JACL National Board Meets in San Francisco.

A JACL Fellow’s Poston Pilgrimage Experience

With ‘Omoiyari,’ Kishi Bashi Gives a Soundtrack to the Incarceration Experience.
‘Defining Courage’ at the Kennedy Center

Emmy Award-winning filmmakers Jeff MacIntyre and ABC-7 News Anchor David Ono presented their live documentary performance of “Defining Courage” at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 11. In addition to honoring veterans of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and Military Intelligence Service, the program also recognized Terry Shima, 100, a veteran of the 442nd, who addressed the filled-to-capacity crowd.

In his remarks, Shima acknowledged President Harry S. Truman’s signing of Executive Order 9981, which abolished discrimination “on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin” in the U.S. Armed Forces. “This landmark executive order leveled the playing field and allowed racial minorities to achieve their career potential,” said Shima. “I wish to salute the soldiers who did not return, all the veterans and the regulars in the U.S. Armed Forces and all Japanese who endured the internment camps and all who contributed to the greatness of America. Happy Veterans Day and God Bless the U.S.A.”

Pictured is Shima as he is honored by Ono and actor/activist Tamlyn Tomita.

PHOTO: JOHN TOBE
CHEATERS NEVER WIN, OR DO THEY?

By David Inoue, JACL Executive Director

Although President Donald Trump and many of his supporters are facing charges of allegations that they worked in various ways to change or block the vote counts in the 2020 election. It's nearly impossible to actually enumerate all the charges in multiple states and federally that are pending and addressing these concerns.

And then there are the widespread efforts by both parties to gerrymander districts to confer the greatest voting advantages to the party in power in states where they can still pick their own voters. Surprisingly, the Supreme Court finally stepped in to block an Alabama voting map that denied an additional potentially Black majority voting district. And yet, Supreme Court precedent still supports partisan gerrymandering. What might be considered cheating to skew results in your favor has been affirmed by the courts as permissible.

Where we are left is a culture that seems to have accepted cheating to advance one's own self-interest, so long as you don't get caught. Although Michigan has since accepted its rather lenient punishment of a three-game only suspension of the head coach from the Big 10 conference, they initially sought to postpone punishment through the courts, claiming they deserved due process despite extensive damaging evidence in the public. Football conferences are not official courts where due process is guaranteed, especially when the evidence is so damning.

This fortunately for the Trump family is the guarantee they have in their various cases. Whether it is the financial fraud cases in the New York case or the election tampering case in federal courts, they remain innocent until proven guilty by the court.

What we need to remember though is that the right to a fair trial is different from the right to a football team or run for president. Michigan realized they had to accept the consequences of what their team has seemingly been caught red-handed.

It’s the time the Republican party recognizes that its leading candidate for president similarly is a threat to democracy and unfit to run for president. Michigan is not a victim, and neither is President Trump, despite public relations efforts to make it seem so.

Just as I am waiting to see if Michigan is forced to vacate its past two wins against OSU as punishment for cheating, we will wait to see what happens with the Trump family and the cases against him. But just as Michigan's coach has been removed from coaching the final regular-season games, Trump can be told that he does not deserve to run for president.

In one case, it’s just a game of football, in the other, the lives of every American can be impacted. We as a nation need to make it clear that cheating should not be rewarded and should have consequences.

David Inoue is executive director of the JACL and is based in the its Washington, D.C., office.

LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY’S PERSPECTIVE

TIME TO GET OUT OF THE MARKET?

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

My investment adviser just gave me an article from USA Today (Oct. 10, 2023) that says, “Analysts expect the bull market (prices going up) to resume in 2024.”

Others may have rental income to supplement their fixed Social Security income. They might say, “I’ll wait to sell my rental property in six months since experts are saying that ‘low levels of inventory’ will keep prices strong.” In fact, Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the National Association of Realtors, predicts that “Home prices will rise around 3-4 percent” in 2024.

But wait! There is also a different market forecast. Some analysts strongly believe a recession is coming. They are skeptical that the U.S. can maintain economic growth with interest rates so high. Furthermore, they predict it could hit as early as 2024. Based on unemployment rates and several other factors, Citi Research has predicted a recession in early 2024 (source: www.investopedia.com, Oct. 27, 2023).

Now, I realize that for many, their minds “shift off” when it comes to news about the economy, e.g., “interest rate hikes,” “jobless claims on the rise” or “GDP growth.” So, the question is, “When is it time to get out of the market?”

Some may say, “The stock market has done very well for me these past few years.”

Some may say, “I have enough savings to last another five years.”

The problem is you are planning savings to last another five years.”

During expansion, it can employ contractionary fiscal policy to stop the economy from overheating during expansions by taxing and running a budget surplus to reduce aggregate spending. During expansion, it can employ contractionary monetary policy.

According to Investopedia.com, the popular sentiment of financial analysts and many economists is that recessions are the inevitable result of the business cycle in a capitalist economy. The empirical evidence, at least on the surface, appears to strongly back up this theory. Recessions seem to occur every decade or so in modern economies, and, more specifically, they seem to regularly follow periods of strong growth. This pattern recurs with striking consistency.

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There’s no question the U.S. economic outlook has improved throughout 2023, but that doesn’t necessarily mean the economy is in the clear heading into 2024. While a growing number of economists are optimistic about a potential soft landing in 2024, some economists are skeptical that the U.S. can maintain economic growth with interest rates so high. So once again, the question remains, “Which economic forecast do I believe?”

I was an economics major at UCLA in the late 1970s. They taught us about business cycles. That is, the market is cyclical, meaning there are peaks and valleys. What they didn’t teach us, however, was that these cycles are done by design.

In other words, business cycles are created on purpose by the 1 percent ruling elite who control the market, control the Fed and put presidents into office.

Every time there’s a market “crash” (or market correction), the wealth gap between the top 1 percent and the 99 percent gets bigger, meaning the rich get richer, and the middle class begins to disappear. Jesse Ventura, former governor of Minnesota, once had a TV show called “Conspiracy Theory With Jesse Ventura” (2009-12). In one episode, he interviewed a woman, a member of the ruling elite, who spoke another language, that’s it, the language of the sheep.

You might say, “I don’t believe in conspiracy theories. What about the Housing Market Crash of 2008? Banks lost millions on defaulted loans.” NO — the banks got “bailed-out” using taxpayer money. Banks were actually better off after the bailouts than had the market never had crash, i.e., it’s done by design.

In conclusion, despite what you might hear on the news about the economy being stable, my advice is to think again. Throughout American history, there has always been business cycles. Historically, these cycles occur every eight to 10 years. Since the last crash (2008-09), it’s been 14 years — we’re overdue for a “market correction.” When it does hit, the recession could be twice as bad. Getting out of a volatile stock market with high-risk investments might be a good idea.

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.

A special recognition was given in absentia to Uno, who is a retired senior judge at the Third District Court for the State of Utah in Salt Lake City. Born in Utah, raised in California and forcibly sent to the Heart Mountain concentration camp during World War II, he served in the U.S. Military Intelligence Service, worked as a social worker and attorney in private practice and then became the first minority judge in Utah. He has served as a longtime human rights activist. JACL chapter president, JACL chapter president, jado instructor and community leader.

Among other legacy lawyers mentioned during the program were:

- Sei Fujii and Takui Yamashita (Issei)
- Saburo Kido, Judge Bill Marutani, Robert Takasugi and Minoru Yasui (Nisei)


A mother’s take

Aiden and Momma’s special dinner at Jula’s on the Potomac

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MARSHA AZUMI

INSPIRATION IN D.C.

By Marsha Azumi

last month, I was so fortunate to be in Washington, D.C., attending the PFLAG National Convention. PFLAG is the first and largest grassroots organization in support, education and advocacy of parents, allies and LGBTQ+ individuals. Like JACL, it has chapters all over the U.S. and over 200,000 members and supporters. PFLAG’s motto is “leading with love.” And so for four days, Aiden and I learned how to lead with love, both fierce love and compassionate love.

I shook the hand of Dr. Jill Biden and heard her say how President Biden has our back. I thanked Ali Velshi from MSNBC, who has a podcast on banned books. I listened to stories from Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld, American Medical Assn. president, who ran out gay man, and Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary who is also part of the LGBTQ+ community—all while attending workshops and talking with other parents and activists from around the country and the world. The adversity our parents in states like Florida, Texas and Oklahoma face made me so grateful to be living in California and having a governor like Gavin Newsom.

I also heard from activists around the world. I listened to parent activists in Panama, Uganda and Ukraine. I had dinner with activists from Taiwan and China. I listened to the difficulties in China and the dedicated advocates and parents who continue to be resilient and persist. I heard about the work in Taiwan and how they want to have more parents be advocates. And I sat with activists from Korea who are also fighting hard for their LGBTQ+ community. In the end, I felt so inspired by all the adversity these countries face, and yet, they continue on with passion, unwavering determination and intention.

While I was in D.C., I also had lunch with JACL staffers David Inoue, Cheyenne Cheng, Bridget Keaveney and Jack Shimabukuro. What a lovely time I had hearing from all of them and feeling so much gratitude for their support of Okaeri.

Two JACL staff, Cheyenne and Phillip Ozaki, presented workshops at the recent Okaeri conference in Los Angeles. Phillip was part of the Pacific Citizen National Committee, which treats the economy as if you were reading it naturally.
National Board Puts Legacy Fund Under Microscope

Feedback from statement on 6-year-old’s slaying also gets scrutiny.

By P.C. Staff

The Japanese American Citizens League conducted its quarterly business meeting on Nov. 4 at the organization’s relatively recently repainted national headquarters building in San Francisco. National President Larry Oda noted that he had attended the previous weekend’s Crystal City pilgrimage in Texas. “This is the first time I’ve been to where I was born in a long time,” he said, before thanking JACL National VP for Planning and Development Gary Nakagawa, a member of the Houston JACL chapter, for his hospitality, which included being treated to Central Texas barbecue.

Oda also mentioned JACL’s involvement in helping produce two performances of “Defining Courage” in San Jose, Calif., on Oct. 22, crediting former telejournalist Jan Yanehiro for her role in helping to bring the live-and-multimedia piece to the World War II military service of Nisei to the Bay Area.

Continuing on the topic of “Defining Courage,” JACL Executive Director David Inoue noted that the show’s producers, David Ono and Jeff MacIntyre (both of KABC TV Channel 7 in Los Angeles), were preparing to bring it to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 11; he also noted that JACL was involved in the Sept. 9 presentation of “Defining Courage” held at El Camino College in Torrance, Calif., that was held to raise funds for the Hawaiian Community Foundation’s Maui Strong Fund.

It being the first National Board meeting since the JACL National Conventions, Inoue said the 2024 convention will be July 10-13. “I believe the Philadelphia chapter is considering doing something on the 14th as well,” he said, adding that the 2025 convention is tentatively set for New Mexico, in Albuquerque.

Inoue also reported that the JACL headquarters had new security lights installed, along with new security cameras in front of the building. NCWNP Regional Director Patty Wada wanted it noted that credit for the upgrades should go to the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California “for installing and paying for those security cameras.”

Eastern District Gov. Paul Uyehara then provided an update on the Legacy Fund Review Committee “by giving some background about the impetus for the creation of said committee, namely to ‘just find out what the basic facts are about the endowment and whether the records are in order and if things are being managed properly.’”

After providing an overview of the core of the years-in-the-making problem — the basic facts about the origin of the Legacy Fund, whether the records were in order and even fundamental questions such as how much money is in the endowment — Uyehara noted some background information about the inflation-adjusted corpus for this year is going to be $5.3 million. “And one of the things that was important is . . . I’m pretty sure this part is pretty definite at this point, that in 2019, and 2020, there was a significant increase in the amount that was allocated by the budget that was spent. . . . And we actually said, ‘Well, why would you have money that’s still in the endowment that we decided to spend?’ And the answer was, well, staff thought that if you didn’t withdraw the full allotment for the year, by the end of the year, you kind of lose it, like use it or lose it. So, we never took it out.”

Uyehara said the consensus was that there were “three numbers” that were needed to understand the Legacy Fund: its corpus, the inflation-adjusted corpus and the trailing fund value. “We need those three numbers in order to put them into the policy and consider what those numbers mean, in terms of our exercising a prudent judgment about how much money should be spent from the endowment for the subsequent two years,” he said.

“Obviously, these three numbers, a determination was made that as of Dec. 31, 2017, the core of the Legacy Fund endowment was about $5.2 million, a figure that Uyehara said, ‘We are . . . especially concerned about protecting in order to make sure that the endowment is a perpetual fund.’”

Part of the problem going forward from that point in time is that there was an incorrect belief that funds allocated for spending that were not actually spent became a “quasi-endowment” that was still part of the overall corpus and thus eligible to be used to grow the Legacy Fund, when instead those unspent funds should have been kept in a separate account or at least somehow segregated and tracked separately — meaning the quasi-endowment did not exist. “The committee generally found evidence that there was any quasi-endowment, but we were still looking for it,” Uyehara said.

“Uyehara continued: ‘The decision that was made is to use the so-called inflation-adjusted corpus measuring stick rather than using the dollar value. The difference is that the inflation-adjusted corpus takes into account the fact that it wasn’t timely withdrawn.’”

Fernandez gave his director of finance report after the lunch break. In a short, JACL’s status quo is that it does not have many big “glaring huge issues,” the organization is “over budget, yet we are performing our budget.” Regarding known overages, he noted as an example the expenses for the interim business manager and bookkeeper, as well as the fees paid to the recruiting firm utilized to fill the finance director position. Another expense that put JACL over budget was the “additional cost of moving the convention on short notice.”

Next came the report from VP of Public Affairs Seia Watanabe, who gave a “quick overview of the statements we released since convention.”

New JACL NCWNP District Board Officers

The JACL NCWNP District Board was elected by its District Council delegates and installed into office on Oct. 29 at JACL national headquarters in San Francisco. The installing officer was Mark Kobayashi, former national treasurer. Pictured (from left) is the newly installed board: Steve Okamoto, Jeanette Otsui-Jager (treasurer), Alan Teruya, Miko Sawamura (vice governor), Mariko Fujimoto (secretary), Sharon Uyeda, Carol Kawase (governor), Halle Sousa (youth representative) and Bruce Aroa (youth representative).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NCWNP
A SONG FOR YOU

With ‘Omoiyari,’ Kishi Bashi gives a soundtrack to the incarceration experience and raises the question: Is there such a thing as Asian American music?

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, Contributor

If the show is where disbelief suspends, and the audience enters a magical world of bounty, the soundcheck is its bare soul. Onstage at the Aratani Theatre, the musicians warm up hours before the seats were filled. String bows dance in the air. The cello mourns loudly. Amid the cacophony, someone is missing.

“Where is K?” someone asks.

On cue, a door at stage right opens, backlit so only a silhouette of a man appears: average height and build with a shock of hair styled in gravity-defying spikes. Before he inhabits his stage persona of Kishi Bashi, the indie rock singer and songwriter, he’s just Kaoru or K.

“Do you want to get on with it?” K asks no one in particular.

For the soundcheck, he wears a white button-down shirt and carries his phone in a wallet case. For the show, Kishi Bashi dons a pale coat and tie — a signature look that simultaneously nods to and rebels against his classical training.

For the soundcheck, he wears a white button-down shirt and carries his phone in a wallet case. For the show, Kishi Bashi dons a pale coat and tie — a signature look that simultaneously nods to and rebels against his classical training.

On this November night, the stakes are high. Kishi Bashi brings his music and film “Omoiyari” to the footsteps of history. In Little Tokyo in 1942, Japanese Americans wore their Sunday best to board buses headed for converted horse stalls and bleak desert barracks — experiences highlighted in the documentary, if he were born at another time, he would likely be incarcerated, too.

He uses the word “new” often in conversation to describe the Japanese American diaspora. “New is good because it’s changing,” said Ishibashi. “It also seems fresh. It’s positive.”

During WWII, the Nisei were barely young adults when they were plucked from their homes and placed in untenable situations in desert prisons, courts of public opinion and on distant battlefields to prove their worth. To survive meant suppressing culture and shedding all signifiers of foreignness, including language.

Ishibashi calls this the universal immigrant decision: to transmit or shed culture. In “Theme for Jerome (Forgotten Words),” he mourns this process with both English and Japanese lyrics:

She’d sing this melody To her beloved sons Forgotten words from Japan

The song is a nod to a Japanese lullaby but with lost words. In the film, Ishibashi stands alone in the remains of the former Arkansas incarceration site and plays the violin forlornly. It is a devastatingly beautiful scene.

The pseudonym Kishi Bashi, which sounds whimsical and Japanese, is a persona forged out of growing comfort with his bicultural identities. Before that, Ishibashi also jettisoned culture while playing in indie rock bands called Of Montreal and Jupiter One. Back then, he said, there was no space for Asian Americans or Asian Americanness in pop music, so he suppressed his culture into abstraction.

Then, he returned to it.

In the Japanese American community, there wasn’t much space, either. Here, a cultural shorthand ties people together — a byproduct of the war — where people greet each other by mapping their incarceration experience: Santa Anita/Manzanar/Gardena. This leaves little room for a self-proclaimed “postwar immigrant child” from Norfolk, Va.

In high school, Ishibashi’s parents took him to the Smithsonian Museum to complete a project on the incarceration. In 1994, he applied for a JACL scholarship but never heard back. “It’s OK,” he said. It worked out. He attended the Berklee College of Music.

“The community has been fairly insular,” said Bill Yoshino, former JACL Midwest director, who also appears in the film. “Identity isn’t something that you’re just born into. It can also be learned.”

In the film, Ishibashi pieces together the war narratives through personal interviews with former incarcerees and his own relatives in Japan. The subtext is biculturalism is OK. As Kishi Bashi, he gives permission to celebrate heritage and speak another language.

“Honestly, it’s what makes America great,” he said.

Musician Kishi Bashi in a scene from the film “Omoiyari”

PHOTOS: LYNDA LIN GRIGSBY

Kishi Bashi’s newest album tells the stories of his experiences learning about the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.
‘Summer of ‘42’

Ishibashi is a musician first. His music is orchestral, romantic and lush. He defines his music as indie rock music, specifically experimental indie rock. In press releases of past performances, his music has been classified as Japanese American, which gives him pause.

“I don’t think your ethnicity defines your music,” he said. “If people want to waste one word and add Japanese to American singer/songwriter, then, you know, they can do that. But I don’t think you have to.”

To tell the story of the Japanese American incarceration through music, he reimagines this historical time by putting himself in the place of people in the photos. He focuses on personal stories, not just the conditions and injustice.

In the “Summer of ‘42,” Ishibashi sings about young love:

We’d sneak off to the desert
The sand over your fancy shoes
The first day that I met you
I wrote down in my book
I am in love with you

For Ishibashi, there is much more to these war stories than the victimization. Who was loved? Who was left behind? During the turmoil of war and incarceration, people fell in love, had babies, fell out of love and started over — all the things that give life meaning. By focusing on humanity, he brings people back from their modern consciousness to empathize with what it was like in ‘42.

He gives this historical event its own soundtrack.

The Japanese word omoiyari means to “have compassion.” Choosing a Japanese word for the album and film’s title was an act of empowerment. MTV Documentary Films released the film theatrically in October and asked for the name to be changed. The reasons are familiar: The title is too hard to pronounce. What does it mean?

“The movie is about embracing biculturalness, so to make us change this title would be like a slap in the face,” said Ishibashi.

The song film “Omoiyari,” as originally titled, makes its streaming debut on Paramount+ on Nov. 21.

A Place for (Asian) American Music

Asian Americans have always been at the center and margins of the mainstream music industry. Since the 1970s, there have been two streams of Asian American artists — those who highlighted Asian Americanness and those who just made music, said Eric Hung, executive director of the Music of Asian America Research Center.

The latter group of modern musicians — Asian Americans who make music — arguably have more name recognition: James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins, Mike Shinoda of Linkin Park and Olivia Rodrigo, the Gen Z pop queen.

Latin music has its distinct sound in the American popular music scene, and so does country and rap — of course, there are crossovers and exceptions — but no such genre is associated with Asian Americans in popular music. It leaves Asian American artists to work in musical spaces that are not their “own.”

In the 1970s, musicians like Nobuko Miyamoto and Chris Iijima’s Yellow Pearl unapologetically made music about the Asian American experience. In their song, “We Are the Children,” they claim their identities:

We are the children of the migrant worker
We are the offspring of the concentration camp
Sons and daughters of the railroad builder
Who leave their stamp on America

The songs and lyrics of consciously Asian American music drive a message and attract (and repulse) a specific audience. In the 1980s, jazz musician and activist Glenn Horiuichi weaved Japanese American themes into his music, but famously said, “And Japanese Americans don’t like it,” according to Hung. “Omoiyari” is a musical memorial that can help raise awareness among indie rock fans who may not know the Japanese American incarceration history.

“But can it actually lead to meaningful political action?” said Hung. “This is also the inherent problem with music as a political tool. Music by itself does not change laws.”

Hung attended a Kishi Bashi concert in Virginia Beach, where he watched Kishi Bashi perform some of the songs from “Omoiyari” while images of the incarceration looped on screen. The photos were familiar to Hung, making him wonder if the experience might differ for somebody who didn’t know about the camps.

“Maybe we are not the audience for this,” he said.

In the Aratani Theatre, Kishi Bashi pauses to ask people in the audience to raise their hands if they had family members affected by the WWII incarceration. A few hands shoot up. Most stayed down.

To the raised hands, he dedicates an ode: “Song for You,” about the threat of time and the erosion of memory. He doesn’t clearly define who he is singing to, so the people in the audience, with their hands down, also feel free to imprint their own meaning to the song. He leaves it open.

Onstage at the Aratani Theatre, Karen Ishizuka, a Sansei curator of the Japanese American National Museum, strides onstage to talk about her family’s incarceration experience.

“Welcome to Little Tokyo,” she says to the audience.

“Omoiyari” is undoubtedly about her story, but this is Kaoru’s story, too, she says. This is the audience’s story. This is your story. This is an American story.

“Omoiyari” makes its streaming debut Nov. 21 on Paramount+.
PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

By JR Fujita

Perhaps you’ve worked 30-50 years and are thinking about retiring soon — or maybe, like me, you’re looking to retire 10 or 20 years down the road. For some, retirement means transitioning to part-time or seasonal work, while for others, it might mean abandoning your commute and completely rejecting any regular routine. But no matter what retirement means to you, there are many ways to plan so that you are financially prepared for your new lifestyle when the time comes.

Retirement will look different for everyone, since it depends on what your goals are. Some will want to travel the world, others will become more involved in their community by volunteering and some will choose a combination of both. Whatever you do, you will have to carefully look at your savings and consider the income you will receive from pensions, stock options, Social Security and any other income sources.

Aside from your goals, you will also need to consider your expenses such as mortgage/rent, taxes, vehicle and home maintenance, healthcare and everyday costs that continue to rise such as gasoline and groceries. According to AARP, the general rule of thumb is that you will need 80 percent of your working income to maintain your standard of living, and Social Security is meant to replace about 40 percent of the average retiree’s work earnings. Using the Social Security calculator (ssa.gov/prepare/plan-retirement) can help you determine when you might want to consider claiming your benefits.

If you decide to take on new hobbies or pursue traveling in comfort, you will need to consider those additional expenses as a part of your retirement budget.

As always, you should plan for unexpected expenses by maintaining a minimum amount in your savings account for emergencies. You may also want to find ways to reduce your expenses such as updating your car insurance to reduce or eliminate coverage you may not need. If you anticipate reducing your miles driven each year, for example, check with your insurer to see if you qualify for discounts.

If work has been your primary source for social connections, you should consider where to seek these connections in retirement. A good way to meet like-minded people and develop new friendships is through volunteering in your community.

No matter when you plan to retire, planning and preparation are key to enjoying your retirement years. If you find retirement is not what you expected, you can always return to the workforce or adjust accordingly based on your current situation.

For more tips on planning for retirement, visit aarp.org/retirement.

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

— « continued from page 4

D.C. » continued from page 4

a panel for queer parenting, and Cheyenne presented with an Okaeeri intern on creating queer-friendly spaces. At lunch with JACL, Bridget said she would love to hear more about PFLAG and my experience at the conference. This article was made possible by you, Bridget!

While all of these moments were special in their own way, I think the most special moment, however, is a tradition that Aiden and I have when we attend conferences together. We reserve one night to have dinner . . . just the two of us. Aiden gets to pick the restaurant, and I get to pick up the bill. For this conference, Aiden chose Jula’s on the Potomac because of the food but also being on the river. Over dinner, we talked about our time at the conference and what we were learning and experiencing. As we sat watching the riverboats move past us on the Potomac, I thought what an extraordinary moment this was for a mother and her transgender son — how we are so close, how we can talk with so much ease and openness and how much we cherish this tradition we have. I thought about the work PFLAG, Okaeeri and JACL are doing to help other families create their own special connection and moments. I was overwhelmed with a sense of deep gratitude.

With the world in turmoil and times of deep divide, I continue to find moments of gratitude and hope. I find people who are not giving up on equality and justice for all, but fighting harder to bring awareness and advocacy to their communities.

I see parents who may struggle when their children come out, but keep loving their children the best they can while they are all finding their way. However you are standing up or taking action, please know it does not go unnoticed. It is the same fuel that keeps the spark burning brightly in the hearts of so many of us that are doing this work.

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

— continued from page 5

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five in total. They were:
• The 60th anniversary of the March on Washington
• The Jacksonville, Fl., mass shooting
• Condemnation of the attack on Seattle’s Wing Luke Museum
• Denunciation of the slashing of a 6-year-old Palestinian American boy
• The response to the xenophobic statements made by Nebraska’s governor.

A lengthy discussion ensued over the statement released regarding the child’s slaying (see tinyurl.com/5623raxx) and the feedback that was received, ranging from whether JACL was proscribed from commenting on international events, i.e., the deadly attack on Israeli citizens on Israeli territory by Hamas militants and Israel’s subsequent counterattack on Hamas in the Gaza Strip to whether JACL should have only addressed the killing as a possible hate crime, whether the statement was partisan, too strong or not strong enough and, on a related note, whether the executive director should express his personal views in the Pacific Citizen on the Israeli-Hamas conflict apart from his role as the executive director.

Regarding the statement, Uyehara felt it could have been edited to be “80 percent cleaner and more focused” without losing the message of what the statement wanted to express. Pacific Citizen Editorial Board Chair John Saito Jr., meantime, believed that using words like “murder” and “murderer” in the statement was problematic because “you’re still presumed innocent until proven guilty. . . . You have to be careful here, too. He hasn’t been convicted.”

Regarding membership, 1000 Club & Membership and Services VP Dominique Mashburn and Membership Manager Ashley Bucher reported that there was a decrease in 2023 compared with 2022. In addition, Bucher reported that for the membership CBL proposal, “We’re getting ready to resubmit for the same thing for next year’s convention. Essentially, we’re resubmitting the same proposal except maybe for premium category names,” she said.

“We’re getting that final feedback now, and then we are excited to resubmit this and hopefully have it pass.”

The JACL National Board will next meet in San Francisco in February.
MY 2023 POSTON PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCE

An inspiring journey to see firsthand the importance of ‘solidarity, intersectionality, community care and healing’

By Bridget Keaveney, JACL Norman Y. Mineta Fellow

On Oct. 13, my colleague and I made the journey to Poston, Ariz., to stand alongside survivors, descendants, fellow activists and educators in honoring the nearly 18,000 Japanese Americans who were forcibly removed and incarcerated at Poston Incarceration Camp, located on the Colorado River Indian Tribes reservation.

This year’s pilgrimage program was organized by the Poston Community Alliance in collaboration with the local Colorado River Indian Tribes Tribal Council, made up of four distinct Native American tribes: the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi and Navajo.

Together with the CRIT Tribal Council, the Poston Community Alliance worked to “uphold the memories of camp life and highlight the significant links and relationships between the Japanese American incarcerated and members of the tribal community.”

In preparation for my first pilgrimage experience, I spent time beforehand reflecting upon the events and relationships that brought me to this very moment.

My earliest memory of learning about the Japanese American incarceration was through a friend of my parents, who was Japanese American. They had very briefly mentioned it during a conversation that I had overheard when I was 8 or so years old; however, it all but left me until my first year of college, during an Ethnic Studies course, when I officially learned about the Japanese American incarceration in a classroom setting.

My interest and curiosity to learn more eventually led me to the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, where I had the opportunity to delve deeper and learn from local educators and advocates about the importance and need to preserve this history and protect the legacy of those who endured the unimaginable.

As a Shin-Nikkei raised in rural Oregon who had difficulty in fully embracing their identity and heritage, it meant the world to finally connect with other Japanese Americans. My understanding of Japanese American history has expanded thanks to those who welcomed me with open arms. It is thanks to these connections that the work of preserving Japanese American history has more or less become my life’s work.

In the five years since my first day at JAMO, I have met and befriended a number of survivors and their descendants who have shared with me their personal experiences and work in collective healing.

It has been incredibly humbling to hear firsthand from so many people within the community their personal journeys and reasons to advocate on behalf of other harmed communities. The injustice against the Japanese American community is one that I am still learning by the day and is one that I hope to further educate myself on in the years to come. It is for those reasons that I jumped at the chance to attend and participate in the Poston Pilgrimage this year.

My colleague, Matt Weisbly, and I proceeded to register ourselves for the program. We then found ourselves making the four-hour drive from Los Angeles to Poston.

The landscape engulfing us was dry, dusty and hot. As we made our way toward Poston, I couldn’t help but imagine the sheer fear that must have gripped those who were forcibly removed, not knowing where they were going and for how long. As I reflect back on this moment of our trip, I am overwhelmed with emotion.

Shortly after we arrived at our destination, we were given a warm welcome by members and volunteers of the Poston Community Alliance.

Our time there began with a presentation by Grant Din of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, who provided an in-depth history lesson on the former Angel Island immigration station, sharing that many of the earliest people to immigrate were those who were Japanese. The provided historical context allowed me and others the chance to understand the Japanese diaspora experience at the time.

Following his presentation, the day after was a daylong experience of visiting historical buildings and monuments, as well as attending several workshops. There was also a beautiful opening ceremony that was held in collaboration with the CRIT Museum and included several traditional indigenous dances in addition to a blessing provided by Buddhist priest and historian Duncan Ryüken Williams.

Once the opening ceremony came to an end, the other attendees and I proceeded to head to the Poston Monument Memorial. Upon arriving on location, the first thing Matt and I took notice of was a paper crane on the ground, which was covered in a layer of dust. It wasn’t long before we took notice of the other paper cranes strewn across the two pillars that are present, which serve as the monument.

Each pillar featured several panels that included historical information about the camp, including daily life. As I absorbed the information, I couldn’t help but notice the families and individuals around me taking in the monument. It was a beautiful moment that brought together not only generations of families together but also activists and other community members alike. To have the opportunity to pay tribute onsite and in person is something that I will cherish for the rest of my days.

Soon after, we made our way to the last remaining buildings left of Poston, located on site 2 of the former camp. It was there that I learned that Poston was made up of three sites, each given a different name to distinguish them: Roasten, Toastin and Dustin.

We began our tour by visiting the ground’s school buildings and auditoriums. Unfortunately, over time, many of those said buildings have been vandalized or torched, ruining their state and leaving them in a hazardous state. Of the buildings that we visited, the most well-maintained and protected was the former barrack, which was housed in a large shedlike building.

Outside of my experience visiting the preserved barrack at the Japanese American National Museum, I had never seen another one in person until that moment. It was shocking to see just how fragile and open it was; granted, many pieces were missing or on the cusp of breaking off, but using my imagination and the information plaques surrounding me, I was able to piece together not only a good visual but also a better understanding of what it must have been like calling such a small enclosed space home.

With barely any insulation, it wasn’t hard to imagine how challenging and unbearable it must have been to fight off the hot dry air and local vermin and on a daily basis. I was told that temperatures could reach up to 115 at their hottest. Sitting on this fact, I took in every inch. This may be the one and only time I will get the chance to fully confront and process the realities of camp life, and I wanted to make sure I left as informed as I could be on the harsh conditions that resulted from such an inhumane decision.

We proceeded to finish our day at La Pera Elementary School, where attendees had the chance to immerse themselves further through the various workshops that were made available. La Pera Elementary stands on where site 2 of Poston once stood. Seeing it be used in the present very much felt like a full-circle moment. Our afternoon started with boxed lunches and a presentation by Matthew Asada, son of former EDC Gov. Michael Asada.

In his presentation, Matthew shared with us his family’s history and his journey of retracing and uncovering his family’s roots in this country. It was a touching tribute to his ancestors, made all the more special with the presence of his family at the pilgrimage.

I’m very grateful to have learned as much as I did during that session. Once lunch was completed, participants were allowed to attend the workshops of their choice. Both my colleague Matt and I attended a session on Poston’s Labor History and on the Munemitsu & Mendez Family Stories. Both were incredibly insightful, each leaving me with a wealth of knowledge I didn’t have prior.

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Amelia Flores, chairwoman of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, provides welcoming remarks at the Poston Pilgrimage’s opening ceremony at the CRIT Museum.
CALENDAR
NATIONAL
Iri – A National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration
Los Angeles, CA
JANM
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: Free

‘The Nutcracker’ With Live Orchestra
Los Angeles, CA
Dec. 1-2
JACCC
244 S. San Pedro St.
Price: Ticket Prices Vary
Let Principal Ballerina Petra Conti and her newly founded company, Hollywood Ballet, take you into this classic winter wonderland. Local and international dancers will come together for an enchanting journey to the live music of the Dream Orchestra of Los Angeles, directed by Daniel Suk and choreographed by Eris Nezha. This is the perfect way to welcome in the holidays.

Kam i Band Workshop: New Year’s Wreath Shimenawa
Garden, CA
Dec. 4:
Class Times (10 a.m.-Noon, 12:30-2:30 p.m., 3-5 p.m.)
Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute
1964 W. 162nd St.
Price: $20
Taught by instructor Maggie Meza, participants will make a New Year’s wreath in which all supplies will be available with registration. This is a very popular workshop in advance of the New Year’s celebration, so be sure to register early. The same instruction will be offered at three different times.

‘The Story Continues’: 35th Anniversary Exhibit
San Jose, CA
Thru Jan. 7, 2024
Japanese American Museum of San Jose
535 N. Fifth St.
Price: Cost Included With Admission
Curated with memories, personal photos and excerpts from past exhibits in the Rotating Gallery, “The Story Continues” chronicles 35 years of the museum’s history and the dedicated founders and volunteers who envisioned and established the Japanese American Museum of San Jose.

‘Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People – Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego’
San Francisco, CA
Thru Feb. 12, 2024
Asian Art Museum
200 Larkin St.
Price: Museum Admission
Takashi Murakami’s first solo exhibition in San Francisco is one that features the artist’s signature combination of fun, spectacle and playful cinematic narrative. In vibrantly colored paintings and sculptures, Murakami uses monsters to embody the hopes and fears of the digital age.
Info: Visit exhibitions/asianart.org/start/china-towns/international-district-seattle-wa/dec-9

NCWNP
Kombukuro Bag Sewing Workshop
San Francisco, CA
Dec. 7; 6-9 p.m.
JCCNC
1840 Sutter St.
Price: Center Members $60; General Public $70
This workshop, your instructor will guide you how to make your own Kombukuro bag, traditionally a ‘rice bag’ used to hold rice that are brought to temples in Japan as offerings during festivals and ceremonies. This class is for beginners; however, participants must have completed the “Introduction to Sewing” workshop or can demonstrate proficiency with a sewing machine. Space is limited.
Info: To sign up, visit www.jccnc.org.

Komekuro Bag Sewing Workshop
San Francisco, CA
Dec. 7; 6-9 p.m.
JCCNC
1840 Sutter St.
Price: Center Members $60; General Public $70
In this workshop, the instructor will guide you how to make your own Kombukuro bag, traditionally a “rice bag” used to hold rice that are brought to temples in Japan as offerings during festivals and ceremonies. This class is for beginners; however, participants must have completed the “Introduction to Sewing” workshop or can demonstrate proficiency with a sewing machine. Space is limited.
Info: To sign up, visit www.jccnc.org.

Mochitsuki 2023
Portland, OR
Dec. 17; 3-4:30 p.m.
Oregon Japanese Cultural Temple
3720 S.E. 34th Ave.
Price: Mochi $6/lb
It’s that time of year again! Mochi pickup will be in the OBT basement. Orders will be accepted until Dec. 12. Don’t miss your opportunity to ring in the new year with delicious, freshly made mochi.
Info: To place orders, visit https://www.oregonbuddhisttemple.com/files/pdf/59e67_c6b757d7461647215b2b434523b3363.pdf.

PNW
Meet Santa in the Heart of China-town-International District
Seattle, WA
Dec. 9
Chinatown-International District 504 Fifth Ave. S
Price: Free/Priced Vary
The Wing Luke Museum’s C-ID Santa gives families an opportunity to connect with their heritages during the most magical time of year. For information and to register, visit https://events.wingluke.org or call (206) 623-5124.
Info: Email visit@wingluke.org or call (206) 623-5124.

Edc
Mochitsuki With the JACL D.C. Chapter
Bethesda, MD
Dec. 2; Noon-2:30 p.m.
Thomas Pyle Middle School
Price: Free

MDC
JACL Chicago Annual Meeting
Chicago, IL
Nov. 25-26
Kombini & Kanpai
1433 W. Belmont
Price: Free (But Drinks Will Be Available for Purchase)
Join JACL’s DC chapter at its Mochitsuki event that will feature mochi pounding led by Kota Mizutani. There will also be crafts for sale and raffles during the event, which will also have preordered bentos. A limited number of bentos will be available for purchase onsite. To ensure food orders, please register before Nov. 30. Please also purchase mochi in advance through the Eventbrite link.
Info: For questions and more information, email jaclwdc@gmail.com. Register in advance on Eventbrite.

ARPs Massachussetts Virtual Event Series: ‘Downsizing and Decluttering’
Nov. 30; 7-8 p.m.
Virtual Event
Price: Free
To register, sign into your ARPs.org account or create an account. ARPs membership is not required.
Info: Visit https://events.ARPs.org/event/the-go-for-broke-spirit-portraits-of-legacy-by-shane-sato

Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction’ Exhibit
Boston, MA
Thru September 2024
Japanese American Cultural Center
504 Fifth Ave. S.
Price: Free
‘Toshiko Takaezu: Shaping Abstraction’ Exhibit
Boston, MA
Thru September 2024
Japanese American Cultural Center
504 Fifth Ave. S.
Price: Free
Toshiko Takaezu was a masterful artist best known for her ceramic sculptures. This exhibit draws from her distinctive palettes and layering of glazes.

JACCC
The Go for Broken Spirit: Portraits of Legacy by Shane Sato
Boise, ID
Thru Feb. 19, 2024
Boise State University Albertsons Library
1865 W. Cesar Chavez Lane
This project centers around veterans of the 442nd RCT, 100th Battalion and the Military Intelligence Service who are featured in Shane Sato’s photographic book, a passion project that began for the chapter, and drinks will be available for purchase, including craft beer, wine, sake and nonalcoholic beverages.
Info: For questions, contact Rebecca Ozaki at rebecca@jacomichicago.org.

Mochi’s Story: The Art of George Tsutakawa
Portland, OR
Feb. 10, 2024
Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace
Price: Free
The Asian American Coalition of Chicago presents the 41st annual Lunar New Year Celebration hosted by the Japanese American Community. This event, the largest pan-Asian event in Illinois, welcomes in the Year of the Dragon, traditionally known for good luck and prosperity.
Info: Visit www.aacchicago.org for more event information.

AARP Virtual Event Series – ‘Downsizing and Decluttering’
Nov. 30; 7-8 p.m.
Virtual Event
Price: Free
To register, sign into your AARP.org account or create an account. AARP membership is not required.

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FOR MORE INFO:
(213) 620-1767
MEMORIAM

Aoki, Amy Emi, 97, Honolulu, HI, June 7.

Fukuhara, Joe Susumu, 90, Oceanside, CA, April 14; born in Olympia, WA, his family moved to Hiroshima before WWII and he lost his sister to the atomic bomb; veteran, Army; career included stints at Union Bank’s Little Tokyo branch and Rafu Shimpo’s advertising department; activities included the Japanese Language School Kyoto System, Rafu Chuo Gakuen, Hiroshima Kenjin-kan, Little Tokyo Lions Club, Little Tokyo Business Assn., Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, and the Japanese American Community Credit Union; he was predeceased by his sister, Shizumi; he is survived by his wife, Yoko; daughters, Christine, Terri, and Karin; brothers, George and Motoyasu; parents, Paul and Pauline; siblings, Ethel (Sei-Jiro) and Dean (Claudia) Yoshizumi; niece and cousins.

Iwai, Mieko ‘Amy,’ 105, Waipahu, HI, March 19.

Kagawa, Roy A., 88, Hilo, HI, March 15.

Kamiyama, Russell, 72, Vallejo, CA, July 15; he was predeceased by his son, Paul; he is survived by his children, Troy, Aisha (Jake), Shaun (Kelsey) and Amanda; gc: 8.

Kosaka, Ronnie, 81, Lodi, CA, April 17; veteran, Army (Vietnam War); activities included Lucky Anglers, Lodi Moose Lodge, Lodi Elks Lodge and Lodi Boat & Ski Club; he was predeceased by his brother, Gerald Kosaka; sister-in-law, Brenda Kosaka; he is survived by his life partner, Phyllis (Tiny) Pleasant; son, Jay Pleasant; sisters, Arlene (Nobi) Tamura, Louis Glasser and Judy Kosaka; he is also survived by many nephews and nieces.

Kuwaye, Jeffrey Alan, 45, Mesa, AZ, April 16; he was predeceased by his grandmother, Barbara Kuwaye and grandfather, Charles Kuwaye; he is survived by his wife, Christin; children, Chasden and Miabella; step-children, Jacob, Arianna, Bella and Brennon Lueders; parents, Paul Kuwaye and Chong Pun Kim; sisters; Naomi Carter (Kuwaye) and Stephanie Kuwaye; and step-siblings, David, Monique Bunel and Victoria Quellin.

Kuwai, Hugo, 84, Los Angeles, CA, May 20; during WWII, he was incarcerated at the Gila River WRA Center; she was predeceased by her sister, Mariko Kawamoto; she is survived by her brother-in-law, Raymond Kawamoto; she is also survived by a nephew, a niece and cousins.

Miyauchi, Guy S., 63, Los Angeles, CA, March 10.

Miyashiro, Susumu, 91, Huntington Beach, CA, Feb. 18; B.A., University of Hawaii (agriculture); veteran, Army; he is survived by his wife, Thelma; children, Milton (Mary), Lisa (Nicolas) and Howard (Carla); brother, Lloyd; gc: 8.

Morimitsu, Masami, 81, Torrance, CA, April 2; he is survived by his wife, Joyce; children, Wayne (Stacie Wu) Morimitsu, Weston (Lisa) Morimitsu and Stacie (John) Nguyen; siblings, Peggy Kozawa, Nancy Tanita, Paul Morimitsu and Judy Morimitsu; sister-in-law, Jeanne (Richard) Sahara; gc: 5.

Nakano, Katsuo, 97, Fresno, CA, April 23; activities included the Fresno Buddhist Church; he is survived by his wife, Ruth; brother, Bob; nieces and nephews.

Nishioka, Sharon Michiyko, 84, Los Angeles, CA, May 20; during WWII, she was incarcerated at the Gila River WRA Center; she was predeceased by her mother, Mariko Kawamoto; she is survived by her brother-in-law, Raymond Kawamoto; she is also survived by a nephew, a niece and cousins.

Otsuka, Alice Mutsuko, 91, Garden Grove, CA, Sept. 20; graduate, CSUF; she was predeceased by her husband, Kenzo; and 14 siblings; she is survived by her children, Leigh Curran (Tim) and Bill Otsuka (Tami); gc: 1.

Sekikawa, Helyn Miyoko, 90, Sacramento, CA, Feb. 13; she was predeceased by her husband, Bill Sekikawa; brother, Robert; she is survived by her children, Keith (Asa), Kenji and Karin; brothers, George Uyabu and Ben Yabu (Jane); she is also survived by many nieces and nephews; gc: 2.

Yoshizumi, Harold, 88, Pearl City, HI and Monterey Park, CA, March 24; he was predeceased by his wife, Lily; he is survived by his children, Teni (Gary Shundo and Dean (Claudia) Yoshizumi; siblings, Ethel (Seiji) Koshimizu and Richard (Lynn) Yoshizumi; gc: 5.

Yukawa, Joseph James, 78, Los Angeles, CA, Oct. 8; he is survived by his wife, Amy.

TRIBUTE

MARTHA MASAKO TOJI-UEJO

Martha Masako Toji-Uejo of Richmond, Calif., died Sept. 29, 2023. She was 88. She is survived by her husband, Donald, and their adult children and spouses, Carolyn and Dr. Stephen Moy, Michael and Sandra Uejo, Curtis and Diane Uejo and Alan and Sherri Uejo; and grandchildren, Prezleigh & Josh Colburn; Kiahna & Ken Haren; and Hailey Uejo & Chase Uejo.

YONE ITO

Born on June 5, 1926, to Chiyoh and Noboru Kato, Yone Ito of Hayward, Calif., died Oct. 30, 2023. She was 97.

During WWII, the family was incarcerated at Tanforan Assembly Center, San Bruno, Calif., and Topaz, Utah. Upon returning from Utah, Yone worked for Transocean Airlines, the Empireum in San Francisco and San Leandro Printing. San Leandro Printing sponsored her classes at the San Francisco Art Institute, and she went on to own her business, Ito Typesetting, specializing in desktop publishing and graphic design. In her retirement years, she volunteered at Eden JACL Senior Center in San Lorenzo and was a board member for the chapter. She was artistically talented, and in her spare time, she enjoyed Japanese brush painting and was an accomplished knitter, quilter and pie maker.

She was predeceased in death by her siblings, Sumi Uyeda, Masao Kato, Hideo Kato, Haruo Kato and Yosihiko Kato. Survived by brothers, Takeo and Kiyoshi Kato; her daughter, Kathleen (John Oshima); son, Scott (Kathy); grandchildren, Chris and Kate; and many nieces and nephews.

Service will be private.

MAY MIYEKO SATO

May Miyeko Sato, 95, of Lansdale, Pa., passed away on Oct. 28, 2023, after a brief illness. She was born on Sept. 1, 1928, in Seattle, Wash., the third of 10 siblings born to Teisuke and Suimatsu Kaname. During World War II, she and her family were forcibly relocated to Tule Lake, Calif., where they remained from 1942–45. After World War II, the family moved to Hartford, Conn., and then to the Philadelphia area. May stayed in Hartford with relatives to complete her senior year of high school and then worked as a secretary for Travelers Insurance. She helped support the family by sending funds and assisting her non-English-speaking father with the startup of the family business, T. Kaname & Sons, Waverly Gardens, in Glenside, Pa. She lived briefly in New York City and then moved with some of her sisters to Chicago, Ill.

On April 25, 1953, May married Kay Sato in Chicago, Ill. They eventually settled in Rochelle, Ill., to raise their family. She is survived by her four daughters: Diane Bjornson of Arlington, Va.; Joanne (Jeff) Scobey of Newark, Del.; and Suimatsu Kaname. During World War II, she was incarcerated at the Gila River WRA Center; she was predeceased by her sister, Mariko Kawamoto; she is survived by her brother-in-law, Raymond Kawamoto; she is also survived by a nephew, a niece and cousins.

She is also survived by many nieces and nephews.
A paper crane is found on the dusty grounds of the Poston Memorial Monument.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRIDGET KEAVENEY

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The Labor History workshop was presented by Katie Nuss, who delved into Poston’s agricultural history. It was revealed to us that a majority of those who were incarcerated at Poston were gardeners from California. It was shared that the “development of agriculture was a priority in 1942 of the Office of Indian Affairs,” who were intent on bringing vegetation to the area.

An irrigation system was soon created by hand by those imprisoned at Poston that consisted of a canal that ran through all three sites within the camp. An infographic from earlier in the day shared that 34 varieties of food crops were harvested, with white daikon being one of the most successful crops.

In addition, it was written that nearly 85 percent of the food that was consumed in Poston was grown on site. In total, those who farmed were able to yield 9,149 pounds of crops per acre. The contributions emitted from that time are still felt today by members of the CRIT.

Learning the historic intersections between the two communities, and the camaraderie that developed as a result, was moving to say the least. I appreciate the message that was made toward the end of the presentation that asserted that CRIT members and Japanese Americans jointly hold the Poston story.

For the Munemitsu and Mendez Family Stories workshop, I had the privilege of listening directly to historian and descendant Janice Munemitsu, who shared her family’s history and ties to the Mendez family, who are credited for their role in desegregating schools in California through their monumental case, Mendez, et. al v. Westminster (1947), seven years before Brown v. Education (1954).

During the incarceration, Janice’s father, Tad Munemitsu, leased their family farm to Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez. As written on Janice’s website in her book, “The Kindness of Color: The Story of Two Families” (1947), “When the Mendez family moved to the Westminster farm, the Mendez children were denied entry to the ‘white’ school and forced to go to the ‘Mexican’ school with inferior academics. Racism by the government and school districts denied both families of their constitutional amendment freedoms and rights, but acts of kindness along the way created the path to justice (About the Kindness of Color).” I was moved by what I had learned through this presentation and left feeling more motivated to fight against laws restricting citizenship and land ownership, as well as segregation of schools and book bans.

Our pilgrimage ended with a banquet and keynote by Williams, who, together with Creative Director Sunyoung Lee, co-created a project entitled “Irieicho,” a sacred book that not only addresses the historic era of the incarceration camps but also brings visibility to the 125,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated at that time by the government and school districts.

I owe a debt of gratitude to every teacher I have had in this space, including all those whom I met at this year’s pilgrimage. It is not lost on me how incredibly privileged I was to attend a pilgrimage whereby I got to stand on the very land that was once shared between the members of the CRIT and incarcerated Japanese Americans.

It was a powerful experience that served more or less as a culmination of everything that I have worked on thus far, starting with my work on archiving the works and letters of celebrated artist Rose Niguma, an Oregonian who was incarcerated at Minidoka. It is because of that experience that I feel as strongly as I do in continuing this work.

I am once again thankful to everyone who made this experience possible for me, and to my colleague and best friend Matt, with whom I underwent this enriching experience.

Bridget Keaveney is based in JACL’s Washington, D.C., office.