Los Angeles, CA
JANM
100 N. Central Ave.
The Irei chō contains the first comprehensive listing of more than 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly incarcerated during World War II. Visitors can now view the book and leave a special stamp (stamp seal) for each person in the monument as a way to honor those incarcerated. The project’s online archive is now searchable alphabetically or by camp.
Info: Visit irei.org for more information and janm.org.

NCWNP
‘Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People — Swelling of Monsterized Humanness’
San Francisco, CA
Sept. 15-Feb. 12, 2024
Price: Free

The Asian Art Museum houses this exhibition, which presents a comprehensive look at Murakami’s work. The exhibition includes more than 80 works, showcasing the artist’s unique approach to art and culture.

PSW
Keiro No Hi Festival
Los Angeles, CA
Sept. 7; 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
JANM
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: Registration Required

Join Keiro for live entertainment, interactive activities, access to JANM exhibitions, food and much more! Attendance will be limited and available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Registration is required.

PNW
‘A Sense of Place: The Art of George Tsutakawa’
Japan America Gardens
Portland, OR
Sept. 7-Dec. 31
Price: Museum Admission

For the first time, artist George Tsutakawa’s work will be on exhibit in Oregon thanks to a collaboration between JANM and the Tsutakawa family. The exhibit will include examples of the artist’s work in watercolor, sumi, metal sculpture and fountain design. Tsutakawa’s public works can be found in cities across the U.S., Canada and Japan. An exhibition highlight is a large model for Fountain of Wisdom, Tsutakawa’s first fountain sculpture, created in 1960 for the Seattle World’s Fair.

‘Parallel Barbed Wire’ Exhibit
Heart Mountain Interpretive Center
Thurmond, WY
Now Open

Price: Free

This new exhibit features the remarkable stories of Heart Mountain incarcerated Clarence Matsumura and Holocaust survivor Sally Ganor. Matsumura was incarcerated along with his family at Heart Mountain during WWII, and Ganor was a child living in Lithuania before the Nazi invasion forced him and his family into a Jewish ghetto and then a forced-labor camp in Bavaria. Matsumura survived in the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion and rescued Ganor. The exhibit details their remarkable friendship throughout their lives.
Info: Visit www.heartmountain.org for Exhibit Information and further details.

EDC
Boston Lyric Opera Presents ‘Madama Butterfly’
Emerson Colonial Theatre
Boston, MA
Sept. 14, 17, 22, 24
Price: Ticket Prices Vary

Amid Puccini’s lush and sweeping score, “Madama Butterfly” unfolds in 1940s America under the shadow of WWII. This new production will take audiences through the nightmare of San Francisco on the eve of Pearl Harbor and will examine the experience of Japanese Americans during a critical moment in U.S. history. This production is presented by BLO Artistic Adviser Nina Yoshida Nelsen, Stage Director Phil Chan and Choreographer Michael Sakamoto.
Info: For more information and tickets, visit https://blo.org/ butterfly/.
MEMORIAM

Ajitu, Robert, 54, Alsea, HI, June 23.

Furuto, Mabel, 100, Los Angeles, CA, March 3; during WWII, her family and she were incarcerated at the Santa Anita Assembly Center, the Jerome WRA Center in AR; and the Tule Lake WRA Center in CA; she was predeceased by her husband, Takaio; she is survived by her children, Amy (Kazu) Takaki, Susan (Glenn) Saita and Michael (Lisa) Furuto; brother, Bill (Reigna) Kobayashi; she is also survived by many nieces and nephews and caregivers Koji, Nicole, Clara and Marie; gc: 4; ggc: 5.

Honda, Joyce, 84, Sacramento, CA, March 30; graduate, Armstrong College; she is survived by her children, Daryl Honda, Wesly Honda and Kristi (Alien) Plinz; gc: 1.

Iwamiya, Hiroshi ‘George,’ 96, Lock, CA, March 6; veteran, Army, WWII; during WWII, he was incarcerated at the Rohwer WRA Center, in AR; A.A., San Joaquin College; in 2008, he received his delayed high school diploma; he was predeceased by his siblings, Shig, Fumi and Haruko; and niece, Kelly Yamane; he is survived by his children, Christine, Joseph, Edward (Trina), Todd and Liza (Gary) Kanemura; siblings, Tooh Nishimoto, Tom (Akemi) Iwamiya and Dick Iwamiya; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews; gc: 8.

Johnson, Margaret Miyoko, 86, Citrus Heights, CA, June 3; she was predeceased by her siblings, Betsy, Violet, Helen and Kenneth; and her son, Peter; she is survived by her husband, Bruce; son, Dale; and sister, Millie; gc: 3; ggc: 3.

Miyashiro, Frances, 100, Honolulu, HI, May 30.

Miyamura, Wanita Lou May, 70, Boise, ID, Feb. 25.

Nakayama, Masami, 85, Rosemead, CA, April 17; during WWII, his family and he were incarcerated at the Poston WRA Center in AZ; veteran, Army; he was predeceased by his sister, Yoko; he is survived by his daughter, Jennifer Nakayama; he is also survived by many cousins.

Naito, Kiyoishi, 88, Colma, CA, May 31; veteran, Army; B.A., economics, University of California, Berkeley; volunteered with Buddhist Churches of America and as chairman and president of the Hokubei Mainichi newspaper; he was predeceased by his siblings, Sakiyu Kusama and Shigeno Takahashi; he is survived by his wife, Tazuko Janice Naito; daughter, Jane Naito; and sister, Yasuko Fukuda.

Nakano, Jean, 74, Los Angeles, CA, July 4; she is survived by her husband, Wayne; daughter, Erin Midori Nakano (Louis Andrew) Israel; father, Bob Iwao Sugawara; brother, Roy Isaio (Alison Michele) Sugawara; she is also survived by a nephew and other relatives; gc: 4.

Ozeki, Masako Mae, 102, Alhambra, CA, May 25; she was predeceased by her husband, Ben; and son, Phillip Ozeki; she is survived by her daughter, Carol Ann (Eric) May; brother, Leo Meguro; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 1; ggc: 1.

Ray, Reiko Ann, 83, Miamisburg, OH, July 30; she was predeceased by her husband, John Ray; and daughter, Lisa Ray; she is survived by her son, Thomas Ray; sister, Keiko Maeda; gc: 5.


TRIBUTE

Anna Marie “Aiko” Nakamura, age 99, passed away on Aug. 17, 2023, in Evanston, Ill. Beloved wife of the late Mark M. Nakamura; she was preceded in death by her parents, Shunzo “Joe” and Yoshie (Mihara) Miyamoto, and her brothers, James and Frank Miyamoto; dear mother of Gail (Bill) Radzевич, Claire Rees, Guy (Ann), Kathy, Joan (Tim) Crowe; fond grandmother of Scott (Jennifer) and Brian (Sandi) Rundio; Sean and Samantha Crowe; loving great-grandmother of Kyle Scott and Anthony John Rundio. Interment will be private. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions to Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glenco, IL, 60022 or a charity of your choice is appreciated.

Alice Yoshiko Ninomiya, 91, born April 3, 1932, in Richmond, Calif., to Tamaki Ninomiya and Hayane Kanagawa, eldest of six children, died peacefully on May 23, 2023. Interred at Amache, Colo., during WWII, she returned to Richmond where she graduated from Richmond Union High School and then received a degree in history from UC Berkeley and her teaching credential from San Francisco State. Alice taught kindergarten and third grade at Dover School in San Pablo until her retirement in 1985. A lifelong student, Alice enjoyed reading, cooking, traveling, YMCA workouts, and studying art and music at the Richmond Adult School and Contra Costa College. She was active with the Berkeley Methodist United Church (BMUC), Contra Costa JACL and West Contra Costa Retired Educators (WCCRE). A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Sept. 30, at 11 a.m. at BMUC. Memorial gifts can be made to Berkeley Methodist United Church, 1710 Carleton Street, Berkeley, CA 94703 or WCCRE Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 703, El Cerrito, CA 94530.
"We learned the lesson ‘take care of your own’ from our Japanese parents,” Fukumoto said, adding, “My parents heavily donated to Keiro until they were betrayed by the sale (to Pacifica) seven years ago.”

On its website, Keiro stated it made “the difficult decision (in 2016) to shift the central pillar of its work from facility-based care” to refocus and provide services for “the larger and diverse needs of our community’s older adults.” Keiro now provides Quality of Life classes, grant funding and palliative care resources.

Matsumura, also serving as the SOSN Outreach director, said, “10,000 baby boomers are retiring every day. Japanese Americans have the largest percentage of those over 65, 19 percent. JAs cannot depend on health-care agencies to provide bilingual and bicultural services.”

Other speakers described their experiences with changes in the level of service since Pacifica gained ownership. Dr. Kensaku Nakayama told the story of his mother, Tomiko, who lived at the Sakura Intermediate Care Facility for eight-and-a-half years. Nakayama said, “She was blessed by bicultural, bilingual care. . . . Unfortunately, due to the sale of ICF, my mother was evicted in 2021 because Pacifica wanted to create townhomes. The facility is still closed.”

Nakayama said they were able to find another facility, though it lacked Japanese culturally based services. “She is receiving good care, but there are no Japanese residents,” he said. “She was very mobile until she moved to the new facility; she is now wheelchair-bound and showing cognitive decline.”

Nakayama continued, “When you live in these facilities, you look forward to food. When you take away their cultural [cuisine], it’s a problem. Her opportunities to have conversation with others (who speak Japanese) were also taken away.” He said during a recent visit with her mother that it required a two-hour conversation before she realized she was talking to her son.

“Bicultural/bilingual services is not a lifestyle issue, it’s a life-and-death issue,” said Nakayama.

This article was made possible by the Harry K. Honda Memorial Journalism Fund, which was established by JACL Redress Strategist Grant Ujifusa.

Members of the Yakima Japanese American community and their friends gathered to witness the historic dedication of “Land of Joy and Sorrow — The Japanese Experience in the Yakima Valley,” a new permanent exhibit at the Yakima Valley Museum in Yakima, Wash., on Aug. 24. Of the 160 people who were in attendance, many were descendants from families that lived in the Yakima Valley before and after World War II. “Land of Joy and Sorrow” builds upon the museum’s initial exhibit “Japanese Pioneers of the Yakima Valley,” which opened on Oct. 2, 2010. It was one of the museum’s most popular exhibitions and won a Washington State Museum award during its 10-year run from 2010-20.

Yakima Valley Japanese pioneers came to the Yakima Valley in the late 19th century and grew in numbers to form a Japanese community of 1,018 people who were involved in farming and providing services and lodging for the Yakima Valley community.

After the conclusion of WWII, only 10 percent of the area’s Japanese American community returned. Now, their story will be permanently told at the Yakima Valley Museum for future generations.

PHOTO: PATI HIRAHARA

Yakima Valley Museum Opens New Exhibit
‘Land of Joy and Sorrow — The Japanese Experience in the Yakima Valley’ highlights pioneers who built new lives there following the end of WWII.

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