

# PACIFIC CITIZEN

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Years



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## LEGAL LEADERS

**Two of the three *coram nobis* cases were led by Sansei women.**

Gordon Hirabayashi (*center*) and members of his legal team. Pictured (*back row, from left*) are Rod Kawakami, Michael Leong and Benson Wong and (*front row, from left*) Arthur Barnett and Kathryn Bannai.

PHOTO: MICHAEL YAMASHITA

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JANM Honors Trio at Annual Gala.

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Communities Unite at Amache.

# THE PACIFIC CITIZEN NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!



By Ron Kuramoto, P.C. Editorial Board Member (MDC) and JACL Wisconsin Chapter President

Throughout the United States, the month of May has been widely recognized as Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This designation commemorates the first Asian immigrant to officially arrive in the United States — a Japanese fisherman named Nakahama Manjiro who arrived on a whaling ship in Massachusetts on

May 7, 1843, 181 years ago. And so the journey of Japanese Americans — and our stories of Japanese in America — began. And the *Pacific Citizen* covered it.

In the first edition on Oct. 15, 1929, of the *Nikkei Shimin* (which later became the *Pacific Citizen*), Saburo Kido, the first president of the New American Citizens League of San Francisco (which became the JACL), wrote:

*“It is with great joy and pride that I write this message to the members of the staff for making our dreams of having a publication such as we now have come true. Ever since the organization of the league, the Board of Governors have recognized the necessity of a newspaper or magazine which would serve as a mouthpiece . . . Oftentimes, we have read in the Japanese section of local papers articles pertaining to us, second generation [Nisei] members; and we have had the desire*

*to express our ideas and thoughts as a reply because we thought our elders misunderstood us. . . . A publication such as we now have will be of great aid.”*

Furthermore, Mr. Kido wrote that this new publication “. . . can portray to the American public what we, Americans of Japanese ancestry, are thinking in regards to our duties as a citizen as well as our diverse problems. It can give expression to what is considered true American ideals and guide the growing generation to become American citizens we can all be proud of.”

Then, Dec. 7, 1941, happened. And then, Feb. 19, 1942, happened. Suddenly, questions as to whether Americans of Japanese descent should be “worthy” of United States citizenship rights were increasingly argued by individuals in both public and private sectors. The *Pacific Citizen* continually monitored and

reported about these threats to Japanese American individuals and communities.

The June 4, 1942, edition of the *Pacific Citizen* reported:

*“U.S. Webb, former California attorney general, proposed that American citizenship be denied to all Japanese, whether foreign or American-born, in a speech before the Native Sons of the Golden West. . . . Webb, state attorney general for more than 30 years, was the author of most of California’s anti-Japanese legislation and has long been identified with proposals for restrictive measures against the state’s Japanese residents. . . . He is also the author of the recent test suits pending in federal district court in San Francisco to determine if any person of Japanese race is entitled to be a citizen and vote.”*

» See SUPPORT on page 8

## LETTER to the EDITOR

Dear Editor,

A letter in *P.C.* issue 3453 (May 24-June 6, 2024) asks JACL to fulfill the obligations created by the resolution of apology to the Tule Lake resisters. For the reasons stated herein, additional information is required before JACL can do that. The resolution does not make clear to whom JACL is to give the apology. The apology is surely not intended to be given to the entire TLSC population. The resolution recognizes that some of the TLSC prisoners had committed violent acts of resistance and dissent. JACL has an obligation to develop guidelines as to who is to receive the apology before it is given.

The resolution also requires the National Education Committee to include the narrative

of Tule Lake Segregation Center (TLSC) in the curriculum guide: However, the resolution itself asserts incomplete or inaccurate information about TLSC that must be vetted before being inserted into the curriculum guide.

For example, the resolution asserts that all persons who resisted the loyalty questionnaire in any way “summarily” sent to TLSC. This is incorrect. For every person who put himself or herself into one of the categories that would label the person as “disloyal,” the WRA provided an administrative hearing to ensure that the individual understood the consequences of his or her decision. Each was given the opportunity to change his or her answer. A written transcript was taken of each hearing.

At the National Archives in Washington, D.C., a WRA file is still kept for each adult imprisoned at the camps. Each file contains each internee’s

loyalty questionnaire and the written transcript of the hearing of those sent to TLSC.

To provide a better understanding of why each adult person choose to be sent to TLSC, the best source is each person’s own words expressed at the time. This is a unique opportunity for JACL to initiate or endorse a research project to review the files of each adult person imprisoned at TLSC and to create a registry to catalog each person’s reasons.

Until the individuals who should receive the apology are identified by JACL and the correct information about TLSC is inserted into JACL’s curriculum guide, JACL must continue to defer the public ceremony to give any apology to the Tule Lake resisters.

Sincerely,  
Gerald Yamada

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

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

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

— Gil Asakawa




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# BERKELEY JACL HOLDS AWARDS CEREMONY

The chapter presents its 2024 scholarship, Pioneer and Youth Leadership awards.

By Berkeley JACL Chapter

The Berkeley JACL chapter awarded scholarships to five high school senior students, honored its Pioneer award recipient and recognized its Youth Leadership honoree during its May 5 awards event held at the Richmond Country Club in Richmond, Calif.

Scholarships were awarded to the students to recognize their academic achievements, community involvement, school activities, work history, JACL involvement, written essay, letter of recommendation and group interview.

This year's scholarship recipients are:

- **Baylor Fredrickson** from Albany High School will attend California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, as a business administration major. He was the recipient of the George/Yoshimi Nakamura Memorial Scholarship.
- **Jordan Go** of El Cerrito High School will attend the University of California, Berkeley, as a business major. He was the recipient of the Terry Yamashita Memorial Scholarship.
- **Seiji Kamita** from Northgate High School in Walnut Creek

will soon select the college he will be attending in the fall. He was awarded the Bea Kono Memorial Scholarship.

- **Wada Nakahara** of Albany High School will attend the University of California, Riverside, as a business major. He was the recipient of the Dan/Kathleen Date Memorial Scholarship.
- **Guo An Wang** of Acalanes High School in Lafayette will attend Diablo Valley College as a civil engineering major. He was the recipient of the chapter's Scholarship Committee Award.

KG Ouye was presented with the chapter's Pioneer Award. An Oakland native, Ouye obtained her undergraduate English degree from UC Berkeley and her master's degree in library science from the University of California, Los Angeles.

During her 35-year civil servant career, Ouye worked for the Los Angeles Public Library, where she worked on the inner-city book mobile for Spanish and Chinese residents. She returned to Oakland as manager of the branch libraries, where she helped build five new branch libraries, and served as interim director of the Oakland City Library over the ensuing 17 years.



Berkeley JACL celebrated its 2024 award winners on May 5. Pictured are (back row, from left) Jordan Go, Wada Nakahara, Baylor Fredrickson, Guo An Wang and Seiji Kamita and (front row, from left) Reiko Nabeta, Matthew Kojima, KG Ouye, Mari Nakamura and Cubby Nakamura.

PHOTO: JAMES TAKANO

For the next 14 years, KG was selected as the City of San Mateo's city librarian. During this time, she functioned as the city's project manager to construct a 93,000-square-foot main library, as well as renovated two branch libraries.

The new library was awarded the Leadership in Energy Design environmental gold award. It was also during this time that the California Public Utilities Commission appointed her to chair a committee that distributed more than \$200 million to encourage internet adoption for schools and libraries.

This appointment subsequently

led to a seven-year appointment by the Federal Communications Commission as founding chair to provide more than \$2.25 billion to encourage internet usage in schools across the nation. Now fully retired, Ouye gives back to her community by holding weekly reading groups with first- to third-graders in West Oakland. She finds time to read, support UC Berkeley's women's sports and assist with Berkeley JACL activities.

Matthew Kojima was presented with the chapter's Youth Leadership Award. A 2022 UC Berkeley graduate with a B.S. degree in chemical

biology, Kojima currently serves as the chapter's president. Previously serving as UC Berkeley's Nikkei Student Union representative, Kojima has led the chapter in planning the annual Day of Remembrance, NSU visits to incarceration camps, membership enhancements and civil rights activities.

He is an associate consultant at Beghou Consulting, where he performs data analyses to advise pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

In addition, the day's program also featured Jennifer Doi, a 2023 National JACL Kakehashi Project participant, who provided an overview of the youth exchange program that is sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Established in 2014, Kakehashi provides participants with a better understanding of Japan including politics, economics and culture, as well as builds relationships between Japan and Japanese Americans.

Born and raised in the Torrance and Palos Verdes areas in Southern California, Doi is a 2021 graduate from Santa Clara University (B.S. psychology) and is currently pursuing her doctorate in psychology from the Wright Institute in Berkeley.

This year's Scholarship Committee was comprised of Jennifer Doi, Mark Fujikawa, Vera Kawamura, Karen Kiyo Lowhurst, Ryan Matsuda, Neal Ouye and Ron Tanaka (chair).

# Florin JACL Awards Scholarships

The chapter recognizes the achievements of three area students.

During its annual Ice Cream Social on May 19 at the Fletcher Farm Community Center in Sacramento, Calif., the Florin JACL chapter held its awards presentation to recognize the achievements of three area students with scholarships totaling \$5,500.

The awards social also featured a mini-Manzanar pilgrimage reunion, where participants shared their experiences and reflections about the April 27 event.

The students honored this year by the chapter are:



- **Nola Nishio**, daughter of Melissa and Matt Nishio, is graduating from C. K. McClatchy High School. Her involvement with JACL is influenced by her maternal grandfather (San Jose JACL) and her paternal grandmother (Florin JACL). Nishio has been a volunteer at the "Uprooted" exhibit at the California Museum and has fond memories helping at the Nikkei Dog and Ice Cream socials. It is her hope that her generation of Japanese Americans can continue to learn the importance of the contributions of JACL to

our community. Nishio has participated in Jan Ken Po Gakko, Baron's basketball and Asian Pacific Islander Student Alliance. She has been accepted at the University of California, San Diego, where she plans to major in psychology.

our community. Nishio has participated in Jan Ken Po Gakko, Baron's basketball and Asian Pacific Islander Student Alliance. She has been accepted at the University of California, San Diego, where she plans to major in psychology.

- **Linnea Tamaki**, daughter of Alexandra and Glenn Tamaki, is attending the University of California, Davis, and is majoring in biomedical engineering. She has always been curious about the Japanese American incarceration



experience during World War II. After she learned about her Great-Aunt Sachi's book about her WWII experience at Heart Mountain, it became

Tamaki's mission to be more educated about the incarceration. She attended Time of Remembrance activities and began conversations with her grandfather about

his experiences as well. Tamaki has been described as having the qualities of leadership, scholarship and service. Her goals in the biomedical fields are focused on animals and prosthetics for animals.

- **Jaelin Umeda**, daughter of Sarah Lindberg and



Greg Umeda, is graduating from C. K. McClatchy High School. She has attended Florin JACL activities and attributes her interest because of her grandmother's influence of the importance of the Japanese American experience. Umeda is fluent in the Japanese language and has participated in Jan Ken Po Gakko, Baron's basketball, Asian Pacific Islander Student Alliance and Humanities and International Studies Program. She has been accepted at the University of California, Los Angeles, and plans to major in applied mathematics.

Scholarship Committee members are Aileen Nishio, Ruth Seo, Irene Uno and Karen Yamamoto (chair).



## Thank You for Your JACL Membership!

We're grateful to have some of the most engaged and committed members around! Because of your loyal support, we have more premium membership upgrades and generous additional gifts than ever. We're also appreciative for those who renew year after year (some for 50 years or more!) and for our increase in new members. Your dedication is essential to our ongoing mission for social justice, education, and community! Thank you! - JACL Membership Department



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# JANM Honors Trio at Annual Gala

## ONO, WILLIAMS AND LEE ARE FETED AS BURROUGHS RESETS THE FUNDRAISING GOAL TO \$85 MILLION.

By George Toshio Johnston,  
Senior Editor

All in all, it was an auspicious night for the Japanese American National Museum and its annual benefit gala.

Under this year's theme "Illuminating Paths," the museum on April 6 recognized three individuals' efforts to tell stories unique to Japanese American military service and foster healing for trauma unique to the nation's Japanese American community.

"Tonight, we have the special privilege of honoring two extraordinary projects and the visionaries who brought them to life," JANM President and CEO Ann Burroughs said, referring to the awards that would be presented to David Ono, Duncan Ryūken Williams and Sunyoung Lee.

Later, Burroughs would announce a new, eye-popping fundraising goal after blowing past JANM's already audacious \$65 million target. (See June 2, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/2vjcujsa](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/2vjcujsa) and Oct. 6, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/3pmabch](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/3pmabch).)

The event was auspicious also for eschewing JANM's *modus operandi* of using a swank downtown Los Angeles hotel ballroom for a different venue, namely the Little Tokyo-adjacent 550-seat Vibiana, once known as Cathedral of Saint Vibiana or just St. Vibiana's prior to becoming an event space following its renovation in the aftermath of the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

With master of ceremony duties again in the more-than-capable hands and voice of KTLA Channel 5 news anchor Frank Buckley, the evening flowed with grace, humor and music, courtesy of *de rigueur* taiko drumming from East L.A. Taiko and performances by musician Kishi Bashi (see Oct. 6, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/2p9924ss](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/2p9924ss) and Nov. 17, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/2p59y9ty](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/2p59y9ty)).

The Emmy-award winning Ono added another trophy to his shelf with JANM's Legacy Award for "Defining Courage," the live and multimedia presentation about the patriotism, heroism and service of Nisei servicemen of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Team in the European Theater and the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific Theater during World War II (see Nov. 4, 2022, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/y26e2ra2](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/y26e2ra2)).

The evening's other awardees were Williams, associate professor of religion and East Asian languages and cultures and director of the USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture at the University of Southern California, and Lee, the project's creative director, who received the museum's Award of Excellence for their work on "Irei: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration" (see Oct. 7, 2022, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/58mrf7m](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/58mrf7m)).

On hand to help present the Legacy Award to Ono was one of the still-living but dwindling ranks of WWII veterans, Yosh Nakamura, 98, a former Gila River War Relocation Authority Center internee who served in the 442nd RCT's M Co. and was awarded a Bronze Star, the French Legion of Honor, the European African Middle Eastern Ribbon with three Battle Stars and the Congressional Gold Medal. He also earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge and was part of the cohort that received a Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster.

"David, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for keeping the stories, the records of the Nisei soldiers in our minds and in our hearts today and for generations to come," Nakamura told Ono and the audience. In response, Ono noted how the award was not so much for him as it was the Japanese American community, for which he gave credit for creating "Defining Courage."

Regarding the Award of Excel-



Sunyoung Lee and Duncan Ryūken Williams upon receiving JANM's Award of Excellence at the Vibiana in Los Angeles

lence given to Williams and Lee for their work on the Ireichō, Burroughs said, "You've created a monument and a gift of enormous and profound consequence." Helping to present the award were Mas Yamashita and his daughter, Tracie Yamashita Dye.

Upon receipt of the trophy, Williams said, "It's certainly an honor for us to receive this award for the Ireichō, the book of names on display at the Japanese American National Museum. The Ireichō is not only a monument to recall the forced removal and wartime incarceration of the Japanese American community, but a monument to repair the wounds of that history."

In her remarks, Lee said, "This award must therefore also be dedicated to all the camp survivors and descendants."

The evening's other speakers included William Fujioka, chair of JANM's board of trustees; Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles Kenko Sone; Masatoshi Komoriya, executive chairman of the board of directors for MUFG Americas Holdings Corp. and deputy regional executive for the Americas for MUFG Bank; James E. Herr, director of JANM's National Center for the Preservation of Democracy; JANM board of governors members Jennifer Hirano (Alphabet Inc. business development analyst),



(From left) Honoree David Ono, Linda Nakamura Oberholtzer, Yosh Nakamura, Dan Nakamura and JANM President and CEO Ann Burroughs gather onstage to support Ono upon receiving the museum's Legacy Award on April 6.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

Jeff Maloney (Alhambra City Councilmember) and Tracey Doi (retired CFO and group vp at Toyota Motor North America); and standup comedienne Michelle MaliZaki.

Doi remarked that the drawing for the 2024 Lexus RX 500h F sport performance had raised more than \$142,000 for JANM, helped with tickets sold by members of the Nisei Week Court. (The automobile was won by William Estrada from Covina, Calif.)

On the topic of fundraising, Burroughs alluded to the 2023 gala, at which she hinted of the museum's big plans, later revealed Aug. 5, 2023, as its "Our Promise" initiative, with a fundraising goal of \$65 million, which she described as "the largest comprehensive fundraising campaign in JANM's history."

Regarding the status quo of that campaign, Burroughs said, "I'm delighted to tell you that not only have we met that goal of \$65 million, but we have exceeded that goal. . . . And our trustees, because they're overachievers and you all know who you are, have extended that goal to \$85 million." She noted that the timeline to raise the additional \$20 million is two years.

Burroughs said that with that new financial goal for "Our Promise," JANM would commit to four promises: one is revitalizing its campus, which will "reimagine a new permanent exhibition that will retell the Japanese American

story." She also remarked how during the renovation phase of the revitalization, "We need to close the museum pavilion to the public. We will close in January 2025 and reopen in mid- to late 2026," with its Democracy Center remaining open for events and exhibitions.

The revitalization is, incidentally, already under way thanks to a pair of rebrandings, namely its National Center for the Preservation of Democracy becoming the Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy and the plaza area outside the museum becoming the Norman Y. Mineta Democracy Plaza (see Feb. 9, 2024, *Pacific Citizen*).

The second promise, Burroughs said, will be to "amplify our national voice"; third will entail telling "stories in bold new ways and create experiences using smart tech to reach people everywhere"; and fourth "is to secure JANM's future by growing our endowment."

Following the event, JANM stated that the event had raised in total more than \$1.1 million, including funds raised from its online auction.

Sponsors for the event included Lexus, MUFG Bank Ltd., U.S. Bank, ABC Stores, Kari Nakama and Kristine Nishiyama in partnership with Capital Group, Sycamore Tree Capital Partners and the Takeo and Miyoko Yuki Family. The exclusive local TV media partner was KTLA. ■



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# Prairie Ghosts and the 2024 Amache Pilgrimage

In addition to a ceremony to welcome the nation's newest national park site, the pilgrimage offers a cross-community spiritual experience.

By Rob Buscher,  
P.C. Contributor

**O**n May 17, 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for our nation's newest national park site, the former Amache incarceration camp, which housed more than 10,000 inmates between 1942-45. This took place during the annual Amache pilgrimage, attended by over 350 pilgrims. Located in the far outskirts of Eastern Colorado near the border of Kansas, the most direct route to Amache is to fly into Denver and drive three hours of prairie desert roads.

Arriving at the Amache Museum in Granada, I was immediately struck by how prominent the museum stood in a downtown corridor of only three or four businesses. Like many Japanese American interpretive centers and regional museums, the collection tells a specific aspect of the wartime incarceration that centers on the unique experiences of the Amache internees.

Colorado Gov. Ralph Carr was the only Western governor who welcomed Japanese American resettlers to his state during the so-called "voluntary evacuation." Perhaps for this reason, the relationship between local residents of Granada and the internees seemed to have been more positive than most other camps.



**Ribbon-cutting ceremony**

PHOTOS: ROB BUSCHER

Granadans would visit Amache to watch movies at the recreation barracks, and by 1943, internees were free to roam into the town. Stories like these offer a compelling alternative to the anti-Japanese prejudice and bigotry that existed elsewhere throughout the country at that time. Following a morning of volunteer tasks with the pilgrimage committee, I had my first opportunity to experience the Amache site. My first stop was the cemetery, where I visited the graves and memorial marker dedicated to the 31 Nisei soldiers from Amache who gave their lives as members of the 442nd RCT. An otherwise still day, I felt a sudden gust of wind as I approached the cemetery, which thrust the strands of origami cranes hanging from the

perimeter fence into motion. I took a moment to pray a few chants of the nembutsu as I paid respects at each grave marker.

The next stop on my tour was the guard tower, one of eight original guard towers that once dotted the perimeter fence line. Compared to others I had seen, this was a unique octagonal shape, surrounded by some original fencing replete with barbed wire. The thought of armed guards peering out these windows with a spotlight sent shivers down my spine. Looking up from the base of the tower, this intimidating structure still looms heavy on the horizon.

I then walked toward the nearby residential barracks, a refurbished original structure that was moved back to the site after decades spent as a storage shed by some nearby rancher. In the fields of yellowing prairie grass, I spotted a small orange flower growing out of the dusty plain. Like the Amache Rose, I wondered if this had been transplanted by internees from the banks of the Arkansas River, evidence of the once-vibrant garden culture at Amache. Notably, both this flower and the Amache Rose bloom only during the pilgrimage.

From there, I went to the ribbon-cutting ceremony that took place on a stage near the park entrance and honor roll. There was a crowd of about 200 Japanese Americans, local residents of Granada, tribal government leaders, Colorado elected officials

and journalists.

The program began with a heartfelt tribute from John Tonai, whose late father, Min Tonai, was one of the survivors who spent decades advocating for Amache to be designated as a National Historic Site. Colorado elected officials spoke about the role that Amache NHS will play in ensuring that future generations learn from the mistakes of our past. Of particular note was the speech given by Gov. Reggie Wasano of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, who drove in from Oklahoma just for the ceremony.

Wasano commented that the United States does not want to remember history that reflects poorly on its past and that we must not take for granted the opportunity that the Amache designation provides in looking at the past with eyes wide open.

Former Congressman Mike Honda, himself an Amache survivor, also gave remarks about how significant this designation is for all Americans. Honda also thanked Wasano for his tribes' friendship and support. The final speaker was National Park Service Director Chuck Sams, the first Native American to hold this role.

Following the ribbon-cutting, I revisited the cemetery as part of a group tour where I learned about the decades-long effort to memorialize those who died in captivity. WRA records recorded only 106 deaths at Amache, but the actual total is estimated to be closer to 200. So many babies were stillborn

» See AMACHE on page 8



**Rev. Nari Hayashi, head minister of the Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple, speaks at Amache.**

**Former California Representative and Amache survivor Mike Honda addresses the crowd.**



**Mike Honda and others pay respects at Amache cemetery.**



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“I don’t know if we’re going to win, but we’re going to give them hell, Peggy,” said Yasui, pictured here at a press conference after filing the petition.



Peggy Nagae was lead counsel for Min Yasui.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PEGGY NAGAE



Gordon Hirabayashi (center) and members of his legal team. Pictured (back row, from left) are Rod Kawakami, Michael Leong and Benson Wong and (front row, from left) Arthur Barnett and Kathryn Bannai.

PHOTO: MICHAEL YAMASHITA

# THEY LED THE FIGHT TO OVERTURN THE WWII SUPREME COURT CASES. WHY YOU MAY NOT KNOW THEIR NAMES.

Two of the three *coram nobis* cases were led by Sansei women.

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, P.C. Contributor

The day before she was set to present her argument in what she called “the case of a lifetime,” Peggy Nagae convinced a clerk to let her in an empty courtroom so she could practice. The Portland, Ore.-born farm-girl-turned lawyer always had a way with words, but in the courtroom, everything mattered. She worked on her tone, pacing and delivery.

“And it was good,” said Karen Kai, a legal team member who was there to help her prepare.

In 1984, Nagae’s strong performance was critical. A lot was at stake for her client, Min Yasui, who, armed with new evidence, had one more chance to exonerate himself of his wartime conviction. It was Yasui’s *coram nobis* case. Nagae was his lead counsel.

To play the role in court, she had to be assertive. That wasn’t a problem.

When Nagae left the courtroom, she had to shed skin in favor of a softer version that felt more acceptable in the Japanese American community. Her father, Shigenari Nagae, was a Gresham-Troutdale JACL chapter president. In the community, she was always “Shig’s daughter.”

The constant shifting of behavior, speech and appearance to put others at ease — or code-switching — felt impossible at times. Nagae once confided in Dr. Hideko Bannai, then a Nisei professor in the master’s program at the University of Southern California. Dr Bannai urged her to consider it a character-builder. Code-switching is a skill that gives a person the chameleonlike ability to move through many social and professional situations.



Peggy Nagae



Peggy Nagae practiced law in Seattle.



Kathryn Bannai



Kathryn Bannai and her son, Jared, with the Hirabayashi legal team

PHOTO: STAN SHIKUMA



Members of Korematsu’s legal team. Pictured (back row, from left) are Dennis Hayashi, Lorraine Bannai, Donna Komure, Leigh-Ann Miyasato, Bob Rusky and (front row, from left) Don Tamaki, Peter Irons, Fred Korematsu, Karen Kai and Dale Minami.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CRYSTAL HUIE

Kathryn Bannai with her sons, Jared (left) and Sean



Today, Kathryn Bannai lives in New York. Pictured (from left) are Nicole, Chloe, Jared and Kathryn Bannai.

Nagae agreed, but she quietly wondered if a man in the Japanese American community would have to constantly wrestle with being “Shig’s son”?

Cultural mores or the rules for socially appropriate behavior are “more caught than taught,” said Nagae, 72, a Portland JACL member. For women, these principles can be set in reproachful silence, a withering stare or questions like, “*Why can’t you be nicer?*”

To fit into the Japanese American community, Nagae turned up the politeness, softened her edges and downplayed her successes until the outline of her body of work began to fade. This isn’t unusual for people of color, who are three times more likely to code-switch in the workplace, according to a recent survey published on [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com).

Nagae and the women who led and worked on the *coram nobis* cases face a unique obstacle — erasure from the historical narrative.

“For many decades, people did not even know I was one of the lead attorneys,” said Nagae, about her role in the Yasui case.

Over the years, she had felt many feelings: Erased. Dismissed. Devalued.

“[It’s] as though the Yasui case didn’t even exist.”

### ‘We’re Alive. You Can Talk to Us.’

The faces of the legal fight against the World War II incarceration were Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi and Fred Korematsu — three larger-than-life Nisei men who cast large shadows with their individual stories of defiance. Motivated by the simple desire to live their lives and the belief in their Constitutional rights, they resisted wartime curfew and forced removal orders. They fought — and, yes, lost — their legal cases in the Supreme Court.

About 40 years later, new evidence was discovered showing how government officials suppressed evidence during WWII to justify the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. The discovery breathed new life into the cases. Lawyers for the Nisei men filed three separate *writ of coram nobis* petitions — starting with Korematsu — in three different states to seek exoneration.

Even though two of the three cases were led by Sansei women — Nagae and Kathryn Bannai, lead counsel for Hirabayashi — public perception has largely focused on the Korematsu case and core members of its legal team.

“I think they deserved more credit for their courage in taking these monumental cases,” said Dale Minami, the Korematsu case’s lead counsel, about the women who led the cases.

Their roles have been diminished, he added. But the reasons are complex and largely based on situational factors, said Minami. Korematsu is the most well-known of the *coram nobis* cases partly because it was first out of the gate in a press-friendly San Francisco market. It was the first victory — and the most publicized.

All three Nisei men’s wartime convictions were ultimately vacated. Over the years, he said, commentators, legal scholars and documentary filmmakers have fixated on Korematsu, the case, and its corresponding legal team.

“I know some folks feel overlooked, and I can understand why,” said Minami, 77, a Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL member. “But in the context of the situation, I can also see why the press and the public ‘elevated’ the attention to Korematsu.”

If the Korematsu case is the most well-known of the three cases, then the large shadow it casts can also threaten to swallow the work of the women who worked on the legal teams. A 2019 San Francisco museum exhibit about the WWII incarceration attributed all three cases to the leadership of Minami and Don Tamaki, members of the Korematsu legal team.

Reporters and historians who seek to tell a historical narrative often cite the same experts for opinions. This can repeat in perpetuity until an association happens: When you think of the *coram nobis* cases, likely you think first of Korematsu. Then, Minami and Tamaki.

But teams of people worked together to push the cases

across the finish line.

“We’re alive,” said Lorraine Bannai, who worked on the Korematsu legal team. “We’re here. You can talk to us.”

### A Narrow Band of Appropriate Behavior

Yasui and Hirabayashi called upon Sansei women to lead their legal teams because they were the complete package, said Kai, 70, who worked with all three legal teams.

“They had the intellectual lawyer skills to absolutely do the job. But they also had this leadership ability,” said Kai. “They understood how to put together their cases and make things work.”

From 1982 to early 1985, Kathryn Bannai served as lead counsel in the Hirabayashi case. In a Seattle courtroom, she set the tone by defeating the government’s effort to dismiss the case. She also persuaded the court to grant a full evidentiary hearing.

She did this while five months pregnant.

It’s just something you just do as a woman, said Kathryn Bannai, 73. The full evidentiary hearing was scheduled a year later. She worked on the case until the day she gave birth. Then, she faced a dilemma many new parents without guaranteed childcare must consider — how to balance the demands of a career and a deeply personal case with the care of a baby.

She decided to step down as lead counsel.

“It was difficult,” said Kathryn Bannai, a New York JACL member, about the decision. “I think I could say — disappointing.”

This is the double bind of motherhood, especially in a country without a social safety net for new parents. Being a mother is a joy, she emphasized. But difficult decisions need to be made. After stepping down as lead counsel, she continued to work on the Hirabayashi case while also running her private law practice. Rodney Kawakami, who was also balancing his law practice while starting a family, took over as lead counsel.

Critical work for the Hirabayashi case was done at Kathryn Bannai’s Seattle law office during the evenings and weekends — outside a daycare’s normal business hours. To work on the Hirabayashi case, she would pick up her baby from daycare before closing time and bring him back to the office. At least once, the legal team gathered for a group photo for which baby Jared is front and center, jubilantly sitting on a table next to a copy of “Personal Justice Denied.”

Caretaking is something mothers do, but social expectations also give men more freedom to maneuver within the constraints.

Kathryn Bannai’s work is inextricable from the Hirabayashi case.

“Kathryn was our first fearless leader,” said Kawakami, 74. “She was responsible for assembling the team of attorneys and was the first public face of our case. Kathryn established the legal team’s credibility with the public and set the tone for how we would operate that continued after I took over.”

But in the case’s retelling, her role often gets diminished or omitted.

“The judicial record has been there all along,” said Kathryn Bannai. “The truth has been there all along.”

In 1987, a group of researchers theorized that for female leaders to succeed, they need to conform to a “narrow band of acceptable behavior,” which means they can’t be too feminine or overly masculine. Add cultural mores to the mix, said Nagae, and the band gets narrower.

On all three legal teams, women did the work on many different levels, but either felt uncomfortable to take credit or were not given the space to claim what was rightfully theirs. Almost everyone associated with the cases who were interviewed for this article talked about the greater good — that everything outside of themselves including the Japanese American community, their clients and democracy — mattered more than their work and selves.

In life, Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga echoed this sentiment, according to Lisa Abe Furutani, her daughter. Herzig-Yoshinaga worked closely with the legal teams to find evidence at the National Archives. She befriended the archivists, spent hours poring over documents and transcribed pertinent information onto index cards that crowded her dining room table and bathtub. When it came time to reflect on her legacy, Herzig-Yoshinaga mostly demurred. Friends and supporters championed her role in the *coram nobis* cases.

“Mom always saw herself as part of the team,” said Furutani, 73.

Being humble and a team player are, of course, valuable attributes. But do they come at the expense of being diminished? Humbleness isn’t a malignant enemy with ill intent. It’s in the air and the water of the community, said Nagae.

It’s the implicit bias that determines appropriate behavior and wordlessly seeps into the next generation.

### If All Else Fails, Get a Bigger Table

In her book “Unlearning Silence,” Elaine Lin Hering says power is invisible to those who have it. If in any given space, you are the person who is most often asked to speak, she says, then use your social capital to elevate the voices that are not often heard.

In hindsight, many of the lawyers on the cases wish they could have done some things differently to ensure a more accurate telling. Be more inclusive. Defer more publicity to the other cases. Speak up instead of falling silent. Misinformation perpetuates in silence, says Hering in her book. It starts so subtly that we may not notice it.

Photos of Korematsu at press conferences surrounded by his lawyers are immortalized in books, nonprofit organizations’ websites and academic research papers. These photos play large roles in forming the historical narrative of the cases. In an often-published photo of Korematsu at a San Francisco Press Club press conference, Lorraine Bannai stands behind the table dressed in vertical stripes.

In the last few years, she has written articles elevating the women who worked on the Korematsu legal team — Kai, Leigh-Ann Miyasato and Donna Komure — as well as the women who worked on the other *coram nobis* cases, including her older sister, Kathryn Bannai.

Historical narratives are about past events. But they are continually being reinterpreted and rewritten. It’s never too late to set the record straight.

In recent years, the women of the *coram nobis* cases have been more intentional in speaking about their roles. They’ve written about their experiences, given talks and participated in panel discussions about the impact of the cases. These opportunities give them visibility and the chance to become the role models they never had as young lawyers.

“Claim your space when there’s a table, a meeting, a room, a photo,” said Lorraine Bannai, 69, professor emerita and director emerita of the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality at Seattle University School of Law.

And if there is pushback, suggest getting a bigger table. “This isn’t about you,” she said, “It’s about the future.” ■



**Korematsu with his legal team at a 1983 press conference in San Francisco.**

PHOTO: CRYSTAL HUIE COURTESY OF MINAMI TAMAKI YAMAUCHI KWOK AND LEE FOUNDATION

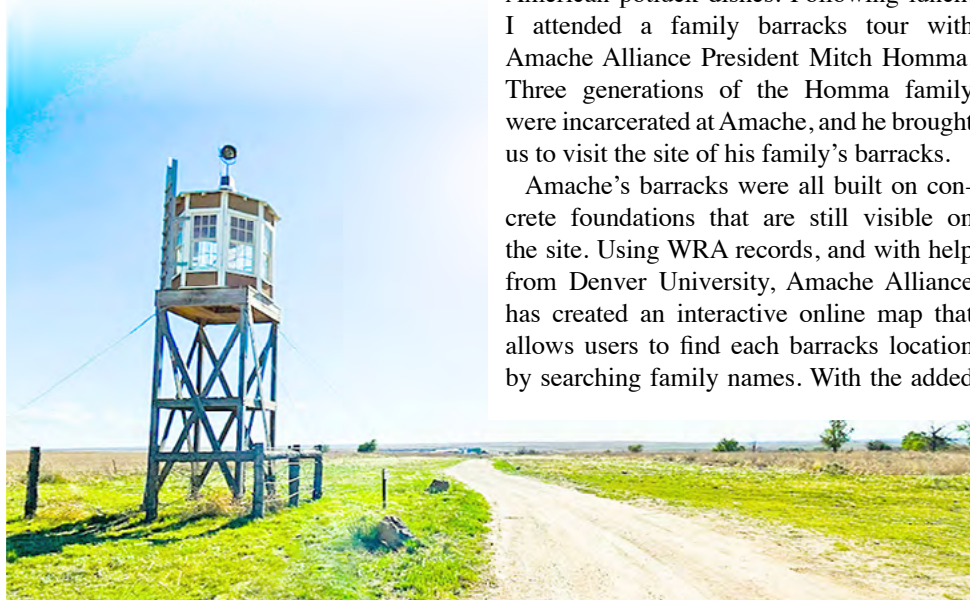
## AMACHE » continued from page 5

that they stopped counting them.

I also learned about the history of vandalism to the cemetery site, dating back to when the camp was first closed, and the cemetery memorial was desecrated by rifle blasts. Later, wooden planks with names of the deceased were burnt by arsonists. As recent as 1983 when the Nisei veterans' memorial was installed, someone used it as target practice with a visible rifle shot just inches below the "Honor Roll" title on the monument.

Amache Alliance board member Derek Okubo further elaborated on this history at Granada High School that evening. In 1982, Nisei members of the Denver Optimists Club were shouted out of a meeting with the Granada Town Council when they first expressed their intentions to memorialize the camp.

Opposition remained until Granada High School social studies teacher John Hopper started the Amache Preservation Society in 1994. The society consists of local high school students who over the past 30 years have worked with Amache survivors and descendants to renovate the cemetery, establish the Amache Museum and restore key Amache landmarks including the water tower, guard tower and barracks.



As subsequent generations of students came through Hopper's program, they shared the harsh realities of camp life with their families, friends and extended community. Gradually, bigotry dissipated among the local residents of Granada as they began to see Amache as a significant part of their own local history. These shifting dynamics enabled the Amache site to thrive through meaningful partnerships across several organizations representing both local residents of Granada, the Japanese American community and now the NPS.

The next day began with a memorial ceremony that took place at the cemetery. Our already significant crowd was bolstered by a coach bus organized by the Denver Nikkeijin Kai. As the hundreds of pilgrims looked on, services were conducted by both a Buddhist monk and Christian pastor. I was struck by how the still air was suddenly broken by a large gust of wind as the Buddhist monk began chanting. Attendees were then invited to individually pay their respects by placing flowers or origami cranes at the base of the monument.

From there, the pilgrimage moved to Granada High School, where attendees enjoyed a barbecue lunch prepared by a local rancher, supplemented with Japanese American potluck dishes. Following lunch, I attended a family barracks tour with Amache Alliance President Mitch Homma. Three generations of the Homma family were incarcerated at Amache, and he brought us to visit the site of his family's barracks.

Amache's barracks were all built on concrete foundations that are still visible on the site. Using WRA records, and with help from Denver University, Amache Alliance has created an interactive online map that allows users to find each barracks location by searching family names. With the added

## SUPPORT » continued from page 2

Also reported in the June 4, 1942, edition of the *Pacific Citizen*:

*[California] Attorney General Earl Warren, [Republican] candidate for governor, and [Los Angeles] District Attorney John Dockweiler promised the [Los Angeles County] Board of Supervisors last week that prosecution faces any Japanese who violates the Alien Property Act and obtained title to land in the names of minor American-born children."*

Starting in February 1942, among the worst atrocities in U.S. history involving mass suspension of Constitutional rights on the basis of race and ancestry was soon under way against what grew to be 125,824 Americans of Japanese ancestry — over 67,000 of whom were United States citizens — being involuntarily removed with seven to 10 days' notice from their homes, businesses and farms located on the U.S. West Coast without due process of law or access to legal counsel, then transported to unspecified remote desert

locations where they were incarcerated for up to four years by their own government and U.S. Army . . . and the *Pacific Citizen* continued reporting.

But as stated in the June 4, 1942, edition of the *Pacific Citizen*:

*"The Pacific Citizen needs your support! The Pacific Citizen under its new setup will endeavor to be a newspaper for ALL Americans of Japanese ancestry. . . . For a record of one of the milestones in American history, the greatest forced migration of an American group, keep a file of the Pacific Citizen."*

For over 95 years, the *Pacific Citizen* has told our stories as told by us. It has chronicled both good times and bad, highlights as well as lowlights of the Japanese American experience — our experiences.

Please join me in supporting the *Pacific Citizen* — our JACL newspaper — by contributing to the 2024 Spring Campaign! ■

## Memorial at the site of victims' repatriated remains at Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site



benefit of the concrete foundations as visual reference points, visitors to Amache can easily find the exact site where their family lived in camp. While touring the grounds, we happened upon another Amache descendant whose family also resided in the same block.

We ended the day with dinner at the old Newman Drug store, where incarcerated used to shop for essentials they could not find at the Amache co-op. Newman would custom order specialty goods that were otherwise unavailable through the mail order catalogs that serviced the camps. Dinner was catered by Shorty's Cafe, the only restaurant in town, which served a homestyle assortment of Tex-Mex dishes.

Our last pilgrimage activity took place the next day at the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. In November 1864, the 3rd

regiment of the Colorado Cavalry opened fire on a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho who were living on lands designated to them by a treaty with the federal government.

The soldiers arrived expecting armed resistance, but seeing instead a peaceful group of mostly women, children and elders, they opened fire anyway and committed other appalling acts of violence. In total, more than 230 Natives lost their lives, and many others were further embittered by the flagrant act of aggression resulting in further conflict between the tribes and the settler-colonists.

Having the opportunity to spend time with tribal leaders from the Cheyenne and Arapaho gave me a deeper insight into the lived experiences of Native Americans both during that time period and today. ➤

## PACIFIC CITIZEN

# Special Issues Coming Soon

September - JACL Scholarship Special  
Celebrate your 2024 graduates with a happy  
CONGRATULATIONS message in the  
*Pacific Citizen*!

November - VETERANS Special  
Acknowledge the Armed Forces or the Veterans in your life by  
placing their name and photo in our newspaper and forever  
saved in our archives! Prices start at \$33 per 2"x1"  
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DECEMBER  
Holiday Special Issue  
Great fundraiser opportunity for Chapters!!

Contact Susan at  
(213) 620-1767 ext.03  
email: BusMgr@PacificCitizen.org



Exploring the site before formal remarks began, I was invited inside of the tipi I was admiring by Greg Spotted Bird-Lamebull of the Cheyenne Dog Soldier Society.

Joined by a half dozen other Japanese Americans who had attended the pilgrimage, Spotted Bird-Lamebull shared stories of his tribal rituals and culture that was imparted to him by Cheyenne elders where he grew up on the reservation lands in Oklahoma. One of his grandparents was a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre and shared his first-person recollection of those terrible events. Listening to his stories, I felt how near the Indigenous Genocide is to our own era. It made me ashamed for the failings of our education system, which to Wasano's earlier point, largely excludes content like this.

After about 20 minutes in the tipi, we rejoined the larger group, and Cheyenne leader Otto Braided Hair shared his tribal elders' remembrances of the Sand Creek Massacre. Like Spotted Bird-Lamebull, he, too, was a descendant of massacre survivors. Braided Hair spoke about the presence of spirits and the heavy weight that the site once held when he and other tribal leaders began visiting the site, which has gradually dissipated after many years of conducting rites and prayers.

Braided Hair told a story about the ribbon-cutting ceremony for their NHS designation. It was a still windless day on the prairie, but when he began praying in his language, a sudden gust of wind blew over the American flag, signaling the presence of their ancestors.



**Amache Alliance volunteer Julia Shizuyo Popham reflects on the Sand Creek Massacre site.**

**Otto Braided Hair addresses pilgrims.**

We shared a laugh together before Braided Hair began his prayer. In our case, too, the wind was still and calm until the moment he began praying. Suddenly, the wind picked up and continued blowing until the cloud cover that blanketed the sky had faded past the horizon. By the time Braided Hair finished praying, the weather had changed from overcast to a bright sunny day.

As I pondered what could be described as a spiritual encounter, I began walking the trail up to the bluff hillside that overlooked the site of the massacre. Approaching the overlook, I felt a strong urge to look to my left. I later learned this was the site where repatriated remains from massacre victims had been re-buried. I walked further along the trail and felt a similar impulse to look to my right, seeing the site where the massacre began. I gave a few chants of the nembutsu and paid my respects before driving three hours through rural Colorado roads back to Denver.

Ending the pilgrimage as such, this was perhaps the most significant cross-community exchange I have ever participated in. Japanese Americans and the Cheyenne leaders held space for each other's emotions and traumatic experiences in ways that could only be possible in two communities that have experienced intergenerational trauma. I am thankful to the Amache Alliance for making this possible, and I look forward to seeing how these relationships continue to develop.

There is much we can learn from the wisdom of tribal elders, as we continue to make peace with our own prairie ghosts. ■



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A NATIONAL GUIDE TO NOTABLE COMMUNITY EVENTS

# CALENDAR

## NATIONAL

### JACL 2024 National Convention Philadelphia, PA

July 10-14  
Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown  
201 N. 17th St.

Price: Convention Registration

Join JACL at its annual confab where this year's theme is "Looking Into the Future Together." The schedule will feature workshops, plenaries, awards luncheon, National Council sessions, welcome event, Sayonara Banquet and a "2024 Presidential Town Hall." Be sure to register today!

Info: Visit [jacl.org](https://www.jacl.org) for more details.

## INTL.

### Heroes of the Vosges Museum Bruyères, France

Oct. 19 Opening Date

Heni-Mathieu Musee

Price: Free

This start-up museum will honor the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team and the French Resistance who bravely fought in battle during World War II. The museum will open during the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Bruyères, Belmonte and Biffontaine.

Info: Visit [vosgesheroes.org](https://vosgesheroes.org).

## NCWNP

### Japan Day 2024

Sacramento, CA

June 23; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Nisei Hall

1515 4th St.

Price: Free

Come join the Sacramento JACL for a day of classes showcasing Japanese culture. Demos include microwave mochi, Japanese line dancing, sakura felt pin craft and a spam musubi contest!

Info: To participate in the spam musubi contest, email [sacjaclinfo@yahoo.com](mailto:sacjaclinfo@yahoo.com) for an entry form.

### 'Taken From Their Families: Japanese American Incarceration on Angel Island During World War II'

San Jose, CA

Thru June 23

Japanese American Museum San Jose  
535 N. Fifth St.

Price: Museum Admission

This exhibit features stories from 24 individuals from Hawaii and the West Coast who were incarcerated on Angel Island

after Dec. 7, 1941, and whose lives were changed forever because of it.

Info: Visit <https://www.jamsj.org/exhibitions>.

### 2024 Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL Community Picnic

Aptos, CA

June 29; 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Aptos Village Park

100 Aptos Creek Road (Parking Is Limited; Carpool Is Suggested)

Price: Adults/Teens \$20; Seniors/Children \$10; Nonmembers \$25

The Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL community picnic celebrates the 90-year anniversary of the chapter. Come enjoy teriyaki chicken, hot dogs, chili beans, rice, salad, beverages and strawberries. An ice cream social is included. There will also be a performance by Watsonville Taiko, as well as a scholarship presentation and senior bingo, plus a drawing featuring many great prizes.

Info: Visit [watsonvillesantacruzjacl.com](https://www.watsonvillesantacruzjacl.com).

### San Jose Obon Festival

San Jose, CA

July 13, Noon-10 p.m.; July 14, Noon-9 p.m.

San Jose Buddhist Church

640 N. Fifth St.

Price: Free

The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin is excited to be celebrating Obon with a traditional community gathering to remind us all of the connections we share together. There will be cultural exhibitions, delicious food, Obon dancing, music and much more.

Info: Visit [https://www.sjbetsuin.org/annual\\_obon\\_festival/](https://www.sjbetsuin.org/annual_obon_festival/).

## PSW

### Nishi Hongwanji Obon Festival

Los Angeles, CA

July 13-14

Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

815 E. First St.

Price: Free

All are welcome at this community event featuring traditional Obon dancing (6:30-8:30 p.m. both nights), preorder chicken teriyaki dinner, food booths, bingo, farmer's market, raffle and much more!

Info: Email [events@nishihongwanji-la.org](mailto:events@nishihongwanji-la.org) for more information.

### Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple Obon Festival

Culver City, CA

July 20-21; 3-9 p.m.

### Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple 12371 Braddock Dr.

Price: Free

Enjoy traditional obon favorites such as chicken teriyaki, won tons, udon, sushi, shave ice and andagi, as well as games, a silent auction and raffle, cultural demonstrations and much more!

Info: Visit <https://vhbt.org>.

### Koto Reunion and Workshop

Los Angeles, CA

July 20; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

815 E. First St.

Price: Free But Registration Required

This workshop and reunion will commemorate NEA Heritage Award recipient June Kuramoto's life and career. The event's goal is to reunite koto players in Southern California as well as teach new players.

Info: To register, email team [kotomoto@gmail.com](mailto:kotomoto@gmail.com).

### 2024 Natsumatsuri Family Festival

Los Angeles, CA

Aug. 10; 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

JANM

100 N. Central Ave.

Price: Free

Save the date for the museum's annual summer celebration featuring free cultural performances, crafts and activities for the entire family and kids of all ages.

Info: Visit [www.janm.org](https://www.janm.org).

### Okaeri Connects! LGBTQ+ Support Group

Virtual Event

English Speaking LGBTQ+ only — Second Sundays from 4-5:15 p.m.

Japanese Speaking LGBTQ+ only — Third Sundays from 4-5:15 p.m. (9 a.m. JT)

Japanese Speaking Parents/Allies — Third Sundays from 2-3:15 p.m. (7 a.m. JT)

Price: Free

We create affirming spaces by sharing our personal experiences and stories. We believe that building relationships, being seen and connecting ourselves within our Nikkei community can improve the quality of our lives.

Info: To register, visit [Okaeri.org/connects](https://www.okaeri.org/connects). For questions, please email [connects@okaeri.org](mailto:connects@okaeri.org).

## PNW

### Olympia 32nd Annual Bon Odori Festival

Olympia, WA

Aug. 10; 5-9 p.m.

### South Puget Sound Community College

2011 Mottman Road S.W.

Price: Free

Come and join the Olympia JACL as it celebrates the return of its annual Bon Odori festival, now in its 32nd year, the first since 2018. The day will feature food trucks, karate demonstrations, a performance by Fuji Taiko and traditional bon odori dancing.

Info: Contact Reiko Callner at (360) 791-3295 for more information.

### 'Because of Bill: William Sumio Naito's Legacy in Portland' Exhibit

Portland, OR

Thru Sept. 1

Japanese American Museum of Oregon

411 N.W. Flanders St.

Price: Free for Friends of JAMO;

Adults \$8; Seniors \$6; Students \$5;

Children 11 and Under Free

This new exhibit offers visitors an in-depth look at Bill Naito's legacy in Portland and the personal motivations.

Info: Visit [www.jamo.org](https://www.jamo.org).

### 'Genji Mihara: An Issei Pioneer' Exhibit

Seattle, WA

Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington

1414 S. Weller St.

An Issei pioneer, JCCCW's feature exhibit on the life of Issei leader Genji Mihara (1890-1982) is part of a larger biographical project on Mihara, who immigrated to Seattle in 1907. Features include original photos and artifacts donated by Mihara's family, historical research and quotes from oral history interviews, including one from Mihara himself in the 1970s.

Info: Visit [www.jcccw.org](https://www.jcccw.org).

## MDC

### 'Muttsu no Kazoku: Six Families' Journey From Internment to Scott'

Exhibit

Scott, AR

Thru July 27

Plantation Agriculture Museum

4815 Hwy. 161 S

Price: Museum Admission

This exhibit tells a story that has long been overlooked, as it explores life for the Shingu, Futamachi, Nakamura, Oshima, Yada and Yoshimura families before, during and after WWII, with a special focus on their lives in the farming community of Scott after their release from Rohwer War Relocation Center.

Info: Call (501) 961-1409.

## IDC

### 50th Annual Denver Cherry Blossom Festival

Denver, CO

June 22, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; June 23, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sakura Square

1255 19th St.

Price: Free

This exciting festival highlights Japanese and Japanese American culture through music, dance, exhibits, arts and crafts and delicious food.

Info: Visit <https://cherryblossom-denver.org/>.

### 'Pictures of Belonging: Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi and Miné Okubo'

Salt Lake City, UT

Thru June 30

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Marcia and John Price Museum Building

410 Campus Center Dr.

This exhibit reveals a broader picture of the American experience through artworks and life stories of three Japanese American women from the pre-WWII generation, seen together for the first time.

Info: Visit <https://umfa.utah.edu/pictures-of-belonging>.

## EDC

### Book Talk: 'Asian American Is Not a Color — Conversations on Race, Affirmative Action and Family'

Cambridge, MA

June 21; 7 p.m.

Price: Free But Registration Requested.

OiYan Poon discusses her book with Suevon Lee to explore questions about race and racism with an earnest exploration into race relations and affirmative action.

Info: Visit <https://portersquarebooks.com/>.

### 'Hiroshige's 100 Famous Views of Edo (Featuring Takashi Murakami)'

Brooklyn, NY

Thru Aug. 4

Utagawa Hiroshige's "100 Famous Views of Edo" returns to public display, this time with Takashi Murakami's views into a more fantastical realm with a set of his own paintings.

Info: Visit [www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/hiroshige-murakami](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/hiroshige-murakami).

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# In MEMORIAM

## Friends, Colleagues Celebrate Mike Watanabe

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass toplines tribute to life, legacy of late AADAP stalwart.

By P.C. Staff

The breadth and depth of the diversity of cultures, faces and faiths — American, Black, Hawaiian, Hispanic, Japanese and white, Buddhist and Christian — of those in the pews and giving eulogies on the stage bore witness to the boundary-crossing, impactful life of Michael Norio Watanabe.

The celebration of life for Mike Watanabe, as he was known to most, took place at Holman United Methodist Church, not far from his home in Los Angeles' Crenshaw District on May 23.

The longtime leader of Asian American Drug Abuse Program, aka AADAP, died Nov. 3, 2023, at 77. The gathering was the embodiment of AADAP's credo: People need people.

### Celebration of Life



Cover of Mike Watanabe's celebration of life booklet

With master of ceremonies duties ably discharged by AADAP board member and retired All People's Community Cen-

ter Executive Director Sandra Bryant, the list of performers — a Hawaiian opening by the Kaio Foundation, a rendition of "A Thousand Cranes" by kotoist June Kuramoto, a performance of "Lands of the Rising Sun" sung by "Atomic" Nancy Sekizawa — and speakers — including Baptist Pastor Louis Lewis, Buddhist Rev. Ray Fukumoto, nephew Ed Shioyazono Richter, Professor Herman DeBose, Ron Wakabayashi, Nick Nagatani, Yvette Enrique (AADAP Therapeutic Community alumna) and Jose Esqueda (director of Youth and Programs) and Elaine "Yoko" Takahashi — was a testament to the far-reaching impact of Watanabe's life's work at AADAP.

He spent 46 years at the organization, 39 as its president and CEO, until stepping aside



Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass fondly remembers her late friend Mike Watanabe at his celebration of life held May 23.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

in 2021.

Born Aug. 23, 1946, in Pa'uailo, Hawaii, in 1957, Watanabe's family and he moved to Los Angeles, where he would graduate from Venice High School, where he was known for his prowess in gymnastics, in 1964. After serving a perspective-changing two-and-a-half years in the Army, including a yearlong tour of duty in Vietnam where he was a helicopter door gunner and mechanic circa 1969, he earned a B.A. from California State University, Northridge, followed by a master's in social work from UCLA. In 2017, CSUN awarded him an honorary doctor of humane letters.

During his years at AADAP, Watanabe's greater community involvement also included serving as president of Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council, in which he oversaw its Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Committee; serving on the L.A. County Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Commission and the Asian and Pacific Islander Constituent Committee; and as a founder of the National Asian Pacific Families Against Substance Abuse.

If the measure of Watanabe's reach was exemplified by the stature of who came to pay tribute to his life and achievements, none was bigger than that of Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. In 2022, at AADAP's 50th anniversary, then U.S. Rep. Bass was the recipient of the Mike Watanabe Leadership Award (*see Oct. 7, 2022, Pacific Citizen, [tinyurl.com/2f5w8c3f](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/2f5w8c3f)*).

"The impact that he's had on all of our lives will go on and on and on through generations, and I was just honored that I had the opportunity to come here today and once again share the impact that Mike Watanabe had on me," Bass said. She was not alone in her assessment of the halo effect her friend's life had on others.

Bryant: "Mike was not a selfish leader. He understood that his gifts should be shared with

the entire community. He mentored many, including myself, he invited me to events, meetings fundraisers and introduced me to movers and shakers."

Nakanishi: "Mike treated the AADAP staff as his family, no matter if you were a new staff member or worked here for many years. He raised so many of us to be the community leaders we are today."

Enrique: "For me, Mike was more than a CEO of AADAP. He has been a mentor, a role model most of all, an inspiration. Mike has been a driving force for me in my transformation from being an addict for 23 years to where I am today."

Richter: "He led by example, having overcome his own challenges."

Lewis: "Today, we're celebrating one who has been such a blessing to all of us as a mentor, as a friend — so many life lessons."

Fukumoto: "The causes and conditions of this gathering is a gift we have received from Mike, for without him, today's gathering would not be possible."

Nagatani: "Mike, I thank you for creating bridges to bring our communities closer together — and for myself, for helping me change my outlook."

DeBose: "When Mike and Susie got married, Mike asked me to serve as his best man. At that point, I realized that he saw me as a true friend. . . . Our primary friendship has been centered on the desire, I think, to make the world a better place for those who are less fortunate than us."

Esqueda: "He was a mentor, a friend, a coach and a great co-worker. I will always honor and cherish Mike's teachings and always be grateful for the opportunity to be all I could be at AADAP."

Wakabayashi: "He's been gone for a few months, but his superpower was still to be able to bring us together, and he's done it again today."

Watanabe is survived by his widow, Suzanne, and other family and friends. ■



(Clockwise from top left) Pastor Louis Lewis, Rev. Ray Fukumoto, Ron Wakabayashi, Yvette Enrique, Nick Nagatani, Nancy Sekizawa, Jose Esqueda and Dean Nakanishi

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

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