

SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

Dec. 19, 2025 - Jan. 22, 2026

# PACIFIC CITIZEN



**VOICES** *of the* **PEOPLE**

# Mile High

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through the new year  
and beyond!



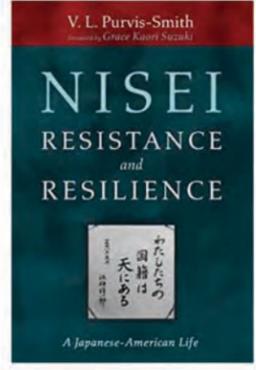
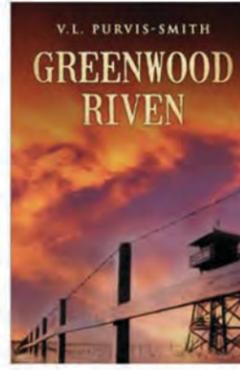
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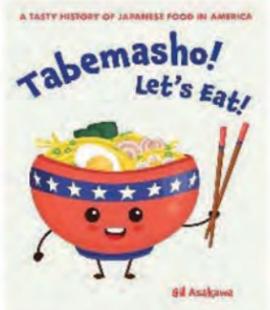
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# Mile High

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Happy Holidays!



All the best for the year ahead.  
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*Happy Holidays*

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*Warmest Holiday Greetings & Peace in the New Year!*

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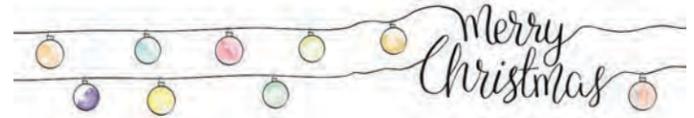


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**Happy Holidays**

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from your friends in

New England



Check out our web site: [www.nejacl.org](http://www.nejacl.org)

**Peace & Happy Holidays to All**

**Happy New Year - 2026**

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**D**uring this season of hope and renewal, the importance of using our voices has never been greater to reflect, show gratitude and make connections with others. Especially now, in an era marked by division, misinformation and social uncertainty, speaking up — thoughtfully and courageously — can build understanding and inspire action.

Every story shared, every outreach made, every call to action strengthens our community and moves us closer to creating a more just world. For nearly 100 years, the *Pacific Citizen*, the national newspaper of the JACL, has used its voice and the power of words to inform, educate and raise awareness even during the most challenging times, then and now.

This year's Holiday Special Issue theme, "Voices of the People," reflects that commitment and features stories that remind us that using one's voice shapes conversations that can lead to meaningful and lasting change for the better. When we come together — JACL members, readers and supporters — our collective voice becomes a force for progress. Your engagement helps ensure that our voice remains strong and impactful . . . and relevant.

As we look ahead to 2026, let's recommit ourselves to the values that guide us forward so that our voices can continue to challenge injustice, protect civil liberties and uplift future generations. Be louder than ever. We SEE you. And, most importantly, we HEAR you.

— Allison Haramoto,  
 Executive Editor, Pacific Citizen



COVER: M.SAMONTE/ADOBE FIREFLY

**08 | CRYSTAL CITY PILGRIMAGE**

*By Rob Buscher*

**12 | OUR VOICES ARE OUR POWER**

*By Nikkei Progressives*

**17 | JAPANESE AMERICANS LOVE BOWLING**

*By Gil Asakawa*

**22 | A FAMILY CONNECTION**

*By Floyd and Brian Shimomura*

**26 | A DEVOTION TO SERVICE AND FAMILY**

*By Patti Hirahara*

**27 | A UNIQUE UTAH EXHIBIT**

*By Patti Hirahara*

**28 | JACL FACES ITS TOUGHEST QUESTION YET**

*By Lynda Lin Grigsby*

**34 | 'TOGETHER IN MANZANAR': A REVIEW**

*By Matthew Weisbly*

**35 | HOUSTON JACL 50TH**

*By Gary Nakamura*

**37 | REFLECTIONS: RETURNING HOME**

*By Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong*

**38 | A GLOBAL BRAND**

*By Gil Asakawa*

**42 | REFLECTIONS: PEARL HARBOR & AEA**

*By Katie Masano Hill and*

*Matthew Marumoto*

**46 | MOTOMURA TAKES ON IMMIGRATION, AGAIN**

*By George Toshio Johnston*

**49 | NIKKEI VIEW/LEGAL-EASE**

*By Gil Asakawa and Judd Matsunaga*

**50 | FROM CORONADO TO SANTA FE**

*By Dan Mayeda*

**54 | WAKAMATSU COLONY**

*By Naomi Hirahara*

**58 | MEDICAL VIEWPOINTS**

*By Dr. Paula Fujiwara and Matthew Kojima*

**62 | NOTABLE 2025 PASSINGS**

*By George Toshio Johnston*

## JACL CHAPTER AD INDEX

Arizona.....	25	Olympia .....	53	Snake River .....	24
Berkeley.....	43,44,45	Omaha.....	16	Sonoma County .....	39
Chicago .....	6,7	Philadelphia.....	56	St. Louis.....	7
Cincinnati.....	7	Pocatello-Blackfoot.....	40	Stockton .....	20,21
Contra Costa.....	19	Portland.....	10,11	Twin Cities .....	3
Dayton .....	36	Puyallup Valley.....	40	Venice-West L.A. ....	40
Detroit.....	41	Riverside.....	55	Ventura County .....	40
Eden Township .....	39	Salinas Valley.....	11	Wasatch .....	3
Fresno .....	41	Salt Lake City .....	21	Washington D.C. ....	36
Greater Los Angeles.....	24	San Diego .....	36		
Hoosier.....	39	San Fernando Valley .....	14,15,16		
Houston.....	48	San Francisco.....	56		
Idaho Falls.....	11	San Jose .....	25		
Lodi .....	16	San Mateo.....	52,53		
Marysville .....	7	Santa Barbara.....	25		
Mile High .....	2,3	Seabrook.....	25		
Monterey Peninsula .....	56	SELANOCO.....	24		
Mount Olympus .....	36	Sequoia.....	3		
New England .....	3	Silicon Valley.....	39		
New Mexico .....	39				

**DISTRICT COUNCILS**

Central California.....	56
Eastern District Council.....	55
Intermountain District Council .....	24
Midwest District Council .....	7
N. Cal Western Nevada Pacific .....	3
Pacific Northwest .....	24
Pacific Southwest .....	21

# Chicago

**In memory of these and other friends and neighbors who raised their families, contributed to their community, served their country, and enriched our lives.**

Richard Agemura • Katherine Anamizu • Yoshie Cheyney • Jean Endo  
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FROM CHICAGO, LA, & HONOLULU

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Jason Doi  
Tom & Verna Muraoka  
Laura Muraoka & Peter Izui  
Grace Kido

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Paul Doi  
Tomoye & Shiro Muraoka  
George & Ruby Izui  
George Kido  
Mitsuji & Ritsue Doi

& ALL OUR FRIENDS WHO  
HAVE PASSED AWAY

*Happy Holidays!*

*The Yatabe  
Family*

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WISHING YOU A  
HAPPY 2026

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

*Pat Harada & Tom Rowland  
Northfield, Illinois*

**Happy and Healthy  
New Year**

Chicago Japanese  
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Season's Greetings

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Jack Rubin  
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TAD TANAKA  
1931 - 2025

CAROL MIYAKE  
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JONATHAN  
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1950 - 2025

Their legacies will live on  
through community

*Happy  
Holidays  
to all*

From a Friend in  
**CHICAGO**

**HAPPY 2026!**

LISA DOI (CHICAGO) &  
ERIC LANGOWSKI (HOOSIER)

*In Memory of*  
**HIRAO "SMOKY" SAKURADA**

# Chicago

和

PEACE

The Sakai Family



HAPPY HOLIDAYS



IN MEMORY OF RICK & KAREN OKABE

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



IN MEMORY OF PAUL DOI

## SEASON'S GREETINGS

From the Members of  
Chicago Nisei Post 1183  
The American Legion



CHICAGO-NISEI POST NO. 1183

*Wishing everyone a  
healthy and joyful  
New Year!*

Steve Arima & Elaine Ogawa



Greetings for the Holiday Season  
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Happy holidays and lots of treats to  
all the Chicago JAACL dogs,  
especially Zeus and Athena Doi.

*love from  
Filbert and Cashew*

This holiday season and every day...



**MEGAN NAKANO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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## SEASON'S GREETINGS

Lary Schectman  
Chicago, Illinois

# Cincinnati

HOLIDAY GREETINGS  
Ron & Joyce Yoshino



## Midwest District Council

# St. Louis



Cincinnati Chapter JAACL

**Happy Year of  
Horse  
2026**

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

*from the snowy & cold MDC ❄️*

- Eric Langowski Chicago
- Ayako Tischler Cincinnati
- Steve Mitori Dayton
- Peter Langowski Detroit
- Eli Nishimura Hoosier
- Romare Onishi Houston
- Zara Espinoza Omaha
- Wisconsin St. Louis
- Twin Cities



*Happy Holidays*

From  
The  
St. Louis JAACL



# Marysville

*Best Wishes for JAACL's 95th Year!*



*Marysville JAACL*

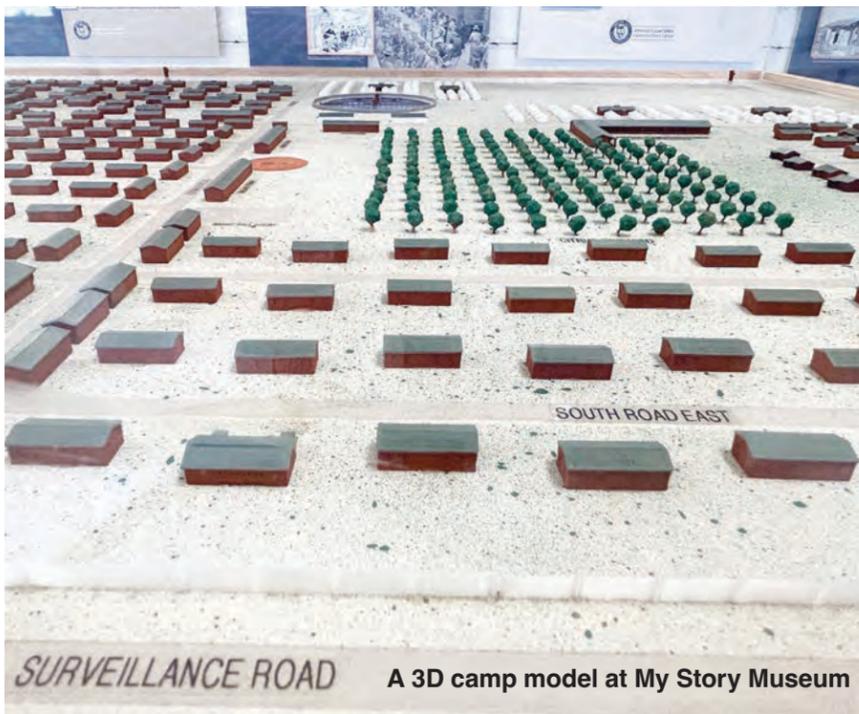
# CRYSTAL CITY PILGRIMAGE: OVERCOMING THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE ONE TOWN AT A TIME

Pilgrims visit “America’s Last WWII Concentration Camp” exhibit at the My Story Museum.

PHOTOS: ROB BUSCHER



“Alien Enemies Act” panel participants (from left) Katherine Yon Ebright, Jennifer Ibanez Whitlock, Grace Shimizu and Larry Oda with moderator Rob Buscher (back row)



Members of the Crystal City Pilgrimage Committee

By Rob Buscher,  
P.C. Contributor

Almost one year ago during the week of the November 2024 election, I journeyed to rural South Texas to help the Crystal City Pilgrimage Committee open a public history exhibit on the wartime incarceration at My Story Museum.

At the time, I felt slightly apprehensive boarding an airplane from my home city of Philadelphia to Texas less than 48 hours after the highly polarizing election.

Days earlier, the *New Yorker* published a clickbait think piece titled “The Americans Prepping for a Second Civil War,” which included stories about people on either side of the political divide who were stockpiling guns and ammunition for what they saw as inevitable violence stemming from the election.

The media fervor made it seem like we were on the brink of open conflict between progressive urban coastal areas and the conservative rural interior regions of the country. I was honestly unsure what to expect when I arrived in Texas to spend four days in Crystal City for the first time.

Crystal City itself is largely progressive as the birthplace of La Raza Unida Party — the progressive third party that sought to give political voice to the Chicano movement of the 1970s.

During the grand-opening ribbon-cutting ceremony that took place in November 2024, we were greeted by a crowd of about 250 rural Texans who enthusiastically welcomed our small committee of Japanese American incarceration survivors and descendants.

There, I met Mexican American community elders and heard their stories about the 1969 student walkout, directly from the people who lived it. At restaurants and small businesses, local residents went out of their way to say hello and make us feel at home in their community.

I left Texas with a renewed sense of hope. If such a community could exist in South Texas, surely there must be others like it elsewhere in rural America.

Now, nearly one year into the second Trump presidency, I had the opportunity to revisit Texas during the 2025 Crystal City Pilgrimage that took place Oct. 9-12 in San Antonio and Crystal City.

What I saw and experienced there has continued to fuel my optimism in the organizing potential of rural America and the role that our Japanese American community might play in bridging the urban-rural divide.

This year’s pilgrimage theme was “Crystal City Rising — Neighbors Not Enemies,” chosen in reference to the legislation first introduced in 2020 by Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) that, if passed, would repeal the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

The pilgrimage’s co-chairs, Hiroshi Shimizu, Gabriela Nakashima and

Brian Shibayama, offered more context in their welcome letter, stating “[The theme] honors the solidarity and community between the people on both sides of the Crystal City Family Internment Camp barbed-wire fence. This sense of community and friendship has continued through the years, and we are deeply grateful for the partnership and support of our Crystal City friends as we continue this pilgrimage work.”

The pilgrimage co-chairs continued, “At a time when we are seeing rampant anti-immigrant rhetoric and direct parallels to our own history, we must uplift and preserve our stories, build across communities and movements and stand in solidarity together.”

As a Department of Justice detention site that specifically imprisoned individuals arrested under the Alien Enemies Act, the history of Crystal City is uniquely suited to draw comparison with what is happening amid the nationwide expansion of ICE detention and militarized immigration enforcement.

The pilgrimage program was designed to emphasize these direct linkages in a way that commemorated the experiences of incarceration survivors, while also demonstrating actionable strategies for pilgrims to get involved in advocacy work to support immigrant communities today.

In its curation of the program, the committee also prioritized content that would further the connections between local histories of the Chicano Movement and the Nikkei diaspora.

The pilgrimage consisted of two full days of programming, starting with a day of educational workshops in San Antonio, followed by a visit to Crystal City.

Nearly 200 people attended the events, with some traveling from Japan, Peru and Canada — in addition to local Texans and Japanese Americans from across the country.

The program opened with remarks from Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai, a Sansei and third-generation Texan whose grandparents were among the first Issei farmers in the Rio Grande Valley.

San Antonio Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones also welcomed the pilgrims to her city. Having assumed office in June 2025, Jones is herself an indication of the changing demographics of Texas as



Austin, Texas, resident Evan Taniguchi poses next to his family’s banner at the museum.

both the first Asian American (Filipino) and openly gay mayor of San Antonio.

CCPC member Karissa Tom then offered their own remarks connecting the past to the present and underscored the relevance of Crystal City to current events.

This messaging was consistent with remarks delivered by speakers who participated in an incarceration survivor panel that featured Japanese Americans, Japanese Peruvians and German Americans.

Following this, a second plenary titled “Manufacturing Enemies: The Alien Enemies Act Then and Now” addressed current efforts to repeal the AEA. The plenary included legal scholars, policy experts and grassroots advocates. Among the speakers was JACL National President Larry Oda, himself a Crystal City survivor.

Workshops held during the second half of the day explored the Ireichō, which was brought to Texas by Rev. Duncan Ryuken Williams and his team, and the ongoing collaboration between CCPC and My Story Museum.

A second workshop track explored the Chicano Movement in South Texas that featured several members of La Raza Unida Party.

Presented in tandem was a workshop led by Campaign for Justice that explored current efforts to achieve redress for Japanese Latin Americans.

That evening, the pilgrimage hosted a celebratory event called the Peru-Kai, which offered an opportunity for pilgrims to share their performance talents as the attendees enjoyed dinner and informal socialization.

I had the opportunity to perform guitar and co-lead several bon odori dances during the Peru-Kai, which reminded me that amidst the difficult work of organizing, we must also make space for joy. Our Mexican American friends in attendance greatly appreciated the opportunity to experience Japanese cultural traditions.

The next day, my visit to Crystal City commenced with an interfaith memorial service held at the site of the swimming pool where two Japanese Peruvian girls drowned in 1944.

With religious observances led by Williams and Christian Pastor Dino Espinoza, the memorial also featured remarks by Crystal City Mayor Jose Angel Cerda, City Clerk Sandra Zavala and members of the city council and



**CCPC board members Victor Uno, Hiroshi Shimizu, and Kaz Naganuma with former Crystal City Mayor Frank Moreno and former City Manager Felix Benavides**

school board. As part of the ceremony, local officials were asked to stamp the names of several Crystal City incarcerees in the Ireichō.

Local residents then hosted lunch at Crystal City High School, where pilgrims were able to view the photo exhibit by Crystal City native Hector Estrada that first debuted at the Spinach Festival in 2012.

Pilgrims then took turns visiting the My Story Museum and touring what remains of the prison site. There was also a workshop about immigrant rights led by Amerika Garcia Grewel, co-founder of Border Vigil – a group that hosts monthly vigils for migrants who died while attempting to cross the border, advocating against further militarization in immigration enforcement.

I spent most of that day at the My Story Museum to help support the local docents by answering questions that pilgrims had about the newly renovated exhibit. It was gratifying to welcome members from six of the eight families who were profiled in the exhibit as they saw their stories incorporated into a museum setting for the first time.

The closing day of the pilgrimage took place in San Antonio and featured a half-day program that gave attendees actionable ways to get more involved in advocacy work. This included presentations from Tsuru for Solidarity and Natalie Sanchez-Lopez, executive director of the Latino Texas Policy Center.

In the month or so since the pilgrimage ended, I have found myself returning to the question of what change might be possible with sustained engagement by coastal urbanites in rural regions of the U.S.

As a country, the U.S. feels more divided today than any moment in recent history. Although there have been major divisions across segments of our population since the birth of this nation, in recent decades, both sides of the aisle have created a zero-sum, all-or-nothing approach to governance.

The extremity of partisan politics has created a political culture where compromise is viewed as weakness, and loyalty to the party is valued over collaboration that might lead to positive change for society.

In the context of overcoming the urban-rural divide, sharing physical space with someone of a different background creates the potential to better understand perspectives outside of our own.

Acknowledging our shared humanity, we must work to see each other beyond the context of mediatized stereotypes propagated by individuals on both sides of the divide.

In doing so, this may reveal mutual goals that we can work toward together for the betterment of our society.

As a public historian, I have spent a great deal of time in rural, conservative and often impoverished communities where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during WWII. I believe that such communities long-forgotten by the coastal elite of both parties are rife with opportunity to build coalitions that may one day heal the divide.

I see the work that CCPC is doing as an opportunity to measure the impact of this strategy, as we continue to build and strengthen relationships with local residents in our shared effort to preserve the history of Crystal City.

The camp exhibit at My Story Museum provides a physical site of exchange and connection between our

communities. Pilgrims who knew little of the Chicano Movement history in Zavala County left the museum with an understanding that state violence and institutional racism has shaped the Mexican American community in similar ways to the Japanese American community.

Regional audiences and Crystal City residents have also come to see the wartime incarceration as an important part of their own local history, as the exhibit demonstrates that much of the town’s current infrastructure was built on the remnants of the prison camp. Crystal City residents have become a compassionate witness to the wartime history of Japanese Americans, as we have to theirs.

Each region of the country possesses distinct local histories that impact the ways our wartime experiences are understood. That also means that the specific points of intersection with local communities are all slightly different.

Given that the population of Crystal City is over 90 percent Hispanic, Crystal City offers unique opportunities for mutual connection and understanding compared to other regions where Japanese American confinement sites were located.

However, even in places with a conservative white majority, I believe there are still opportunities to build genuine connections around shared values and begin dismantling the manufactured political divide.

The theory of change for this work has yet to be fully tested, as the Crystal City exhibit has only been open for just over a year. Whether this will lead to lasting impact in the region is yet to be seen. In a limited sense at least, the success of the recent pilgrimage has demonstrated that it is possible to transcend the urban-rural divide as we continue to deepen the organizing relationship with our friends in Texas. ■



**Flower offerings at the Crystal City camp monument**



**Pilgrims and locals join together for an intergenerational dance.**



**CCPC board member and local Crystal City resident Ruben Salazar speaks to pilgrims at the high school.**

# Portland

## Happy New Year from the Portland JACL



The Portland JACL organizes our annual Nikkei Community Picnic held on the third Sunday in August at Oaks Amusement Park. We enjoy a bingo, prizes, amusement rides for the kids, lots of pot luck food, fun and conversation. *Photo by Rich Iwasaki*

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*おめでとう*

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*お正月*

2026

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wishes you a

very very very very very very very very

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**Peace on earth, please**

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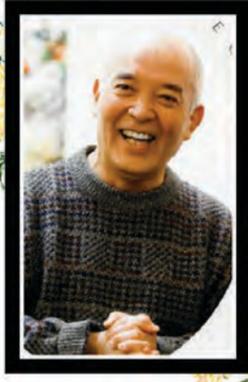
Janice Okamoto and Gary Okamoto

# Portland

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# Salinas Valley

# Idaho Falls

Happy Holidays

From All Our Members

Salinas Valley

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*From the Idaho Falls Chapter*

Members of the Nikkei Progressives group on the Edmund Pettus Bridge to commemorate the 60th anniversary crossing in March.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NIKKEI PROGRESSIVES



# Our Voices Are Our Power

*Nikkei Progressives members reflect on their journey to Alabama to attend the 60th anniversary of the crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge.*

By Nikkei Progressives

In March, 15 Nikkei Progressives members, friends and relatives traveled to Montgomery, Ala., to attend the 60th anniversary of the crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 9. According to participant Jean Hibino, “The march was an act of determination of not going back to a time of racial oppression, erasure and disenfranchisement, current battles that in 2025 — unbelievably — we are still fighting today.

While in Montgomery, the group also visited the Equal Justice Initiative’s Legacy Museum, National Monument for Peace and Justice (National Lynching Memorial) and the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park and Michelle Browder’s Mothers of Gynecology. Throughout their trip, Nikkei Progressives members concurred: There is much work to do, and the fight for justice must continue.

Following are several members’ reflections of the trip.

**‘Back to Montgomery, Ala.’**

By Jean Hibino

The last time I saw Montgomery was the summer of 2022. Returning for the 60th anniversary of “Bloody Sun-

day” in Selma was comfortable in an uncomfortable way. The unrelenting reminders of white supremacy. The Great Seal of the City of Montgomery has a star with a huge “Cradle of the Confederacy” in dead center with a smaller, grudging, ring around it, “Birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement.” The state flag is a thinly disguised homage to the Confederacy. There is a statue of the traitor Jefferson Davis and the monument to Confederate heroes on the Statehouse lawn. Yeah, we get it, keep folks in their place.

Bryan Stevenson is taking over and remaking Montgomery. It is no longer a quick afternoon stop on a civil rights tour, past Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and Rosa Park’s bus stop. Visiting the Equal Justice Initiative’s three legacy sites was the highlight for me. The museum, lynching memorial and the new sculpture garden are extraordinary. The sites draw a straight line from slavery to convict leasing to Jim Crow, lynchings and mass incarceration. A placard in the museum explains that visitors will be uncomfortable. Someone said to me, “Geez, Bryan Stevenson constantly hits you over the head about slavery, mass incarceration,

civil rights.” I realized later it’s because HE HAS TO. Blunt force is necessary. Now more than ever.

The “comfortable” part of my return was to visit friends made during my post-retirement years in Alabama. They are the folks born and raised there. And whether or not by choice, they stay. It is home. They continue to fight and organize and get into good trouble. They, like Mr. Stevenson, are the real heroes.

**‘The People United’**

By Mia Barnett

A group of Nikkei Progressives members and supporters traveled to Alabama over the weekend of March 8 and 9 to attend a commemorative march marking the 60th anniversary since “Bloody Sunday.” It was my first time traveling to the Deep South. To prepare for the trip, I decided to brush up on my civil rights history and watched Ava DuVernay’s “Selma” and the PBS series “Eyes on the Prize.”

While the landmark moments and famous quotes jogged my memory from history class, I realized I had never actually learned about the movement itself — the people. In school, the civil rights movement had always been painted as a victorious time in American history, where the courts decided to allow integration in schools, and the government decided to expand voting rights to Black people. And while it was certainly victorious, change came about not because of the government, but because of the people who worked together, strategized, struggled and gave their lives for a better future.



National Monument to Freedom

PHOTO: M. MURASE



As we visited the Legacy Museum, toured Montgomery with Stephen Browder and walked across the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, I was struck by the stories of the people who had lived the history. I was moved by the narratives of enslaved people who faced horrific violence with profound faith and immense courage. I was moved by the people of the civil rights era, from children to seniors, who faced horrible brutality and constant discrimination yet still vowed to march another day. Getting to know the people of the movement gave real-life context to what I’d read in textbooks and watched in films, and their stories of resistance provide a blueprint for the movements that continue today.

I’ve been reflecting on what the Nikkei community has learned and can still learn from the civil rights movement. While the struggles we face today aren’t the same, familiar dynamics are at play. An overreaching government is creating laws and stoking fear to keep people small and powerless. But just as the people came together for what some thought was an impossible feat of organizing during the civil rights movement, the people will come together once again. We are the ones who make the world we want to live in, and it would be an incredible disservice to the relentless activists of the civil rights era if we don’t continue the fight. We must continue the fight.

**‘Much Work to Do’**

By Kimiko Roberts Griffin

When I think on my reflections of our Montgomery, Ala., trip, all I know is that I’m angry, and I’m pissed. I’m really not

sure if it’s because my blackness felt so personally offended while revisiting the history of assaults on my “blood” or because the current climate of our government’s attack on all my countrymen’s promised liberty.

I find myself working hard every day just to love people and not blow up at every contemptuous exchange or microaggressive attack on me or my husband or my children. I’m Japanese American, but I’m also a Black American, and my husband and kids present even more phenotypically African American than me. I deal with the memory of the lynchings, whippings, rapes, drownings, beatings of my relatives whenever I am excluded or devalued at work or in the supermarket.

I’m consciously grateful for all the heroic and painstaking effort that was made to create the Legacy sites. Bryan Stevenson’s work is miraculous and invaluable for all people. The results therein are completely beautiful and a tribute to my cherished ancestors. However, for me to say it’s difficult for me to intertwine reflections of our Alabama trip, which included the downtown Montgomery tour and the commemoration of the [crossing of the] Edmund Pettus Bridge with all these



Inspirational words inscribed at the National Lynching Memorial PHOTO: J. HIBINO



**Supporting Black reparations at the march** PHOTO: A. KONDO

combustible feelings is a big understatement.

There is much work to do.

**‘Selma-Montgomery Bridge Crossing — 50th Anniversary vs. the 60th Anniversary’**  
By Carrie Morita

Participating in the 50th anniversary Selma to Montgomery Bridge Crossing had much to do with President Barack Obama. The 2015 crossing was a celebratory one.

I started with campaigning/phone banking for Barack Obama in 2009, going to Arizona, Nevada, SoCal, door to door to “get out the vote” and madly cheering on election day in Cleveland, Ohio, when he was declared our 44th president. To walk across the Bridge in Selma, Ala., with President Obama, who had linked arms with John Lewis, Diane Nash, as well as many other civil rights leaders, was an event that 40,000 wanted to join in . . . including a contingent of us from Los Angeles!

It was the feeling of a cohesive group walking together behind Barack and other leaders after listening to rousing speeches. We marched as one.

Fast forward to 2025 and the 60th anniversary of the bridge crossing. No way would our current president have attended the 60th crossing.

I decided to make the journey again and cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge 10 years after my first crossing, knowing I most likely won’t make it to the 70th crossing.

I’m not sure if we missed the rousing speeches like what we heard in 2015. Was there even a start to the March? All I know is, folks were already walking. Our group decided that rather than walking behind our banner, we would stand off to one side and cheer everyone on. Our banner could be more visible. We received many cheers from the crowd as they passed by!

**‘Yonsei, American. Reflections’**  
By L. Misumi

As a Yonsei, or fourth-generation Japanese American, I’ve found myself at times feeling

so very American: feeling so far removed from the immigrant experience, English as my mother tongue, my people’s experience as such a uniquely American experience, while also feeling like whatever the narrative of who is American could never include me. Not with these eyes and this hair and this last name.

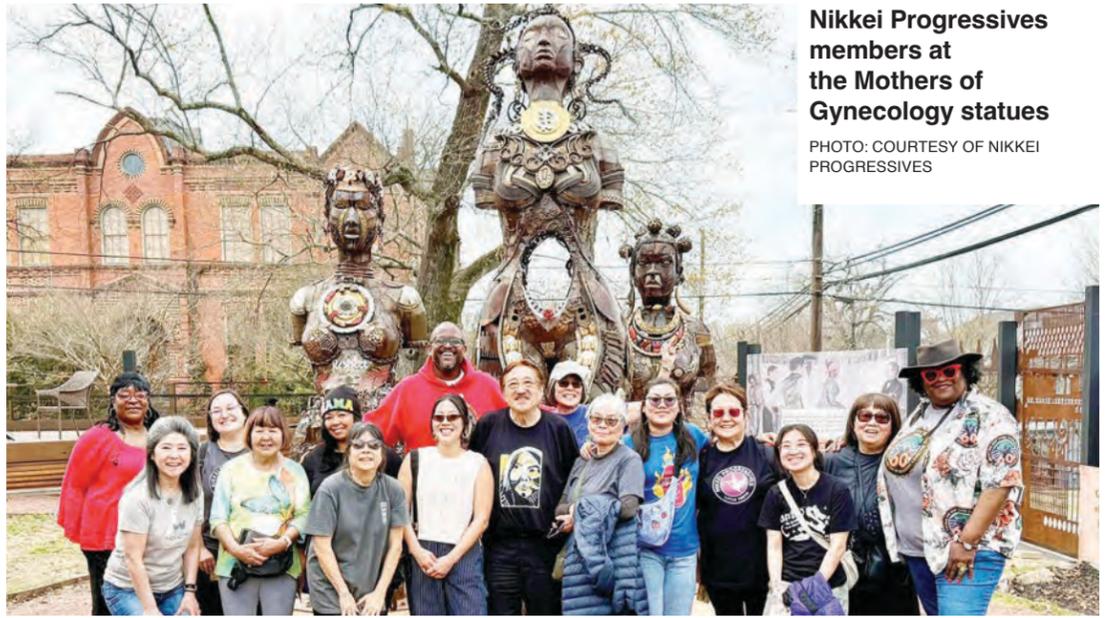
But . . . why does the right get to set the narrative of who gets to be American? We are here, we are here on stolen land and we are living in a world that is the product of genocide and built through the forced labor of enslaved people. These things are true, and they are American. My family was incarcerated during World War II, following the signing of Executive Order 9066 by one of the most beloved progressive presidents we’ve ever had. These contradictions are also deeply American, and we cannot learn from them if we refuse or fail to acknowledge them.

All of these things weighed heavily on my mind when I traveled to Alabama for the 60th Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee and the march from Selma to Montgomery for voting rights.

Walking into the EJI Legacy Museum is a visceral experience. . . . In a way, it reminded me of the visceral experience of visiting the site of the Topaz Relocation Center, where my family was incarcerated. It’s so easy to reduce this history to just written words in a book (then ban the book . . .) but it’s hard to deny the experience of standing in a place and confronting it with your own senses.

What is the saying, “History doesn’t repeat itself but it often rhymes?” We had the opportunity to hear from EJI’s deputy director of development talk about the origin of EJI and its efforts at seeing the true story told of slavery and racial terror and its impacts on mass incarceration today.

She said something along the lines of, “We cannot have reconciliation, there can be



**Nikkei Progressives members at the Mothers of Gynecology statues**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NIKKEI PROGRESSIVES

no moving forward, without first confronting history and acknowledging the truth of our past.” The dangers of history rhyming and the wheel of white supremacy continuing to turn are here. We are living in them.

The world I want to live in is one where painful histories are regularly confronted, acknowledged and learned from, where we strive for progress and not perfection. We’ve come so far to go back now. We have so far yet to go, and we have to stay in it for the long haul.

There are many things we can and should do to defend democracy and continue to strive toward the America we want to live in, but if you can . . . visit the EJI sites in Montgomery and other historic sites to be confronted, to acknowledge the truth of our past and to grow.

**‘The Ultimate Form of Resistance’**

By Jan Tokumaru

Throughout our time in Selma, Birmingham and Montgomery, my mind seemed to be a whirlwind of images. So many forms of dehumanization, punishment of body and mind, generations of constant subjection to white supremacy dictates, destruction of families, lynchings . . . I now think more about resistance and how much more discomfort there needs to be for the kind of changes necessary to move us toward freedom for all.

Somewhere I read, or heard, that the strongest form of resistance of enslaved Black people was that they were able — against all odds — to survive and to love.

That was the ultimate form of resistance!

**‘How Could This Still Be Happening?’**

By Yasuko Sakamoto

Visiting Alabama for the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Walk was a deeply emotional and eye-opening experience that fulfilled a lifelong wish of mine. My desire to attend this event was rooted in my studies of African American history during college in Japan and my passion for social justice since the 1970s.

Driving through Selma and witnessing the lasting signs of poverty and inequality made me realize how little I truly knew about the depth of suffering, excruciating pain and resilience within African American communities.

The visit to the Legacy Museum and other memorials left a lasting impact on me. I kept asking myself, “How could this still be happening?” and came away feeling that one visit is not enough to grasp the magnitude of this history or the ongoing struggle for justice and equality. Am I the only one who felt this way? I doubt it.

**‘The Changing Face of Civil Rights’**

By Ruth Wakabayashi Kondo

I crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge for the first time in March for the 60th anniversary of “Bloody Sunday.” Back in the spring of 1965, I was a high school student angry at America for unconstitutionally incarcerating my family in a WWII concentration camp.

Martin Luther King Jr.’s

embrace of nonviolence seemed like an unlikely way to achieve equality. Little did I realize that in the coming years, my grasp of the civil rights struggle would evolve to “intercommunalism,” which includes all communities of the world who are unjustly persecuted and exploited for greed.

While in Montgomery, I paid a visit to the Legacy Museum, an important effort to confront our nation’s history of enslavement and exploitation. Through viewing the exhibit on the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the separation and destruction of family structure and the victimization of the powerless, I began to see a common thread — the systematic subjugation of poor communities and people of color since the beginning of our history.

I empathized with the cries of mothers during slavery trying to find their children. It was much like today’s agonizing experiences of immigrants at our borders. I felt the desperation of the imprisoned, feeling hopeless in their fight for justice.

“Hopelessness is the enemy of justice,” said Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Legacy Museum. “We will remember with hope and courage because peace requires bravery. Justice is a constant struggle. With faith, we shall overcome” I now realize that each generation has an obligation to address this injustice so that we can find peace.

I learned an invaluable lesson on my crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. I hope you will have the good fortune to do so yourself. ■



**Through this tunnel, the enslaved were marched into pens to await auction day.**

PHOTO: BY M. MURASE

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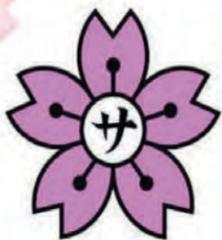
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# San Fernando Valley



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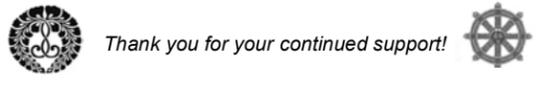
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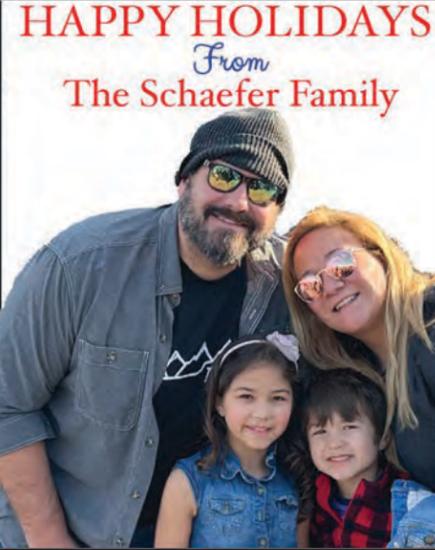
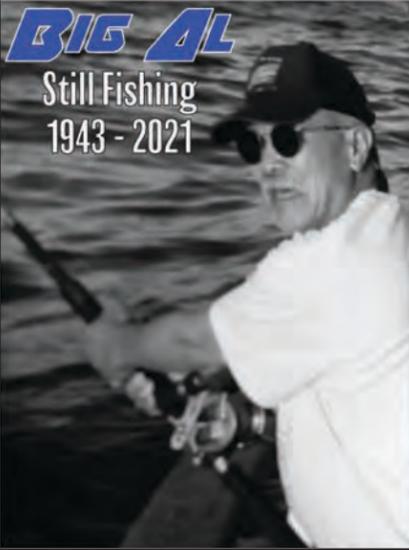


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# JAPANESE AMERICANS STILL LOVE BOWLING AFTER DECADES OF ORGANIZED LEAGUES

By Gil Asakawa,  
P.C. Contributor

Japanese Americans love bowling. JAs have been bowling since the early 20th century. But the ancient (invented by the Egyptians!) sport was formalized in the U.S. with rules by the American Bowling Congress in 1895, and those rules excluded anyone but white players. Though JAs played where they could in unofficial lanes before World War II, the war didn't allow for expensive alleys in the concentration camps. Baseball, football, basketball and even sumo, yes. But not bowling.

After the war, JACL filled the exclusion gap and hosted the first National JACL Nisei Bowling Tournament in 1947, and the organization's circuit criss-crossed the U.S. until 1974. Even though the ABC was forced to allow bowlers of color in the early 1950s, JAs' love for their own leagues had been established. Regional associations for Nisei leagues formed like the Southern California Nikkei Bowling Assn. in 1955, and national tournaments were held every year.

A program book for the JACL National Nisei Bowling Tournament, held the first week of March 1970, lists hundreds of bowlers from across the country, converging on Celebrity Sports Center in Denver for a week of camaraderie and competition. The program lists previous champions and winning teams, as well as includes ads from leagues and JA-owned businesses from the Denver area and greetings from Seattle, San Jose and Southern California leagues.

Bowling was so popular with JAs in

the early 1970s that JACL decided to spin off the management of the sport to a separate organization. JACL was increasingly focusing on the coming years of fighting for redress. So, the Japanese American National Bowling Assn. was formed, and the first JANBA tournament was held in 1975 in San Jose, Calif.

JA bowling has continued under the JANBA banner since, with national tournaments moving from city to city — all in the West, Northwest or Hawaii, even though historically there have been JA bowlers in the Midwest, East Coast and even Texas, more as a social activity than an organized league sport. Competitive bowlers from the East competed in JACL or JANBA tournaments in Denver, Salt Lake, Las Vegas, Portland, Seattle, up and down California and in Hawaii.

That's still the case. This year's JANBA tournament was held in Las Vegas, and it will be in Sacramento in 2026, then back to Denver in 2027. The tournament still operates under the racial requirements that forced JACL to start its post-war opposition to the American Bowling Congress's exclusion 80 years ago. JANBA remains an organization "for members (and spouses) of Japanese descent."

That requirement isn't a problem in Southern California, where so many JAs still live. Every city in the L.A. area has its own leagues. The SoCal Nikkei Bowling Assn. represents bowlers from



Japanese Americans have long-embraced bowling as a sport that also brings with it camaraderie and cultural traditions. Here, a photo from the Nov. 28 Denver Nisei Tournament at Holiday Lanes.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF GIL ASAKAWA



Bruce Sunada proudly wears his 2025 JANBA shirt; Sunada in action on the lanes.



Chris Yoshida, president of Denver Nisei Mixed League bowls at Holiday Lanes in Lakewood, Colo.



the San Gabriel Valley to Gardena and all around the L.A. area. The Northern California Nikkei Bowling Assn. is the umbrella organization for leagues from Sacramento south to Gilroy and Stockton and San Francisco and San Jose.

In some areas, there has been a crisis for JA bowling. At one point, bowling became tagged with a reputation as an activity for elders, and membership in local leagues dropped as older bowlers joined senior leagues or, sadly, passed on.

But thanks to younger bowlers, that trend has been changing, with more youth — including younger members of JACL — picking up the ball for heritage and history.

"For a while, I thought it was a dying sport," says Mae, who at one time was a leader in the Nisei bowling community in the Northwest (she preferred her last name not be used). "You know, after those early bowlers passed on, the younger kids were really not into it. But now, it seems like here in Portland and up and down the west to the San Jose area, there has been a resurgence of young kids bowling."

One major reason Mae thinks bowling is making a comeback is that "bowling is for everybody. Basketball wasn't for everybody." There have been Nisei leagues for basketball and baseball, and golf is a common passion for many JAs, but she thinks golf attracts a different crowd, while bowling is truly open for everybody.

In large part, and in common with others who were interviewed for this story, the special attraction for bowling is the sense of cultural community. "It's just for the social aspect, the camaraderie, being with friends," she added. "Scoring was important, yes, but for me, it was always more about the friendships."

"And it's still the same to a degree," Mae continued. "I go to Las Vegas with my sons to watch them bowl. People think I'm nuts going to Las Vegas not to gamble, but to watch the family bowl instead. They can't believe that I would do that. How can you sit in a bowling alley for six hours at a time? Well, I see a friend from Seattle. I see someone from San Jose I know. So, half the time, I may not end up watching my son bowl, but I'm socializing."

Mae is excited to see what the next generation of bowlers bring to the sport. "The younger kids now are also trying to encourage more of their friends into bowling," she said. "And these may not be all 100 percent Nihonjin, but you know, they may be mixed blood or whatever, but they have the appreciation. They have encouraged a lot of their friends to come in, and that's one of the reasons why this league in Portland is able to sustain itself."

Dominique Mashburn, who is a board member of the SELANOCO chapter and vp of membership for JACL, is one of that younger generation of JA bowlers keeping the sport alive in the L.A. area.

"I think I had a very large fascination with bowling, just because it was an adaptive physical activity for my older brother, who has autism," she said. But Mashburn was introduced to bowling when she was younger, like many JAs, who go to alleys with their parents and family members and absorb the sights and sounds of the high-fives and the thundering pins.

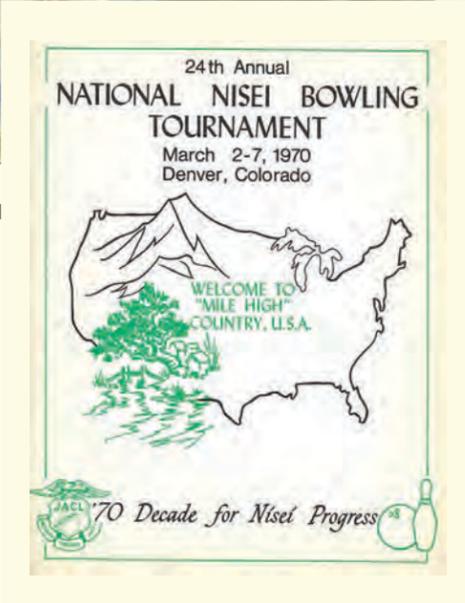
She agrees that Southern Califor-



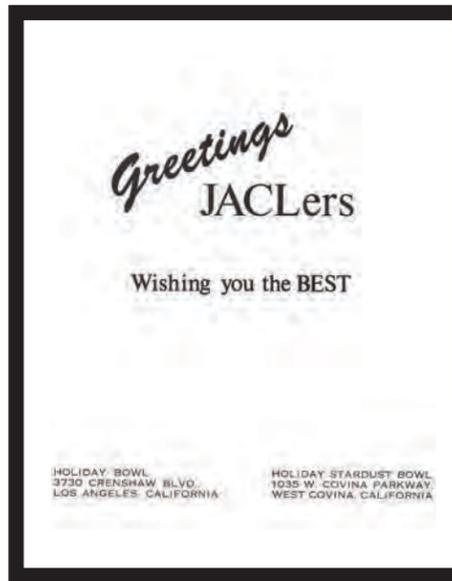
Bowlers fill the lanes at the Nov. 29 Nisei Bowling Tournament at Holiday Lanes.



Wayne Berve (right) of the Simpson United Methodist Church high fives the next generation of bowlers, his son, Eric, after a strike on Nov. 29.



(Left) 1970 Tournament Greetings; (Above) Program for the 1970 National Nisei Bowling Tournament



nia is a pocket of enthusiasm for JA bowling, partly because of the Nikkei student unions that use bowling as an icebreaker. “So, it has been really great for JACL and SELANOCO to have those university relationships where we were able to build new bridges with them,” she noted.

And Mashburn concurs with Mae’s point that everyone can bowl. “I think that’s the really best part of it because not all sports can do that. It’s the sport that anybody can do. And there’s no judgment. I feel like it’s a really judge-free zone. No one’s a loser; everyone’s a winner. I love it.”

Lincoln Hirata, a 19-year-old college student who’s a leader in JACL’s National Youth/Student Council, is another bowler who represents the future of the sport.

“I think that there is kind of a divide, though,” he observed, “between those who are in JACL and then those who are bowlers and those who are JA golfers. People are either focused on their bowling or their golf, versus, you know, people who are only focused on JACL, right?” (Others like Mae think that bowlers and golfers can coexist, and so do some younger bowlers who hit the links as well as the lanes.)

Hirata, who is from Portland but attends the University of Oregon in Eugene, says many of his generation’s introduction to bowling came from parents or their grandparents, who were part of the community and very involved in JACL or, in his case, also “because I’m very big in my church, you know, the temple. But as time has gone on, it seems that people have just naturally drifted away from the more

traditional things and have moved on toward other activities.”

Ironically, one activity cited by some of the older generation of bowlers is having kids. Many parents gave up bowling when they had children and only returned to the game after their kids grew older. Now, they’re bringing their sons and daughters to the lanes. Hirata understands that experience. “My parents both stopped bowling when I was born, and I think that was a trend with a lot of these other families.”

Hirata cites Covid as a prompt for a return to bowling. At first, JAs in his community started golfing because that was a safer outdoor activity. “After that, kids my age, or kids a little bit older than me, started to bowl, and we had this giant influx of young bowlers, you know, 20s, 30s, teens. It’s not like it was everywhere, but when I go to JANBA, I do see a lot of kids my age now.”

Robert Wada, who is vp of the Denver Nisei Bowling League, was raised around bowling. Wada’s mother and her brother were active in the early 1950s JA bowling scene, and she won the singles title at the JACL tournament in 1952. “She was the real bowler in our family,” he recalled. “And that’s kind of how I got roots in bowling.” His uncle later served on the JANBA board for years, and Wada now serves on the JANBA board today. “It’s kind of ironic that eventually I got on the board as well, and now, I’m the old guy in the Denver league (he’s not that old).

distinction of being the last JA league bowler to grace its lanes. He even has a pin from that night as a prized artifact on his shelf.

Saito says the Holiday Bowl was a reflection of the status of JA bowling when it was built. “It was started by these four Nisei guys who were real entrepreneurial,” he said. “This was in the late ’50s, when bowling was huge.” The Holiday Bowl became a cross-cultural center of bowling, entertainment and dining for decades. Although the building was a landmark, it had undergone ownership changes and hadn’t been kept up by the time it closed. But Holiday Bowl is often mentioned in accounts of the glory days of JA bowling.

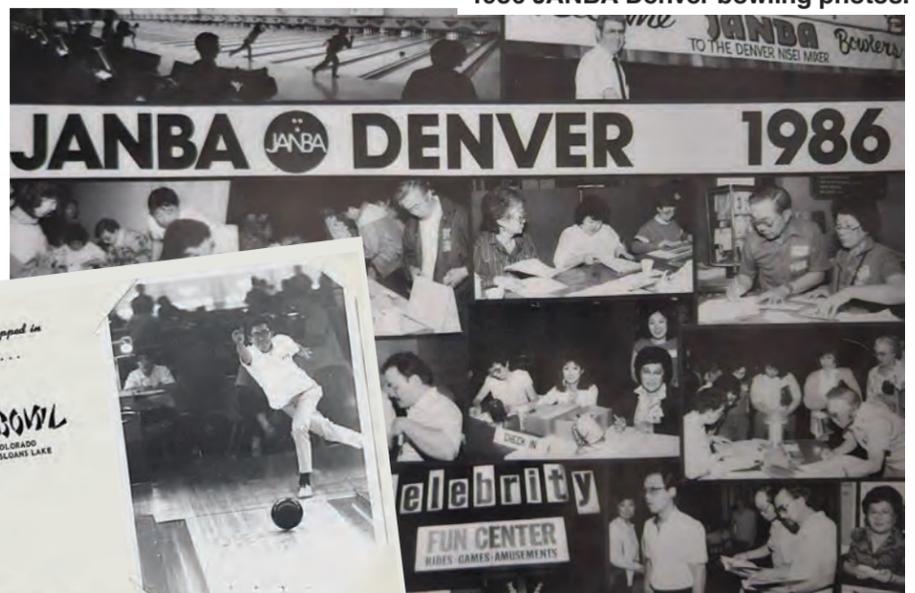
Bowling alleys may have gone over time, but today, young and old bowlers are keeping the sport alive. And some JA leagues have a built-in source of players. Bing Lau is the administrative director of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center, and he has a pool of elder JAs who can be recruited to bowl. He came to JA bowling as the president of the Asian American fraternity at USC, whose brothers urged him to join them in JA bowling.

His day job benefits from his involvement in bowling, Lau says. “Yeah, it’s so important just for people, and I always talk about this from the senior perspective, to get out, to be able to engage with others and give them that activity,” he said. “It’s so good for them mentally to fight loneliness and whatnot, so we actually have a senior league that is attached to our center as well, through our Meiji Club. A lot of the people that used to bowl on Fridays that can no longer bowl, or they don’t want to drive at night, now bowl on Tuesday mornings in our Senior League.”

The sport even led to his marriage. “I met my wife, Eileen, through the league,” Lau said. “She wasn’t a bowler, but I bowled with her cousin, and she came around to watch her cousin. So, we met through the league. We got married on a Friday in Little Tokyo, we had a small wedding and dinner, and then we went bowling that night. We had a cake at the bowling alley.”

Now, *that’s* dedication to Japanese American bowling. ■

1986 JANBA Denver bowling photos.



Rex Yoshimura in the Trade Winds Bowl 1965 program

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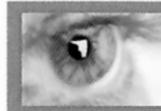
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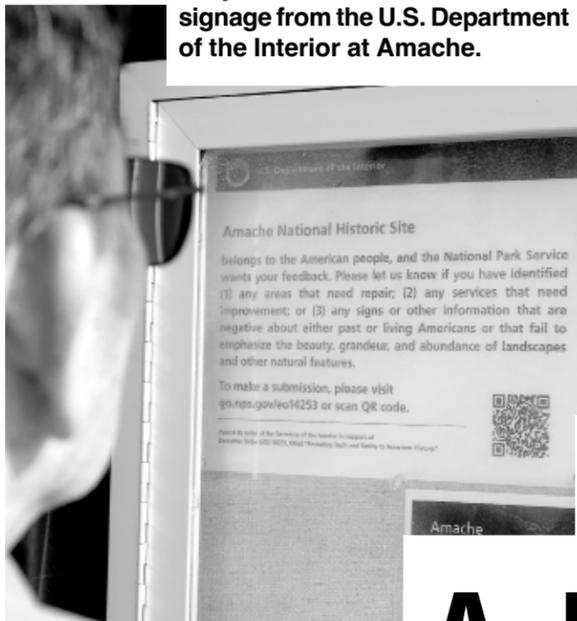
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Floyd Shimomura views new signage from the U.S. Department of the Interior at Amache.



Pictured at the 2025 JACL National Convention (from left) are Brian Shimomura, Floyd Shimomura, EDC Gov. Paul Uyehara and National President Larry Oda.

Brian Shimomura, Floyd Shimomura and Mike Honda (right) meet at the 2025 JACL National Convention.



# A FAMILY CONNECTION

*A summer road trip opens up one family's past and connects them to the broader JA experience.*

*By Floyd and Brian Shimomura*

**From the Editor:**  
*In July, Brian and Floyd Shimomura set out on a road trip from their homes in Northern California to attend the JACL National Convention in Albuquerque, N.M. Along the way to the “Land of Enchantment,” they made a stop at the Amache National Historic Site in Colorado, where members of their family were forcibly incarcerated during World War II. Following, according to Brian Shimomura, is “an attempt to record a small subset of the conversations that I had with my dad, Floyd Shimomura, over the years and help clarify some history related to the redress movement. In this article, we visited Amache to pay respect to our relatives and other Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII. Thank you to Allison Haramoto and Susan Yokoyama at the Pacific Citizen for working with us to publish this article.”*

## Rediscovering History

**Brian Shimomura:** Growing up, I knew my dad as the calm, thoughtful guy who made semihealthy Sunday dinners and helped me with homework. I didn't realize he was the first Sansei national president of the Japanese American Citizens League in 1982, or that he helped advance the redress campaign that resulted in President Ronald Reagan signing a bill in 1988 granting an apology and \$20,000 to each person unjustly incarcerated during World War II. We didn't talk much about our family's internment history. I was more focused on becoming the best tennis player in Woodland, Calif.

**Floyd Shimomura:** When Brian suggested a road trip to Amache before attending the 2025 JACL National Convention, I was delighted. It was a chance to revisit our family's past and share stories I hadn't told him before.

## From Denver to Amache

**Brian:** We flew into Denver and drove southeast toward Amache, the incarceration camp where my grandparents were held. On

the way, we talked about the “Lost Japanese Community of Winters” exhibit and my great-grandparents, Itaro and Sawano Shimomura.

**Floyd:** I helped curate that exhibit in 2021 for the Winters Museum. Itaro emigrated from Wakayama in 1906 and became a foreman on an apricot and almond farm. He married Sawano, also from Wakayama, in 1915.

**Brian:** My dad prepared a binder full of information. On May 15, 1942, Civilian Exclusion Order No. 78 forced all Japanese Americans out of Yolo County. My grandfather, Ben Shimomura, was the designated “responsible” family member.

He reported to the Civil Control Station in Woodland and received family number 30980. The Shimomura family — Ben, his sister, Harumi, and their parents, Itaro and Sawano — departed from the Woodland Train Station. They were first sent to the Merced Assembly Center, where they slept in horse stalls for three months, then transported to Amache by train with the shades drawn.

**Floyd:** Ironically, my father said the train served regular meals in the dining car — the best food they'd had since being uprooted.

## Amache National Historic Site

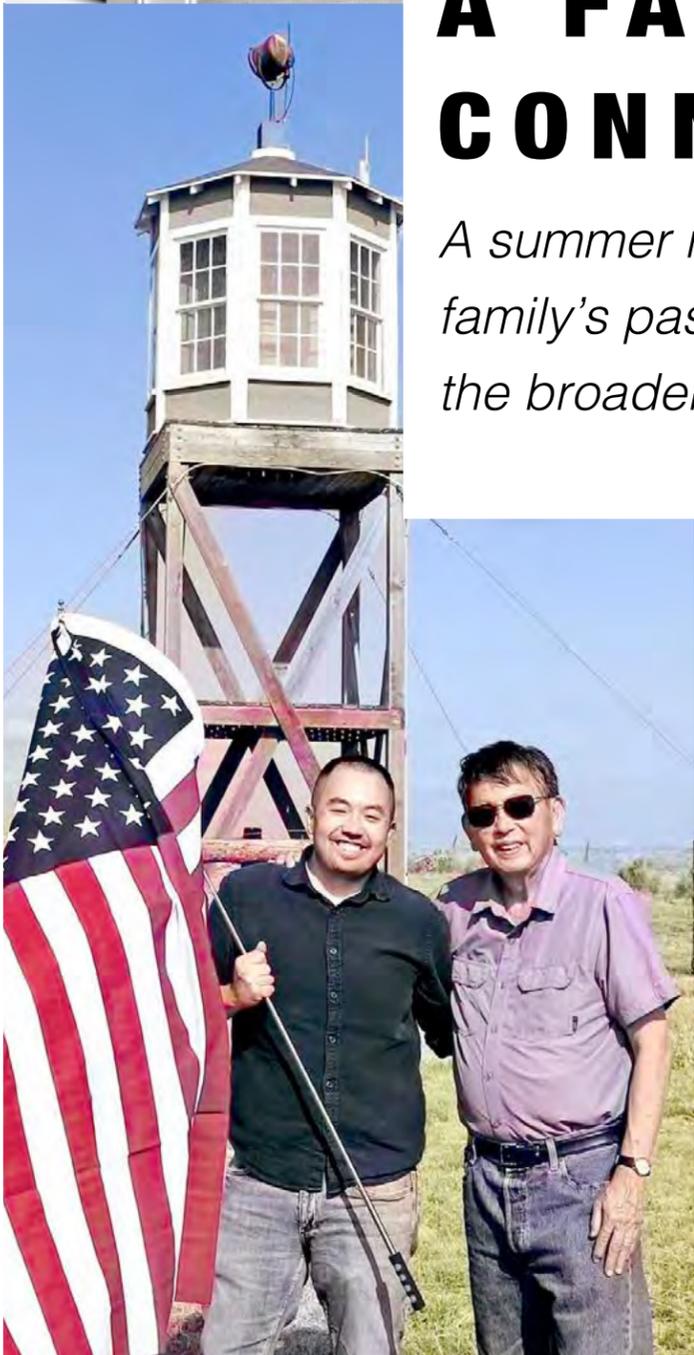
**Brian:** Visiting Amache was surreal. Behind us stood a guard tower, a stark reminder of the 120,000 Japanese Americans imprisoned during WWII. My dad said that this was where my grandparents, Ben Shimomura and Lois Morimoto, met.

Ben worked in the motor pool, maintaining trucks and making deliveries. Lois, the youngest of six siblings from Cortez, Calif., worked in the dispatch office. They married in Denver in March 1945. Their love story began behind barbed wire, under armed watch, in a country that promised liberty and justice for all.

**Floyd:** They were among the fortunate few who returned to Winters. Of the 300 Japanese Americans who lived in Winters before the war, only about 15 percent returned. Many were too afraid. During V-J Day celebrations, Winters' Japantown was burned down. Signs at the city limits read, “No More Japs!” But the Tufts family, our prewar neighbors, defied public sentiment and invited us to work on their farm.

**Brian:** Before leaving Amache, we checked the park bulletin board. A notice similar to one seen at Manzanar asked visitors to report “any signs or other information that are negative about either past or living Americans.”

We were worried that this might signal a revisionist view of history. Dad had taken me to the JANM dinner where it had declared it would “Scrub Nothing.”



Brian Shimomura (left) and Floyd Shimomura visit Amache during their summer road trip to the JACL National Convention in Albuquerque, N.M.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRIAN AND FLOYD SHIMOMURA



Brian Shimomura (left) and Floyd Shimomura at the 2025 JACL National Convention



**Brian Shimomura's grandfather, Ben Shimomura, at Amache, where he was incarcerated during World War II.**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRIAN AND FLOYD SHIMOMURA



**Floyd Shimomura shows a ranger the location of his parents while they were at Amache.**

### On to Albuquerque

**Brian:** It's a six-hour drive from Amache to Albuquerque. I asked my dad about his JACL experience and how he became the first Sansei national president in 1982.

**Floyd:** I explained there were four key factors: I had just completed two terms as national vp for public affairs; I was a law professor at UC Davis specializing in federal administrative law, including monetary claims against the government; I came from Northern California, the largest JACL district with the most votes; and the organization wanted to present a younger face to the community.

I explained to Brian that most Nisei supported "Go for Broke" in WWII, while most Sansei supported, "Hell no, we won't go" in the Vietnam War. So, many Sansei questioned if the JACL — a mostly Nisei organization — had the ability to truly confront the government on redress.

**Brian:** I asked about the redress campaign and the 1983 meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

**Floyd:** Many, like John Tateishi and Ron Ikejiri, did more than me. But I testified before Congress and wrote briefs for the redress commission. Thanks to Frank Sato, I met with President Reagan's chief domestic policy adviser, Jack Svahn, in the West Wing. In Tokyo, Ron Wakabayashi and I met Prime Minister Nakasone about trade friction.

Many Nisei board members advised against discussing redress, but Nakasone unexpectedly brought it up. He said Reagan would soon address the Japanese Diet and stay at his residence. Nakasone asked if there was anything I wanted him to say to Reagan.

I said, "Ask him to sign the redress bills." He nodded slightly and made a noncommittal grunt. I wasn't sure if he followed through — until 10 years after Reagan left office, when a history professor uncovered documents showing that Nakasone's administration had quietly lobbied Reagan to sign the bill because he wanted to put it in Japanese textbooks.

### The JACL National Convention

**Floyd:** We arrived in Albuquerque at the JACL National Convention and attended a plenary session on repealing the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 — the law used to detain Issei leaders after Pearl Harbor without due process. One of the detention camps was in nearby Santa Fe. The Trump administration had recently invoked it to detain suspected illegal aliens, even though there was no war. Coming straight from Amache, it made us question whether the lessons of history had truly been learned.

**Brian:** We also saw a video about Nobuko Miyamoto, a performer and activist who used her art to fight for civil rights and protest the Vietnam War. She performed live at the Sayonara Banquet the next evening.

### Coming Home

**Brian:** Since getting married in 2021, my wife, Alissa Shimomura, and I have traveled to 22 countries to photograph the world. We hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, climbed Mount Fuji, rode camels at the Pyramids of Giza, endured 115-degree heat at the Taj Mahal, caught Covid in Bali and swam below an active volcano in Iceland. But this road trip — with my dad, to an incarceration camp and a JACL national convention — was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life, second only to getting married.

**Floyd:** As a dad, it was gratifying to see Brian connect with our family's history and the broader Japanese American experience. It was also a little sad. The road trip reminded me that the fight for justice is never truly over — and that passing on these stories is part of that fight.

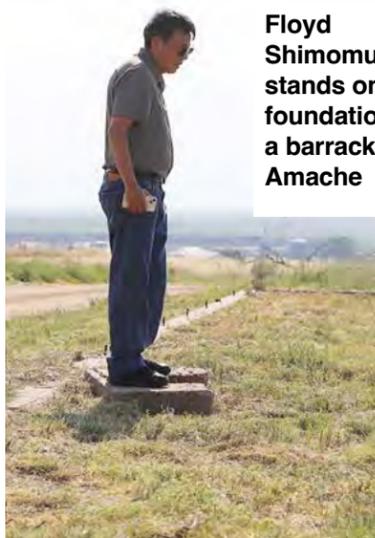
*Floyd Shimomura is a past JACL national president. Brian Shimomura is a past board member of San Francisco JACL and a current manager for the State of California. They reside in Woodland, Calif., and Daly City, Calif., respectively.*



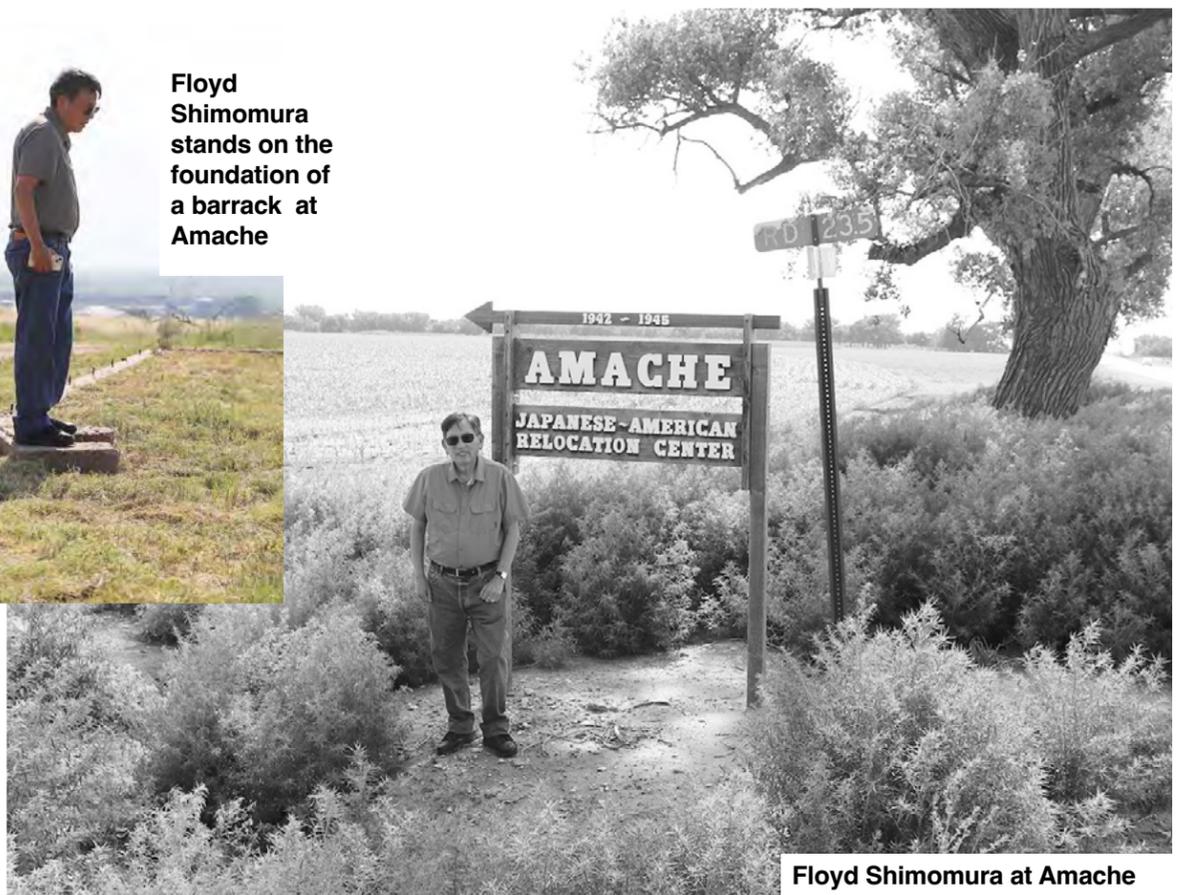
**A ranger shows Floyd Shimomura the location of his parents' barracks.**



**A ranger and Floyd Shimomura at the site of the Shimomura barracks**



**Floyd Shimomura stands on the foundation of a barracks at Amache**



**Floyd Shimomura at Amache**

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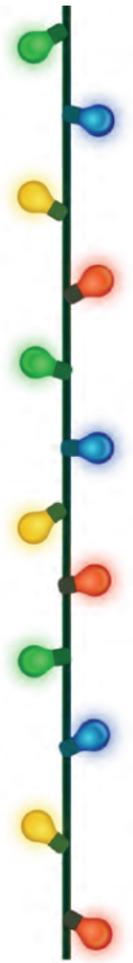
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# Santa Barbara

# Happy New Year!



from the members of the Santa Barbara JACL



Lt. Gen. Philip Garrant, Space Systems Command commander, holds the guidon flag with Col. Mia Walsh, who is relinquishing command of Space Base Delta 3 on May 29, 2024. CMSgt. Sarah Morgan, senior enlisted leader for SBD3, holds the guidon in the back. The guidon is a symbol of the transfer of authority.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF U.S. SPACE FORCE



Col. Mia L. Walsh

PHOTO: COURTESY OF U.S. SPACE FORCE



California Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) on March 2, 2023, named U.S. Space Force Col. Mia Tsutsumi Walsh as the 2023 Woman of the Year in the 66th Assembly District. He is shown escorting her to the podium at the State Capitol building.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF COL. MIA WALSH

## A DEVOTION TO SERVICE AND FAMILY

*How the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force have defined Col. Mia Walsh's military career*

By Patti Hirahara,  
P.C. Contributor

While watching the Fox 11 news in 2024, I saw an impressive story about Col. Mia L. Walsh for a piece on Women's History Month in Southern California that left me wanting to learn more about her impressive public service career and deep affinity for her cultural Japanese roots.

Walsh is a Sansei who was raised in Hilo, Hawaii, and I wondered what she would want people to know about her life.

"I'd love for people to know that my parents are amazing and instilled in all three of us, my sisters and I, a strong work ethic," said Walsh. "It's something my sisters and I talk about a lot because we all take a lot of pride in our work, and we feel that is because we always see our parents working hard. We're all fairly frugal as well, probably something that came from our upbringing. We laugh about my mother smoothing out the tin foil to reuse, but then my husband makes fun of me for washing out Ziploc bags and reusing them!"

"I had a great upbringing in Hawaii," Walsh continued, "coming from a large family on both sides, and I really valued my Japanese culture."

Col. Walsh and I had conversations over a series of months about her life and illustrious military career, which has included 10 major awards and military decorations. She returned to Washington, D.C., in 2024 to work as the director of the Current Operations Division, Headquarters Space Force Staff, at the Pentagon. She leads six branches, including the Space Force Service Watch cell and is responsible for policy, guidance and oversight of Space Force current operations.

**Patti Hirahara for the Pacific Citizen: Being raised in Hawaii, your family was very active in the Japanese**

**community there. What aspects of their Japanese community activities do you feel added to your preparation to having a career in the military?**

**Mia L. Walsh:** My family was very involved in church — we belong to Hilo Hongwanji. I grew up in the church, going to church's Japanese language school from kindergarten through fifth grade, teaching Sunday school and playing the organ for church on Sunday. . . . I think I'm very inspired by the culture I saw around me growing up. Japanese people work very hard, don't complain and value group consensus and mutual respect, which I feel translates well to being in the military.

**The P.C.: Who inspired you when you were growing up?**

**Walsh:** Ellison Onizuka visited my elementary school when I was in the fourth grade. He was the first astronaut from Hawaii, the first Buddhist astronaut and the first Japanese American astronaut. His one visit instilled in me an interest in space, and I went home that daydreaming of becoming an astronaut. The importance of seeing someone who grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii like I did, whose grandparents came over from Japan to work in the sugar cane fields, just as mine did, who grew up in the Buddhist faith and attended public school —

it was something I would never have dreamed of but his presence in the community inspired me.

**The P.C.: What made you decide to join the U.S. Air Force?**

**Walsh:** I always wanted to be an astronaut, and when I was in high school, everyone said joining the military would be the best path toward achieving that goal. I love being in the military — first the Air Force and now the Space Force — and I believe it is my calling.

**The P.C.: What were the highlights of your U.S. Air Force career?**

**Walsh:** I have loved every assignment in my career — from being an ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) operator in Cheyenne, Wyo., which was quite a culture shock for a first assignment, to working in the National Military Command Center. The highlight of my career is having the opportunity to work with amazing people, from all walks of life. I have learned so much from other people I serve with, and we all share a deep sense of patriotic duty and a great love for this country and what it represents.

**The P.C.: You are now a member of the U.S. Space Force. When was the U.S. Space Force created, and what does it do?**

**Walsh:** The U.S. Space Force was

created on Dec. 20, 2019. We'll celebrate our 6th birthday this month! The mission of the U.S. Space Force is to secure our nation's interests in, from and to space.

**The P.C.: What is your most gratifying assignment to date?**

**Walsh:** My most gratifying assignments were both times I was able to command — at the 18th Space Control Squadron at Vandenberg and at Los Angeles Air Force Base. I served as the Commander of Space Base Delta 3 (SBD 3) in El Segundo, Calif. In that position, I was responsible for five squadrons and six staff agencies, supporting over 7,000 personnel with \$1.3 billion in physical plant assets and managed the annual execution of an \$80 million budget.

**The P.C.: Why did you find this assignment most rewarding?**

**Walsh:** It is always very special when you are chosen to lead. Gen Mark Welsh, former chief of staff of the Air Force, said, "Leadership is a gift. It's given by those who follow. You have to be worthy of it." This is one of my favorite quotes about leadership. It is a gift. I feel very fortunate that I was selected to lead, first a squadron of about 120 people plus a detachment of 60 or so in Dahlgren, Va., and then serving as the installation commander in Los Angeles. Taking care of people is the most amazing job in the military



Col. Mia L. Walsh attends JAVA's 2024 Veterans Day event in Washington, D.C. Pictured (from left) are Col. Walsh, former Embassy of Japan Minister and Head of Chancery Masaru Sato, JAVA President Howard High and Taylor Walsh.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA



(From left) Taylor Walsh, Mark Walsh, Col. Mia Walsh and Dylan Walsh at the Rose Bowl for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, where Col. Walsh was honored for her service.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF COL. MIA WALSH

— when you take care of people, they can take care of the mission.

**The P.C.: Who is the one person who is the most influential in your life?**

**Walsh:** I would have to say my husband, Mark. He's my best friend and biggest supporter, and I know he always believes in me and is proud of me. As a prior military officer, I'm proud of who he is and what he stands for — he also believes very much in taking care of people — and I am always meeting people who say how lucky they were to have worked for him. We've been separated for numerous deployments (90 days, 120 days, 180 days) and two long separations of two years each. We make it work because we understand how important serving is to both of us, and we also understand how important family is to both of us.

**The P.C.: You attended your first JAVA event on Veterans Day in 2024, which was held at the Japanese American National Monument in Washington, D.C. In attending that event and meeting other military officers, what did that experience mean to you?**

**Walsh:** My entire family honors those who serve and those who came



**Col. Mia Walsh spoke to members of the Kazuo Masuda Memorial VFW Post 3670 on May 6, 2024. Pictured (from left, front row) are David Uyematsu, Muneo Hamano, Norio Uyematsu, Col. Walsh and Toki Endo; (back row, from left) Ken Hayashi, Tim Yoshinaga, James Styles, David Miyoshi and VFW Commander James Nakamura.**

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

before us on both Veterans Day and Memorial Day. We have always made it a priority to pay homage, every day, but especially on those two days. I very much enjoyed the JAVA event at the Japanese American National Monument and was especially happy to see Norio Uyematsu, who was JAVA's Veterans Day keynote speaker, who I met at the Kazuo Masuda VFW Post 3670 while I was the installation commander at LAAFB. The VFW post kindly asked me to speak, and it was

truly an honor to meet the members of the post. I am not an emotional person, but I found myself getting choked up as I thought about the sacrifices of the many Japanese Americans who served their country so proudly.

**The P.C.: What opportunities are available for women in the U.S. military today?**

**Walsh:** I think for the younger generation, it's important for them to see female leaders who have families

and who make those sacrifices. I think it's not unusual to see that these days, which is nice. I have lots of friends who've made serving our country and having a family work, and I think it's great that we have that opportunity to choose.

**The P.C.: What advice would you give to Japanese Americans considering a career in the U.S. military?**

**Walsh:** I would tell them that it is very honorable to be able to serve your country and that I am grateful for having the opportunity to wear the uniform. Our heritage in uniform lies in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and I am grateful every day for the sacrifices they made.

**The P.C.: What other things would you like people to know?**

**Walsh:** I would also want people to know how much I value the 442nd since I had two uncles who served in the U.S. Army in WWII and all the Japanese men and women who came before me who paved the way so I could serve my country. I'm sure it was not easy, and I am so grateful for their sacrifice and service. I believe very strongly in giving back to the community, and I was blessed to be able to do that while in Los Angeles. ■

## Unique Utah Exhibit Receives Outstanding Achievement Awards

*'Uncovering the Journey' tells the unknown story of Box Elder County Japanese pioneers.*

**By Patti Hirahara,  
P.C. Contributor**

The "Uncovering the Journey: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County" exhibit, curated by staff at the Brigham City Museum in Utah, was honored recently by the Utah Museums Assn. with its Award for Excellence in Exhibit Creation and Community Engagement and the Utah Historical Society with its Outstanding Achievement Award for 2025. The exhibit has also been nominated for multiple state and national awards for excellence.

The exhibit, which held its opening reception during the first Day of Remembrance program in Brigham City, Utah, in February and ran through June, tells an unique story of pioneers who came from Japan in the early 1900s and settled in Box Elder, Weber and Salt Lake Counties.

They became part of the local community and when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942, Utah was fortunate to be outside of the Exclusion

Zone of the states of California, Oregon, Washington and a portion of Arizona.

Persons of Japanese descent who lived in Utah were not incarcerated and could continue their everyday lives and accepted family members to relocate to Utah before they were to be put into American concentration camps.

This year marked the 80th anniversary of the closing of the camps. The resettlement of people who were incarcerated had an important decision to make when they were released in 1945.

There were several families from Heart Mountain, Wyo., and Topaz, Utah, that took the opportunity to resettle in Utah for a second chance at a better life.

One such person whose family resettled in Brigham City in 1945 at the age of 14 was Norio Uyematsu, a Korean War veteran and a 1948 graduate of Box Elder High School.

In 2022, Uyematsu, then 91, wondered if the Brigham City Museum would consider doing an exhibit about the Japanese pioneers of Box Elder County and tell the story of Earl G. Anderson and his



courageous role of offering six Japanese families a place to live and work on his farm in Brigham City in 1945.

Uyematsu's proposal soon became a reality, as the Brigham City Museum created a plan for a 2,000-square-foot exhibit that would become "Uncovering the Journey."

The exhibit's debut in February at the first Day of Remembrance program, held in collaboration with the Wasatch Front North JAACL chapter, became the biggest event in Brigham City's history for the Japanese American community.

According to Brigham City Museum Director Alana

Blumenthal, "Two-thousand-seven-hundred-fifty-six people attended the exhibition — that's about 1,000 more than our average attendance from February-June since 2021. We are grateful to the mayor, city council and all our incredible colleagues at the Brigham City Corp. who supported this vision.

"While creating the exhibit, the Brigham City Museum received many more photos and family histories than they could fit into the exhibit," Blumenthal continued. "But the exhibition is the beginning of the journey, not the end."

The museum has created an online portal of images, videos

and oral histories and is still seeking input as it grows its collections and resources for future exhibits.

Museum staff also acknowledge the generous support of the Honeyville Buddhist Churches, the local Japanese families who brought personal stories through photographs, artifacts and items for visitors to see and the monetary donors who helped finance the endeavor.

The Brigham City Museum is now in talks to create a Japanese American History Endowment to help preserve the collection and develop the creation of future exhibits for years to come.

Uyematsu is extremely proud that JAACL could help contribute to this first in Brigham City and tell a story that needed to be told. As a collaborative effort, the success of this exhibit proves that great things happen when local businesses and community members work together.

**To view the full "Uncovering the Journey: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County" 3-D exhibit, visit <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=gz91ao8SepW>.**

Peter Frandsen and his family. Pictured (from left) are Clara, Peter, Bennett, Emily, Daisy Ray and William.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PETER FRANDSEN



# JACL Faces Its Hardest Question Yet

*Founded in response to injustice and sustained by shared memory, the organization must decide who it wants to be — and who it hopes will carry it forward.*

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, P.C. Contributor

Once, JACL was united by injustices done to its people. The organization’s founding in 1929 focused on many problems facing the Japanese American community, for which Saburo Kido entrusted to the stewardship of the Nisei.

“This could only be done by co-operation,” said Kido, then a JACL leader, in a published report of the organization’s first National Convention.

Back then, the message was clear: Amid a tenuous existence in this country, the JACL provided a sense of shoes-off safety and a space that allowed the Nisei to assume leadership of their own community.

Amid the barren landscape of the World War II camps, this identity continued to crystallize. The victims of mass incarceration gradually became the guardians of civil rights, shaped by a terrible life event that continues to ripple through generations — the WWII incarceration.

But as this unifying identity continues to fray, the question presses harder: Who is the JACL now?

The organization, which is inching closer to celebrating its centennial, bills itself as the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in



Peter Frandsen visits the Vietnam War Memorial during the Washington, D.C., Leadership Summit in 2005.

the U.S. Yet, the membership numbers tell a quieter, more troubling story. For years, membership has been falling precipitously.

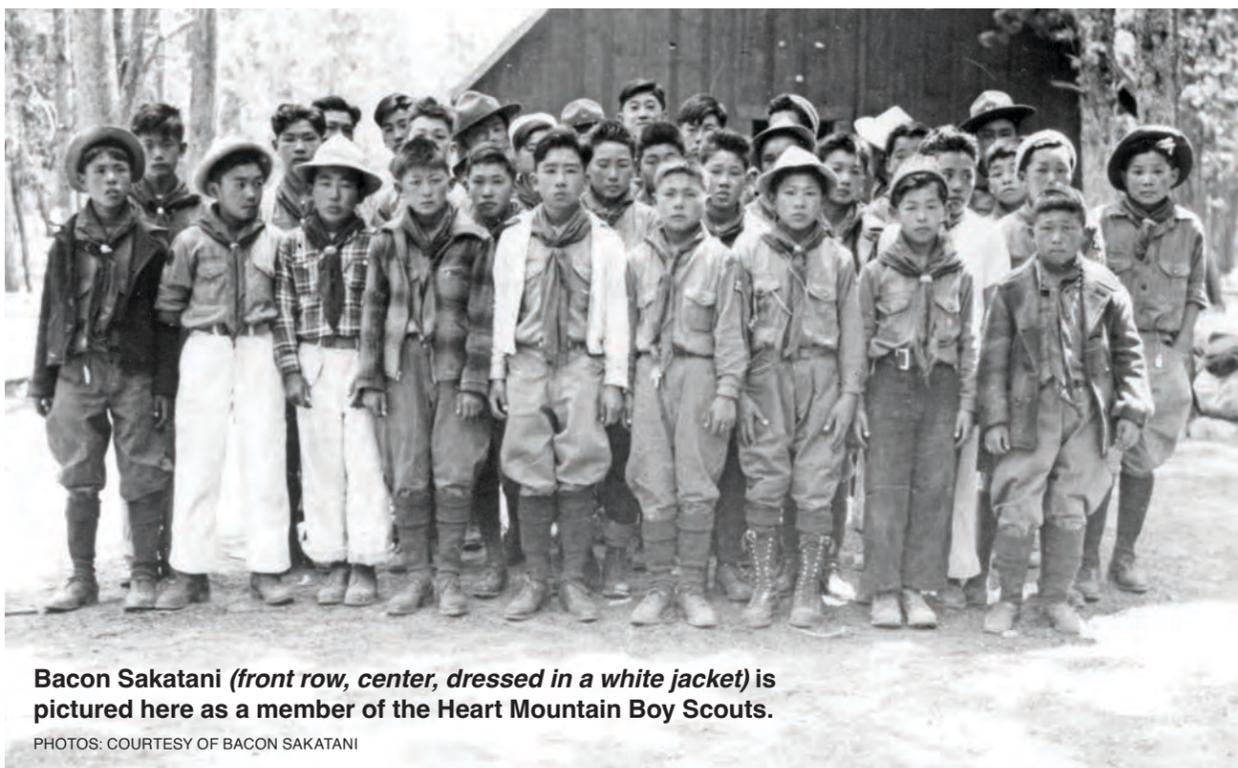
Today, membership hovers just under 7,000 — likely a lower number than the organization experienced in its early years. The problem of dwindling membership has long been whispered about and spoken aloud in broad strokes, but whispers are no longer enough. JACL is facing an inflection point.

“The single most important position is membership,” said Ron Ikejiri, a former JACL Washington, D.C., representative. “If you can’t make membership sales, you have no organization.”

Now, more than ever, JACL must reckon with itself. What does it want to be? And how can it reignite more cooperation in younger generations, who, despite seeing echoes of history in today’s news headlines, do not feel compelled to buy into the organization’s mission statement?

This call for change comes from inside the house. In my early days as the *Pacific Citizen* assistant editor, I committed to memory the names and faces of JACL members who, for every national board meeting in San Francisco, greeted us in hotel lobbies before making the short walk to headquarters. At national conventions, members gathered in what was affectionately called the “peanut gallery” to witness the tedious but earnest process of adopting resolutions and bylaws.

To these members, JACL represented something larger — a moral anchor and a unique sense of comfort, wrote one reader in a letter to the *P.C.* during



Bacon Sakatani (front row, center, dressed in a white jacket) is pictured here as a member of the Heart Mountain Boy Scouts.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BACON SAKATANI



Bacon Sakatani, a longtime San Gabriel Valley JACLER, was a member of the Heart Mountain Boy Scouts.



my tenure, urging for the return of the JACL logo to the front page of the publication because it brought her so much ease during the war years.

These ardent members form the heartbeat of the organization. But to boost membership, JACL needs to cast a wider net and ask itself a difficult question: *Why hasn't it captured the hearts and minds of these devoted members' children and grandchildren?*

### Elusive Hearts

Peter Shigeki Frandsen, 44, grew up adjacent to all things JACL. His family history in the organization runs deep. Since 2004, a student has won a JACL national scholarship named after his grandfather, Shigeki "Shake" Ushio, who helped establish the National JACL Credit Union in Salt Lake City, Utah. Frandsen's uncle, David Ushio, served as JACL national director.

Frandsen grew up attending JACL events with his family. He participated in programs such as the Washington, D.C., Leadership Summit and, for a time, became a member of the Salt Lake City and New York chapters.

"But it wasn't enough to set me on a path," said Frandsen, a pediatric dentist in La Crosse, Wis., about his participation in the JACL.

Life, family and career pulled him in a direction away from the organization. The closest chapter, Wisconsin JACL, is based hundreds of miles away in Milwaukee. To bring Frandsen, a Yonsei, back into the folds of the organization, the barriers of re-entry need to be low. Frandsen reflects on the guard-down relationship he has with his Mormon faith, which allows him space to be himself. No matter where he is, he finds people who, like him, are united in faith.

"It's just easy, you know?" said Frandsen.

From that lens, he wonders if JACL can offer social connection where a person can exhale at the door and enter a safe space. Can it fulfill a communal need that people are not getting in their regular work and community lives?

"If we're in a place where the walls come down easily," said Frandsen. "What is it collectively that we want to do?"

During historic times of crisis and reconciliation, JACL provided its members with tangible services and mutual aid. After the Second World War, the organization helped its members resettle in towns and cities without barbed-wire fences. During the 1980s, pages of this publication became a repository of updates on every step of the Redress Bill.

Once, the Japanese American community was unified by a singular event — a wrong that was done to it. The further away the community gets from the last big injustice, what bonds it together?



**Ron Ikejiri during redress. Pictured (back row, from left) are Karl Nobuyuki, Ron Mamiya, Clifford Uyeda, Ron Ikejiri and John Tateishi; seated (from left) are Senators Spark Matsunaga and Daniel Inouye and Congressmen Robert Matsui and Norman Mineta.**

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVES

For Frandsen, stories of the WWII incarceration, the heroics of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and redress land differently for his children, who don't have the support of a vibrant Japanese American community like he did growing up in Salt Lake City.

The fraying sense of community identity is a problem, according to Ikejiri, who served as the JACL Washington, D.C., representative from 1978-84.

"You have to be rooted in your history," said Ikejiri, 77, a lawyer and former Gardena City Council member. "What are we good at? I think the bottom line is: JACL really has a story to tell about Japanese American history." But stories only matter if people see themselves inside them.

Today, it's difficult to imagine newer JACL members consistently traveling to national conventions simply to observe bylaw debates. Is this apathy or misalignment? Maybe this is because the organization hasn't won the hearts and minds of its people.

"What's really out of whack is the relevancy of the JACL," said Ikejiri, a Sansei. "Our job is to instill upon the younger generations that it's really cool to go out and protect American Constitutional rights."

After a hiatus from JACL, Ikejiri has sent in his 2026 membership dues.

### Make It Cool Again

When I covered JACL events for the *P.C.* as a staff member, I marveled at the grab-bag crowd spanning professions, belief systems and geography — all united by a shared faith of a more perfect union. At national conventions, former Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta would wend through hotel hallways alongside conventiongoers wearing their JACL neck badges.

For those occasions when I met new members, I relied on a well-worn question to break the ice: *Why is JACL important to you?*

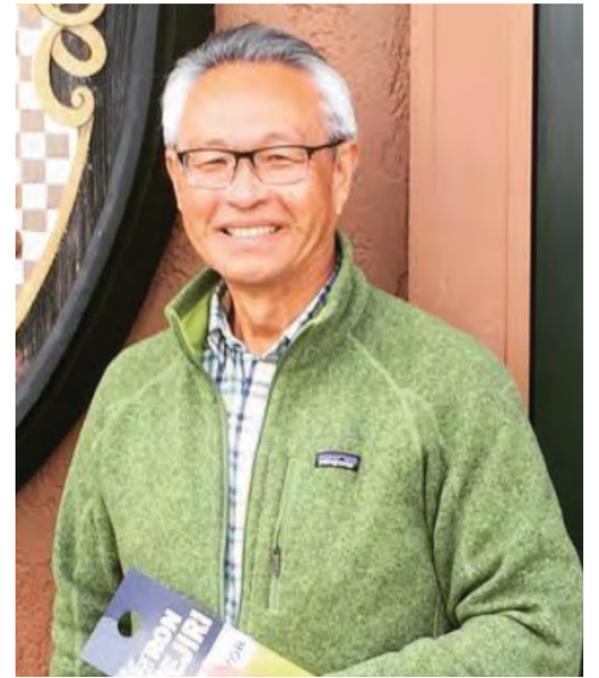
Most responses centered on "never again" or a moral sense of obligation to carry on the work of the Issei and Nisei, who endured unspeakable adversities to ensure a better world for the next generations. Idealism dripped from their mouths as they described this inheritance.

But over time, gradual shifts in attitudes led to seismic changes. At national conventions, youth members' presence was often paid. Chapter delegates sheepishly admitted that they served because no one else would.

This changing attitude mirrors larger cultural changes. Now, echoes of the past are seeping into the present. News of mass incarceration and legal challenges to birthright citizenship sometimes makes it feel like WWII again.

This is part of JACL's reckoning: What principles will galvanize people into action now? Will there be meaning in becoming a card-carrying member again?

This reckoning has been waiting at the organization's



**Ron Ikejiri formerly served as JACL's Washington, D.C., representative from 1978-84.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF RON IKEJIRI

door. Now is the time to let it in.

"History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes," Mark Twain once said.

When the Nisei created the JACL, they likely faced skepticism, too. The Japanese American community is complex and hardly monolithic, but as Kido suggested in 1929, cooperation was enough to begin.

Bacon Sakatani, 96, joined the JACL during the Redress Era. As a child incarcerated at Heart Mountain, he was moved to join when he learned about the illegalities of the WWII incarceration. He called his local JACL chapter and was put to work fundraising. The purpose-driven mission hooked him. He's been a longtime member of the San Gabriel Valley JACL.

"I have a lot of history to talk about," said Sakatani. "It's too bad that we do not have an audience anymore." His children and grandchildren are not members. He speaks plainly about the future, citing high rates of out-marriage and shifting identities.

What does it mean to be Japanese American now? "You have to face reality. You have to face today and the future. We're thinking too much of the past," said Sakatani. "I'm part of the past."

JACL cannot be everything to everyone. But it has to mean something to enough people to survive. The reckoning at its door raises a lot of questions for which there are no easy answers.

I am also a lapsed member.

Since leaving the organization as a staff member, I have also taken my own path away. And yet, when I think about the young Nisei who stood on the precipice of upheaval and built an organization that has endured for almost 100 years, my heart still roots for the JACL.

The question remains — and it is an urgent one: Who does the JACL want to be? ■



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*The Fraud Crisis in America:*

# Fraud Awareness and Experiences among Asian American and Pacific Islander Adults.

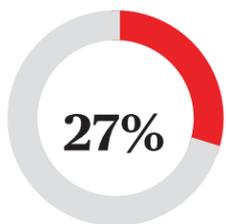
Theft through fraud has risen exponentially over the last five years. According to a recent report from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), fraud losses topped \$12.5 billion in 2024, a 25 percent increase over the prior year. Fraud is a widespread and growing concern across the U.S., affecting individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

## Their Experiences With Fraud

**49%** have encountered at least **one fraud attempt**.



One in four



have reported falling victim to a scam, with an average of \$5,800 stolen.

Most (54%) who fell victim, spoke with a family member or friend about the fraud incident, yet few (32%) reported it to (9%) authorities.

## How They Feel About Fraud

**64%** are **not confident** in their ability to **recognize a fraudulent pitch or offer**.



They are more likely to **view fraud as a criminal act** (84%) rather than as a reflection of the **victim's personal traits or behavior** (56%).



Most adults would like to see more being done about scams and fraud, including, **better reporting mechanisms** (65%), **more support from law enforcement** (58%), **enhanced legal support** (57%), and **increased collaboration between businesses, government, and financial institutions** (56%).

## Their Actions That Pose Risks for Fraud

**67%** use public Wi-Fi without a VPN

**44%** use their social media account to log into other accounts

**25%** use the same password for two or more online accounts

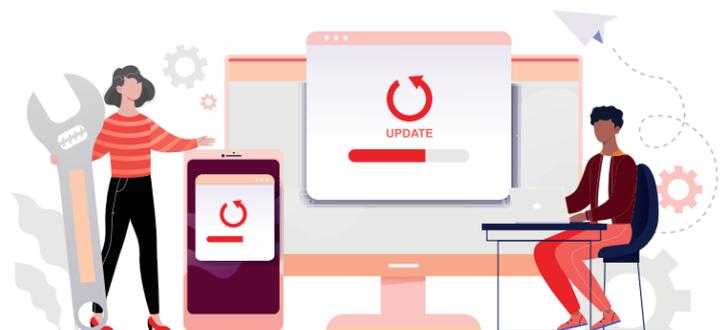
**21%** accept social media friend requests from people they don't know



## Some Good News

**67%** update their devices immediately or via auto-update when a security patch or update is made available.

**65%** use protective software, such as antivirus, anti-spyware, firewall, call- or popup blocking feature or app.

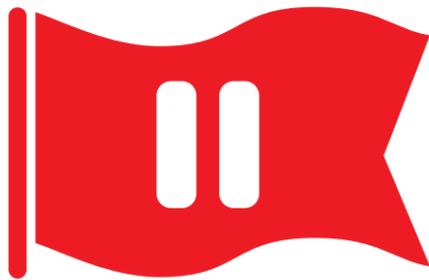


**Source:** Fraud Awareness and Experiences among Asian American and Pacific Islander Adults. Fielded on July 3-23, 2025, the nationally representative survey includes 2,050 Asian American and Pacific Islander adults selected from NORC's Amplify AAPI Panel and from Prodege non-probability panel.

For more information on the survey, contact Alicia Williams, PhD at [arwilliams@aarp.org](mailto:arwilliams@aarp.org)  
For media inquiries, contact [media@aarp.org](mailto:media@aarp.org)



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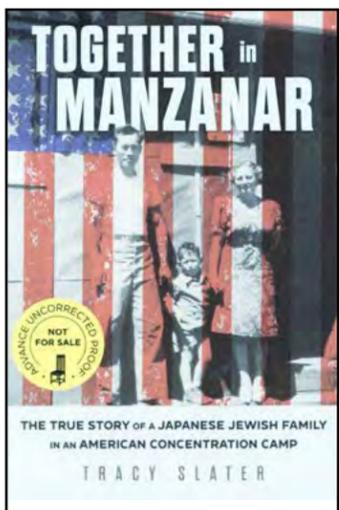
[aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork](https://aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork)

# 'TOGETHER IN MANZANAR' — A Review

By Matthew Weisbly,  
JACL Education  
Programs Manager

Growing up, I thought I was unique in having a Japanese and Jewish family. For much of my childhood, the only people who could relate to that experience were my siblings and some of my cousins, who also happened to be Japanese and Jewish. As I got older and went off to college, I finally found more people who shared that background and eventually discovered an entire community bonded by this identity.

Looking back on my family's history with this unique heritage, I often thought about their experiences. On one side, my Sansei grandfather and his family were forcibly removed from their farm in Northern California and sent to the barren deserts of Arizona, where they remained even after the war ended. On the other, my more distant relatives in Ukraine and Poland, whose fates we would never truly know, were linked to the name Auschwitz-Birkenau in the small fragments we could uncover. It made me wonder if there had ever been anyone like me who lived through the war. For many years, I didn't think there was, until



I found out about "Together in Manzanar: The True Story of a Japanese Jewish Family in an American Concentration Camp."

Written by Tracy Slater, an American writer based in Japan with her family, "Together in Manzanar" tells the true story of the Yonedas: Karl Yoneda, a Nisei labor organizer and activist; his wife, Elaine Buchman Yoneda, a second-generation Jewish American labor activist; and their son, Tommy. Together, they faced the horrors of incarceration.

Though not a long book, coming in at just under 250 pages without the index, it is rich in detail, deeply exploring the Yonedas' lives, especially during the prewar years and throughout their wartime incarceration. While I'll leave it to readers to discover more for themselves, the Yonedas were involved in some of the most significant events that took place in Manzanar during the war. In fact, the name Karl Yoneda may already be familiar to those who know Manzanar's history particularly well.

It's also worth noting that JACL's own history plays a role in the Yonedas' story. Again, I'll leave it to readers to learn more as they go along, but it's important to understand the role that JACL and its members played before, during and after the war. For some, that role was seen as invaluable and just in its actions; for others, JACL remains viewed as a collaborator that caused more harm than good within the Japanese American community.

This is a history that I believe is important for us, as both an organization and a community, to continue with which to reconcile. While that conversation lies beyond the scope of this



(From left) Richard Hirschhaut, Mitch Maki, Yuko Kaifu and Vivian Alberts participate in a panel discussion at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance on May 29 following the premiere of the short documentary "Pilgrimage to Manzanar."

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

article, this story could provide a meaningful starting point for some of these conversations.

In the end, the story of Karl, Elaine and Tommy reminds us that among the more than 125,000 people incarcerated during the war, there are truly 125,000 individual stories and experiences to be shared. Even now, 80 years later, we continue to uncover new stories that expand our collective understanding of and remembrance of the incarceration.

As with many books that attempt to tell a comprehensive account of the incarceration, there is a lot to keep track of, names, locations, organizations and events, which may make the book feel a bit dense at times. Yet, that very detail adds depth and immerses the reader in the experiences of the Yonedas. For anyone who studies or reads about the wartime Japanese American incarceration, this book is certainly one to pick up and add to your reading list.

**"Together in Manzanar: The True Story of a Japanese Jewish Family in an American Concentration Camp" is available for purchase online and in bookstores nationwide.**

# Shared Experiences in 'PILGRIMAGE TO MANZANAR'

A short documentary premieres at L.A.'s Museum of Tolerance.

By P.C. Staff

Members of the Japanese American and Jewish American communities in Los Angeles joined hands earlier this year to celebrate the premiere of the short documentary "Pilgrimage to Manzanar" at the Museum of Tolerance.

The movie, directed by filmmaker Odin Odzil, recalls the Manzanar Pilgrimage that took place in 2023 (see May 19, 2023 Pacific Citizen, [tinyurl.com/ykm9y-3nr](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/ykm9y-3nr)), when members of the American Jewish Committee, which produced the short, participated at the 54th annual gathering at the site of the former War Relocation Authority Center. More than 10,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry and Japanese nationals then-barred from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens were incarcerated at Manzanar, one of 10 WRA camps operated by the federal government during World War II.

The May 29 event was an opportunity for the two communities to explore unity amidst the shared experience of having been "othered" by dominant societal forces. Deputy Consul General of Japan Naoshige Aoshima addressed the audience, as did the AJC's Marcie Goldstein; Odzil; and Vlad

Khaykin, Simon Wiesenthal Center executive vp of social impact and partnerships, North America.

Following the screening, a panel discussion moderated by AJC Los Angeles Regional Director Richard Hirschhaut took place. It featured Go for Broke National Education Center President and CEO Mitch Maki, Japan House President Yuko Kaifu and AJC Intergroup Committee Chair Vivian Alberts, who helped organize the AJC's participation in the Pilgrimage.

To view a trailer to "Pilgrimage to Manzanar," visit [tinyurl.com/mrnnpv624](https://www.tinyurl.com/mrnnpv624).



"Pilgrimage to Manzanar" filmmaker Odin Odzil



Naoshige Aoshima, deputy consul general of Japan

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

## 2026 JACL National Scholarship Applications Now Open!

**SAN FRANCISCO** — The Japanese American Citizens League has announced that the 2026 National Scholarship and Awards Program is now underway. The JACL annually offers approximately 30 college scholarships to students who are incoming college freshmen, undergraduates and graduates, as well as those specializing in law and the creative/performing arts. There are also financial aid scholarships available for those who demonstrate a need for financial assistance.

Scholarship Program guidelines, instructions and applications have been posted on the JACL website at [www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org) and can be accessed by clicking the "Youth" tab on the menu bar.

Freshman applications must be submitted directly by the applicant to National JACL through the online form no later than March 2 at 11:59 p.m. Hawaiian Standard Time.

The freshman applications will then be disseminated to their respective chapters for

review. Chapters will have one month to evaluate their applications and forward the names of the most outstanding applicants to National JACL. It is these applications that shall be forwarded to the National Freshman Scholarship Committee for final selection.

Applications for the non-freshman scholarship categories (undergraduate, graduate, law, creative/performing arts and financial aid) are also to be sent directly by the applicant to National JACL through

the online form no later than April 3, 11:59 p.m. Hawaiian Standard Time.

All those applying to the National JACL Scholarship Program must be a youth/student or individual member of the JACL; a couple/family membership held by a parent does NOT meet this requirement. Applicants must be enrolled in school in fall 2025 to be eligible for a scholarship. If a student has received two National scholarship awards previously, they are no longer



eligible to apply as the limit is two national awards per person.

For more information on the National JACL Scholarship Program, contact Scholarship Program Manager Matthew Weisbly at [scholarships@jacl.org](mailto:scholarships@jacl.org).

# HOUSTON CHAPTER CELEBRATES ITS 50TH

The anniversary banquet recognizes the chapter's longstanding history and honors individuals for their efforts to uplift the AAPI community in Texas.

By Gary Nakamura

**O**n a pleasant fall evening in Texas, the JACL Houston chapter held its 50th anniversary banquet on Oct. 31 at Rice University's Faculty Club, where it celebrated the achievements of the chapter's longstanding history and honored U.S. Rep. Al Green, Judge Peter Sakai and Texas State Rep. Gene Wu.

The event, which welcomed more than 100 attendees and representatives from more than 20 community organizations, began with a cocktail reception and an official welcome by Houston Chapter President Colleen Morimoto, who then introduced the master of ceremony, Gary Nakamura, JACL National vp for planning and development and past chapter president.

Nakamura acknowledged the community representatives and then introduced Japanese Consul General Zentaro Naganuma, Greater LULAC President Sergio Lira, Asian Texans for Justice Executive Director Nabila Mansoor and JACL National President Larry Oda, who each gave congratulatory remarks.



**Pictured at the anniversary banquet are (from left) Marc Kashiwagi, Colleen Morimoto, Congressman Al Green, Consul General Zentaro Naganuma, Satoshi Hamada, Gary Nakamura, Larry Oda, Eric Lindsay and George Hirasaki.**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF JACL HOUSTON CHAPTER

A brief overview of the Houston chapter's major accomplishments from the past 50 years was then given, which included the successful fight to rename Jap Road and Jap Lane in East Texas in the late 1990s, the important role it played in 2009-10 to have the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to the Nisei Veterans of World War II and being named in 2024 the recipient of the George Inagaki JACL Chapter of the Biennium Award at the National Convention in Philadelphia.

Nakamura then presented special awards to three elected officials to recognize their efforts in uplifting the AAPI community in Texas and elevating JACL Houston's stature in the community:

- **The Visionary Leadership Award was presented to Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai**
- **The Courage in Leadership Award was presented to Texas State Rep. Gene Wu**
- **The Champion of Justice & Equality Award was presented to U.S. Rep. Al Green.**

Following the awards ceremony, Nakamura announced that the National Japanese American Baseball Exhibit will be officially launching in Houston in the spring.

The traveling exhibit will be on display at the main gallery of the Central Library in downtown Houston, the flagship library of the Houston Public Library System, from the beginning of March through the end of May 2026 to celebrate AANHPI Heritage Month.

National JACL, the Nisei Baseball Research Project and JACL Houston

are teaming up to then display the exhibit around the country to educate the American public about the history of the Japanese American community through the prism of baseball.

The exhibit will tell the story of how the Issei and Nisei pioneer Japanese American baseball players built the foundation of their presence in the sport a century ago and paved the way for the Japanese and Asian baseball stars who are now playing in Major League Baseball.

On hand to speak about the goals of the baseball exhibit and give historical context to the displayed artifacts that guests were able to view during the event's cocktail hour were Kerry Nakagawa, president and founder of NBRP, and Bill Staples, NBRP board member.

The evening's celebration was an enormous success for the chapter.

"It was a great event . . . having all those high-profile people there, Al Green, Peter Sakai, Gene Wu, plus all the coalition friends . . . made it that much more enjoyable," said Oda.

The Houston Chapter looks forward to a very busy but exciting year ahead, starting with the Day of Remembrance program in February at Rice University that will feature guest speaker Don Tamaki, as well as the baseball exhibit's official grand opening in March. ■



**Historical baseball artifacts and photographs on display at the banquet**

## LITTLE TOKYO HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEEKS ENTRIES FOR 2026 SHORT STORY CONTEST

**LOS ANGELES** — The Little Tokyo Historical Society, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2026, seeks fictional short stories for its 13th annual Imagine Little Tokyo short story contest in the categories of English language, Japanese language and youth (18 and younger). The deadline to enter is Feb. 28, midnight Pacific Time.

The contest, which is presented by LTHS in partnership with the Japanese American National Mu-

seum's Discover Nikkei project, seeks to raise awareness of Little Tokyo through a creative story that takes place in Little Tokyo.

The story has to be fictional and set in a current, past or future Little Tokyo in the City of Los Angeles. The short story committee will be looking specifically for stories that capture the spirit and sense of Little Tokyo.

Both generative AI and plagiarism are strictly prohibited. Each category winner will be

awarded \$500 in cash with their short story being published in Discover Nikkei and the Little Tokyo Historical Society website.

A special anniversary hybrid (in-person and virtual) award ceremony and dramatic readings of the winning stories are also being planned for 2026 at the Japanese American National Museum.

**For information and guidelines, refer to the LTHS's website at <https://www.littletokyohs.org/>.**



# Mount Olympus

Holiday Greetings from Utah's

## *Mount Olympus Chapter*

The Mount Olympus JACL Executive Board wishes to express gratitude to our retiring board members for their many years of dedicated service to the chapter.

**Sadie Yoshimura (50+ years)**  
**Amy Tomita (50+ years)**  
**Reid Tateoka**  
**Noelle Howe**



Congratulations to our youth members who were recipients of JACL National scholarships in 2025:

- **Evan Lee**, Alice Yuriko Endo Memorial Scholarship
- **Mariko Jessop**, Shigeki "Shake" Ushio Memorial Scholarship
- **Carli Mano**, Aiko Susanna Tashiro Hiratsuka Memorial Performing Arts Scholarship

And congratulations to our youth members who received Mount Olympus chapter scholarships:

**Mariko Jessop and Miriana Sakamoto**

**May 2026 bring a year full of new opportunities and endless possibilities!**

# San Diego

## **Happy Holidays!** *from the San Diego JACL*

**Ada Shido**  
**Alex Yamashiro\***  
**Alice Butcher**  
**Carol Tohsaku**  
**Chiho Fell**  
**Cory Mitsui\***  
**Janet Hamada Kelley**  
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**Dr. Mits Tomita**  
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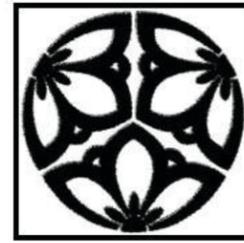


JAPANESE AMERICAN  
CITIZENS LEAGUE

\* 2025 officers

**Love, Peace and Joy in 2026!**

# Dayton



PEACE

and

HAPPY NEW YEAR  
2026

From the members of the

DAYTON CHAPTER JACL  
Dayton, Ohio

[www.daytonjacl.org](http://www.daytonjacl.org)

# Washington, D. C.

*Wishing*

PEACE & HEALTH

to ALL in the New Year!



from your friends at the  
JACL DC Chapter

Give a gift that  
tells an important  
American story,  
Our story.



[jacl-dc.org](http://jacl-dc.org)



(From left) Dan Ball, Andrea Agana and Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong observe the vessel on July 23 at the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. Its next destination: returning to Hiroshima.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF OREGON



Dan Ball hands over the vessel to JAMO Executive Director Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong for her to take to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Japan.

## Reflections

# RETURNING HOME: A JOURNEY OF REMEMBRANCE AND RECONCILIATION AT HIROSHIMA'S 80TH ANNIVERSARY

By Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong, Executive Director, Japanese American Museum of Oregon

August marked the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, a milestone that drew survivors, descendants and peace advocates from around the world to Japan's Peace Memorial Ceremony on Aug. 6. I was among them, and my journey to Hiroshima carried profound personal significance — a pilgrimage to honor family, reconnect with ancestral roots and facilitate an unexpected act of historical reconciliation.

The ceremony drew approximately 55,000 attendees, including representatives from 120 countries and territories. United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu delivered a message from Secretary-General António Guterres, paying tribute to the *hibakusha* — the atomic bomb survivors — whose voices have become a moral force for peace.

The ceremony followed its traditional format: At exactly 8:15 a.m., the moment the bomb exploded 80 years ago, attendees observed a moment of silence while the Peace Bell rang. Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui warned of the dangers of rising global militarism, criticizing world leaders who argue that nuclear weapons are necessary for national security.

With the number of surviving *hibakusha* now below 100,000 and their average age exceeding 86, this 80th anniversary holds a particular poignancy as likely the last major milestone many will witness.

### A PERSONAL CALLING

My journey began not with meticulous planning, but with something deeper. Last year, I experienced what can only be described as an ancestral calling — a profound yearning to return to Japan for this commemorative event. The pull was intensely personal: My grandfather's cousin perished in the bombing eight decades ago, one of an estimated 140,000 who lost their lives by the end of 1945.

I felt compelled to be there. It was about honoring my ancestor and finally connecting with the land my family left behind so long ago.

That connection became literal when I stood on the shores of Hiroshima Bay, my feet touching the sand and water — a symbolic reunion with my ancestral homeland after generations of separation.

### AN HONORED GUEST OF THE SASAKI FAMILY

The experience took on even greater significance when I received an invitation to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony as a guest of Masahiro Sasaki and his family. Sasaki is the older brother of Sadako Sasaki, whose story has become synonymous with Hiroshima's message of peace.

Sadako, who developed leukemia as a result of radiation exposure from the bombing, famously folded paper cranes during her illness, inspiring the international symbol of peace that now graces Hiroshima's Children's Peace Monument.

It was incredibly emotional and touching to be with the Sasaki family on this day to honor my ancestor alongside them and commemorate all who lost their lives on that fateful morning. Words cannot fully capture what it meant to share that space with a community I had never been a part of, yet felt completely welcomed. I felt loved and cared for. That's what true community is supposed to be.

### AN UNEXPECTED MISSION OF REPATRIATION

What began as a personal pilgrimage evolved to include an unexpected responsibility. Before departing Oregon, Andrea Agana, a supporter of our museum, introduced me to her friend, Dan Ball, an Oregonian who possessed a remarkable artifact with its own Hiroshima story.

The object — a brass vessel believed to have served as an incense holder in a Buddhist temple — had survived the atomic bombing 80 years ago. As a child, Ball's father served as a judge advocate general, stationed in Tokyo. His family visited Hiroshima in 1950 or 1951, where his mother asked his father to purchase this brass vessel.

During that visit, a moment occurred that would shape young Ball's understanding of war's true cost. Speaking to a man by a ditch, the boy asked innocently, "Why are there so many dragonflies?" The man looked at him and replied, "Your bombs killed

many birds. They are no longer able to control the insects."

It was in that moment that Ball felt the bitter legacy of war and the use of the atomic bomb — a realization of the destruction wrought not only upon humanity but also upon the environment itself. He never forgot, and he resolved that such devastation should never be repeated.

Ball had long wished to return the vessel to its homeland, and my journey provided the perfect opportunity. I had met Yoshifumi Ishida, director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, earlier this year in March as part of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation and was able to communicate Ball's wish to donate the artifact to their museum, which they gladly accepted.

Being able to facilitate the repatriation of this object and fulfill Ball's wishes made the trip even more meaningful for me. It felt like another piece of history coming full circle, another small act of healing across the decades.

I delivered the brass vessel to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where it now resides in its collection. It will serve as both artifact and testament — a silent witness to destruction that ultimately found its way home, carrying with it the story of a child's awakening to war's true cost and an adult's commitment to remembrance and reconciliation.

### FINDING MYSELF IN THE LAND OF MY ANCESTORS

This experience was nothing short of extraordinary. Standing in my ancestral homeland, surrounded by a community I had often felt disconnected from, something profound shifted within me. For the first time in my life, I truly felt Japanese — not as an abstract concept or a distant heritage, but as a lived reality, rooted in the soil of Hiroshima and embraced by my people.

The sense of belonging I experienced has transformed me. I know now that I will return to Japan to continue deepening this connection that has awakened in my soul.

But beyond my own journey, I hope that my story inspires others to seek out their own ancestral homelands to walk the paths their families once walked and connect with their ancestors in whatever way feels meaningful to them.

These connections — to land, to community, to those who came before us — have the power to heal, complete us and remind us of who we truly are. We are never as disconnected from our roots as we might believe; sometimes, we simply need to take that first step home.

*Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong is executive director of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. She is a booster of the Portland chapter of the JACL.*



This brass vessel survived the Hiroshima bombing. Inscriptions are the names of people who donated to create this vessel.

PHOTO: ANDREA AGANA



(From left) Natsuki Okita, Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong and Mari Shimomura following the transfer of the brass vessel to the stewardship of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum on Aug. 5

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF JAMO



Pictured (from left) are Ched Magaspar, Masahiro Sasaki, Sue DiCicco Smith, Sumiyuki Sasaki, Yuji Sasaki, Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong and Noël Southall at the Children's Peace Memorial on the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima event at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on Aug. 6.



“Morimoto’s Sushi Master” features (from left) host Lyrica Okano, chef Masaharu Morimoto and judge Phillip Frankland Lee.



Chef Masaharu Morimoto

**The P.C.:** How do you feel about the California Roll, which my mother calls “*inchiki* (fake) sushi”?

**Morimoto:** It is true, it is not a traditional Japanese sushi roll, but it is very important. For many, many people outside of Japan, the California Roll was the very first sushi they tried. It was easy to eat because it has no raw fish and has helped millions of people feel comfortable trying sushi. It helped make sushi popular around the world. It is not traditional, but I respect its role in opening the door for so many people and appreciate *kanikama* (imitation crab) for the role it played in my upbringing.

## BUILDING A GLOBAL BRAND

*Chef Masaharu Morimoto continues to build his food empire with a TV series and his ever-growing restaurants.*

By **Gil Asakawa**,  
P.C. Contributor

**Y**ou’d be hard-pressed to find a Japanese chef that’s better-known in the West as Masaharu Morimoto. Sure, Rocky Aoki brought Benihana to New York City in 1964, but he wasn’t a chef, just a brilliant entrepreneur who wanted to introduce elements of Japanese food to America. And Nobu Matsuhisa became famous for his international chain of high-end restaurants combining Japanese with Peruvian cuisines.

But Morimoto wins the celebrity sweepstakes hands-down because he has built his brand with a savvy mix of restaurants and TV appearances in the Food Network and streaming media age.

The 70-year-old Hiroshima-born chef came to the U.S. in the 1980s and eventually worked for Matsuhisa’s flagship Nobu restaurant in New York City. In 1998, Morimoto found his brand identity on the original Japanese version of “Iron Chef,” battling other chefs with creative, East-eats-West combinations of ingredients and presentations.

He became the most familiar Japanese face (except for part-Japanese and Filipino actor Mark Dacascos, who played the role of “The Chairman” in the long-running series) of “Iron Chef America” when Food Network brought the cooking competition to American audiences in 2005.

Morimoto wielded his knives on “Iron Chef America” until 2012 but focused mainly on running restaurants, including his newest, which opened this year, MM by Morimoto in Montclair, N.J. But in 2023, he returned to the small screen to helm “Morimoto’s Sushi Master” on the Roku streaming platform.

The series has sushi chefs from across the U.S. competing to win Morimoto’s nod as the champion after tackling a series of challenges making all types of sushi. The series, led by Morimoto and hosted by Lyrica Okano and featuring judge Phillip Frankland Lee, completed

Season 1 with champion Frances Tariga, who took home a \$25,000 grand prize; Season 2 is now available to stream for free on the Roku Channel.

Morimoto spoke recently with **Gil Asakawa** for the *Pacific Citizen* about his ever-growing global food empire, culinary career and what he thinks will be the “next big food” from Japan to make it big in the U.S.

**The Pacific Citizen:** How do you feel about pronunciations? So many Japanese words are mispronounced by non-Japanese and personally, including some of the chefs competing on “Morimoto’s Sushi Master.”

**Masaharu Morimoto:** Pronunciation is something I do notice. It is true that Japanese sounds can be challenging for people who do not speak the language, and I truly appreciate the effort everyone makes to use the Japanese words when they talk about our food. For me, this is not about needing perfect Japanese speech. It is about showing respect for the food itself, for its long history, and for the culture where it comes from. When you try to say the name of a dish or an ingredient correctly, it helps you feel a stronger connection to it. It makes the experience of enjoying the food even deeper. So, I am always grateful for the effort people put into trying.

**The P.C.:** You came to America pretty young in 1985, after having a restaurant in your hometown of Hiroshima. How did you come to develop your “fusion” vision for Japanese food in the U.S.?

**Morimoto:** When I came to America, it was a completely new environment for me. I first worked in traditional Japanese restaurants here. But I saw so many different ingredients available, some I missed from Japan, but also many wonderful things I had never used before. My idea of “fusion” didn’t start from a plan. It happened naturally. I wanted to use my Japanese cooking skills and spirit as the base because that is who I am, but also use the great ingredients and ideas I found here in America. It was just my way of cooking, growing and changing in

a new place.

**The P.C.:** You worked for a time at Nobu in NYC — you have seen the acceptance of Japanese cuisine in America. Are you surprised at how *Nihonshoku* has been accepted even in Middle America, not just in the major cities?

**Morimoto:** Working at Nobu in New York was a great experience. We saw how much people in a big American city loved Japanese food, especially sushi, and it’s been great seeing the appreciation continue to spread throughout America. It makes me very happy. It shows that people are open, curious and like trying new foods. It is wonderful to see Japanese cuisine become something that people enjoy in so many different parts of the country, not just in big cities.

**The P.C.:** How do you feel about the fact that young people in the U.S. can today buy sushi in supermarkets across the country, not exactly the best quality but as a display of their sophistication?

**Morimoto:** The most important thing with sushi, especially for raw fish, is always the quality and safety. This is very important for your health. When you eat raw fish, I only recommend eating it if it is labeled “sushi-grade,” as it has been prepared under strict rules to control bacteria and parasites. If it does not have that label, eating it raw is risky. If you buy fish from the store, look for it to be firm and have a bright color. But even with that, you must still be very careful about eating it raw.

**The P.C.:** You are the most familiar Japanese chef in the West, starting with your role in “Iron Chef.” Looking back on your career, are you surprised that you have become a worldwide celebrity, like a movie star of the culinary world?

**Morimoto:** Before the show, I was just a chef, focusing only on cooking good food in the kitchen. To be recognized all over the world is still surprising to me. I only wanted to be a better chef and share my passion for food. But if being known helps more people learn about Japanese food, about cooking, about enjoying meals, then I am happy for it. It gives me a bigger voice to talk about what I love. My work is still in the kitchen, but now many more people are watching.

**The P.C.:** After sushi and ramen and maybe tonkatsu, what do you predict will be the next Japanese dish or ingredient to become popular in the West?

**Morimoto:** I think the next thing to become really popular in the West could be different kinds of donburi. There are many kinds, like oyakodon, katsudon, or gyudon. Donburi is a complete, satisfying meal, and it uses ingredients that many people already know and like, served in a comforting way. I think donburi bowls are easy for people to try and love, and there are so many types that people won’t get tired of them.

*Season 2 of “Morimoto’s Sushi Master” is available to view for free on the Roku Channel streaming platform at <https://therokuchannel.roku.com/details/c362803410fcbd4a550cddfa99f908b3/morimotos-sushi-master>.*



Eight new chefs are competing for the Season 2 title on “Morimoto’s Sushi Master.”

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ROKU CHANNEL

# Eden Township

*Best wishes for a  
Healthy and Happy 2026!*  
Kathy and Bill Asai

Holiday Best Wishes  
**Glen and Georgene  
DEARDORFF**  
Justin, Jake, Jessica, Joshua,  
Ian, EmmaJean, Alice

Happy Holidays  
**Gary and Judy  
Oda**

SEASON'S GREETINGS!  
**Digger, Agnes  
& Rik  
Sasaki**



Season's Greetings from  
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- |                   |                    |                   |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Allen, Keiko      | Kovenich, Kiyoko   | Samukawa, Masa    |
| Allamano, Miyuki  | Kuritsubo, Ruby    | Sasaki, Agnes     |
| Azouri, Tina      | Kusano, Michiko    | Sasaki, Dick      |
| Chan, Josephine   | Leong, Yuko        | Seibel, Coco      |
| Chang, Marlene    | Lim, Judy          | Shinoda, Karen    |
| Clark, Keiko      | Loh, Frances       | Smart, Atsuko     |
| Ford, Ryuko       | Maeda, Chiye       | Suzuki, Kimiko    |
| Hamasaki, MaryAnn | Makishima, Joanne  | Takahashi, Cathy  |
| Hashimoto, Daphne | Mar, Joannie       | Takahashi, Clyde  |
| Hashimoto, Joyce  | Masuda, Agnes      | Takeuchi, James   |
| Honda, Pam        | Matsumoto, Michiko | Tamura, Milton    |
| Ide, Gorden       | Merrill, Mieko     | Tanaka, Kimi      |
| Isaacs, Sawako    | Myoraku, Katashi   | Tanaka, Shiro     |
| Iwane, Fujiko     | Nakamura, Eiichi   | Teshima, Mary     |
| Jaimes, Satomi    | Nakano, Sonny      | Tsubori, Tom      |
| Jang, Roxanne     | Nakaya, Chiyo      | Tsuno, Yoko       |
| Kadoyama, May     | Neishi, Alice      | Yamamoto, Jean    |
| Kalvans, Tami     | Neishi, John       | Yamamoto, Suzanne |
| Kaneshige, Claire | Norris, Etsuko     | Yanagi, Amy       |
| Kanzaki, Amy      | Ogata, Judy        | Yanagi, Dorothy   |
| Kawabata, Gary    | Pence, Lys         | Yanagi, Gayle     |
| Kawabata, Robbin  | Prior, Rimiko      | Yokomizo, Alice   |
| Kishi, Jane       | Sakamoto, Fumiko   | Yokomizo, James   |
| Konno, Amy        | Samukawa, Carol    | Yokomizo, Sally   |

Happy Holidays

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*Happy Holidays!*



Happy Holidays!

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Wishing you peace,  
courage, and community in  
the year ahead.

Robbin Kawabata & Carl S.  
Gutekunst and family

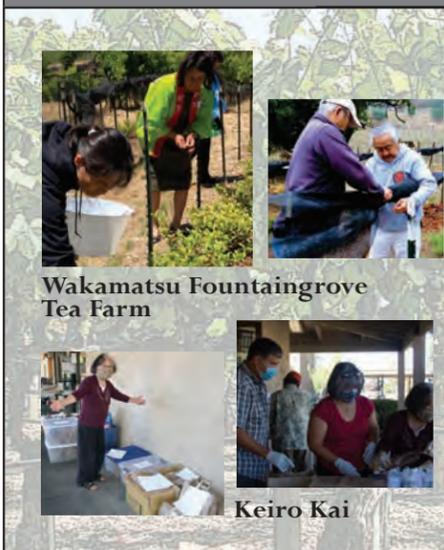
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Happy Holidays  
**Ted & Susan  
Tanisawa**

# Sonoma County



**Happy Holidays  
and  
Best Wishes  
for a  
Prosperous and Joyful  
New Year**



from  
**The Japanese American Citizens League  
Sonoma County Chapter**

Sonoma County JAACL in service to our community  
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## Hoosier

## New Mexico

## Silicon Valley

Holiday Greetings for 2025

**Hoosier JAACL**  
Indianapolis, Indiana

*Warmest Wishes*

FROM

The New Mexico Chapter of JAACL

*Best wishes for a safe and happy  
holiday season!*

**Silicon Valley JAACL**  
bridging generations  
svjacl.wordpress.com

# Ventura County



## 2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Ventura County chapter of JACL grants annual local scholarships to exceptional high school seniors to continue raising awareness in our community about Japanese American history and civil rights. We strongly believe in encouraging and equipping the younger generation to be advocates in their undergraduate careers and beyond. Please join us in celebrating our 2025 Ventura County Scholars!



**Alexa Koniares**

Hitoshi "Harry" Kajihara Memorial Scholarship

Westlake High School → Political Science @ UC Berkeley

2025 JACL National Scholarship Awardee



**Abigail Inouye**

Yoshiro "Yosh" Katsura Memorial Scholarship

Newbury Park High School → Architecture @ Cal Poly SLO



**Aiko Bailey**

Toshiko Higa & Sadako Okinawa Scholarship

Rio Mesa High School → Biochemistry @ UCSB



**Noa Nakagawa**

Jennie & Pat Taketa Memorial Scholarship

Westlake High School → Kinesiology @ SDSU



**Ceora Tan**

Dr. Tom Taketa Memorial Scholarship

Westlake High School → Biopsychology @ UCSB



**Lisseth Solano**

2025 VCJACL Scholarship

Channel Islands High School → Environmental Science @ Oxnard College



**Jacob McDonough**

2025 VCJACL Scholarship

Camarillo High School → Mechanical Engineering @ Moorpark College



**Gemma Woodcock**

2025 VCJACL Scholarship

Ventura High School → Berklee College of Music



**Mary Galbreath**

VCJACL Service Award

Oxnard Middle College High School → Cal Poly Pomona

A special thank you to the families of our memorial scholarships. ❤️  
If you are interested in creating a scholarship or learning more, please email [venturacountyjacl@gmail.com](mailto:venturacountyjacl@gmail.com)

## Venice-WLA

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Peace and Good Health to All

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[venicewlajacl@gmail.com](mailto:venicewlajacl@gmail.com)

## Puyallup Valley

The Puyallup Valley JACL wishes you

Season's Greetings

Remembrance Gallery



Special thanks to our volunteers and guests to the Remembrance Gallery

## Pocatello-Blackfoot



WISHING YOU  
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**  
POCATELLO-BLACKFOOT



# Detroit

## SEASONS GREETINGS and BEST WISHES FOR 2026

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Soh Suzuki & Dessa

Mika Kennedy

Ann O'Neill

Terry & Holly Fujishige

Irenita Shimoura - Andria, Celeste & Caitlin

Bill Kubota & Sharon MacDonell

Mark Peters & Nancy Sugimoto - Daniel, Matthew & Adam

Don & Marilyn Schlieff



**FROM  
DETROIT CHAPTER JAACL**

# Fresno



**BEST WISHES FOR A  
HEALTHY AND HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!**

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*The Pacific Citizen  
thanks the many  
Spring Campaign  
contributors throughout  
2025 and appreciates the  
kind and encouraging  
thoughts...always!*

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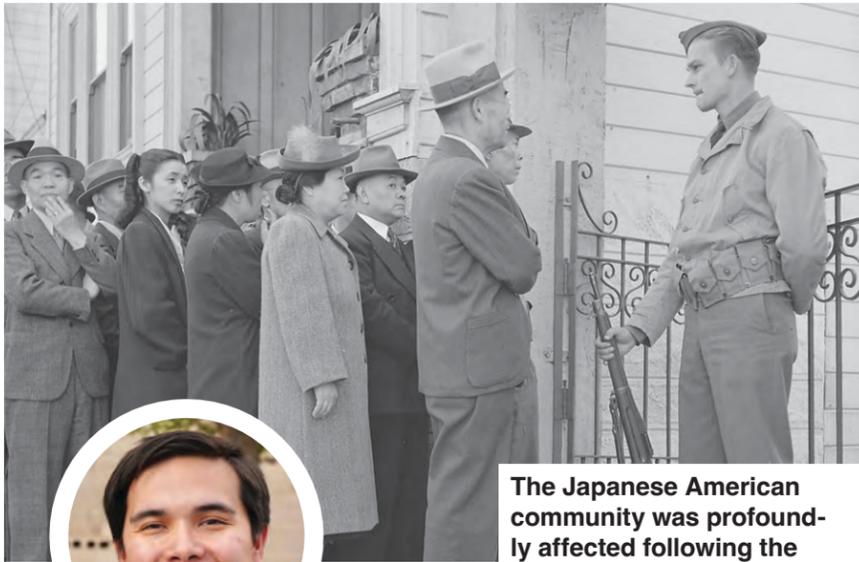
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# REFLECTIONS | Reflections on Pearl Harbor and the Aftermath of the Alien Enemies Act



The Japanese American community was profoundly affected following the Empire of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent events of World War II.

## Pearl Harbor Day Reflection

By Matthew Marumoto, JACL Daniel K. Inouye Policy Fellow

Eighty-four years ago, the world changed forever when the Empire of Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The Japanese American community was profoundly affected, having their lives turned upside down.

Following the attack, the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 was invoked, leading to the internment of over 31,000 Japanese, German, Italian and Japanese Latin Americans.

This was followed by Executive Order 9066, which led to the wider incarceration of over 125,000 Japanese Americans. The consequences of the internment and incarceration during World War II are still being felt to this day and are still not entirely known.

Just this year, the Alien Enemies Act was invoked for the fourth time, marking the first such invocation outside wartime and serving as a sweeping and legally dubious deportation authority.

Alongside the 2025 invocation, we are seeing things that are akin to what our community saw in the

past. Large-scale raids from federal police are disappearing members of immigrant communities, and former internment sites, such as Fort Bliss in West Texas, are being reopened to confine migrants.

In October, I had the great honor of leading a lecture on the history of the Alien Enemies Act, followed by an advocacy training with the support of JACL National and the JACL Salt Lake City chapter. This event is part of the JACL's broader efforts to educate the public about the impact the AEA had on our community and how to push back against its illegal invocation in 2025.

As we wait for the case *W.M.M. v. Trump*, the primary challenge to the invocation of the AEA, to return to the Supreme Court, we are continuing to educate our community and push for the passage of the Neighbors Not Enemies Act on Capitol Hill.

Now more than ever, the Japanese American community can make a substantial impact by making our voices heard. Our community possesses a unique and important voice in calling for the United States to stop repeating the most shameful parts of our history.

Call your legislators, educate your friends and family and spread the word — no action is too small. Together, we can ensure that we keep the promise of "Never Again."



Daniel K. Inouye Fellow Matt Marumoto presents the history of the Alien Enemies Act for the JACL Salt Lake City chapter.

PHOTO: SHELDON MARUMOTO



(Left) A family photo of Kahei Sam Morikawa, Masano Nakatsuka and family

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MORIKAWA FAMILY



Katie Masano Hill and Mollie Pressler of Camp Lordsburg at the Lordsburg Museum

PHOTO: JULIE ABO

## From Issei to Gosei, Pearl Harbor Day Reflection

By Katie Masano Hill, JACL Norman Y. Mineta Policy Fellow

I began my journey as the Norman Y. Mineta Fellow with JACL at the end of January, unaware that history would soon echo into the present.

Less than two months into my fellowship, the Alien Enemies Act, a law used to justify the detention of Japanese immigrants immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and during World War II, was invoked.

This law, which allowed the government to arrest, detain and imprison people based solely on their nationality, resulted in the incarceration of thousands of Issei under suspicion, even though not a single person was ever found to be a traitor.

On the 84th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, we must seize this moment to honor their resilience and remember the hardships the Issei faced. These experiences resonate today as we confront ongoing immigration injustices, including the reopening of Fort Bliss as the largest ICE detention center in the United States, reminding us of the dangerous continuity of xenophobia and systemic racism.

While working to repeal the AEA, I discovered that I am a descendant of those affected by it. I had always thought my family's story was limited to Tule Lake and Heart Mountain, but it reaches far beyond, spanning Fort Missoula, Santa Fe, Lordsburg, Topaz and Fort Bliss, where my relative, Kahei Sam Morikawa, was interned.

Kahei's story, like many others, is essential for understanding the harm and long-term ramifications of the AEA. Through my fellowship, not only have I learned about my own history, but I have also helped share these stories and honor them in person.

I attended the JACL National Convention in Albuquerque, where the AEA Stories project was featured, traveled to Santa Fe to visit the historical marker alongside fellow descendants and joined a remembrance and incense ceremony at the site in Lordsburg where two Issei were killed.

The work continues. Through the AEA Stories Project and efforts to expand the descendant amicus brief, we honor these histories while confronting present injustices.

As you read this reflection, I will be in Japan on the Kakehashi Project, a journey that brings the story full circle. From the Issei who were forcibly interned because of their heritage, to the picture bride Masano I am named after, to me as a Gosei, the effects of the AEA continue to echo across generations.

In the wake of the Pearl Harbor anniversary, I am reminded that the Issei endured unimaginable hardship for the sake of their children, *kodomo no tame ni*. This journey, too, is part of that legacy: a continuation of their hope that future generations might live with dignity, remembrance and justice.

*Katie Masano Hill and Matthew Marumoto are policy fellows for the JACL. They are based in the organization's Washington, D.C., office.*

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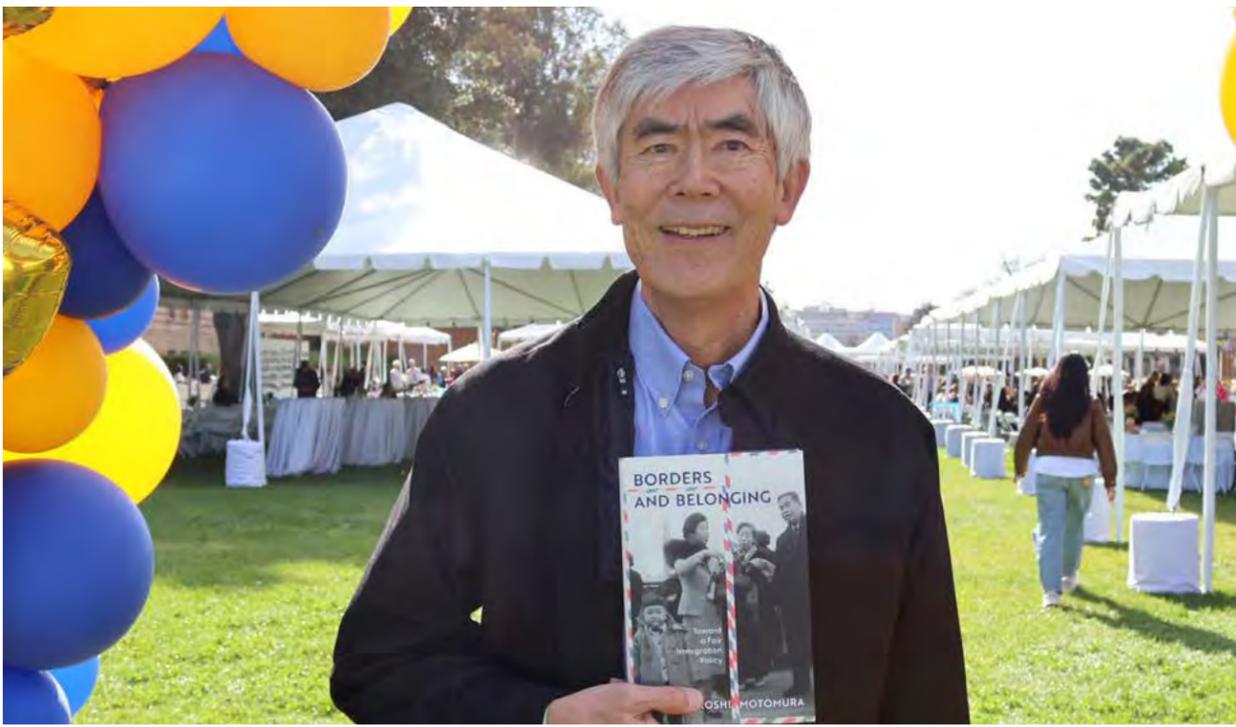
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Hiroshi Motomura, the UCLA School of Law's Susan Westerberg Prager Distinguished Professor of Law, displays his new book "Borders and Belonging" at the law school's 75th anniversary event on April 4.

## Expert Re-Revisits Immigration

*Law Professor Hiroshi Motomura's third book on the subject arrives amid targeting of 14th Amendment, immigrant bashing.*

By George Toshio Johnston,  
P.C. Senior Editor

In recent weeks, the president of the United States was reported to have stated that he was strongly in favor of "reverse migration," wanted to "permanently pause migration" from poorer nations and end "federal benefits and subsidies for those who are not U.S. citizens," as well as "denaturalize people 'who undermine domestic tranquility.'" He also vowed to "deport foreign nationals deemed 'noncompatible with Western Civilization.'"

This was followed by more invective, with the president writing on social media that he would send Somalis in America "back to where they came from."

For context, the president made those pronouncements after an Afghan immigrant, here legally, traveled cross-country to New York City and shot at National Guard troops deployed by the White House, killing one and severely wounding another.

The president's remarks about America's Somali community, meantime, came after news of a large-scale grift in Minnesota — home to 84,000\* people of Somali descent in the Twin Cities — in which many of the defendants charged with defrauding the government of Covid-19 relief funds meant to feed children were of U.S. citizens of Somali ancestry.

History tells us, of course, that Americans who share the president's sentiments about fellow Americans who are not of the white Anglo Saxon Protestant or Northern European persuasion is almost as old as — maybe older than — the republic itself.

What is seemingly different in 2025, what is shocking and surprising, is that the nation's commander-in-chief would and could make those statements so openly, so directly and so shamelessly.



For Hiroshi Motomura, a professor at the UCLA School of Law, where he teaches immigration law, immigrants' rights and the Immigrant's Rights Policy Clinic, though he might be shocked at the blatant nature of the president's recent statements, it would be a pretty safe bet that he was not all that surprised at what was said. "Everything that Trump is doing is from a certain playbook, and that playbook has been around for a while," he told the Pacific Citizen.

As the author of 2025's "Borders and Belonging: Toward a Fair Immigration Policy," it would also be a pretty safe bet that Motomura knows of what he speaks, with "Borders" as his third book on immigra-

tion law and policy. His first was 2006's "Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States," and his second was 2014's "Immigration Outside the Law." (All three are published by the Oxford University Press.)

But his award-winning books — "Americans in Waiting" won the Association of American Publishers Professional and Scholarly Publishing Award as that year's best book in Law and Legal Studies, and "Immigration Outside the Law" won the same award for that year, along with it being chosen as the Association of College and Research Libraries' Choice Outstanding Academic Title — are just part of Motomura's bona fides.

Prior to joining UCLA School of Law's permanent faculty in 2008 as the Susan Westerberg Prager Distinguished Professor of Law and serving as the faculty co-director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy, Motomura was the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He was also the Nicholas Doman Professor of International Law at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Also at CU Boulder, he was named the President's Teaching Scholar, the university's highest teaching distinction.

His other accolades: being named the Distinguished Teaching Award for Post-Baccalaureate Instruction at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and receiving the 2013 Chris Kando Iijima Teacher and Mentor Award from the Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty. In 2014, he received the UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award and in 2021, the UCLA School of Law's Rutter Award for Teaching Excellence.

As a visiting professor, Motomura has taught at Japan's Hokkaido University, the University of Michigan Law School and was a guest researcher at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

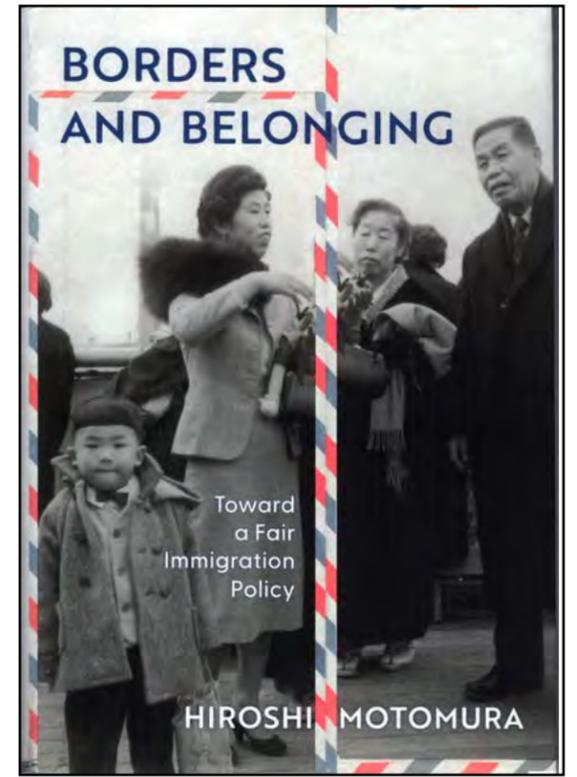
The preceding is all the more impressive considering that early in his life, Motomura was for a time legally stateless. Perhaps that explains what motivated him to become the expert's expert on U.S. immigration law.



Unlike his brother, younger by six and a half years and born on U.S. soil, and therefore an American citizen from Day 1 of his life, Hiroshi Motomura's journey to becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen was more convoluted and circuitous — and far different from his fellow Japanese Americans with whom he grew up in San Francisco.

The cover of his third book, "Borders and Belonging," tells the beginning of that journey. Taken in 1957, it's a photo that shows an overcoat-and-bow-tie-clad lad with a bowl-head haircut looking into the camera in the foreground with his mom in natty *yōfuku* (Western garb) and a traditionally garbed relative in the background.

That boy is Motomura, about to board the USS President Wilson at the Port of Yokohama, ready leave Japan with his mother for America, where his father had been born in 1925 in San Francisco. The cover's design fittingly includes rectangular red, white and blue striping that is recognizable to anyone who remembers aerograms, a now-discontinued postage-paid air mail letter that could be written on, folded over and put into the mail. For those in his parent's generation, the aerogram was the quickest and cheapest way to communicate between the U.S. and Japan.



That Motomura's father had been born in the U.S. to Japanese parents, the husband of which worked for the Yokohama Specie Bank, was a key factor to how, more than 30 years later, he, his wife and young son would be able to emigrate from Japan at a time before the immigration reforms of the mid-1960s, when the quota for Japanese wishing to move here was less than 105 annually.

Although Motomura's father was drafted into the Japanese army during World War II as a young man, fortunately for him he never experienced combat and postwar found employment as a houseboy on a U.S. military base during the Occupation.

Motomura's mother, meantime, was from Yokohama; his parents met and married in the early 1950s and at some point decided to leave a war-devastated Japan for America. But there were complications to effectuating that plan. Despite his father having U.S. citizenship (thanks to the 14th Amendment and the Wong Kim Ark case), he had not been to America since 1930, when his family returned to Japan, and he spoke English as a second language.

So, as Motomura put it, the question became how, if you were Japanese and wanted to come to United States, would you do it when the quota for Japanese in any given year was such a miniscule number? Here, it gets a bit fuzzy, even for a professor steeped in immigration law and history.



"It was an issue, whether his being drafted in the Japanese army was in effect, expatriating and would cause him to lose his American citizenship," said Motomura, who added that fact might have scotched his father's plans to "emigrate"/return to the U.S.

"He never told me about the details of this, but there were other people in his situation," Motomura said. There was an attorney, whose identity Motomura

does not know, who found that someone who had been drafted into the Japanese army but had never seen combat would be able to retain and confirm his U.S. citizenship. “I have inferred, although I’ve never seen this in writing, the cost of doing that was for him to make it clear that he was not a Japanese citizen.”

When Motomura’s father was cleared to return to the U.S. as a citizen, he entered a hotel-and-restaurant program at City College of San Francisco and became a cook, getting work at various hotels, including the city’s Plaza Hotel, and started saving money to bring his wife and son to America. At the beginning of this three-yearlong process, Motomura’s mother was pregnant with him, and he spent his first years in Japan.

This was, Motomura noted, when U.S. citizens could bring their spouses and children stateside outside the quota that restricted Asian immigration at that time.

And where did that leave young Hiroshi Motomura? He was born in Japan when his father was overseas at a time when Japanese citizenship was passed only through the father’s bloodline. So, he did not receive Japanese citizenship through his mother. As for getting U.S. citizenship through his father, that wasn’t possible either.

“The reason is that United States citizenship passes to a child born outside the United States from a U.S. citizen parent only if that U.S. citizen parent lives the United States for certain number of years, some of which have to be after the age of 14,” Motomura said, noting that because his father left the country at age 5, that did not apply.

“The particular combination of facts here meant that I was stateless,” Motomura said. “I had no citizenship, which is also unusual.” (He did, however, have a green card.) So, when his family and he went to visit his grandparents in 1968 at age 14-1/2, that meant he had to use a permit to enter the country, which is a travel document substitute, not a passport. “I couldn’t get a passport,” Motomura said. That would happen later, after becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen.

“The way I was able to naturalize is there’s a provision that allows a naturalization application to be filed by my father on behalf of the child for whom he did not fulfill the residency requirements at the time of the child’s birth. That was the situation.” After his father fulfilled the residency requirement, Motomura said his father “applied for my naturalization, and that’s how I got naturalized” when he was 15.

“I grew up in a community that had a lot of Japanese American kids, but their parents had been in the camps. They were classic Nisei. One consequence of this is my mother, and my father to some extent, but especially my mother, found herself not part of that community,” Motomura recalled. “I don’t think they treated her badly, but she would come back and say, ‘You know, I went to a JAACL meeting, but those people, they speak funny Japanese,’ or ‘They don’t speak Japanese.’”



Back to shock and surprise, it turns out that though Motomura may not have been surprised by the content of what has come out of the president’s mouth and from his social media postings when reacting to current events, he said what was surprising to him was “the vehemence, the perverse enthusiasm that the administration seems to come up with, ever more extreme things.”

Immigration — or illegal immigration — was, of course, one of the issues that candidate Donald Trump ran on that helped with getting him re-elected. Since his inauguration, that “perverse enthusiasm” would infamously include riot-inducing raids by mask-wearing federal agents that were supposed to target criminals but ended up dragnetting non-criminals, legal residents and U.S. citizens alike; stationing National Guard troops and even Marines within American cities; illegal deportations;

transporting arrestees to prisons beyond U.S. borders; and attempts to circumvent the clear, plain wording of the Constitution’s 14th Amendment regarding birthright citizenship.

Although none of that had yet happened when Motomura turned in the final manuscript for “Borders and Belonging,” since it was before the outcome of the November 2024 general election, he nevertheless said he “knew what some of the issues would be.”

“Because the book was written before what’s happened since Jan. 20, I couldn’t address them in a way I can now address them more now. I can address them more directly because I can say, ‘Well, you know, this is what’s happening, and here’s how I look at it based on what I wrote in ‘Borders and Belonging,’” he said.

One of Trump’s first official acts after taking office on Jan. 20 was his issuance of Executive Order 14160, aka “Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship” ([tinyurl.com/ec3e658r](https://www.tinyurl.com/ec3e658r)). It is a challenge to the legal concept of *jus soli*, Latin for “right of the soil,” which, under the 14th Amendment, confers anyone born on U.S. soil or under U.S. legal jurisdiction U.S. citizenship.

One of the fundamental, foundational legal cases that undergirds the application of the 14th Amendment also happens to be in the Trump administration’s crosshairs for challenge and reinterpretation. That case is the heretofore settled law of the 1898 Supreme Court case *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*.



So it was that Motomura found himself with other Asian American legal experts on an April 16 panel titled “Advancing Equality: United States v. Wong Kim Ark,” sponsored by the Chinese American Museum.

Held at the Historic Pico House in L.A. Chinatown, on the panel with Motomura were Dr. Linda Trinh Vo, professor emeritus at the University of California, Irvine; Connie Chung Jo, CEO of Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California; and Helen Zia, who was also the event’s keynote speaker. The special guest for the event: Norman Wong, none other than the great-grandson of Wong Kim Ark.

Norman Wong also has a direct connection to another historical incident with legal consequences to Asians who came to America. Referring to how his great-grandfather had “endured jail time for citizenship challenges,” he mentioned how another relative of his had also been incarcerated for her ancestry.

“My mother also endured similar treatment. She, like my great-grandfather, was born in the USA. In 1942, she was forced, with her family and thousands of other Japanese Americans, to relocation camps, an experience that her family of 11 kept unspoken.”

For Motomura, Wong’s attendance was a fascinating continuity from the past to the present. “I had no idea that Norman Wong was around. It’s just really interesting to hear it from his perspective,” he said. “And, of course, he sees that case as central now in terms of birthright citizenship.”

On the topic of citizenship, Motomura said the following: “The real significance of Wong Kim Ark is partly in the register of understanding that this is an important landmark in the fight against racial discrimination in this nation’s history. But the other thing it does is it says there’s actually two ways you can think about citizenship.

“One is kind of the diploma version, the ‘If you’ve shown you’re an American, we’re going to give you diploma, we’re going to give you a merit badge’ and say, ‘OK, you’re a citizen.’ I think that’s how governments think about that now. That’s the reason why it’s hard to get naturalized in a lot of situations.

“I actually find that version of citizenship, in some respects, very troubling because what Wong Kim Ark did, that decision said, is, ‘No, we’re not going to just look at what you’ve done, but we’re going to look at the future of the country, and the last thing

we want is a group of people who are living here but without full rights, at least without full formal rights.’

“What Wong Kim Ark stands for is the idea that it’s not just the merit badge that you get for your past life. It’s also the way you make the nation stronger in the next generation, and it’s a way you avoid having a generation of people who live here that don’t really have full legal rights.

“And so when we think about a lot of these citizenship rules, so much of the restrictions we’re seeing now are from the perspective of, ‘You don’t deserve it’ as opposed to the perspective of ‘What are the rules are going to make this country stronger and be more inclusive?’ And one of the best ways you can make a country more inclusive is to give people citizenship.

“What matters is not for the parents’ generation, but for the children. The fact that my father was a citizen was one of the ways that I felt like I belonged. . . . So, I think that a lot of the value of Wong Kim Ark in fighting the racial discrimination is to look ahead and not look behind.”



As noted, one of the first official acts taken on Jan. 20 by the newly inaugurated president was to issue EO 14160, which was almost immediately challenged. As an executive order and not a constitutional amendment, such a challenge was inevitable.

Speaking at the aforementioned April 16 panel, Linda Trinh Vo explained what was in the executive order. “The current administration declared: ‘Children born in the United States will not be automatically entitled to citizenship if their parents are in this country illegally or temporarily,’” she said, noting that the EO was blocked by a federal court.

Also expected was that the Justice Department would appeal the ruling and that the issue would eventually wind its way to the Supreme Court to rule on the executive order’s legality. On Dec. 5, that happened when the high court announced it would decide whether the president had the legal authority, via executive order, to put restrictions on a constitutional amendment that addresses birthright citizenship. Published reports foresee justices issuing their ruling by the end of June.

Noting that he got himself “out of business of predicting what the courts will do,” Motomura at the panel nevertheless said, after noting the Supreme Court’s rightward turn over the last 10 years, “I can tell you a normal court — a normal Supreme Court even — would say, ‘This is ridiculous,’ but you know, to be honest, I’m just not sure what’s going to happen, although I have more confidence that this will be struck down than many other things that the administration is trying to do.”

Another topic that Motomura is unsure about is whether he will be writing a fourth book about immigration. “I’m definitely of retirement age,” he said. “On the other hand, I continue to work and have ideas. So, it’s hard to say. I do think that maybe the more substantive answer to your question is that each of these books responds to something I felt I left out of the prior book. Some of the answers to your question depends on how things evolve, in terms of how I assess this ‘Borders and Belonging’ book and what’s left out of it.”

Perhaps the answer to that question will be prompted by how the Supreme Court rules on EO 14160 in mid-2026. Regardless, it’s safe to say that the balanced, measured and nuanced perspectives that Motomura has provided on the issue of immigration will continue to be needed as America deals with new challenges on immigration that will inevitably arise from geopolitics, demographics and even the climate.

**To view a video of Professor Hiroshi Motomura, visit [tinyurl.com/ysm6kscr](https://www.tinyurl.com/ysm6kscr).**

*\*Approximately 260,000 people with Somali origins live in the United States.*

# Houston

## Holiday Greetings from Texas!

Wishing all of you & your families a very  
Happy & Healthy 2026!



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## JACL HOUSTON CHAPTER

We are proud to launch our traveling National Japanese American Baseball Exhibit  
at the Houston Public Library system's flagship, Central Library, from  
the beginning of March through the end of May 2026.

Look for the California debut of our exhibit in Little Tokyo in May 2026!



### STRENGTH IN PURPOSE



JACL's 2025 End of Year Campaign



Scan to donate

This has been an eventful year to say the least. Since our last letter to you, we have seen more violence, misinformation, and conflict that have led to no solutions. These moments are stark reminders of why we continue the work we do.

Eighty-three years ago, our ancestors were forcibly removed from their homes and stripped of their rights. This past August, the Little Tokyo community was shaken by federal actions threatening to displace residents. Just weeks later, immigrants and citizens alike were again targeted and portrayed as enemies of the government. We are witnessing history repeating itself, and we will not remain silent.

Critics say JACL doesn't do enough. To that, we humbly agree—we have more work to do. With your help, we are recommitting our efforts to being responsive, not reactive—to standing on the frontlines, not the sidelines. Our collective power lies in our voice and our knowledge—both hard-earned from generations before us. Your support is invaluable to educate, advocate, and organize through projects and actions fulfilled this year such as:

- Launching our Japanese American Experience website JAexperience.org;
- Filing amicus briefs challenging the misuse of the Alien Enemies Act; and
- Collaborating with partners to mobilize the community to defend the National Park Service and our nation's history.

Our mission remains clear: to secure and maintain the human and civil rights of Japanese Americans and all people who face injustice and bigotry.

We ask for your support to advance this vital work. Our goal is \$50,000 by December 31, 2025, to sustain the fight against the erasure of our history, repetition of forced displacement, and the ongoing and relentless stripping of rights. Your donation helps us to:

- Advocate for policies that protect civil and human rights in the halls of Congress, in state capitols around the country, and in communities where we all live;
- Expand existing programs and develop new educational resources that keep history alive and accessible; and
- Continue to nurture and empower the next generation of JACL leaders who share the goal of equity and justice for all.

We are deeply grateful for your steadfast support. Because of you, JACL will continue its nearly century-long mission of promoting a world that honors diversity by respecting values of fairness, equality, and social justice. Please contribute to our end-of-year campaign as we move toward our goal of equity and fairness for all.

Sincerely,

Saki Mori  
JACL Interim Executive Director

Please send checks to  
Attn: JACL Annual Giving  
PO Box 45397  
San Francisco, CA 94115-0397



# NIKKEI VOICE

## Does 'Rental Family' Represent the Voices of Japanese Americans?

By Gil Asakawa

I really love the new movie “Rental Family,” which stars Brendan Fraser as a fading ex-pat American actor who gets a gig in Tokyo working for a “rental family” agency. Most Americans aren’t familiar with the burgeoning Japanese industry, which provides actors who take on roles for clients, usually as family members but also as friends or, say, journalists pretending to be on assignment.

“Rental Family” is, as advertised in many reviews, “heartwarming.” It’s a perfect holiday season feel-good movie,



and Fraser is nothing if not amazing at selling the role of the “token white guy,” as the owner of the rental family agency, Shinji, played by Takehiro Hira, tells him when he is hired for his first gig: playing a “sad American” attending a funeral.

Fraser has the perfect doleful eyes to be a *gaijin* (foreigner) standing head-and-shoulders taller yet lost amidst the dense population of Tokyoites as he dons demeaning mascot costumes or runs to auditions for roles that he doesn’t get.

So, he is confused when Shinji explains after the hilarious funeral scene – Fraser’s character, Phillip Vanderploeg, is part of a group of mourners all hired by the client, who is in his open casket and wanted to know how it would feel like to attend his own funeral – that the agency doesn’t just provide people for clients, it provides emotions.

Though Phillip is hesitant at first, he takes on assignments: being a friend who visits a young man who is a *hikkikomori* — a person who self-isolates, a common mental illness in Japanese society that afflicts all ages — and an elderly famous actor suffering from dementia, who Phillip visits, pretending to be a journalist who is on assignment to interview the star.

And at the heart of the film, Phillip takes on the role of a father to a young mixed-race girl named Mia, played by Shannon Mahina Gorman, whose single mother

now needs a father figure present for the girl so that she can apply to attend an exclusive private school.

Yes, Japanese society has cultural hangups about many things, including single-parent families.

For Japanese Americans (and Asian Americans) such cultural values that require the help of a rental family agency probably makes sense even though such businesses don’t really exist here in the U.S. We don’t discuss difficult issues such as mental health and loneliness. Dementia is common, yet we wait until we have to deal with the illness because the symptoms can’t be ignored or hidden away any longer.

There are many touching scenes in the movie (and lots of funny ones, too), so viewers should have tissues on hand. The interplay between Fraser and Akira Emoto as Kikuo Hasegawa, the aging movie star, are poignant, and Gorman as Mia is especially powerful as their relationship develops. She’s angry at him at first because she thinks he’s the father who abandoned her, but then she learns to trust and accept him, to the dismay of her mom. Gorman deserves special commendation for her performance, since this was the first time she has ever acted.

All of the emotional and social threads

that run through and weave this movie together will be familiar to JAs because of our family values. Hikari, the director and co-writer of the film, understands Japanese and American values: She was born and raised in Japan but came to Utah as a high school exchange student and stayed in the U.S. to study and work in the film industry. She directed three episodes of Netflix’s powerful AANHPI series “Beef,” about unexpressed Asian values of anger and regret.

We’ve all struggled with the emotional constipation, family pressures and social rules and norms that our community’s conscribed by. So, in a very real sense, “Rental Family” expresses very much the theme of “Voices of the People” — our voices as Japanese Americans — as well as our roots as Japanese.

See this movie, and let me know if you agree. Happy Holidays to all and be proud to share your voices with the world!

*Gil Asakawa is the author of “Tabemasho! Let’s Eat! The Tasty History of Japanese Food in America.” He is currently the interim board chair of the Pacific Citizen Editorial Board.*



Shannon Mahina Gorman and Brendan Fraser star in “Rental Family.”

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES



# LEGAL-EASE: An Attorney’s Perspective

## A SIGNIFICANT EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

Anti-Japanese sentiment against Japanese American citizens in the U.S. would peak during World War II, after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. An example of this was the so-called “Jap hunting license,” a faux official document, button or medallion that purported to authorize “open season” on “hunting” the Japanese, despite the fact that over a quarter-million Americans at that time were of Japanese origin. These “licenses” often characterized Japanese people as subhuman (*Boggs, Jeremy. Open Season. 06 Mar. 2004. 15 Oct. 2007.*)

In 1942, with the Japanese incarcerated in 10 American concentration camps, California Attorney General Earl Warren saw his chance and approved the state takeover of 20 parcels of land held in the name of American children of Japanese parents, in absentia. In 1943, Gov. Warren signed a bill that expanded the Alien Land Law by denying Japanese the opportunity to farm as they had before WWII. In 1945, he followed up by signing two bills that facilitated the seizure of land owned by American descendants of the Japanese.

In a Dec. 19, 1944, opinion poll, it was found that 13 percent of the U.S. public was in favor of the extermination of all Japanese, as well as 50 percent of American GIs. U.S. professor of Japanese History, John Dower, suggests the racial hatred of the front-lines

in the war rubbed off onto the American public through media representation of Japanese and propaganda (*Feraru, A. N. (1950), “Public Opinion Polls on Japan” Far Eastern Survey, 19(10), 101–103.*)

Dower, in his essay about the Second World War, introduces his “War Hates and War Crimes” by quoting American Historian Allan Nevins that “no foe has been so detested as were the Japanese.” Dower highlights how the Japanese were more despised than the Germans by the American public, and he claims that it was a result of racial hatred.

There’s a well-known Japanese saying, “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down.” Meaning, don’t rock the boat or make waves, or you will pay a price. Not surprisingly, Japanese Americans had to lay low and avoid drawing attention, even if that meant getting “stepped on.”

After the war, Hollywood, i.e., the movies and media, would stereotype Japanese men as physically unattractive, sexless, nerdy and lacking social skills. In contrast, Hollywood perceived Japanese woman as highly desirable, e.g., exceptionally feminine and delicate. In the 1960s, James Yoshio Yoda played “Fuji,” a prisoner of war in the sitcom “McHale’s Navy” (1962). In the ’70s, Pat Morita, a Japanese American actor and comedian, played Arnold Takahashi on “Happy Days.”

Major movie and TV roles of Asian men were given to non-Asian actors. In the 1940s, Swedish American actor Warner

Oland was the first actor to portray Charlie Chan. David Carradine was cast in the 1972 TV series “Kung Fu.” Although Bruce Lee originated the concept and was considered for the role, his audition was rejected.

Fast forward to more recent times. Since the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (i.e., “Redress”), a significant evolutionary change has occurred in the self-perception and collective identity of Japanese Americans. The Sansei, their parents, grandparents and children are changing the way they look at themselves and their pattern of accommodation to the non-Japanese majority. Redress and the subsequent educational campaigns have facilitated a community-wide healing process that continues today.

The younger generations (Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei) are changing the way they look at themselves as individuals of Japanese descent in their respective nations. A real Hollywood change in the portrayal of Japanese men came when Morita earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of Mr. Miyagi in the 1984 film “The Karate Kid.”

In the sports world, baseball has changed the way the American mainstream views the Japanese male. On May 2, 1995, Hideo Nomo made his MLB debut with the Los Angeles Dodgers and became the first Japanese-born player in Major League Baseball. Nomo’s success created a path for subsequent Japanese players.

As of the 2025 season, the Dodgers have three Japanese players: Shohei Ohtani,

Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Roki Sasaki. They have all played a significant role in the Dodgers’ success, including consecutive World Series titles in 2024 and ’25.

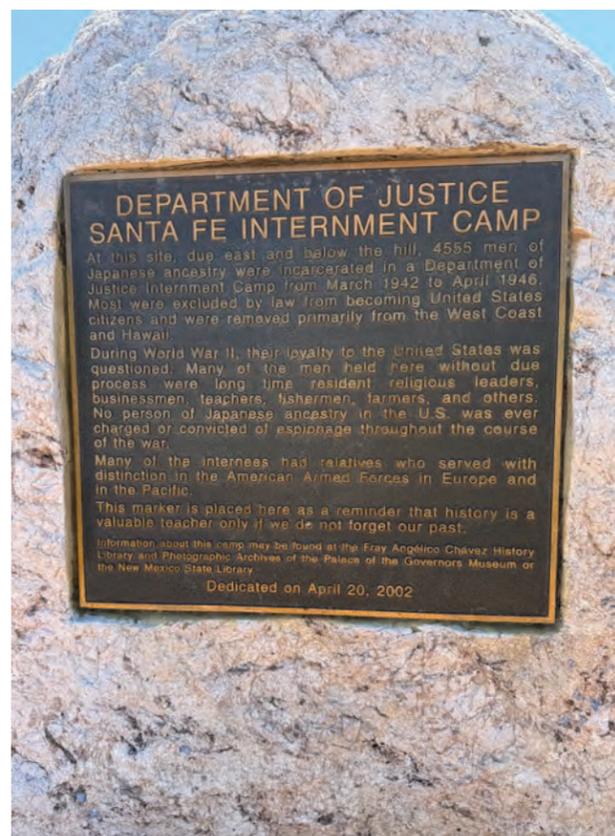
On Dec. 11, 2023, Ohtani signed a 10-year, \$700 million contract with the Dodgers, the largest contract in professional sports history at the time. Ohtani also is the first player in Major League history to win multiple MVPs in both leagues and only the second player to win four MVP Awards after Barry Bonds. TV commentators would call him the best player in baseball history!!!

But it was his teammate, Yamamoto, that made the biggest impression on me. Yamamoto received a standing ovation after the Dodgers’ World Series win in November and was named the MVP, recording three wins in the series and a 1.02 ERA. It was as if America, i.e., “Voices of the People,” were saying that the time has come when the dream of the Japanese American Nisei WWII soldiers is coming true — Japanese Americans are good Americans.

*Judd Matsunaga is the founding attorney of Elder Law Services of California, a law firm that specializes in Medi-Cal Planning, Estate Planning and Probate. He can be contacted at (310) 348-2995 or. The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Pacific Citizen or constitute legal or tax advice and should not be treated as such.*

Dan Mayeda stands next to the Santa Fe Internment Camp Remembrance Site stone memorial during the JACL's pilgrimage to the site in July as the final-day activity of the organization's National Convention.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DAN MAYEDA



A close-up image of the marker's inscription at the Santa Fe Internment Camp Remembrance Site memorial

# From CORONADO to SANTA FE

A JACLer traces the path of his 'enemy alien' grandfather.

By Dan Mayeda

Like many other Nisei, my dad, Ray Mayeda, was somewhat reluctant to talk much about his incarceration experience in one of the Poston, Ariz., camps. But especially after he received an official apology from the government as part of the redress campaign, Ray Mayeda began to share and voice a bit more about his father (my grandfather), Kunitomo Mayeda.

Kunitomo came to America in 1907 as a 16-year-old teen. Imagine the courage it must have taken at that age to travel to a far-away country where you didn't know anyone or speak the language well. He ended up in San Diego, where he first worked as a houseboy and then a cook at the world-famous Hotel del Coronado. Ultimately, he leased some land, plowed fields and built a successful celery farm business.

On a trip back to Japan, Kunitomo got married. He brought his wife to America and started raising a family. First came Al, then my dad, Ray, then three more children. But in the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, my grandmother died.

Kunitomo could not make a living while trying on his own to raise five young children, so (except for the eldest, Al) he took the family back to Japan. Kunitomo remarried there but quickly returned to

Coronado to work as a gardener, so that he could send money back to Japan. After a few years, Ray rejoined his father, and he and Al enjoyed being students at Coronado High School.

Then came the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941, and the whole world shattered for the Mayeda family.

Al immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army. The FBI came to interrogate Kunitomo. An informant initially alleged that Kunitomo shined a spotlight on a water tower after curfew but later admitted

it was only a brief flashlight shine that had come from the general direction of Kunitomo's house.

The FBI ignored evidence from a retired Army officer that Kunitomo was a better American than most native-born men. But, like other Issei, Kunitomo was not allowed to become an American citizen. So, before President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast, Kunitomo was deemed an "enemy alien" and taken away by the FBI based on the Alien Enemies Act while Ray was at school. That left Ray literally "home alone."

Ray did not know where his father had been taken. He told me only that Kunitomo was incarcerated in Santa Fe, N.M. I eventually learned that Kunitomo's path went from his home in Coronado to a San Diego County jail, to brief stints in the Terminal Island and Tuna Canyon Detention Stations, both in the Los Angeles area. From there, Kunitomo eventually was incarcerated in a Santa Fe Department of Justice internment camp, along with other Issei.

I also know that Ray had to stay with old bachelors in Poston since his only family in the U.S. was either in the Army (Al) or incarcerated in Santa Fe (Kunitomo). So, the first chance he got, Ray seized the opportunity, sponsored by the Friends/Quakers, to leave camp and go live in Chicago.

Ray took a train from Poston to Chicago by way of Santa Fe. There, he was reunited with Kunitomo for the first time in two years. After the war was over, Kunitomo was repatriated to Japan at his request. That was the only realistic option since the U.S. government had stripped him of all rights and incarcerated him without a genuine hearing let alone evidence against him. Plus, his second wife and remaining children were still in Japan.

That is all I thought I knew about Kunitomo's life in America — except for one thing. Reviewing my dad's possessions after he passed, I found a neatly folded handkerchief on which an amateur artist had painted a



The stone memorial

scene of barracks, barbed wire, a watch tower and cacti, along with an inscription in Japanese.

The words translate roughly as follows:

*Upon entry to Camp Lordsburg: This is evidence that we were held there, a place where we experienced bad feelings. But, it couldn't be helped. Gaman [Japanese word roughly translated: enduring hardship but also maintaining composure and grace in the face of adversity]. We had to obey. [Signed, Masunaga].*

At first, I was puzzled. I had never heard of Camp Lordsburg. But after looking it up and finding a photograph of it, I realized that it was located in New Mexico, and I figured out that it was my grandfather, not my dad, who was incarcerated there.

An image from the Ireicho project confirms that Kunitomo was incarcerated at both Santa Fe and Lordsburg. Putting these pieces together, I have concluded that on March 17 or 27, probably in 1943, a fellow incarcerated named Masunaga presented to Kunitomo this hand-drawn artwork. My grandfather then passed this memento down to my dad. And now I have it. (I would, however, be thrilled to give this memento to any descendant of the artist Masunaga who happens to read this!)

So, when I saw that the JACL was holding its annual convention in Albuquerque, N.M., in July 2025, I became determined to attend to see what else I could learn about Kunitomo's journey. I wanted to attend a presentation on the Alien Enemies Act. (Kunitomo's story is featured in an amicus brief that JACL filed in litigation challenging the Trump administration's invocation of that act to justify the deportation of Venezuelan Americans whom it accused of being members of a criminal gang.)

The convention also included a session in which a fascinating documentary entitled "Community in Conflict" by director Claudia Katayanagi was screened about the tensions that arose when the city of Santa Fe proposed to install a historical marker at the site of the Santa Fe Internment Camp.

There was another session providing further history and background on both the Santa Fe and Lordsburg Internment Camps. Finally, on the morning after the convention's Sayonara Banquet, there was a pilgrimage, organized by the New Mexico chapter's Victor Yamada and Nikki Nojima Louis, to the site of the Santa Fe Internment Camp historical marker, which is located at the top of a hill at the Frank S. Ortiz dog park in the Casa Solana neighborhood. It was dedicated on April 20, 2002.

Visiting the site of the Santa Fe historical marker was a moving experience. The actual camp site has long been paved over with housing developments, but the marker, embedded onto a massive rock, sits on a higher point overlooking the site. The marker states in part: "At this site, . . . below the hill, 4,555 men of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated in a Department of Justice Internment Camp from March 1942 to April 1946. Most were excluded by law from becoming United States citizens. . . ."

Standing there, I tried to imagine how Kunitomo must have felt to be incarcerated there along with other Issei men, all held for the crime of simply being from Japan — without any evidence of disloyalty to America.

*"During World War II, their loyalty to the United States was questioned. . . . No person of Japanese*



**Pilgrims left flowers to honor their friends and relatives who were forcibly incarcerated in New Mexico during World War II.**



**Pilgrims and descendants of those imprisoned at the Santa Fe Internment Camp gather at the memorial to share stories during the JACL's pilgrimage to the site in July.**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DAN MAYEDA

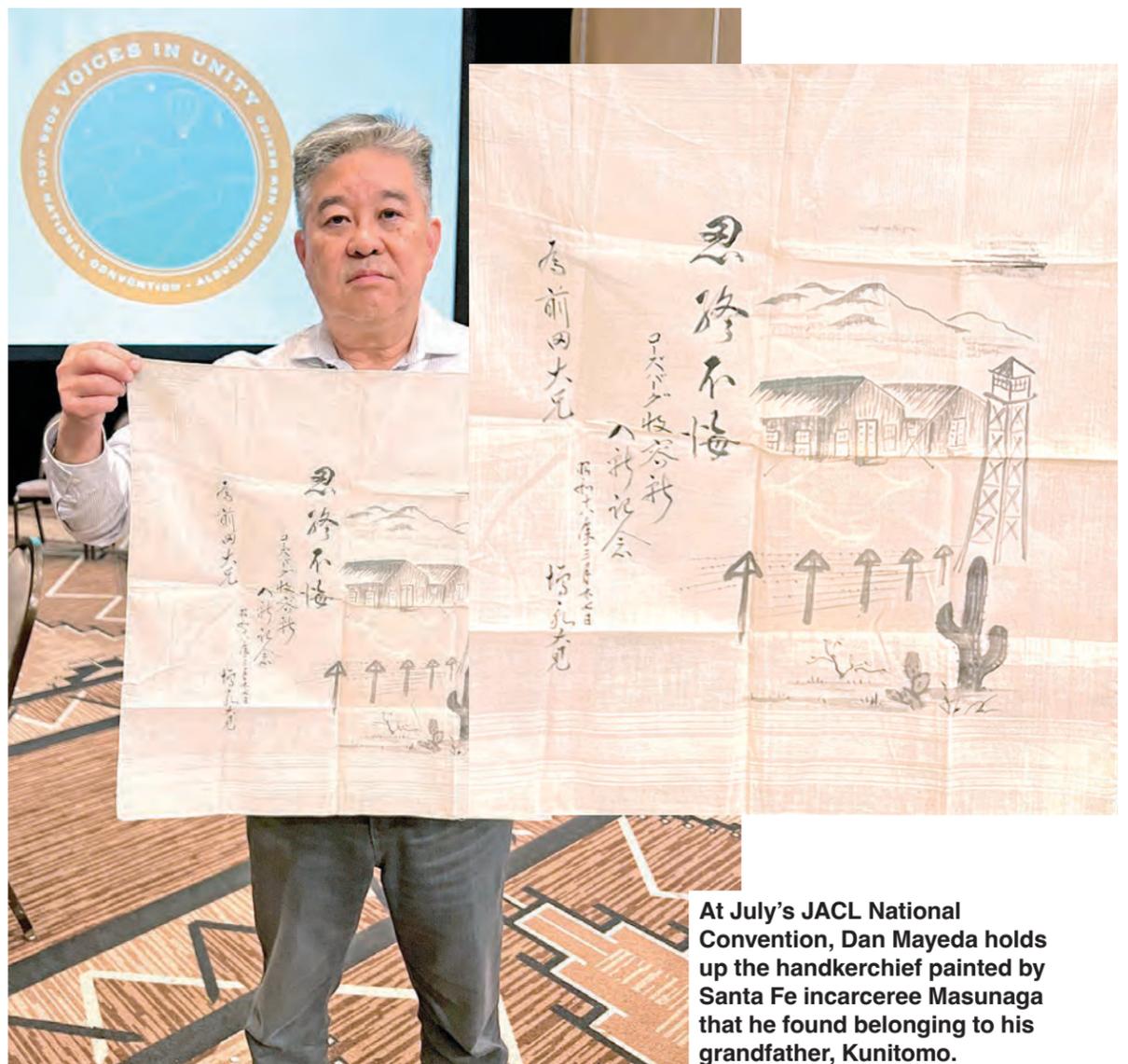
living without his parents at a crucial time in his young adult life, having to leave his father behind bars so that he could try to start a new life in an unfamiliar city, alone once again.

Those JACL Convention attendees who joined me at the Santa Fe pilgrimage also paid homage to their ancestors, and some read poignant bits of poetry that had been written by the incarcerated.

We did this all to remember the past and recommit to fight for justice in the present and future. "This marker is placed here as a reminder that history is a valuable teacher only if we do not forget the past." ■

*ancestry in the U.S. was ever charged or convicted of espionage throughout the course of the war."*

I also tried to picture the scene when my dad was finally able to leave the confines of Poston en route to Chicago, but stopped first to visit his father still imprisoned in Santa Fe. It is heartbreaking to think of my grandfather, seeing his son for the first time in years, but unable to be with him; or my dad,



**At July's JACL National Convention, Dan Mayeda holds up the handkerchief painted by Santa Fe incarcerated Masunaga that he found belonging to his grandfather, Kunitomo.**

# 2025 Pacific Citizen Holiday Helpers

## Thank you to all the Chapters that participated!

Arizona	Donna Chung	Pocatello-Blackfoot	Karl Endo
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Chicago	Rebecca Ozaki	Riverside	Jennifer Betancourt
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Lodi	Derrick Egi	Sequoia	Mike Kaku
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Mile High	Richard Hamai, Dylan Mori & Tom Migaki	Snake River	Mike Iseri
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Olympia	Bob Nakamura	Venice-West L.A.	John Saito, Jr.
Omaha	Kai Uno	Ventura County	Anne Chilcott
Philadelphia	Rob Buscher	Wasatch Front North	Larry Grant
		Washington D.C.	John Tobe, Linda Adams & Craig Uchida



## San Mateo



### AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL

#### 2026 TOUR SCHEDULE

<b>HOKKAIDO SNOW FESTIVALS TOUR</b> (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.	
<b>JAPAN SOUTHERN CHARMS HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (Ernest Hida) . . . . .	Mar 9-20
Fukuoka, Hagi, Suo-Oshima, Hiroshima, Matsuyama, Takamatsu, Shodo Island, Okayama, Kurashiki, Himeji, Osaka.	
<b>GREAT TRAINS-SEDONA HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (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.	
<b>JAPAN SPRING COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (Ernest Hida) . . . . .	Apr 13-25
Tokyo, Shimoda, Commodore Perry sites, Shizuoka, Mt Fuji, Lake Kawaguchi, Matsumoto, Tsumago/Nagome, Gero Onsen, Toba, Nagoya.	
<b>NEW YORK CITY HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (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.	
<b>MT RUSHMORE-YELLOWSTONE HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (Carol Hida) . . . . .	Jun 17-25
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.	
<b>GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR</b> (Ernest Hida) . . . . .	Jun 21-Jul 1
Tokyo, Hakone, Atami, Hiroshima, Kyoto. Craftmaking hands-on experiences.	
<b>ALASKA HOLIDAY CRUISE</b> (Carol Hida) . . . . .	Jul 18-25
Vancouver, Sail Inside Passage, Juneau, Skagway, Cruise Glacier Bay, Ketchikan – "Salmon Capital", Vancouver.	
<b>PANA CONVENTION</b> (Ernest Hida) . . . . .	Sep
Sao Paulo-Brazil.	
<b>JAPAN AUTUMN COUNTRYSIDE HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (Ernest Hida) . . . . .	Oct 5-18
Hokkaido-Tohoku. Kushiro, Lake Akan, Sounkyo, Asahikawa, Sapporo, Otaru, Noboribetsu, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Aomori, Lake Towada, Morioka, Naruto Onsen, Matsushima, Mito, Tokyo.	
<b>AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (Ernest Hida). . . . .	Oct 26-Nov 11
Sydney, Cairns, Melbourne, Queenstown, Rotorua, Auckland.	
<b>CHRISTMAS MARKET CANADA HOLIDAY TOUR</b> (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:

AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL  
312 E. 1st Street, Suite 240 \* Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Tel: (213)625-2232 \* Email: [americanholiday@att.net](mailto:americanholiday@att.net)  
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# San Mateo



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# LITTLE TOKYO TO TRUCKEE TO THE WAKAMATSU COLONY

*Los Angelenos trek together to visit tunnels excavated by Chinese workers and the site of early migration from Japan.*

By Naomi Hirahara,  
P.C. Contributor



A highlight of the Wakamatsu Pilgrimage was the attendance of the descendants of the original colonists, some of whom had traveled as far as Japan and the Marshall Islands. Pictured (from left) are Nancy Ukai, Nichi Bei Foundation board chair; Naori Shiraiishi, a descendant of Matsugoro Oto; Aaron Gibson, Barbara Johnson and Andrea Lashley, descendants of Kuninosuke Masumizu; Atsuko, Soun and Karen Kaname with Ayako Matsufuji, descendants of Sakichi and Nami Yanagisawa; and Kenji Taguma, Nichi Bei Foundation president.

Camp pilgrimages have become an important rite of passage, ever since activists gathered on a winter day in December 1969 in the Owens Valley to mark the experience of their ancestors at the Manzanar concentration camp. But thanks to Kenji Taguma's Nichi Bei Foundation, there is now the Wakamatsu and Angel Island pilgrimages to commemorate early Japanese pioneers arriving to California.

Members of the Little Tokyo Historical Society, which was established 19 years ago, have wanted to take a road trip to participate in these immigration pilgrimages some time. For Michael Okamura, society president, visiting the grave of Okei — a member of the Wakamatsu Colony and the first woman of Japanese descent to be buried on American soil — was essential because of his own family connections. The original colonists, some from the samurai class, came to California's Gold Country from Aizu-Wakamatsu in Fukushima Prefecture in 1869 after being defeated in the Boshin civil war.

"My great-uncle was a longtime member of the Nanka Fukushima Kenjinkai, including serving as president, so he had visited the grave marker site multiple times," said Okamura. A frequent visitor to Fukushima, Okamura has even paid tribute to the Okei memorial monument in Aizu-Wakamatsu. "I think I may be one of the few Nikkei in America who has been to both Okei grave marker sites."

In contrast, another traveler with the historical society, Pauline Wada, had never before heard of the Wakamatsu Colony. Indeed, in 2011, when I made the trek with my husband to see the gravestone (then on private property), located in the back of Gold Trail Elementary School, there was little to distinguish the area, despite being established as a California State Historic Site in 1966. I was curious to see the new improvements and interpretive features of the Wakamatsu Colony since the acquisition from private owners to now management by the American River Conservancy as not only a pilgrimage site but also a working farm.

We nine members of the historical society gathered around 5 a.m. on Oct. 3 in Pasadena, Calif. Carrying overnight bags and containers of freshly made Spam musubi, sticky rice and other



Representing the Little Tokyo Historical Society's 2025 Wakamatsu Pilgrimage are (back row, from left) Ruth Watanabe, David Nagano, Bill Watanabe, Michael Okamura and (front row, from left) Naomi Hirahara, Paula Miura, Pauline Wada, Cindy Abrams and Yuko Gabe.

PHOTO: MICHAEL OKAMURA

snacks, we set out in a long white van to make a 500-mile drive up Highway 5, first to Truckee, the site of tunnels created by Chinese railroad workers across from Donner Pass, then to stay the night in Auburn and finally gather with more than 275 people at the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony.

We were only able to experience the rugged adventure of following the path of Chinese railroad workers through our guide, Phil Sexton, an active member of the 1882 Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit devoted to broadening public awareness of the history and continuing significance of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Sexton, who resides in nearby Auburn, took us on a journey over glacial polish and granite boulders across from Donner Lake and Donner Pass.

For us Angelenos, the 45-degree temperature and light drizzle were a bit of a challenge, not to mention the ascent up to the location where the workers camped and detonated black gunpowder that had been stuffed into 2.5-inch diameter holes drilled into solid rock. We saw the railroad line where locomotives carried rubble away from the construction area and encountered 150-year-old remnants, such as rusted can lids and square nails. Our final destination — the tunnels of the Union Pacific — were urbanized by colorful graffiti, quite a contrast to the natural beauty of the mountains and pine trees.

Okamura, who only wore a sweatshirt to keep him warm and dry, commented: "We and the U.S. have to thank the Chinese railroad workers for the historic work they did. It also made me think of the back-breaking work of the Issei men who also worked on the railroads

in the late-19th century and early-20th centuries."

In comparison to the wet and physically taxing experience in Truckee, the Wakamatsu Pilgrimage represented order, comfort and celebration. I was impressed by how much the property had developed over the past decade, with the renovation and interpretive exhibitions of the Veerkamp farmhouse, where Okei and another colonist, Matsunosuke Sakurai, had worked after the colony disbanded. The Okei gravestone, damaged by a crack, is displayed in a glass case now. Flowers and even a *jizo* statue with a red cap were displayed at the site as Rinban Yuki Sugahara of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento delivered a blessing for that day.

New plaques and monuments now adorn the site. There's a marker at the giant *keyaki* or Japanese elm tree that the Wakamatsu colonists had planted, as well as a stone marker commemorating Sakurai, who was the one who had led a campaign to produce a gravestone for his friend, Okei, who had died from a sudden illness at 19 years of age in 1871.

In addition to tours of the grounds, the pilgrimage included genealogical workshops, a bento lunch and ondo dancing. It was wonderful to bump into both old friends, including another writer, Karen Tei Yamashita. Introduced onstage were eight descendants of the original Wakamatsu Colony, the newest discovered one being Andrea Lashley, who is originally from the New York/New Jersey area. During the pandemic, her teenage son had requested a DNA test from ancestry.com, an unusual request coming from someone so young. The results of that test led Lashley and



Display case at the site of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony shows a *tanto* (small sword) believed to be owned by colonist Oyoo Schnell.

PHOTOS: NAOMI HIRAHARA

her son to discover that they had not only Japanese DNA, but were related to Kuninosuke Masumizu, the only original colonist who remained in California and wed an African American and Native American woman.

This discovery was not a surprise to Lashley's friends, who teased, "I knew something about you didn't belong here." To find ties to California, including relatives Aaron Gibson and Barbara Johnson, even inspired Lashley to make the move to San Francisco as a nursing student at the University of California at San Francisco.

After the festivities, our Little Tokyo group piled back into our white van. Not all of us in the vehicle had direct family members who had been held in a World War II concentration camp. Not all of us were even Japanese American. What tied us together was the willingness to get into that van on an early morning and trust our drivers to get us to our destination.

"There was such great enthusiasm and care for each other that it made me long for another road trip," said Nagano. She may not have to wait long: The Nichi Bei Foundation is planning another gathering to mark the immigration station that processed early Japanese immigrants — the Nikkei Angel Island Pilgrimage — for next year.

*Naomi Hirahara is the author of more than 20 nonfiction history books and mystery novels. Her next historical mystery, "Crown City," set in 1903 Pasadena, will be released in February 2026. Her web series, "Silk," on Discover Nikkei, is a fictional retelling of the Wakamatsu colony.*

# Riverside



## Season's Greetings

FROM CONGRESSMAN MARK TAKANO

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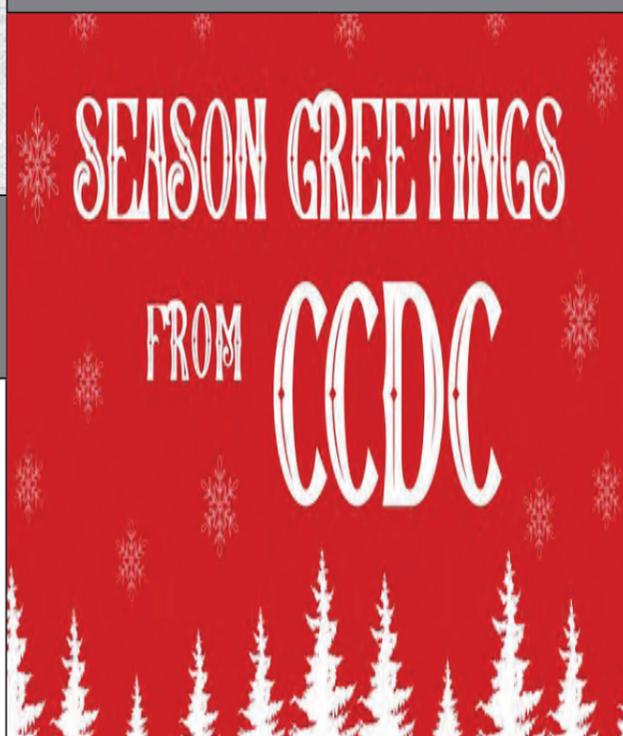
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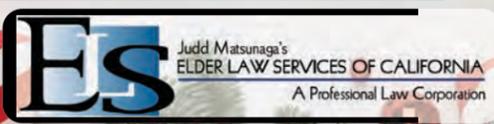
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# The Detrimental Impacts of Federal Funding Cuts and Policy Changes to Essential Medical Care

By Dr. Paula Fujiwara and Matthew Kojima

**A**s an ethnic group that has historically faced barriers to medical care and access to the profession, Japanese Americans bring special insights to policy changes that are now occurring. JACL members Dr. Paula Fujiwara is a Sansei who has spent more than 30 years as an expert in global tuberculosis prevention, and Matthew Kojima is a first-year medical student at Boston University. They shared recently their views with the JACL Berkeley chapter on funding cuts to medical research, language policy impact on medical care and implications for these changes to global health.

**JACL Berkeley Chapter: How do the current federal funding cuts impact the medical profession and aspiring medical professionals?**

**Matthew Kojima:** Frozen and reduced funding for research has made it difficult for students and young professionals to find research opportunities. Previously, agencies like the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have provided internships and jobs to current college students and college graduates interested in medical or graduate school. However, the new administration canceled these internships and implemented hiring freezes, resulting in fewer students getting essential work experience to prepare them for a career in research and medicine. Due to these uncertainties, universities have had to consider reduced funding of their graduate programs. For some, the result has been devastating. At the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, all admission offers for the biomedical sciences Ph.D. program have been rescinded for this year. This reduces opportunities for young people to become researchers and help advance scientific knowledge ([National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and](#)

**Dr. Paula Fujiwara (right) in Myanmar with a local nurse who administers TB medications, traveling by motorbike and sometimes walking through waist-high water to reach patients.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DR. PAULA FUJIWARA



[Skin Disease Internship Program; University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School PhD Applicant Information](#)).

**Dr. Paula Fujiwara:** Recent funding cuts have affected my life's work in tuberculosis prevention. For example, the United States' most important TB research project was stopped when the funding agency, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was dissolved. A TB project submitted to the National Institutes of Health for which I was a consultant has had its review meeting canceled twice. Colleagues in Zimbabwe were told that Secretary of State Marco Rubio has determined that continuing their program is "not in the national interest."

**Berkeley Chapter: How do government funding cuts to medical research disproportionately impact underrepresented and historically devalued populations?**

**Kojima:** As a first-year medical student, I have learned about the various ways in which some populations have been disproportionately affected by socioeconomic inequities. For example, to be eligible for a kidney transplant, the patient's kidney function must be below a certain threshold. Until recently, kidney function was assessed using an algorithm that incorporated race. For many years, physicians believed that their algorithm underestimated kidney function for Black patients, so this meant that a Black person would be less likely to be eligible for a kidney transplant. Some recent research has been used to show that using race in the algorithm is inaccurate, and thus, this variable is no longer used in new versions, which may negatively impact Black people's access to kidney treatment ([Delaware Academy of Medicine - Delaware Journal of Public Health: The Case Against Race-Based GFR](#)).

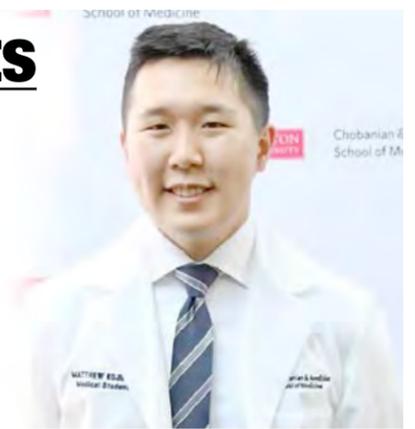
Loss of federal funding disproportionately hurts research focusing on diseases that mainly impact marginalized communities. For example, sickle cell disease and cystic fibrosis primarily impact those with African and European ancestry, respectively. Despite more people in the U.S. having sickle cell disease and the life expectancy of the two diseases being similar, cystic fibrosis receives 75 times more in private funding per person with the disease, while on the other hand, sickle cell disease receives the bulk of its funding through federal grants. Therefore, the majority of funding for cystic fibrosis will likely be preserved regardless of what the federal government does, while federal grant cuts would devastate sickle cell research, disproportionately hurting Black communities ([American Journal of Managed Care: Study Finds Funding Disparities Between Sickle Cell Disease, Cystic Fibrosis](#)).

**Fujiwara:** One-quarter of the world's population is infected with the germ that causes TB, the world's No. 1 infectious disease killer. TB is a social disease with medical manifestations. People at increased risk include those who live in poverty; suffer from undernutrition; have diseases such as HIV or diabetes; smoke tobacco; or misuse alcohol. Reaching these groups requires targeted educational messages, food support and diagnosis and treatment that people understand and are receptive to. Until the funding of USAID ended, the United States was the key donor for global TB activities, supporting countries with some of the highest burden of disease, such as India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Since the start of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) in 2002, the U.S. has provided one-third of its U.S. \$5 billion annual budget. In mid-May, countries receiving support were told to plan for a downsizing of their programs in light of the closure of USAID. The U.S. government's withdrawal of support has negatively impacted the fight against these infectious diseases, affecting access to treatment and prevention, care programs and community education.

**Berkeley Chapter: President Donald Trump signed an executive order this year naming English the official language of the U.S. What impact could this have on medical care?**

**Kojima:** Doctors and patients must be able to communicate in order to achieve the best outcome. At present, when a patient's first language is not English, federal guidelines require a professional medical interpreter to be provided. However, with the move to make English the official language of the U.S., there is concern regarding what this means for this guideline. Without interpreters, it would become substantially more likely for there to be a major misunderstanding between a patient with limited English proficiency and their health-care team, which could lead to a devastating health outcome.

**Fujiwara:** When I was the director of the New York City Department of Health's TB Control Program, I had to link with local communities with high rates of TB where English was not their native tongue. I gave talks to members of medical societies who served the Chinese-, Haitian- and Spanish-speaking communities. I encouraged them to work with the Department of Health, offering free laboratory services and medications in return. We provided culturally appropriate educational materials, oral presentations and outreach for the communities mentioned above. We hired staff who spoke these languages and used phone interpretation services. Without these interventions,



**Matthew Kojima on his first day of medical school at BU Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine on Aug. 5, 2024, in Boston**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MATTHEW KOJIMA

we would not have had the great success in decreasing the number of persons diagnosed with TB, particularly the ones with difficult-to-treat multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDRTB).

**Berkeley Chapter: How has that changed the way we approach medicine and access to health care and treatment?**

**Kojima:** During the Covid-19 pandemic, we learned how a virus that started in China could spread around the world and have a devastating impact at home. To protect our national health, we should use our substantial research and financial capabilities to support researchers studying diseases across the globe [to] hopefully eradicate them before they spread and kill more people. Unfortunately, the drastic reduction in funding for USAID programs and our government's departure from the World Health Organization may not only hurt those who live in the world's most vulnerable regions but also allow for dangerous diseases to spread more rapidly, eventually entering the U.S. and potentially causing another pandemic-level event.

**Fujiwara:** The fight against TB requires collaboration across political borders. At the national level, my first job was working as a CDC medical officer assigned to address the disease in New York City, the ground zero of MDRTB in the 1990s. Many of the people I cared for were from other countries with poor TB control programs. People with MDRTB flew to New York City from other countries, with the specific goal of receiving care that they could not get at home.

The lessons I learned in New York informed my career addressing global tuberculosis.

For the U.S. to think that it should only concentrate on issues within its borders and not support global TB prevention efforts is extremely short-sighted. TB is an airborne disease, and we are all connected by the air we breathe.

**Dr. Paula Fujiwara is a member of the JACL Florin chapter. In 2023, she was awarded the Princess Chichibu Memorial Global Award of the Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Assn. for her contributions to TB control worldwide. Matthew Kojima was co-president of the JACL Berkeley chapter in 2023.**

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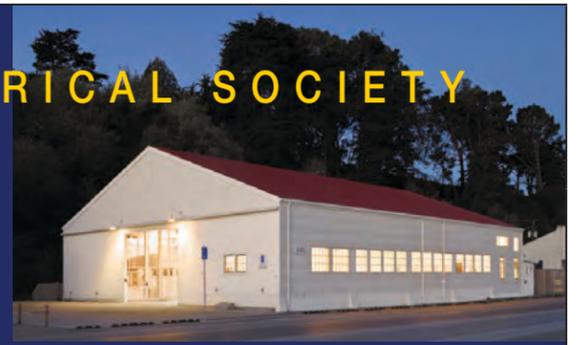
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# NOTABLE 2025 LOSSES

## DWIGHT CHUMAN (77)

One of the six founding members of Asian American Journalists Assn. in 1981 when he was the editor-in-chief of the *Rafu Shimpo's* English section, Dwight Chuman died July 25 at his home in Los Angeles. The websites [gunviolencearchive.org](http://gunviolencearchive.org) and [crimesolvers-central.com](http://crimesolvers-central.com) indicate that the cause of death was a self-inflicted gunshot wound. His journalism career began at *Gidra*, the alt-Asian American newspaper, prior to being hired by *Rafu Shimpo* English-section Editor-in-Chief Ellen Endo.

"I felt he was a gifted writer," Endo told the *Pacific Citizen*. "He was kind of a free thinker and sometimes that was a good thing."

Following Endo's departure, Chuman became the paper's editor-in-chief. During his tenure, when the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians held regional hearings in Washington, D.C., Chuman traveled to the nation's capital to testify on July 16, 1981, and, according to a report in the July 31, 1981, edition of *Pacific Citizen*, asked the CWRIC to "investigate certain JACL leaders, such as Mike Masaoka, in regards to their role in the Evacuation" (see [tinyurl.com/mv9e-zuac](http://tinyurl.com/mv9e-zuac)). After 10 years at *Rafu Shimpo*, Chuman would abruptly leave in the early 1980s. According to AAJA, post-*Rafu Shimpo*, Chuman found employment at KCET, the Los Angeles PBS affiliate and later published a Las Vegas leisure magazine; in 2022 was inducted into AAJA's Hall of Fame.

## FRANK CHUMAN (105)

With having served as JACL national president from 1960-62 among his many accomplishments, attorney Frank Fumio Chuman was reported in the Nov. 14 *New York Times* as having died on May 23, 2022.

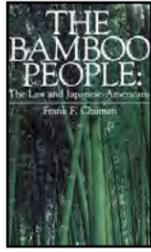
Chuman's death came a little more than seven weeks after he and some

35 other University of Southern California students who had been summarily expelled after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor solely because of their Japanese ancestry received honorary diplomas from the university in 2022. At 104 and residing in Bangkok, he was likely the only Trojan still alive during the April 1 ceremony. He turned 105 on April 29 (see [April 15, 2022 Pacific Citizen](http://April 15, 2022 Pacific Citizen), [tinyurl.com/2s3mk23z](http://tinyurl.com/2s3mk23z)).

After graduating as valedictorian from Los Angeles High School in 1934, Chuman attended and graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1938 before enrolling in USC's law school in 1940. After the United States declared war on Japan, however, and everyone of Japanese ancestry living in Washington, Oregon and California would be forced into concentration camps, Chuman was sent to the Manzanar War Relocation Center and became its hospital's head administrator.

According to Densho, Chuman initially signed "no-no" to Questions 27 and 28 of the infamous loyalty questionnaire, an action that he was able to have withdrawn after much effort so that he could leave the camp in 1943 to resume his postgraduate endeavors. He completed his law degree at the University of Maryland.

Referring to two successful 1948 Supreme Court cases involving Japanese American litigants — *Oyama v. California* and *Takahashi v. Fish & Game Commission* — for which Chuman prepared the briefs, San Francisco-based attorney Dale Minami called him a "pioneer civil rights lawyer for Japanese Americans." He added that Chuman made "enormous contributions to Asian Americans and the law in terms of both his civil rights work in Los Angeles, and 'Bamboo People' and some of the other things he's written," a reference to Chuman's "The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans" (1976) and "Man-



zanar and Beyond: Memoirs of Frank F. Chuman, Nisei Attorney" (2011).

Prior to being elected JACL national president, Chuman had served as the League's legal counsel from 1953-60. It was during his stint as JACL national president that he initiated the creation of the Japanese American Research Project, or JARP, at UCLA.

Many narratives, including his own, credit Chuman for having originated the idea of using the arcane legal procedure writ of error *coram nobis*, which he learned of as a student at University of Maryland, to revisit the three failed Supreme Court cases of Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu and Minoru Yasui challenging various aspects of the government's orders to remove and incarcerate U.S. citizens and legal aliens of Japanese ancestry who were then ineligible for naturalization.

Minami, who was a member of one of the three *coram nobis* legal teams (for Korematsu), however, credits legal historian Peter Irons for the origination of the idea of utilizing the legal tactic for revisiting those cases because Irons, who was a conscientious objector, had already used *coram nobis* when had been convicted of selective service violation. Minami told the *Pacific Citizen*, "I don't want to diminish his [Chuman's] accomplishments, but I do have to intercede when he claims credit."

Chuman nevertheless did provide an invaluable service with regard to the revisitation of the SCOTUS cases: According to Minami, Chuman, as Yasui's attorney, "bulked up our credibility with Min Yasui," who was initially skeptical about the legal team that had been assembled to revisit his case. Getting all three men on board with regard to reviving the cases was critical, Minami said, in order to make the biggest impact. Chuman, after visiting with the teams, vouched for them with Yasui. "Frank apparently reported to Min that these folks are really good, so you shouldn't have any problem," Minami said.

Chuman is survived by his widow, Donna; their daughter, Diana Heyd; and sons from his first marriage, Daniel and Paul.

## NANCY MATSUI (73)

A Torrance, Calif.-born resident of La Palma, Calif., and a Sansei, Nancy Ellen Matsui, who had a 40-year-long career with American Airlines and was also very active in the Japanese American community, died Oct. 12.

The Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, the board on which she served for more than 29 years, issued the



following statement: "Nancy devoted much time and energy to ensure the success of many of the JACCC's fundraising events, reaching out and engaging others in the process. ... No one can forget her many kindnesses."

In addition to her decades of service with the JACCC, Matsui was also active with such organizations as Japanese American National Museum, U.S.-Japan Council, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Cypress College and Little Tokyo Service Center.

Matsui is survived by her husband, Glenn; their sons, Eric and Ryan; sisters, Karen (David) Thompson and Ginny Suruki; and many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

## YOSH NAKAMURA (100)

A civilian-turned-soldier who became an artist, educator and school administrator following his World War II service in M Co. of the valorous 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team, Yoshio "Yosh" Nakamura died Nov. 22.



Nakamura's death came just five months after his 100th birthday, which was celebrated at a standing-room-only party at the Liberty Community Plaza in his hometown of Whittier, Calif. (see Oct. 31, 2025, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/fxrx254p](http://tinyurl.com/fxrx254p)).

Regarding his death, the Go for Broke National Education Center stated: "We extend our deepest gratitude to Yosh for everything he gave — during the war, after the war and in every moment he chose to stand up and speak out. He will be profoundly missed."

A lifelong San Gabriel Valley native — born in Rosemead, raised in El Monte and as an adult, a resident of Whittier — during WWII, Nakamura and his family were forcibly evacuated and incarcerated at Arizona's Gila River War Relocation Center, where he enlisted in the Army and was subsequently assigned to the segregated 442nd RCT. He was awarded a Bronze Star and in 2011, was among Nisei veterans who were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

While serving in Italy, he was inspired by the historic works of art he was able to view, and postwar, Nakamura attended the University of Southern California, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art.

Nakamura's teaching career began as a Whittier High School teacher, and in 1963, he was hired as Rio Hondo College's first professor and later, its first Fine Arts Department chair, spending nearly three decades there. Other roles he had included dean and vp of community services and institutional development. In 2024, Whittier High School's Fine Arts building was named in his honor.

Nakamura was predeceased in 2017 by his wife, Grace Shinoda Nakamura. He is survived by his children, Linda, Daniel and Joel, and grandchildren.

## GEORGE SUGIMOTO (99)

An entrepreneur-turned-philanthropist who founded a successful avionics company with facilities in the California cities of Arcadia and Upland, Kazuo George Sugimoto died Oct. 12 in Pasadena.

Decades before KGS Electronics became the successful avionics company that supplied equipment to the



likes of Cessna Aircraft and Boeing Aerospace, Sugimoto was born in Parlier, Calif., the youngest among eight other siblings. As a result of Executive Order 9066, his family and he were incarcerated at Arizona's Gila River WRA Center. He joined the Army in 1945, served in Korea and afterward attended Chicago's American Institute of Television Technology. After earning a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, he became an entrepreneur and later started what became KGS Electronics.

As a supporter of the Japanese American community, Sugimoto was active with the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, Go for Broke National Education Center and Japanese American National Museum.

Sugimoto was predeceased by his wife, Ruri Hirano. He is survived by their children, Lisa (Donald) Nose and Nathan (Christine) Sugimoto; grandchildren, Lindsay, Alyssa (Jackson), Aaron and Garrett; and nieces, nephews and other relatives.

## CARY TAGAWA (75)

Boasting a nearly 40-yearlong career that encompassed big and small screens, as well as video game voiceover, actor and martial artist Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, who was often cast in roles calling for elegant malevolence or moral ambiguity, died Dec. 4 in Santa Barbara, Calif., from complications from a stroke.

The son of a Hawaii-born Japanese American stationed in postwar Japan and Japanese war bride, Tagawa had a peripatetic upbringing as a military dependent. After moving to California, he attended the University of Southern California but would become best-known for his role as Shang Tsung in 1995's "Mortal Kombat" and its offshoots.

Tagawa caught his big break in the 1987 epic movie "The Last Emperor," followed in 1989 with a role in the James Bond pic "Licence to Kill." Other movie appearances include "Rising Sun," "Picture Bride," "American Me," "Pearl Harbor" and "Memoirs of a Geisha." He also appeared in "The Slanted Screen: Asian Men in Film & Television," the 2006 documentary by Jeff Adachi.

On the small screen, Tagawa appeared in "Miami Vice" and reunited later with that show's star, Don Johnson, for a few seasons of "Nash Bridges." He also appeared on the Prime Video series "The Man in the High Castle." He showed a less-scowling side of his onscreen persona in the Disney TV movie "Johnny Tsunami."

Tagawa is survived by his ex-wife, Sally Phillips; and their children, Calen, Brynne and Cana; and two grandchildren.

## OTHER NOTABLES

Note: Use the hyperlinks to view the entire news article.

- Todd Endo ([tinyurl.com/mv862ce6](http://tinyurl.com/mv862ce6))
- Art Hansen ([tinyurl.com/4n9f77p7](http://tinyurl.com/4n9f77p7))
- Jeanne Houston ([tinyurl.com/2h85wv2k](http://tinyurl.com/2h85wv2k))
- K. W. Lee ([tinyurl.com/4y85wy9a](http://tinyurl.com/4y85wy9a))
- David Lin ([tinyurl.com/8r45zpbu](http://tinyurl.com/8r45zpbu))
- K. Mochizuki ([tinyurl.com/32uvf7vd](http://tinyurl.com/32uvf7vd))
- R. Nakamura ([tinyurl.com/4rty9ebs](http://tinyurl.com/4rty9ebs))
- Karl Nobuyuki ([tinyurl.com/ysr72czv](http://tinyurl.com/ysr72czv))
- Mario Reyes ([tinyurl.com/3yaphu7z](http://tinyurl.com/3yaphu7z))
- Kanji Sahara ([tinyurl.com/4648rh4r](http://tinyurl.com/4648rh4r))
- Keith Terasaki ([tinyurl.com/uwv3cvkj](http://tinyurl.com/uwv3cvkj))

## TRIBUTE

### AGNES M. UCHIDA

Agnes Mizuho Uchida died peacefully at her home in South Pasadena, Calif., on Nov. 2, 2025, at the age of 93.

Agnes was born on Oct. 23, 1932. In 1952, she married Joe Uchida. They went on to have three children. Over the course of her life, she was an artist and landscaper, a home gardener, an avid reader, a terrific cook and followed every Dodger and USC Trojans game. Agnes was a friend to many in the community of South Pasadena and beyond. She will be dearly missed.

She is survived by her three children — Alan, Craig and Naomi (John Foley); three grandchildren — Maria (Ted Pleiman), Jennifer (Jeff Franklin) and Melinda (Sergio Camarena); three great-grandchildren — Cora, Lucy and Nicole; and numerous nephews and nieces.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you consider making a donation in her name to: Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute ([pjci.org/about/](http://pjci.org/about/)), 595 Lincoln Ave. #202, Pasadena, CA 91103; and the Japanese American National Museum ([janm.org/give/](http://janm.org/give/)), 100 N. Central Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

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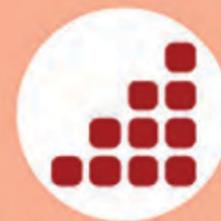
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