

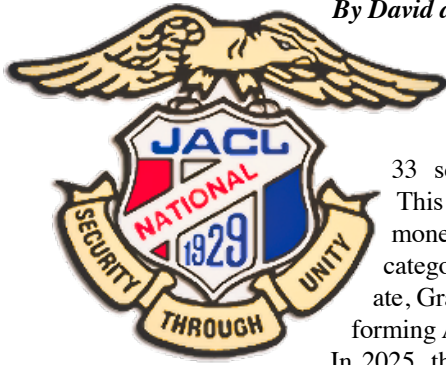
PACIFIC CITIZEN

					
					
		JACL NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP ISSUE 2025			
					
					
					

FRESHMEN · UNDERGRADUATE · GRADUATE · CREATIVE ARTS · LAW · STUDENT AID

NATIONAL JACL 2025 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

By David and Carol Kawamoto



The 2025 National JACL Scholarship Program is awarding 33 scholarships totaling \$77,000. This JACL program provides monetary awards for the following categories: Freshmen, Undergraduate, Graduate, Law, Creative and Performing Arts and Student Aid.

In 2025, the National JACL Scholarship Program is pleased to add a new scholarship award to our program. The Michio and Namiko Suzuki Memorial Scholarship is an annual \$2,000 award to an undergraduate or graduate student studying social work.

In 2025, a committee from the JACL's Eastern District Council evaluated the Freshmen category applications for the third and final year of its current commitment. The EDC's committee was chaired by Linda Adams of the Washington, D.C., chapter. The committee members and their respective chapters are Janice Faden (Washington, D.C.), Danielle Pierce (Seabrook), Stefanie Pierce (Seabrook), Ryo Tanaka (Washington, D.C.) and John Tobe (Washington, D.C.).

For the Undergraduate, Graduate, Law, Creative and Performing Arts and Student Aid categories, a committee from the Pacific Southwest District reviewed the applications and selected the winners for 2025. The PSW's committee was chaired by PSW District Gov. Joseph Gu of the SELANOCO chapter. The committee members and their respective chapters are Cathy Arakaki (Las Vegas), Denise Fuse (Arizona), Alice Ishigame-Tao (SELANOCO), Sarah Taketa (Ventura County) and Carol Young (Venice-West Los Angeles).

We truly appreciate these volunteer committees for donating their time and expertise in evaluating the many qualified applicants. Please join us in thanking these volunteers for their excellent work on behalf of the JACL's Scholarship Program.

We also express our appreciation for the fine work of our JACL staff members who coordinate the Scholarship Program. Education/Communications Coordinator Matthew Weisbly and NCWNP Regional Director Patty Wada do such a fine job annually with this successful program.

And, we thank the JACL chapters for their excellent job of screening and forwarding Freshmen Scholarship applications for the national competition. However, please be reminded that the other National JACL Scholarships are submitted directly to National JACL by the respective applicants.

Please inform all your members and acquaintances of these other scholarships that are available to JACL members.

The updated information brochure and applications for the 2026 program will be posted on the JACL's website (www.jacl.org) this month. The 2025 information is still available on the website to provide background and requirements of the program.

This year's application included the essay question: "The Japanese American community is constantly changing. As new generations grow and new communities pop up in different locations, how do you build a community and bring people with different views together around shared goals?" An excerpt from each scholarship recipient's response is found in this publication.

We were very pleased with the excellent quality of this year's applicants. All of the scholarship recipients, as well as every applicant, are truly deserving of recognition. We are impressed with their academic excellence and community service. Their actions and accomplishments reflect well of themselves, their families and our entire community! ■



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SAN JOSE JACL AWARDS NINE SCHOLARSHIPS

By JACL San Jose Chapter

At a luncheon held on May 31 in the garden area of the Issei Memorial Building in San Jose, Calif., nine high school seniors received scholarships totaling \$22,500 from the JACL San Jose chapter. Following are the 2025 recipients:

• **Jacqueline Aochi**, a graduate of Santa Clara High School in Santa Clara, received the \$2,500 Kaysee Tsuji Memorial Scholarship. She is attending the University of California, Santa Cruz, with plans to major in microbiology.

• **Ryan Idemoto**, a graduate of Los Gatos High School in Los Gatos, received the \$1,000 San Jose JACL Chapter Award and the \$500 Joyce Oyama Memorial Scholarship. He is attending the University of California, Berkeley, and is planning on double majoring in political science and Asian American and Asian diaspora studies.

• **Miya Fujikawa**, a graduate of Valley Christian High School in San Jose, received the \$2,500 George Masunaga Endowment Scholarship. She is attending the University



This year's San Jose scholarship winners are (from left) Tyler Kao, Jacqueline Aochi, Ryan Idemoto, Aaron Oshidari, Noah Kikuta, Jordyn Yamaguchi, Miya Kosakura, Miya Fujikawa, Bria Shimada and Kiyone Tanaka-Gacayan. Not pictured is Akemi Tsuchitani. PHOTO: COURTESY OF JACL SAN JOSE CHAPTER

of Southern California and plans to major in human biology on the prehealth track.

• **Tyler Kao**, a graduate of Santa Clara High School in Santa Clara, received the \$1,000 Henry & Ada Uyeda Memorial Scholarship. He is attending the University of California, Davis, and is majoring in economics and data science.

• **Miya Kosakura**, a graduate of Monta Vista High School in Cupertino, received the \$2,500 Shogo & Chiyo Hikido Memorial Scholarship. She is attending the University of California, Berkeley, and is planning on majoring in molecular and cell biology.

• **Aaron Oshidari**, a graduate of Leigh High School in San Jose, received the \$10,000

Oyama Family Foundation Scholarship (\$2,500 for each of four years). He is attending the University of Southern California, with plans to major in economics.

• **Bria Shimada**, a graduate of Los Gatos High School in Los Gatos, received the \$1,000 Ray & Lucy Matsumoto Business Scholarship. She is attending California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, with plans to major in business.

• **Kiyone Tanaka-Gacayan**, a graduate of John F. Kennedy High School in Fremont, received the \$1,000 Fujio Nakasako Memorial Scholarship. She is attending San Jose State University, with plans to major in computer science and linguistics.

• **Akemi Tsuchitani**, a graduate of Fremont High School in Sunnyvale, received the \$1,000 Masuo & Machiko Nakamura Memorial Scholarship. She is attending Scripps College and is majoring in psychology.

In addition, Noah Kikuta and Jordyn Yamaguchi received their Ninja Youth Foundation Scholarships at a Ninja Youth Foundation meeting.

The San Jose chapter is grateful to this year's Scholarship Committee members: Gary Jio, Mitsu Kumagai, Jo Ann Okabe-Kubo and chairperson Sharon Uyeda. ■



By Japanese American Veterans Assn.

The Japanese American Veterans Assn. awarded 14 scholarships totaling \$25,000 in 2025 to outstanding students worldwide. This year's recipients represent the next generation, all committed to upholding the Nisei legacy of service and sacrifice to this nation.

Following are this year's scholarship winners:

• **Kai Vu — U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye Memorial Scholarship**

This \$3,000 scholarship honors the late U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's iconic career of military and civilian public service. Vu, who is from Seattle, Wash., is the great-grandson of George Yamada, MIS/OSS. He is pursuing a doctor of medicine and master of public health at Tufts University in Boston.

In his essay submission, Vu wrote, "Learning of the adversity my family faced . . . has empowered me to be an advocate for . . . all marginalized groups in my community. . . . I am passionate about providing care to marginalized groups, aspiring one day to be able to use my knowledge

of social determinants of health to ensure each patient is receiving a care plan that fits their needs and lifestyle. There would be no greater privilege than to undergo the necessary medical training to become a physician and establish longitudinal and interpersonal relationships . . . serving as an agent of change and closing the gap in inequitable health outcomes."

• **Kai Yasuo Moriyama — Ishio Founder's Scholarship**

This \$3,000 scholarship is named for JAVA's founder, the late Col. Phil Ishio, his wife, Constance, and their son, Douglas Ishio. It is awarded to a student who has completed two or more years of college/university. Moriyama, who is from Kaneohe, Hawaii, is the son of JAVA member Heather Moriyama. He is attending the University of Southern California and is pursuing a bachelor in science degree in neuroscience.

In his essay submission, Moriyama wrote, "I learned early that authenticity could come at the cost of acceptance. I approached a patient with a warm smile, ready to offer support. Almost immediately, he recoiled and asked loudly if I was gay, saying he did not want me helping him. I was ready to retreat. However, a physician assistant noticed my distress

and listened without judgment and reminded me that health care needs people of all backgrounds, especially those who know what it feels like to be unseen. I realized the challenge I faced was not only enduring discrimination but transforming pain into purpose. I chose to stay, and, more importantly, I chose to lead."

• **Karissa Ginoza — Kiyoko Tsuboi Taubkin Legacy Scholarship**

This \$2,000 scholarship is named in honor of the longtime patron of JAVA and is awarded to a student who has completed at least one year in college/university. Ginoza, who is from Honolulu, Hawaii, is the great-granddaughter of Iwao Takamori, 100th Bn/442nd RCT. She is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering and premed at the University of Southern California.

In her essay submission, Ginoza wrote, "My ambition to attend medical school and become a physician is fueled by my desire to give back to the community that raised me. After completing my training, I plan to return home and serve my community, striving to make Maui a healthier, stronger and therefore better place. Grit — the relentless pursuit of a goal against all odds — is a value passed down to me by my

great-grandfather, Iwao Takamori, a soldier of the 442nd RCT. In a world where resilience seems to waver, I am determined to carry forward his legacy through my own unwavering effort and determination to pursue my goals."

• **Kylee Narasaki — Col. Jimmie Kanaya Legacy Scholarship**

This \$2,000 scholarship is named in honor of U.S. Army Col. Jimmie Kanaya, a three-war veteran — WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Narasaki is the great-granddaughter of William Minoru Takata, MIS. She will attend the University of California, Los Angeles, and plans on earning her bachelor of science in bioengineering and pharmacy.

In her essay submission, Narasaki wrote, "I carry with me not only a passion for scientific innovation but also a legacy shaped by resilience, discipline and strength. The internment of over 120,000 Japanese Americans wasn't just a historical event — it was a test of character that continues to echo through generations. My great-great-grandparents rebuilt their lives from scratch after being uprooted from California. . . . It is this knowledge of my ancestor's experience that propels me to pursue bioengineering, knowing that their educational opportunities were

delayed or ended. . . . Knowing that they faced discrimination for their ethnicity pushes me to champion diversity and inclusion."

MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Following are the 10 graduating high school students who each received a \$1,500 scholarship:

• **Evan Doi** from Playa del Rey, Calif., received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Col. Virgil R. Miller, commanding officer of the 442nd RCT. Doi is the great-grandnephew of Hiroshi Kamimura, 442nd RCT. Doi plans to attend the University of California, Berkeley, and plans to study economics.

• **Kaia Fujinaka** from Hilo, Hawaii, received the Izuno Family Scholarship in honor of JAVA member and Korean War Veteran Dr. Takumi Izuno, who served in the U.S. Army 511th MIS. Fujinaka is the great-granddaughter of Fred Hiromu Yamashige, 100th Battalion/442nd RCT. She will attend California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, with plans to study kinesiology and occupational therapy.

• **Mia Mayeda** from Torrance, Calif., received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Ranger Grant Jiro Hirabayashi, MIS. Mayeda is the great-grandniece of Alfred Mayeda, 100th Battalion/442nd RCT/MIS. Mayeda will attend the University of Southern California and plans to study mechanical engineering.

» See JAVA on page 14

2025 JACL NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

ESSAY TOPIC: This year's scholarship recipients were asked to respond to the following question:

'The Japanese American community is constantly changing. As new generations grow and new communities pop up in different locations, how do you build a community and bring people with different views together around shared goals?'

» **EDITOR'S NOTE:** All student responses reflect those that were submitted to the Pacific Citizen by the respective JACL National Scholarship committees.

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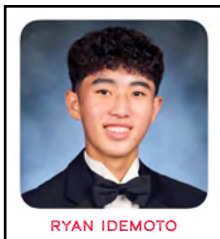
RYAN IDEMOTO

JACL Chapter: San Jose
Recipient of the Kenji Kasai
Scholarship

The University of California, Berkeley

NOTABLES:

Ryan Idemoto holds a certificate of achievement in Asian American Studies from De Anza College. He has been vp of his school's Model United Nations, World Culture Club and Entrepreneurship Club. In addition, he served as a student Board of Education member and was a project manager for the Japanese American Outreach Network Project in partnership with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose and the Los Gatos Library to expand availability of Japanese American history books in libraries. Idemoto plans on studying Asian American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.



RYAN IDEMOTO

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"In my ninth grade English class, I felt moved by a particular book, 'Farewell to Manzanar.' Troubled by the horrific episode in U.S. history that was seemingly overlooked, the WWII Japanese internment camps, I asked my grandmother about her experiences. She recalled being pushed into a dark train from Stockton, Calif., only being able to take what she could hold as her family was forcibly relocated to the Rohwer Arkansas internment camp.

"While my father's parents were reluctant to share about their traumatic experiences, my father privately disclosed that my grandfather grew up at the Tule Lake Camp in California, and my father's mother was born at the Heart Mountain Camp in Wyoming.

"Asian American Studies — a field I discovered through a local community college class called 'Asian Americans and Asia' — gave me the opportunity to explore my identity and, correspondingly, the ways it intersects with

my community.

"Since my school didn't offer this subject, I took a variety of classes at De Anza College, where I witnessed uncertainty amongst the AAPI community with the rise in anti-Asian hate, mirroring the loss of direction I experienced with my mother's death.

"Propelled by this wave of hate I observed online and my family's touching stories as prisoners of the internment camps, I felt empowered to act. I eventually discovered the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign.

"Interning at Stop AAPI Hate, I interviewed students on Ethnic Studies. One student, Bianca, feared her class would be influenced by her district for being 'too controversial.' This cultivated fear of censorship dangerously distorts how we view education. Erasing details isn't 'just careless' — it's a deliberate betrayal of truth.

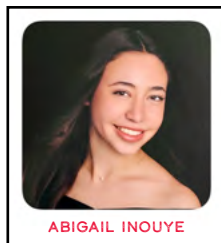
"As I reflect on my experiences, I realize I've achieved my own medium for honoring the memory of my mother, grandparents and community — Asian American Studies. By pursuing this field in the future, I aim to publicize the untold stories of those who deserve a platform of recognition."

ABIGAIL INOUE

JACL Chapter: Ventura County
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial
Scholarship
California Polytechnic State University

NOTABLES:

Abigail Inoue founded the Food Culture Club, creating a safe space on her campus for cultural appreciation and education. She was also a leading member of the Asian Culture Club. In addition, Inoue participated in Nihon Buyo and performed in annual recitals, the Nisei Week parades and Cherry Blossom Festivals. Inoue will be studying architecture at California



ABIGAIL INOUE

Polytechnic State University.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"As part of my international baccalaureate curriculum, I chose to explore my heritage. Over the course of nine months, I planned, researched, revised and submitted a 4,000-word paper exploring the nuances of the Japanese American redress movement.

"As I spent months digging through primary accounts and essays written by historians, what became extremely clear to me was the divide between the Issei, Nisei and Sansei generations in regard to the issue of Japanese American redress.

"For instance, after the internment camps, the Nisei and Sansei generations were focused on assimilating back into society. They often used terms such as *gaman*, which means to "endure or persevere with dignity," and *shikata ga nai*, which translates to "it can't be undone" or "it can't be helped" in order to process their trauma from the camps.

"On the other hand, the Sansei generation, who were born in the camps or shortly after, grew up hearing these terms but never fully understood their parent's emotions behind the phrases.

"Although the Nisei generation attempted to hide their trauma from their kids as a form of protection, their reluctance to speak about this experience largely contributed to the divide between the Nisei and Sansei generations.

"The more I researched this generational divide and disconnect, I began to see signs of the same phenomena happening in my own community. I began to talk to my friends and classmates, and many shared their stories growing up in an immigrant household but not feeling connected to a certain culture or identity.

"Many speak English as their first language and may not speak their parent's native language fluently, or at all. To combat these growing feelings and frustrations of disconnect, I started a Food Culture Club my freshman year. Twice a month, we would research, cook

and present different ethnic foods and their respective culture to our club members. Over these past few years, our club has become one of the largest on campus.

"Through food and fellowship, our club provides students on campus with a safe space to connect, learn and explore their culture, and take pride in sharing their discoveries with the larger community."

MARIKO JESSUP

JACL Chapter: Mount Olympus

Recipient of the Shigeki 'Shake' Ushio Scholarship
University of Montana

NOTABLES:

Mariko Jessup has been a long-time member of the Mount Olympus JACL chapter, volunteering with Memorial Day services, Funderama, the International Peace Garden cleanups, Nikkei Center luncheons and performing traditional Japanese dance. She has also volunteered at the Topaz Museum. In addition, she is vp of the Young Buddhist Assn. at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple and a member of both the Salt Lake and Ogden Buddhist taiko groups. Jessup will be attending the University of Montana.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"Communities aren't simply built through some people getting along. They require time, unity and the embracing of differences to be able to withstand adversity. For me, I see this best demonstrated by my own community in Utah.

"My family exhibits it on the

smallest scale. We hold many different beliefs and have all different interests but manage to be extremely close, nonetheless. That is the first step in creating a strong community — we must believe that our connections mean more than our differences.

"On the next level is the Salt Lake region. Here, the shared culture of dancing, food and music brings us together. The primary event I see this at is the Salt Lake Obon Festival. Everyone contributes to the atmosphere and sense of community. The beat of taiko drums and the colorful sea of dancers are enjoyed by all. It may be a Japanese Buddhist festival, but people of all ethnicities, religions and backgrounds are able to enjoy the culture.

"A community is formed not through the locking away of customs and traditions, but through spreading and sharing them.

"Lastly, there is Utah as a whole. At the Honeyville picnic, there is more food than the town's small Japanese congregation could eat in two days, but it is all gone by the end of one because a group from Salt Lake made the trip. We attend as a way to support the historical community of Japanese Americans in the area.

"Similar situations occur all over the state because while we may not all know each other personally, we are still a part of the greater JA community in Utah; as a community, we are united by the need to preserve our history and culture and support each other's efforts at doing the same.



MARIKO JESSUP



"These elements of a lasting community are found all throughout the nation. With the community ever changing, it is these that keep us bound together. Every community looks different, and there are indefinite numbers of subcommunities within them, but finding value in our culture, history and each other makes the Japanese American community what it is."

AMELIA KAWAGUCHI
JACL Chapter: SELANOCO
Recipient of the Takashi & Yuriko Moriuchi Scholarship
California State University, Long Beach

NOTABLES:

Amelia Kawaguchi was the co-founder and co-president of the Student Advocacy for Change Inc., a nonprofit to raise awareness of various social justice initiatives. She was also the president of the Student Advocates of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. In addition, she organized an annual Day of Dialogue event, bringing speakers to the school campus for presentations about social justice initiatives and historical events. As an ambassador for the Groundswell Human Relation Program, she worked on a variety of community topics. Kawaguchi will be studying prekinesthesiology for physical therapy at California State University, Long Beach.



AMELIA KAWAGUCHI

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"As the Japanese American community grows with each generation and expands to different locations, our community becomes increasingly diverse and complex. Thus, to unite such a diverse group of people with different views and experiences, the first step is to foster compassion, mutual respect and communication within our community.

"It's OK if you don't agree with your neighbors or even your own family — but taking the time to

understand their perspective and acknowledging their experiences and right to a difference in opinion is one of the most important steps when building a community.

"Our community is not only made up of families who've been here for generations, but also many newly immigrated families from Japan. Growing up as a Gosei in Southern California, I used to feel embarrassed and ashamed around my Nisei friends whose parents still spoke Japanese and/or recently immigrated to America.

"I used to feel like I was a 'fake,' participating in 'watered down' Japanese celebrations and traditions. However, after learning about the adversities Japanese Americans faced, I've become proud of and celebrate the differences between JA and Japanese culture.

"I now understand that the 'watered down' culture I once hated was a result of extreme discrimination and persistence, and I'm a champion and product of these experiences.

"I've also met numerous members of the new Issei and Nisei generations that held so much respect and admiration for Japanese Americans after learning about WWII and the internment, eager to learn more about our story. Acknowledging and celebrating our differences will make us a strong, diverse community based on compassion and mutual respect.

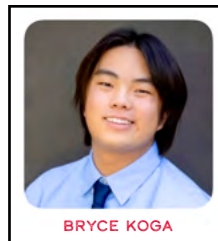
"Over time, the Japanese American community has developed into a blend of many separate but beautifully intertwined cultures, perspectives and experiences. Compassion, respect and communication will not only make our community a force to be reckoned with, but a loving family and safe space that opens its arms to everyone."

BRYCE KOGA
JACL Chapter: San Fernando Valley

Recipient of the Deni & June Uyejima Scholarship
California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo

NOTABLES:

Bryce Koga has been part of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center for five years. He has also served as a panel judge for the UCLA Grand Slam for research presentations and a student researcher for UCLA Physics and Astronomy, doing motor and cooling system design. Koga plans to study mechanical engineering at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo.



BRYCE KOGA

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"In creating a new community, first and foremost, you must find the unifying cause that will bring people together. Perhaps it's the shared goal of civil justice, like JACL, or a common interest. However, perhaps much more important than the logistics of creating a community is finding strong leadership.

"Many community leaders I have met have a warmth and strength to them that makes people gravitate toward them. They are also well-organized and take everyone's views into consideration, creating a safe space, even when people have differing opinions.

"In making people feel heard, members feel valued and empowered to continue contributing to community dialogue. They develop trust and respect through their actions, lending a hand irrespective of affiliation to the community, showing true compassion for all. Such is what I have observed of my mentors and friends at the San Fernando Valley chapter of JACL.

"There is also the question of the people you want to reach in building new communities. Whether the ojiichan climbing tall ladders to trim trees or the many volunteers who devote their time to organizing events and fundraisers in the JA community, every volunteer has

brought enthusiasm, a strong work ethic and a sense of community that not only helped me feel like I belonged, but made me want to further pursue my love of helping and serving others.

"Seeing the dedication of all the volunteers has shown me just how much can be accomplished when we all come together for a common goal. In such a divided world, the unity of the community is truly unique.

"When I see how everyone in the JA community works together, it proves to me the importance of different voices and people from all backgrounds and skill sets to accomplish goals. I find that these hardworking individuals are the most important behind your cause, as once vested in the community dream, will back you and commit to helping in any way they can."

MADISON LEE
JACL Chapter: Florin-Sacramento Valley
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial Scholarship
University of California, Berkeley

NOTABLES:

Madison Lee was vp of the Asian American Association Club, whose mission was to support, uplift and educate all students about diverse Asian groups and cultures. An additional leadership role included the Women's Leadership Association, which creates safe spaces to empower women within her school and community. She also volunteered for the Interact Club and participated in service projects. Lee will be studying integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"For me, having volunteer opportunities available for all ages has been a great way to build a community and connection to the Japanese American community. For example, as a volunteer for the Japanese American Citizens League, I was given the unique opportunity to participate in the grand opening of the 'Uprooted'

exhibit at the California Museum. I met a vast community of dedicated individuals whose mission was to amplify the unheard voices of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated and displaced by Executive Order 9066 during WWII.

"Through this experience, I felt deeply connected to my own Japanese heritage. I also gained valuable insight into my own family's hardships and the discrimination my great-grandparents endured during WWII.

"By speaking openly about these injustices, I feel I can help honor these victims by keeping their stories alive. The feeling of fulfillment and purpose I obtained during this experience has truly given me a different perspective. It stirred within me a newfound understanding and compassion for others, no matter their background.

"This school year, I took the opportunity to share the mission of JACL with other students at my high school that belonged to the California Scholarship Federation. I then took charge and organized multiple volunteers from my high school to assist at the 2024 Annual Nikkei Dog Festival.

"This provided me with a great opportunity to bring new people and generations together and share with them how JACL works to support shared goals within our community. The event was a success, and each volunteer that attended left feeling educated and inspired.

"My sincere hope is that by embracing our individual views within the Japanese American community, we can bridge the gaps between generations and find common ground and strength in our collective identities. With mutual understanding, unity and resilience, we can continue to build a dynamic community and inclusive future to support shared goals together."

MANA NOZUE
JACL Chapter: Florin-Sacramento Valley
Recipient of the Sam & Florice Kuwahara Scholarship



MADISON LEE



CONGRATULATIONS

Amelia Kawaguchi

MR. & MRS. TAKASHI MORIUCHI SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT


SELANOCO-OC JACL IS SO PROUD OF YOU!




Congratulations Madison Lee upon receiving the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial Scholarship!

Thank you to the Florin JACL for your support!

Love, Mom, Dad & JB



*University of California,
Santa Barbara*

NOTABLES:

Mana Nozue is a member of the Florin JACL chapter. She has been an ambassador with the Manzanar Pilgrimage Committee, where she assisted in planning and promoting the pilgrimage to educate others about Japanese American history. Nozue will be attending the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she plans on studying marine science at the College of Creative Studies, whose program permits students to shape their own interdisciplinary course of study. There, she plans to research the threats marine mammals face, how improving/introducing policy can combat these threats and rehabilitation techniques.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"As the Japanese American community continues to grow, it is important to bridge differences between individuals by educating and raising awareness in the community about historical injustices. By exchanging knowledge and experiences through meaningful conversations, we can foster empathy between individuals.

"The first step in solving this issue is to educate the community about historical injustices. When I joined JACL two years ago, I was familiar with Manzanar, as my parents had taught me about it. When I talked about my Manzanar Pilgrimage experience with my friends and classmates, I was shocked that no one knew what Manzanar was. I had to teach them about Japanese American history before I could even talk about my pilgrimage experience.

"Educating others about historical injustices is a crucial step to addressing current and future injustices. If people aren't aware of past injustices, how will they stand up to similar incidents in the future?"

"During Japanese American incar-

ceration, communities were stereotyped according to their appearances or beliefs and unfairly discriminated against according to these stereotypes. Japanese American incarceration was considered a major violation of civil rights caused by wartime hysteria, and the same xenophobic discrimination is being exercised against Middle Eastern communities decades later.

"My experience as a Manzanar Pilgrimage Ambassador has helped me understand the importance of education, taught me how to unite individuals and inspired my commitment to education and activism.

"This experience turned history from words on a page into an emotional connection that strengthened my commitment to ensuring such injustices never happen again.

"To share my pilgrimage experience, I posted on social media and had discussions with my friends. People who saw my posts contacted me, wanting to learn about my ambassador role and the pilgrimage. When friends had questions relating to Japanese American incarceration, they came to me. I also inspired one of my friends to join the pilgrimage."

ROMARE ONISHI

**JACL Chapter: Twin Cities
Recipient of the Paul & Katherine Ohtaki Scholarship
University of Chicago**

NOTABLES:

Romare Onishi is the vice chair for the JACL Midwest Youth District Council. He worked closely with the Twin Cities' JACL Education Committee to create an educational opportunity for high school students, including a research opportunity with the Minnesota Historical Society to analyze primary sources from the wartime Japanese American experience. Onishi will

attend the University of Chicago, where he plans to major in English literature and classical studies.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"This culture of a left-leaning curriculum that confirmed much of my political beliefs was peeled back in my junior year of high school when I read excerpts of Milton Friedman's 'Capitalism and Freedom' in my economics class.

"Reading Friedman's words, trying to make sense of them, and eventually advocating for his claims in a paper was a humbling experience for me. I understood the root of conservative thinking from an economic lens — something that had seemed so foreign and blasphemous to me beforehand.

"I wasn't convinced or moved to think any differently about my politics or what I truly believed. And it was this realization that I finally understood what my father had been trying to tell me: The ability to think beyond myself and my own world — my own existence — is a massive strength.

"I see these lessons as incredibly relevant to the Japanese American community in the present day.

"For starters, the Japanese American experience throughout history is still a significant historical event that is glossed over too often. In my high school U.S. History class, we covered topics from the time period and the events that took place for two days.

"As the Japanese American community grows and evolves, I feel that it becomes ever more important to understand our history and our complicated relationship with the U.S. government. Not only does this shared understanding foster a strong sense of community, as I have found in my local JACL community, but it also helps us understand other people beyond our own existence and, perhaps, beyond our own community.

"I think that uniting people

around this shared understanding and a common goal of spreading this knowledge is important and a strong foundation for any community. But equally as important is listening and understanding divergent viewpoints.

"Why do people gloss over the Japanese American experience? What other communities are there to focus on? Throughout my life, I have found that stepping outside of my identity and the beliefs that I hold true to myself have been enlightening moments. Seeking to understand everyone's perspectives is key to fostering a strong community. Only then can we unite around shared goals to move forward as a collective body."

CHARLOTTE SANDFORD

**JACL Chapter: Berkeley
Recipient of the CWO-4 Mitsugi Murakami Kasai Scholarship
Colgate University**

NOTABLES:

Charlotte Sanford was a board member of the Berkeley JACL chapter and produced the monthly "Berkeley Blast," a digital newsletter that allows members to get involved with preserving cultural traditions and history in Berkeley. She also partnered with organizations including J-Sei, Nikkei Student Union and the Berkeley Buddhist Temple to promote cultural events, historical commemorations and community gatherings. Sanford will be attending Colgate University, where she plans on majoring in Asian studies.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"I have always been interested in the connection between the past and the present. In particular, how communities affected by historical harm preserve stories to be passed on to future generations.

"Learning about my own family history has inspired me to elevate similar narratives at school. In my Asian American Studies class, our 'Hidden Histories' final project focused on lesser-known narratives of landmarks in the Bay Area connected to events in Asian American history.

"I presented the history of a seemingly unassuming apartment building in Berkeley that used to be the office of a doctor who provided for the Japanese American community. I had learned from my great-aunt this was the same office where she and her siblings received medical care before their incarceration.

"My presentation inspired my peers to incorporate a family story

into their presentation, and this helped to create a community environment where we could all educate and learn from each other.

"One classmate talked about how their family attended services at a temple formerly used to store belongings during the incarceration. Another told a story about a restaurant their grandparent loved that had to be closed when the relocation began.

"I realized that though we all had different family connections to our respective landmarks, our class community shared a goal to elevate these narratives. Preservative efforts ensure that the history behind these stories is not left in the past but carried forward for future generations.

"I produced a special issue of the digital "Berkeley Blast" newsletter promoting commemorative events for the 2025 Day of Remembrance. These events included an exhibit at the Berkeley Historical Society — 'Roots, Removal & Resistance: Japanese Americans in Berkeley' — that I visited while doing research for my project. Reading about lesser-known narratives and sharing them with my Asian American Studies class made me feel like I am continuing my family narrative of our American experience. It tied together my family history, my AA classwork and my JACL involvement in a profound and meaningful way."

TOWAKO TAMANO

**JACL Chapter: Boise Valley
Recipient of the Hanayagi Rokumie Scholarship
University of Tokyo, Japan**

NOTABLES:

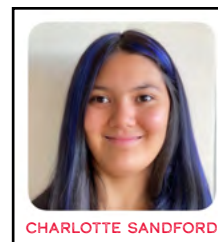
Towako Tamano has been engaging with her Boise Valley JACL chapter in the last year, attending board meetings, visiting the Minidoka Exhibit and listening to stories from family members of those incarcerated in the camps and attending the chapter's Mochitsuki event. Tamano plans on studying environmental science at the University of Tokyo in Japan.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

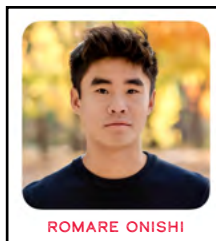
"Spending summers in Kofu, Japan, helped me realize that even among Japanese peers, no two bentos were the same. Through my own, my mother expressed her individuality — each piece was intentionally and thoughtfully prepared, her version of a daily love note. This love gave me the courage to celebrate my own uniqueness.



MANA NOZUE



CHARLOTTE SANDFORD



ROMARE ONISHI



TOWAKO TAMANO



Madison Lee

Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara
Memorial Scholarship

Congratulations to our
**2025 JACL National
Scholarship Awardees!**



Mana Nozue

Sam & Florice Kuwahara
Memorial Scholarship



capstone research on “Takuichi Fujii’s Artwork in Minidoka: A Historical Art Analysis Study,” which earned a special recognition from the College Board. Walsh plans to study sociology at the University of Oregon.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“My family and I drove down a straight road, through fields of open farmland in southern Idaho, for what felt like forever. We were in the middle of the hot, dusty desert when we finally arrived at Minidoka.

“My first trip to Minidoka was seven years ago in the summer of 2017. Minidoka is only a couple hours southeast of where I live in Boise, and yet I couldn’t understand how a place like this was in the same state where I lived, let alone that it ever existed and that members of my family had lived there.

“In addition to my personal connection to Minidoka through my family, my frustration with the lack of recognition of Minidoka in our history led me to want to learn and teach others more about it.

“During my junior year of high school, I took AP Capstone and chose to focus on Minidoka. More specifically, I concentrated on Takuichi Fujii, a Japanese artist who was incarcerated there. I studied two collections of his art, each with its own unique purpose.

“The first was found in a yearbook-style document called the Minidoka Interlude, which captured the incarceration experience in a light and surface-level way. The second was Fujii’s private illustrated diary, the “Minidoka XX,” that he kept throughout the war.

“I decided to compare these two works of art through the Japanese cultural beliefs of *honne* and *tatemae*. *Honne* represents someone’s true feelings vs. *tatemae*, which is what someone expresses to the public. In a way, I think my Japanese heritage is my *honne*. My innermost thoughts and emotions have a Japanese influence.

“Meanwhile, my *tatemae* is my Irish and Croatian heritage. It is what people see when they

look at me.

“My research sparked my interest in getting more involved with Minidoka and led me to take on an internship at Minidoka this past summer. During my visit last summer, Minidoka was still this dry and desolate place, but now the idea of it is more clear to me.

“I no longer feel as lost or confused as I did seven years ago. I understand that my connection to Minidoka is what fuels my interest in human rights and social justice.”

KEITH YASUMURA

JACL Chapter: Berkeley
Recipient of the Paul & Katherine Ohtaki Scholarship
University of California, Berkeley

NOTABLES:

Keith Yasumura was recruited by the College Board to lead an online SAT Math bootcamp. He has been a STEM tutor for the Fusion Academy in algebra, calculus and chemistry. In addition, he interned

with the East Bay Municipal Utility District in hydraulic engineering and gained real-world industry experience collecting samples and data for water safety. Yasumura will be studying applied mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

“Setting the precedent and leading by example to show that all voices are accepted is vital. Leadership needs to demonstrate having an open mind and promote diverse points of views with its interactions with its members.

“I found this concept to be highly needed at my high school. Given the high interest in STEM at Fusion Academy, in the 10th grade, I co-created and led the Philosophy Club to broaden the perspective of the school community.

“I found that in every discussion, members offered invaluable insights based on their individual backgrounds and skills. It got people to build upon other people’s ideas and think out of the box to improve ideas or solutions. I could

see how valuable these types of meetings could be when developing technology but also being socially responsible.

“Over time, I could see how we left Fusion Academy a better community. The meetings were very unifying. . . . Sharing viewpoints often shaped or even changed people’s worldviews, especially when debating ethical dilemmas.

“I found this aspect most rewarding in bringing people together to explore complex issues together as a team, develop a richer understanding and develop critical thinking skills. Through this process, I gained the skills of being the ‘devil’s advocate’ to help drive healthy debate. I also learned how to de-escalate heated arguments by reminding people that we were all on the same team.

“I believe these skills will make me an effective college student, especially in research, by encouraging people to think critically, embrace opposing points of view and broaden their viewpoints toward creating a better product, especially in advancing technology.

“As the Japanese American society is changing and new Japanese American communities are established, future leaders must accept and promote diverse viewpoints from a broader spectrum of members.”

an interest in cancer research and wishes to approach this from an electrical engineering stance.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“When I think of building a community, I think of the group of friends that I have now. If you ever were to ask me, ‘If you could go back in time and relive high school, would you?’ My answer would probably be a firm, ‘No.’ The reason for my answer is that I realized too late that the people I considered my friends and community in high school weren’t the amazing people I had always thought they were.

“So, what happened next, once you moved to college?” Well, I built a new community of old and new friends, bringing together an awesome and supportive group of people who I still often see today. Now, this doesn’t mean that we all agree about everything or get along all the time either.

“We are a group of uniquely different people, who all come from a variety of backgrounds. Quite a few of us grew up in Utah, while many others also grew up outside of Utah and even outside of the U.S. Yet, despite the stark differences in background, we are all able to come together as one group.

“It is this experience that allows me to say that community events and activities must be the foremost priority in order to build a community and bring people with different views together around shared goals. These activities need to be designed in a way that appeals to the community they are uniting.

“My friends and I all found common ground over food. Almost every weekend, we would all go to Dee’s Diner late at night. This diner was by no means a fancy restaurant, and the food was outstandingly average. What brought us together was simply having a ritual that we all created together, one that has lasted for multiple years.

“Everyone can find common ground in something, and for us, that was food at Dee’s. Coming to-

gether as a group to do something as simple as this allowed us to get to know each other in a casual setting. There was no need for any facades, and we all felt comfortable enough to be ourselves. We have all laughed, argued and gone through the entire spectrum of emotions together.”

REMY KAGEYAMA

JACL Chapter: New York
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Scholarship
Cornell University

NOTABLES:

Remy Kageyama is a very active member of the New York chapter of the JACL, in addition to serving as the NY/SC youth chair and National Board member. They also serve on the *Pacific Citizen’s* Editorial Board. Kageyama has also participated in the 2024 JACL/OCA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Currently, at Cornell, Kageyama is the president of the Watermargin Cooperative, which is a historic organization whose mission is social justice education. In addition to their work in social justice, Kageyama is pursuing a senior honor thesis and has made the Dean’s List

for all semesters.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“My vision for JACL has been and continues to be for the organization to increase its investment in its youth and diversify its membership so that we CAN work toward building community and bringing people with different views together around shared goals.

“I think that JACL has historically been very progressive in its support of youth members, but even in the short time I have been involved in the organization, I have seen youth membership and participation dwindle to a concerning level.

“I think that this is largely a result of the ideological divide I wrote about above, with youth members leaving the JACL to find more fulfillment in grassroots organizations and more pan-Asian advocacy groups, including Nikkei Progressives and OCA.



KEITH YASUMURA



REMY KAGEYAMA

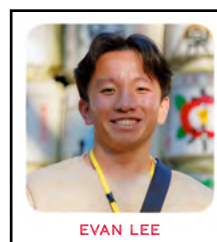
UNDER-GRADUATE

EVAN LEE

JACL Chapter: Mount Olympus
Recipient of the Alice Yuriko Endo Scholarship
University of Utah

NOTABLES:

Evan Lee is a member of the Mount Olympus chapter of JACL and is currently enrolled at the University of Utah as an electrical engineering major. He has volunteered at several Mount Olympus chapter events and was a participant in December 2024’s Kakehashi Program. He has



EVAN LEE



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“Youth are our future — without youth, our organization cannot survive. And in order to retain youth engagement, I think JACL needs to provide more opportunities for youth to participate in direct action and partner with/build strong relationships with these newer grassroots organizations.

“Furthermore, if JACL wants to continue claiming that it is the oldest and largest AAPI civil rights organization in the nation, we need more AANHPI representation. When OCA pivoted and became more pan-Asian, their youth involvement flourished. Their interns consistently consist of South Asians, Pacific Islanders, East Asians, Southeast Asians, Queer and Trans Asians, etc., and as a result, their retention rate and connections to other organizations has flourished.

“By investing in diversity, both by working more closely in collaboration with other Queer and BIPOC orgs (for convention workshops, youth summits, etc.) and encouraging more diverse membership within our own, we would be investing in our youth and in our general membership. And investing in our youth and general membership is an investment in our organization’s and community’s shared future.”



MAXWELL MAMISHEV

MAXWELL MAMISHEV

JACL Chapter: Chicago
Recipient of the Dr. Thomas T. Yatabe Scholarship
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

NOTABLES:

Maxwell Mamishev is currently enrolled at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign as an electrical engineering major. He has participated in many engineering fairs and conferences, notably with the IEEE.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“I have not yet participated in JACL activities at the chapter, district or national level. That said, I believe the work I’m already doing aligns closely with JACL’s mission, and I am now in a position to actively contribute — both as a student and as a professional working across cities where JACL has a strong presence.

“Up to this point, my work in the Japanese space has come through technical and cultural projects, not organized civic involvement. But that’s changing. Now that I’ve built research experience, cross-national collaborations and peer mentorship skills, I want to use those to support the JACL’s student outreach and U.S.-Japan programming.

“I’m especially well positioned to do this because my interest in Japan isn’t casual or inherited. My father is originally from Ukraine and my mother from Poland. I did not grow up in a Japanese-speaking household. I chose to study Japanese in high school and college because of a growing interest in the culture and language.

“I’ve since passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), Level N3, which certifies intermediate reading and listening comprehension and requires mastery over grammar and concepts foreign to English speakers like conjugation, 助詞, 助動詞 and over 600 常用漢字. I’ve also completed the foreign language requirement at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Japanese and am currently pursuing a minor in East Asian languages and cultures.

“During my summer internships, I could work with the local JACL chapters, organizing events close to my technical interests. In Seattle, I’d like to support younger students who are just beginning to explore their own cultural identity and career direction. And in San Francisco, starting in June 2025, I hope to visit the national office and learn how I can support national-level initiatives going forward.

“I’m not applying to JACL as someone looking for a starting point. I’m already doing the work. I’m looking for ways to make that work part of something bigger — and I believe JACL is the right place to do that.”

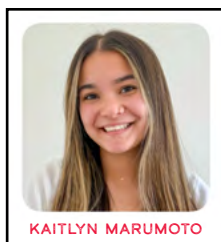
KAITLYN MARUMOTO

JACL Chapter: Salt Lake City
Recipient of the Daniel & Irene Iritani Scholarship
University of Utah

NOTABLES:

Kaitlyn Marumoto and her family have been volunteering with the Salt Lake City chapter of the JACL doing spring cleanup events at the International Peace Gardens for many years. A couple of years ago, Marumoto became the youth representative and co-chair of the Social Media committee for the Salt Lake City chapter. She helps the chapter by using her talents in graphic design for its information flyers and participates at the board meetings. Marumoto is currently attending the University of Utah pursuing a graduate degree in education and credential to teach History and government at the high school level.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:



KAITLYN MARUMOTO

“Some people see change as a bad thing, but I don’t think that’s true. Change is a chance for learning and growth if the opportunity is used for good. Right now, the United States is a very divided place, especially politically.

“I feel that this sort of change is not in everyone’s best interest. Positive change takes time, and we need to have patience that the difficulties we are feeling right now will benefit us in the future.

“This is why organizations like the JACL are so important. They give people hope! At the end of the day, I think something that we can all agree upon is that we want what’s best for the country.

“The difficult part is that we all have different expectations of what the ‘best’ thing for our country means. This is where we need to compromise. Compromise means that each party needs to yield in some way, which may not always happen, but communication and respect must always be at the forefront of conversations.

“When it comes to politics, it may seem like the average citizens have no power over legislation, but this is so untrue. I want to encourage young people to vote. We need to elect leaders that represent us so that we have equality in the government, and we can hope that the elected representative will listen to what their constituents have to say.”

JARED NAKAHARA

JACL Chapter: Greater Los Angeles
Recipient of the Shigeru Nakahira Scholarship
University of California, Los Angeles

NOTABLES:

Jared Nakahara’s involvement with the JACL came about through his leadership position in Southern California’s Intercollegiate Nikkei Council and as a member of UCLA’s Nikkei Student Union NSU. When he realized that most NSUs did not interact with their local JACL chapters, he decided that needed to change. Nakahara worked closely with members of the Greater Los Angeles chapter to put together programs like Nikkei Professionals and the Young Adult group. As the president of the INC, he was instrumental in bridging NSU with local JACL chapters to form partnerships that have continued to flourish. In addition to his community involvement, Nakahara is currently a premed student at UCLA.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“My commitment to the

Japanese American community also intersects with my path as a premed student. As someone on the premedical track at UCLA, I’ve been involved in outreach projects through my premed club that focus on addressing health-care disparities within the Japanese American community — especially in regions with little JA representation among doctors and providers.

“We’ve hosted educational events, health fairs and resource drives aimed at increasing health literacy and access to culturally sensitive care. This work has shown me how important it is to have providers who understand and reflect the communities they serve.

“Ultimately, every aspect of my involvement — from INC leadership to cultural storytelling to health-care outreach — stems from

one goal: building a stronger, more connected and more empowered Japanese American community.

“I’ve seen what happens when you give young people the tools and support they need to lead.

I’ve watched isolated students find belonging, once-fragmented chapters unite and new NSUs come to life. I’ve witnessed the ripple effects of meaningful collaboration — not only in the relationships we’ve formed, but in

the leaders we’re becoming.

“Community building is not about creating a single vision — it’s about weaving together many voices. It’s about honoring where we come from, while building where we want to go. And above all, it’s about ensuring that every person, especially the next generation, has a place to belong, lead and thrive.



JARED NAKAHARA

JACL CHICAGO CHAPTER

Japanese American Citizens League

JACL CHICAGO CONGRATULATES OUR NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:

Maxwell Mamishev

Eli Nishimura

JACL CHICAGO CONGRATULATES OUR CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:

Sanjay Ganesh

Sofia Ozaki

Jake Rohde

Sydney Terada



"As our community continues to grow and change, I'm committed to continuing this work — through medicine, through cultural engagement and through every opportunity I have to uplift others and create spaces where we can all rise together."

ELIJAH NISHIMURA
JACL Chapter: Chicago
Recipient of the Saburo Kido
Scholarship
DePaul University

NOTABLES:

Elijah Nishimura is a member of the Chicago chapter of the JACL and is currently pursuing animation at DePaul University. He is currently the MDC youth representative for the JACL NY/SC and has been heavily involved in both the MDC as well as within the community of Chicago.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"Communities are built through the understanding and connections created through our experiences. Even if our experiences and goals are different, it is important to sympathize and be open to opinions that are not your own. This idea is especially important for the growing Nikkei community.

"From my experience, safe spaces and open conversations are

important aspects of a productive community. I was a participant in a workshop called 'Intergenerational Conversations,' where people of all ages discussed their experiences as Nikkei.

"I was fortunate enough to talk to people between the ages of 18-96. It was a powerful experience hearing from a wide range of ages because it helped me to better understand the different perspectives of the Nikkei experience.

"It is rare that older generations are willing to speak about their experiences, considering that they grew up in a generation where being Nikkei was not something to be proud of. I feel that these spaces bring in older generations because

of the welcoming and accepting environment that these spaces present. This is why giving people a platform to voice their opinions is important in establishing a community with diverse backgrounds.

"It is also important that when we have these conversations, we maintain a level of respect and receptiveness. . . . The ideas of collaboration and connections have been huge influences for the type of work I want to do as the Midwest District youth representative for the JACL.

"One way I want to implement these values is to establish a JACL youth board in the Midwest. I recognize that I do not represent everyone in the Nikkei community, and a youth board would allow me to gain more insight in terms of the programming I do in my district.

"My goal as the Midwest District youth representative is to not only strengthen the relationships of the JACL, but [also] expand the JACL's message to as many individuals/organizations as possible.

"The Japanese American experience has always been anything but consistent. Whether it is by location, generation or exposure to Japanese culture, there are not two stories that are exactly the same."

LAURYN SUMIMOTO
JACL Chapter: San Fernando Valley
Recipient of the Michio & Namiko Suzuki Scholarship
Georgetown University

NOTABLES:

Lauryn Sumimoto is part of the San Fernando Valley chapter of the JACL and is currently studying at Georgetown University as a healthcare management and policy major. She has been extremely involved with her community and school, serving on commissions and committees addressing mental health, youth tobacco and vaping use and other health concerns.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"Building and strengthening the Japanese American community

requires a balance of honoring cultural traditions while adapting to the evolving needs of new generations. As Japanese American populations shift and expand into new regions, fostering meaningful connections becomes essential to preserving our heritage and advancing shared goals.

"For me, community building starts with intergenerational collaboration. Creating spaces where older generations can share cultural traditions, language and history with younger members ensures that our heritage is not just remembered but actively lived.

"Whether through mentorship programs, cultural workshops or local events, bridging generational gaps helps sustain a strong, unified identity. My experience as a teaching assistant at Jan Ken Po Gakko Cultural Camp reinforced this idea.

"Working with 1st-6th grade students, I helped teach Japanese language, math, reading and cultural traditions through hands-on activities.

"By engaging children in these lessons, I saw firsthand how early exposure fosters a strong connection to heritage and strengthens cultural pride.

"At the same time, inclusive leadership and open dialogue are key to bringing people together, even when perspectives differ.



LAURYN SUMIMOTO

Encouraging diverse voices in community organizations and fostering respectful discussions allow us to find common ground. By focusing on shared priorities — such as cultural preservation, advocacy or public service — we can create a collective vision that unites rather than divides.

"Lastly, leveraging technology and media plays a major role in connecting Japanese American communities across different

locations. Digital platforms make it easier than ever to engage with one another through virtual events, online storytelling and social advocacy. Whether it's amplifying voices through social media or organizing national initiatives, technology helps preserve and expand our reach.

"Through my work at Jan Ken Po Gakko and my broader community involvement, I've learned that bringing people together around shared goals requires a balance of education, communication and action.

"By blending tradition with innovation, fostering meaningful conversations and prioritizing collective action, we can build a thriving, connected Japanese American community — one that grows stronger with each generation while staying true to its roots."

GRADUATE

BRUCE ARAO
JACL Chapter: Watsonville/Santa Cruz
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Scholarship
University of California, Berkeley

NOTABLES:

Bruce Arao has been an active member of the Japanese American community in Watsonville and Monterey, Calif. He represented the Watsonville/Santa Cruz chapter of JACL



BRUCE ARAO

by serving as the youth chair for the Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific District and attended the JACL National Conventions in 2022-24 as the NCWNP District youth representative. Arao also became one of the first co-chairs of the NCWNP District Youth Board. At the National Convention in 2022, he was instrumental in spearheading fundraising efforts to secure a \$2,000 donation for the NY/SC National Convention fundraiser. Arao is currently pursuing a dual master's program in public

policy and public health at the University of California, Berkeley.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

"Traditional JACL programming may not resonate with younger generations who engage with cultural identity and social justice differently than their predecessors. The DYB and JAYA (Japanese American Youth Alliance) focus on creating events that unite the community, educate about JA culture and history and cultivate leadership all through a contemporary lens that addresses current interests and concerns.

"JACL should dedicate resources for youth-designed events and initiatives, even when these differ from traditional approaches. This might include digital storytelling projects, social media campaigns or intersectional programming that connect JA experiences with contemporary social movements.

"From my leadership with the DYB, I've learned that JACL is a welcoming community ready for more youth leaders. The organization doesn't lack willing mentors or interested youth —

it needs structured pathways connecting them and removing barriers to participation.

"By establishing youth boards in each district, providing financial support for youth involvement, building cross-organizational networks, empowering youth-led programming and creating mentorship pathways, JACL can ensure that younger generations will assume responsibility for preserving and advancing Japanese American history, culture and

community relations.

"The success of JAYA and the DYB Sponsorship Program demonstrates that when youth feel welcomed and recognize the value of the JA community, they eagerly step into leadership roles, securing the future of our shared heritage.

"Public service in health policy offers the opportunity to address fundamental inequities that affect millions of lives. While the challenges are substantial, my academic training, professional experience

and unwavering commitment have prepared me to contribute meaningfully to building healthier, more equitable communities through reformed public systems and policies. This is not simply my career goal, it is my personal commitment to advancing health as a civil right for all Americans."

AIKO DZIKOWSKI
JACL Chapter: Venice West-L.A.
Recipient of the Kenji Kajiwara Scholarship

Liberty
Lost... Lessons in
Loyalty

Watsonville-Santa Cruz Japanese American Citizens League

WATSONVILLE-SANTA CRUZ JACL
Proudly Congratulates

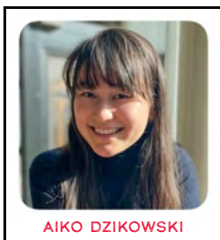
BRUCE ARAO
Awarded the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara
Memorial Scholarship &
*W-SC JACL's Sako * Mito * Kitayama*
Memorial Scholarships

MALLORY SHEEHAN
*Awarded the Sako * Mito * Kitayama*
Memorial Scholarships

University of California, Los Angeles

NOTABLES:

Aiko Dzikowski is currently pursuing her PhD at UCLA in linguistic anthropology. Dzikowski is a former NY/SC at-large member, a Leadership Summit and Kakehashi alumni, a Kansha History Project participant and has been heavily involved with several local Japanese American communities such as those in Chicago and Los Angeles.



AIKO DZIKOWSKI

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“As a PhD student and future educator in Japanese American studies, I am passionate about building community and bringing people with different views together. . . . Having grown up in a small town in Pennsylvania with few other Asian Americans, I believe I serve as an example of how separate communities can build connections and unify around shared goals.

“My public school system barely addressed the history of World War II incarceration, and there were few opportunities to take part in Japanese American culture and community. As a second- and fourth-generation Japanese American, I had longed for a sense of belonging — which I finally found through the JACL.

“During my time with the JACL NY/SC, JACL/OCA Leadership Summit, Kakehashi Project and Kansha Project, I learned the impact of bringing Japanese Americans from all over the country together through leadership programming.

“With an emphasis on Japanese American history — and on the experiences of those who were forced to assimilate into hegemonic society both then and now — I believe educating new and diverse generations is key to bringing people together around the shared goal of preserving history and fighting injustice, no matter where you come from or how you identify.

“By continuing to organize ways for our diverse community to gather in pursuit of shared goals, the JACL would be able to provide for the diverse needs of the people it serves — both in Japanese American spaces and areas such as my hometown, where there remains little to no AANHPI representation.

“Now in the third year of my PhD program at UCLA, I continue to feel impacted by my educational experiences through the JACL and affiliated programs. My growing knowledge of Japanese American

history and culture has inspired my graduate research, which pertains to language and identity within the Japanese American community, and I aim to highlight Japanese American history and the ways in which it continues to impact our understandings and experiences of race, gender, transnationalism and its various intersections.

“Someday, I hope to share my knowledge and findings by becoming a professor of anthropology and Japanese American studies. As such, I am committed to preserving the history, culture and community of Japanese Americans — and bringing people together around the shared goal of safeguarding civil and human rights for all.”

MATTHEW KOJIMA
JACL Chapter: Berkeley
Recipient of the Railroad & Mine Workers Scholarship
Boston University School of Medicine

NOTABLES:

Matthew Kojima has been highly involved with enzyme research, providing health resources to underserved individuals and volunteering with medical programs. He is now enrolled at Boston University School of Medicine. He is part of the Berkeley chapter, where he has been involved in chapter activities for five years.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“As we strive to build a stronger community, it is also important to acknowledge that having a diversity of opinions can sometimes cause conflict. Unfortunately, I have heard of times where youth have felt ignored when expressing opinions on issues that are important to them and then feel discouraged and choose to become less involved. For this reason, it is crucial to create spaces to promote dialogue between Japanese Americans of different generations.

“While each generation may have different ways of thinking and have different priorities, I believe that talking through our differences while discovering what we have in common is a great way to strengthen us as a whole.

“For example, the NCWNP District Youth Board hosted several intergenerational potlucks over the past few years. These events were really well-received, and many people felt like they better understood one another and left feeling a stronger bond to the community.

“Following up on this, the

Berkeley JACL chapter invited UC Berkeley college students and alumni to join our Civil Rights Committee to write resolutions, sign on to letters and discuss ways to get more people engaged in advocacy.

“As a result, we have a very multigenerational committee, with each person bringing in their unique perspectives and ideas for causes that we can support. Furthermore, we are now looking to start a social media page for our committee and increase engagement among young people.

“During this past Leadership Summit, I have learned about the influence that JACL has as an organization and the connections that have been built with other groups aligned with their values. Furthermore, with the National JACL pushing for things like the Neighbors Not Enemies Act, backing a lawsuit against DOGE, speaking out in support of DEI policies and supporting a

ceasefire in the Middle East, I believe that JACL is fighting for important causes that would make civically engaged youth excited to join.

“However, in this effort, it is likely that some may have different viewpoints on policies and values, which can cause disagreement. Nevertheless, I hope that in this important time, the various generations of Japanese Americans can listen to each other, compromise to create new ideas and help our community grow in a healthy and sustainable way.”

ARIANA MONMA
JACL Chapter: Arizona
Recipient of the Dr. Kiyoshi Sonoda Scholarship
Midwestern University

NOTABLES:

Ariana Monma has been involved with the Arizona chapter of the JACL for two years. She is also a past Kakehashi Project and Kansha History Project participant.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“Having a diverse number of events is important to draw people of different backgrounds. JACL does so well with this already by having workshops for those who like something more interactive, keynote speakers for auditory learners, family-friendly events like festivals or bowling clubs or even collaborative events like the Kansha Project for people interested in service-related events.

“The Kansha History Project, in particular, made me realize what a

strong magnet it was for Japanese Americans. While recently going through response cards for a Kansha event, I found that many people from all different generations expressed their interest in the culture of Japanese American farming or the drive to preserve its history.

“I thought it was very heartwarming to see people of different ages and backgrounds from all over the country express their interest and personal feelings on learning about Japanese American history, even if their family was not specifically impacted by that branch the project is focusing on.

“As stated, the Japanese American community is continually growing and evolving. I believe that finding that delicate balance between embracing the new while retaining the old is crucial when looking to grow such a dynamic community such as the Japanese American one.

“Just looking at each generation, there are unique cultural features to each of them. For example, my father grew up in a heavily populated Japanese community in Chicago under his immigrant mom and American father. He got to experience a lot of Japanese culture straight from a whole community of immigrants and their kin. Like many others of his generation, he moved out of the city to start a family.

“Growing up, I was not exposed to as much Japanese culture as he did. Instead, I learned most of what I know through my grandparents, parents and the events my family would attend closer to the city.

“During my participation in the Kakehashi Project, I discussed how my generation has the sharp trend in mixed-Japanese Americans. As each new generation forms, I think we can expect to see a continual

trend of Japanese Americans who have at least one other cultural heritage.

“Having a difference in cultures does not have to mean a difference in views or goals. There are many

other minority groups that could share a lot of the same values and viewpoints as Japanese Americans do.

“For example, Hispanic people are currently facing unjust discrimination and persecution, something I think a lot of incarcerated Japanese Americans and their families can sympathize with. Finding commonalities with more diverse groups through means such as the ones I mentioned earlier can only help maintain and proliferate our community.”

MATTHEW NAKATOMI
JACL Chapter: Sacramento
Recipient of the Chiyoko & Thomas Shimazaki Scholarship
Western University of Health Sciences, College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific

NOTABLES:

Matthew Nakatomi is part of the Sacramento chapter of the JACL and has been involved with the organization for four years. His family has long been intertwined with the JACL, all the way back to his grandparents in the

Lodi chapter. He will be attending Western University of Health Sciences, pursuing a doctorate of osteopathic medicine.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“In a time of division and rising acts of cultural and ethnic hate, we risk undoing the progress made toward inclusivity and acceptance in the U.S. As new generations emerge and communities shift, the Japanese American community is also evolving, becoming more diverse in its locations, identities and perspectives.

“To build a strong and united community, we must acknowledge our differences, embrace change and create spaces where cultural exchange is welcomed.

“For me, food and fishing have been my bridges to connection. My first exposure to cultural exchange wasn’t in a formal setting — it was in the kitchen at the Sacramento Buddhist Church during food bazaars.

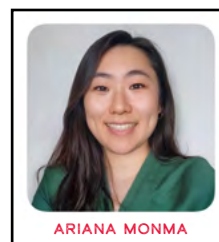
“As a child, I volunteered



MATTHEW NAKATOMI



MATTHEW KOJIMA



ARIANA MONMA



JACL
ARIZONA CHAPTER

Congratulates

Ariana Monma

Recipient of the Dr. Kiyoshi Sonoda Scholarship



alongside Nisei volunteers, watching them carefully prepare dishes that had been passed down for generations. I remember standing on a stool, learning how to bread vegetables and seafood with panko, the crispy Japanese breadcrumb that would later play an unexpected role in my own cultural exchange.

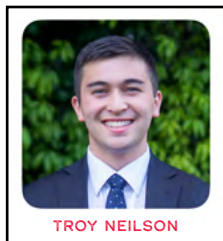
“One of my most memorable experiences happened at a fishing camp in Tennessee, where the local community hosted a traditional fish fry. Typically, these events relied on cornmeal batter, a Southern staple.

“When it was my turn to contribute, I decided to share a piece of my heritage by using panko instead. I wasn’t sure how my spin on tradition would be received, but to my surprise, everyone loved it. People kept coming back for more, asking about the crispy texture and where I had learned to make it. It

sparked conversations — not just about food, but about my background, my experiences and the shared love of fishing that had brought us all together.

“That moment reinforced a powerful lesson: Sharing your culture can feel intimidating, but it’s often the key to building real connections. In that small lakeside community, people weren’t focused on what made me different — they were excited to learn and experience something new. Within this community, the seemingly simple act of being both proud of our heritage and welcoming to others turned curiosity into appreciation and acceptance.”

TROY NEILSON
JACL Chapter: National Associate



TROY NEILSON

Recipient of the Dr. Newton K. Wesley (Uyesugi) Scholarship
Pacific University College of Optometry

NOTABLES:

Troy Neilson is an avid volunteer, having joined an Optometric Outreach Trip to Vietnam. He has many awards, some of which are the Robert Yolton PhD, OD Visual Perception Award and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. He has served as a Japanese family history facilitator in Fukuoka, Japan, and he supports Pacific University students by helping translate to Japanese.

PERSONAL

STATEMENT:

“People underestimate the importance of sharing culture. My great-grandparents lived in a time when being themselves,

being Japanese caused them to be interned, and they came to feel shameful about their heritage, their culture and their traditions.

“The world is more accepting now, and places like the United States are becoming more diverse. People come from a variety of places with a variety of different cultural backgrounds. Those backgrounds do not go away simply because they move to a different place. As we are excited about the cultures, customs and traditions of others, we create a climate to share our traditions and build up all cultural communities.

“I will share a small example of this. During New Year’s, I invited my two colleagues and their partners to the JACL Mochi Smash. . . . I spoke to my colleagues about how I typically make mochi with my grandmother on New Year’s Eve and how much I like red bean paste.

“A few days ago, one of those colleagues brought me some anko-filled mochi. He shared with me that after attending the JACL mochi activity, him and his wife had begun trying Asian restaurants, and they had been to the large Japanese market in the area for the first time. . . .

“I share this experience because I think we forget about the importance of sharing our culture and connecting with others.

“I think it is important to have allies in the community that may not have the same cultural heritage (peoples that don’t have Japanese heritage) and that it’s open to everyone.

“As we foster this inclusivity, we broaden our community, prevent the disappearance of Nikkei culture and help grow a sense of identity for those with Japanese heritage who never got a chance to learn about their roots.”

CREATIVE ARTS

QUINHA FARIA

JACL Chapter: Portland
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Scholarship
Bard Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts

NOTABLES:

Quinha Faria draws on her multidisciplinary experience to connect with people and the world. After becoming a registered nurse in 2015, she went on to receive her MFA from Bard Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts in 2025, among her many accomplishments. She is a regular volunteer at Ikoi no Kai, a Nikkei senior community center in Portland and the co-founder of the Philadelphia Packaging Company, “a queer artist collective that uplifts small businesses and local economies” that launched the archive project “A Phonebook” in Philadelphia in 2020. She was a member of the Philadelphia chapter from 2020-23 and is currently a member of the Portland chapter.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“At its heart, community is about care — ongoing, intentional and shaped by the people within it. No matter where I have lived or what path I have pursued, I remain deeply committed to my community.

“This commitment is evident in my work as an Emergency Room nurse and as an artist with a dedicated social practice. Through

both fields, I have witnessed firsthand how caring and showing up — whether through medical intervention, creative engagement or community organizing — can be powerful forces for change.

“I am a co-founder of the Philadelphia Packaging Company, a queer artist collective that uplifts small businesses and local economies. In 2020, we launched ‘A Phonebook,’ an archive project highlighting over 140 BIPOC, immigrant and women-owned businesses in Philadelphia.

“Our multilingual print publication and digital video series document the stories of these community pillars, preserving their histories while amplifying their voices. We were honored to receive the Added Velocity grant from the William Penn Foundation to continue this work, and copies are now permanently housed within several of the Philadelphia Public Library system.

“As I pursue my master of fine arts with a focus on painting, I remain committed to integrating health, care and creation in innovative ways. I look forward to working within the art world and academia to amplify underrepresented voices and expand how we define both artistic and community care.

“In doing so, I honor those who paved the way before me — artists like my great-aunt, Sumiye Okoshi, and my great-uncle, George Mukai, who were active in the Japanese American community in New York City. Their legacies,

along with the many communities I have been a part of, inspire me to continue shaping spaces where people can connect, heal and build together.”

CARLI MANO

JACL Chapter: Mount Olympus
Recipient of the Aiko Susanna Tashiro Hiratsuka Scholarship
Utah State University

NOTABLES:

Carli Mano grew up attending local JACL chapter events with her family. Throughout her high school and college career, Mano actively volunteered to support many of the same chapter events she grew up attending. As she volunteered at these events, she also learned about the important work JACL does in preserving the history of the Japanese American community. Now, Mano wants to use her artwork to continue that mission

while also advocating and supporting all communities in need. She is currently in her final year studying printmaking at Utah State University.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“In the fall 2024 semester, I began taking Advanced Printmaking Studio. This course is one where we have the freedom to explore any topic we choose and create a thesis body of work. This work eventually culminates in a graduating exhibition, where all the graduating students from the department come together to display their work.

“My thesis is about telling the Japanese American story. This

series of relief prints aims to explore a new perspective on Japanese American history through the lens of my own family’s experience.

“I am inspired by stories of strength and resilience through hardship that I grew up hearing. In my art, I choose to reference old family photographs when I create my imagery. I study the photos and histories of my great-grandparents from their life before, during and after the events of WWII.

“I want to share the experience of my family in a way that can hopefully reach a larger audience. Sometimes, art makes it easier for people to be introduced to difficult topics and allows them a way to explore their emotions associated with these things.

“I hope that my art acts as a spark that can lead people into deeper exploration, discussion and research on this underrepresented part of history.”

LAW

CHRISTA CHENG

JACL Chapter: San Gabriel Valley

Recipient of the Sho Sato Scholarship
University of California, Irvine School of Law

NOTABLES:

Christa Cheng is a member of the San Gabriel Valley chapter of the JACL, as well as a recent Kakehashi Program participant in December 2024. She has received

the UCI Law Scholarship for demonstrating exceptional promise for outstanding law school performance. Past experiences include being a Pro Bono intern, Judicial Extern

for the U.S. District Court’s Central District and serving in many Japanese American organizations such as Nikkei Progressives, Tsuru for Solidarity and Kizuna.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“‘Our community is not just here in Little Tokyo,’ the presenter stated, looking out over the crowd gathered in the courtyard of the JACCC. ‘It is worldwide.’ Sitting at the banquet table surrounded by new friends from around the coun-



CHRISTA CHENG



Greater Pasadena JACL
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Scott R. Lew

Thomas T. Hayashi
Memorial Law Scholarship
Recipient

try, I was struck by her words.

“Growing up in Los Angeles, the Japanese American community evoked memories of playing basketball in JAO leagues, visiting the Nishi Hongwanji temple for special events and getting mochi from Fugetsu-do with my family. Location and community were inseparable, at least in my life.

“Yet, as the night went on and presenters from throughout the country spoke, I realized how true the speaker’s statement was. Community leaders fighting for the preservation of Little Tokyo connected their struggle to those resisting the gentrification of ethnic enclaves in New York. Lawyers fighting for racial justice in Northern California spoke alongside activists from the Midwest. As I listened, I learned that the Japanese American community was much broader than I knew.

“That night at the 2023 JACL National Convention opened my eyes to the expansiveness of the Japanese American community and showed me the many ways it is continually growing and innovating.

“As an intern with the national staff, I saw firsthand the work that went on behind the scenes to build a community that brought together

members from across the country. Uniting such a broad community, I learned, involved constant dialogue — conversations where personal stories and experiences were valued alongside discussions of current issues and strategies.

“Despite geographical differences, so many of our struggles shared similar roots. Bringing the community together in conversation not only fostered greater understanding but also allowed for creative collaboration in determining how to address common issues of racial injustice, gentrification and cultural erasure.

“The bridges that I’ve been able to build within the Japanese American community have been immense sources of joy and support, and I hope to continue building up this community as I enter law school this fall.

“As a lawyer, I intend to make space for stories by ensuring that all sides are heard, giving a voice to those who have been marginalized. By using my skills to encourage dialogues of difference, I hope to foster greater understanding both within and beyond the Japanese American community.”



SCOTT LEW

SCOTT LEW
JACL Chapter: Greater Pasadena
Recipient of the Thomas T. Hayashi Scholarship
University of California, Irvine School of Law

NOTABLES:

Scott Lew, a Yonsei, has been constantly engaged with the Japanese American community, such as volunteering at Obon, playing basketball in CYC, submitting photos to the *Rafu Shimpo*, participating in the Manzanar Pilgrimage and attending JACL’s Kakehashi Program. He became a member of the Greater Pasadena chapter and one of the co-presidents in 2023. Although still relatively new, Lew remains committed to JACL and the Japanese American community.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“As the Japanese American community evolves and our shared sense of identity weakens with increased distance from our Issei and the fading collective memory of internment, we must emphasize our cultural heritage to create a foundation in which we can build and

strengthen our community.

“To reinforce our cultural heritage, we can perpetuate Japanese culture in our communities through food, tradition, music, philosophy and culture. By educating younger members about Japanese culture and reinforcing the parts of our identity that makes us unique, we can strengthen the cultural bond that transcends the differences that may exist in other facets of our lives.

“The shared sense of a Japanese identity provides members of our community an avenue to bond and a path in which we can build relationships with one another.

“... However, in order for a community to thrive, such celebration cannot be done in a vacuum; we have to support the organizations and people that strengthen our community.

“These spaces, whether they are centered around sports, politics, philosophy, food, music, art or pop culture, create an environment for Japanese Americans to gather, build relationships with other individuals and become advocates for ourselves.

“From these relationships, we not only reinforce our culture and shared identity but [also] build stronger relationships that intersect

with others to form communities. Volunteering, sponsoring, attending and supporting the spaces that provide us the opportunity to celebrate our shared identity and pursue our goals as a collective is key to ensuring the creation and survival of a community.

“Like all other people, Japanese Americans are not a monolith. The Japanese American community cannot be uniformly generalized or minimized to a small subset of characteristics as our people embody a diverse range of experiences, beliefs, backgrounds and perspectives.

“Even the internment camps [were] not a universal experience as the impact [they] had on people differed based on age, affiliation to Japan, location, politics and more. Our community is constantly changing and evolving. While change is scary because of the uncertainty it brings, it also provides opportunities for growth.

“By perpetuating our Japanese heritage, providing cultural spaces for members of our community to engage with one another and build relationships and remaining adaptable and inclusive of the ever-changing nature of our people, the Japanese American community can flourish and become strong enough

AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL
2026 TOUR SCHEDULE

- HOKKAIDO SNOW FESTIVALS TOUR** (Ernest Hida) Feb 2-13
Lake Akan, Sounkyo, Sapporo, Otaru, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Tokyo.
Hyobaku Ice Festival, Asahikawa Snow Festival, Sapporo Snow Festival,
Hyoto Winter Festival.
- JAPAN SOUTHERN CHARMS HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) Mar 9-20
Fukuoka, Hagi, Suo-Oshima, Hiroshima, Matsuyama, Takamatsu,
Shodo Island, Okayama, Kurashiki, Himeji, Osaka.
- GREAT TRAINS-SEDONA HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida). Mar 15-20
Sedona Tour, Grand Canyon Railway to Grand Canyon South Rim, Flagstaff,
Montezuma Castle National Park, Verde Canyon Railway to 2 National Parks.
- JAPAN SPRING COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) Apr 13-25
Tokyo, Shimoda, Commodore Perry sites, Shizuoka, Mt Fuji, Lake Kawaguchi,
Matsumoto, Tsumago/Nagome, Gero Onsen, Toba, Nagoya.
- NEW YORK CITY HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida) Apr 23-28
New York City Tour, Statue of Liberty, Ferry Cruise of New York Harbor,
9/11 Memorial & Museum, 2 Broadway Shows.
- PANA CONVENTION** (Ernest Hida) June
Sao Paulo-Brazil.
- MT RUSHMORE-YELLOWSTONE HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida) Jun 20-28
Rapid City, Mt Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial, Billings, Little Big Horn
National Monument, Cody, Yellowstone National Park, Jackson, Grand Tetons
National Park, Salt Lake City.
- GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR** (Ernest Hida) Jun 21-Jul 1
Tokyo, Hakone, Atami, Hiroshima, Kyoto. Craftmaking hands-on experiences.
- ALASKA HOLIDAY CRUISE** (Carol Hida) Jul 18-25
Vancouver, Sail Inside Passage, Juneau, Skagway, Cruise Glacier Bay,
Ketchikan – “Salmon Capital”, Vancouver. Koningsdam - Holland America Cruise.
- JAPAN AUTUMN COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida) Oct 5-19
Hokkaido-Tohoku. Kushiro, Lake Akan, Sounkyo, Asahikawa, Sapporo,
Otaru, Noboribetsu, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Aomori, Lake Towada, Morioka,
Hiraizmi, Naruto Onsen, Matsushima, Mito, Tokyo.
- AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND HOLIDAY TOUR** (Ernest Hida). Oct 26-Nov 11
Sydney, Cairns, Melbourne, Queenstown, Rotorua, Auckland.
- CHRISTMAS MARKET CANADA HOLIDAY TOUR** (Carol Hida). Dec 1-7
Vancouver City Tour, Grouse Mountain Skyride, Shipyards Christmas Market,
Ferry to Victoria Island, Butchart Gardens, High Tea at Fairmont Empress Hotel,
Victoria Christmas Market & Fair, Van Dusen Festival of Lights.

For more information and reservations, please contact:

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to act as a collective in pursuit of our shared goals.”

STUDENT AID

RENE NICHOLS

JACL Chapter: Salinas Valley Recipient of the Abe & Esther Hagiwara Scholarship
University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine

NOTABLES:

A member of the Salinas Valley chapter since 2017, Rene Nichols is a second-year medical student that recounts serving as her “grandparents’ translator at doctor appointments, where [she] witnessed how language and cultural differences impacted the care they received and their trust in the health-care system” growing up. This has shaped her interest in geriatrics and public health, and she is currently researching health disparities that affect the Nikkei community. Among her many involvements, she has served as a mentor at the Salinas Valley Hospital Summer Health Institute & Explorers Program since 2021, and in 2024, she began organizing monthly exercise classes at the Sakura Gardens Assisted Living Center.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“Growing up in a predominantly

Shin-Nikkei community, I was largely unaware of JA incarceration history. It was not until I took Asian American Studies in college where I began to learn about JA incarceration. It was truly eye-opening, and I felt compelled to deepen my understanding of JA history and become more involved in efforts to preserve our histories and also build community with others.

“I began volunteering at JA cultural events, such as the Cherry Blossom Festival in Davis and various Obon festivals, where I found community with others and

really took pride in my heritage.

“I also joined Nikkei Rising, an organization dedicated to empowering, educating and connecting Nikkei. Through Nikkei Rising,

I met JAs from diverse backgrounds, both with family who experienced incarceration and Shin-Nikkei and different generations of Nikkei. We all came with different lived experiences, but we all shared a common desire to explore our identities and contribute to the community.

“Many of the injustices endured by our community — forced removal, incarceration, and discrimination — continue to affect marginalized groups. Moving forward, it is essential to not only build community within the JA community but also build intercommunity solidarity.

“The Manzanar Pilgrimage is one space I have experienced that

effectively connects the struggles of Japanese Americans with those of other communities facing systemic injustice. By standing in solidarity with others, we honor the resilience of past generations while advocating for a more just and inclusive future.

“As the JA community continues to evolve, it is important to find ways where we can come together and build community across generations, regardless of geographical location.

“By creating inclusive spaces, preserving our history and building alliances with other communities, we can ensure that future generations feel connected, empowered and supported in their identities and ability to take action in community efforts.”

KAI VU

JACL Chapter: Puyallup Valley Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Scholarship
University of Washington School of Medicine

NOTABLES:

Kai Vu has been a member of JACL for six years, being significantly involved with the Puyallup Valley chapter. He has volunteered at numerous chapter events and fundraisers. He has also contributed origami tsuru to support Tsuru for Solidarity, volunteered with the Greater Kent Historical Society & Kent Museum to set up a Japanese

American exhibit and attended the 2016 JACL National Convention in Washington, D.C.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

“The divisiveness of the AAPI community was not unique to the U.S.; centuries of war and politics had brewed many conflicts between the two regions. However, in the context of Western society, these groups were further pitted against one another, strengthening this divide.

“These groups perpetuated such conservative beliefs, perhaps even more than their Caucasian counterparts, with East Asian families attempting to maintain their prestige as the model minority by not associating with those they deemed inferior in social status.

“Likewise, Southeast Asians insisted on staying covered up in the sun to remain as pale as possible, asserting that darker skin was a symbol of poverty. To this day, classism, colorism and many other forms of prejudice rooted in conservative Western beliefs continue to be perpetuated within the AAPI community, dividing its members.

“Being of both Southeast and East Asian heritage, I recognize both sides to have more similarities than differences. Both my Vietnamese and Japanese lineages faced adversity in incarceration and refugee camps. Both struggled to navigate the country and receive acceptance

from Western society.

“We witnessed unity for perhaps the first time in significant volume between these groups during the Stop Asian Hate campaigns during the pandemic. It was exemplified then that, in the face of explicit racism, the AAPI community was capable of uniting around the shared goal of ending such injustices plaguing the community.

“It’s important now more than ever that we continue to build on this momentum in the pursuit of AAPI unity, identifying one another as allies.

“The Stop Asian Hate campaign is proof that we have more in common than once believed; that to bigoted outsiders, we are all just ‘Asian,’ irrespective of subrace, and none of us are immune to the harmful perception that comes with the label.

“The AAPI community becomes more homogenous with each generation containing more individuals of mixed race like myself. As such, we cannot continue tolerating perpetuating stereotypes and biases that have brought about conflict for decades prior.

“We have an ethical obligation as a new generation to educate ourselves; it is no longer excusable to remain culturally ignorant. Recognizing similarities and respecting unique differences in beliefs and values among subcultures is imperative in building unity not only among the AAPI community but [also] in our incredibly diverse and rapidly progressing modern-day society as a whole.”

JAVA » continued from page 3

• **Lana McIlvane** from Durham, N.C., received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Sgt. Ben Kuroki, a gunner in the U.S. Army Air Corps, 505th Bombardment Group. McIlvane is the daughter of JAVA member Brian Yamamoto McIlvane. She will be attending the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as a political science major.

• **Jolie Murakami** from Kaneohe, Hawaii, received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Vic and Teru Matsui. Murakami is the great-

granddaughter of Sam Isamu Yamao, 442nd RCT. Murakami plans on attending the University of Portland and major in nursing.

• **Katelyn Nishita** from Honolulu, Hawaii, received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mitsugi Kasai. Nishita is the great-granddaughter of Paul Okama, 442nd RCT. She will attend the University of Utah, where she will study kinesiology.

• **Tyler Shimazaki** from Torrance,

Calif., received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of past JAVA President Roberta Nakamoto, a Korean War veteran. Shimazaki is the great-grandson of Henry Hayashi, 100th Battalion. Shimazaki plans to attend California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, and study industrial technology and packing.

• **Jencyn Shishido** from Wailuku, Hawaii, received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Sadami Katahara. Shishido is the great-granddaughter of Toru Orikasa, 100th Battalion. Shishido will be attending the University of California, Irvine,

and plans to study pharmaceutical studies.

• **Tyler Tanaka** from Torrance, Calif., received the Furumoto Family Scholarship in honor of Tak Furumoto’s sister, Kyoko Lillian, sponsored by JAVA member and Vietnam veteran Tak Furumoto. Tanaka is the great-grandson of Theodore Kazuyuki Takano, 100th Battalion. He will attend California State University, Long Beach, and pursue a degree in kinesiology.

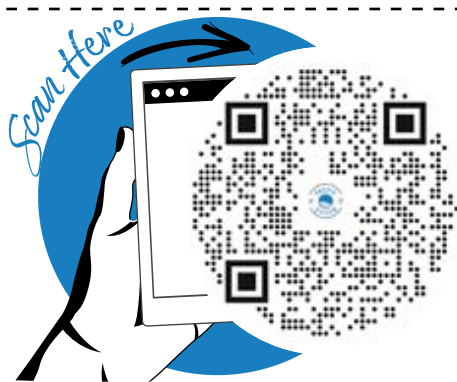
• **Hulali Williams** from Kihei, Hawaii, received the Dr. Americo Bugliani and his liberator, Paul Saka-

moto, 442nd RCT Scholarship. She is the great-granddaughter of Mineo Kodama, 442nd RCT. She plans to attend Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore., as a biology major. Members of this year’s Scholarship Committee are Chris DeRosa, chair; VADM Scott Van Buskirk, USN (Ret); Capt. (Dr.) Cynthia Macri, MC, USN (Ret); Capt. Susan Sherman, USN (Ret); LTC Robert Vokac, USA (Ret); and Maj. Kay Izumihara, USAR.

For more information on the JAVA Scholarship program, visit www.java-us.org.

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Author, Journalist KEN MOCHIZUKI Dies

Death comes weeks after receiving AAJA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

By P.C. Staff

Less than two months after the Asian American Journalists Assn. honored him with its Lifetime Achievement Award on Aug. 2 in his hometown of Seattle (see *Pacific Citizen*, Sept. 5, 2025, tinyurl.com/32fdbczd), Ken Mochizuki succumbed Sept. 20 to the esophageal cancer that kept him from accepting the recognition in person. He was 71.

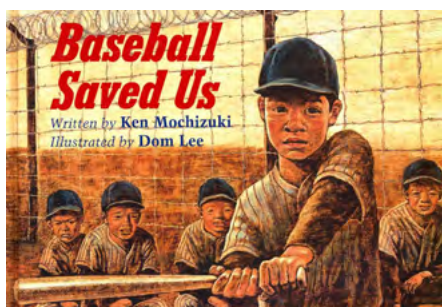
An actor, screenwriter, author and journalist, Ken Steven Mochizuki was born in Seattle and raised in its Beacon Hill neighborhood, the middle son of Miyeko and Eugene Mochizuki. At the time of his death, he had been living in Maple Valley, Wash.

After graduating from the University of Washington's School of Communication, where Mochizuki had been bitten by the acting bug, he pursued the craft in local theater before decamping to Los Angeles in 1976 for five years, with much of that period spent at East West Players.

Although he had landed a role in a 1979 episode of "M*A*S*H," he found that Hollywood did not have an abundance of roles, positive or otherwise, for Asians, especially Asian men.

Dom Magwili, one of Mochizuki's thespian friends from his time in Los Angeles, nevertheless recalled that he thought Mochizuki's career was on the upswing after the "M*A*S*H" appearance. "But the next thing you know, you find out, well, he's leaving for Seattle this weekend," Magwili recalled. Mochizuki had something else in mind for his future: writing.

When Mochizuki visited to say goodbye to Magwili and his wife, Saachiko, before putting L.A. in his rearview mirror, the couple had a parting gift for him. "I had a green Royal portable typewriter, and we gave it to him. I wasn't using it. And he's going to be a writer. 'Well, get about it.' And then he does. He actually gets something printed," recalled Magwili.



Ken Mochizuki's award-winning "Baseball Saved Us"



From Oct. 10, 2024 (from left) are Lori Matsukawa, Ron Chew, Ken Mochizuki and Mimi Gan. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LORI MATSUKAWA

"He is the first of people that I know who got something published. Very proud of him."

In 1981, Mochizuki did, however, spend 13 weeks working in Boston on a WGBH-produced TV series titled "The New Voice," about young people who start a newspaper, which would, in a case of life imitating art, presage his future journalism career, in which he focused on covering Asian American and Japanese American stories.

Ron Chew, Mochizuki's friend and journalism mentor at Seattle's *International Examiner*, told the *Pacific Citizen* how they met and how Ken started on the path of becoming a writer.

"He had come back from L.A. where he tried to pursue an acting career and found that the doors were pretty much not open to Asian American, particularly male actors," said Chew. "He was glad to leave that with life behind."

"I served as his editor, and he was very interesting because he would listen to everything I said," Chew told the *Pacific Citizen*. "I had this practice of going over stories with all my writers while they were there, literally doing the editing in front of them so they knew what I was doing. So, he was my most attentive and patient journalism student, and over time, he just became a terrific writer and reporter. So, our friendship blossomed."

Mochizuki also contributed a short story that appeared in the 1987 Holiday Issue of the *Pacific Citizen* (see tinyurl.com/5n7arfer).

Back home, Mochizuki would combine his old love of acting and movies with his newfound love of writing when he turned the novel he was working on into the screenplay for 1985's independently produced movie "Beacon Hill Boys," in which he had the lead role in its ensemble cast (see *Pacific*

But it was Mochizuki's award-winning debut in the genre — 1993's "Baseball Saved Us" — that no doubt serves as the milestone — and personal and professional turning point — for him. He is set to posthumously receive a Community Voice Award from the International Examiner at its Oct. 23 gala banquet.

"He had a fighting spirit, and he really tried to fight it until he passed," Chew said of his friend's losing battle with esophageal cancer.

Mochizuki was predeceased by his wife, Merry, and his parents. He is survived by his brothers, James (Susan) and Alan (Stacey); three nephews and a niece. Plans for a celebration of life are pending. According to his wishes, those wishing to honor his memory may make donations in his name to the Wing Luke Museum (wingluke.org), the International Examiner (iexaminer.org) or the Asian American Journalists Assn. (aaja.org).

Mochizuki's website is kenmochizuki.com.

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