

NOTABLE DEATHS OF 2021

LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

David Iбата, Corky Lee and Jimmy Lee

Iбата, 66, of Chicago, died Jan. 26. **Corky Lee, 73**, of New York, died Jan. 27. **Jimmy Lee, 48**, of Los Angeles, died Feb. 7. All three were journalists, and all three deaths were related to Covid-19.

Iбата's career included stints at the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Corky Lee, a photojournalist, received the Asian American Journalists Association's Dr. Suzanne Ahn Award for Civil Rights and Social Justice for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 2009.

Jimmy Lee was an editor at *KoreAm*, a Los Angeles-based English-language magazine aimed at the younger Korean Americans demographic. Lee was its managing editor from 1999-2007.



Eunice Sato

Sato, who died on Feb. 12 at 99, served as mayor of Long Beach, Calif., from 1980-82. She was the first woman mayor of Long Beach and the first Asian American woman mayor of a city of its size. She was also honored in 1996 by the government of Japan with a *kunsho*, the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold Rays with Rosette, for her role in advancing U.S.-Japan relations. In 2015, the Sato Academy of Mathematics and Science was named in her honor.

Sato's political career began in Long Beach when she began volunteering for the PTA and her church. In 1975, she ran for and won the Seventh District City Council seat in 1975. She is credited for helping lay the groundwork for the revitalization of Long Beach's downtown, which was described as being "at the rock bottom" in the mid-1970s.

At the state level, Gov. George Deukmejian appointed her to serve on three state commissions. At the national level, President George H. W. Bush appointed her to serve on the National Advisory Council on Educational Research.

On the issue of Japanese American redress, Sato's was a prominent voice opposed to monetary damages. After President Ronald Reagan signed the historic redress bill

on Aug. 10, 1988, Sato donated her \$20,000 to the JACL Legacy Fund.

Sato was predeceased by her husband, Thomas and her siblings Joseph, Rose, Julia, Robert and Art. She is survived by her daughter and sons and their families.



Ron Katsuyama

Katsuyama, who died on March 2 at 76, at Stanford Hospital after developing a sudden, aggressive lymphoma, was a lifelong JACL member. During his decades with the JACL, he served as the president of the Dayton JACL chapter in Ohio, the Midwest governor (2007) and as JACL National Board VP of Public Affairs (2010).

During WWII, his family was incarcerated at the WRA Center in Minidoka, Idaho. Katsuyama grew up in San Francisco. He graduated from Washington High School and UC Berkeley before earning a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. Ron was honored as a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Dayton in 2017 when he retired after 44 years of research in child psychology and social justice issues.

In Ohio, Katsuyama co-founded the Dayton Asian American Council and Ohio Asian American Health Coalition. He also served on the Ohio Governor's Asian Pacific Islander Advisory Committee for Govs. Strickland, Kasich and DeWine. In the arts, he served as a board member of the Victoria Theater Association and the Human Race Theatre, where he worked to bring George Takei to Dayton to perform the musical "Pacific Overtures." Ron also served as a Japanese American National Museum governor.

He is survived by his wife, Jane; children, Sean (Hyunju) and Jana (Tito); grandchild, Tatsuo; niece, Kathy Brodowy (Bret); and many relatives.

Paul Andre Michels, 54, Xiaojie "Emily" Tan, 49, Daoyou Feng, 44, Delaina Yaun, 33; Suncha Kim, 69, Soon Chung Park, 74, Hyun Jung Grant, 51, and Yong Ae Yue, 63, were killed by a gunman on March 16 in Cherokee and Fulton counties in Georgia. The gunman also

wounded Elcias Hernandez Ortiz, the sole survivor of the slayings.



Bob Shimabukuro

Shimabukuro, who died on March 29 at 75, served in editorial roles at the *Pacific Citizen* and the *International Examiner*. During his time on the *P.C.* staff, he wrote a column titled "One Thing Leads to Another." He also wrote the book "Born in Seattle: The Campaign for Japanese American Redress," a project of the Seattle JACL chapter.

Shimabukuro was born on the island of Maui in Hawaii. He attended Reed College and earned a philosophy degree. While in Portland, Ore., served as the as president of the Portland JACL chapter during the time of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians hearings in the early 1980s and assisted in preparing former incarcerated to speak publicly about their experiences.

In 1996, the Seattle JACL chapter recognized Shimabukuro for his activism and community service with its Don Kazama Human Rights award.

Robert Sadamu Shimabukuro was predeceased by his parents, Zenshu and Yasuko Shimabukuro. He is survived by his widow, Alice Ito; and children, Mira Shimabukuro (Wayne Au) and Zenwa Shimabukuro; grandson, Mako; siblings, Toki Shimabukuro, Ann Colunga (John Drogemiller), Roy Shimabukuro, Ned Shimabukuro (Dee); and Irene Whitaker (George); and nieces and nephews.

Haunani-Kay Trask

Trask, who died on July 3 at 71, in Honolulu, was an outspoken advocate for Hawaiian sovereignty. The cause of death was cancer.

Trask wrote the book "Notes From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii." She was a professor of Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawaii.

Gunther Hashida

Hashida, who died on July 29 at 43, was an 18-year veteran of Washington's Metropolitan Police Department. He responded to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. His death was a suicide. He

is survived by his wife, three children and a sister.

Janice Mirikitani

Mirikitani, who died on July 29 at 80, operated San Francisco's Glide Memorial Church with her husband, the Rev. Cecil Williams. She led the Glide Foundation and was executive director of the Janice Mirikitani-Glide Family Youth and Child Care Center. In 2000, she was named San Francisco's poet laureate.



Holly Yasui

Yasui, who died on Oct. 31 at 67, was an educator, activist and filmmaker. She died at a hospital in the town of Celaya, not from where she had made her home in San Miguel de Allende, in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The cause of death was related to Covid-19.

A Denver native, she and sisters Iris and Laurie were the three daughters of Tsuru "True" and Min Yasui. Holly, the youngest, had spent the last several years paying tribute to her late father's legacy.

Min Yasui, who died in 1986, was a stalwart leader within the JACL. His WW II-era challenge to a curfew singling out those of Japanese ancestry, including U.S. citizens, reached the Supreme Court.

In addition to being an educator, writer, playwright and activist, Holly Yasui was also a filmmaker, and she used those skills in collaboration with Will Doolittle to share her father's story via the documentary movie "Never Give Up! Minoru Yasui and the Fight for Justice," which premiered on March 28, 2017, in Salem, Ore., in conjunction with Minoru Yasui Day.

Prior to that, she wrote the play "Citizen Min," also about her father, and co-founded the Minoru Yasui Tribute Committee with Peggy Nagae, who served as the lead attorney for Min Yasui's revived attempt to overturn the 1943 Supreme Court decision using an arcane legal procedure known as writ of error *coram nobis*.

In 2016, the Minoru Yasui Tribute Committee successfully nominated Min for a Presidential Medal of Freedom, which he received posthumously in 2015.

Holly Yasui is survived by

her partner, Gerardo Armenta Ojeda; sisters, Iris and Laurie; and many friends and relatives.

Kevin Nishita

Nishita, who died on Nov. 27 at 56, was serving as a security guard for a KRON-TV news location report in Oakland, Calif., on Nov. 24 when he was shot in the abdomen by a gunman who was trying to steal the news crew's camera equipment.

Nishita, a retired police officer who had worked for the Oakland Housing Authority, and the police departments of the cities of Hayward, San Jose and Colma Police, died at a hospital. Thus far, no arrests have been made.

Donations to Nishita's survivors can be made to the Kevin Nishita Trust at Metropolitan Bank. The account number: 116020591, routing number 121141343.

Nishita is survived by his widow, two children, his sister and three grandchildren.



Bob Dole

Dole, who died Dec. 5 at age 98, was a U.S. senator for the state of Kansas who ran for president three times.

As young men, Dole and Dan Inouye (pictured above) and Sparky Matsunaga, all of whom later became U.S. senators, fought the Nazis during WWII. Dole and Inouye would later spend time recuperating from their war wounds at the same Army hospitals.

The three came together again in the Senate in spring 1988 to help make the Japanese American redress bill the law of the land. Democrats voted 44 in favor of S. 1009 and 7 against; Republicans, 25 in favor, 20 against.

The result was a 69-29 bipartisan, filibuster-proof majority, thanks mostly to the work of Matsunaga. But without Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, there was no way that 25 Republicans would have voted for the bill. That overwhelming majority ensured that Republican redress opponents, North Carolina's Jesse Helms and Wyoming's Malcolm Wallop, could not sink the bill with a filibuster.

That overwhelming Senate majority also helped to reverse opposition inside the Reagan Administration to our bill. And so, we owe a debt of gratitude to Sen. Robert J. Dole.

—Grant Ujifusa