



PACIFIC CITIZEN

Kakehashi participants (from left) Jillian Stineman, Nanami Lillie, Megan Arakaki, Stella Saame and Annika Tamaki pose at the statue of Taiki, a Ryūkyūan diplomat of the Chūzan Kingdom during the late 1300s who is credited with establishing trade and cultural exchange with China.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JILLIAN STINEMAN

Remaining curious helps one participant explore the roots of her identity.



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KAKEHASHI IS MORE THAN A BRIDGE: PART II



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JACL Makes More Staff Cuts.

» **PAGE 3**

Hawaii Korean War Vets Remain Active.

JACL National Board Makes Cuts

The organization undergoes another round of staff layoffs.

By JACL National

On Feb. 15, the JACL National Board made the decision to implement an emergency expenditure reduction plan that includes the layoff of three national staff members. This decision was made based on updated financial projections and an evaluation of National JACL programs.

These actions were taken after deep consultation and reflect the challenging landscape for membership-based nonprofits alongside rising personnel

and program costs. This decision was necessary based on the board's fiduciary duty as stewards of JACL.

The JACL National Board expresses its gratitude and appreciation to the staff for their service and dedication to JACL's mission. Their hard work over a combined 40 years of service has advanced the JACL and the community at large.

Despite these challenges, the board is determined to secure the future of JACL and continue its mission to defend civil rights and support democracy.

JACL Remains 'Unwavering' This DOR

Statement on E.O. 9066's 84th anniversary commits to continued vigilance.

By P.C. Staff

The National JACL issued a statement Feb. 19 — the 84th anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066 — that was defiant amidst actions coming from the White House that seek to "remove, revise and invite public comments on alleged 'negative portrayals' of American history" at "national parks and federal institutions."

In the statement, JACL said it "remains deeply concerned by actions that affect the interpretation of American history at national parks and federal institutions across the United States" that were targeted by another executive order, EO 14253, aka "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History" (tinyurl.com/4d-fy5n4c), signed by President Donald Trump on March 27, 2025.

Also contained in the JACL statement was the following: "Our communities will face continuing challenges in the coming year, including further erasure of American history, continuing attacks on immigrant communities, narratives being spread to divide our country further and more that is yet to be known. But in the face of what lies ahead, the JACL's commitment to combat these threats across the United States remains unwavering."

To read the entirety of the statement, visit tinyurl.com/mrp7pncp.

The Pacific Citizen will feature Day of Remembrance coverage in its March 6-19, 2026, issue.

LETTER to the EDITOR

Dear Editor,

We, the undersigned, are Asian American men that have served in the United States Armed Forces. Our active military service varies from post-World War II, Korean War, Vietnam era and post-Vietnam era. The branches of service, ranks and military occupational specialties also differed.

Our common bond is that we all took an oath and pledged our allegiance to serve and protect the Constitution of the United States. Upon completing our military service, we all received HONORABLE Discharges.

Today, as veterans, we are frustrated, perplexed and angry. We see no "honor" watching unrestrained, masked, armed ICE troops acting under false pretext of making America great again, violating clauses and amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

POTUS' divide and conquer rhetoric, actions and policies have instigated and unleashed unmitigated racial hatred, profiling red vs. blue nonsense, civil unrest and even death. Thus far in 2026, there have been nine ICE-related deaths of human beings. Two of these deaths were white American citizens shot and killed by ICE agents.

Purposely, we substitute "human beings" for "immigrants" because the calculated misuse of semantics is historically used to dehumanized people of color, making it appear to seem "OK" to perpetuate less-than-human treatment on "us" (e.g., word "Jap" used to dehumanize and justify incarcerating 120,000 Japanese Americans in WWII).

What is happening today is unprecedented — entering into homes without court-ordered warrants; U.S. citizens (primarily persons of color) indiscriminately stopped by armed ICE patrols and "ordered" to prove citizenship; and certain "Blue" states occupied by massive forces of armed ICE patrols because POTUS harbors

a personal vendetta against the leaders of the targeted state (e.g., Texas and Florida have more "immigrants" than Minnesota).

All the while, elected government officials turn a blind eye due to fear of POTUS' "repercussion."

Unfortunately, unless WE act, the situation will worsen.

History has proven that when the overwhelming majority of like-minded people put aside petty differences and unite in the interest of a common cause (justice), those politicians who thought they were in control are "scared straight" and will do what is right, rather than face the consequences (e.g., mass protest and demonstrations ended the war in Vietnam).

Now is the time to cast aside the "model minority" myth and stand up and be counted. Conscious acts of resistance (e.g., demonstrating, protecting our neighbors, writing a letter to a representative, signing a petition, boycotting a Trump-supporting business, etc.) — nothing is too small as it adds a ripple effect to countless other progressive acts of resistance ultimately creating a tsunami to be reckoned with.

Signed Signatures (so far),

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Hiroyuki Chris Taga | Chris Sagawa |
| Art Ishii | Mike Sugawara |
| Mel "Pops" Higashi | Laurence Hirota |
| Norman Nakamura | John Nishikawa |
| Roger Karl Nakazawa | Kenneth Hayashi |
| Mike Nakayama | Henry Ako |
| Nick Nagatani | Richard "Togo" Toguchi |
| Mike Song | Jun Arai |
| Mia Yamamoto | Dennis Ishiki |
| Kiki Kingi | Ron Kato |
| Ron Shintani | Keith Kadomiya |

HOW TO REACH US

Email: pc@pacificcitizen.org
Online: www.pacificcitizen.org
Tel: (213) 620-1767
Mail: 123 Ellison S. Onizuka St., Suite 206 Los Angeles, CA 90012

STAFF

Executive Editor Allison Haramoto	Business Manager Susan Yokoyama
Senior Editor George Johnston	Production Artist Marie Samonte
Production/Archives Cindy Siu	

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JACL President: Larry Oda

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Harry Honda dedicated 61 years to promoting the Pacific Citizen, providing thoughtful coverage of JACL chapter activities, national news and events and issues of general interest to Japanese American and Asian American readers. The fund was launched with a generous donation from author and activist Grant Ujifusa, whose intent was to support the Pacific Citizen in hiring outside contributing writers. This support helps expand and strengthen coverage from across the country for our national readership.

Editor Emeritus Harry Honda as drawn by Pete Hironaka

KWVA CHAPTER NO. 1 CONTINUES TO SERVE

Hawaii Korean War veterans remain active through camaraderie and fellowship.

By Patti Hirahara,
P.C. Contributor

Many Japanese American veterans who fought and served in the Korean War are slowly passing away, and their numbers are too small to continue to organize and gather for public functions on the mainland.

Their stories of bravery and courage are in the shadows of those who served during World War II, and many younger generations are unaware that many of these Nisei veterans were American citizens who were forcibly incarcerated in American concentration camps during WWII just as those that were part of the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Last year marked the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, but for Japanese Americans who fought during that time, opportunities to be recognized are difficult since these



Members of the KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 and guests take a group photo at their 2025 Christmas Luncheon at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu. Pictured (front row, from left) are Stanley Nakasone, Alfred Kim, Robert Kaleohano, Stanley Fujii, Kenneth Tashiro, Tommy Tahara and Franklin Chang; (middle row, from left) Herbert Iwashita, Susumu Akena, Harold Yamauchi, Richard Poe, Brian Lau, Kenneth Muraoka, Nori Uyematsu and Clifford Chillingworth; and (back row, from left) Roy Yamashiroya, Walter Furuyama, Bob Imose, Herbert Kobayashi and Walter Ozawa. PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

veterans are in their 90s and live throughout the U.S.

According to Tommy Tahara, treasurer of the Korean War Veterans Assn. Hawaii Chapter No. 1, "It was estimated that over 15,000 Korean War veterans were residing here in the State of Hawaii, but there were no dedicated Korean War Veterans organizations nationally or locally

that we could join upon our return from the 'Forgotten War.'"

Returning veterans migrated into organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Hearts and others, but veterans of these organizations served in all wars.

It became evident that the gener-

ation gap did not provide the best fit for the camaraderie and fellowship of the Korean War veterans. This was followed later by new veterans organizations such as the 5th Regimental Combat Team Assn., the 45th Infantry Division Assn., the 1st Marine Division and part of the 7th Infantry Division called the "Chosin Few" and even informal

organizations from the Korean revisit program beginning in 1989, some 36 years after the end of the Korean War.

Tahara also added "that the National Korean War Veterans Assn. started in New York City in 1985. Through the efforts of Mr. Louis Baldovi, a charter for a Hawaii unit was obtained in August of 1993 and became the 20th chapter in the nation."

When I went to Honolulu last May and met with a small group of gentlemen from the KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1, I was so surprised to hear that they still had an active group in Hawaii to this day and that they participated in many activities in conjunction with the local Korean Consulate.

The rebirth of Hawaii Chapter No. 1 took place on Jan. 26, 1996, to reconstruct and open membership to a broader base of Korean War veterans. Twenty-six charter members were present at the first meeting at the Maple Garden Restaurant in Honolulu, and Louis Baldovi was elected as the first president in 1996 and served a consecutive year in 1997.

Since 1996, Hawaii Chapter No. 1 became the flagship organization to further the national expansion of other chartered KWVA chapters on all the islands in Hawaii: the Big Island Chapter in Hilo, West Hawaii Chapter in Kona, the Maui No Ka Oi Chapter, the Kauai Chapter and Aloha Chapter in Honolulu. ➔

POSTAL SERVICE CELEBRATES BRUCE LEE

The martial arts master was Hollywood's first Asian American leading man.

SEATTLE — The U.S. Postal Service honors and celebrates the life of Chinese American martial artist, actor and filmmaker Bruce Lee with a new stamp featuring an eye-popping image of his iconic flying kick. The stamp was dedicated at a ceremony on Feb. 18 at the Nippon Kan Theater in Seattle.

"He was mesmerizing to watch. Unlike the theatrical, acrobatic kung fu that came before, Lee's movements were economical, explosive and real," said Ben Kuo, USPS senior vp of facilities and infrastructure, who spoke at the event. "Bruce Lee has earned this special tribute because he wasn't just an action film star who could fight — he was a philosopher who could think and a teacher who inspired millions."

Joining Kuo for the ceremony were Lee's daughter, Shannon Lee; Sue Ann Kay, a former student and friend of Lee; and journalist Jeff Chang. Mimi Gan, an officer of the board of trustees for the Wing Luke Museum, was master of ceremonies. Genelia Lai performed the national anthem, and American Legion Cathay Post 186 served as color guard for the day.

Known as Hollywood's first Asian American leading man, Bruce Lee was a celebrated boxoffice star in Hong Kong well before he dazzled American moviegoers. Shannon Lee says her father's life was about breaking through barriers and bringing people together along the way.

"His legacy is one of resilience, self-mastery and flow that resonates and connects people across multiple demographics, which is why this stamp is such a profoundly perfect touchpoint and a true honor, especially at this moment in time," said Lee, CEO of Bruce Lee Enterprises. "Our family is deeply grateful to the USPS for choosing to recognize Bruce Lee, and we are excited to see his kicks flying all across

the country on our mail."

Lee Jun Fan was born in San Francisco on Nov. 27, 1940, while his father, Lee Hoi Chuen, a singer and actor from Hong Kong, and mother, Grace Ho, were in the United States on an extended tour. Their son, who would have dual citizenship, received not only a Cantonese name but also an American one suggested by the midwife who delivered him: Bruce. The family returned to Hong Kong when he was a few months old.

With family connections in the Hong Kong film industry, Bruce Lee began appearing in movies as a child, with his first lead role at age 10. His stage name was Li Xiao Long, or "Lee the Little Dragon," because he was born in both the hour and year of the Dragon in Chinese astrology. As a teenager, Lee studied the Wing Chun style of Chinese kung fu and became an expert boxer as well as a competitor in cha-cha dancing.

Lee arrived back in the U.S. in 1959. After earning the equivalent of a high school diploma, he started taking classes at the University of Washington and teaching martial arts on the side.

In 1964, he opened a martial arts school in Oakland, CA, and married Linda Emery. Later that year, he would attend karate competitions and demonstrate the "one-inch punch" technique, which enabled him to strike an opponent at close range with extraordinary force.

Watching in the crowd was celebrity hairstylist and martial arts enthusiast Jay Sebring, who was struck by the combination of Lee's remarkably chiseled frame, lightning-fast hands and feet and Zenlike composure.

A few months later, when a producer-friend was searching for a Chinese actor, Sebring passed along Lee's name. This was groundbreaking. In Hollywood, Asian roles usually



The USPS released the new Bruce Lee Forever stamp on Feb. 18 in a ceremony commemorating the late martial arts master and actor. PHOTO: USPS

went to Caucasian actors, with Asian actors rarely given a chance. Producer William Dozier gave Lee a screen test in 1965.

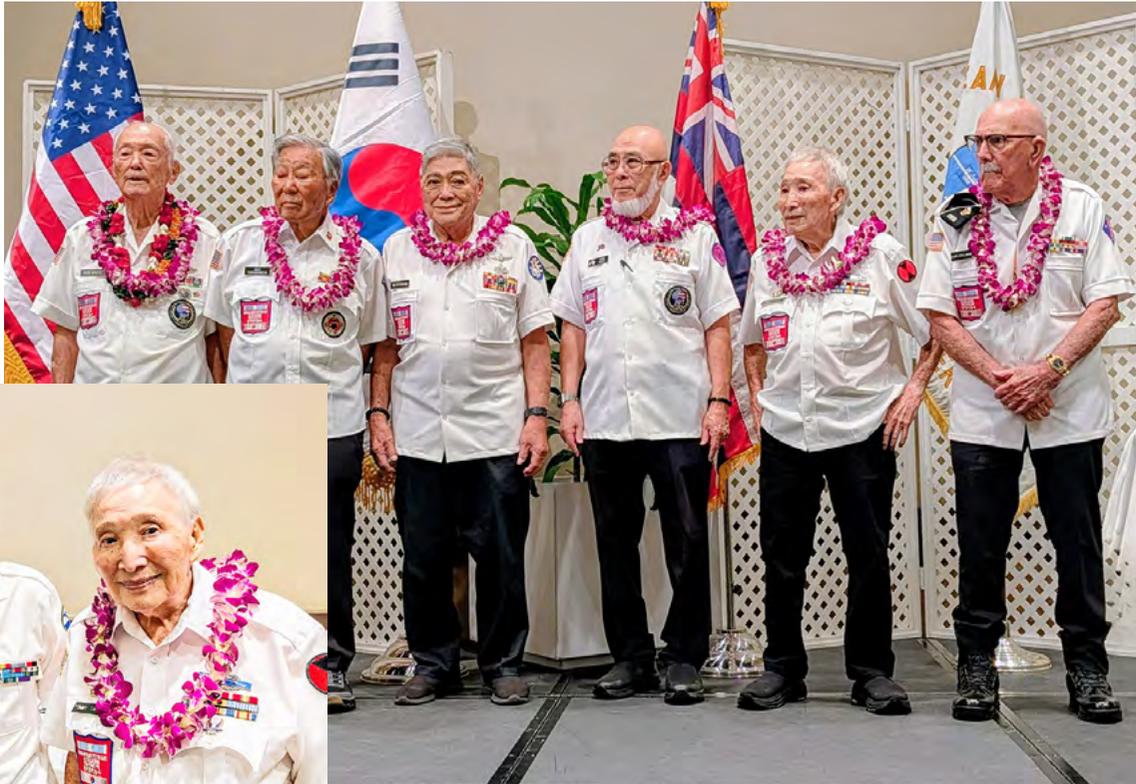
Lee's first major American role was in the TV version of "The Green Hornet," which aired on ABC from September 1966-March 1967. He played Kato, the title character's martial arts partner. After one season, the program was canceled in the U.S. but caught on in Hong Kong, where it became known as "The Kato Show." In the late 1960s and early '70s, Lee choreographed movie fight scenes and appeared in a few TV series but had no starring roles.

During this time, Lee was also developing his own philosophy and style of martial arts. With "Jeet Kune Do" — which roughly translates as "the way of the intercepting fist" — he pushed aside the rigidity of traditional martial arts for a more free-flowing approach. "When there is freedom from mechanical conditioning, there is simplicity," he wrote in his posthumously published book "Tao of Jeet Kune Do." ➔

It would be several more years before Warner Bros.

KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 new officers for 2026-2027. Pictured (from left) are President Robert Imose, VP Roy Yamashiroya, 2nd VP Walter Furuyama, Secretary Walter Ozawa, Treasurer Tommy Tahara and Sgt at Arms Clifford Chillingworth.

PHOTOS: PATTI HIRAHARA



When Korean War veteran Nori Uyematsu (center) went to Hawaii last May and met with a few members of this group, no one knew who he was, but when they saw him in person, they were surprised it was Norio, the name he used when he enlisted. Due to this, the group invited him back, from the mainland, to join their Christmas party last December. Pictured (from left) are KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 President Robert Imose, Uyematsu and Christmas Party Chairman and Chapter Treasurer Tommy Tahara.

“The KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 has taken a leadership role in all the Korean War veterans events and has been recognized by the Korean community here in Honolulu as the key Korean War Veterans organization here in the state,” said Tahara.

As a war veterans organization, the pronounced objectives are 1) to honor the memory of its fallen heroes and 2) to maintain the camaraderie born on the battlefields and participate in memorial services on Veterans Day and Memorial Day at the National Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) and at the state Veterans Cemetery at Kaneohe.

They also participate at sponsored ceremonies at Punchbowl for the commemoration of the start of the Korean War on June 25, as well as

the Korean War Armistice on July 27 and the POW/MIA ceremony at Punchbowl.

The chapter initiates and participates in the annual Korean War Veterans reunion and provides a leadership role in the Korean revisit program, which has enabled hundreds of Hawaii Korean War Veterans to revisit South Korea.

The KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 has also logged in several thousands of hours of volunteer maintenance work at the Korean and Vietnam Memorials at Hawaii’s state capitol.

After my meeting with the KWVA Hawaii Chapter with Japanese American Veterans Assn. member Norio Uyematsu in May, the group invited Uyematsu to join them again from California to attend its 2025 Christmas Luncheon and Installation of

Officers on Dec. 13, 2025, at the Ala Moana Hotel by Mantra in Honolulu. More than 200 people were in attendance at the popular event.

Last year, 18 of its members were in attendance out of 33. The chapter also has five honorary members. Chapter treasurer Tommy Tahara, who is turning 95, has chaired the Christmas event for 10 years and will once again host it in 2026.

During the Christmas Luncheon, which was emceed by Secretary Walter Ozawa, the chapter installed its officers for 2026-27. The keynote speaker was Acting Consul General Joon Kim from the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Honolulu, who said, “It is a great honor to join you today as we gather to close the year and pay tribute to the heroes who fought to defend freedom on the Korean Peninsula.

“Today carries a very personal meaning for me,” Kim continued. “My father was a Vietnam War veteran, and though he is no longer with us, the values he lived by continue to guide my life and my service.

“I often think about him on occasions like this. And as I stand before you today — honoring the courage of those who served before us —

I believe he would be proud to see his son standing with you, thanking you for your sacrifice and continuing the mission of strengthening the bonds between our nations. In many ways, your stories remind me of his. And I feel a deep connection to each of you.”

“Hawaii’s role in that history is truly special. This state sent a remarkable number of young men to fight in Korea. Their bravery is deeply honored by the Korean people, who have never forgotten the sacrifice of Hawaii’s sons. The prosperity and freedom Koreans enjoy today are built on the foundation you laid,” Kim said.

In working with KWVA in Hawaii, on behalf of the Korean Consulate, Kim said, “It is truly an honor to work along with the Korean War veterans who have devoted themselves to our country and our people. The veterans in the Hawaii chapter are so

energetic and warm-hearted individuals, and on behalf of the Republic of Korea, we would like to express our deepest respect and sincere gratitude for their service and are happy to continue our close cooperation with them.”

Said KWVA Hawaii Chapter No. 1 President Robert Imose: “We are so fortunate that the Korean Consulate works to take care of us and honor those that fought and served in the Korean War. It is a very important bond that we continue to share.” ■



Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Honolulu Acting Consul General Joon Kim served as the 2025 KWVA Christmas Luncheon keynote speaker.

studios produced the first Hollywood movie starring Lee. Released in 1972, “Enter the Dragon” became a worldwide phenomenon. It was also added to the National Film Registry, which honors “culturally, historically or aesthetically” significant motion pictures.

Tragically, Lee did not live to see his opus stun American audiences. On July 20, 1973, a month before the film’s premiere, he lay down for a nap and fell into a coma, dying at age 32 of cerebral edema.

In the following decades, Lee’s legend grew. In 1999, he was included in Time magazine’s list of the “Top 100 Most Important People of the Century.” In 2012, the U.S. House of Representatives paid tribute to Lee with an official statement calling him “a true catalyst for social change and civil rights” and “a cultural and American icon.” The statement concluded that Lee

“remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for future generations in America.”

Antonio Alcalá, an art director for USPS, designed the stamp with Kam Mak’s egg tempera painting on traditional gesso. The black-and-white palette with a brush stroke of yellow references his final movie, “The Game of Death,” which was completed and released after his death. Lee’s name and the words “USA” and “FOREVER” are arranged to appear as if Lee’s flying kick were breaking them in half.

The Bruce Lee stamp is available in panes of 20. As a Forever stamp, it will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

News of the stamp is being shared with the hashtag #BruceLeeStamp. ■



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Creating a legacy plan is the most effective way to avoid family disputes and will also allow you to choose who will control your assets after your death. An effective legacy plan will help ensure your legacy gets distributed according to your wishes.

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THE RE-EDUCATION OF DAVID ONO

As Ventura County JACL installation's guest speaker, the TV newsman reveals his storytelling motivations.

By P.C. Staff

Whether reporting on disasters like Hurricane Katrina, Haiti's earthquake and Japan's *tsunami* or covering royal weddings, popes and presidents, multiple-award-winning TV journalist David Ono's calling has been telling other people's stories. (tinyurl.com/43jc696t)

And while Ono did indeed share some stories on video as the guest speaker at the Ventura County JACL's 46th installation on Jan. 25 at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, Calif., the ABC7 Eyewitness News anchor and reporter also shared with those in attendance some of his own backstory and what motivated him to relay manifold stories about Japanese American servicemen during World War II that, while revered within the Japanese American community, were still largely untold and unknown to the wider public.

Following lunch and recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, chapter Co-President Lily Anne Welty Tamai introduced Ono, citing his record of professional accolades, which includes Emmys, Edward R. Murrow awards, Asian American Journalists Assn. and Society of Professional Journalists awards and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Los Angeles Press Club.

Noting that he didn't have nor really care for "any formal speeches" and preferring "to be a little bit more interactive," Ono began by telling the audience about his journey, including how his white American father met his Japanese mother while serving in the Army, stationed in Japan.

"We ended up in San Antonio, Texas, Fort Sam Houston, and that's where I lived for several years," Ono said. "And then when he was going to be transferred out is when he decided to retire because he didn't want to move yet again. So, I ended up growing up in San Antonio, Texas. My mother's family is from Kumamoto, Japan."

Ono then explained his reason for using his mother's surname professionally. "I use my mother's name on the air, but my real name is Johnston, as in George Johnston, right



David Ono introduces an installment from his "FACEism" series.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Standing in front of the decommissioned Air Force One at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum are (from left) PSW's Nancy Takayama; Ventura JACL board members Anne Chilcott, Janice Tanaka, Akemi Ketchum, Donn Taketa and Sarah Taketa; guest speaker David Ono; chapter Co-Presidents Megan Gately and Lily Anne Welty Tamai; Kai Tamai; and board member Mark Chilcott.

over there," he said, getting laughs from the audience. "I use Ono because Ono is a tribute to my mother. But also it's very simple for TV, forwards, backwards, upside-down. And I did love my own ethnicity. I wanted to embrace that a little bit more as I went on the air."

Ono also spoke of how his father's military background led him to becoming interested in anything related to the military and military history. "I read, I thought, every book there was about WWII, from Guadalcanal to the Flying Tigers to Pearl Harbor. I thought I had a broad gamut of knowledge about WWII," he said.

But early in Ono's TV news career, when he spent three years in Sacramento, Calif., prior

to moving to the Los Angeles TV market, he came to realize there was a huge gap in his knowledge regarding America's concentration camps for Japanese Americans during WWII, not to mention the experience of Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. Army. "I had never heard of the Nisei soldiers," he said.

In no time, Ono was being approached by members of Sacramento's Japanese American community and was asked to emcee different events. It was the beginning of a re-evaluation of what he thought he knew.

"I would show up, and they would say, 'Were your parents incarcerated?'" Ono was also asked if his father was in the 442. "I'm like,

'I have no idea what you're talking about.' I started to learn," Ono said. "I was a history buff, yet there's no mention of this chapter in any history book in Texas."

It was when Ono moved to Los Angeles when his re-education really began. He had to re-evaluate not just himself and his knowledge but also his abilities as a journalist. Ono had to ask himself a fundamental question: "How could I have lived this long and not known this story?"

Fortunately, Ono was a journalist and not only was it his job to learn, it was also his job to share what he had learned, to educate. "I started diving into the history and telling these stories on the air. And through that, you start building a deeper knowledge, to where people actually start to go to you for some of the details, which would have been such an absurdity 30, 33 years ago. But today, I do know a lot more thanks to your help and all these different organizations that I've been associated with."

Ono shared some of what he learned via some short videos of news stories he worked on, such as the 2011 earthquake and *tsunami* in Japan, a story on Japanese American photographer Toyo Miyatake and his award-winning documentary series "FACEism," which, according to the ABC7.com website, exposes "chapters in our history that have gone hidden and ignored."

In addition to sharing some of his videos with the audience, Ono also touted the latest iteration of his well-regarded "Defining Courage" program (see "Nisei Vets' WWII Saga Goes Live and In Person," Nov. 4, 2022, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/2sb722vw).

Before turning the microphone over to Ventura County JACL Co-President Megan Gately, who in turn introduced Ventura County JACL scholarship coordinator Sarah Taketa, Ono said, "I came to that conclusion that really educating people is the most important part of storytelling."

Taketa reported that in 2025, the chapter awarded nine scholarships ranging from \$500-\$1,500. "While the dollar amount is important and the quantity of students is important, I think for me and really our committee, what matters more is what the scholarships represent and what they can really unlock for the students, which is that feeling of momentum, confidence and also just the power of knowing that you're worth investing in, you're worth believing in and that there's a community behind you."

The oath of office for the 2026 Ventura Chapter board was conducted by Nancy Takayama, representing the JACL's Pacific Southwest District. The office of Ventura County Supervisor Vianey Lopez provided the newly sworn-in officers with certificates of recognition. ■



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KAKEHASHI IS MORE THAN A BRIDGE: PART II

Remaining curious helps one participant explore the roots of her identity.

By Jillian Stineman

Over the years, I have struggled to answer the question, “What constitutes the Japanese American identity?” and my acceptance into the December 2025 Kakehashi Program has also prompted me to reflect on my relationship to Japan.

Originally, I was born in China and was adopted by a Sansei Japanese American mother and a white father. I grew up isolated from the Japanese American community and struggled to understand my identities as an Asian American and an adoptee while experiencing anti-Asian racism.

Jillian Stineman (standing, far right) with Stella Saame (third row) and (second row, from left) Annika Tamaki, Setsu Nakahara, Seiji Nakahara and (front row, from left) Nanami Lillie and Megan Arakaki.



I have always attended Obon observances in Southern California as long as I can remember, but those did not offer the reprieve I needed when the summer ended. When I went back to school, I distanced myself from Asian culture as a reaction to the racism I experienced.

I got very involved in the Los Angeles Japanese American community as a member of the UCLA Nikkei Student Union. My two years at UCLA were a mission to claim an Asian American identity, community and history.

But after, I realized that I had never made an attempt to connect to my Japanese cultural heritage, which motivated me to apply for the

Jillian Stineman

PHOTOS:
COURTESY OF
JILLIAN STINEMAN



Jillian Stineman



Pictured with Seiji Nakahara are (from left) Annika Tamaki, Megan Arakaki, Nanami Lillie, Stella Saame and Jillian Stineman.

Kakehashi Program, which sent young professionals and students like myself to Japan from Dec. 10-17 through coordination by the JAACL and the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) and support by funding from the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After landing in Okinawa on Dec. 12, we were whisked immediately to the University

of the Ryūkyūs, where we met with Okinawan participants of the TOFU Kakehashi Program. We broke out into discussion groups to share our perspective as Americans and Okinawans.

We concluded our session with each group sharing key takeaways, and many similar themes of forced assimilation, language loss, generational trauma and resilience arose when we concluded our small group discussions.

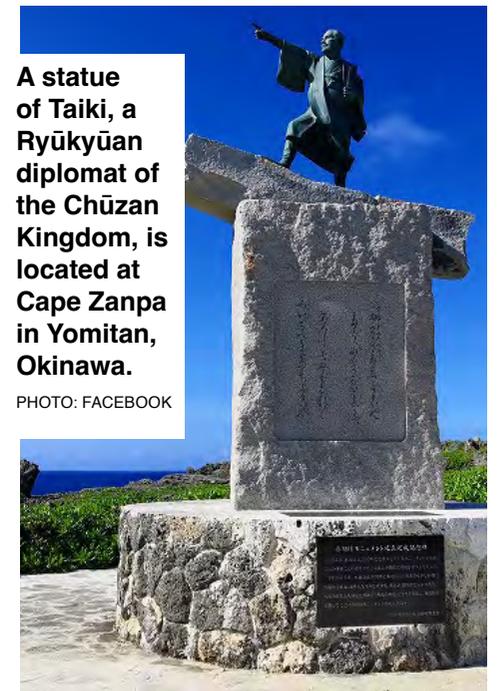
I recommend that people look at the 2018 report from the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of Ryūkyūs, in addition to the Minority Rights Group website to learn more about the discrimination and xenophobia Okinawans experience today as a minority group and an indigenous community in Japan.

My favorite part of the entire trip was my homestay with Seiji and Setsu Nakahara in Yomitan Village, which is located in Nakagami District in Okinawa Prefecture.

On what I would describe as a perfect day, my homestay group, which also included Stella Saame, Annika Tamaki, Nanami Lillie and Megan Arakaki, woke up at 7:30 a.m. to

A statue of Taiki, a Ryūkyūan diplomat of the Chūzan Kingdom, is located at Cape Zanpa in Yomitan, Okinawa.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK



drive to Toguchi Beach during the lowest tide and spent the morning catching sea cucumbers, hermit crabs, sea stars, snails and clams before eating breakfast, which our obasan had prepared: sandwiches, fruit and tea.

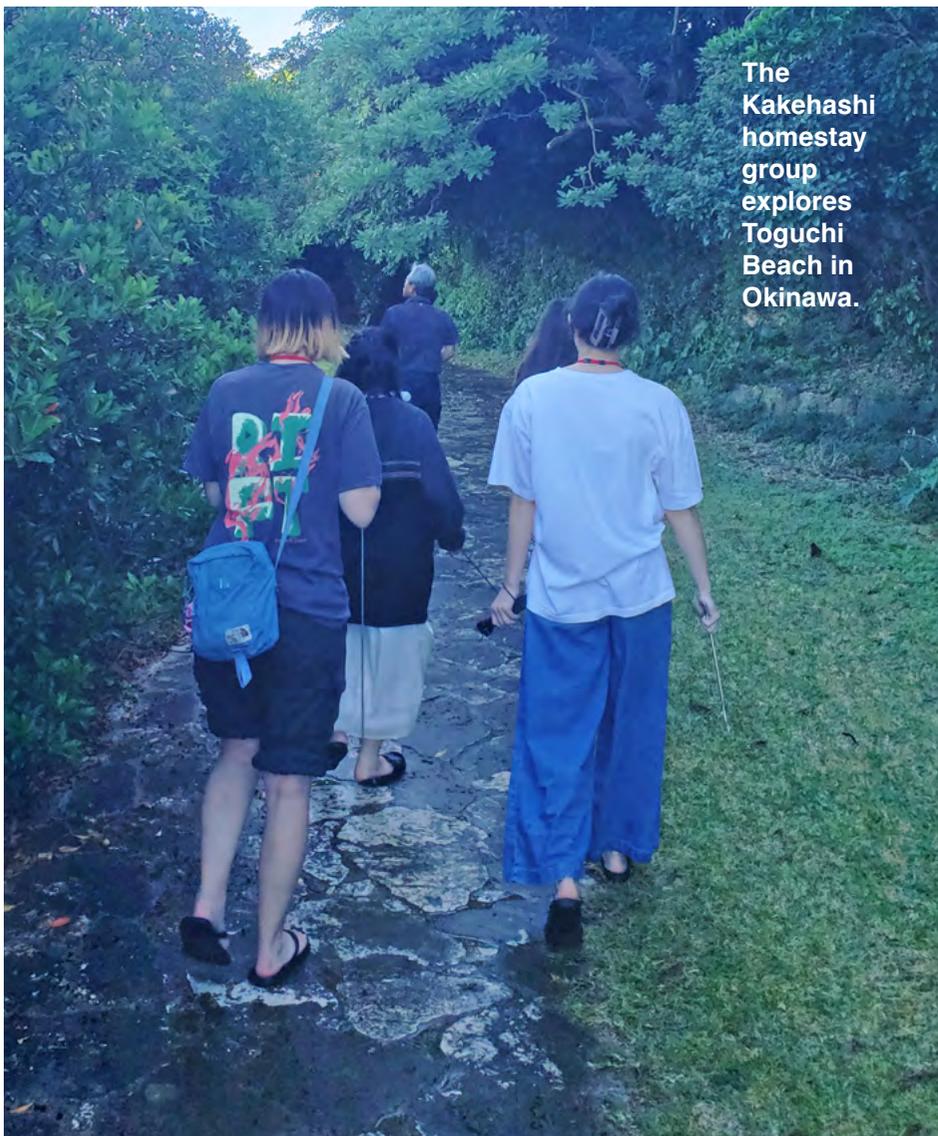
Our ojichan pulled out one of his many shamisen, which he carved himself, and played many American and Okinawan songs.

After packing up, we visited the ruins of Zakimi Castle, which was built around 1420. The walls of the castle formed waves atop a hill high above sea level, which made for a stunning scene when you stood on them.

We also visited the Cape Zanpa Lighthouse, located in a park with a statue of Taiki, a Ryūkyūan diplomat of the Chūzan Kingdom during the late 1300s who is credited with establishing trade and cultural exchange with China, greatly influencing Okinawa's own culture and aesthetics from then on.



Making gyoza during their homestay are (from left) Nanami Lillie, Megan Arakaki, Jillian Stineman and Stella Saame.



The Kakehashi homestay group explores Toguchi Beach in Okinawa.

On our last day on Okinawa, we visited the Chibichiri Gama and Shimuki Gama caves, which memorializes the Battle of Okinawa during World War II, where the United States Army and Imperial Japanese Army fought on the island, with many Okinawans tragically caught in the crossfire.

At the Chibichiri Gama Cave, 140 residents — women, children and elders — took refuge in the cave to hide from the Imperial Japanese Army, where only 40 percent survived a mass-coerced suicide after hearing lies from Japanese soldiers that the consequences of surrendering to the American military would be worse than death.

The cave is located in a small pocket at the bottom of a ravine, and after peering inside, it was easy to imagine the claustrophobia people might have felt, which contributed to people's desperation.

In contrast, the Shimuku Gama Cave was able to hold 1,000 refugees who lived thanks to two men who had spent time in Hawaii and were able to persuade everyone to surrender.

I also loved our short visit at the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, Japan. With an academic background in Asian American Studies, I was very excited to learn how Japan viewed and related to its diasporic communities.

I have visited museums made for and by the Japanese American community to memorialize the incarceration experiences of Issei and Nisei Japanese Americans during World War II. Exhibitions have since explored the Japanese American experience from the 19th century to present day and branched out into other aspects from mixed-race identity, pop culture and more niche topics like the car scene in Southern California, which is often accompanied by rich oral histories and personal stories attached to many artifacts.

I frequently find myself at awe when witnessing the depth and richness embedded in the breadth of Japanese American history, and I felt that feeling reignited while visiting the Migration Museum.

While the majority of the museum focused on a short time span from the mid-19th-early-20th century, it was fascinating to place the Japanese American experience within a global context.

I was also delighted to see a list of researchers, staff and artists involved with the museum who were Japanese Latin American. I also saw a variety of pamphlets and audio guides in Japanese, English, French and Spanish showing that the museum was a learning space not just for Japanese people to learn about the experiences of the diaspora, but also for the diaspora to visit and trace their roots back to Japan.

While in Okinawa, the history of Japan's forceful annexation and the current American military presence were ubiquitous. One of our courtesy calls was with Ginowa City Mayor Atsushi Sakima, who has made a political career with his strong stance to close and relocate the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, located in the middle of the city.

Futenma Air Station was originally built by the U.S. during the Battle of Okinawa and is one of many military facilities located on the island. In fact, 70 percent of U.S. military facilities are located on Okinawa despite only being 0.6 percent of the land in Japan.

Anti-base sentiment was a deeply personal issue for many residents due to concerns about noise, pollution and safety. Accidents and crimes, particularly the sexual assaults and murders of Okinawan women

and the crashing of a fighter jet into an elementary school have inspired large protests.

While the majority of the people we met expressed anti-airbase sentiments, there are also many caveats. Calling back to our discussion at Ryūkyū University, two of the TOFU participants in our group also recalled the U.S.-Japan alliance, citing that the American military would offer some form of protection in the case of an attack from another country.

It is also clear that the Okinawan economy is closely tied to the historical development of the airbases, which has also led to the development of a thriving tourism industry.

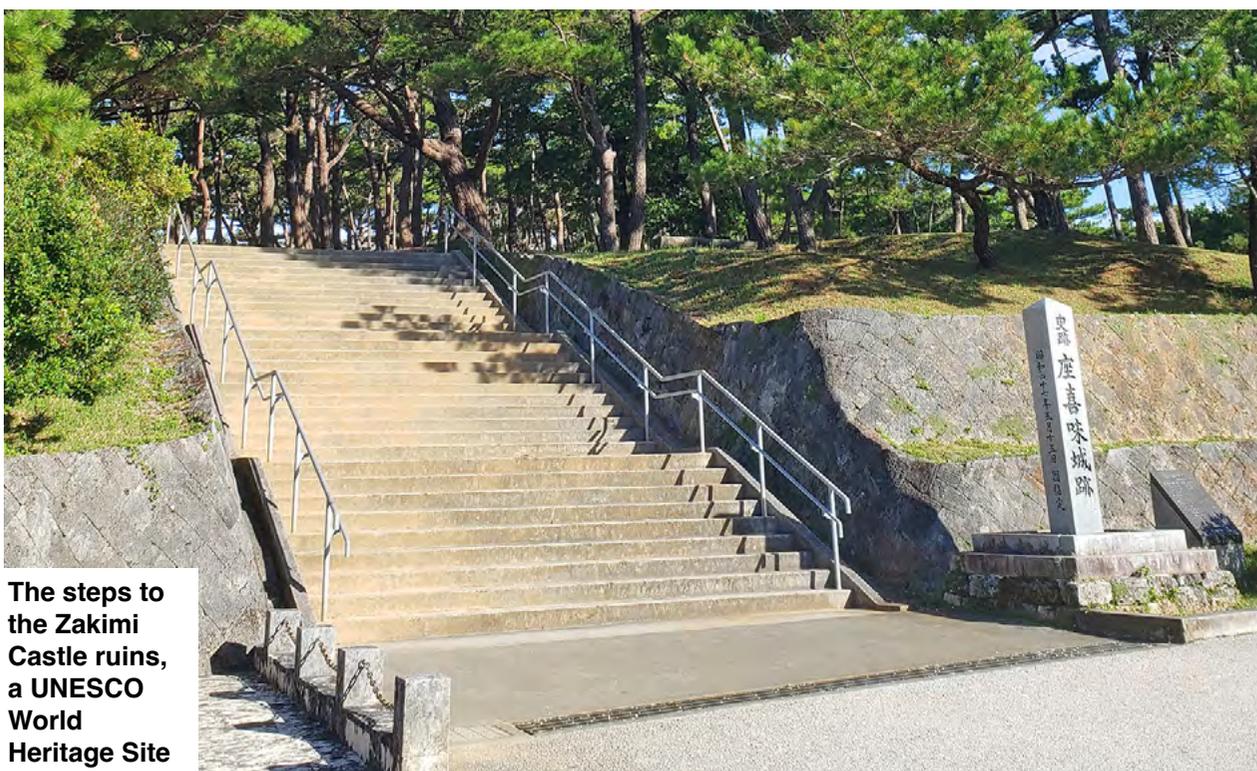
As much as I enjoyed my time in Okinawa, I was initially very scared to confront these truths head on, but I was eager to come to Japan and act as a "bridge" (*kakehashi*) by explaining the Japanese American experience during WWII.

I found instead that my thoughts and feelings took the backseat, and a large part of Kakehashi was to decenter my experience to wrestle with these ugly truths and witness how the U.S.' unequal relationships to overseas communities manifests in people's everyday lives.

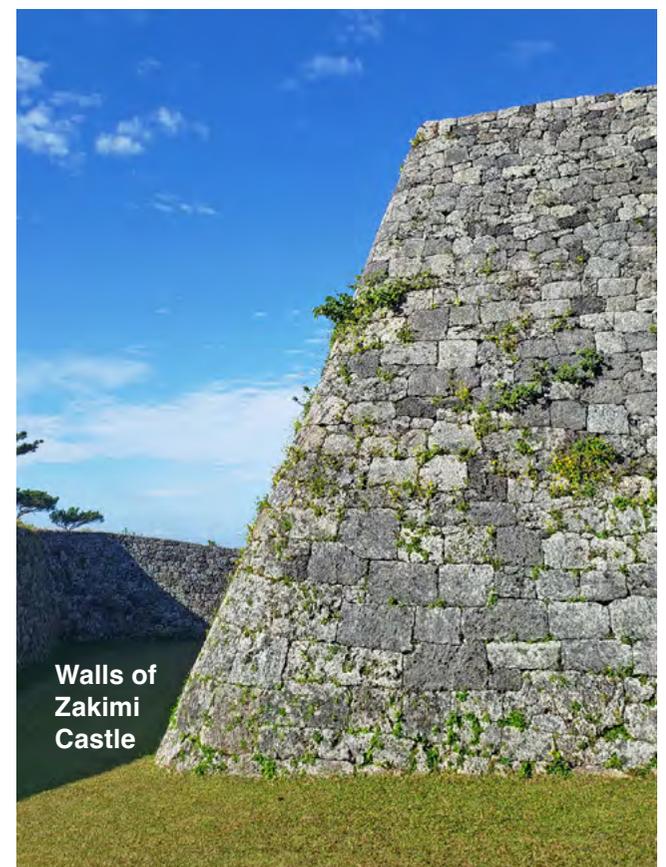
The Kakehashi Program is a great opportunity for Japanese Americans to visit Japan, connect with other Japanese Americans across the United States and reconnect with one's ethnic homeland and family history.

The inclusion of a homestay visit is an opportunity to resist the easy choice of consuming and spectating Okinawa through a tourist gaze. My ojichan and obachan were very proud and eager to share their lives, culture and history with us so that we could share with others. I would encourage anyone eligible for Kakehashi to apply, remain curious on your trip and share what you learned.

Jillian Stineman is a recent graduate from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a minor in Asian American studies. She is looking forward to becoming a member of the Ventura County chapter of the JACL.



The steps to the Zakimi Castle ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Walls of Zakimi Castle

Nikkei Progressives, Activist Ju Hong Honored

K.W. Lee Center for Leadership holds annual awards dinner and marks its 20th anniversary.

By P.C. Staff

The evening of Dec. 19, 2025, was an inflection point for the K.W. Lee Center for Leadership. On one hand, the organization continued its years-long tradition of holding its annual awards dinner and silent auction at the Oxford Palace Hotel in L.A.'s Koreatown.

But on the other hand, the occasion was noteworthy not just because it was the organization's 20th such annual event, but it also was the first with its titular figure and North Star, investigative journalist K.W. Lee, no longer among the living.

The center nevertheless marked the end of its second decade by honoring a group and an individual, namely Nikkei Progressives and Ju Hong, an advocate for undocumented immigrants and families.

Repeating his past role as master of ceremonies was K.W. Lee Center for Leadership board member Eugene Kim, who recalled how Do Hyung Kim, who became and still is the nonprofit's board president, invited him over to discuss launching the

organization. "I remember walking out of that meeting to my car, and I was like, 'What did I get myself into?' Because it's been 20 years, and we're still here. . . . I'm actually very proud of this in my life."

Kim noted K.W. Lee's passing. "This year is especially meaningful, as we also had to say goodbye to our mentor, our friend and truly our inspiration, K.W."

Introduced by Kim was KWLC-FL board member Albert Oh. "The K.W. Lee Center is a special place for me. It has done much for the community, and I personally became part of this organization as a 2010 college intern," he recalled, adding, "Tonight's theme, 'Rooted in Community and Rising in Solidarity,' is a message that is more important than ever. As our community is rocked by attacks on our immigrant brothers and sisters, we are reminded more than ever of the need for solidarity in the face of such adversity."

The evening's youth speaker was Scripps College junior Kayla Mar, who reflected on serving last summer as a college intern for the center's



Pictured at the 20th anniversary awards dinner of the K.W. Lee Center for Leadership are (from left) Ayaka Nakaji, Kristin Fukushima, Arlene Inouye, Do Hyung Kim, Ju Hong, Miya Iwataki, Nina Nakao, Kathy Masaoka and Mike Murase.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

program Korean American Youth Leaders in Training and how the experience enriched her "life and personal growth." She returned to the stage later in the program with three of her KAYLT cohort to give Nikkei Progressives its award.

The evening had two in memoriam recognitions: one for K.W. Lee, who died at 96 on March 8 (see March 21, 2025, *Pacific Citizen*, [tinyurl.com/9u9b6szd](https://www.pacificcitizen.com/9u9b6szd)), the other for Kent Wong, who died at 69 on Oct. 8

([tinyurl.com/upxbs8az](https://www.tinyurl.com/upxbs8az)).

Arlene Inouye ([tinyurl.com/ywp-pa82e](https://www.tinyurl.com/ywp-pa82e)), of Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) and outreach co-coordinator of Foundations and Futures, a project of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, provided the tribute to Wong, the former director of the UCLA Labor Center from 1991-2023 and professor of labor studies and Asian American studies.

Next was a tribute to the center's namesake, K.W. Lee, which began

with a slideshow by Emmy-award winning "Free Chol Soo Lee" co-director Julie Ha and personal tributes by Steve Chanecka, who co-founded *Koreatown Weekly* with Lee in the mid-1970s, and Sophia Kim, who Lee hired as a reporter for that newspaper, as well as at the *Korea Times English Edition*.

Following a vocal performance by Chase Karng was the presentation of the two K.W. Lee Spirit Awards.

Ju Hong's award was presented by K.W. Lee Center for Leadership President Do Hyung Kim. Hong, an advocate for undocumented families who famously — or infamously, depending on one's viewpoint — as a 24-year-old undocumented student challenged President Barack Obama during a 2013 speech to use his executive order power to halt deportations that separate families ([tinyurl.com/5n66xj4k](https://www.tinyurl.com/5n66xj4k)).

Related Story:

'Free Chol Soo Lee' Reframes an Infamous Injustice, March 18, 2022, [tinyurl.com/2vykm2uh](https://www.tinyurl.com/2vykm2uh).

A longer version of this story can be read at [tinyurl.com/3epxs3pk](https://www.tinyurl.com/3epxs3pk).

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JACL Announces Executive Director Search

A permanent hire is expected to be announced in the coming months.

By Ryan Yoshikawa,
JACL VP of General Operations



Hello readers of the *Pacific Citizen* and members of the Japanese American Citizens League.

On behalf of the National Board, I am pleased to share that JACL has officially launched the search for its next executive director.

The next executive director will honor JACL's historic legacy while guiding its next chapter of impact. The executive director will serve as a strategic leader, culture builder and public voice for the organization, strengthening relationships with members, chapters, partners, policymakers and funders.

The search is being led by a Hiring Committee of National Board members in partnership with Bonsai Leadership Group, an external executive search firm.

Together, we are committed to leading a thoughtful and structured search process that includes proactive candidate outreach, careful evaluation by multiple rounds of evaluation interviews, a leadership assessment and professional reference checks.

We encourage all individuals to apply via <http://www.bonsaileadershipgroup.com/jacl-ed>.

Please feel free to reach out to Bonsai Leadership Group careers@bonsaileadershipgroup.com if you have any specific questions as well.

The National Board is excited for the future of the JACL, and we look forward to introducing our next executive director in the months ahead. ■

Japanese Soldiers Once Branded 'ENEMY ALIENS' Promoted Posthumously

By Associated Press

HONOLULU — Seven Japanese American soldiers were promoted to officer ranks in a solemn ceremony on Jan. 26, eight decades after they died fighting for the U.S. during World War II despite having been branded "enemy aliens."

The seven were students at the University of Hawaii and cadets in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, on track to become Army officers, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. They initially served in the Hawaii Territorial Guard, but soon after the attack, the U.S. barred most Japanese Americans from service and deemed them enemy aliens.

The seven cadets instead worked with a civilian battalion known as "Varsity Victory Volunteers," which performed tasks such as digging ditches and breaking rocks, until American leaders in 1943 announced the formation of a segregated Japanese American regiment. The seven were among those who joined the unit, known as the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

The seven men — Daniel Betsui, Jenhatsu Chinen, Robert Murata, Grover Nagaji, Akio

Nishikawa, Hiroichi Tomita and Howard Urabe — died fighting in Europe in 1944. All but Murata were killed during the campaign to liberate Italy from Nazi Germany. Murata was killed by an artillery shell in eastern France.

"It is important for us to really kind of give back and recognize our forefathers and these veterans that we stand on the shoulders of," said 1st Sgt. Nakoa Hoe of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regiment, what the unit is now known as in the Army Reserve. He noted the once-segregated unit now includes a "multitude of cultures."

The seven "sacrificed so much at a challenging time when their loyalty to their country was questioned and they even had family members imprisoned," he added.

"They served in the ultimate capacity of giving their lives for their country," said Lt. Col. Jerrod Melander. Melander said he launched the commissioning effort in 2023 during former President Joe Biden's administration and that the promotions were approved last year during the Trump administration.

The university awarded the men posthumous degrees in 2012. ■

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CALENDAR

NATIONAL

Ireicho Tour to Former Confinement Sites & Other Places

National Stops

March 6-8: Portland, OR

March 26-30: Seattle, WA

April 8-11: Honolulu, HI

May 1-2: Topaz, UT

May 10-11: San Francisco, CA

July 4-5: Tule Lake, CA

Info: Visit <https://www.janm.org/exhibits/ireicho/venues>.

NCWNP

'I Am an American' Exhibit

San Francisco, CA

Feb. 23-Aug. 31

MIS Historic Learning Center at the Presidio of San Francisco

220 Halleck St.

Price: \$15; Free for Veterans, Children 12 and Under, NJAHS Members.

This new traveling exhibit tells the storied history of the Nisei soldiers who served during WWII as part of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Army's Military Intelligence Service. The exhibit features artifacts, first-hand accounts and evocative images that reveal how the Nisei soldier's service became a defining testament to courage, sacrifice and belonging.

Info: Visit nvnvets.org/exhibit.

Stockton JACL DOR Program

Stockton, CA

Feb. 28; 1 p.m.

Buddhist Church of Stockton

2820 Shimizu Dr.

Price: Free

This year's program will feature author Susan Kamei who will give a talk and discussion of her book "When Can We Go Back to America?" A candle ceremony and Q & A session will follow.

Info: Call (209) 541-9118.

'The Volunteer' Screening

Sacramento, CA

April 18; 1 p.m.

Buddhist Church of Sacramento

2401 Riverside Blvd.

Price: Free

This program features a screening of the documentary "The Volunteer," directed by David Brodie and tells the story of Vietnam veteran Bruce Nakashima, who reflects on his combat experiences and his struggles to overcome his feelings of guilt and anger. Following the film will be a Q & A session that will include the film's director. The Nisei VFW Post 8985 and

the Sacramento Adult Buddhist Assn. are co-sponsoring this event.

Info: For questions, contact John Yoshikawa at spyron@aol.com or call (916) 320-2111.

'House Meeting(s): Opening the Door for Redress in San Jose'

San Jose, CA

Now Open

Japanese American Museum at San Jose

535 N. Fifth St.

This exhibit looks at the Japanese American redress movement through everyday places and the eyes of everyday people. House meetings were informal gatherings and this space within the home was essential to the movement where trust could be built before conversations moved beyond the home.

Info: Visit www.jamsj.org.

PSW

'Visas and Virtue' Screening

Thousand Oaks, CA

Feb. 26; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Cal Lutheran University

Preus-Brandt Forum

135 Chapel Lane

Price: Free

Come see "Visas and Virtue," a short film inspired by the true story of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who, for thousands of Jews in 1940, defied Tokyo and the Nazis to offer them visas. This film is from Academy Award-winning director Chris Tashima.

Info: Visit <https://www.callutheran.edu/calendar/event/6525>.

'The Blue Jay' Screening

Hollywood, CA

March 3; 4 p.m.

TCL Chinese Theatres 6

Ovation Hollywood, 3rd Floor

6925 Hollywood Blvd.

The narrative short film "The Blue Jay" tells the story of an unlikely friendship, inspired by true events set in the Poston Incarceration Camp in Arizona during WWII. The film's director is Marlene Shigekawa.

Info: Visit www.postonpreservation.org.

DOR San Diego: 'Loyal American' and 'One Fighting Irishman'

San Diego, CA

March 11; 3:15-5:15 p.m.

Serra Mesa-Kearney Mesa Branch Library

9005 Aero Dr.

Price: Free

These two films will include discussion

following their screenings. "Loyal American" features Henry Kaku as he talks about his father and the loyalty questions he refused to answer. "Irishman" is about attorney Wayne M. Collins, who defended Japanese Americans.

Info: Visit <https://jacl.org/events/san-diego-days-of-remembrance-loyal-american-one-fighting-irishman>.

Ventura County JACL & USC Day of Service Annual Cemetery Cleanup

Oxnard, CA

March 21; 10 a.m.-Noon

Oxnard Cemetery

Corner of Etting Road and Pleasant Valley Road

Price: Free

Join the Ventura County JACL chapter and USC Alumni Day of Service as they co-sponsor this event to garden, cleanup and assist with trash removal from Oxnard Cemetery.

Info: For questions, email VenturaCountyJACL@gmail.com.

2026 Films of Remembrance

Los Angeles and Gardena, CA

March 28: Los Angeles at the Tateuchi Democracy Forum in Little Tokyo;

March 29: Gardena at the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute

This showcase of films commemorates the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans in American concentration camps during World War II. This event screening is presented by the Nichi Bei Foundation.

Info: Visit filmsofremembrance.org.

PNW

'Minidoka on Our Minds' Exhibit

Portland, OR

Thru June 14

Japanese American Museum of Oregon

411 N.W. Flanders St.

Price: Museum Admission

This exhibit celebrates 25 years of preservation at the site where many Nikkei from Oregon and Washington were incarcerated during WWII. Artwork by survivors, descendants and Japanese American youth explore the park's history and its importance as a site of memory.

Info: Visit <https://jamo.org/minidoka/>.

'The Yasui Family: An American Story' Exhibit

Portland, OR

Thru Sept. 6

The Oregon Historical Society

1200 S.W. Park Ave.

Through photographs, personal journals,

documents and objects, this exhibition explores how the Yasui family reflects the complexity of the American story. From their forced incarceration during WWII, the Yasui family endured racism and incarceration while also sharing a commitment to equal justice through engagement with the local, state and national forces that determined and withheld their civil rights.

Info: Visit ohs.org.

MDC

IFEST-MN

St. Paul, MN

April 10-11

RiverCentre

175 W. Kellogg Blvd.

Price: \$21

The International Festival of Minnesota, now IFEST-MN, is back where foods from many Asian countries will be featured at this event celebrating a community of cultures. Metro Transit and buses will provide free transportation on days of the festival.

Info: Visit ifestmn.org.

Minnesota Japanese American Veterans Graveside Decorating

Minneapolis, MN

May 16

Fort Snelling National Cemetery

7601 34th Ave. S.

Save the date for the Minnesota Japanese American Veterans Graveside Decorating in observance of Memorial Day. The Twin Cities JACL invites family and friends to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Minnesota Japanese American Veterans by decorating gravesites at the cemetery. Volunteers are also needed to decorate gravesites of veterans whose family members are not able to attend.

Info: Please RSVP by May 13 to chiratadulas@tcjacl.org.

EDC

Lunar New Year Celebration

Boston, MA

March 1; 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Pao Arts Center

99 Albany St.

Price: Suggested Donation \$10 Per Family

Pao Art Center's annual Lunar New Year celebration is back. Come by for an afternoon of art and interactive workshops. All ages are invited to join in for cultural activities as the center ushers in the Year of the Horse!

Info: Visit PaoArtsCenter.org.

'You Are Cordially Invited to the End of the World' Play

Boston, MA

March 6-28

Boston Public Library

700 Boylston St. (Copley Square)

Price: All Tickets Are Pay-What-You-Want.

"You Are Cordially Invited to the End of the World" proves that every family is their own ecosystem, as complex and beautiful as the Earth itself. This play features a sparkling celebration of life, death and cosmic connection!

Info: For tickets, visit <https://companyone.org/cordially-invited/>.

15th Annual Boston Charity Concert

Arlington, MA

March 22; 3:30 p.m.

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

630 Massachusetts Ave.

Price: Early Bird (Thru March 19) \$25; After Adults \$30; Grades 1-12 \$10; Preschool & Under Free.

This family-friendly concert brings together ensembles ranging from young student performers to professionals. Net proceeds benefit Food Link, an Arlington-based nonprofit.

Info: For tickets, visit <https://www.bostoncharityconcert.com/contact>.

Play: 'Chinese Republicans'

New York, NY

Thru April 5

Harold & Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre

Laura Pels Theatre

111 W. 46th St.

Price: Ticket Prices Vary.

Roundabout Theatre Company presents this new satirical drama from Alex Lin, directed by Chay Yew. Four women are forced to grapple with how much they already have and are willing to sacrifice to climb the corporate ladder.

Info: Visit <https://www.roundabout-theatre.org/get-tickets/2025-2026-season/chinese-republicans>.

'The Many Lives of the Nakagin Capsule Tower' Exhibit

New York, NY

Thru July 12

Museum of Modern Art

11 W. 53rd St.

Price: Museum Admission

The exhibit brings together original drawings and models with ephemeral photographs and films to explore how this structure became a hive of creativity.

Info: Visit <http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5830>.

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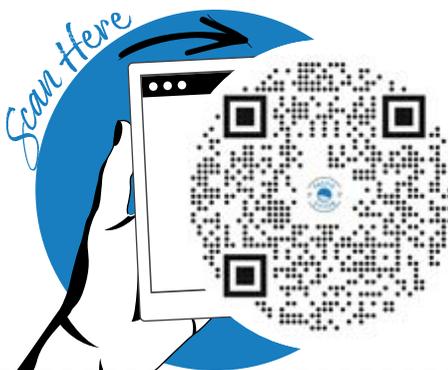
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Jesse Jackson Dead at 84

Fiery orator, MLK protégé ran twice for U.S. presidency.



The front page of the May 25, 1984, *Pacific Citizen* shows Jesse Jackson at a Los Angeles campaign stop in Little Tokyo.

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, a protégé of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and two-time presidential candidate who led the Civil Rights Movement for decades after the revered leader's assassination, died Feb. 17. He was 84.

Already a well-known national figure, Jackson's visibility widened in 1984 and again in 1988 thanks to two unsuccessful-but-historic, profile-raising bids to become the Democratic Party's candidate for U.S. president, more than 20 years before a fellow Chicagoan and African American, then-Sen. Barack Obama, was elected to the White House in 2008.

In his 1984 bid, Jackson announced his support of Japanese American redress on March 9. (*Page 4, May 6, 1988, Pacific Citizen, tinyurl.com/mr2rscv2*).

Jackson's presidential candidacy found support within the Japanese American and Asian American communities. He spoke in Little Tokyo on May 17, 1984 (*May 25, 1984, Pacific Citizen, tinyurl.com/bdf6ste3*), and in 1988, was endorsed by four Asian American community leaders (*April 8, 1988, Pacific Citizen, tinyurl.com/3abb6wap*). On Jan. 30, 2011, Jackson spoke at the inaugural Fred Korematsu Day (*Feb. 4, 2011, Pacific Citizen, tinyurl.com/y2dkadhv*).

In 2025, it was announced that he had been hospitalized at a Chicago hospital for progressive supranuclear palsy, or PSP, a neurodegenerative disorder he has been "managing for more than a decade" and received a diagnosis for in April. The new diagnosis superseded the one he had received in 2017 for Parkinson's disease.

As a young organizer in Chicago, Jackson was called to meet with King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn., shortly before King was killed, and he publicly positioned himself thereafter as King's successor.

Santita Jackson confirmed that her father died at home in Chicago, surrounded by family.

Jackson led a lifetime of

crusades in the United States and abroad, advocating for the poor and underrepresented on issues, including voting rights, job opportunities, education and health care. He scored diplomatic victories with world leaders, and through his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, he channeled cries for Black pride and self-determination into corporate boardrooms, pressuring executives to make America a more open and equitable society.

And when he declared, "I am Somebody," in a poem he often repeated, he sought to reach people of all colors. "I may be poor, but I am Somebody; I may be young; but I am Somebody; I may be on welfare, but I am Somebody," Jackson intoned.

It was a message he took literally and personally, having risen from obscurity in the segregated South to become America's best-known civil rights activist since King.

"Our father was a servant leader — not only to our family, but to the oppressed, the voiceless and the overlooked around the world," the Jackson family said in a statement posted online. "We shared him with the world, and in return, the world became part of our extended family."

Fellow civil rights activist the Rev. Al Sharpton said his mentor "was not simply a civil rights leader; he was a movement unto himself."

"He taught me that protest must have purpose, that faith must have feet and that justice is not seasonal, it is daily work," Sharpton wrote in a statement, adding that Jackson taught "trying is as important as triumph. That you do not wait for the dream to come true; you work to make it real."

Despite profound health challenges in his final years, including the disorder that affected his ability to move and speak, Jackson continued protesting against racial injustice into the era of Black Lives Matter. In 2024, he appeared at the Democratic National Con-

vention in Chicago and at a City Council meeting to show support for a resolution backing a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war.

"Even if we win," he told marchers in Minneapolis before the officer whose knee kept George Floyd from breathing was convicted of murder, "it's relief, not victory. They're still killing our people. Stop the violence, save the children. Keep hope alive."

Jackson's voice, infused with the stirring cadences and powerful insistence of the Black church, demanded attention. On the campaign trail and elsewhere, he used rhyming and slogans such as "Hope not dope" and "If my mind can conceive it and my heart can believe it, then I can achieve it," to deliver his messages.

Jackson had his share of critics, both within and outside of the Black community. Some considered him a grandstander, too eager to seek the spotlight. Looking back on his life and legacy, Jackson told the Associated Press in 2011 that he felt blessed to be able to continue the service of other leaders before him and to lay a foundation for those to come.

"A part of our life's work was to tear down walls and build bridges, and in a half century of work, we've basically torn down walls," Jackson said. "Sometimes when you tear down walls, you're scarred by falling debris, but your mission is to open up holes so others behind you can run through."

In his final months, as he received 24-hour care, he communicated with family and visitors by holding their hands and squeezing.

"I get very emotional knowing that these speeches belong to the ages now," his son, Jesse Jackson Jr., told the AP in October.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded Jackson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor.

In 2021, Jackson joined the parents of Ahmaud Arbery inside the Georgia courtroom where three white men were convicted of killing the young Black jogger. In 2022, he hand-delivered a letter to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago, calling for federal charges against former Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke in the 2014 killing of Black teenager Laquan McDonald.

Jackson stepped down as president of Rainbow/PUSH in July 2023.

(A longer version of this article is at tinyurl.com/yn5yrf9t.)

News Brief

Calif. Man Headed to Prison After Pleading Guilty to Being Illegal PRC Agent

The Department of Justice announced that Yaoning "Mike" Sun, 65, of Chino Hills, Calif., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner to four years in prison for acting as an unauthorized agent in service to the People's Republic of China. According to FBI documents, Sun had served as campaign adviser to an Arcadia, Calif., political candidate in 2022 — identified as Eileen Wang, who was sworn in as mayor Feb. 3 — who was elected to its city council. Sun also had been Wang's fiancé and served as her campaign consultant. In a similar incident, a mistrial was declared in late 2025 in the case of Linda Sun, a former aide to a former and the current New York governor, who had also been accused of serving as an unauthorized agent for China.

— P.C. Staff

MEMORIAM

(Note: Boldfaced names in the PDF version of this are active hyperlinks.)

Hamamoto, Fusako, 94, Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 21.

Aki, Robert H., 70, Barrington, Ill., Aug. 15, 2025.

Matsumura, Akio, 83, Forest Hills, NY, Feb. 10.

Ando, Helen Hanako, 91, Gardena, CA, Jan. 20.

McLemore, LaMonte, 90, Las Vegas, NV, Feb. 3.

Cruce, Shige (Yogi), 85, Syracuse, NY, Jan. 2.

Yogi, Loretta, 104, Kaneohe, HI, Jan. 7.

TRIBUTE

MARY ENOMOTO

Mary Hisako Enomoto was born Sept. 21, 1929, in Las Vegas, Nev., and died Jan. 21, 2026, in Los Angeles, Calif.

She was the third child and only daughter of Kintaro "Ben" Enomoto and Kimiko Shimojima Enomoto.

Mary graduated from Las Vegas High School and then spent many years teaching home economics among other subjects at Hollywood High School.

Mary was kind to animals and often adopted stray dogs and cats from her neighborhood.

She was generous to her nieces and nephews for birthdays and holidays. She had a strong faith in God and Jesus Christ, both blessings learned from her mother. Mary would often donate and volunteer at Centenary Church and other churches in the Los Angeles area.

She has returned to her eternal home and will be deeply missed.

Preceded in death by siblings Hidemi, Shinji Joseph Morita Enomoto, George Toshio Enomoto and John Yohane Enomoto.

Survived by nieces and nephews (Joseph) Jeffrey K. Enomoto and daughter Brilynn, Jon T. Enomoto, Kimmie (Enomoto) Matsuda, spouse Keith, children — Krystyna, Kaytlyn and Kyle, (George) Kiku Chablee Enomoto, (John) Tylana Enomoto and Ranei Enomoto-Lopez, and grandnephews Kuma Jacobson Enomoto and Desmond Lopez.

Graveside services were held on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier.

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'In Memoriam' is a free listing that appears on a limited, space-available basis. Tributes honor your loved ones with text and photos and appear in a timely manner at the rate of \$25/column inch.

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