

83rd Nisei Week Reveals 2025 Festival Lineup

Celebration for honorees, award winners, next queen runs Aug. 9-17.

By P.C. Staff

The Nisei Week Foundation has released details about its upcoming Nisei Week Japanese Festival, which runs Aug. 9-17 in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo.

With 2025 marking its 83rd anniversary, the nine-daylong festival continues its Nisei Week queen and court tradition, as well as its Grand Parade celebrating the Japanese American experience and *ondō* street dancing, along with its Pioneer Spirit Awards luncheon that recognizes individuals for their service to the Japanese American community.

The candidates for Nisei Week queen made their debut July 13.

The 2025 roster and respective sponsoring organization are as follows:

- **Samantha Kimiyo Cirelli** (Venice Japanese Community Center & Venice-West Los Angeles JACL)
- **Mika Fumiyo Megumi Dyo** (Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute)
- **Emma Yasuko Shojinaga Fukunaga** (Japanese Restaurant Association of America)
- **Casey Mariko Kuramoto** (Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council)
- **Kimi Look** (Gardena Evening Optimist)
- **Megan Ayumi Miyamoto** (San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center)
- **Mia Miyoko Takatsuka** (East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center).



The 2025 Nisei Week queen candidates are (standing, from left) Megan Ayumi Miyamoto, Casey Mariko Kuramoto, Mia Miyoko Takatsuka and Emma Yasuko Shojinaga Fukunaga. Seated (from left) are Kimi Look, Samantha Kimiyo Cirelli and Mika Fumiyo Megumi Dyo.

PHOTO: COURTESY NISEI WEEK FOUNDATION/TOYO MIYATAKE STUDIO

The seven candidates will vie for the title of Nisei Week Queen on Aug. 9 at 6:30 p.m. during the Coronation and Awards Celebration at the Aratani Theatre. Serving as co-hosts for the event are actor-activist Tamlyn Tomita and Los Angeles TV news anchor David Ono of KABC Channel 7. For details on each candidate, visit niseiweek.org/candidates/.

Serving as Nisei Week choreographer is Bando Hidesomi. She has been responsible for Nisei Week Coronation choreography since 2015 and has led and choreographed the Nisei Week Parade.

This year's recipients of the Frances K. Hashimoto Community Service Award, which recognizes people and organizations for their outstanding contributions to the Southern

California Japanese American community, are Doug and Chris Aihara, and Azay restaurant.

Meantime, Michael Okamura has been named as a Nisei Week Inspiration Award honoree, along with Japanese American Vietnam War veterans on the 50th anniversary of the end of that war. Both parties will be honored at the Coronation and Awards Celebration, as will 2025 parade Grand Marshal Thomas Iino and Parade Marshal East West Players.

Per-person tickets for the Coronation and Awards Celebration are \$95 (orchestra) or \$65 (balcony) and may be purchased via the JACCC website (jaccc.org/) or by calling the Aratani Theatre box office at (213) 680-3700.

On Aug. 10, the newly crowned Nisei Week queen and court will participate in Nisei Week's Grand Parade, which starts at 4 p.m. Leading the parade will be Iino and East West Players. The parade features Japanese taiko drum performers, local community groups, high schools, elected officials and representatives.

Another signature feature of Nisei Week is its Pioneer Spirit Awards at 11 a.m. on Aug. 13, honoring four dedicated leaders and outstanding mem-



The 2025 Nisei Week Pioneer Spirit Award honorees are (clockwise from upper left) Miya Iwataki, Gene S. Kanamori, David Miyoshi and Katsuyoshi Miyazato.

PHOTOS: COURTESY NISEI WEEK FOUNDATION

bers of the greater Los Angeles Japanese American community. Being honored this year for their contributions are:

- **Miya Iwataki** (nominated by the Little Tokyo Historical Society)
- **Gene S. Kanamori** (nominated by Keiro)
- **Katsuyoshi Miyazato** (nominated by the Nanka Fukuoka Kenjinkai)
- **David Miyoshi** (nominated by the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council).

The 2025 Pioneer Spirit Awards Luncheon takes place at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center's Toshizo Watanabe Culinary

Cultural Center. Tickets are \$95 per person or \$950 per table of 10. Tickets may be purchased by visiting niseiweek.org; questions may be sent to pioneer-luncheon@niseiweek.org. (To read the P.C.'s coverage of last year's Pioneer Spirit Awards, visit tinyurl.com/4w4dph9v.)

For details about the accomplishments and contributions of each Pioneer Spirit Award recipient, the Hashimoto Community Service Award and Nisei Week Inspiration Award honorees, as well as the grand marshal and parade marshal, visit tinyurl.com/9f59c5w2.

For details on the Nisei Week Festival, visit niseiweek.org. ■

MEMORIAM

Arao, Motomi, 91, Los Angeles, CA, June 26.

Uyehara, William Suyekichi, 93, Los Angeles, CA, March 16.

Kimura, Andrea 'Andie,' 37, Santa Monica, CA, May 4.

Yama, Chris Kunio, 59, Fairfield, CA, March 22.

Okamoto, Susanne, 83, Gwynedd, PA, May 30.

Yonezawa, Kenneth Kazuyuki, 94, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 23. ■

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News Brief

Kazuo Masuda Memorial VFW Post 3670 Awarded All-American Honors

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has bestowed Garden Grove, Calif.-based Kazuo Masuda Memorial VFW Post 3670 All American Post honors. This designation is awarded to fewer than 5 percent of VFW posts nationwide. To be so honored, a post must meet criteria that includes exceptional performance in membership growth, community outreach, youth engagement and advocacy for veterans' rights. Nevertheless, Post 3670 in a statement said: "This honor is not just about numbers or benchmarks. It affirms the legacy of our Nisei fathers and uncles and the continued commitment of Sansei, Yonsei and beyond. Together, we carry forward a living history of loyalty, resilience and leadership."

— P.C. Staff