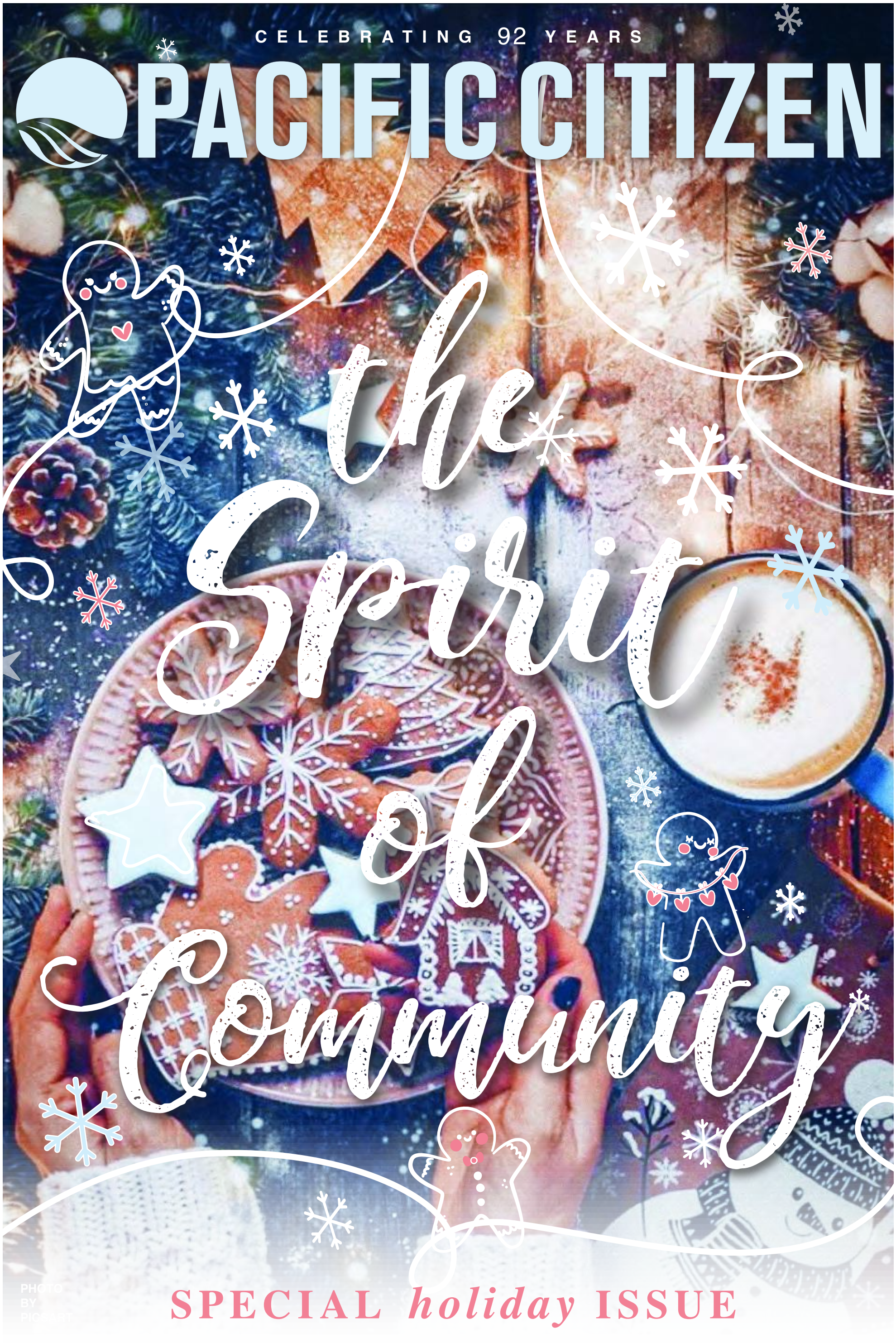
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the Spirit of Community

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Season's Greetings
from: Chuck, Amy, Cate and Laura Kuniyoshi

Happy Holidays
The Ventura County JACL would like to thank our Chapter Supporters and Holiday Issue Advertisers. Your generous support helps fund our scholarship awards and sustain our cultural and community events.

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© 2020-2021 The *Pacific Citizen* newspaper (ISSN: 0030-8579) is published semimonthly (except once in December and January) by the Japanese American Citizens League. *Pacific Citizen*

123 Ellison S. Onizuka St., Suite 313
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Periodical postage paid at Los Angeles, CA
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to National JACL
1765 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA 94115
OFFICE HOURS — Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Pacific Time
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES: JACL MEMBERS: $12 of the national dues provide one year on a one-per-household basis.
NONMEMBERS: 1 year – $50 payable in advance.
Additional postage per year — $50 International Delivery. (Subject to change without notice.) Periodical postage paid at Los Angeles, Calif.

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Founded in 1929, JACL is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization with a 10,000 membership base. JACL has 112 chapters nationwide and a Washington, D.C., office and a national headquarters in San Francisco. JACL's mission is to secure and uphold the human and civil rights of Japanese Americans and all Americans while preserving our cultural heritage and values.

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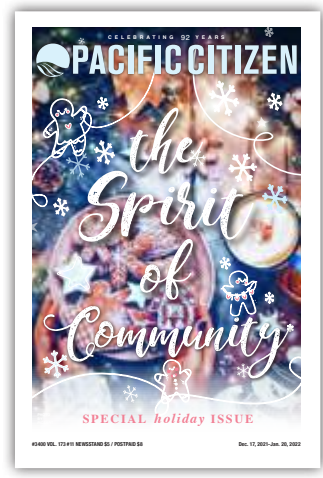


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Last year as I wrote my welcome letter, I hoped that the hardships we had to endure during the pandemic would soon come to an end, making that moment in time a distant memory for us all.

Fast-forward to 2021, and unfortunately, we're still trying to gain the upperhand on the novel coronavirus, continuing to fight with everything we've got thanks to vaccines made possible by our fearless frontline workers and the steady resolve of millions of Americans to band together as one community and not let the pandemic spoil our spirit.

"The Spirit of Community" is this year's Holiday Issue theme, and it simply encompasses the heart of every individual to do their part to make our lives better for our own selves, our families, our friends and neighbors — our nation.

In addition to fighting Covid-19, the Asian American community saw many highlights this year, including the new Go For Broke Forever Stamp honoring our Nisei World War II heroes, support for HR 40, virtual events signifying Day of Remembrance and numerous locallly organized health drives for bone marrow donors to help patients in need. But perhaps most importantly, AAPIs rallied against the violent rise in hate crimes against them — attributed largely to the pandemic — which led to the signing of the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Law by President Joe Biden in May. JACL and its chapters played an integral role in the success of that bill and remain at the forefront in the fight for justice, always advocating and voicing their support for the civil and human rights of all people.

It's uplifting to see communities putting aside their differences to come together for the common goal of helping others. Community spirit, which is constantly changing and evolving, compels us all to help wherever we can. In the many difficult days ahead, we must rely on one another to rise up against adversity so that good can always prevail.

We at the *Pacific Citizen* vow to do our part to continue to help educate others. I'm so proud that "The Spirit of Community" is alive and well as we head into 2022. Although the days ahead of us are fraught with uncertainties, our united force ensures that we won't have to go it alone. Strength in numbers. There's no greater comfort than knowing we've got each other.

— Allison Haramoto, Executive Editor

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Happy Holidays to Everyone
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Wishing you a happy 2022

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

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Tsune was a longtime member of JACL Chicago and advocate of civil rights. The Chicago Chapter misses her.

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MAUI WOWIE: 'SHANG-CHI' DIRECTOR WAS DESTIN-ED FOR GREATNESS

Hawaii's Destin Daniel Cretton directed 2021's top moneymaker — and the 442nd story is his future focus.







***(clockwise)* Destin Daniel Cretton, director of 2021's highest-grossing film, "Shang-Chi," rose steadily throughout Hollywood's ranks before earning the opportunity to direct the Marvel property.**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON

By George Toshio Johnston, Senior Editor, Digital and Social Media

If you had never before heard of the titular character portrayed in "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" until its Sept. 3 release, don't fret: Not so long ago, even the movie's director hadn't a clue about the Marvel Cinematic Universe's first Asian American superhero.

"I had no knowledge of Shang-Chi," Destin Daniel Cretton told the *Pacific Citizen*, harkening to his childhood, adding that his mother prohibited anything that had even a hint of violence in it. "The only comics that were allowed in our house were, like, the Archie Comics."

That was years before America's Favorite Teenager, his pals and their milieu would mutate into a naughtier incarnation in the form of the CW series "Riverdale."

"I probably would not have been able to watch that show. I mean, I wouldn't be able to watch any of the movies that I make," Cretton laughed.

And just who is this Destin Daniel Cretton?

Well, you may want to commit his name to your memory because in the months and years ahead, you'll be hearing much, much more about the second among the six Cretton siblings born to Daniel and Janice Harue (née Tajiri) Cretton. Destin was preceded by brother Denim, followed by sister Joy, fraternal twins Brook and Spring and the clan's youngest, Merrily.

Now, having directed 2021's highest-grossing motion picture, with a cumulative domestic total north of $224.5 million, not to mention the top-grossing Marvel movie of the year (sorry, "Black Widow" and "Eternals"), Cretton is now a newly minted member of Hollywood's A-List Directors Club. (Note: "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" is streaming on the Disney+ service.)

Ahead of him lies a slate of projects that includes, among many others, an adaptation of Daniel James Brown's "Facing the Mountain" *(see the May 7-21, 2021, issue of the Pacific Citizen)*, which represents Hollywood's first attempt since 1951's "Go for Broke!" to convey to a wide audience the story of World War II's legendary — but still largely unknown to the masses — true story of 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team, whose troops were primarily Nisei from the territory of Hawaii and America's mainland concentration camps that incarcerated ethnic Japanese.

Although "Shang-Chi" truly represents Cretton's mainstream breakthrough, the 43-year-old, who was born and raised on the Hawaiian island of Maui, is no overnight sensation.

His is a career that has been on an upward trajectory dating back to before 2013's well-regarded "Short Term 12." The drama about social workers who care for troubled teens at a group home was not only a personal triumph for Cretton — a 22-minute-long shorter version of it was his thesis project at San Diego State University, and in 2009, it won the Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking at the Sundance Film Festival — it was a breakthrough role for Brie Larson, who would win an Oscar in 2015 for "Room." Its stellar cast also included Rami Malek, who would himself win an Oscar in 2019 for "Bohemian Rhapsody."

A future Cretton project pushed his profile even higher: the 2019 civil rights-themed drama "Just Mercy" was yet another well-regarded movie in his growing filmography.

But Hawaii to Hollywood? It does seem somewhat improbable. Maui is not Honolulu, much less New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, and no shade intended on his alma mater — but SDSU's School of Theatre, Television and Film doesn't have the name recognition of the programs at USC, UCLA or NYU.

Translation: Cretton's success is proof that hard work, vision and talent matter more than one's credentials.

"It would be a very long and wind-y story to tell you how I got to where I am today," Cretton laughed. "It was just one foot in front of the other, taking steps toward something that I loved." It probably doesn't hurt, however, that he "fell in love with making movies" at age 11.

"It wasn't like a career that I was chasing by any means," Cretton said, thinking back to his childhood. "But it was always a form of expression. It was always a hobby of mine." Although he didn't know it at the time, he was, as a youngster, actually training himself for what he would do later in life. But before that, he would need to exit paradise.



Destin Daniel Cretton won the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting in 2010. Pictured *(from left)* are Cretton, Andrew Lanham, Cinthea Stahl, Micah Ranum and Marvin Krueger.

PHOTO: ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES/ COPYRIGHT 2010

The Origins of *SHANG-CHI*

When Marvel Comics introduced the character of Shang-Chi in 1973, American pop culture had just encountered a seismic event caused by the blockbuster movie "Enter the Dragon" and its star, the late Bruce Lee.

Although Lee had already gained some fame in the U.S. as the Kato character from TV's late-1960s "Green Hornet" show, and his subsequent Hong Kong movies that had an underground following here (and huge success across Asia), "Enter the Dragon" released the floodgates that would become the kung fu craze.

ABC's "Kung Fu," which debuted in 1972, owed a direct debt to Lee, who taught Hollywood notables his brand of kung fu. Then there was one-hit wonder Carl Douglas' pop single "Kung Fu Fighting," complete with a line about "funky Chinamen." Saturday morning cartoons would get "Hong Kong Phooey." That there would also be a kung fu comic book and a character like Shang-Chi was, as Thanos would himself say decades later, "inevitable."

But there were problems. Just as Hollywood movies were lousy with Yellowface roles to depict Asians, American comic books had their own horrid history when depicting Asians. During World War II, Japanese people in comic books were depicted as rats and monkeys or rat-human hybrids.



The character of Shang-Chi is far removed from how another Chinese character, "Chop Chop," was depicted in the "Blackhawk" comics, which began in 1941.

Chinese people — supposedly America's allies at the time — didn't fare much better. "Chop Chop," a comic relief character in the "Blackhawk" comic series, was short, fat, dimwitted and bucktoothed, as well as unable to speak anything but broken English. (Did he carry a meat cleaver for a weapon? Of course. He was the team's cook, after all.) Then there was the "Terry and the Pirates" comic strip, which introduced the Dragon Lady, the distaff Asian stereotype.

Shang-Chi the comic book character originally appeared in "Special Marvel Edition" No. 15 before getting his own book. He was created by Steve Englehart and Jim Starlin. Marvel at the time had licensed the characters created by writer Sax Rohmer, who created Fu Manchu, the ur-Yellow Peril pop culture evil genius stereotype that begat Ming the Merciless ("Flash Gordon"), the Mandarin ("Iron Man" comics), Dr. Zin ("Jonny Quest"), James Bond's Dr. No and Marvel Comics' Yellow Claw character, to name a few.

So, it was only natural that Shang-Chi would be — no joke — the SON of Fu Manchu. He joined Rohmer-created character Sir Denis Nayland Smith in the quest to hunt down his evil genius pop, using his kung fu skills for good. The standalone Shang-Chi comic titles would eventually disappear, only to be revived (with the necessary renovations) thanks to the singular success of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The latter-day Shang-Chi is miles removed his original comic book version depiction. Gone is the red gi and headband, along with the whole Fu Manchu connection, the rights to Rohmer's noxious intellectual property having expired years ago. (Thanks to the movie, we also now know how to properly pronounce the character's name: "Shang" doesn't rhyme with "hang" or "bang" — it rhymes with "long" or "gong." Kinda like Kay-toe vs. Kah-toe.)

One can only speculate what the man who got the kung fu craze freight train rolling would think about the success of "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." Hopefully, he'd nod in approval, for if anyone could claim to be the real father of Shang-Chi, it would have to be Lee Jun Fan, aka Bruce Lee.

— George Toshio Johnston



Shang Chi Comic cover





Behind-the-scenes shots of Destin Daniel Cretton directing the cast of "Shang-Chi" during the film's production, including stars Awkwafina *(left)* and Tony Chiu-Wai Leung. *(Below)* The director is shown with additional cast members, including break-out star Simu Liu *(center).*



"I first went to MCC — Maui Community College — for two years, so I was on Maui till I was 19," Cretton said. "I didn't think I'd ever leave. But then all of my friends were going to this small, private university in San Diego called Point Loma Nazarene University. I just went because I still wanted to hang out with my friends."

He applied and graduated from PLNU in 2001, but he continued to make movies "just for fun." Later would come the film program at SDSU — but another important stop in the road was what he called "a semester abroad" at the LA Film Studies Center.

Cretton said that experience was his "first introduction to make shooting something on film," followed by "an internship at Nickelodeon Movies on the Paramount lot. We had very clear assignments. I would be the writer and director on a project that I would have to make and edit, and then screen for my class and get critiqued. All of that was very scary for me because I'd never done that before. And I did feel very out of my element being up in L.A., but, it was also extremely gratifying. And that was really where the spark hit me that this was something that I wanted to just chase after even more."

Although known as a director, writing is also central to Cretton's moviemaking skills — and "if it ain't on the page, it ain't on the stage" is one of those Hollywood maxims that is actually true.

Asked which skill he feels is stronger, Cretton said, "It honestly is kind of hard for me to separate the writing and the directing from each other because so much of my writing process is me visualizing how I'm going to direct something. And so, by the time I'm on set directing, because I've been in the pages so much and have ingested it . . . I just kind of know exactly where the camera should be and what to tell the actors."

Cretton recalled that one important event came "at a bit of a low point" in his career pursuits. Even though he had won a prize at Sundance, his attempts to make a feature-length version of "Short Term 12" were going nowhere.

"I was trying to get that feature film made," Cretton said, "and I was just getting a lot of rejections and was right at the point where I was giving up on that project because I just didn't think it was ever going to get any traction."

Then fate — or the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, to be more precise — intervened, in the form of its Nicholl Fellowship, described on its website as a "global competition, which aims to identify and encourage talented new screenwriters."

"The Nicholl Fellowship called and said that I was a finalist," Cretton recalled. He then became one of 2010's five winners, which proved to be a timely confidence boost to keep him pushing toward his goal to have his vision become a reality. (It was also how he met fellow Nicholl winner Andrew Lanham, who with Cretton and David Callaham, co-wrote "Shang-Chi's" screenplay.)

Up to that point, however, there was nothing in Cretton's filmography of intimate, emotional dramas that would augur his entry into the bombastic, over-the-top, CG spectacles of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

"I was in postproduction [on 'Just Mercy'] when Marvel made the announcement that they were looking for directors for 'Shang-Chi,'" Cretton said.

A week or two earlier, ironically, in a conversation with his agent, he had just told him, "I have no interest in doing a giant movie like a Marvel movie." But there was something about "Shang-Chi" that piqued Cretton's creative instincts.

"Something just got really excited inside me," he said. "I called my agent and asked to try to set a meeting with Marvel, just to get in the room and start talking about this character. I never thought in a million years that I would be the one directing the movie. But the conversation just kept evolving and evolving until I was pitching them a story, and then I ended up getting the job."

Then, of course, would come the hard part: turning those ideas into a movie about a relatively obscure 1970s comic book character who was basically a recombination of the DNA of James Bond and Bruce Lee — but in a bright red bell-bottomed gi — and who was (no joke) the son of Fu Manchu. Yes, that dude. Some changes would be needed. *(See sidebar.)*

For and against the movie's favor was its timing. In 2018 came the unexpected boxoffice and critical success of "Crazy Rich Asians," a big, mainstream studio movie that not only starred Asian American and Asian actors, but also doubly defied the conventional wisdom by making Warner Bros. Pictures a lot of money. ("Shang-Chi's" cast actually included two "Crazy Rich Asians" alumna in Awkwafina and Michelle Yeoh.) Lightning could, in theory, strike again.

The timing was, however, also grim, thanks to the arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which coincided with the movie's production. Cretton noted that he returned to Hawaii after principal photography had been completed and was editing "Shang-Chi" at his grandparents' house from January to March before returning to L.A. to complete the movie.

As the deadly virus spread, seeing movies in crowded theaters not only became ill-advised, the thought of doing so seemed as smart as playing Russian Roulette with five bullets in a six gun.

But, by September 2021, the status quo had adjusted yet again, thanks to the rollout of three different Covid-19 vaccines. The timing was appearing to be right again. People seemed more than ready to return to theaters. But would the masses actually go see a movie about an obscure martial arts character, even if it was a Marvel movie?

Cretton, thinking back to where he was mentally and emotionally the last couple of weeks before his movie's release, said, "There's a lot of questions and doubts and hopes and fears anytime you're releasing a movie. When you're releasing a movie in a pandemic, then I think the doubts and question marks are quite a bit more. Nobody knew."

Some of the doubts might have stemmed from the fact that "Shang-Chi" was pushed back from its originally announced release date of February 2021, due to the pandemic. That was because the movie business was dealing with great uncertainty about whether the traditional theatrical release model was still viable.

Warner Bros. Pictures, for instance, for a time made all its movies available simultaneously theatrically and via its streaming platform, HBO Max. Disney, meantime, shortened its theatrical window and put, for example, its "Black Widow" onto Disney + much earlier than it would have normally.

Disney CEO Bob Chapek did indeed say that the theatrical release of "Shang-Chi" would be "an interesting experiment," which appears to have been misinterpreted by lead actor Simu Liu, who thought

›› See **DIRECTOR** on page 13

Santa Barbara



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Season's Greetings from

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Wishing All Our Friends and Relatives a Joyous Holiday Season

BILLY AND SHARON ISHII JORDAN AND FAMILY

Omaha, NE

Thank You FOR YOUR SERVICE

Veteran Nori Uyematsu has been giving back to his community for decades and is showing no signs of ever slowing down.







(Above, from left) Cpl. Uyematsu, during the Korean War in 1951, at Misawa Air Force Base in Japan

Nori Uyematsu at the newly dedicated Korean War Memorial in Fullerton, Calif.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

Cpl. Uyematsu at X Corp. finding a rare Christmas tree in November 1951.

(Bottom, from left) Uyematsu presents a remembrance plaque during the dedication of the Kazuo Masuda Memorial Japanese Garden on June 7, 1977.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

Michael and Nori Uyematsu at the Field of Honor at Eucalyptus Park in Anaheim Hills, Calif.

Cpl. Uyematsu in 1951 in Korea

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF NORI UYEMATSU

By Patti Hirahara, Contributor

Nori Uyematsu has been a familiar face in the Southern California Japanese American community for many years. People usually see him with his Korean War U.S. Army veteran cap on, and when they see him — on the street, in a store or at a restaurant — they'll usually come over and say, "Thank you for your service." Uyematsu is surprised each time this happens, but he is very appreciative of their kind gesture to realize what he did for his country.

The Uyematsu family was among the more than 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent who were forcibly incarcerated during World War II following the issuance of Executive Order 9066 by Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942. Norio Uyematsu saw his life forever changed at 11 years of age.

After spending three years in a Japanese American concentration camp in Heart Mountain, Wyo., Uyematsu's family had no home to return to following the end of WWII and thus relocated to Brigham City, Utah, in 1945. He went on to graduate high school from Box Elder High School in Brigham City in 1948 and decided to enlist in the United States Army.

The U.S. government was still drafting men from WWII, and so Uyematsu decided to join and fulfill his military commitment. When he volunteered, he found out that he required his parent's approval to enlist, since he was only 17 years old. His father signed his enlistment form immediately, but his mother would not sign the form until a month before his 18th birthday.

Uyematsu, the oldest son of Niroku and Shitsuyo Uyematsu, was born in Cupertino, Calif. His immigrant parents were both from Hiroshima, Japan, and they raised a family of four children. Nori is a second-generation Japanese American or Nisei, and he is now one of the few surviving Japanese American veterans who served in the Korean War.

The Korean War has become known as the "Forgotten War," where 33,600 American soldiers were killed in action while fighting to prevent the North Korean Communist regime's attempt to take over South Korea. The conflict began on June 25, 1950, and concluded on July 27, 1953.

Uyematsu recalls that "President Truman authorized Gen. Douglas MacArthur to send American troops to Korea to prevent the North Korea Communist Army takeover. Of the 33,600 men who lost their lives defending South Korea, 258 of those soldiers were Japanese Americans.

"I officially became a member of the United States Army on Jan. 3, 1949," he continued. "I went through basic and advanced training in Anti-Aircraft Artillery at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. In April of 1950, I was scheduled to go to Okinawa, Japan, but with the invasion of North Korea into South Korea, my transfer changed abruptly. We all boarded a ship, like herded cattle, and were shipped from San Francisco to Seattle, Wash.

"From Seattle, we flew to Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Japan, and were then transferred to Camp Drake, where Army replacement personnel were given an M1 rifle and 30 caliber ammunitions," Uyematsu continued. "They sent us to a firing range and then on to Korea. I was fortunate not to be sent to Korea due to my being in the Military Occupation Service (MOS) specializing in Anti-Aircraft Artillery. I was assigned to the 865 Anti-Aircraft Artillery Self Propelled (865 AAA, AW SP) guarding Misawa Air Force Base in Northern Japan. Due to this assignment, I lost a portion of my hearing for the rest of my life.

"During my stay in Japan, I was sent to Yokohama to go to school to study forward observer training in July of 1950. While in Yokohama, I saw mothers with small children and Japanese military survivors, dressed in white robes with missing limbs, wearing Japanese military caps, all begging for food.

"This was very sad to see as a 19-year-old, and this scene did not impact me until later in my life. In July of 1951, our unit boarded a Landing Ship Transport, and we were sent to Korea, landing at Inchon, Korea. We then settled to guard Kimpo Air Base. After our arrival, I was assigned to be an interviewer for the 521st Military Intelligence Service, or MIS, to interrogate prisoners of war. I was assigned one month, in December of 1951, to the Korean Regiment's 9th Infantry Division. The war lasted for three years.

"When Japanese Americans were called to fight in the Korean War, the Americans of Japanese ancestry served their country valiantly. They did not want to take away from what the 100th/442 RCT did in WWII, but they hoped they would still be remembered for their efforts. Many had been evacuated during WWII and sent to concentration camps, yet they fought and gave their lives to defend the freedom of people that they never met," Uyematsu concluded.

He was decorated with 10 medals for his service, which are proudly displayed in his home.









The Uyematsu Family. Pictured are *(back row, from left)* Thomas, Michael and Ronald and Rose and Nori Uyematsu

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORI UYEMATSU



Kazuo Masuda Middle School teacher Dan Weireter receives a framed donation of the Declaration of Independence from Nori Uyematsu on Dec. 7, 2021.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

Uyematsu returned to Utah and received his honorable discharge from the Army on July 27, 1952. Even though he was discharged from the Army, his dedication to remembering his fallen comrades and keeping the Korean War veteran memory alive is a mission he follows to this day.

He joined the Kazuo Masuda VFW Memorial Post 3670 in 1962 and was post commander for three terms from 1976-77, 1986-87 and 1994-95. He was also an adviser to the VFW Post 3670 Youth Group.

During his tenure, he helped dedicate the Kazuo Masuda Memorial Japanese Garden at the Kazuo Masuda Middle School in Fountain Valley, Calif., on June 7, 1977, which was designed by landscape contractor Kinya Hira and donated by the Kazuo Masuda VFW Memorial Post 3670 to the school.

In 1968, Uyematsu represented the Kazuo Masuda Memorial VFW Post as a member of the Nisei Veterans Coordinating Council and participated in all of its meetings until the council disbanded.

In 1996, the Japanese American Korean Veterans organization was created, and Uyematsu was a charter board member. He is also a life member of the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 100, the Sadao Munemori American Legion Post 321 and the Japanese American Veterans Assn.

Uyematsu was also part of the Memorial Committee for the Japanese American Korean War Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated on May 24, 1997, at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

He also received a Certificate of Appreciation, in 2013, from U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta in recognition of his honorable service during the Korean War in defense of democracy and freedom. The certificate also states, "Through your selfless sacrifice, the tide of communism on the Korean Peninsula was halted and liberty triumphed over tyranny. The Department of Defense and the people of America and Korea are forever grateful."

In 2013, Nori was honored as a 73rd Nisei Week Japanese Festival Pioneer, and in 2019, his story was highlighted in the City of Anaheim's "I Am An American – Japanese Incarceration in a Time of Fear" exhibition at the MUZEO in Anaheim, Calif.

Uyematsu's spirit of community does not stop here. Over the years, he has paid memberships and subscriptions for family and friends to keep Japanese American entities afloat since he was concerned they would become extinct without support.

Now 90 years old, Uyematsu will turn 91 in January, and he still continues his volunteer activism by attending events and supporting projects, as well as being a member of the Salt Lake City JACL chapter to continue his ties to his Utah roots.

Uyematsu married a Brigham City, Utah, girl, Rose Fujikawa, on April 13, 1957, in Los Angeles, and together they raised three boys: Michael, Ronald and Thomas, who gave them 11 grandchildren, eight girls and three boys, and two great-grandchildren, one boy and one girl, as well as many nieces and nephews. Rose passed away in 2020; they were married for 63 years.

For many, Uyematsu's contributions to his community are not well known, since he preferred to work in the shadows, but his spirit of service will continue on with the foundation he has set, and his mission will never end as long as he can continue to remind all to remember what the Korean War veterans did more than 68 years ago.

"Each time I look at the obituaries, it saddens me to see old friends such as Dr. Jack Fujimoto, who was the first Asian American to become the president of a mainland U.S. community college, pass away," Uyematsu sad as he reflected on the importance of giving back and helping others.

"Our generation gave so much to our country and to the Japanese American community. My motto is, 'You must endure hardship to succeed,' and I will never forget what their friendship meant to me and the wonderful times we shared through the years." ■

» **DIRECTOR** continued from page **9**

'I have a very simple view on the work that I do. I look at each project as a way to work on something that I love, to work on a story that I connect with.'

— Destin Daniel Cretton

it was a reference not about it being one of the pandemic-era's first theater-only tentpoles but, rather, a comment on the movie's primarily Asian cast. As it turned out, though, Liu's tweet stating that "We are not an experiment" may have actually energized audiences to turn out.

"We were really the guinea pigs for Disney. We were the first movie that they were releasing exclusively . . . in theaters during the pandemic," Cretton said. "And I think everybody was really kind of blown away by the reaction to the movie. It was a very pleasant surprise to see that people responded to it as well as they did."

On another note, it's also worth mentioning that there was another critically acclaimed movie released in 2021 that also not only was in the year's list of Top 10-grossing movies but was also directed by a man of Japanese ancestry: MGM's "No Time to Die," which to date has grossed nearly $160 million domestically and was directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga.

"I'd be interested to know if that has ever happened before in history," said Cretton, who added, "I love Cary, and I love his work. I'm a huge fan of his. I feel very, very lucky to be coming out with a movie like this at the same time."

Boxoffice success is something every director needs to acknowledge. Cretton insists, however, it's not his only yardstick for success.

"I have a very simple view on the work that I do. I look at each project as a way to work on something that I love, to work on a story that I connect with," Cretton said. "I do the best job that I can and try to create the best experience that I can during the making of the movie. I try to do that with the best team that I can gather together. And in this case . . . the experience could not have been better.

"It was so exhilarating to work, really for the first time, with a crew and cast that were very, very close to me culturally, who I was able to share experiences of my childhood growing up with a mom and grandma who would cook miso soup and mochi and share those funny anecdotes with my cast for the first time, and they would get it, you know. That whole experience of working with this incredibly talented and diverse crew was just a very fulfilling experience for me. And that's what I take away from this movie. Everything else from the point that the movie is released is just icing on the cake for me."

Although Cretton is still at work toward the end of the year, the holiday season means that he, like most, is more focused on setting the stage for tackling new projects when 2022 arrives.

"Right now we're in prep on a show that I'm directing some episodes for called 'American Born Chinese,'" said Cretton. "It's based on a graphic novel. It's the same title. And that's something that will be released on Disney+ next year, I believe."

Cretton will also be facing down adapting "Facing the Mountain" in the coming months — and for his part, he is very excited.

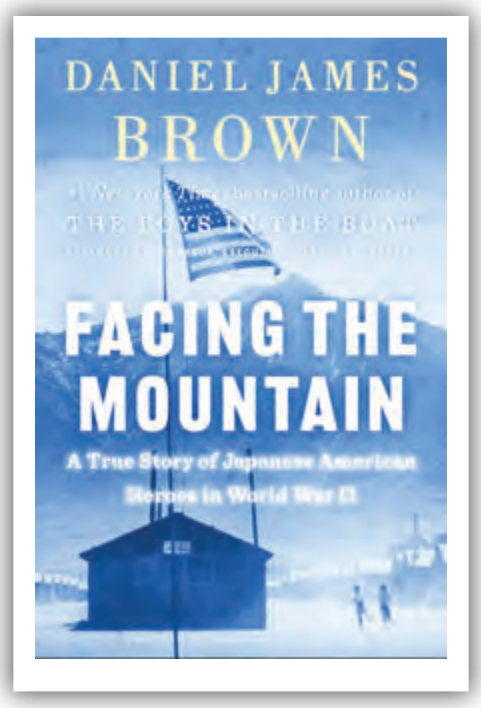
"We actually just brought on a writer who is also Japanese American and who actually has family connections to the 4-4-2. And we're very excited about the development process. When I read that book, I saw the movie and the world the way that it was described.

"The characters are so rich and unexpected, he continued. "I can't wait to adapt it and see it onscreen. I do think right now we're planning to do it as a show rather than a movie because there's just so much in there, I don't really want to try to pack it all into two hours."

With the undeniable success of "Shang-Chi" three years after the similar success of "Crazy Rich Asians," does Cretton believe that the "people in America won't pay to see a movie with a primarily Asian cast" mindset has finally been broken?

"I do think that will continue to be a battle that we have for years to come. But I but I do think that every new movie that comes out helps to get rid of that fiction," Cretton said. "I mean, we grew up as Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and we're watching white people's stories since the time we were born. And we go to those movies. There's actually something really exciting to go into a theater and see something about a different culture.

"I am attracted to movies like that. And I do think that big blockbuster movies can really represent the cultures and faces of our world and remind us that even though we do have differences, there are shared emotions, shared family bonds, that we all share, regardless of what our background is. And that is, to me, what the power of movies can do for people." ■



Among Destin Daniel Cretton's next projects is an adaptation of "Facing the Mountain," a story of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Silicon Valley



Happy Holidays!

best wishes to stay healthy and safe

Silicon Valley JACL
bridging generations

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Season's Greetings!

from

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Idaho Falls

Seasons Greetings

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AND

BEST WISHES FOR

2022



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Seabrook JACL

On behalf of the Seabrook JACL, we extend our sincere best wishes & holiday greetings to the Pacific Citizen and fellow JACL members.

May 2022 be a year filled with peace and prosperity

Happy New Year

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NMJACL New Mexico Japanese American Citizens League

The New Mexico Chapter of JACL

Wishes everyone

Happy, Healthy and

Safe Holiday Season!!

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Wishing you a safe & healthy

New Year!

from the JACL DC Chapter community

Seattle

Season's Greetings!

Seattle JACL

www.SeattleJACL.org

Feeding the Creative Soul:

HOLIDAYS *With the* ISHIBASHIS

Gerald, Brittany, Brianna and Brooke Ishibashi continue to blaze the entertainment trail one step at a time.

By Connie Ho, Contributor

"The future belongs to the Creative Communicators." These are the words that come to mind in describing the Southern California-based Ishibashi family, who has been involved in multiple facets of the entertainment industry in their community for years. The family patriarch, Gerald Ishibashi, and his daughters, Brittany, Brianna and Brooke, have blazed trails for artists of all stripes. At a young age, the girls could be found performing in plays around town. The *Pacific Citizen* recently had the opportunity to speak with the Ishibashi family on their various projects and initiatives, as well as discuss the importance of family during this holiday season.



(Center photo, from left) **Brittany, Brooke, Gerald and Brianna Ishibashi have performed throughout their community in various aspects of the entertainment industry for years. They are all pictured here having fun as children to experiencing life moments from graduation, weddings, holidays, work and giving back to their community — with entertainment playing a big part of the memories.**

GERALD ISHIBASHI

Gerald Ishibashi has been surrounded by music his whole life. He has played with his musical heroes and went on to form Stonebridge Entertainment, inspired by the meaning and translation of the family name Ishibashi ("stone bridge"). It was through his company that he was able to work on community events like the Taste of Newport and discover up-and-coming artists.

Growing up, his daughters had the opportunity to attend concerts put on by his company, and they could often be found backstage visiting with different artists. They could also be spotted at the merchandise booth, helping to sell CDs and memorabilia. They didn't realize at the time that they were meeting heavyweights in the music world such as musician Keiko Matsui and singer Nancy Wilson; to them, it seemed like a normal part of childhood.

"We encouraged them to be creative, whether that be as a writer, actor, poet, artist, entrepreneur," said Gerald Ishibashi.

One rising musical group he met was through his eldest daughter, Brittany Ishibashi, who was known at the time as Kara's Flowers. The group later changed its name to Maroon Five and has since gone on to become a global force in the music industry, winning multiple awards and releasing chart-topping singles.

Gerald continues to stay active in the music scene with the musical group the Island Crooners, who have been described as Bobby Darin and Don Ho meet the Rat Pack. They have outstanding harmonies and a distinct performance style.

BRITTANY ISHIBASHI

Brittany Ishibashi grew up acting in plays when she was younger, and it wasn't until high school when she realized it was something that she could pursue professionally. She has been seen in shows such as Netflix's "Grace and Frankie," CBS/Paramount+ "Hawaii Five-O," Hulu's Marvel property "Runaways," NBC's "This is Us," USA's "Political Animals," among others. Her family has been a huge support system in her career.

"I always come back to how grateful I am — not only have they been supportive of me as an artist, but they're also artists themselves, and it is comforting to have a shorthand with them and a team that is behind you and understands the ups and downs," said Brittany.

Her most recent role was the film "Every Time a Bell Rings" on the Hallmark Channel, and her dad recently flew with her to Mississippi to spend time with her and her newborn daughter during filming of the movie.

"He was amazing, and we look back on that and how much we treasure that time together," said Brittany, who noted that they landed in the Mississippi area on the eve of Hurricane Ida. "My dad, my mom, my sisters, make me feel safe in the best way possible."

The story of "Every Time a Bell Rings" centers on three sisters in their hometown of Natchez who discover that their late father planned one last scavenger hunt for them to find the family's wishing bell, an annual holiday tradition. As they search for clues, their bond is rekindled, leading them to find hope and healing as a family.

She highlighted the trust she has felt as a performer.

"My parents were great about providing a positive outlook, and they still encourage us to just trust that and follow our hearts, and if we listen to our gut, we'll be happy — and that's been true," said Brittany.

Apart from different acting projects, Brittany also leads her production company, Mana Moments Prods. The name of the company was inspired by her family's trips to Hawaii.

"When I thought about starting my own pordouction company and what I wanted to put out in the world, it came down to making people feel good and connecting with one another," Brittany said. "Mana Moments is about moments that touch your heart."

Brittany spoke about the present opportunity for storytellers.

"These days, there are so many platforms, so many ways to get your story out there," Brittany said. "It's come an incredibly long way. . . . I'm very hopeful for all the stories being told and the hunger and the desire that people have to share different stories."

BRIANNA ISHIBASHI

Brianna Ishibashi has narrated various roles, working with Deyan Audio on books like "The Hole" by Hiroko Oyamada, a story that explores eccentric characters in a rural landscape.

"It has been really nice getting started with audio books because it is such a wonderful medium," said Brianna.

The company's newest book, "How High We Go in the Dark" by Sequoia Nagamatsu, will be released in January 2022. The novel spans continents, centuries and even celestial bodies to tell a story about the resilience of the human spirit and the infinite capacity to dream.

"It's a beautiful book, and I can't wait for other people to read it," said Brianna.

She describes her process in preparing for recording sessions, including preparing her voice to switch back and forth during narration or conditioning it by limiting dairy or coffee the day before.

One project that the three sisters have been working on collaboratively is "Sisters Ishibashi," which is inspired by their bond and familial relationship. They see it as a story about immigrants and children of immigrants, but from an angle that hasn't been covered in the past.

"We've been having more Asian stories told, and it's really wonderful that so many more are coming out," said Brianna. "We haven't really had a story that centers on an Asian American showbiz family, where the whole family is in the arts and the parents are also Americanized and fourth generations."

The show, while not completely autobiographical, features a host of characters with memorable stories about living. The sisters have a host of photos and videos that help them visualize the experience of growing up and hanging out at different performances.

One tradition the sisters have is spending time together on Christmas, relaxing with mugs of hot cocoa in front of the Christmas tree. The tradition stems from the experience when they were younger, waking up early to open presents and then enjoying home cooking with dishes like Christmas fried rice.

Apart from working on the "Sisters Ishibashi" project, Brianna enjoys putting pen to paper, flexing her skills in writing TV and film scenes, short stories and longer narratives in the sci-fi/magical realism vein.

BROOKE ISHIBASHI

Brooke originated the role of Neary in "Cambodian Rock Band" at the South Coast Repertory, a professional theater company based in Costa Mesa, Calif. She is also passionate about exploring anti-racism, social justice and transgenerational trauma.

Her grandparents were forcibly incarcerated during World War II in the Manzanar and Poston concentration camps. Her grandmother, Mary Kageyama Nomura, is famously known as the "Songbird of Manzanar," while her grandfather, Shiro Nomura, dedicated his later years to curating the Manzanar exhibit at the Eastern California Museum in nearby Independence, Calif. When she was younger, her family would make pilgrimages to Manzanar; her dad would then record the stories that were told to share the story with their community and other family members.

"We were lucky that our family was very communicative about our family," Brooke said. "We inherently understand the pain and trauma passed down from generation to generation."

Most recently, she performed at the La Jolla Playhouse on the campus of the University of California, San Diego, in the production of "To the Yellow House," which was written by Kimber Lee.

"Kimber wrote this tragic and inspiring story about this figure who is incredibly resilient who keeps striving despite facing rejection," said Brooke. "It is about resiliency and the strength of the human spirit . . . it has been incredibly cathartic, and it's a beautiful story and ensemble."

During the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brooke and a group of friends were part of a movement to publicize the plight of those in the arts to congressional staff and lawmakers; the work is housed under the Be An Arts Hero organization.

The group first launched its campaign in August 2020, looking to get federal unemployment benefits extended. A TV program with Ovation TV is in the works and will premiere in early 2022; the show will include special guests and comedy bits all centered around revitalizing the economy in the creative industry. With this movement, they hope to get legislators to understand the economic contributions of the arts and culture sector.

"The performing arts industry took its cue from Broadway, and it was the day that Broadway shutdown that it was serious and a big deal, and this affected every nook and cranny of the arts sector," Brooke said.

In addition, Brooke has been involved with #FairWageOnstage, a grassroots movement of Actors' Equity members separate from — but working alongside and in support of — the union to fight for higher wages and stronger contracts.

"It's interesting because I've always had a strong sense of equality and fairness and justice since I was a small child and being exposed to what happened to my grandparents and going to those pilgrimages and reading up about the history and what happened with communities," said Brooke. "My grandfather dedicated so much of his life to keeping that memory alive because he wanted to make sure it didn't happen again, and it fueled me and prepared me to speak out on any inequity that I see."

Follow the Ishibashi family to learn more about their upcoming projects. Check out Amazon.com for more details on audio books featuring Brianna Ishibashi or @BriannaIshibashi on Instagram for any updates. For updates on Brittany Ishibashi, follow her on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/brittishibashi/), Facebook (https://facebook.com/BrittIshibashi) and Twitter (https://twitter.com/brittishibashi). For updates on Brooke Ishibashi and her work with Be an Arts Hero and #FairWageOnstage, visit Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/BeAnArtsHero and https://www.facebook.com/StageFairWage/). And follow Gerald Ishibashi at https://www.instagram.com/geraldishibashi/.

Stockton

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Olivia, Maiya & Luca

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Cheers to 2022!

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and family

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Happy Holidays
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Alice K. Fujii & Family

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Debbi Endow Hatanaka

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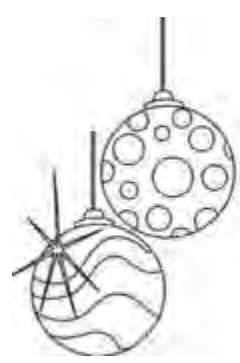
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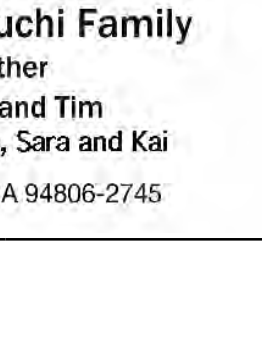
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FROM DEFEATISM TO HOPE

By David Inoue, JACL Executive Director

This year I turned 50. Half a century on this Earth — where does that put me in context of all that is happening and has happened? The month before I was born, Disneyworld opened in Orlando, Fla. One of my early memories from childhood was riding the Jules Verne "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea"-themed submarine ride. Almost exactly seven months after I was born, workers from the Nixon campaign were breaking into the Democratic National Committee Headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. Seven months later, *Roe v. Wade* was decided by the Supreme Court.

Now in my 50th year, the Disney ride no longer exists, long ago decommissioned. The Nixonian subversion of democracy pales in comparison to the election denialism of former President Donald Trump and his greatest supporter, MyPillow President/Founder Michael Lindell.

The violent attacks on the Capitol on Jan. 6 are now lifted up as acts of patriotism by members of the Republican party. And we just saw the Supreme Court hear cases that could change the course of women's rights with the elimination of the rights guaranteed by the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

All this is set against the backdrop of a worldwide pandemic that by the time you are reading this, will have taken over 800,000 documented American lives. The actual number is most certainly higher than that. For context, 800,000 is more than the population of Seattle, the 19th-largest city by population, and we long ago blew through the population numbers of Boston, Denver and Washington, D.C.

Next on the list is San Francisco with a population of 883,255. With our current mortality rates, we could reach that number as soon as early to mid-February. As a result, we are seeing reductions in travel plans, reinforcement of masking and distancing protocols to help stem the spread of the new Covid variants in the face of stagnant vaccination rates.

For parents of children under 12, this has been especially discouraging as we long awaited the opportunity to get our children vaccinated and hopefully return to normal with playdates and school uninterrupted by quarantine for every case in the class.

When the Covid pandemic began, JACL was in the midst of our 2020 spring Kakehashi trip with a group of Japanese American college students in Japan just as news of Covid was spreading across the world and days before everything shut down. Ours was one of the last Kakehashi trips to happen.

Just this past week, we received final notice that Kakehashi has been canceled for 2022 as well. Nearly two years later, we have failed both as a nation and a global community to stem the spread of Covid and bring a return to normalcy.

It is hard not to feel defeated at this point.

Yet, there have been some bright points. In September, we successfully held our JACL/OCA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., with participants traveling from as far away as Hawaii.

We required all participants to provide proof of vaccination, a negative test within 72 hours prior to arrival and masking was strictly enforced. While participants might have felt run down and maybe even sick at the end of the busy four days, no one became sick with Covid.

Some of that is inevitably due to luck, but we know that precautions do help. Just a few weeks later, the National Youth/Student Council held its first in-person summit in nearly two years in Los Angeles.

What we probably need to recognize and accept is that our new normal is one of vaccine checks and regular masking. We cannot allow Covid to control our lives, but we need to continue to take it seriously and take the steps to mitigate its spread. With the vaccines, they do reduce the seriousness of symptoms when infected.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we thought masks were unnecessary, as masks are typically worn by those who might be infected to prevent spread to other people. Then we learned that Covid could be spread asymptomatically. We adapted and changed our recommendations on wearing a mask. We will need to continue to adapt our responses to Covid as new variants emerge, and we continue to return to more normal activities.

A big part of our return to normal is a necessary part of making JACL whole. For many of us, we have now been through a virtual National Convention that had the benefit of engaging nearly 500 registered participants, nearly double the usual number of registrants.

But we also admittedly struggled with the technology — the convention platform faltering and the struggles of administering the National Council sessions virtually.

Although we had opportunities for people to engage with one another, both during and after the Sayonara Gala, it wasn't the same. It wasn't the same as grabbing someone from a National Council session and stepping into the hallway for a quick conversation. It wasn't the same as going to the hotel bar for drinks after the Sayonara Gala. As we look forward to 2022, we need to get back to in-person events and the opportunity to interact one-on-one with one another.

As challenging as this time has been and the need to return to normal, I see this most in our children and our youth. Their academic and social experiences have been almost entirely virtual the past two years.

Our daughter's transition from elementary school was done through Zoom sessions, and her entire first year with new classmates was done through the computer screen. And for an 8- to 10-year-old boy, they want nothing more than to get out and play with their friends, something nearly impossible for the first half of the pandemic.

We so often speak about the concept of Kodomo no tame ni or "for the sake of the children." As our children have made it through nearly a full semester of school, there is also hope that we can make the adjustments in our lives to do the normal things in life safely.

And this is also where JACL is important — to provide some of the civic structure for our children as they grow up. Just as they learn at school that they are part of a bigger society, we also teach them that in JACL. As Americans for a greater America, JACL members have always sought to engage with our communities.

Even as we enter a year of what will be the 80th anniversary of the injustices laid upon Japanese Americans during World War II, we can use this year to highlight the successes, the responses we made as a community. Even as HR 40, the legislation to establish a commission to study reparations for our Black brothers and sisters, struggles in Congress, we can continue to highlight that our community did receive redress for what was done to us.

We need that same community mobilization today to respond to Covid, to ensure that voting rights are ensured for all Americans and that women's rights are not once again subjugated to the whims of a majority of men.

The year 2020 saw unprecedented diversity in newly elected members of Congress, and this year, my hometown of Cincinnati elected an Asian American mayor for the first time. In a trend that began shortly after President Trump took office, we are seeing more women run for public office at all levels.

Much of this starts within our organizations such as JACL — our engagement with one another and conversations about the importance of working toward making a difference in our advocacy, as well as also creating a better place for our children, letting them know they belong to something bigger and demonstrating that through our actions and activity.

Right now, our membership department is running an end-of-year Otoshidama campaign for you to gift a membership to your loved ones, perhaps a child, grandchild or niece or nephew. In the past two years, I have given my children each a lifetime membership to JACL. It is an investment in the work of the organization and also an investment in them, that they will grow up a part of something that is able to nurture their growth and help them to understand their place as a United States citizen and as a Japanese American.

As I have made very clear, the problems that existed when I was born still exist today. Our kids will need to continue to address the challenges of racism that have existed going back to the founding of our country.

One could easily feel that we are not going anywhere, but we know better. There may be setbacks, but ultimately, we will continue to move forward as we continue to bend the moral arc of the universe both as the JACL and as "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for ALL."

David Inoue is executive director of the JACL. He is based in the organization's Washington, D.C., office.

San Jose

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The National Park Service is updating the reconstructed Honor Roll listing WWII veterans with ties to the former Minidoka WRA site in Idaho.

NPS SEEKS TO UPDATE MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The National Park Service is updating the reconstructed Honor Roll located at the front entrance of the Minidoka National Historic Site.

If you are a WWII veteran who was unjustly incarcerated at Minidoka or if you are a friend or relative of such a veteran, the NPS would like to hear from you.

Veterans include those who served in the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team, Military Intelligence Service, Women's Army Corps, Army Nurse Corps and Cadet Nurse Corps. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, 3.2 (d), WWII service is defined as "Dec. 7, 1941, through Dec. 31, 1946, inclusive. If the veteran was in service on Dec. 31, 1946, continuous service before July 26, 1947, is considered [WWII] service."

Only WWII veterans (as defined above) who have direct ties to the Minidoka concentration camp are eligible for inclusion on the Minidoka Honor Roll. This includes veterans who were themselves incarcerated at Minidoka and those whose immediate family members (including parents, grandparents, siblings, children or a spouse) were incarcerated at Minidoka.

From now until Jan. 31, 2022, the NPS is accepting applications to add Minidoka WWII veterans onto the Honor Roll if their names have not yet been listed. The NPS is also accepting applications to correct misspellings or make changes to an existing name.

The Minidoka Honor Roll was originally built in 1943 by Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at the Minidoka concentration camp in Hunt, Idaho.

It served to recognize the Nisei who enlisted for U.S. military service in WWII despite the anti-Japanese racism they faced. During WWII, recognition of the Honor Roll was not limited to those who were incarcerated at Minidoka. Those who were serving and had family incarcerated at Minidoka were also recognized.

After Minidoka was closed in 1945 and deconstructed for farmsteads, the original Honor Roll was lost.

In 2011, a replica was created in partnership with the Friends of Minidoka using historic images.

As a living interpretative exhibit, the replica Honor Roll is periodically updated to include the names of Minidoka WWII veterans who were not listed on the 1943 original. During this 2022 update, we hope to capture as many new names as possible.

To apply, please contact the park rangers at the Minidoka National Historic Site for an emailed application form, where applicants will be asked to provide his/her contact information and basic information about the Minidoka WWII veteran. The completed form must be submitted by Jan. 31, 2022.

Appreciation and gratitude to the previous Minidoka NHS staff and Friends of Minidoka for putting community at the center of the visitor experience. Acknowledgment is also given to the community veterans' organizations helping to find the resources needed to make this project possible, in addition to the community for the continuing interest and investment in the Minidoka National Historic Site.

Finally, deepest gratitude to all of the WWII veterans of all backgrounds whose exceptional service should be recognized for generations to come. ■



Keiro founders. Pictured *(from left)* are George Aratani, Edwin Hiroto, Kiyo Maruyama, James Mitsumori, Gongoro Nakamura, Frank Omatsu and Fred Wada. *(Not pictured: Joseph Shinoda)*

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEIRO

KEIRO CELEBRATES VIRTUAL KANREKI: 60TH CELEBRATION

LOS ANGELES — Keiro celebrated its 60th anniversary with a virtual celebration highlighting the organization's history and vision for the future on Oct. 23. The "Kanreki" celebration honored Keiro's legacy — including its eight founders George Aratani, Edwin Hiroto, Kiyo Maruyama, James Mitsumori, Gongoro Nakamura, Frank Omatsu, Joseph Shinoda and Fred Wada — and shared its renewed focus on the next generation and commitment to exploring a full spectrum of options for baby boomers, the next wave of older adults.

Board Chair Lynn Miyamoto reflected on Keiro's rich history, one full of innovation and care for older adults. She also elaborated on the organization's journey to becoming the beacon of senior living. Miyamoto touched upon the many fond memories of Keiro's history and the challenges and learning opportunities the organization has experienced, including the recent sale of the four former facilities.

"The board of directors and I regrettably didn't handle the sale well, and in hindsight, realize we should have done better," Miyamoto shared. "Going forward, we are committed to better engaging the community and our stakeholders in our future plans and decisions."

In the years since, Keiro has sought input and advice from leaders and the community. Keiro conducted several focus groups throughout Southern California prior to the pandemic in order to hear from baby boomers on how they want to age. It also continues to seek ways to involve the community in future decisions.

Since the sale of the former facilities, Keiro has transitioned to find multiple approaches to serving the community through grantmaking, partnerships, events and educational programs.

In the virtual celebration *(see tinyurl.com/2p9ace99),* Iyashi Care, a partnership with Providence, was featured, highlighting its whole-person approach to caring for older adults and their families dealing with a serious health condition.

Looking to the future, Gene S. Kanamori, president and CEO, revealed Keiro's vision for the future and the community, including baby boomer- and millennial-focused programs.

"As the next wave of us baby boomers age and look to Keiro, the need for a suite of services is important," he said. "We are launching new caregiving initiatives focusing on our children's generation, the millennials, who will have to play a caregiving role for their parents' generation."

Kanamori added, "We are looking to establish permanent roots in Little Tokyo and are exploring all options to serve the comprehensive needs of older adults, including adult day programs, social services and possibly senior living options. Innovative ideas like a health and wellness campus have surfaced to meet the future needs of our community."

Kanamori said Keiro will continue its existing partnerships with organizations such as the Little Tokyo Service Center, Providence, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center and others. ■

Stronger Together: Voices to Inspire, Advocate and Educate

JACSC holds its education conference in Los Angeles, providing a daylong program of impactful storytelling and lessons to ignite participants' thoughts about the Japanese American experience.

By P.C. Staff

JACSC held its Education Conference "Stronger Together: Voices to Inspire, Advocate and Educate" in Los Angeles on Oct. 30 that was sponsored by the Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium and hosted by the Japanese American National Museum with the support of the Aratani Foundation.

The conference, which was also live-streamed, was preceded on Oct. 29 by a limited in-person reception that showcased the current immersive virtual reality experience of "A Life in Pieces: the Diary and Letters of Stanley Hayami."

The conversation featured innovative ways to share the voices of Heart Mountain, in addition to the other World War II incarceration sites. Participants included Dakota Russell, executive director of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, Clement Hayami, JANM art director, and Judy Hayami. They were also joined by actor Kurt Kanazawa, Emblematic Group's Nonny de la Pena and writer Sharon Yamato, who spoke about the exhibit and how it was developed.

Saturday's schedule featured opening remarks by members of the JACS Consortium, including an official welcome by JANM CEO Ann Burroughs.

"Our goal with the education conference in general is to provide a platform and a professional network for folks who are working with the confinement sites," said Burroughs. "Today certainly promises to be an inspiring day with rich opportunities for learning and the exchange of ideas."

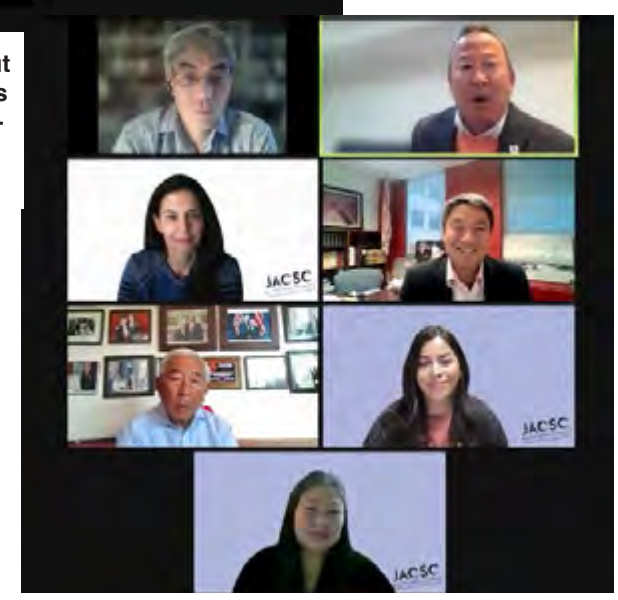
Added Doug Nelson, vice chair of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation: "We've created a growing network that really does foster an exchange of ideas that is creating opportunities like this conference that helps us learn from each other."

In addition, Burroughs presented a special commendation to the Amache Alliance for its tremendous achievements in 2021 to recognize Amache as a National Park Service Site, thus ensuring its future for generations to come.

Conference programming was divided into three sessions that included the following programming: "Transformational Approaches to Teaching Japanese American History (K-12)," "The Power of Data-Driven Historical Analysis," "Advocacy in Action: Making an Impact Through Legislation," "What's Next: Telling Japanese American Stories Through Digital Arts," "Museum Openings and the Pandemic" and "Trials of Suspicion, Segregation and Selective Service."



(Above) **Karen Korematsu speaks about the importance of educational materials as a participant of the "Transformational Approaches to Teaching Japanese American History (K-12)" discussion.**



"Advocacy in Action" panel participants included *(clockwise from top left)* Dan Sakura, Derek Okubo, David Inoue, Mia Russell, Josina Morita, Floyd Mori and Tracey Coppola.

Karen Korematsu, founder of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute, participated in the "Transformational Approaches to Teaching" workshop, where she spoke about carrying on the mission of education, using her experience in talking about her father's story as the impetus to make learning materials more readily available to the public.

"I learned that there wasn't a lot of information as I would have thought about my father, especially his fight for justice. There were some teaching materials out there, but we felt that it was important to develop more of that," Karen Korematsu recalled. "Now we have an education tool kit online at the Korematsu Institute, and it's interesting with the pandemic. All of a sudden, we have many parents contacting us for help, we want access to your curriculum. It's available for both educators, parents and students, and it's just incredible, [especially during] this incredibly difficult time in our country."

JANM Virtual Learning Coordinator Nina Nakao also spoke about the importance of the Japanese American story being relatable to everyone, even students who are not of Japanese descent.

"I think for me, like the future looking forward and what everyone's been talking about is just that everyone wants to learn about themselves and wants to see themselves represented. . . . And even if you're not a Japanese American student, most of the students that we teach are not. They can see themselves in the stories of Japanese American history, more broadly stories of immigration, stories of injustice and racial discrimination and stories of fighting for our own civil rights and fighting for our stories to be told more broadly. Students of any background can find a place to relate to what we're all teaching."

Other conference highlights included discussion about Ethnic Studies, historical preservation, and the "Advocacy in Action" panel featured, among others, JACL Executive Director David Inoue and former Executive Director/National President Floyd Mori, who spoke about the JACE Act to promote education and the numerous benefits of the JACS grant program.

"Relationships and working with each other is very, very important," said Mori. "We need to fight for everybody, not just ourselves."

Echoed Inoue, "This consortium that we have here is how we do create that collaboration, that community within our community, to make sure that we are all working together and for that same goal, for the same purposes. So, stay engaged with the consortium, and let's all work together."

As Burroughs summed up the day's agenda, she said, "I think today clearly demonstrates the benefits of being part of this deeply committed community of activists, practitioners and advocates, but we also heard that we still have a lot more work to do." ■

A Promise Not to Forget

Indiana University dedicates a memorial and scholarship program for Japanese American students ban.

By Eric Langowski, Contributor

Indiana University dedicated a memorial and scholarship program on Nov. 12 in recognition of the 12 Japanese Americans denied admission to IU during World War II.

This act followed years of advocacy by the JACL's Hoosier Chapter, Asian American leaders at IU and the support of dozens of others at the university.

When I initially took on this project in 2018, it felt impossible. A gym on campus was named after the architect of IU's ban, and the 1942 decision by IU's Trustees that "no Jap be admitted to Indiana University" had stood unaddressed for over 75 years.

Yet, with the support of Midwest Japanese American leaders and the Asian American community at IU behind me, action still felt possible.

Previous student-led activism on campus led to the creation of the Asian Culture Center, where I worked during my time at IU, and the Asian American Studies Department, both of which were critical allies in arguing to the IU administration that action was needed.

With these communities and a lot of perseverance, we were able to accomplish an apology at a Midwestern school that denied admission to Japanese Americans during WII, in contrast to West Coast schools that issued retroactive diplomas and apologies for enrolled students.

This distinction is important. Quoting from my remarks at the dedication ceremony:



Eric Langowski is pictured with the new memorial on the campus of Indiana University. The text on the plaque reads: "This commemorative space is dedicated to the Japanese American students who were wrongly denied admission to Indiana University between 1942 and 1945. Indiana University regrets its failure to meet the needs of these students, for whom college would have meant freedom from prisons in which they, together with 120,000 other Japanese Americans, were forcibly incarcerated. The racial hatred that drove their unjust imprisonment is antithetical to the fundamental values of Indiana University, and this space is intended as a reminder of our shared commitment to social justice and equity." PHOTO: PETER LANGOWSKI

"How can a university like IU, which is trying to remember students who never set foot on campus, properly acknowledge this history? For me, the dedication of the plaque and bench are significant because it provides a physical space on campus that says, in their own ways, William Suyemoto, Robert Omata, Sumiko Itoi, Richard H. Iwata, Tadashi Ochiai, Richard Doi and Donald Yamashiro and at least five unnamed applicants left a mark on IU. The Masuji Miyakawa Scholarship represents an ongoing commitment to try and blunt the impact of any structural barriers to admission, like those that Japanese Americans faced in World War II, for present applicants to IU.



Shawn Brinsfield *(left),* whose mother, Sumiko Itoi, was denied admission to Indiana University, and Eric Langowski PHOTO: LISA DOI

"Today, we look back 80 years, remember and promise not to forget."

An important way to commemorate a history of exclusion is creation. I believe that IU has done that with this apology, and I am proud to continue to support similar work across the Midwest with the Nisei College Redress Project.

More information can be found at jaclchicago.org/programs/nisei-college-redress-project.

Eric Langowski is the JACL Midwest District governor and past Midwest youth representative.

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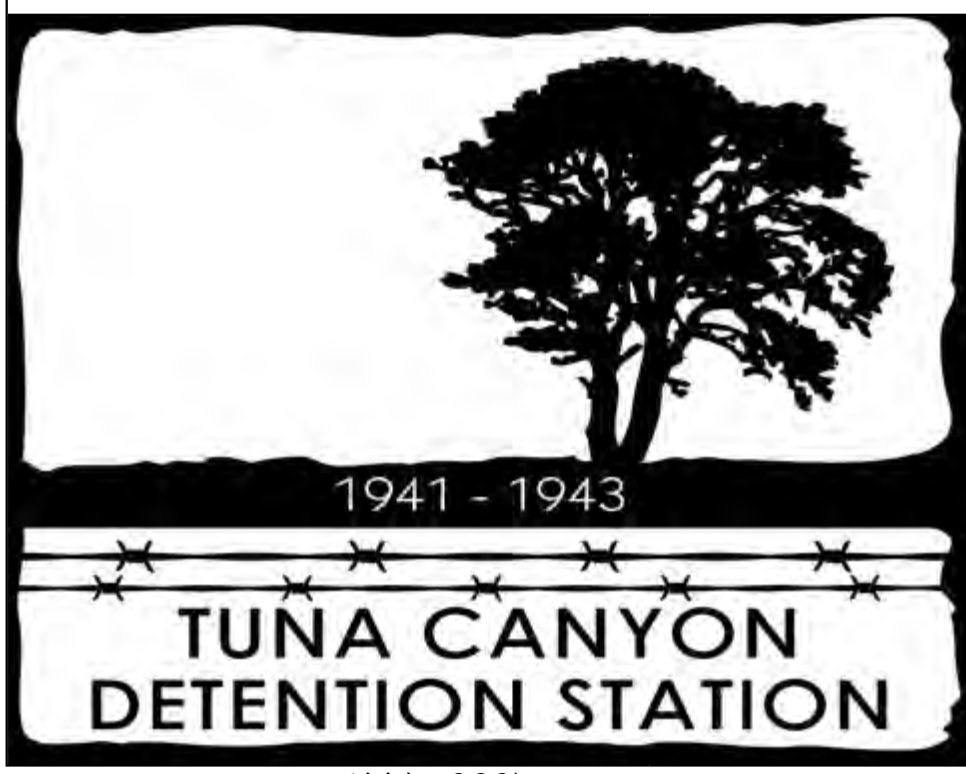
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The Doctor Will See You Now

Learning disabilities don't stand in the way of Tyler Paras achieving big dreams. The secret to his success goes back for generations.



Tyler Paras graduated from medical school at the University of Pittsburgh. He is now an orthopedic surgery resident at the University of California, San Diego Medical Center.

***(Below)* Mary Mizota, Paras' great-grandmother, in the 1950s**







Kenji Mizota, Tyler's great-grandfather, began farming again in the 1950s after losing everything during WWII.

By Lynda Lin Grigsby, Contributor

Tyler Paras should not be successful.

His mother agrees.

Someone like her son is not supposed to do well in an educational system that prioritizes rigorous standardized testing. Paras, 27, has several learning disabilities, including dyslexia, dysgraphia and auditory processing disorder.

A learning disability diagnosis does not imply an automatic life of suffering, but it serves as a wake-up call for a kid with big dreams.

"I knew nothing was going to come easy," said Paras. "So, I knew I just had to work a little bit harder."

On a late November day in his hometown of Carpinteria, Calif., Paras smiles over Zoom and asks to be called his name and not his honorific — Dr. Paras.

You see, he is a newly minted medical doctor.

Specifically, he is an orthopedic surgery resident at the University of California, San Diego Medical Center. On the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), on which someone with his learning disabilities should not do well, Paras scored in the 99th percentile.

His journey from a kid with early speech delays and learning difficulties to the doctor he is today can best be attributed to his self-identified spirit of gamesmanship — the ability to identify what he calls his "slower processing system" to do as well as other people.

Paras' approach is extraordinarily pragmatic, strategic and grounded in self-awareness. There is no hint of self-pity or shame over his learning disabilities. It is what it is, he continually says.

A closer look reveals the roots of his success — Paras, who identifies as Yonsei and Filipino American, stands on the shoulders of survivors who lost everything and rebuilt their lives, because it was what it was.

He is the embodiment of the spirit of a community that experienced trauma and somehow digs deeper to plant seeds for the next generations. And in his own way, Paras is continuing this tradition by helping other aspiring medical students achieve success.

"It's very important for Tyler to give back," said Debbie Paras, his mom. "He forged a path for himself and figured out these ways that worked for him, and he's just hoping to give some help to anyone who's coming after him."



***(Right)* The Paras family. Family plays a large part in Tyler's success.**



***(Left)* The Paras brothers with their grandparents, Mamoru and Ruth Yamaoka**

FAMILY ROOTS AND LIFE HACKS

"I have a tight-knit family, especially on my Japanese side," said Paras.

His extended family lives within three blocks of each other in Carpinteria, where his grandparents, Mamoru and Ruth Yamaoka, run a legacy flower nursery business called Yamaoka Flowers. On Sundays, family dinners serve as a time-honored tradition and boisterous opportunities to catch up and stay connected.

Paras' success in the face of adversity can be credited to two generations of family members who supported him.

One in seven Americans has some type of learning disability, according to the National Institutes of Health, but the stigma endures especially in Asian American school-age children who are underdiagnosed and underserved.

Dyslexia primarily affects reading, while dysgraphia affects writing. Paras also has an auditory processing disorder, which is a condition that affects a person's ability to understand what they hear. These conditions can impede learning but don't show or affect intelligence. In fact, most people with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence. Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking were brilliant thinkers with learning disabilities.

A person can often hide his or her learning disabilities and go through life undiagnosed. By the time Paras entered college at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Calif., his undergraduate research adviser described his ability to achieve high grades as effortless.

"He could use and synthesize information in sort of creative higher-level ways," said Dr. Eileen McMahon McQuade, Westmont College associate dean of the faculty and biology professor. "He knew how to compensate for his learning disabilities, and he worked incredibly hard."

Paras worked with McQuade for more than two years. In a research lab one day, he told his adviser that his path to success has been far from effortless.

"He is open about the story, but also he doesn't lead with that," said McQuade. "He doesn't let it define him."

Experts say the brain of someone with

learning disabilities is simply wired differently. Lately, there has been a push to destigmatize the conditions by referring to them as learning differences over disabilities.

But for Paras, it is what it is.

"I do think that they are disabilities," he said, and naming them allows people living with the conditions to receive the support they need.

The challenges for Paras started early. He did not speak many words until he started speech therapy at 3 years old.

That's when Paras developed his first life hack — he made up his own language.

"Boost," young Paras would say, and his parents knew he wanted water or juice.

When he started kindergarten, he could not blend sounds. The hard "c" sound and the "at" could not become the word cat.

To support her first-born son, Debbie Paras trained in the best teaching method for children with learning disabilities. On weekends, she drove more than 100 miles to San Luis Obispo for the training, which she applied at the kitchen table with Paras after school.

"We didn't know what the future held, so I think all we could do was do our best with what we had at the time," said Debbie Paras.

This family mantra has persisted from one generation to the next.

Paras comes from a long line of Japanese American farmers, who toiled tirelessly to tend the land. During World War II, his grandparents were incarcerated at Rohwer, Jerome and Amache. Mamoru and Ruth Yamaoka, who are longtime Santa Barbara JACL members, often tell their grandchildren they lived in horse stalls at Santa Anita Racetrack during the war. They lost everything in the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans and still found a way to rebuild.

Mamoru and Ruth Yamaoka, both 80 years old, still work at Yamaoka Flowers. They represent one of the last vestiges of a once-thriving Japanese American farming community. Their ethos and work ethics float in the air and seep into the soil to nurture the acres of lilies and dahlias that sprout at Yamaoka Flowers. Paras soaked up this message when he dug his toddler hands in the soil as a kid running around the farm with his younger brother, Jason.

So, your government betrayed you and took away your dignity and livelihood. What do you do? In the lived experiences of Mamoru and Ruth Yamaoka and their Issei parents, you rebuild, grow flowers and scaffold the next generations.

SPIRIT OF GAMESMANSHIP

"I'm not like a superathletic specimen or anything," said Paras.

He tried every single sport, from fencing to water polo. Nothing stuck, so he exercised the biggest muscle in his body — his brain.

Chess is a game of strategic thinking. His dad, David Paras, taught him how to play at 4 years old.

"In chess, you're always asking yourself, 'What can I do in this situation to make my plan work a little bit smoother?'" said Paras. "Do you know the end situation that you're working toward?"

He applies this spirit of gamesmanship in everything he does — studying for the MCATs, applying for a residency program and finding the perfect sport for himself.

A good chess player studies, puts in the work and analyzes, said Andrew Svehaug, Paras' former chess coach.

Paras has all those attributes. In 2005, his parents started driving him from Carpinteria to Los Angeles, where Svehaug lived, for one-on-one chess lessons.

"I think that says a lot about the parents' willingness to invest in their kids," said Svehaug, 35.

A year later, Paras competed in a national chess competition at 12. High-level competitive chess players train young, said Svehaug, who has taught preschool-age children. To compete as a teenager made Paras an outlier.

"I think that shows a lot of initiative," he said about his former student. "I think it shows courage as well."

By his account, Paras was once ranked in the 98th percentile of players under 18 years old.

He was officially diagnosed with learning disabilities in the seventh grade, the same year he decided he wanted to become a doctor. The diagnosis and the dream existed in a tension like one could not exist with the other.

"I think it's always been tough even without having the official diagnosis of always being slower than my friends," said Paras. "I just had to develop this understanding that it's always going to be way harder for me, but that it shouldn't necessarily stop me from doing the things that I want to do."

So, Paras thought, what kind of sport would be advantageous to someone 5-foot-8 with self-described disproportionately large thighs?

Weightlifting, of course.

Debbie Paras describes the weightlifting singlet, the one-piece uniform that looks like a cross between overalls and a turn-of-the-century men's bathing suit, as the "tiny thing," and marvels at her son's dedication.

After all these years, he found a sport that stuck.

OWNING HIS TRUTH AND GIVING BACK

Putting broken bones together is like chess, said Paras.

Medical residency programs are difficult. They require high standardized test scores, board exam results and the ability to polish an audition at top hospitals. Candidates can submit a list of places they want to go, but there is no guarantee of being placed in your desired location. A candidate could put down New York as his or her first choice and get assigned to New Mexico for five years.

Paras got his first choice — San Diego.

In the competitive medical field, with hundreds of excellent applicants with good board scores and research experience, there is little room for weakness, real or perceived.

But, Paras wanted to own his truth.

"The special thing about me is that I have learning disabilities, but I score really high on standardized tests," he said.

By simply telling his story, he helps destigmatize learning disabilities. He also started a service to help aspiring doctors through the rigors of applying to medical school.

He does it through social media, of course, and TEDx talks about refining study skills for standardized tests. On Instagram and TikTok, Paras doles out advice as the self-branded doctor who scored in the 99th percentile on the MCATs. People submit their questions, and he answers through videos, often while washing his hands dressed in surgical gear.

He has helped about 750 students with questions about MCATs, said Paras.

"He's just willing to help people overcome their challenges because he himself has been through something difficult on his journey to becoming a physician," said Saba Shalwani, 22, who Paras has advised.

"I always thought that, you know, maybe he's going to offer services free for a while, then he would start charging," said Shalwani. "That's usually what people do, but he never did that."

For Paras, helping other aspiring doctors is a way to pay it forward. He has seen this modeled for him by his parents and his grandparents.

The WWII incarceration caused intergenerational trauma to the Japanese American community. The effects vary as emotional wounds are handed down from generation to generation.

For Paras, the family experience has fostered a sense of self-awareness.

Their great-grandparents and their grandparents went through hardship and worked hard to allow the younger generations the freedom they did not have.

Paras' younger brother, Jason, is a talented singer and musician.

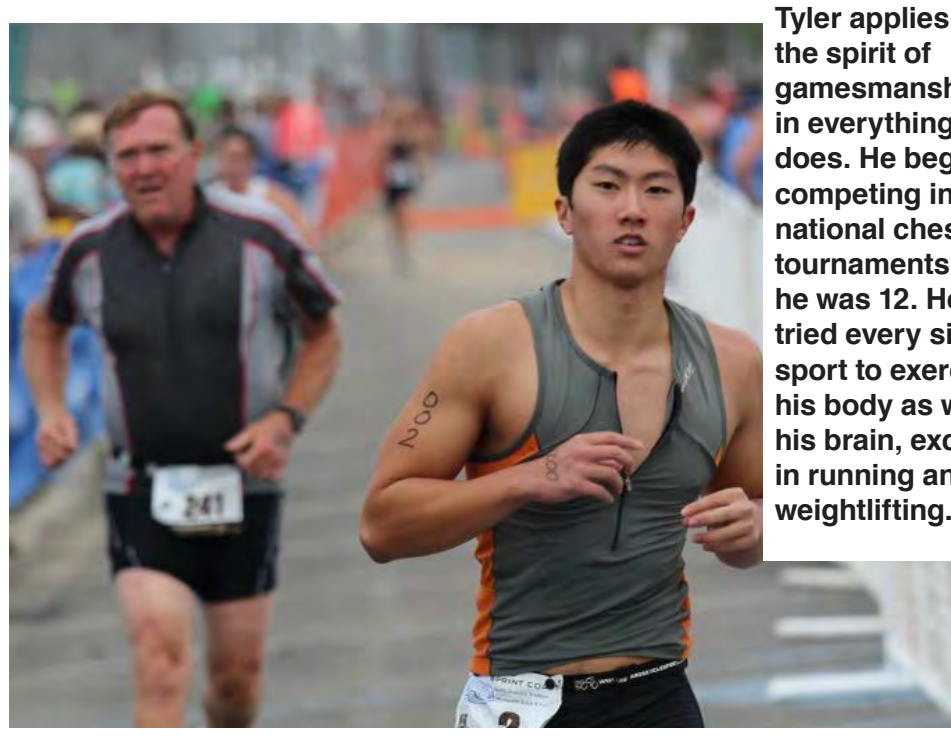
Her sons don't have to just go to work and get jobs if that is not what they want to do, said Debbie Paras.

They can become doctors and musicians who support others in the ever-growing chain of humanity and beauty. ■





(Left) Tyler Paras gives a TEDx talk about redefining the process of studying for the MCATs.



Tyler applies the spirit of gamesmanship in everything he does. He began competing in national chess tournaments when he was 12. He also tried every single sport to exercise his body as well as his brain, excelling in running and weightlifting.



San Fernando Valley

Thank you for your support of the San Gabriel Valley API PFLAG and the Okaeri LGBTQ Gatherings!

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from
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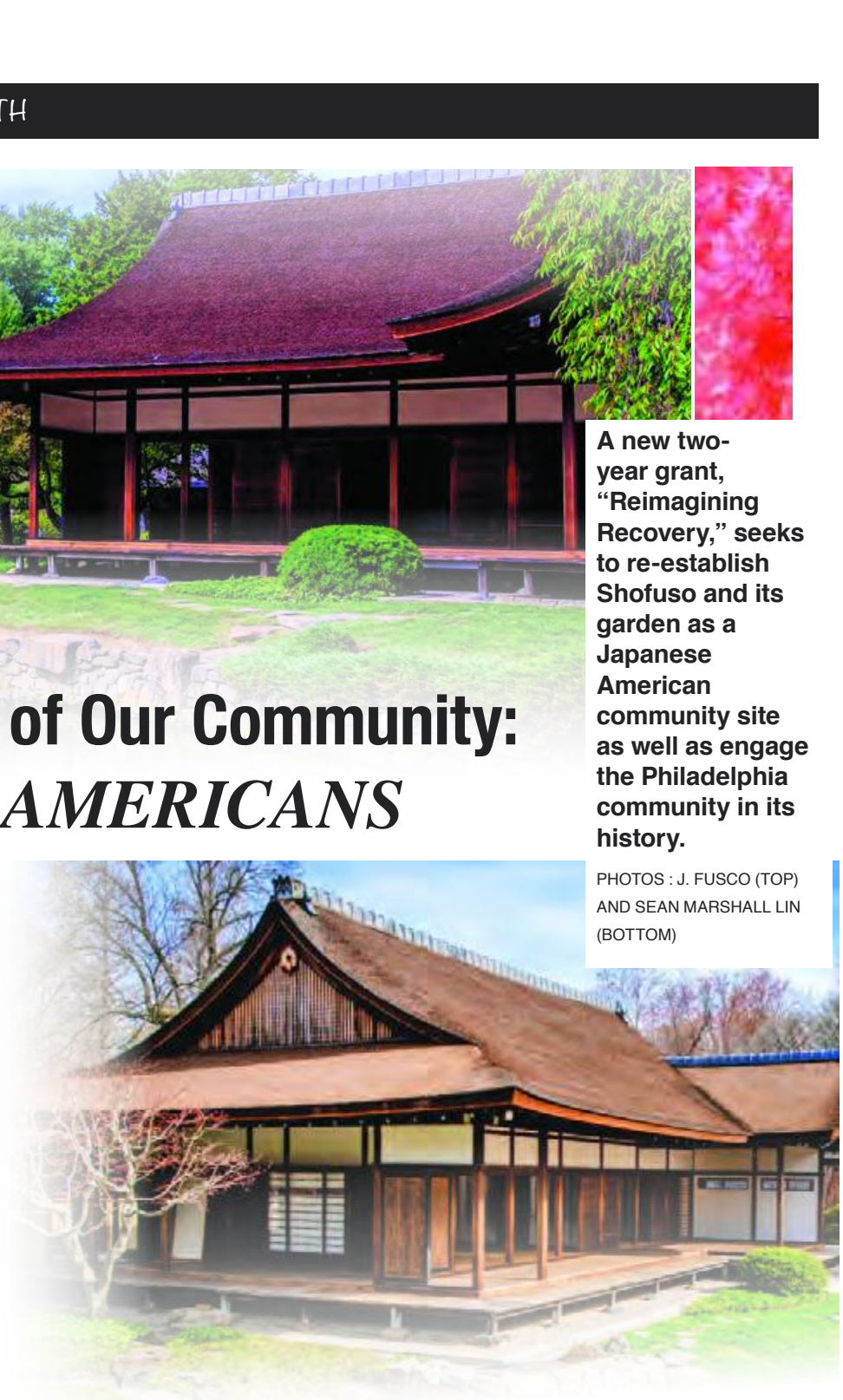
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Rekindling a special relationship so that all generations will know its impact and importance as we move forward together.

A new two-year grant, "Reimagining Recovery," seeks to re-establish Shofuso and its garden as a Japanese American community site as well as engage the Philadelphia community in its history.



PHOTOS : J. FUSCO (TOP) AND SEAN MARSHALL LIN (BOTTOM)

By Rob Buscher, Contributor

When I learned that this year's Holiday Issue theme would be "The Spirit of Community," I began thinking about how this concept relates to the work that we do at JACL. Our entire organization is based on the legacy of the Nisei who laid the foundation for both our civil rights agenda and preservation of Japanese American history and culture.

As active JACL members, we are contributing to a story that began long before us and will hopefully continue on for many more generations. With these topics in mind, this theme also helped me to better understand the work I am currently doing at the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia.

JASGP is a nonprofit organization that seeks to foster mutual curiosity, understanding and collaboration between Japan and Philadelphia. Like many Japan America societies, its programs are a mix between citizen-to-citizen diplomacy, transnational business relationship building and cultural programs. Since merging with Friends of the Japanese House and Garden in 2017, JASGP also operates the Shofuso Japanese House and Garden in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, hosting over 40,000 visitors annually.

In August 2021, I accepted a new full-time position with JASGP to oversee a two-year grant-funded project called "Reimagining Recovery." Funded by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, the project's main goals are to re-establish Shofuso as a Japanese American community site and engage the predominantly Black neighborhood residents of Parkside West Philadelphia, where the house is located.

This position differs greatly from the work I have done in the past in Japanese American community spaces, in that the staff of JASGP who operate the Shofuso site are predominantly white. In one sense, ancestry is not a prerequisite for cultural participation, especially given the distance than many of us from the Sansei, Yonsei and Gosei generations have from our ancestral culture of origin. That being said, there are certain sensitivities that people from outside of our community will never fully understand —for example, the extent to which cultural stereotypes impact our lived experiences as persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States.

In the past year and a half since the pandemic began and in the aftermath of the George Floyd Uprising and ongoing anti-Asian violence, there has been a lot of soul searching within JASGP. The staff of JASGP acknowledged that the organization needed to revisit the impact its programs have on the lived experiences of the Japanese American community.

Granted, Japanese Americans are few in the Philadelphia region (approximately 3,000 according to the latest census), but our community is notably absent from many of the cultural programs the city offers. This may be in part due to the disconnect that many multigenerational Japanese Americans feel from both traditional and contemporary Japanese culture. For those of us whose families have assimilated to the extent that we no longer speak Japanese at home, it can sometimes be intimidating to walk into Japanese cultural spaces without feeling the imposter syndrome. Whatever the reason, Japanese Americans are largely absent from the one physical site in Philadelphia that is visibly Japanese.

The Reimagining Recovery project was developed to address these issues head-on through a series of staff trainings and implementation of a Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion plan. This, in turn, will help JASGP's staff to adopt a more intentional approach to engage both the Japanese American and African American communities through arts-based programming at the Shofuso site and elsewhere in the Parkside neighborhood.

As I began my tenure with this organization, my first project was to develop and lead a five-part staff workshop series about the history and culture of the Japanese American community. Having gone through over 10 hours of training with the entire staff of JASGP, I am pleased at the level of nuanced dialogue and intentionality with which our team is now approaching these topics. My hope is that this newly gained perspective will help shift some of JASGP's programming to be more inclusive of our local Japanese American community, which in turn will create a space for more Japanese Americans to be involved in this organization's work.

In many ways, Shofuso was created as a physical embodiment of U.S.-Japan relations during the postwar era. Just eight years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the people and government of Japan came together to fund and build Shofuso.

Conceived by Japanese architect Junzo Yoshimura, Shofuso was loosely based on the 17th-century temple guest house at Kojo-in and designed for an exhibit at New York City's Museum of Modern Art. Although the exhibit series "House in the Garden" that Shofuso exhibited in was meant to focus on Modern architecture, Yoshimura successfully argued that the utilitarian nature where form follows function within the traditional Japanese house met the contemporary Western definition of Modernism.

The house was built entirely using traditional construction methods in Nagoya before being disassembled and shipped to New York, where it was reconstructed in the sculpture garden at MOMA.

In the two seasons that Shofuso was exhibited in spring/summer 1954-55, more than 220,000 visitors came to view it. This exhibit had such a significant impact on normalizing U.S.-Japan relations in the postwar era that New York's Japan Society (then under John D. Rockefeller III's leadership) decided to pay for Shofuso to be relocated to the current site in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, where it



Shofuso in the winter

PHOTO: ELIZABETH FELICELLA





(Right) **The Shofuso veranda during the fall with its blooming red maple trees**

(Below) **Paul Uyehara and Mary Yee on the Shofuso veranda**

would be shown in perpetuity alongside the park's other historic houses.

This location was also chosen because it was close to the former site of the Japanese Pavilion at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, itself the first physical presence of Japanese cultural exchange in the United States. Unfortunately, the city of Philadelphia devoted few resources to the upkeep of the site, and after several decades of deferred maintenance and frequent acts of vandalism throughout the 1970s, Shofuso fell into a state of disrepair.

As I was onboarded into my new role, I was surprised to learn that it was actually JACL Philadelphia leadership who helped to organize fundraising and restoration efforts that brought the house back to its present condition.

They did so by establishing a separate nonprofit organization in 1982 called Friends of the Japanese House and Garden (FJHG). In past FJHG board rosters, I found the names of many Nisei leaders including Louise Maehara, Hiroshi Uyehara, Mary Watanabe, Shigeko Kawano and even Jack Ozawa — our founding chapter president in whose name the JACL Philadelphia Scholarship is named.

I have spent much of the past four months learning about the leadership role that our local JACL chapter played in restoring and maintaining Shofuso, and how it is that over time, our organizations and members have grown apart. The founder and first president of FJHG was the late Mary Watanabe. Watanabe was an active member of JACL Philadelphia as were Reiko Gaspar, Hiroshi Uyehara and Steve Yanai, all of whom also served as president of FJHG from its origins until the early 2000s.

The only surviving member of the original group who founded FJHG is Sansei Teresa Maebori. A longtime board member of the Philadelphia JACL and past chapter president, Maebori recalled, "It was very much a crossover in terms of JACL and the Friends, but they were entirely different kinds of organizations with a different mission. As the years went by, the JACL members who were the original people that started it — they've all died. So, because of that, we've lost that connection, and it went more toward Japanese. You know, it's a Japanese house rather than Japanese American house, so I think that's why there wasn't as much togetherness there."

Watanabe played a pivotal role in fundraising for the restoration work, having previously organized major fundraisers for Nisei Judge William Marutani's re-election campaign in 1977. She was also deeply invested in traditional Japanese arts and culture.

Maebori continued, "I think it was Mary Watanabe who really understood Shofuso as a treasure, so she started this group. She was very much in with the arts community, she and her husband Warren, their ukiyo-e collection went to the museum, so they had a very strong relationship with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her connections in that way sort of came along with the show."

Another Nisei leader Louise Maehara was instrumental in organizing the cultural programs at Shofuso in the early decades of FJHG. Maehara served on the board for more than a decade from 1983-94 and made sure both her daughter, Miki Rotman, a grandson, Lucas, got involved.

"When the Japanese roofers came to repair the house, Louise cooked all their meals from scratch. It was important to her that they felt welcomed, and they appreciated the extra effort Japanese Americans put to make them feel at home," Miki Rotman recalled.

Yonsei Lucas Rotman worked at Shofuso as a teenager in the late 1980s and remembers both Japanese Americans and Shin-Issei working collaboratively on cultural programs during that time.

"Michiko Bley was one of the many first-generation Japanese who worked as tour guides at the house. They had the added duty of teaching non-Japanese and us less knowledgeable JA's about the house and the culture. Michiko-san was a lovely person and really spent so much time teaching me about the house, Japanese culture and tea ceremony. She was like an aunt to me," Luca Rotman said.

Shin-Issei Taeko Shervin was also deeply invested in sharing her culture with generations of Japanese Americans and non-Japanese audiences as a tea practitioner from the Urasenke school. Now, her students continue the tradition at regular intervals throughout the season, practicing tea and hosting public demonstrations out of Shofuso's tea house.

For many years, a major annual fundraising project for JACL Philadelphia was the preparation and selling of bento box lunches at the Summer Festival that was held at Shofuso. Preparing the bento was a fun event that brought together many of our members, their families and friends in a celebration of Japanese culture. Birthdays, weddings and even memorial services were held for prominent JACL members at the only physical site in Philadelphia that was identifiable as a Japanese American community space.

Outside of her work at Shofuso, Watanabe was instrumental alongside Hiroshi Uyehara, Sumiko Kobayashi and several other JACL Nisei leaders in helping to organize the 1985 exhibit "The Japanese American Experience" at the Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies.

At the same time, another Philadelphia chapter member, Grayce Uyehara, was leading JACL's efforts in the Redress



Louise Maehara on her 100th birthday with her daughter, Miki Rotman, and grandson, Lucas Rotman



Louise Maehara on Children's Day in 1995



(Above) **The Uyehara family together at Shofuso. Pictured *(from left)* are Oliva Yee, Grayce Uyehara, Hiroshi Uyehara, Mary Yee, Kaz Uyehara and Paul Uyehara**



(From left) **Louise Maehara, Michiko Bley and a friend at Shofuso.**



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE MAEHARA AND UYEHARA FAMILIES



Reconstructing "Japanese House MOMA 41" in 1954

PHOTO: MICHAEL ROUGIER

Japanese Americans at Shofuso in this photo taken during the 1950s

Movement through her role as executive director of the Legislative Education Committee.

Based on the overlap of persons involved in each effort, the intent of the Nisei generation in getting involved with Shofuso becomes clear. I believe their efforts to preserve and maintain Shofuso were an intentional way of sharing the traditional culture of Japan with local Philadelphia audiences in a way that would help dispel harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about our own Japanese American community.

Throughout the history of Japanese diaspora in the United States and elsewhere, rarely if ever have we been in control of the narratives that are used to describe our communities. From the beginning of diplomatic relations with Japan, cultural exchange has played a central role in the ways that the general public has understood Japan and its people.

During the 1980s-90s when U.S.-Japan trade war rhetoric was reigniting anti-Japanese sentiments nationwide, and especially in the aftermath of the murder of Vincent Chin, how could the Nisei involvement with Shofuso be read as anything but activism? Without confirmation from the Nisei themselves, I can only speculate, but perhaps if these motivations had been made clearer to younger generations in the Japanese American community, we would have maintained a more direct role in Shofuso over the past two decades.

Although some Japanese Americans remain involved in the Urasenke and Omotesenke tea schools, our community's direct involvement in the daily operations at Shofuso was lost as engagement with traditional Japanese cultural practice waned among the Sansei. In their place came newer immigrant generations of Shin-Nikkei and non-Japanese people who developed an appreciation for the culture while working or studying in Japan. These demographics were also reflected in the membership and board of JASGP prior to its merger with FJHG.

JACL Philadelphia Chapter Board Member Hiro Nishikawa offers his comments on the separate history of JASGP, whose origins can be traced to the international business community.

"Half of the active members of JASGP were white, and most of them had connections with businesses in Japan. Some of them even knew how to speak Japanese because they've been there so often, so there was an interesting mix of people white and Asian that constituted the JASGP, but it was a business-focused and business-centered organization," Nishikawa said. "When they merged with Shofuso a few years ago, I thought that was a huge shift because when Shofuso was established as a cultural organization, it was managed by Japanese Americans and Japanese expatriates. That focus shifted over time, but it was a cultural organization and so very distinct from JASGP. So that merger . . . I still find it puzzling. I think the business part of it was largely supported by people who have a Japanese background, who came to the U.S. on temporary job assignments and then went back to Japan. Those kinds of families constituted a significant portion of JASGP."

When JASGP was established in 1994, there was still a lot on incoming investment from overseas Japanese corporations in the Greater Philadelphia region. Although their membership was largely Shin-Nikkei, some Nisei leaders were also involved with JASGP during its first decade of operation.

Grayce Uyehara served on the board for several years starting in 1994. Her son, Paul Uyehara, also served a brief stint on the JASGP board in 1998 during his term as JACL Philadelphia chapter president.

He remembered: "I don't recall any discussion with Mom about her motivations for getting involved. It might have been a networking angle, something she was very aware of from the Legislative Education Committee work where it was so instrumental to lobbying. Also, the tie to the consul, possible JACL membership recruitment (she was the chapter membership chair at some points) and corporate funding."

One might also guess that having a seat at the table where conversations that might impact the Japanese American community were taking place also played a factor in Grayce Uyehara's decision to join the board.

In the past three decades since the Nikkei stock market crash in 1989, new investment from Japan has slowed, though Subaru of America headquarters are located in nearby Camden, N.J., along with a few local branches of overseas Japanese pharmaceutical companies in the Philadelphia suburbs.

With less interest in Japanese business programs and declining populations of Shin-Nikkei immigrants, JASGP gradually shifted its focus toward cultural presentation from the mid-2000s onward. Given the focus in that era on "Cool Japan" popular culture products like anime and manga, this actually further alienated many Japanese Americans from participating in JASGP's cultural programming, which was unrelated to their own experiences or understanding of Japanese culture.

The merger between JASGP and Shofuso is still somewhat new; only three full seasons of programming have taken place prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the current state of flux, this presents a unique opportunity for the Japanese American community to help redefine the kind of work that JASGP does going forward.

To be successful in this endeavor, we as a community must revisit the ways that Japanese Americans engage in cultural diplomacy – with both our country of ancestral origin and non-Japanese audiences in the United States.

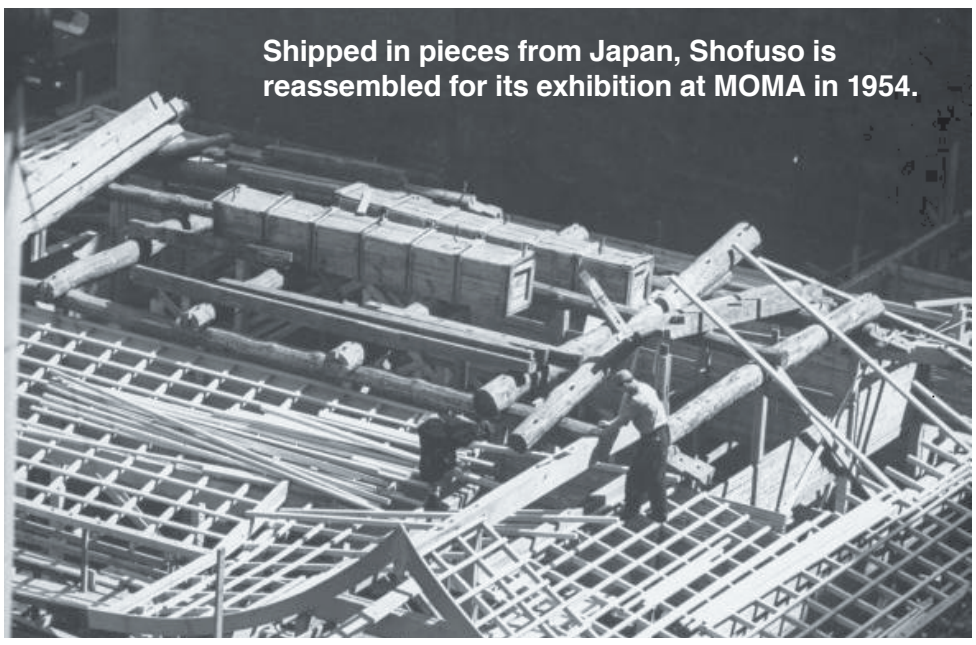
Culture is a powerful tool when used to build empathy among diverse communities. This is particularly effective in regions like Philadelphia, where we do not have a large Japanese American population.

For that reason, it is important for Japanese Americans to have a say in how Japan is being represented, and this project is our opportunity to reclaim the narrative in a way that is inclusive of both overseas Japanese and multigenerational Japanese American perspectives.

Our historic connection to Shofuso through the Nisei JACLers who saved it can be the starting point for these conversations to continue as we work together with JASGP and the Parkside residents to define what the Japanese American relationship to this site is in our current time and for generations to come.

I am grateful to the cultural stewards who came before me in FJHG and JASGP, both Japanese American and non-Japanese, who have worked diligently for decades to preserve the Shofuso site. It takes a tremendous amount of vision from the staff and board leadership to acknowledge the need for a project like this to take place, and also courage to embrace the change that will come as a result.

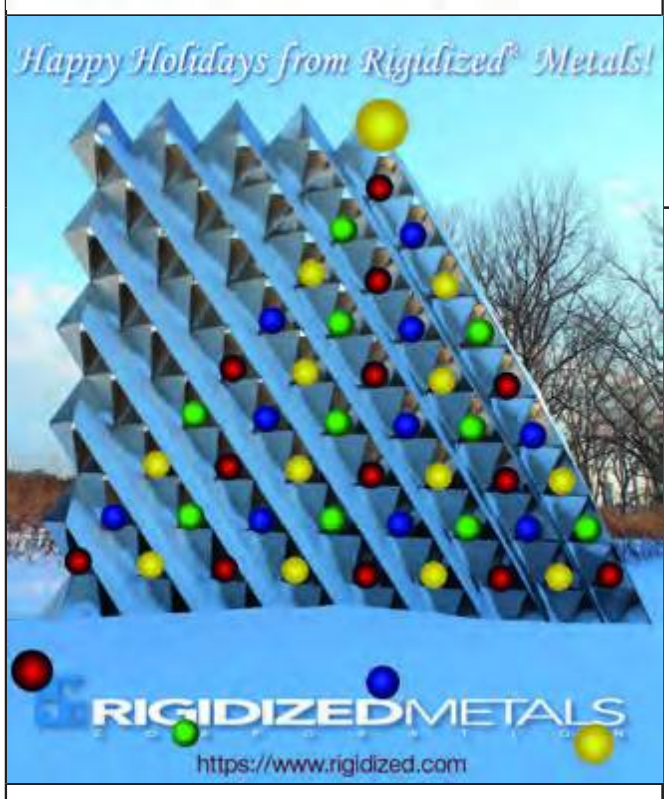
I am hopeful that the conversations we are having now will eventually rekindle the special relationship that our local Japanese American community once held with Shofuso. In doing so, I believe that we can move forward together with JASGP in the spirit of our community. ■



Shipped in pieces from Japan, Shofuso is reassembled for its exhibition at MOMA in 1954.

Mile High





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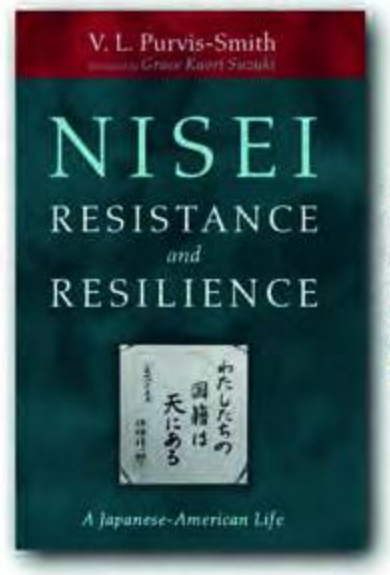
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Our history informs our future.

Densho at 25:

An Evolving Mission That's (Virtually) Unchanged



The tech-forward nonprofit's **Ikeda, Froh, Niiya** *weigh in on what's the same, what's to come.*

By George Toshio Johnston, Senior Editor, Digital and Social Media

If there was one trait, one word that differentiates Densho from nearly every other Japanese American community nonprofit organization, the first to come to mind is "technology."

It's little wonder: Densho is, after all, based in Seattle, minutes away from Redmond, Wash.-based tech giant Microsoft, which is where Scott Oki and Tom Ikeda, the founders of the "Japanese American Legacy Project" website, used to work.

Inspired by the Shoah Foundation, which sought to record oral histories of Holocaust survivors, the tech-savvy duo would, on Oct. 23, 1996, officially found Densho — but with emphases on the Japanese American experience writ large, especially the tumultuous World War II-era, and on accessibility for any and all via a wave of intertwined tech trends that they expertly surfed in the mid-1990s, foreseeing what would forever transform society and human interaction: the digital revolution.

"There was a confluence of things happening. I had recently left Microsoft, so I just knew that the personal computer was going through a dramatic shift in terms of these little boxes all of a sudden able to handle video, audio," Ikeda, Densho's longtime executive director, told the *Pacific Citizen*.

A quarter-century later, as Densho marks its 25th birthday, it's worth taking a moment to review what that "confluence" encompassed: powerful personal computers and software, high-speed internet and the World Wide Web, wireless technologies, email and mobile phones, digital audio, video and photography, digital scanners, PDFs, blogging, social media and more.

That shift to digital versions of analog photography, videography and audio would mark a profound change for Densho and its mission.

"We could literally buy cameras that were, from a resolution standpoint, as good as what TV stations were using," Ikeda added, referring to all the things that were happening in the mid-'90s.

Bolstering that perspective is Ikeda's Densho colleague Geoff Froh, deputy director and chief technology director. He contrasted how institutions with missions similar to Densho's did things and how technological advances changed that approach.

"In the 'old days,'" Froh said, "the people who did these oral histories would record them on some kind of a tape, and you would have to go to a library or a special collections room and listen to the physical tapes there. And maybe if you were lucky, they would make you a copy or something like that.

> All Americans will know the history and understand the lessons of the World War II incarceration by 2042, the 100th anniversary of Executive Order 9066.
>
> ***— Densho's Vision Statement***

"But what we were able to do, you know, in the early 2000s, was take the digital video and transcode it to something that could be viewed on the internet and then have it available to many, many more people without having to be on location.

"Now that's like, of course, you're going to do that, that totally makes sense. Back then, that was definitely sort of a bit of an innovation," he concluded.

As all of the preceding technologies grew and spread, Densho was there, absorbing and incorporating that which was useful. As it enters its next phase, Densho will no doubt continue to absorb and use newer, emerging technologies.

While Oki's role in Densho is now that of emeritus board member, Ikeda has been the face and voice of the organization since its earliest days. But after 25 years, changes are in the offing at Densho, including that of the still-youthful appearing Ikeda and his high-profile role. Yet, Densho's mission will remain on track as it evolves.

For Froh, Densho's mission is two-pronged: preservation and access. Preservation, which he described as "critically important," is about "the stewardship of the stories of our community and the stories that our narrators have very generously shared with us."

Regarding access, Froh noted, "We've never charged for access to the data, and we feel very strongly about that. We want people to use the information as much as they possibly can; we want it to be accessible and usable. So, that's the part where digital technology has really benefited what we do."

Hard as it may be to believe now, Froh says many "traditional archival institutions didn't even want to do any digitization because they thought it was a waste of time."

Another longtime staffer is Brian Niiya, Densho's content director. From his perspective, while Densho's mission remains on its original trajectory, there has been an evolution.

"Densho started basically with the goal of capturing these digital video life histories of Japanese Americans about their camp experience, and it kind of evolved from there to include documents and, you know, newspapers and other research materials. So, that's kind of continued," said Niiya, whose early role at Densho involved curating its online encyclopedia.

"I think in the last few years, it's been kind of another track, kind of more social justice-related stuff and being more activist and in trying to connect our story, the Japanese American incarceration story, to other struggles that are going on in the present. I think that's been a little bit of a change.

"I think there's always been some connection to that, right?" he continued. "I mean, why do you do this? Why do we study history? Why do we want this history known? It's always been as an educational tool or as a warning as to things that are going on in the present, right? That's why we study history. But I think we've been more intentional about that in the last few years."

Froh, echoing that sentiment, looked back to how that intentionality began, tracing it to Sept. 11, 2001.

"After the morning of 9/11, we all came into the office a little bit later; everybody was sort of in shock, kind of numb. I remember the phones started ringing. It was all these Nisei calling us saying, 'Don't let what happened to us happen to Arab Americans, to Muslim Americans.'

"We know that this can be the inclination, in times of crisis in the U.S. We've



Tom Ikeda
Executive Director



Geoff Froh
Deputy Director and Chief Technology Director



Brian Niiya
Content Director

seen this in our own history," he said. "And that kind of supercharged us and gave us this new sense of mission. We always knew that collecting these stories is important. . . . But that made it very clear, immediately."

From the outside looking in, could it be that Densho's role in disseminating those stories within the framework of its vision statement might include reaching well beyond its Densho.org website? Maybe.

In a way, mass media might be the only way to reach Densho's vision statement goal: "All Americans will know the history and understand the lessons of the World War II incarceration by 2042 . . . ."

In May, best-selling author Daniel James Brown's book "Facing the Mountain" was published *(see the May 7-21, 2021, issue of the Pacific Citizen),* and Densho's digitized archives played a big part in Brown's research.

Now, the book, which tells the story of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, appears to be on its way to becoming adapted into a TV miniseries under the guidance of A-list director Destin Daniel Cretton. *(See page 8 of the Pacific Citizen's Holiday Issue.)*

According to Ikeda, though, Densho's role as a story consultant for Hollywood productions isn't new. In 2019, the AMC anthology series "The Terror" was shown; that season's episodes took place in a WWII-era concentration camp for Japanese Americans. Densho and Niiya helped by providing details to make the actual history fit with the supernatural, fanciful aspects of the show.

While helping Hollywood tell those stories may be part of Densho's future plans, more immediate is Densho and Ikeda's realization that the mission needs to reach a younger demographic.



Tom Ikeda and Traci Kiriyama express their joy as Sean Miura looks on upon learning that Densho exceeded its goal of raising $1 million during its 25th anniversary gala.



Miya Folick performs during Densho's 25th anniversary gala.

"I had this conversation with my dad just two days ago. I said, 'So dad, when I started Densho 26 years ago, you were in your late 60s. And I'm 65, so I'm about the same age as you were. We amazingly had the foresight to say, we need to interview the Niseis now because, you know, they're still vibrant, and they have good memories.'

"And it's like, the whole generations pass," he continued. "And in the same way, I have to realize that, yeah, I am kind of like the Nisei, now. And at that time, I remember, the entrenchment of the Nisei in community organizations and how, in many cases, unwilling they were to to listen to new ideas.

"I thought, 'The world's changing, there's so much — politically, technology-wise. I'd look across the board, almost every JA organization was very static.' And I realized, 'We have to change, too.' . . . I just realize we're kind of the generation that now needs to make way for the millennial generation and their ideas."

Indeed. When Densho held its online virtual fundraising gala on Oct. 23 — for the record, Densho exceeded its goal of raising $1 million — the show visibly skewed younger in its orientation, while still including the presence of Japanese American elders — and that, Ikeda noted, was intentional. *(To view the show, visit tinyurl.com/4cx9udxk.)*

For Densho after its 25th year, we can still expect the presence of Froh and Niiya, who joked, "I've already told many people that this is my last job. . . . When I retire, I'm just going to do the same thing I'm doing anyway."

For Froh, he is excited about the possibilities that emerging advances in machine learning and form recognition will have for Densho, since "a lot of the processes for us have been very manual for years." This would take the "more mundane tasks off the off the plates of archivists in particular, so that they can spend more time doing the contextual work."

As for Ikeda, he says that while he has no plans to leave Densho, his role will be changing in the months to come.

"Five years ago, we started having a conversation about what we need to do to, you know, so that Densho could be around for another 25 years," Ikeda said. That includes structural things like ensuring the organization's mission, values and vision are clear, but also things like building up its financial reserves and management team.

"Yeah, I will be transitioning to a new role fairly soon," Ikeda allowed. "But, we're trying to do it in a way that we can bring in a kind of that new leadership. … We are very much into what we're calling the succession planning phase and how we're doing this.

"So, staff, board and I are in that conversation . . . and at some point that we haven't announced yet, we'll say, 'OK, so this is the next step.' The thinking is that I won't leave the organization, but I will change my role in a way that I can still be supportive in the value of what Densho does."

That careful transition is fitting, since the word *denshō* was chosen for the group's name: translated from Japanese, it means "pass on to the next generation." ■

Bringing the Spirit of Music to Our Community

Musician Kevin Village-Stone uses the power of music to uplift, educate and inspire us to experience all that the world has to offer.

By Patti Hirahara,
Contributor





***(Top)* Whispering Light performs at the Enmanji Buddhist Temple with the Sonoma County Taiko Group.**

Kevin Iwamura and his mother, Shinako, at home in San Francisco in 1975

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KEVIN VILLAGE-STONE

In 2017, on the TV soundstage of "Asian Pacific America With Robert Handa," a weekly half-hour program on NBC Bay Area highlighting diverse Asian American communities in the greater San Francisco region, I met a unique talent who performed for the musical portion of that episode.

His name was Kevin Iwamura, and his stage name is Kevin Village-Stone. His performance playing a Native American flute was amazing, and I felt he would become a trailblazer who would bring the spirit of music to all who would listen.

Village-Stone's family background is quite unique.

His mother, Shinako Imamura, was born into the prestigious Iwamura family in Japan. His grandfather, Kanekoto Iwamura, was a battleship commander and later a rear admiral for Japan's Imperial Navy prior to World War II. All of the men in the Iwamura family were naval officers, and the family's samurai blood line goes back more than 400 years.

Others in the Iwamura family were kimono makers for Japan's Imperial Royal Family and held prominent roles in Japan's engineering, music and zoology fields.

His father, William Phillips, was a mixed-blood Cherokee and an officer in the U.S. Air Force who could speak Japanese fluently and enjoyed Japanese traditions and culture. He met Shinako Iwamura in Japan in 1953, and together, they moved to the United States in 1957. Their son, Kevin, was born in the early 1960s.

Japanese culture played an influential role in Village-Stone's upbringing, where he observed major Japanese holidays. To this day, Village-Stone still has his family's Japanese dolls and koi flags that they would put on display each year, and he speaks Japanese, some Cherokee and Lakota, as well as etiquette words in 27 languages.

He lost both of his parents in separate car-related accidents early on, so keeping important family traditions alive that reflect his mother and father's cultural upbringing also helps him stay closely connected to his family ties.

He decided to adopt his mother's maiden name of Iwamura because he wanted to carry on the family legacy since he is an only child and the last of his generation in the U.S. "The translation for the name Iwamura is 'Village Stone,' and it also has an inference to a phrase in English of 'pillar of the community,' which is something solid, unmoving and dependable that supports the community. I try my best to live up to the values of my family name," Village-Stone said.

"My mother was always a hard worker who worked for 20 years before taking her first vacation," he continued. "Along with hard work, my mother also demonstrated balance by living a good and honest quality of life. Since my parents divorced in 1975, my mother raised me as a single mom. Like my grandfather, she was consistently placing kindness and compassion into her community."

Village-Stone has lived primarily in the San Francisco Bay area and California's Central Valley in the Patterson and Atwater areas. He has loved living in there because in these areas, he can enjoy the music and arts of San Francisco, as well as the open country and mountains of the Central Valley and Sierras.

When asked why he chose music for his career, he said, "Well, I actually was a 12-year jazz and classical trumpet player, starting when I was 8 years old. What got me started was hearing my dad's records of Harry James and the big bands. I loved how music made me feel, and it inspired my decision. Later at the age of 16, I began learning bass and keyboards and performed in everything from jazz groups to hard rock, progressive rock, reggae and hip-hop.

"It was during my 30s that the doctors found I had severe back issues, which had me go through five spine operations. This kept me in chronic pain for 20 years, which prevented me from using many of my musical



***(Left)* Kevin Village-Stone's mother, Shinako Iwamura, circa Japan 1943**

***(Right)* Kevin Village-Stone shares Native American storytelling as a California Public Schools presenter.**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KEVIN VILLAGE-STONE



(Below) Kevin Village-Stone performs a Native American song.

PHOTO: SAM CAMP





(Above) Kevin Village-Stone plays the Native American flute during an appearance on "Asian Pacific America With Robert Handa."

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

instruments," he continued. "So, I learned to play the Native American flute to help me relax and heal. It became a spiritual instrument for me, and I was able to release albums and become a Native American Music Awards nominee," Village-Stone said.

When he moved to Sebastopol, Calif., he found that the city's Enmanji Buddhist Temple was located there. He had missed his Japanese community connections, and this opportunity allowed him to become more involved in temple events.

He offered his skills in music and concert sound systems, as well as helped the temple with its social media presence. He then accepted an invitation to become a part of the temple's board of directors, and he and his music partner, Lindy Day, enjoyed performing concerts for the temple prior to Covid.

Village-Stone has found that he can intertwine his Buddhist teachings in his musical works for his musical group Whispering Light. He finds these teachings address our current social ills.

"I want to do more than just talk about Buddhism. I want to show Buddhism teachings in action in the ways they relate to humanity, compassion and kindness — what could be more relevant to today," Village-Stone said.

In addition, he is known as an international film score and broadcast composer, recording artist and performer. And since the onset of the pandemic, he and Day have shifted their focus from live performances to online music education, providing entertainment and music education to families, especially children, through their site Treble rocks.

Their Black Ramen project includes music education, music for film and games, manga and associated music videos, live stage shows and a game app that is fun and educational. Village-Stone and Day plan to donate a fixed portion of all Black Ramen proceeds to benefit organizations rescuing children from human trafficking.

However, the ongoing Covid pandemic has caused havoc in their lives.

"This whole Covid shutdown all but bankrupted us. In live performances, we make income from the performance fee, performing rights royalties, merchandising and tips. In our case, we make additional income with writing and recording music for media. Then when Covid hit, we not only lost major income from live performances but also with the shutdown of sports, overnight, we lost more of our income from music licensing royalties. So, we needed to be creative to keep our projects going," Village-Stone said.

Besides his love of all things music, Village-Stone is also a member of the Sonoma County JACL. His mother, Shinako, had been a JACL Life Member, and he remembers reading copies of the *Pacific Citizen* when he was growing up. Once he moved to the Sonoma County area, he was able to join himself in 2017.

"Where I formerly lived, I had no opportunities to connect with the Japanese American community since I was seven hours away from any JACL functions," Village-Stone said. He enjoys working with Sonoma County JACL President Mark Hayashi and his wife, Cynthia, with the Enmanji Temple and JACL collaborative events.

With the *Pacific Citizen's* theme this year being "The Spirit of Community," how does Village-Stone feel this relates to his life and what he does?

"I believe any artist has the power to uplift their community. Before Covid shutdowns, twice a year we would volunteer performances for charities like the local community center, cancer benefits for a struggling family and participate in local fundraisers," he said. "I firmly believe in 'Pay It Forward,' and I have witnessed that if I show compassion and kindness to another person, this trend will carry on to others. Japanese Americans are some of the most giving and charitable people, and they do what needs to be done regardless of any attribution or benefit of return."

He also shares his passion of storytelling, playing Native American flutes and explaining the ancestral drum healing ceremony by being a California Public Schools presenter. He often performs storytelling and cultural presentations for elementary schools and church groups on both Native American and Japanese cultures. He finds that in sharing this opportunity, he allows children to celebrate everything they are.

So, what does Village-Stone have in the works for the future? While he and Day have released two albums together, he has released seven solo albums, and Day has released a solo classical guitar album. Together, they have published 278 songs for film, games and TV, varying from jazz rock fusion to cinematic rock symphony.

They hope to be able to start doing more live performances soon, as well as continue to develop many more projects and opportunities.

"Regardless of the project, I want to inspire young people and our elders to learn of, and ultimately experience more of, the world around us," said Village-Stone. "Music, literature and the arts are learning tools that lead to understanding. Understanding leads us to peace. I want to help inspire the next generation of musicians, historians, scientists and humanitarians to believe in inclusion and diversity. This is very important to me."

To learn more about Kevin Village-Stone, visit his web page at www.KevinVillageStone.com.



Kevin Village-Stone was featured on "Asian Pacific America" in 2017. Pictured _(from left)_ are Sonoma County JACL member and "Asian Pacific America" Coordinating Producer Lance Lew; Kevin Village-Stone (Iwamura); JACL National President Gary Mayeda; "Asian Pacific America" host Robert Handa; Berkeley JACL's Nancy Ukai; Sonoma County JACL Co-President Mark Hayashi; _P.C._ contributor and Greater Los Angeles JACL's Patti Hirahara; and "Whispering Light's" Lindy Day.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF "ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICA WITH ROBERT HANDA"

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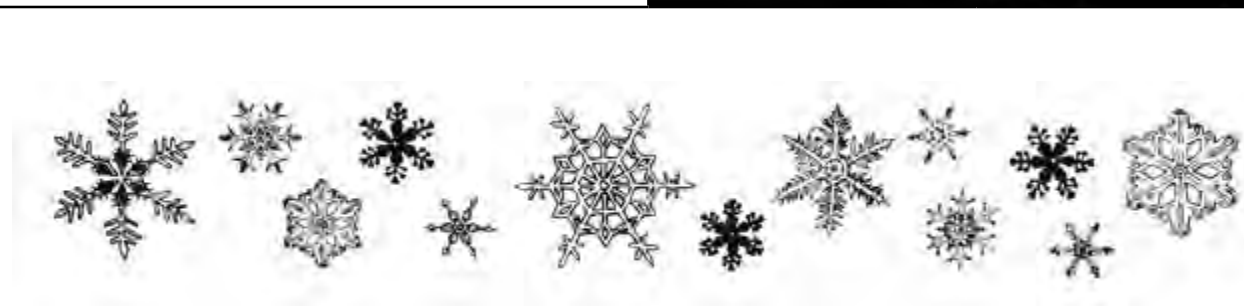
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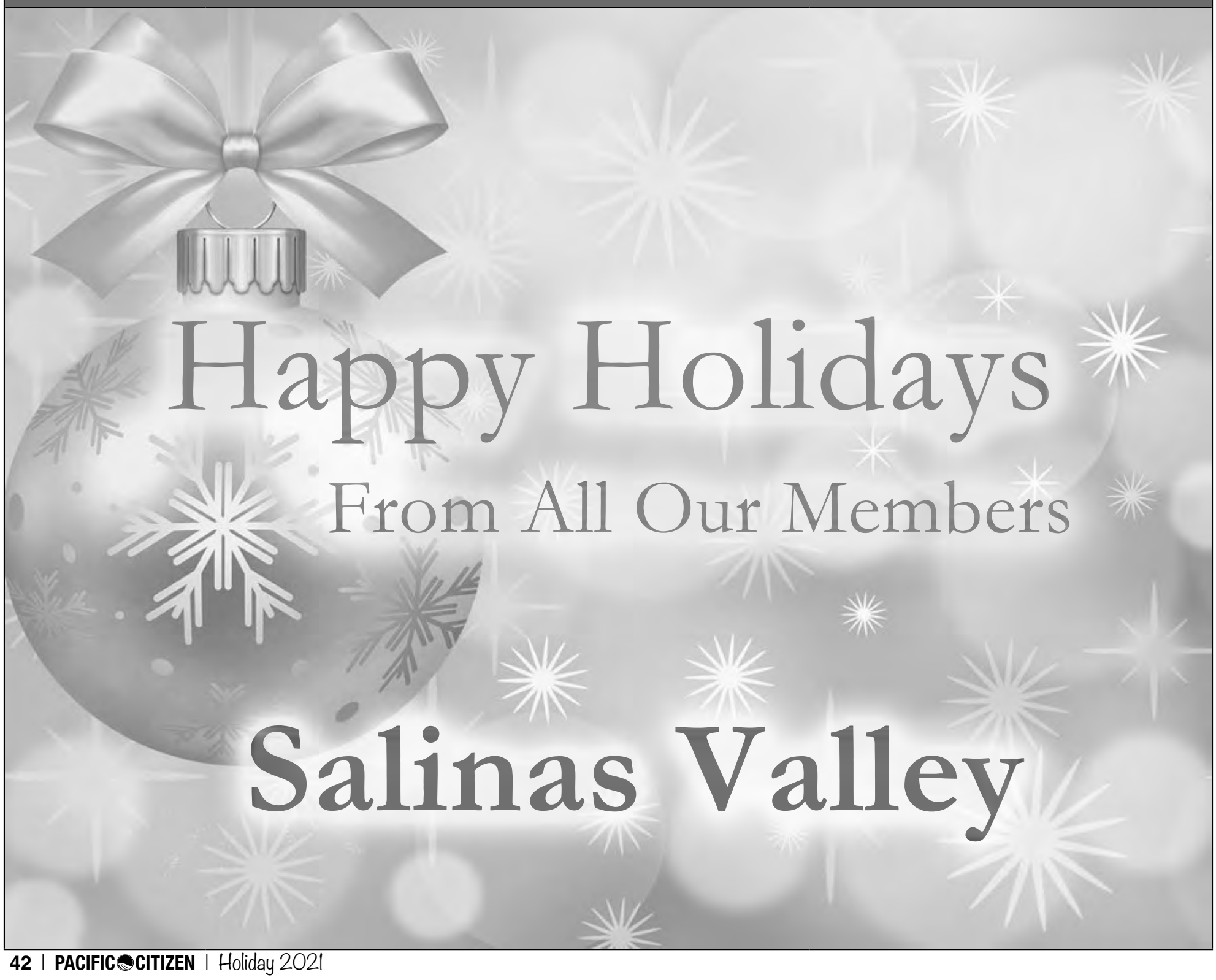
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THE NY/SC: LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

JACL's National Youth/Student Council is comprised of students and young professional leaders who represent their peers on the district and national levels of JACL. Together, it supports and empowers young leaders to create positive changes in their schools, workplaces and communities. They are the voices making a difference for our today and our tomorrow.

The year 2021 has been another year of challenges for us all, yet working together as a united community has provided amazing opportunities despite our hardships. What has been your favorite part of the NY/SC, and what are you most looking forward to in the new year?



Pictured are the NY/SC's (back row, from left) Biansa Burke, Kendal Takeshita, (middle row, from left) Mariko Rooks, Mika Chan, Claire Inouye, Kayla Ikemiya (seated, left), Joey Tanino-Springsteen (seated), Sheera Tamura, Justin Kawaguchi and Seia Watanabe.

JUSTIN KAWAGUCHI, NATIONAL YOUTH CHAIR

"My favorite part of the NY/SC has been the opportunity to connect with passionate youth leaders from around the country. In many ways, the pandemic challenged our group to think innovatively, forging connections with each other in a fully virtual environment and rethinking how we will engage with the larger JACL youth membership.

"I am looking forward to continuing to reimagine what the future of the organization will look like and how we can apply the learnings from online programming to future events, be it in-person or virtual."

SHEERA TAMURA, NATIONAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"With Covid-19 restrictions being lifted, I am most looking forward to attending my first in-person summit and JACL convention. I became a part of the JACL's NY/SC in November of 2019, and for a year and a half, the majority of my experience has been virtual. From participating in this past year's fall retreat, I have come to value the importance of being physically connected in a mutual space.

"The memories that we had made through exploring and learning within the charming city of Little Tokyo was nothing less than delightful. For this upcoming year, it is my hope that each youth representative can bring insightful programs to each of their districts while still creating meaningful connections with their greater AAPI communities."

MIKA CHAN, PNW YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"When I came into the role of PNW Youth Representative, I was hesitant about my ability to connect with youths in the PNW district remotely and nervous about working virtually with the other members of NY/SC. To my dismay, I've felt an immense amount of support and encouragement from the JA community, and being able to work with others across the nation toward common goals of bringing youths together and spreading awareness of current and pressing challenges in our community has been very rewarding.

"The other members of NY/SC have been my favorite part because they have acted as a support system and have reinforced my motivation and passion for community advocacy and involvement. I am so appreciative of everyone for their dedication to enacting positive change, their diverse skill sets and their passion for community growth and sustainability.

"I'm looking forward to exploring more opportunities to connect with youths in the PNW district (hopefully through in-person events soon!) and going to my first JACL convention next year!"

SEIA WATANABE, PSW YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"When everything seemed to be worsening and the world came crashing down on me, what remained was community — it was my passion to connect more with the Japanese American community. This year, I was able to see the JA community come together for each other and truly see how the work we do for each other continues to strengthen and uplift community members even through the bleakest moments.

"Personally, my involvement in the community gave me hope during a dark time. I was able to experience firsthand how the Japanese American community continues to evolve, adapt and strives to be better every single day."

KAYLA IKEMIYA, CCDC YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"My favorite part of the NY/SC is working with other like-minded young adults in the Japanese American community to promote civil rights advocacy. So far, I have enjoyed getting to know my fellow NY/SC members on a deeper level, learning more about their families' histories and their personal experiences within JA spaces. I am looking forward to planning more youth summits and events!"

KENDAL TAKESHITA, MDC YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"Next summer will mark the THIRD year of my time with the NY/SC, and it has been such a blast! Being able to meet new people, participate in various programs and be a part of such a historic and active community has been such a blessing.

"Additionally, being part of the NY/SC has also motivated me to learn more about the civil rights movements and injustices that are happening in our nation. With the knowledge and experience that I have gained, I hope to continue down a similar path where I can fight for the needs and interests of those who are often left unheard. One thing that I am looking forward to is having more in-person programming, so that I can connect with new people!"

JOEY TANINO-SPRINGSTEEN, IDC YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"So far, my favorite part of the NY/SC has been becoming part of a welcoming, intelligent and hardworking group of people who value culture and social justice. When I was younger, I did not have a JA community to provide me with a sense of belonging. The NY/SC has done exactly that. I am looking forward to hosting more civic dinners and attending future retreats!"

BIANSA BURKE, NCWNP YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"I had a wonderful time in Los Angeles for the Fall Retreat. It was so amazing to meet everyone in person — finally. Before this, I felt a little disconnected because I did not know anyone else before stepping into the role.

"I am looking forward to continuing to build on the connections that I created in L.A. I think that the NY/SC is a great group of people who want to fight for civil rights for everyone, and even though we are young, I think that we have the power to create positive change in our communities."

CLAIRE INOUYE, AT-LARGE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

"My favorite part of the NY/SC has been the relationships and connections within the JA community that I have made. I have always had a hard time finding people in the JA community to connect with and work with. The NY/SC has been an amazing opportunity to work with others to create a safe environment for the youth community." ■



YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND: *Nidoto Nai Yoni*

By Kara Kimiko Chu

This summer, I was beyond honored and grateful to receive the 2021 Paul and Katherine Ohtaki Memorial Scholarship from JACL.

My family was planning a vacation to Seattle, so I excitedly asked if we could go to Bainbridge Island, Mr. Ohtaki's hometown. I was looking forward to learning about the unique circumstances of the Japanese American community there during World War II.

A few weeks later, we were on the ferry from Seattle to Bainbridge Island. Looking out across the water, I could see how the separation from the mainland could be so effective in creating a tight-knit community on the island.

We arrived at the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum, which was small but jam-packed with fun facts: Who knew pickleball was invented on Bainbridge Island? In one corner, an old-fashioned television playing oral histories from JAs captivated me in the award-winning exhibit *"Kodomo No Tame Ni* — For the Sake of the Children."

I flipped through the interactive display next to the TV, and I was happily surprised to spot Mr. Ohtaki's name several times.

Mr. Ohtaki grew up on Bainbridge Island, where he was a student, helped out on his father's strawberry farm and worked for the *Bainbridge Review,* the local newspaper.

I was amazed to see a significant parallel between Paul Ohtaki's life and mine: We've both used journalism as a way to speak up for what we believe in.

Right before he left for Manzanar, Paul Ohtaki was asked by Walt Woodward, the publisher of the *Bainbridge Review,* to send him letters detailing camp life. He was only 17, one year younger than me at the time, when he was forcefully evacuated to Manzanar on March 30, 1942. Every week, Paul sent him letters. The first one contained the news that they had arrived safely on April 1.

During a time when JAs nationwide were discriminated against and hated, Mr. Ohtaki's writing from Manzanar and Minidoka reminded Bainbridge Island residents that the island was their home, and his stories kept the spirit of community alive. When WWII and incarceration ended, Bainbridge Island saw strong public support for JAs to return.

I have written a few articles for the *Rafu Shimpo* to raise awareness about farmers in Japan who were affected by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. I was amazed to read about this special connection that Mr. Ohtaki and I share, as we both write to make sure that people didn't forget about the little-known struggles that others were going through.

After buying the book "In Defense of our Neighbors" by Mary Woodward, we were on our way around the harbor to the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial.

When we arrived, we were lucky to run into Park Ranger Logan, who gave us an in-depth history of the JA experience on Bainbridge Island. I learned that Bainbridge Island was the first place that JAs were removed from under EO 9066.

After we walked through a traditional Japanese gate, I saw a large rock inscribed with *Nidoto Nai Yoni,* which means "let it not happen again." To the right stretched a long curved wooden and stone wall where all 276 Japanese and JA Bainbridge Island residents who were incarcerated are listed, 191 of whom were U.S. citizens.

Along the wall were illustrations and quotes by Bainbridge Islanders. Ranger Logan shared a heartwarming story of the Bainbridge Island High School baseball team's last game together, related to one of these drawings on the wall.

The game was moved up because of the relocation date, and Coach Miller kept all six JA boys in for the whole game so they could enjoy themselves for one last game. BIHS lost 15-2, but Ohtaki, who was centerfielder at the time, later said, "I will be eternally grateful for Pop Miller for letting all of us play regardless of how good we were."

After we made paper cranes and hung them up by Ohtaki's name at the memorial, I walked over to where the old dock would've been. As I looked out into the harbor, I solemnly imagined the ferry loaded with all the Bainbridge Japanese Americans waving tearful goodbyes to their friends.

After leaving the dock myself, I also visited Bainbridge Gardens and Suyematsu Farms, who are highlighted on walkthefarm.org, where I help collect JA farming family histories.

As a young JA, all of these experiences show me the importance of speaking up and sharing our Japanese American history with ourselves and others. I am inspired and determined to continue being active in the JA community at Tanaka Farms, Nikkei Federation Rising Stars, Go For Broke National Education Center, JA Veterans Memorial Court Alliance, JA Memorial Pilgrimages, Kizuna, JANM and the JACL.

During the pandemic, I also lost a special friend, Mr. Wada, who passed away right before his 100th birthday. We must never forget the bravery and sacrifices of our Japanese American soldiers.

As a writer for *Pacific Ties,* an APIDA newsmagazine at the University of California, Los Angeles, I speak up for current Asian American issues while honoring the legacy of Japanese Americans like Frank Wada and Paul Ohtaki throughout my lifetime.

Nidoto Nai Yoni.

Kara Chu is a first-year applied linguistics major at UCLA with plans to enter the computational linguistics field working in such areas as speech recognition, machine translation and data science to promote global cultural understanding and knowledge sharing. She is a member of the to the SELANOCO JACL chapter.









(From top) The Chu and Kikuchi families on Bainbridge Island

The *"Kodomo No Tame Ni"* exhibit at the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum

A terra cotta drawing depicting the Bainbridge Island baseball team and a quote by Paul Ohtaki

Kara Chu with Paul Ohtaki's name at the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE CHU FAMILY

(Right) Kara Chu and a museum exhibit honoring the Woodwards and the JAs who served in the U.S. military

(Below Right) Donna Harui and Kara Chu in front of her grandfather Zenhichi's pear-shaped pear tree

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE CHU FAMILY





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Wishing everyone a holiday season full of fun, rest and love!
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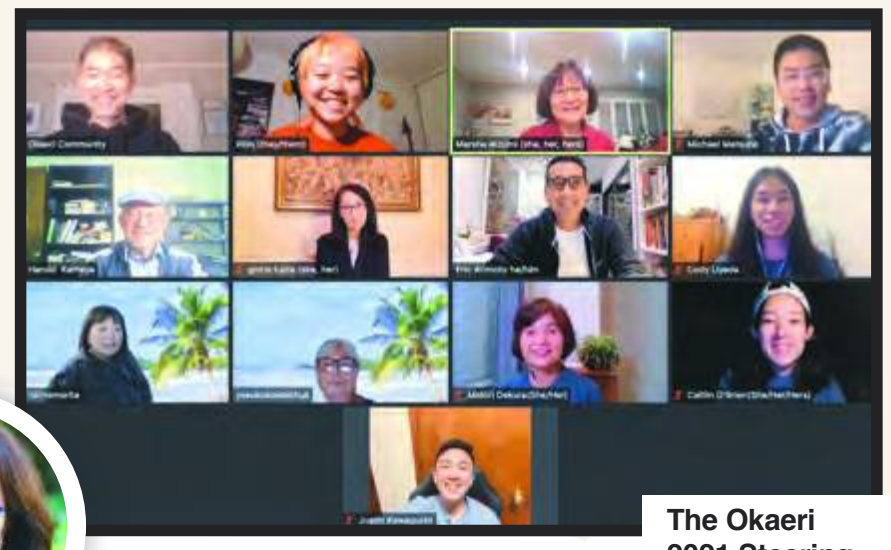
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A MOTHER'S TAKE

OKAERI 2021: A NIKKEI LGBTQ + COMMUNITY OF LOVE, HOPE AND COURAGE



The Okaeri 2021 Steering Committee

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MARSHA AIZUMI

By Marsha Aizumi



When I dreamed of a space for LGBTQ+ individuals, their families and allies, I imagined not just sharing things in common as a community, but also finding a deep connection that was forged by people leading with their heart and soul.

The spirit of Okaeri would be a place not only welcoming people back into the Nikkei community who felt rejected and excluded in the past, but it also would be a place where people entered and felt they had arrived in a place they didn't know they needed, but once they stepped in, they knew this was like home.

Okaeri, which means "welcome home" in Japanese, has become all I dreamed it would be and more. But a dream does not become reality just because one person wants it to be one. It takes people who share in the vision and want to put in time, ideas and their heart to make a community. It takes funders like the Aratani Foundation and Masto Foundation that believe in our mission and generously support it.

When I think about "The Spirit of Community," I think about the energy that permeates the space and the feeling that people have being a part of whatever is happening. At our fourth biennial conference, which took place on Nov. 12-14, these people shared the spirit of Okaeri 2021 with us:

One mother, who was a first time Okaeri attendee, shared . . .

"I think I was most fearful of the disapproval and rejection from Japanese American relatives and friends, but because Okaeri is Japanese American, I know that this is the place for me to be to receive support, build confidence and focus on following a path of love for my LGBTQ+ child. I know that I have arrived in a safe, supportive place so that I can do the most good."

A young man from the LGBTQ+ community said . . .

"It was a cathartic experience to see and hear other LGBTQ JA stories, and it was an emotional time for me throughout the weekend. I am grateful that the virtual conference made this accessible to me in Hawaii, but I hope I can attend in person in the future!"

Finally, a young nonbinary Nikkei attendee shared . . .

"My parents attended a Japanese-speaking workshop at Okaeri. After the conference over dinner, we were able to talk about how I could feel more supported by them as a queer individual. What they learned at Okaeri helped us to begin this conversation that we had been hesitant to start. I am so grateful for this space."

Okaeri 2021 was a place of support, a place to build confidence, a place to learn more about love, a safe place, a healing space and a place to help bring greater connection and communication.

Since Okaeri 2021 was a virtual space, no matter where you lived, you could join us. We hoped more people from around the country and the world would come. And come they did . . . close to 300 people registered from 17 states and five international places: Canada, Japan, Korea, Peru and Singapore. Participants came to 23 workshops: 20 in English and three in Japanese.

Aiden did a workshop on "Transgender 101." My husband and I attended. And though people were not focused on Tad and me, if you saw us, I think you would have seen two parents, filled pride and joy. How often do parents get to see their children in their world talking about things important to them? Papa and I felt so privileged to be able to share this space with our son.

I spoke in one workshop on mental health. At first I didn't think that I had anything really important to say, since there were two therapists bringing their expertise and a transgender person sharing their journey. I was just a mother talking about my shame, grief and fears, but I wasn't depressed, have anxiety or am agoraphobic like Aiden.

But then I realized my thoughts affected the way I felt and in turn affected how I acted. When Aiden came out, I thought I was a bad mother. I felt ashamed and so I retreated, not wanting to face others.

So, my thoughts or the mental part of me affected my whole life. We need to lift the stigma of mental health for families so they will reach out for support to professionals and support groups like PFLAG in order to weather our most difficult days. We do not need to add more shame but encourage others to seek support.

At the end of the conference, Gia Gunn from "Ru Paul's Drag Race" shared her story about coming out as transgender. She then brought her sweet father into the Q & A. People really fell in love with Carl Ichikawa, and it is my hope that Carl becomes a more visible voice for our Nikkei LGBTQ+ fathers in the future. Gia closed out our conference with a wonderful performance of Japanese dancing filled with twirling umbrellas and Japanese fans. It was a heartfelt ending to two and a half days of community.

The spirit of community is based on all who lead, all who show up and all who let themselves be authentically seen. For Okaeri, I believe our spirit is built on our core values:

LOVE: Love for our children, love for our Nikkei LGBTQ+ family and friends and love for ourselves so that we create a balanced life that gives us the strength and determination to make our world a better place.

HOPE: We envision a safe, loving and accepting world for LGBTQ+ Nikkei and their families where all identities are celebrated, respected and embraced.

COURAGE: We are grateful for the courage of those who use their visibility and voices to create compassionate spaces and transformation of our Nikkei community to be inclusive of our Nikkei LGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

I think the Nikkei community and the LGBTQ+ community both have the most beautiful spirits. It is my greatest joy to see each of these communities supporting each other and bringing the best and the most generous parts of themselves to create a more empowering and inspiring space for all.

I wish you all a happy holiday and may 2022 bring greater love, hope and courage to your life.

Marsha Aizumi is an advocate in the LGBT community and author of the book "Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance."



(Right) **"Ru Paul Drag Race's" Gia Gunn made a special appearance at Okaeri 2021. Gunn shared her story about coming out as transgender.**



(Right) **A picture of hope from Okaeri 2018. Hope is one of Okaeri's core values.**



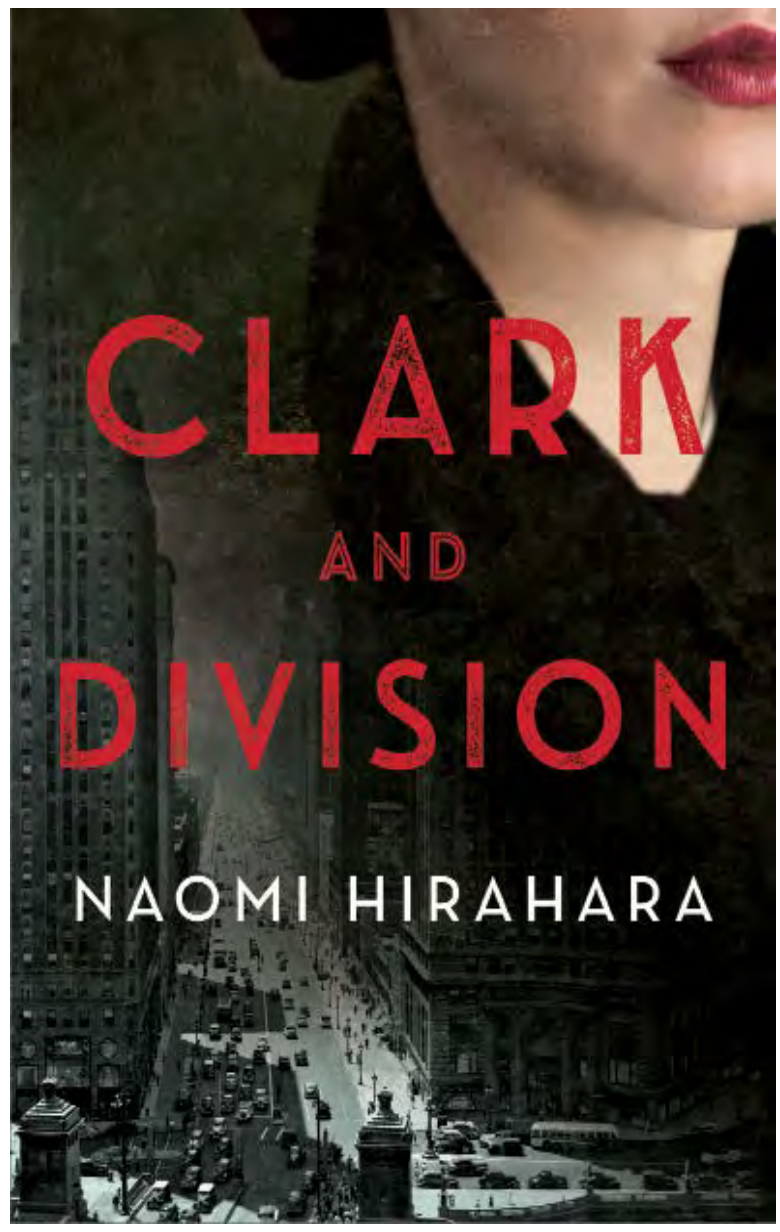
Another of our core values is love — Janet and Kylee Uradomo



(Left) **A picture of courage from Okaeri 2018**

Nisei Depicted as Not-So Quiet Americans in ‘Clark and Division’

Author Naomi Hirahara’s latest novel is placed in World War II-era Chicago.



**“Clark and Division,” written by Naomi Hirahara.
Published by Soho Crime and distributed by Penguin Random House.
ISBN 9781641292498, 312 pages, SRP $27.95.**

***By Jane B. Kaihatsu,
Contributor***

One moment you’re squinting in the bright sunshine of Southern California as you gaze at the San Gabriel Mountains in the distance. Warm breezes swirl up the dust from the fruit-and-vegetable produce truck rumbling by. Then, you hear the hurried clop-clop of a woman’s shoes and are jostled by a stylish young woman in a pretty summer dress who stops suddenly on the platform right in front of you. She peers down the black abyss of a tunnel, straining to see the headlights of the rumbling oncoming train you both hear. This is the same black tunnel you were momentarily peering down, in a dank underground subway station of the Chicago Transit Authority. It’s the “Clark and Division” Station where your elder sister died.

It’s 1944, and this is a scene of mind-musing crafted from the odyssey of a young California-born Nisei woman, Aki Ito, the protagonist in mystery writer Naomi Hirahara’s latest offering, “Clark and Division.”

One divergent aspect of ‘Clark and Division’ is how it puts cracks in the ‘model minority’ storyline, which still pervades the Japanese American community.

In this — her 12th novel*, having also written eight nonfiction books — Hirahara sets her story in Chicago and in the burgeoning Japanese American enclave at the intersection of Clark and Division streets on the Near North Side.

While the pre-World War II life on the West Coast and incarceration of Japanese Americans in the illegal detention centers is well-documented, the page-turner “Clark and Division” lifts the curtain on a little-discussed period of the Japanese American experience.

Hirahara presents in meticulous detail the life of Japanese Americans in Chicago as WWII was winding down, though not quite over. Most but not all of the Japanese Americans in Chicago in this story were forcibly incarcerated during the war and were in the East to rebuild their shattered lives and regain a sense of themselves following their release.

Aki’s journey begins in Tropico, Calif. — now part of Glendale —where she and her sister, Rose, were born and lived with their Issei parents. They had a tidy life until Dec. 7, 1941, next followed by Executive Order 9066 and, eventually, Manzanar.

Hirahara paints a full life of the Ito family both prewar in the bright and subdued environs of the Los Angeles area and in the soulless desert of Manzanar, which allows the reader to become deeply invested in their personalities and emotions, as well as comprehend the extent of the trauma that follows.

As in many Japanese American immigrant families, Rose, as the eldest child, took the lead for shepherding the family

through these life shifts. She was the first to leave Manzanar and followed thousands of others, including friends from Tropico, who left Manzanar and the other illegal detention centers for the so-called bright lights of the big city of Chicago.

Rose found a job there, and after several months, secured an apartment for her family and summoned them to Chicago. But upon their arrival to Union Station, the Itos were met not by Rose but by other family friends. The Itos were told that Rose was dead, killed in a train accident at the subway stop of "Clark and Division," just north of the Loop.

It's no surprise that the Itos are stunned. Aki now becomes the de facto head of the family with her immigrant parents crumpled. In dealing with the aftermath and police report of Rose's death, Aki decides the circumstances of Rose's death do not make sense to her, and so she embarks upon an investigation of her own. She is determined to find the real cause of how and why her beloved sister died.

❖❖❖

Many Japanese Americans after the Nisei generation on the West Coast might have known that their Nisei relatives went East in the 1940s and '50s after their release from the illegal detention centers before eventually returning to the West Coast.

Other Midwestern- and Eastern-born Sansei and Yonsei know scant little of these early days of resettlement outside of the West Coast, only that they are the fruit of the endeavors of their Nisei parents and elders. "Clark and Division" illustrates vividly that Aki's experiences in Chicago could not be more different from her lives in Tropico and Manzanar.

Hirahara's Chicago of the 1940s is an edgy, bold and rough urban landscape. The fact that Japanese Americans populated some enclaves here and there throughout Chicago is but a thin veneer of comfort for the newcomers.

Life is not only really different for the former prisoners, but it also tests every one of their known sensibilities of what a life should be like beyond barbed wire. Just about everything is a huge struggle. The weather is different (humid!); the people are different. Not every Japanese American Aki meets is from Tropico, and the ones she had known seem changed.

There's Roy Tonai, the family friend who owned the produce market where her father had worked in Tropico. Roy talks about finally gaining freedom in Chicago after his confinement at Manzanar.

As Aki is relishing her first tastymeal of pancakes and syrup in a diner with Roy, he says, "Being out of camp does things to you. You're finally free, but you're not. It's like there are invisible bars caging you in. You do something you're not supposed to do, and you hit a wall."

There's a myriad of other colorful characters like Nisei zoot-suiters nicknamed "Hammer" and "Manju"; dashing young Nisei men and svelte young ladies anxious to capture their hearts at a dance hall in Uptown where a fight breaks out; shady persons inhabiting gambling dens; and interracial couples.

One divergent aspect of "Clark and Division" is how it puts cracks in the "model minority" storyline, which still pervades the Japanese American community.

Hirahara says that the idea for "Clark and Division" was born out of an actual War Relocation Authority report about Japanese Americans that she came upon during her research. It discussed some of the issues of resettlement, including acts of serious crimes, including felonies, as well as substance abuse and babies born to unwed mothers.

Such a report and the story of "Clark and Division" serve to show not only an underbelly of the Nisei but also of Chicago itself. After all, what is "The City of Big Shoulders"? For then as now, Chicago has been big and broad enough to handle all comers — the good, gentle, kind and industrious, as well as the bad and the rough, the takers of society — from every race, nationality, religion and ethnic group, including Japanese Americans.

Through her job at the Newberry Library where she was placed with help from Japanese Resettlers, Aki gets to know Chicago and makes Polish American and African American friends while gaining a glimpse of their decidedly un-Tropico family lives.

❖❖❖

Hirahara's staggering research includes taking "Lead Investigator" Aki searching for clues and interviewing witnesses/suspects to all parts of the North and South Sides of the Chicago area.

Native Chicagoans will delight in reading about Aki's trips to a professor's home in leafy Evanston near the campus of Northwestern University, beach trips to the lakefront, the Japanese section at Montrose Cemetery *(to see Montrose Cemetery, search Youtube.com for Japanese Community Virtual Memorial Day Program 2021)* where she meets a handsome, Chicago-native Nisei; the bustling Loop; the sturdy single-family homes anchoring Hyde Park; and, of course, the various establishments along Clark and Division streets, especially those run by Japanese Americans.

On the North Side in the Lakeview neighborhood, the one neon 'Nisei Lounge' sign is the one indicator of the Japanese Americans who once lived there.

The Japanese store where Aki can buy some goods for her Issei parents mirrors a shop known as Toguri's Mercantile Co. Older Sansei fondly recall as small children running over there to get a paper sack of rice crackers.

Unfortunately, there is no trace of the community that once thrived in this Near North neighborhood now known as the Gold Coast. There barely are any other markers anywhere else Japanese Americans lived and worked, and Hirahara bemoans this fact. On the North Side in the Lakeview neighborhood, the lone neon "Nisei Lounge" sign is the one indicator of the Japanese Americans who once lived there.

Mostly, "Clark and Division" captures a rather unknown side of Nisei as young adults. Sadly, most of this generation has passed on or have become too old to remember much anymore, and so we who had them as parents or knew them as community elders can only wrack our brains to recall stories of Nisei youth.

Hirahara's Nisei characters are convincing and varied despite the fact that Hirahara is not a "true Sansei," as she describes herself, and didn't have typical Nisei parents who were born in the U.S. and were incarcerated during WWII.

Her father was a Kibei, or Nisei largely educated in Japan, and her mother was a Japanese national. Thus, perhaps as Hirahara is closer to being a Nisei rather than a Sansei, it's how she voiced the Nisei characters with such a warm and fond familiarity.



Clark and Division Subway Stop
PHOTO: JANE B. KAIHATSU

Some of these young Nisei were audacious and anxious to revel in their freedom. Not only were they free from incarceration, but many were also free from their Issei parents and younger siblings who were still incarcerated while these Nisei settled themselves.

As they searched for new opportunities to rebuild their lives or seek adventure, even via enlisting in the U.S. military to join the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, these Nisei navigated often alone to a new place with so many things they weren't accustomed to — a new climate, a new cultural language and a new lifestyle with almost none of the things they had on the West Coast.

And yet, many Nisei with their Issei parents stayed or moved on even farther East or North or into the Rocky Mountains. They became an extension of their pioneering Issei parents who had left Japan decades earlier in search of new opportunity or adventure. These Issei rebuilt their lives with almost none of the things they had in Japan.

Hirahara acknowledges this second migration of Japanese Americans and feels there are many stories yet to be told about the Issei and Nisei who moved East and not back West. She hopes that she has helped to stir up interest and encourages others to write these tales.

While "Clark and Division" cracks the "model minority" myth of the Japanese American community, it also answers the question Hirahara poses; "What face do we show the rest of America?" "Clark and Division" is a fresh unpacking — Japanese Americans are more unpredictably diverse and in the most unexpected places.



Author Naomi Hirahara

**Hirahara's 13th novel, "An Eternal Lei: A Leilani Santiago Hawaii Mystery," will be published in March 2022.*

Jane B. Kaihatsu is a Sansei born in Chicago and raised in Park Ridge, Ill. She is a former JACL Chicago Chapter president (1982-83) and a freelance writer who has contributed previously to the Pacific Citizen. She was a reporter for East-West News in San Francisco and worked as a reporter and editor for the Daily Yomiuri in Tokyo when she lived in Japan. Her Kaihatsu relatives are from Hollywood, Calif. She dedicates this story to her Nisei Aunt Martha Kaihatsu, now 101, who wrote for the Rafu Shimpo, handled ad sales for the Heart Mountain Sentinel, went to Chicago to establish her family and then to New York City, where she lived for 66 years and worked in advertising and public relations.

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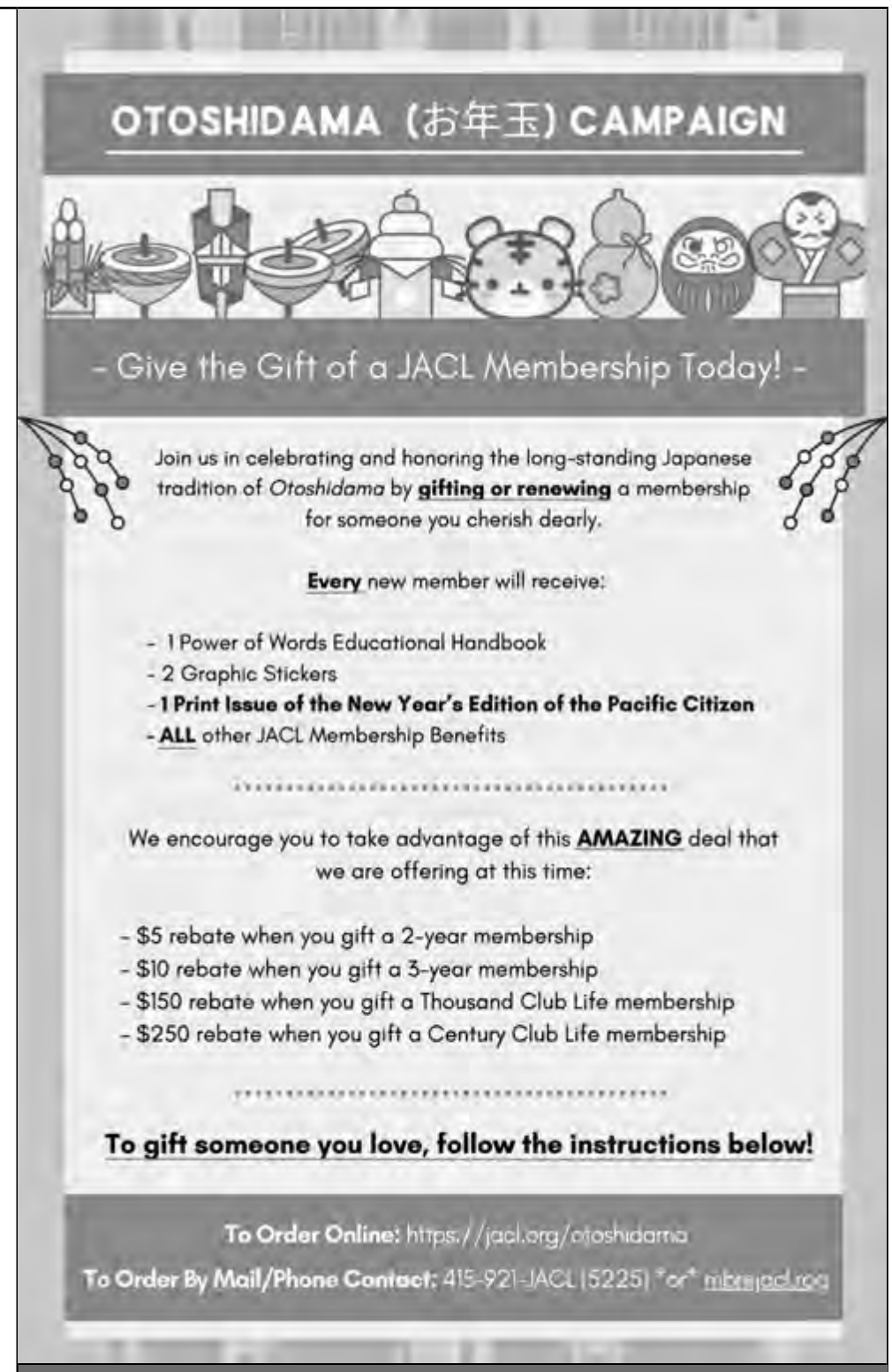
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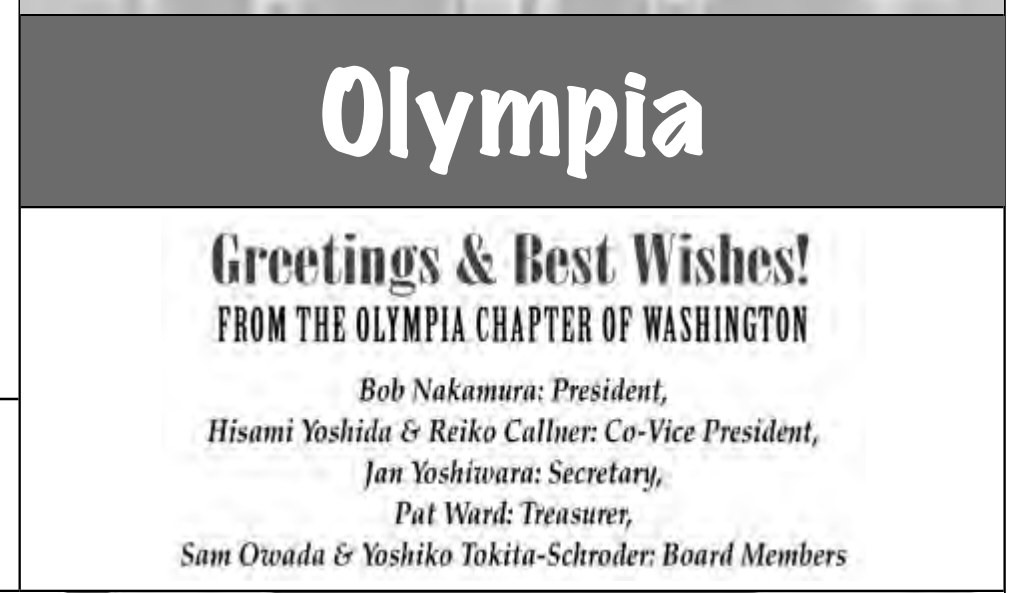
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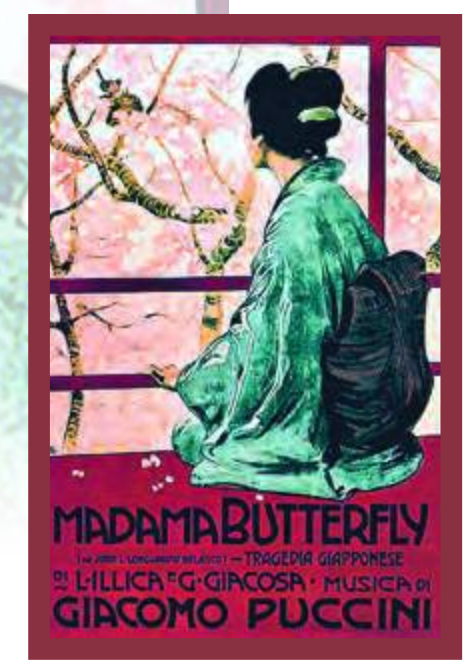


NIKKEI VOICE

COMMUNITY MEANS REPRESENTATION: IT'S GETTING BETTER, BUT STILL HAS AGES-OLD CHALLENGES



(Left) A poster for "Madama Butterfly" by Adolfo Hohrenstein; *(Below)* The cover, created by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, of the first edition of "Madama Butterfly."



By Gil Asakawa

Japanese Americans and the wider Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are seeing more of ourselves reflected in pop culture these days, but the high arts has a ways to go. It's important to recognize the ongoing challenges of representation because they affect our view of ourselves and our community.

The past year and a half has seen a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes across the United States, thanks to fanning of the racism sparked the Covid-19 pandemic. And yet, Asians have become more and more a part of the American cultural fabric. Through arts and entertainment (and yeah, food), stereotypes, ignorance and long-held animus can be called out, confronted and, hopefully, discussed so that solutions to the historical hate can be found for the future.

Pop culture has definitely embraced Asians as a part of American society, with productions that were started in motion long before even the arrival of Covid. "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" has introduced audiences this fall to a hunky AAPI superhero with Simu Liu in the starring role, but the movie wasn't produced in the pandemic bubble or as a reaction to the anti-Asian attacks. Marvel's Asian superhero movie was greenlit in 2001 and went into serious production in 2019.

The timing this year was perfect: Having a butt-kicking AAPI superhero and a wise-cracking sidekick in Awkwafina taking over the boxoffice totals for a full month and succeeding as a streaming hit gave some hope that things might be changing for Asians in America. The recent addition of Ji-Young, the first-ever Asian American Muppet character on "Sesame Street" boosted this feeling of cultural arrival.

Sure, there are lots more Asians working in pop culture now in TV shows and movies and even commercials that represent more opportunities for our faces to be a part of "mainstream" America.

But we can look at other arts and see long-held stereotypes and racist tropes still on display — and considered classics, no less. The Broadway musical theater world still loves "Miss Saigon" despite its racist and misogynist story about a Vietnamese woman who falls in love with an American GI.

And, that story is just the modernized version of "Madama Butterfly," Puccini's celebrated 1904 opera about a Japanese woman who falls in love with an American soldier stationed in Japan. It doesn't require a spoiler alert to say that in both the opera and musical, the woman has a baby after the soldier leaves her, and when he comes back some years later with his American wife, the woman commits suicide.

"Madama Butterfly" is one of the giants of the opera canon — it's a classic that's cited for its drama and music, as well as its biting criticism of American imperialism.

But the opera does catch flak for its outdated portrayal of Japanese culture and exotification of Japanese women. When Central City Opera performed it two years ago, my wife and I met with opera management and shared our concerns. We were invited to discuss the issue in a CCO podcast, and the cast and crew added preshow talks about the problematic portrayals and representations.

The Boston Lyric Opera had planned to raise the curtain on "Madama Butterfly" for the fall 2021 season, but amidst the headlines about anti-Asian hate, BLO's management and its cast and crew earlier decided not to perform it.

Instead, they've launched "The Butterfly Process," a series of public discussions and community events to "re-examine the history and legacy of this opera" and find ways to acknowledge its artistic legacy without continuing its racial legacy.

The BLO asked Phil Chan, a dancer and choreographer who in 2017 co-founded "Final Bow for Yellowface" with his partner, Georgina Pazcoguin, for help. "Final Bow for Yellowface" was launched because of the number in Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" — yes, the seasonal classical favorite — that features a "Chinese" dance that was too often performed as a racial caricature with white dancers in yellowface.

Chan has a reputation as a creative who brings a multicultural perspective to even the canon of classical "high arts" — meaning European, white-centered arts.

He's not the only one, or the first person to push for AAPIs in the arts. "There's the Coalition for Asian Pacifics in Entertainment, who've been having this conversation and leading it in Hollywood already for, you know, 40-50 years already," Chan said in an interview.

But the lack of appropriate Asian representation in dance pushed him to help launch "Final Bow for Yellowface." "It's, you know, what is my tiny corner of the world? Where can I make a difference?

So, Chan started with dance, aiming at "Nutcracker," and every holiday season as symphonies across the country drag out the chestnut, he and his partner get media coverage. But, he added, "I'm an opera queen, a self-professed opera queen," so he's now hoping to get the same attention for "Butterfly." He's working with a new organization, the Asian Opera Alliance, and hopes it can have some impact on an artform that is decidedly Eurocentric, in both its canon and its name-brand performers.

"I think the reason why BLO came to me was because sort of my niche is figuring out how do we take traditional Eurocentric works and expand them for a multiracial audience," Chan said.

Chan cautioned that he's not pushing for cancel culture. "I'm not saying that any white artist from Europe is inherently a colonialist, anything they made from Europe ever needs to not be performed anymore in order to make room for, you know, voices of color. That's not how it works. In reality, like, yes, that would be lovely.

"And looking at works like 'Butterfly' and like 'Nutcracker,' yeah, they're kind of colonialist, you could say that, but they also bring in enough money so that these opera companies can commission new works by people of color. So, it's sort of we're using them to bring equity."

When he met with the Asian Opera Alliance on Zoom, Chan said the people on the call had all performed in "Butterfly."

"We talked about the issues around 'Butterfly,' we talked about the issues onstage, you know, everything from Japanese stuff to bad artistic choices that directors have made, microaggressions like white directors telling them how to act more Japanese when they are of Japanese descent."

That AOA meeting set the stage for the current process. "So, what do these opera companies do in the larger ecosystem? Those are the questions that came out of that conversation. And I think BLO realized that they couldn't ever stage 'Butterfly,' again, without going this deep, without really asking some of these questions."

The Butterfly Process *(https://blo.org/butterfly-process/)* began Dec. 14 with a free online discussion about the history of "Butterfly" and its impact through WWII (performances were canceled after the war because people thought the opera was pro-Japanese). The conversation featured Chan and Dr. Kunio Hara, a Japanese-born professor of music history and an expert on Puccini and Orientalism in music.

The spirit of community is what we all need to celebrate this season — and all year. Happy Holidays, everyone!

Gil Asakawa is the author of "Tabemasho! Let's Eat! A Tasty History of Japanese Food in America," which will be published by Stone Bridge Press in 2022. He blogs at www.nikkeiview.com.



Dancer/choreographer Phil Chan, who co-founded "Final Bow for Yellowface" in 2017, is advocating for appropriate Asian representation in the theater world.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK



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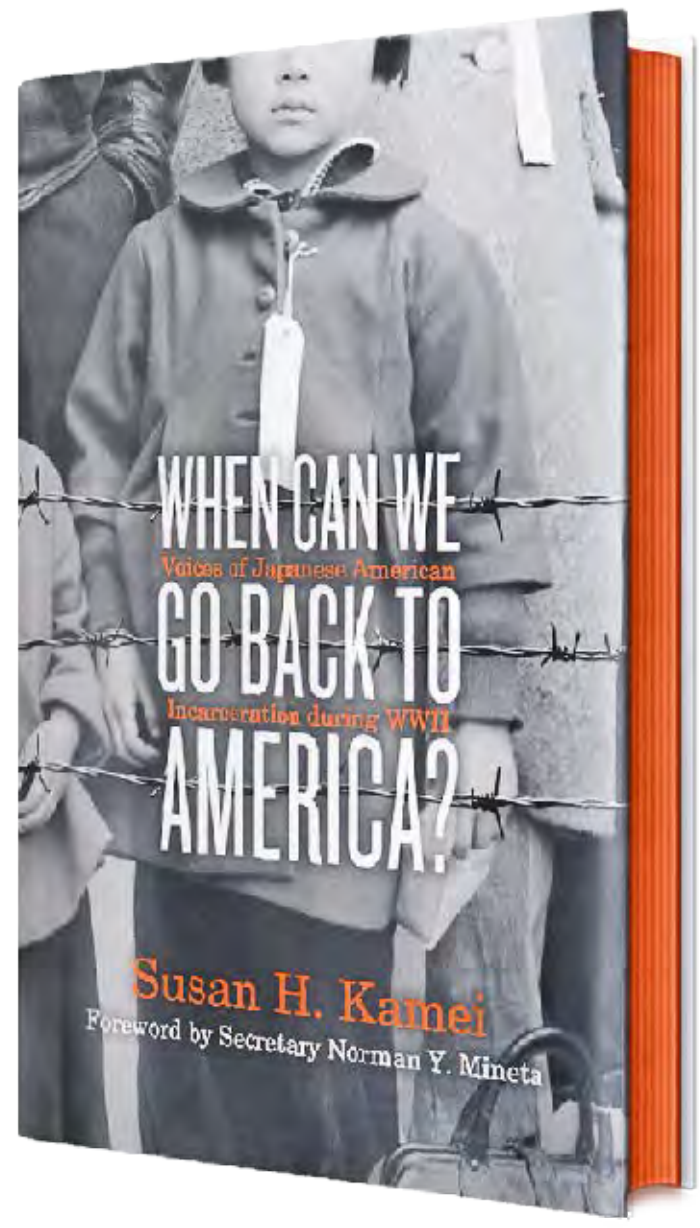
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‘When Can We Go Back to America?’

A fitting memorial to truth, honor and courage



By Don DeNevi
Contributor

To begin with, no book review can do justice to an author who can so easily sear herself into the imagination of the reader.

Through her amazing amalgam of devotion to parents and ancestry, inherited high intelligence and gracious sensitivity, author Susan Kamei not only illumines one of the darkest political and social periods in American history, but she also disinters its true nature and aftermath.


Author Susan Kamei

From the fountainhead of great reportage, her perceptive eye for unsparing detail, commingling with the precision and economy of language, the ability to remain resolute while concealing tears and anger and, above all, the intrinsic urge, nurtured and nourished by mom and dad, to tell the truth, has guided her into heartbreaking injustice where other writers avert their gaze.

Kamei’s stunning compendium, “When Can We Go Back to America — Voices of Japanese American Incarceration During World War II” *(Simon & Schuster; 2021, 711 pp, $22.99),* is being hailed as a priceless literary achievement and reference. Sec. Norman Y. Mineta acclaims the compiled years of research, editing and writing as “a landmark” in WWII literature.

As someone who, like Kamei, was friends with and knew Mike Masaoka — the valiant, decorated combat war veteran and first national secretary of the JACL who fought so hard to restore the rights of Japanese Americans — I’m certain he would no doubt, were he still with us, applaud this book.

Taking the liberty to channel his thoughts, I’m certain he would tell her something like: “I don’t know whether your cogent, near-masterpiece will be the ultimate book to come out of our four-year concentration camp plight. That’s a pretty large order. But your steadfast drive to complete a hard, self-imposed commitment brings deserved recognition to you personally for believing in writing the story lest fellow Americans, our very neighbors, begin to forget that we of Japanese blood lived in a climate that demanded if any one of us had one-sixteenth Japanese blood in us we must of had to be herded into strict disciplinary camps, American style; that all young American men of Japanese ancestry had to be castrated or sterilized or ‘ . . . we would breed like rats,’ or, all 120,000 of us should be placed on a small island in the Pacific, and the island blown up . . .

“So, dear Susan, I wish and hope all America reads your book, the product of a wonderful, powerful, compassionate mind, reminding the world of that cold, gloomy, often terrifying ‘climate’ of hate, prejudice and often, even jealousy, as well as what happened to us. And, yes, we are Japanese, but Japanese AMERICAN! Not in the sad, sick way Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, commander of the 4th California District, who so gleefully carried out our evacuation and publicly screamed, ‘A Jap’s a Jap and no matter what you do with him, and his American citizenship, he’s still a Jap.’ I agree what you say about him in your book. So, Susan, I, too, am enormously proud of what you’ve created in your book. Thank you for giving America, and the world, your extraordinary eyewitness to history.”

Of course, Mineta and Masaoka’s (imagined!) statements, along with the inordinate number of interviewees, or contributors who have dealt with her directly, Kamei’s mesmerizing “When Can We Go Back to America” is unequivocally the most-important portrait yet written on what it meant to be a Japanese American citizen whose ethos and ethnicity condemned them to isolation during the duration of the war. For most non-Japanese Americans, reading her book will create a hitherto unknown, unexperienced historical event.

Historians, scholars, novelists, buffs and researchers of all persuasions heap great praise on those responsible for the author’s superbly crafted Table of Contents chapters and standard subject headings, all beginning with Dec. 7, 1941, and concluding in the early 1980s, followed by comprehensive Appendices and pages of Further Resources. Especially helpful for further research and study are countless encyclopedic articles, all accessible by a full index.

Kamei’s stunning compendium, ‘When Can We Go Back to America — Voices of Japanese American Incarceration During World II,’ is being hailed as a priceless literary achievement and reference.

Of note, readers will be enthralled with the Epilogue. Most Japanese Americans know by heart 18-year-old Marion Tsuruko Konishi’s “Valedictorian Address” delivered at Amache Senior High School, Granada War Relocation Authority Center, 1943, that Masaoka often referred to when non- JA visitors paid their respects in his D.C. office. This reviewer says, “If tears don’t well up in your eyes upon reading her words than . . . .”

Sad, in the section that follows, that facial photos aren’t attached to the 118 Biographical Sketches of Contributors in Part Six. The 180 pages that follow conclude the mammoth volume with a list of assembly centers and their addresses; War Relocation Authority centers; Department of Justice Internment Camps for Enemy Aliens; U.S. Army Internment Camps for Aliens; a 40-page Timeline; a Glossary; Contributor Notes; List of Abbreviations; and Chapter Sources.

Susan, a personal note from this reviewer who insists there is no reviewing your book other than to write that you’ve achieved what you deemed to accomplish, based upon the natural goodness, the beauty, and light your dad and mom imbued you with — you Preserved Honor (thank you, Kristen Taketa) of the Good People far beyond unconscionable injustice.

Don DeNevi was born in 1937 and raised in south Stockton, Calif. He retired as a teacher, then worked for the California prison system. He has written more than 30 nonfiction books, which are available on Amazon. Growing up, he had several Nisei neighbors, and his friends’ disappearances beginning in 1942 is marked indelibly in his memory, as is the return of the 11 members of the Nishimoto family from the Rohwer WRA Center in the fall of 1945.

HONORING THE HUMAN SPIRIT



Ceremonies consecrate the Wakasa Monument site as the National Park Service begins its assessment.



(Far left) **Topaz survivor Akemi Ina made a cross similar to one made for James Wakasa's funeral in 1943.**

PHOTO: MARI MATSUMOTO

(Left) **Nancy Ukai ties a flower to the barbed-wire fence.**

PHOTO: EMIKO OMORI



(Below left) **Ruth Wakabayashi ties a flower while Sen. Jani Iwamoto offers incense at the butsudan.**

(Below) **Masako Takahashi ties a flower.**

PHOTO: EMIKO OMORI



By Nancy Ukai, Contributor

When 2021 began, the Wakasa Monument, the most sacred artifact of Utah's Topaz concentration camp, was safe in the earth, buried 12 feet inside the west fence, a small portion of it sticking up above the ground.

By mid-year — on July 27, to be exact — the monument signifying the murder of 63-year-old James Wakasa by Pfc. Gerald Philpott, an Army sentry, was secretly dragged from its resting place by a construction worker hired by the Topaz Museum Board.

On Dec. 1, the ground where multiple crimes had occurred — Wakasa's murder on April 11, 1943, and the heritage crime of digging up his memorial without archaeologists or Japanese Americans present — was marked by traffic cones and orange flagging tape placed by officials of the National Park Service's Heritage Partnership program.

The orange ribbons, reminiscent of a construction zone and a crime scene, were actually meant to prevent visitors from walking on the site during NPS field work there on Dec. 1.

But the perimeter tape also symbolized protection and acknowledgement of the site where Wakasa was killed by a guard as well as the first time in 78 years that Japanese Americans knowingly stood near the hallowed ground where Wakasa died of a gunshot wound to the heart.

That's because the exact place of Wakasa's death had not been known until his monument was rediscovered last year by archaeologists Jeff Burton and Mary Farrell of Lone Pine, Calif. They were guided by a hand-drawn 1943 map by Issei George Shimamoto of the killing site found in the National Archives.

"The finding of this stone is a miracle," said Chizu Omori, 91, a Poston survivor and a member of the Wakasa Memorial Committee (WMC), a group formed shortly after the monument was excavated.

The memorial had been built by Wakasa's Issei friends, in defiance of camp officials, and buried by them after government orders to demolish it. It was a "stone communique from the other side," wrote a local journalist.

The monument was estimated to weigh between 800 and 1,000 pounds, with a height of about five feet, a depth of 24 inches and a width of about a yard.

Now, NPS specialists had arrived at Topaz to assess the condition of the filled-in hole, where the monument had been removed, and the monument itself, now stored in the courtyard of the Topaz Museum in Delta, Utah.

The NPS specialists were invited to carry out the technical study by the Topaz Museum Board.

With their invitation, the museum was signaling welcome agreement with one of the six steps proposed by the Wakasa committee — for a professional assessment of the desecrated site and artifacts.

Other steps include collaboration on curation, interpretation and treatment of the site and monument after a memorandum of agreement formalizes the structure of future discussions.

The creation of an MOA has so far been rejected by the board.

Patrick Hayashi, who was born at Topaz but did not attend the Dec. 1 ceremony, expressed keen interest in the results of the study: The worker used a "forklift and chain to pull the monument out of the ground





(Top) **Topaz survivors, descendants and allies with the excavated Wakasa Monument stone at the Topaz Museum courtyard.**

PHOTO: ALAN KONDO

(Above) **Rev. Jerry Hirano *(left)* of the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple brought a butsudan to the site and offered prayers during the Dec. 1 memorial gathering.**

PHOTOS: (LEFT) NANCY UKAI; (BELOW) UTAH DIVISION OF STATE HISTORY; (BELOW) NANCY UKAI



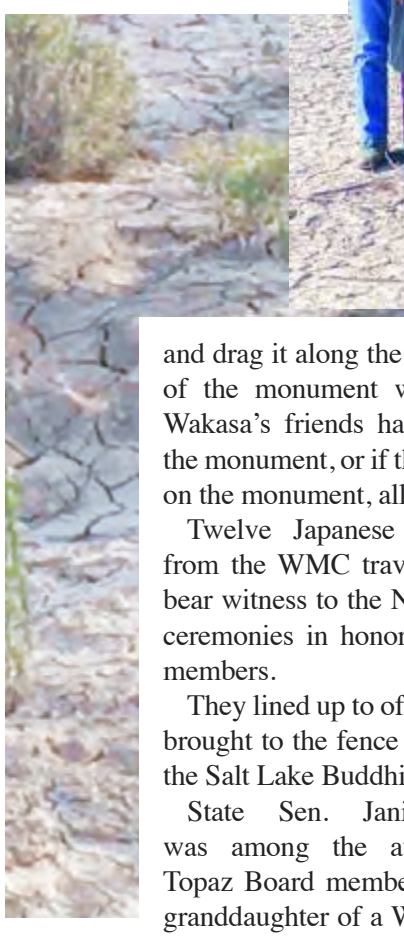
(Right) Kiyoshi Ina, Akemi Ina, Masako Takahashi and Ned Isokawa were all born at Topaz.

(Far right) The Wakasa Monument was removed on July 27. The white circle indicates the filled-in hole.

(Below) Pictured (from left) are Edie Mitko, Mark Izu, James Russell, Nancy Ukai, Mari Matsumoto, Masako Takahashi, Claudia Katayanagi, Kiyoshi Ina, Chizu Omori, Akemi Ina, Ruth Wakabayashi and Alan Kondo with Ruth's dog, Bodhi, who reminded everyone that Mr. Wakasa was shot while walking his dog.









and drag it along the dirt. In the process, part of the monument was broken off. If Mr. Wakasa's friends had buried anything with the monument, or if they had written anything on the monument, all that is lost forever."

Twelve Japanese Americans and allies from the WMC traveled from California to bear witness to the NPS field study and hold ceremonies in honor of Wakasa and family members.

They lined up to offer incense at a butsudan brought to the fence by Rev. Jerry Hirano of the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple.

State Sen. Jani Iwamoto (D-Utah) was among the attendees that included Topaz Board members, NPS specialists, the granddaughter of a WRA employee and Ned Isokawa of the Bay Area, who represented the museum board.

Each participant laid a fresh flower at the base of a cross for Wakasa, who was Christian.

The cross was made of paper flowers by Akemi Ina, 78, who was born at Topaz the day after Wakasa was killed.

"My mother gave birth to me the next day," Ina recalled. "I know that she was affected by his death as everyone in the camp was. She had a difficult delivery.

"The horror of it happening to one of them," she continued, "must have been indescribably fearful, offensive, frustrating and very, very sad."

Paper flowers were attached to the barbed-wire fence by Topaz survivors and descendants as Mark Izu of San Francisco played the gagaku sho, a Japanese wind instrument made from bamboo.

Masako Takahashi, who was born at Topaz in 1944, expressed anger at the reason why the group "had to be here."

She sits on the WMC's Advisory Council, whose 16 members include JACL's NCWNP district, Fred T. Korematsu Institute's Karen Korematsu, psychotherapist Satsuki Ina and Topaz survivor and historian Tetsuden Kashima.

Takahashi told Matt Ward of the *Millard County Chronicle Progress* that the stone should be in a place where "it would be accessible to historians, educators and stakeholders, other Japanese Americans . . ." such as "the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles . . . or it could be in the Japanese cemetery in the Bay Area, in San Francisco, which is the only Japanese cemetery in the country and where Japanese have been buried since the 1800s."

The Topaz Museum forfeited its role in how the moment is handled in the future, Takahashi said, considering the manner in which it was removed.

The NPS team report is expected to be ready in mid-January.

Nancy Ukai is on the board of the Berkeley chapter, P.C. Editorial Board Member and a member of the WMC. She is director of the website 50objects.org and wrote about Wakasa's "Demolished Monument" in which the map she found in the National Archives is posted. It led the archaeologists to rediscover the monument.



(Near right) Nancy Ukai and Chizu Omori along with allies from the Wakasa Monument Committee.



(Right) Orange perimeter tape on the site during NPS field work

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REIMAGINE EVERYTHING

THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY — NOW AND BEYOND

By Ron Mori

I know this holiday season is special to all of us. After 21 months of adjusting to life during the pandemic, we are starting to see signs of our life before the pandemic. More offices are opening up, and in a few weeks, I will be heading back to the office on Jan. 3. As I reflect back, we have all had time to slow down, reassess and adjust to our new normal as individuals and as a community at home. For many of us, social isolation has not been easy, and it's especially hard during the holidays for older adults without internet access and computer skills.

During this time, many of us have become Zoom, Teams and Google Hangout pros, not to mention we're also caught up on the latest streaming content and newest shows. I have to thank JACL National and JACL chapters across the country that have hosted amazing virtual programs during the pandemic.

I hope this trend continues, as these virtual programs have really been a best-in-class example of the spirit of our community from across the country with excellent programming. My heartfelt thanks to all of the volunteers, hosts and guests of these programs over the past two years. There truly were not enough hours in a week for me to take in all the great virtual programming. Please continue the great work in sharing the spirit of our JA community.

At AARP, the pandemic has prevented us from hosting in-person events and programs. However, we have continued to expand our outreach through our AARP Virtual Community Center, an online destination where anyone can find a wide array of free online classes and events designed for self-improvement, learning and fun — including offerings to empower older adults to overcome barriers to digital engagement by fostering skills and giving them the confidence needed to use technology and stay connected.

"Tech access and literacy can be the difference between being able to work, order food and medications, learn about vaccine availability in your community and stay in touch with friends and family — or feeling isolated and reliant on others," said Scott Frisch, AARP executive vp and COO. The AARP Virtual Community Center offers a wide variety of live activities and classes and can help you feel more connected, but all from the convenience and safety of your home.

In a past article, I wrote about OATS (Older Adults Technology Services) digital literacy courses, resources and events that are a key part of the AARP Virtual Community Center, which is free for AARP members and nonmembers alike.

With everything from free movies, concerts, cooking classes and museum tours to exercise classes, trainings for the 50+ worker, caregiving help and lectures from top professors, the virtual center continues to offer free interactive online events and classes designed for learning, self-improvement and fun.

AARP hosted a very special virtual event on Dec. 16 with Apolo Ono, Kristi Yamaguchi and Alex and Maia Shibutani. To learn more about it, visit the AARP AAPI Facebook page.

I also know many of us have had moments to think about our life, and our what's next post pandemic. I have, and after 38 wonderful years, I have decided to step aside and pass the baton to the next generation to continue to advocate for the 50+ community. It has been an honor for me to work with the staff of the *Pacific Citizen* and bring AARP content to your reading world. I wish all of you the best in 2022 and in the years to come.

Ron Mori is a member of the Washington, D.C., JACL chapter and manager of community, states and national affairs — multicultural leadership for AARP.



AARP is hosting a special holiday discussion featuring AAPI Olympic athletes. Visit AARP for details on how to view this special program.

PHOTO: AARP



LEGAL-EASE:
AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

BECOMING MULTICULTURAL

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

In the 1960s, as a young child in elementary school, I can recall learning that America was one big "melting pot." The "melting pot" theory is used to describe how immigrants who come to America eventually become assimilated into American culture, thus creating multiple cultures that have blended into one.

This made sense to me. Because of World War II, internment camps and discrimination, the Nisei raised their kids to become "Americanized." So, my parents gave all four of their children Western names, i.e., Marsha, Mark, Laura and Judd. None of us even speak Japanese. In fact, very few Sansei that I know speak Japanese. As far as the Yonsei — forget about it!!!

I grew up in a Japanese American neighborhood called the "Crenshaw District" of Los Angeles. As a bunch of Sansei kids, my childhood friends and I didn't see ourselves as Japanese or even Japanese Americans, but as Americans.

Years later, as a teenager at Beverly Hills High School (after moving out of Crenshaw) in the early '70s, I learned about the "salad bowl" theory. The "salad bowl" theory is a different view describing that immigrants who come to America combine their cultures with others, but still retain their own cultural identity. The "salad bowl" metaphor was of particular interest to me since I was the only Asian in my class and didn't feel "blended" into "one" with my Caucasian (or Jewish) classmates.

Once I got to UCLA in the late-1970s, I was happy to learn there was an "Asian Room" where all the Japanese American students would hang out. I wrote a term paper for an Asian American Studies class on the rate of out-marriage amongst Japanese American Sansei's. The Issei and Nisei that I interviewed seemed "OK" with their children and/or grandchildren marrying outside the Japanese community (provided it was white or Chinese).

However, the by-product of becoming "Americanized" has been the loss of cultural identity. Today, most Yonsei have married outside the Japanese American community. Their kids are (or will be) half this, quarter that, etc. It is the exception that a Yonsei child will marry within the Japanese American community. Like it or not, the Japanese American community is becoming "multicultural." One can even argue that it is slowly disappearing.

For example, the Japanese American church where my parents were married over 60 years ago has but a handful of Japanese American members.

Years ago, I asked the director of a large Japanese American Community Center in Los Angeles, "What will happen to the community center once all the Nisei gone?" He replied, "It will probably be turned into a community center for other Asian and Pacific Islanders groups and organizations." What a shame!!!

You say, "Hogwash, melting pot simply goes too far. There's still hope for a Japanese American community." I hope you're right. I'm sure it is the hope of every Nisei and Sansei that their children, and their children's children, grow up with an understanding of their roots and a sense of ethnic pride.

In a way, "The Spirit of Community" is a battle cry for help. If there is to be a Japanese American community in the future, now is the time for Japanese Americans to step up and support it.

Years ago, the CEO of a major Japanese American nonprofit in Los Angeles said to me before it shut its doors, "The Sansei don't give like the Nisei did."

But it's not too late for the Sansei!!! To support the "Spirit of Community," the Sansei must open their wallets and give back. If not, there may not be a "community" to support in the years to come. If you're a Sansei, find the local Japanese American Community Centers, or national organizations like Go For Broke National Education Center, and papers like the *Pacific Citizen,* and give back to the community.

Great time to "plug" one of the Japanese American nonprofits that I support, Kizuna. "Kizuna was founded on the core value of giving — giving back to the community, giving thanks to the generations that came before us and giving hope for our community's future."

With the help of the Sansei and Yonsei, the Japanese American community will continue to thrive in the future. But not as a "melting pot," which erases the Japanese American identity. And not as the "salad bowl," which does not go far enough to bring us together.

Instead, our hope is that the Japanese American community will survive as a dish arguably more delicious than either the "melting pot" or the "salad bowl," i.e., the "chili bowl." It offers the right balance between individuality and commonality — unique and identifiable ingredients, tied together with a single sauce.

A "chili bowl" metaphor strikes the right balance of uniqueness and collective identity. The Japanese American community is becoming a "chili bowl."

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 judd@elderlawcalifornia.com. 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.



"The East Coast Matsunaga's"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JUDD MATSUNAGA

Notable Deaths of 2021

Listed in Chronological Order

David Ibata, Corky Lee and Jimmy Lee

Ibata, 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.

Ibata'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 incarcerees 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 Droegmiller), 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

In MEMORIAM

Abe, Masayo, 92, Monterey Park, CA, Sept. 13; she is survived by her husband, Albert Shogo Abe; daughters, Christi Abe (Chuck) Miyahira and Sandra Abe (Ryan) Tsujii; sisters, Tazue Hayashi and Fujie Otani; gc: 4.

Anzai, Yoshio, 82, Gardena, CA, Sept. 17; an Army veteran, he is survived by his children, Wesley (Kathy) Anzai and Noreen (Michael) Nishiki; sister, Yoko Anzai; he is also survived by many nieces, nephew and other relatives; gc: 5.

Domoto, Lily Yuriko, 92, Torrance, CA, May 10; she is survived by her children, Denise (Thomas) Okabe, Lisa (Craig) Maeda and Carol (Jeffrey) Hiroto; siblings, Reiko Tsuchimoto, Hasu Fujitani, Amy, Chiyo and Shoichi Shingu; sisters-in-law, Sumie Maruya, Alice and Selina Shingu; gc: 6.

Endo, Frederick, 94, Kawaguchi, Japan; he is survived by his siblings, Chiaki Esther Thompson and Kikumi (Chrys) Endo; sisters-in-law, Fusae Endo and Mary Endo; he is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Fukumoto, Randy Haruo, 89, Gardena, CA, Oct. 4; he was predeceased by his siblings, Ken (Tsuru) Fukumoto, Joseph Fukumoto, Janet (Alex) Ruiz and Myra (Shige) Muramoto; he is survived by his wife, Esther "Chico" Fukumoto; son, Wayne H. (Liz) Fukumoto; siblings, Ted (Alice) Fukumoto, Helen Hirano, Gladys (Frank) Yoshii, Gary (Betty) Fukumoto, Naomi Masaki and Gaylord (Susan) Fukumoto; gc: 1; step-gc: 1.

Fukuya, Mutsuo, 90, Eden Prairie, MN, Oct. 26; an Army veteran (Korean War), he is survived by his wife, Barbara; daughters, Nancy (Dan) Caudill, Penny (Kim) Kardas, Karen (Bryan) DeYoung and Sandra (Drew) McLean; gc: 11; ggc: 5.

Furuya, Anne Christine, 73, San Jose CA, Nov. 20; she is survived by her husband, Alan Kazuo Furuya; father, George Shimizu; and siblings Richard (Chris) and Carol (Tommy Hirabayashi)

Hanafusa, Karen, 75, Cypress, CA, July 27; she is survived by her daughter, Brooke Hanafusa; sister, Janis Hanafusa Tom; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and a grandnephew.

Hirashima, Yuriko Lilly, 98, Granada Hills, CA, Sept. 18; she is survived by her daughters, Barbara Ikejiri and Pam (Randy) Hamashita; brother, Dr. George (Toyoko) Kawakami; she is also survived by other relatives; gc: 3.

Hirayama, Satoshi 'Fibber,' 91, Fresno, Calif., Sept. 15, 2021.

Ikeda, June Sumie, 92, Torrance, CA, Nov. 8; she is survived by her husband, Tamotsu Ikeda; children, Winston Ikeda and Gwenn (Dr. Thomas) Omoto; gc: 3.

Iwata, Shigeru, 91, Carson, CA, Sept. 16; he was predeceased by his wife, Fume; he is survived by his children, Karen (Norman-Iseri, Cheryl Iwata and Bryan Iwata; brothers, Norio, Akiyoshi (Jane), and Yutaka (Pat) Iwata; gcv: 2.

Kakita, Lilly Yuriko, 96, Gardena, CA, Oct. 11; she is survived by her children, Nancy (Mark) Nagayama and Thomas (Arlene) Kakita; sisters-in-law, Haru (Ben) Fuchiwaki, Tomoko (Tak) Tomiyama and Harriet (George) Gerza; gc: 2; ggc: 3.

Kamimoto, Hitoshi, 84, Fresno, CA, Oct. 17; he was predeceased by his son, Kevin; siblings, Bill, Tamotsu and Masako; he is survived by his wife, Ellen; children, Elisa Kamimoto (John Hayashi), Jason Kamimoto (Michael Beattie) and Erin Kamoto (Jose Angeles); daughter-in-law, Patricia Kamimoto; siblings, Aiko Imada, Mariko Imada, Haruko Nakagawa, Hanako Nishimoto, Mary Kunishige; Joe Kamimoto, Henry Kamimoto and Sho Kamimoto; gc: 2.

Kamon, George Hideo, 75, Santa Maria, CA, Aug. 28; he was predeceased by his wife, Tú Thi; he is survived by family members.

Kanazawa, Shunro, 87, Torrance, CA, Oct. 2; he is survived by his wife, Kunie; sons, Hideki Kanazawa, Takashi (Kanae) Kanazawa and Yuji (Wakako) Kanazawa; he is also survived by gc, nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Kaneko, Clyde, 65, Monterey Park, CA Oct. 5; he was predeceased by his parents, Hayao and Yoshiko Kaneko; he is survived by his siblings, Ryoji (Marie) Kaneko and Grace (John) Yamamoto; 3 three nieces, 2 nephews.

Kanzawa, Sanji, 86, Monterey Park, Oct. 20; he is survived by his wife, Miyoko Kanzawa; children, Tsuyoshi Kanzawa, Kiyoshi (Luanne) Kanzawa and Sanae Kanzawa; sister, Yukiko Matsuo; sister-in-law, Kimiko Kanzawa; gc: 3.

Kawakami, Marian, 69, Fresno, CA, Oct. 29; she is survived by her husband, David; children, Dallas and Kristi.

Kazahaya, Lily Yuriko, 99, Los Angeles, Oct. 18; during WWII, she was incarcerated at the Rohwer WRA Center in AR; she was predeceased by her husband, Larry Kazahaya, and son, Glen Kazahaya; she is survived by her children, Dianne and Norio (Jeannie); daughter-in-law Carol; she is also survived by many nieces and nephews; gc: 5; ggc: 7.

Kobayashi, Rachel, 84, Cerritos, CA Oct. 1; she is survived by her daughters, Kathy Quan and Kara Kobayashi; brothers, Kenneth Shimokochi and Robert Shimokochi; gc: 2.

Kuroda, Teruko, 99, Sammamish, WA, Oct. 23; she is survived by her children, Christine (Harry) Manaka and Kenneth (Hue) Kuroda; gc: 3; ggc: 3.

Masuda, Frances Eiko, 98, Rosemead, CA, Sept. 26; during WWII, she was incarcerated at both the Manzanar and Tule Lake WRA Centers; she was predeceased by her husband, Archie Takeshi Masuda; she is survived by her sons, Glenn (Carol) Masuda and Daniel Masuda; sister, Rose Hisae Myose; she is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Mayeda, Jennifer, 38, Gulf Breeze, FL, May 23.

Miwa, Fred Atsushi, 89, Pasadena, CA, Oct. 9; an Army veteran, he was predeceased by his wife, Yasuko Kumagai; he is survived by his fiancée, Marion Setsuko Tani; brothers, Bob Miwa and Takeshi Miwa (Judy); he is also survived by other relatives.

Morikawa, Hideo, 91, Monterey Park, CA, Oct. 10; he is survived by his wife, Haruko Morikawa; daughters, Maryann (Gary) Fukushima, Kelly (Will) Kwong and Sarah (Ken) Sumida; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 6.

Motoyasu, Takashi Ted, 98, Torrance, CA, Aug. 30; he is survived by his children, Joyce Straky, Steve and James (Darlene) Motoyasu; brother-in-law, Tom (Masako) Nakamura; gc: 4.

Nakagawa, Sugako, 90, Gardena, CA, Oct. 14; she is survived by her daughter, Martha Nakagawa (a former *P.C.* editor); she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Nakagawa, Tsuneko S., 93, Irvine, CA, Sept. 16; a Chicago JACL member and longtime Chicago resident, she aided in convincing Sen. Charles Percy (R-IL) to support legislation to establish the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians during the Redress Campaign.

Nakagawa, Viola Sadako, 100, Los Angeles, CA, June 3, 2021; predeceased by husband, Fred Nakagawa; survived by sister, Dorothy Matsuda; and many nieces, nephews, other family members, and friends.

Nakamura, Ruchi, 84, La Habra, CA, Oct. 24; he is survived by his wife, Katherine; children, Lee (Mary) Nakamura and Kimberly Nakamura.

Nakano, Julia Shizue, 85, Torrance, CA.

Nishikubo, John S., 65, San Diego, CA, Oct. 30.

Nishimura, Lori, 62, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 8; she is survived by her brothers, Bob (Mary) Nishimura and Rod (Marion) Nishimura; she is also survived by other relatives.

Nishimura, Toru Bill, 101, Torrance, CA, Oct. 19; he was predeceased by his wife, Michiko; daughters, Lynne (John) Ozawa and Donna Nishimura; he is survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 2.

Nishioki, Faye, 99, Fresno, CA, Nov. 7; she was predeceased by her husband, Norman, and sisters, Kimiko Hirata (George), Chiyoko Sakamoto (Louis) and Yoshiko Niizawa (Johnny); she is survived by her sons, Gary and Scott (Karen); sister, Kay Ihara (Steve); gc: 3.

Okada, Marsha, 70, Selma, CA, Oct. 10; she is survived by her children, Jennifer Khiem (Dustin) and Matthew Okada; siblings, Rod Misaki (Kathy) and Kerri Katayama (Donnie); gc: 2.

Okura, David Masao, 82, Los Alamitos, CA, Sept. 17; he is survived by his wife, Joyce; children, Michael Okura, Karen (Mitch) Hartmann and Vicki (Marek) Zadrozny; siblings, Ted (Pat) Okura, Gary (Frances) Okura and Janice (Wilbur) Shigehara; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and other relatives, gc: 2. ■

TRIBUTE

EDITH IKEMOTO



Edith Ikemoto, who would have been 99 years young in December, passed away Sept. 24, 2021. She was a loyal spouse, mother and grandmother.

She was born to Issei parents, raised with five siblings in California and a survivor of the internment camp.

Uniquely gifted. Charismatic Bay Area professional. Savvy investor. Entrepreneur. Winsome, passionate and athletic sportswoman: bowler, golfer and fly fishing enthusiast. Avid appreciation of hummingbirds.

Married in Stockton, Calif., and relocated to raise a family in Salinas, Calif. She, along with her spouse, was a supporter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and host to numerous successive generations of Japanese agricultural exchange students at Hartnell College. Later in life moved to Tennessee and then Washington state to be close to family.

She has been laid to rest with Ted Ikemoto, who predeceased her in 2015, at Yamato Cemetery in Salinas.

Arrangements were entrusted to Cascade Memorial, Bellevue, WA 98005 and Struve and Laporte Funeral Chapel, Salinas, CA.

Per her wishes, there will be no memorial service. In lieu of flowers, please send contributions to your favorite charity.

TRIBUTE

HARUKI YOSHIZUMI

Haruki Yoshizumi passed away peacefully on Nov. 21, 2021, at the age of 99. He had been living in a wonderful residential care home ever since January of 2016 and had been declining in the last couple of weeks.

He was born in Stockton, Calif., in 1922, the one son in a family with three daughters. The family lived in several places in California in his youth, finally settling in Watsonville. He was a renaissance man, with interests in music (violin, viola, clarinet, piano), painting, as well as more technical pursuits such as model airplanes, photography and electronics.

He, along with the rest of his family, was imprisoned in the Poston internment camp in the Arizona desert during World War II, working in the camp hospital and mess hall. He painted many scenes of camp life while there; and was one of four who painted an elaborate mural in the camp library. After the war, he spent two years in the U.S. Army Allied Translation Interpreter Service in Tokyo, Japan.

After his honorable discharge, he attended various art schools in California, did farm work and attended school to study electronics, ultimately working for IBM until he retired. He eventually built a studio in his backyard at nearly 70 years old, where he continued to paint until arthritis made it too difficult.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mitsue, and sisters Florence Matsushita, Kazuo Shimonishi and Lillian Etow. He is survived by eight nieces and nephews.

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for your continuous support throughout the year!

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THANK YOU to all of our Holiday Helpers who have helped in this fundraising production!
We understand that human contact has been difficult during these pandemic times and most (if not all) of your communication has been via email and telephone calls.
Thank you so much for your effort and patience in reaching out and continuing the communication between your chapters, the Pacific Citizen newspaper and your communities.



A New Year with continued dedication to the Japanese American community

The New Year's promise is built upon past commitments. We recognize and value our long-standing partnership with the Japanese American community. As we reflect on our past, we look to the future.

This year, like many new beginnings, brings hope and excitement. You can always rely on our financial expertise and services that are tailored to you and your needs.

It is our promise to continue cultivating this trusted relationship and building a greater legacy with the Japanese American community.

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