

PACIFIC CITIZEN

CELEBRATING
97
Years

Sakura Square's Tamai Tower, "a symbol of resilience for Denver's Japanese American community," is named after Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai, who became head minister of the Denver Buddhist Church in 1932.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF
sakurasquare.com

**Denver's
Historic
Sakura Square
Is Looking to
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Meet the New ED.



LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY'S PERSPECTIVE

AGING WITH HUMOR

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

American comedian Henny Youngman was famous for his mastery of the “one-liner,” the most famous being, “Take my wife . . . please.” I really liked his doctor jokes (reminded me of my dad). For example, “The patient says, ‘Doctor, it hurts when I do this.’ Then don’t do that!” Or, “Doctor, my leg hurts. What can I do? The doctor says, ‘Limp!’” Or, the doctor says, “You’ll live to be 70. ‘I AM 70!’ See, what did I tell you?”

Back in the medieval times (500-1500 AD), doctors would try to cure various ailments by “bloodletting,” making the “cure” far deadlier than the illness.

In today’s modern medicine, chemotherapy is the usual course to treat cancer. However, standard chemotherapy causes significant side effects that are often worse than the cancer itself.

In like manner, many seniors are taking medications where the “treatment is worse than the disease.”

This *Pacific Citizen* article discusses how some medications that doctors commonly prescribe to older adults will increase fall risk.

If you are worried about falls in an aging parent or relative, you need to know that fall risks can be reduced by reviewing their medications. If you’ve been concerned about falls and want to request a medication review, this list will help you identify medications to discuss with your doctor (*source: www.betterhealth-whileaging.net*).

1. Benzodiazepines: Often prescribed to help people sleep or help with anxiety. They do work for this purpose, but they are habit-forming and have been associated with developing dementia. Clinical research studies consistently find that benzodiazepines are associated with increased fall risk. Commonly prescribed brand names are Ativan, Valium, Restoril and Xanax.

2. Nonbenzodiazepine prescription sedatives: These drugs are usually prescribed to treat insomnia or sleep difficulties. These have been

shown in clinical studies to impair balance — and thinking! — in the short-term. This group includes the brand names Ambien, Sonata and Lunesta.

3. Antipsychotics: Originally developed to treat schizophrenia and other illnesses featuring psychosis symptoms, they are commonly prescribed to control difficult behaviors in Alzheimer’s and other dementias. They are also sometimes prescribed to people with depression. Clinical research indicates that antipsychotics are associated with increased falls. Commonly prescribed brand names are Risperdal, Seroquel, Zyprexa, Haldol and Abilify.

4. Anticonvulsants/mood-stabilizers: Originally developed to treat seizures, they are also used to stabilize mood in conditions such as bipolar disorder and to treat difficult dementia behaviors. They can also be used to treat certain types of nerve pain. Clinical research suggests that anticonvulsants are associated with increased fall risk. Commonly prescribed brand names are Depakote and Neurontin.

5. Antidepressants: These are medications prescribed to treat depression. Some of them are also used to treat anxiety. Virtually all antidepressants have been associated with an increase in fall risk. Commonly prescribed brand names are Zoloft, Celexa, Lexapro, Paxil, Remeron, Wellbutrin, Effexor and Prozac. Trazodone is an older antidepressant that is now used

almost exclusively as a mild sleep aid.

6. Opioid (narcotic) analgesics: Opioids are mainly used for the treatment of pain. Opioids often cause drowsiness, as well as other side-effects. Most experts — including the CDC — recommend that narcotics use be evaluated as part of fall risk management. Commonly prescribed brand names include codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl and methadone.

7. Anticholinergics: This group covers most over-the-counter sleeping aids, as well as a variety of other prescription drugs. These are medications that have the chemical property of blocking the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. Anticholinergics commonly cause sedation. They can also cloud thinking and have been associated with developing dementia. Given that anticholinergics can cause drowsiness and are risky for older adults, many experts believe it’s reasonable to include them when reviewing medications for fall prevention. Commonly prescribed brand names include Benadryl, Nyquil, Tylenol PM, Antivert, Scopace and Phenergan.

8. Antihypertensives: These are commonly used to treat high blood pressure. Clinical research on blood pressure medications and fall risk has shown mixed results. Many geriatricians and other experts do recommend re-evaluating BP medications in older adults at high risk for falls.

9. Other medications that affect

blood pressure: There are some commonly used medications that are not usually prescribed for hypertension but still lower BP or increase postural BP changes in many older people. Commonly prescribed brand names are Flomax, Hytrin, Cardura and Minipress.

10. Medications that lower blood sugar: Many older adults with diabetes take medications to keep their blood sugar from getting too high. Most diabetes medications can cause or worsen hypoglycemia (too low blood sugar).

In conclusion, if you or your loved one have fallen (or almost fell) recently, go see your doctor for a medication review. If you see any of your medications on the above list, please note that it can be dangerous to stop taking them suddenly. Medications that increase fall risk should always be tapered, under medical supervision.

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

JACL Agrees With Tule Lake's Endangered Site Status

National Trust for Historic Preservation includes TL in its ‘11 Most Endangered’ list.

By P.C. Staff

The JACL issued a statement in support of the nonprofit National Trust for Historic Preservation’s recent annual “11 Most Endangered Historic Places List” that included the Tule Lake Segregation Center.

In its May 27 statement, JACL said that it “applauds the inclusion of the Tule Lake Segregation Center on the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s ‘11 Most Endangered Historic Places List’” and that the recognition “... serves as an important reminder that sites that preserve our community’s history of trauma, resilience and resistance are under immediate threat.”

The National Trust for Historic Preservation wrote in its May 20 statement on its website (*see tinyurl.com/bdd5rub9*): “Today, a token 37-acre portion of the Tule Lake Segregation Center has been designated as a National Monument, but the primary 1,100-acre site is unprotected,” also noting that “staffing and public access is limited” and that a “rural airfield now occupies 359 acres at the heart of the former incarceration camp site.”

Tule Lake was one of 10 World War II-era

federally run concentration camps operated by the War Relocation Authority built to incarcerate ethnic Japanese, most of whom were U.S. citizens forcibly removed along the U.S. West Coast after Imperial Japan’s December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

On Dec. 8, 1941, the U.S. declared war on Japan. On Feb. 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which would authorize the forced removal and incarceration of America’s Japanese populace into the WRA 10 camps.

In 1943, Tule Lake became a segregation center that housed incarcerated from the other camps deemed disloyal for, among other things, not answering “yes” to two specific queries on a government-issued loyalty questionnaire. At its peak, it housed more than 18,700 people. In 2006, the Tule Lake Segregation Center gained National Historic Landmark status.

JACL also stated, “We encourage our community to urge their members of Congress to take action to save Tule Lake today” by visiting *tinyurl.com/26tmswt4*. It also shared a link from March on the 80th anniversary of the closure of the Tule Lake site (*see tinyurl.com/mry2xwc9*).



NY/SC Adds to IDC Youth Board

By Alex Tokita, IDC Youth Rep.

The Intermountain District Council Youth Board has been going strong and is continuing to expand and evolve. Adding two new youth board members in the past few months, the board now has 11 total members. They are District Youth Chair Alex Tokita and Risa Hoshijima, Austin Joyce, Campbell Kato, Maverick Lucas, Katie Marumoto, Kimari Matsuura, Boone Nakasone, Jordan Roberson, Justin Roberson and Parker Suzuki.

The IDC board’s members all live in Utah, but it hopes to find board members and create subcommittees for both Colorado and Idaho. The board held its first event, a bowling social, on Feb. 6, and with more than 20 attendees, it was



The IDC Youth Board held its first event, a bowling social, on Feb. 6. Participants were introduced, connections were made and attendees who were not already JACL members were given more information on the benefits of joining the organization. Pictured (second row, third from right) is IDC Youth Rep. Alex Tokita, who is also a candidate for NY/SC Youth Chair in the upcoming election at the JACL National Convention next month in Las Vegas.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALEX TOKITA/IDC YOUTH BOARD

a great launch for the group.

Attendees bowled, bonded with one another and the IDC Youth Board spoke to them about the benefits of joining the JACL as members such as scholarship opportunities, community events and JACL youth programs.

Many were already signed up as members, and now the group is using the event as a first step to gain new ones.

The next event, an outdoor

summer social/learning event, will be at Fairmont Park in Salt Lake City on June 13 at 7 p.m.

Members of the IDC Youth Board are excited to continue growing our youth community and supporting JACL’s mission amongst youth in the district!

For more information on joining the IDC Youth Board, email idyouth@jacl.org.

MEMORY AS RESPONSIBILITY

The 78th Annual Memorial Day Service highlights humanity and the importance of carrying forward its stories.

By Katie Masano Hill,
JACL Norman Y. Mineta Fellow

The 78th Annual Memorial Day Service, “Celebrating America, Honoring Valor,” was held at Arlington National Cemetery in the Columbarium Ceremonial Courtyard on May 24. The program was co-hosted by the Japanese American Citizens League D.C. chapter, Japanese American Veterans Assn., the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation and the JACL.



Keynote speaker and former JAVA President Gerald Yamada. He is set to receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, from the Ambassador of Japan, Shigeo Yamada, on June 24.

The service, founded in 1948 by Key Kiyokazu Kobayashi and continued today by his son, Turner Kobayashi, is recognized as the oldest, continuous Memorial Day ceremony at ANC that is not organized through a government agency.

The ceremony opened with welcome remarks from Turner Kobayashi, followed by greetings from Dr. Brad Sakaguchi (USA ret.) of the JACL D.C. chapter, Howard High (USA ret.) of JAVA, LTC Mark Nakagawa (USA ret.) of the NJAMF and myself, representing the JACL as its Norman Y. Mineta Fellow.

The program continued with student introductions by JACL D.C. board member Janice Nakano Faden and remarks from fifth grade student speaker Gina Chuai of Spark Matsunaga Elementary School.

Gerald Yamada (USA, ret), former JAVA president, delivered the keynote address, with a special tribute honoring Sgt. Kay and Mary Sato of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, presented by their daughter, JACL D.C. board member Linda Sato Adams, for the concluding remarks.

In my own speech, I reflected on what history demands beyond ceremony through my family’s story. My Great-Uncle Kei served in the

Flowers are prepared for the memorial ceremony.



442nd RCT and was wounded in France, earning a Purple Heart. My great-grandfather, after incarceration at Tule Lake, later served during the aftermath of the Nuremberg Trials as a U.S. Army chauffeur for prisoners on trial.

Their experiences are reminders that Memorial Day is not only a moment of reflection but also a call to responsibility.

It is the act of returning and memorializing names, truth and humanity to stories that must continue to be carried forward. Ceremonies like this endure because memory is not



Pictured are the 78th Annual Memorial Day Service speakers (front row, from left) Katie Masano Hill, Linda Sato Adams, Gina Chuai, Gerald Yamada and Brad Sakaguchi and (back row, from left) Mark Nakagawa and Turner Kobayashi.



Attendees who are currently serving or have served salute the bugler during the playing of “Taps.”

PHOTOS: JOHN TOBE

passive; it asks something of us. It calls on us to preserve these histories with care, confront injustice with

honesty and ensure that the sacrifices and lessons of the past are not forgotten or repeated. ■

Memorial Day: Paying Tribute in Little Tokyo

L.A.’s Japanese American community gathers to honor its fallen ranks.

By P.C. Staff

Solemnity and gratitude were the bywords in Little Tokyo on a pleasant May 23 Memorial Day Service honoring Japanese American members of the U.S. Armed Forces who died in service to their nation.

“We honor their service. We honor their sacrifice,” said William Fujioaka, chair of the Japanese American National Museum board of trustees.

Held in front of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center and its adjacent Japanese American National War Memorial Court and its polished black granite slabs engraved with the too-many names of Japanese Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in war, the event was co-sponsored by the Veterans Memorial Court Alliance, JACCC, Go For Broke National Education Center, JANM, Little Tokyo Service Center and Keiro.

The ceremony included several floral tributes to the fallen and their survivors, as well as the singing of the national anthem and “God Bless

America” by vocalist Candice Shikai. Serving as mistress of ceremonies was VMCA’s Sharon Wada Maeda.

As in years past, the presentation and retiring of the colors was conducted by Redondo Union High School Marine Corps Jr. ROTC, led by 1st Sgt Steve Mick (USMC, Ret.). Later in the program, Mick was honored by the event’s producers for his past support and leadership of the RUHSMC Jr. ROTC with a certificate of appreciation and a 15th-century *wakizashi* (short sword).

Keynote speaker Mayumi Kimura, deputy secretary of women veterans at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, said: “To the Gold Star families here today, your loved ones are remembered. Their sacrifices live on in this community, on those walls, and in all of us . . . To the veterans here today, your example continues to guide our future generation. Your courage did not end with your service. We carry it forward.”

Representing veterans groups and other organizations that participated in the event included Steve Moriyama, commander, VFW 4th



Pictured (from left) are Ken Hayashi of the Veterans Memorial Court Alliance, Keith Kawamoto of American Legion Sadao Munemori Post 321, Steve Moriyama of VFW 4th District Gardena Post 1961, 1st Sgt. Steve Mick (USMC, Ret.) and James Nakamura of Kazuo Masuda Memorial VFW Post 3670. PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

District Gardena Post 1961; David Miyoshi, VFW Kazuo Masuda Post 3670; Keith Kawamoto, American Legion Sadao Munemori Post 321; Lt. Robert Yoshioka, Coast Guard, Japanese American Veterans Assn.; George Tanaka, board chair, GFB-NEC; Patricia Wyatt, president and CEO, JACCC; Beverly Ito, president and CEO, Keiro; Tadao Suzuki, co-executive director, LTSC; Robert Horsting, vp, VMCA; Tom Nakagiri, Venice Hongwanji Buddhist

Temple, Adopt A Vietnam War KIA Program; Don Bannai, co-president, Asian American Community Media Project; Cory Hayashi, vp, Events and Programs, Nisei Week Foundation; Bryan Horsman, president, and Brian Folks, team leader, Honor Flight Southland; and Wayne Osako, president, Stamp Our Story.

Prior to LTSC Deputy Director Noelle Ito giving her closing remarks, the RUHSMC Jr. ROTC performed a rifle volley. “The names



Yoko Nakamura places a white rose at the black granite marker engraved with the name of her son, Sgt. Paul Tokuzo Nakamura, who was killed in action on June 19, 2003, while serving in Iraq.

we heard today represent people who fought for our freedom and gave to this community in ways that they would never fully imagine and never get to see with their own eyes,” said Ito.

“Just two blocks down the road at Judge John Aiso and Temple,” she continued, “Little Tokyo Service Center, in partnership with Go For Broke, is building 248 units of affordable housing that includes 63 units set aside for homeless veterans. It’s LTSC’s first project dedicated for veterans. This is just one way to say thank you. This is how we show up for those who showed up for us.” ■

SIMMERING SIGNS ON

JACL's new executive director on her first steps and the challenges ahead for the nearly 100-year-old organization.

Lilly Simmering assumed the reins of the Japanese American Citizens League on May 26 from interim Executive Director Saki Mori following a months-long recruitment search by Bonsai Leadership, initiated by the JACL, following the dismissal of former ED David Inoue in July 2025.

Simmering, a first-generation Hmong American born in Dallas, Texas, to refugee parents Phen and Kay Vue, was raised in Tulsa, Okla., before moving to Fresno, Calif., where her father served as executive director of the Hmong Council refugee resettlement nonprofit before becoming a small farmer in California's Central Valley.

A member of the Washington, D.C., bar, Simmering's career stops include stints at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, Boeing Capital Corp. and a nearly 10-year career with the County of Orange, Calif., where she led major countywide initiatives including the establishment of the county's Office of Sustainability and Office of Immigration and Refugee Affairs.

Simmering spoke exclusively with *Pacific Citizen* Executive Editor Allison Haramoto and Senior Editor George Johnston on her first priorities and the next steps for the nearly 100-year-old civil rights organization.

PACIFIC CITIZEN: Prior to applying for the executive director post, what was your knowledge and perception of the JACL?

LILLY SIMMERING: When I was approached about applying for the position, I reached out to close Japanese American friends across multiple generations. They were excited that I was considering the opportunity and helped me learn about the history of the JACL while also sharing their own perspectives on the organization. Through those conversations, I came to better understand the foundation of that strong sense of community I had observed growing up.

My perception of the JACL was shaped by how relatable its history, mission and challenges felt to me. . . . I was especially impressed that the JACL has endured for nearly 100 years, sustained largely through community support like the San Benito County JACL, who I understand is the oldest



continuous operating chapter. The ability to unite and serve a community of this size across the United States — and even Japan — is truly remarkable.

P.C.: July's upcoming National Convention will elect a new National Board. As you will also be in your first few months as executive director, the organization has a real opportunity for a "reset." What do you believe should be the organization's first priorities and why?

SIMMERING: Priority 1: Strengthen JACL's operations. A strong organization starts with strong operations. One of my first priorities is ensuring that JACL's systems, processes and governance are efficient, compliant and positioned for long-term success. From IT infrastructure to program delivery, I want JACL to be a well-run organization that can make decisions effectively and implement them quickly. Strong administration may not always be visible, but it is the foundation that makes everything else possible.

Priority 2: Build long-term financial sustainability. I understand that financial sustainability is a top concern for many members. My primary focus this year will be strengthening development efforts and diversifying revenue sources so that JACL is well-positioned for the future. Working alongside staff, the National Board, districts, chapters and community partners, I hope to develop a clear strategic vision that helps us grow support, deepen partnerships and ensure that JACL remains strong for the next 100 years. My goal is for JACL's impact and support to extend beyond the Japanese American community while remaining firmly rooted in its history and mission.

Priority 3: Reinvigorate the JACL brand.

JACL has an extraordinary legacy as the nation's oldest Asian American civil rights organization, yet many people are unfamiliar with the depth of its history and impact. We need to clearly define who we are, what we stand for and why our work matters today.

JACL has tremendous strengths to build upon — from its leadership in advancing civil rights to the *Pacific Citizen*, the oldest Japanese American vernacular that continued to print in Salt Lake City even in the face of adversity and earned a Pulitzer Prize nomination and finally all the way to the rich history of the Japanese American community itself.

By telling that story more effectively, we can engage new generations, attract new supporters and ensure JACL remains a recognizable and respected voice for civil rights and the preservation of Japanese American heritage.

P.C.: JACL is facing declining membership and an ever-widening financial deficit. How do you plan to strengthen its financial sustainability while also attracting younger and more diverse members?

SIMMERING: I believe those two challenges are closely connected. JACL's long-term financial sustainability depends on our ability to attract younger and more diverse members while continuing to serve and value our existing membership.

What I have observed, both personally and professionally, is that younger generations often connect with culture first. In my own family, my daughters were drawn to learning Japanese through anime, manga and a desire to travel and engage with other cultures. Through Japanese language school, however, they also became connected to the Japanese American community, its history and the friendships and relationships that come with it.

That experience reinforced something important for me: People join and stay involved in communities where they feel a sense of belonging. JACL has a tremendous opportunity to meet people where their interests begin — whether through culture, heritage, education or civil rights — and then connect them to the broader mission and community. If we can do that successfully, membership growth and financial sustainability will follow.

P.C.: With the recent departure of Chief Financial Officer Tom Fernandez, as well as the staffing layoffs of several longtime employees in the past year, what hires for what positions do you see yourself making?

SIMMERING: First and foremost, I was really sad to see Tom go, but I understand and respect his reasons. Secondly, I would like to

hire a director of development. I understand this was a position that was approved at the last National Convention and has yet to be filled. If one of my priorities is to build long-term financial sustainability, then a director of development is essential. Ideally, I would like to fill the position by fall, but with a new board coming on, I want to consult with them and ensure alignment on the path forward before initiating.

P.C.: Considering the current uncertain state of the country, what role do you believe JACL should play in addressing issues regarding civil rights, immigration and diversity initiatives?

SIMMERING: JACL absolutely has a role to play in addressing these issues. It is central to our mission and one of the reasons the organization was founded. I believe the founders were incredibly insightful in pairing the preservation of Japanese culture and heritage with a civil rights mission because both ultimately begin with education and understanding. The more we learn about one another's histories, cultures and experiences, the stronger our communities become. What I see happening today is a redefinition of civil rights, immigration and diversity. I believe the best response is education grounded in lived experience. JACL has a treasure trove of stories, history and firsthand knowledge that can help people better understand these issues and why they continue to matter today.

P.C.: Previous JACL executive directors have worked either in its San Francisco headquarters or in Washington, D.C. How do you plan to contribute to JACL's mission should you remain based in the Southern California area?

SIMMERING: Yes, I plan to not only be at those two offices more regularly but also out with the districts. I hope to be able to be out in person in each district at least twice per year and if possible, eventually get around to the chapters. I don't believe in running an organization from Zoom. Having said all this, I also want to be mindful of travel costs to the organization, so I think it's safe to say that I am officially putting a call out to all the district governors to identify at least two opportunities to visit in person this year.

P.C.: What were the circumstances that led to your Aug. 14, 2024, resignation from Orange County as its deputy county executive officer, and, after being hired shortly thereafter by the Los Angeles

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Thank You for Your JACL Membership!

We're grateful to have some of the most engaged and committed members around! Because of your loyal support, we have more premium membership upgrades and generous additional gifts than ever. We're also appreciative for those who renew year after year (some for 50 years or more!) and for our increase in new members. Your dedication is essential to our ongoing mission for social justice, education, and community! Thank you! – JACL Membership Department



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GROWING 'TINY TOKYO'

Denver's historic Sakura Square is looking to the future.

By Gil Asakawa,
P.C. Contributor

San Francisco has Japantown. So does San Jose, albeit a smaller Nihonmachi. And Los Angeles has Little Tokyo, which is not so little. But Denver? Denver, Colo., has its "Tiny Tokyo," Sakura Square, which takes up exactly one block of the city's downtown, a stone's throw from Coors Field where Major League Baseball's Colorado Rockies play.

But recent local news reports have sounded an alarm that Sakura Square may be in danger of collapsing or going away after 53 years as the center of Denver's Japanese community.

The news coverage has been unnecessarily dire. Sakura Square is showing its age and for more than a year has had scaffolding shore up its second level. But, says Tim Higashide, the CEO of Sakura Square LLC, the company that manages the property, the structure is safe and not about to collapse and crumble to the ground.

As wear and tear appears, Sakura Square gets fixed. Safety, Higashide says, is primary. And, he adds, "It is critical to get this project done. I mean, every year that our buildings are getting older, it's critical."

Higashide is also pragmatic — a very Japanese trait. "But I think we need to hang on as long as we need to get this project done, and the people are the most important thing," he said.

That includes the residents in the 19-story Tamai Tower apartments and the throngs who shop at Pacific Mercantile, the oldest Asian grocery store in Colorado, as well as the people who worship and attend events at the Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple.

Those are the anchors at three of the block's corners, with the fourth taken up with a Japanese garden and small park.

"The most important is taking care of the people, but it's also a reality that in terms

The Sakura Square parking lot



of renovation, keeping up with the properties' repairs has to be a priority," Higashide continued. "Like the financing is going to be challenging."

And, though redevelopment is necessary because of the block's older infrastructure, that work has been discussed and planned for 15 years. It's not a sudden crisis, as some reports have portrayed it.

Partly, the spark for the fire alarm has been a Downtown Denver Development Agency loan for \$30 million to help fund a rebuild for the block that Sakura Square applied for improvements.

The city has approved some other funding for projects to revitalize the moribund 16th Street Mall across downtown, and a nearby mall that has been largely empty for some years. But Sakura Square hasn't heard yet about its funding.

Then again, the community has been discussing funding for redevelopment for years, so that's not new, either. Grants, loans, donations — all have been part of the planning for more than a decade. If this loan doesn't come through, the Square will turn to the other fundraising, which has been part of the equation anyway even if it gets the DDDA money.

How It Became 'Tiny'

Denver's Japanese community came

together in the early 20th century near downtown and was already formed before World War II, with businesses like restaurants and a newspaper along Larimer, the street made famous at one point after Jack Kerouac wrote about it in his 1957 novel "On the Road" (without references to its many Japanese American shops).

At its post-war peak, 15 blocks and more on neighboring blocks were lined by dozens of Japanese American-owned shops.

But by the late 1960s, as a wave of "urban renewal" spread across the U.S. to take what big cities designated as blighted areas — ethnic enclaves, mostly — and raze them or redevelop them into fancy pricey residential structures or construct new office buildings, Denver was hit by the movement.

A Latino neighborhood just west of downtown was demolished except for a few historic buildings, including a Spanish church, and was turned into a multicollege campus development.

And the Japantown stretch was taken over — much of it with businesses not much newer or fancier, just not Japanese — except for one block, between Larimer and Lawrence streets and 19th and 20th streets. That was the block that included the Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple, which had moved to its building on the block in 1948, and Pacific Mercantile, the grocery store that opened in 1946.

A group of leaders organized and worked with the city to purchase the block to protect the temple and the store, as well as build a

legacy for the JA community that included the park and the apartment building, which was built as a place for the community's elders to live. The land was purchased from the Denver Urban Renewal Authority for \$188,800.

Construction began at the turn of the decade, and Sakura Square opened with much fanfare in 1973.

Sakura Square was hailed at the time for its clean, modern design — it was designed by Bertram A. Bruton, one of the first African American architects to practice in Colorado. It's a modern design that feels Japanese without being obvious about it. Bonsai trees and the garden give off Japanese vibes.

Back to the Future

The redevelopment of the block has been on a tortuously slow path, in large part because of the Covid pandemic and the economic crash to downtown Denver. Many office buildings are half-empty today because of the cutbacks and remote work that have changed downtown's energy.

Where once there were 10 cranes jutting up against the Denver skyline to show how vibrant construction was booming, now there are none. Property values downtown have dropped, so original plans had to be reassessed to align with current realities.

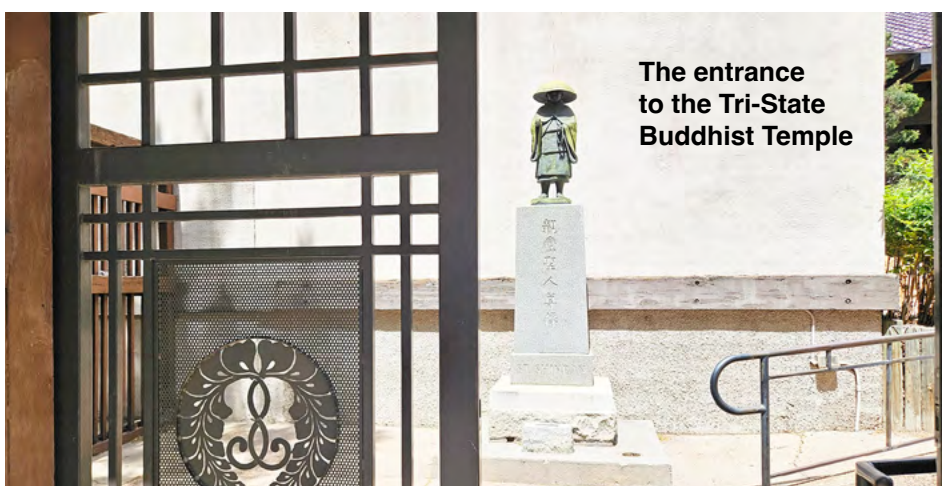
Higashide hopes the downturn won't force Sakura Square to downsize its vision for redevelopment.

"We certainly hope that we don't have to downscale it," he said. "I truly do think that the vision that we have is still based upon the



Pacific Mercantile at Sakura Square

PHOTOS: GIL ASAKAWA



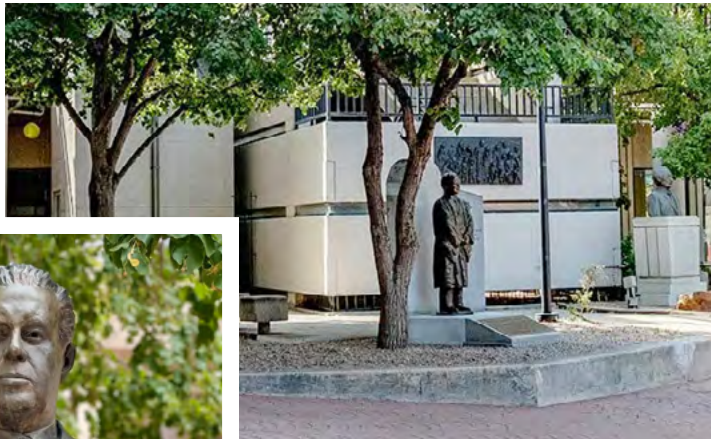
The entrance to the Tri-State Buddhist Temple



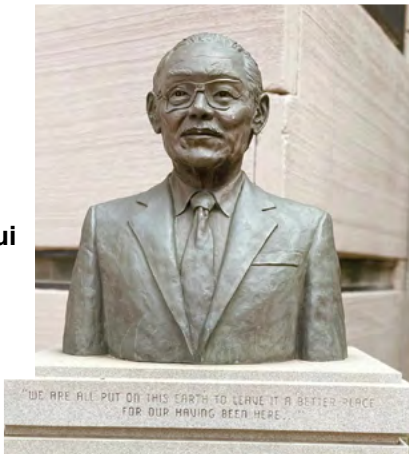
Tri-State Buddhist Temple signage

The courtyard and garden located in front of Tamai Tower

PHOTOS: SAKURASQUARE.COM



Busts featuring Sakura Square heroes Gov. Ralph L. Carr, Minoru Yasui and Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai



ple back to the city’s core, and Sakura Square is hoping to be a part of that revitalization.

The 52nd Cherry Blossom Festival, which will be held at Sakura Square on June 27-28, will bring back tens of thousands of people to the block to enjoy Japanese cultural performances, gift and food vendors for the weekend.

The festival was first held in 1973 as a way to celebrate the completion of Sakura Square. It was sponsored by the Tri-State Buddhist Temple until 2016 when the Temple leadership asked Sakura Foundation to become the co-presenter of the event.

“Some people think that we took it over,” says Stacey Shigaya, executive director of the Sakura Foundation, the parent organization of the LLC that manages Sakura Square.

many community discussions and workgroups going back a decade or more. It really depends on how do we create it? How do we build it? How do we get funding for this project, whether through public private partnership or through community donations?”

Higashide adds, “I think obviously the legacy, like, how do we continue the legacy? And then there’s so much when you talk about the legacy; there is so much history in this area of downtown.”

Mayor Mike Johnston’s priority has been to revitalize downtown’s economy and bring peo-



Braces upstairs at Sakura Square

PHOTOS: GIL ASAKAWA



A poster advertising the upcoming 52nd Cherry Blossom Festival at Sakura Square

“But it’s a partnership. We were asked to help support them. The two big reasons are, you know, we have paid staff, so that’s what we do. But the other reason is because since we’re a 501(c)3, we’re able to go out and get grants and sponsorship support, whereas [the Tri-State Buddhist Temple] couldn’t because they’re a church.”

The festival is the temple’s biggest fundraiser of the year, and Shigaya and her staff are deep in preparations for the weekend event.

She understands the role the festival — and Sakura Square — represents for Denver’s Japanese American community and the city’s hopes for an economic revival. The festival has attracted more people the past few years post-Covid, and this year, there were so many vendor applications that organizers had to place applicants on a waitlist.

Shigaya is also aware that attendees will need to navigate the maze of scaffolding in some parts of Sakura Square for this year’s festival, but she’s hopeful that won’t keep away the crowds. Like Higashide, she emphasizes the square is safe and not about to come down.

Instead, Shigaya says, “In this decadelong process of working on this redevelopment, I think one of the most heartwarming things we’ve realized is how many people really care about Sakara Square, about the Japanese American community, about our culture and about the importance of people from different backgrounds learning about each other, respecting each other and wanting to see each other succeed.

“Because we haven’t only heard from fellow

JAs,” Shigaya continued. “We’ve heard from people from all different types of backgrounds about how they want us to succeed. So, I think that’s the biggest takeaway from this whole process.”

For more about the 52nd Cherry Blossom Festival, visit <https://cherryblossomdenver.org>. And to learn more about Sakura Square, visit www.sakurasquare.com.



Tim Higashide, CEO of Sakura Square LLC



Stacy Shigaya, executive director of the Sakura Foundation

AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL

2026 TOUR SCHEDULE.

CHRISTMAS MARKET CANADA HOLIDAY TOUR (Carol Hida). Dec 1-7
Vancouver City Tour, Grouse Mountain Skyride, Shipyards Christmas Market, Ferry to Victoria Island, Butchart Gardens, High Tea at Fairmont Empress Hotel, Victoria Christmas Market & Fair, Van Dusen Festival of Lights.

2027 TOUR SCHEDULE (Preview)

FANTASTIC FLORIDA & KEYS HOLIDAY TOUR (Carol Hida). Mar 11-18
Miami, Ft Lauderdale, Everglades National Park, Homestead, Key West, Marathon Key, Hemingway Home.

JAPAN SPRING COUNTRYSIDE TOUR (Ernest Hida). Apr 4-15
Tokyo, Niigata, Sado Island, Kanazawa, Amanohashidate, Tottori, Kyoto.

JAPAN HOLIDAY CRUISE Rescheduled to 2028 Apr 8–25
Tokyo, Yokohama, Amaezaki, Osaka, Kochi, Fukuoka, Sokcho(S.Korea), Kanazawa, Sakata, Aomori, Otaru, Hakodate, Yokohama. Holland America Cruise.

NATIONAL PARKS & CANYONS HOLIDAY TOUR (Carol Hida). Apr 25-30
Las Vegas, Hoover Dam, Mob Museum, Grand Canyon West & Skywalk, Mesquite, Bryce Canyon, St. George, Zion National Park.

TULIP FESTIVAL & GREAT LAKES HOLIDAY TOUR (Carol Hida). May 6-14
Chicago, Grand Rapids, Holland Tulip Festival, Mackinac Island, Green Bay, Milwaukee.

KOREA HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida). May 11-24
Seoul, Bullet Train to Busan, Jeju Island, Jeonju, Nami Island, DMZ, few K-Drama sites.

GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR (Ernest Hida). Jun 20-30
Tokyo, Atami, Hiroshima, Kyoto. Craftmaking hands-on experience.

HOKKAIDO SUMMER HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida). July 11-23
Furano Asahikawa, Wakkanai, Rishiri Island, Sapporo, Noboribetsu, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Tokyo.

DANUBE RIVER CRUISE (Carol Hida). Aug 22-Sep 4
Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Weissenkirchen, Linz, Passau, Vilshofen, Prague. AmaWaterways Cruise Line.

JAPAN AUTUMN COUNTRYSIDE TOUR (Ernest Hida). Oct 14-27
Kyushu, Shikoku.

OKINAWA HOLIDAY TOUR (Ernest Hida). Nov 12-22
Okinawa, Ishigaki Island, Iriomote Island, Taketomi Island.

For more information and reservations, please contact:

AMERICAN HOLIDAY TRAVEL
312 E. 1st Street, Suite 240 * Los Angeles, CA 90012
Tel: (213)625-2232 * Email: americanholiday@att.net
Ernest or Carol Hida

SIMMERING » continued from page 5

Homeless Services Authority, why you resigned after less than two weeks in that position?

SIMMERING: My resignation from Orange County was not related to the fraud investigation involving Supervisor Andrew Do. I was never a subject of that investigation, nor of the county's subsequent forensic audit. In fact, the audit found that county staff were pressured by the supervisor to approve contracts they were uncomfortable with; none of those employees reported to me.

I left Orange County because, after nearly 10 years of public service — including work on homelessness, Covid response, two County Service Centers, the County's first Office of Sustainability and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs — I was ready for a new chapter. . . .

I later joined LAHSA because of my experience leading innovative homelessness initiatives, including developing the nation's first homeless data integration system under California's AB 210 framework. Before accepting the position, I was transparent with LAHSA leadership about the situation in Orange County and made clear that if it ever became a distraction from the agency's mission, I would step aside. When I learned an article was being prepared that could shift attention away from the work of serving people experiencing homelessness, I chose to resign.

JACL CFO RESIGNS

Tom Fernandez departs after just over three years as budget chief.

By P.C. Staff

JACL Director of Finance/CFO Thomas Fernandez has tendered his resignation, effective May 27.

In an email to JACL's National Board and staff, Fernandez wrote: "Today marks my last day as director of finance at the Japanese American Citizens League, and I wanted to take a moment to say a proper goodbye and express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you."

In a statement, JACL National President Larry Oda said, "Tom brought a level of financial expertise to JACL that we hadn't had for awhile. He was able to determine the cause of our reporting anomalies and discovered errors in our accounting calculations from 10 years ago that have impacted our financial statements until now."

Fernandez joined JACL in May 2023.



Tom Fernandez at February's National Board meeting at JACL headquarters in S.F.

PHOTO: GIL ASAKAWA

During his time in that capacity, he helped to update the organization's financial reporting systems, updated payment processing systems, transitioned to a new payroll processing system and updated the reimbursement procedure, among other accomplishments.

He also inherited major financial problems that predated his employment, the latest being a projected budgetary shortfall that has now reached \$1 million. The financial crunch led to the departures of five JACL staffers in less than a 10-month period.

"I'm sorry to see him move on and wish him well," Oda continued. "We are thankful for the time he was here and his skill and tenacity to find all the errors and incorrect assumptions in our accounting systems that have been perpetuated for a dozen years."

A new father as of November of last year, Fernandez will be employed by the city of Benecia, Calif., in a similar capacity of financial oversight. ■

P.C.: As JACL approaches its 100th anniversary, what is your vision, and what steps do you believe are necessary to ensure that it remains relevant and impactful?

SIMMERING: My vision for JACL is that it remains one of the most-respected and influential voices for civil rights and the Japanese American community in the country. I want JACL to be the organization that government leaders, media outlets, academics and community partners turn to for trusted expertise and perspective.

I want us to always have a seat at the table — not because we are the loudest voice in the room, but because we are among the most credible, thoughtful and effective. Our history, our lived experiences and our commitment to education give us a unique ability to help people understand both the challenges of the past and the issues facing our communities today.

At the same time, I want JACL to be a strong, well-run organization that consistently delivers on its promises, grows its impact and continues to elevate the *Pacific Citizen* as one of the leading publications covering Japanese American issues and perspectives.

Ultimately, I want JACL to enter its second century stronger than ever — rooted in heritage, relevant to new generations and trusted to help shape the conversations that matter most.

This article has been edited due to space considerations. For the full interview, visit the Pacific Citizen website at www.pacificcitizen.org.

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Onto the 100th Anniversary

CENTENNIAL COUNTDOWN

of the Japanese American Citizens League

PACIFIC CITIZEN

NATIONAL NEWS

FEB. 6-19, 2009 5

Celebrating the *Pacific Citizen's* 80-year LegacyBy LYNDA LIN
Assistant Editor

Through wars, Redress and revolutions, the *Pacific Citizen* was there. When events shook the community, the black and white newspaper published by the Japanese American Citizens League steadily reported the news.

The paper — simply called the *P.C.* by its readers — relied on the power of words to inform, advocate and serve as a beacon of hope during the Japanese American community's darkest hour.

The *P.C.* was the only national JA newspaper during World War II, said Ben S. Kuroki, 91, the famed U.S. Army Air Force veteran who earned a Distinguished Service Medal for his service during WWII.

Japan's Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor not only propelled the U.S. into war, it unleashed a national epidemic of racism against a community of innocent citizens. JAs were rounded-up for incarceration in barbed wire internment camps, their businesses were closed and their newspapers were forced to shut down — all except the *P.C.*, which along with the JACL, moved operations to Salt Lake City and continued publishing.

Through its pages, the paper became a trusted news source informing its readers about news on the community and the nation.

"The *P.C.* gave the JACL a viewpoint," said Kuroki.

This year, the *P.C.* turns 80.

It's been 80 years of unprecedented national news coverage, enterprising stories and in-depth features. So in its anniversary year, the newspaper that for so long reported on the stories important to the community is turning the mirror on itself and allowing community leaders of past, present and future to reflect on its legacy.

No doubt there is a lot of history to cover.

"I congratulate the *Pacific Citizen* as it marks 80 years of informing and serving the Asian Pacific American community," said Sen. Daniel K. Inouye in a statement. "I commend them for their celebrated history, and wish them many more years of success."

Pulitzer Prize Nominated WWII Coverage

What started out as a bulletin for JACL members evolved into a reputable news source under the editorship of Larry Tajiri. When the JACL was established in 1929, the *P.C.* — then called the *Nikkei Shimin* or *Japanese American Citizen* — was adopted as the official national publication of the newly formed civil rights organization. By 1931, the publication's name was officially changed to the *Pacific Citizen* — a name that was chosen in a national contest.

In an October 1948 issue of the *JACL Reporter*, L.H. Gordon described Larry as a "myopic, rotund and amiable editor."

Before Tajiri, the *P.C.* had been printed "on one sheet, not taken very seriously, even by the JACL members," said Greg Robinson, an associate professor of history at the Université du Québec à Montréal and author of "By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans."

"Larry turned it into an outstanding newspaper," said Yoshiko Tajiri, Larry's younger sister who worked in the *P.C.*'s circulation department during the war.

With Larry and his wife Marion on staff in Salt Lake City, the *P.C.* became a weekly. It was put together on the fourth floor of the Beason Building on 25 East Second South Street. The *P.C.* occupied one room of the JACL suite and Larry's desk was always piled high with copies of newspapers from all over the U.S., said Yoshiko.

Larry's column, "Nisei USA," was a regular feature and Marion also wrote a regular column under the pen name Ann Nisei. The *P.C.* covered every stage of the evacuation — in which JACL took the stance of cooperating with U.S. authorities in the evacuation — including news about Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu and Minoru Yasui, the brave men



who protested their WWII internment.

It covered every development of camp life and the extraordinary heroics of JA soldiers. Although the *P.C.* was known for its support of the Nisei WWII veterans, articles did appear on those who protested service in the U.S. military, the "No-No Boys" and the "Renunciants."

Readers that may have been opposed to the JACL still need to know what was going on, so they subscribed to the *P.C.*, said the late Bill Hosokawa, a famed journalist and longtime *P.C.* contributor in his book, "JACL: In Quest of Justice."

In 1946, the Friends of the American Way nominated the *P.C.* for a Pulitzer Prize in journalism.

Post war, the *P.C.* kept its focus on civil rights even as other JA newspapers returned to print. In 1949, Marion traveled to San Francisco to report on Iva Toguri's "Tokyo Rose" trial, likely an unprecedented accomplishment for a JA female reporter at that time.

By the early 1950s the JACL decided that the *P.C.* needed to return to the West Coast to Los Angeles. But for the first time in over a decade the paper would be without Larry and Marion. In the Sept. 27, 1952 issue — Larry's last as editor — he said the *P.C.*'s objective was to tell the Nisei story.

"The *P.C.* published the story but the Nisei have written it," he wrote in his "Nisei USA" column.

Redress and the Aftermath

With the *P.C.* in Los Angeles, the paper came under the editorship of former *Shin Nichibei* staffer Harry K. Honda. His first issue of the *P.C.* was published Oct. 4, 1952. Honda would continue his work with the *P.C.* in many different leadership roles until his retirement in 2002.

By 1952, the *JACL Reporter* was discontinued and Honda led the *P.C.*'s new editorial voice.

"How do we balance the editorial spread? More JACL chapter news? More Nisei community news? More news of national impact affecting the Japanese American in particular?" said Honda about the coverage. "The overriding goal, of course, was to make the press deadline."

Since the war, the *P.C.* had been the stomping ground for many well-known journalists and community leaders including Hosokawa, Togo Tanaka, Saburo Kido, Mike Masaoka and Bill Marutani.

"But unique were the 'Minority Report' columns by Edison Uno in the 1970s demanding reparations/Redress because of the WWII evacuation and the camps," said Honda. "Several complained in the *P.C.*, that they were against Redress. There was no price to denial and loss of civil rights by the U.S. government."

The *P.C.* was there every step of the way during the Redress Movement to record the community's triumph of getting an official apology and monetary compensation for WWII internees.

"We had to reach every member of the organization to help

with the grassroots lobbying, and the *P.C.* was the most effective vehicle for doing so," said John Tateishi, JACL's Redress director and former national director.

But in its attempt to get different voices heard, the *P.C.* itself became the center of controversy when some JACLers objected to coverage of other community groups including the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, said George Johnston, a *P.C.* staffer from 1987-90.

"But while (fellow assistant editor) Laurie Mochidome and I were on the editorial staff, we thought it best to publish news and opinion that we felt was of consequence to the JACL membership, the thinking being that it was better for the membership to be informed rather than not," he said.

In 1988 when President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act, Honda attended the event on behalf of the *P.C.* The image of Reagan with former U.S.

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, Sens. Sparky Matsunaga and Daniel Inouye, and Rep. Robert Matsui is an iconic image that illustrates the magnitude of this accomplishment.

Post Redress, the *P.C.* continued to be a conduit for information and a forum for debate over issues of same-sex marriage and the National Japanese American Memorial.

"My belief is that a newspaper should make readers think and provide a forum where different voices could be heard," said Martha Nakagawa, the *P.C.*'s assistant editor from 1998 to 2003.

Online Revolution

As the community has continued to evolve, so has the JACL and the *P.C.* Today, the *P.C.* has become truly a national Asian Pacific American news publication providing award-winning coverage on immigration reform, same-sex marriage and 1st Lt. Ehren Watada.

The *P.C.* is also reaching younger generations in the new digital age.

With the addition of its popular Web site in late 2005, the reach of the *P.C.* is now truly worldwide. With the click of a mouse, readers who may have not heard of the JACL or the *P.C.*, get instant access to the articles, videos and information that can still connect communities.

"I think the awareness that I get from reading the *P.C.* about hate crimes/incidents towards Asian Americans makes me want to get involved and challenge stereotypical and ignorant views and actions," said Paul Fisk, 27, a graduate student at the University of Utah.

But many of the JACL's leaders and readers are not yet ready to part with the *P.C.* in print.

"I'm a kind of person who likes the written word," said Lillian Kimura, who was elected the JACL's first female national president in 1992. "I really do want the print edition."

"The *P.C.* brings current national Asian American issues to my doorstep. I enjoy reading it because it's a very unique paper that focuses on civil rights issues that happen around the nation," said Mike Mikawa, 22, a student at the University of California, Berkeley who also reads the *P.C.* in print.

With 80 years behind it, the *P.C.*'s legacy is still being written.

"We've inherited an important legacy but our work continues," said Caroline Aoyagi-Stom, *P.C.* executive editor. "As we continue to expand our national APA coverage, our increased online presence will be vital."

"I think it's important to have a record of any organization and the *P.C.* is a great vehicle. In the next few years, I see it as being both online and in print," said Lori Matsukawa, Seattle's KING TV anchor. "The *P.C.* should reflect the important work JACL is doing as a watchdog of civil liberties." ■

Check out *P.C.*'s new Web site: www.pacificcitizen.org

A NATIONAL GUIDE TO NOTABLE COMMUNITY EVENTS

CALENDAR

NATIONAL

JACL National Convention
Las Vegas, NV
July 29-Aug. 2
Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino
3655 S. Las Vega Blvd.
 Join JACL at its 56th National Convention themed "Reigniting Our Purpose and Mission!" where the organization will gather to reinvigorate the spirit of advancing our community forward with renewed action and impact. Events include the Chapter Awards Luncheon, National Council and 2026 National Board Elections, Sayonara Gala, workshops and mixers.
Info: Visit www.jacl.org/2026-national-convention.

Ireicho Tour to Former Confinement Sites & Other Places
National Stops:
July 4-5: Tule Lake, CA
Oct. 10-11: St. Paul, MN
Info: Visit <https://www.janm.org/exhibits/ireicho/venues>.

NCWNP

'I Am an American' Exhibit
San Francisco, CA
Thru Aug. 31
MIS Historic Learning Center at the Presidio of San Francisco
220 Halleck St.
Price: \$15; Free for Veterans, Children 12 and Under, NJAHS Members.
 This new traveling exhibit tells the storied history of the Nisei soldiers who served during WWII and features artifacts, first-hand accounts and evocative images of their bravery and sacrifice.
Info: Visit nvnvets.org/exhibit.

Jammin' With JAMsj
San Jose, CA
June 13; 4:30-6:30 p.m.
In the Garden at Historic Issei Memorial Building
565 N. Fifth St.
Price: Free
 This fun, free event held in collaboration with San Jose JACL and Minasan, celebrates the music of the Pan-Pacific and will feature performances by Studio Phoebe, Kyle Abbott & Su Bunjamin and the Practitioners while exploring history and art to celebrate community creativity.
Info: Visit jamsj.org/upcoming-events-to-rsvp.

Soy and Tofu Festival
San Francisco, CA
June 13; 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

The Event Center at St. Mary's Cathedral
1111 Gough St.
Price: \$5 General Admission
 This signature annual fundraiser of the Nichi Bei Foundation celebrates the joy of soy through food, art, live performances, soy education and the beloved Soy-ful Youth Art Contest.
Info: Visit <https://soyandtofufest.org/tickets/> to purchase in advance.

2026 Tule Lake Pilgrimage 'Resistance & Solidarity'
Tulelake, CA
July 3-6
Tule Lake Segregation Center
Price: \$700 All-Inclusive Fee
 Save the date for the Tule Lake Pilgrimage and reserve your spot now as space is limited. The four-day event includes charter bus transportation, lodging, meals and all activities.
Info: Registration now open. Limited spots. Visit <https://www.tulelake.org>.

San Jose Obon
San Jose, CA
July 11, Noon-10 p.m.; July 12, Noon-9 p.m.
San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin
640 N. Fifth St.
Price: Free
 This family event, one of the largest Obon gatherings, honors family, community and is a time of reflection and gratitude. Come enjoy delicious food, dancing, cultural exhibits and crafts and games for all.
Info: Visit sjbetsuin.org.

'America's Last Concentration Camp: Crystal City'
Emeryville, CA
Thru July 22
J-Sei Gallery
1285 66th St.
Price: Free
 This traveling exhibit, presented by the Crystal City Pilgrimage Committee, features interpretive panels depicting stories of the families who were incarcerated at Crystal City during WWII. This exhibit is open during gallery hours, Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri. 2-5 p.m. or by appointment.
Info: Visit j-sei.org.

PSW

GVJCI 76th Annual Matsuri Fundraiser
Gardena, CA
June 27; 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute
1964 W. 162nd St.

Price: Free
 This South Bay tradition is the GVJCI's largest fundraiser and all are welcome to enjoy food, games, raffle, beer garden, crafts, entertainment and much more!
Info: Visit <https://www.jci-gardena.org>.

Film Screening of 'Nobuko Miyamoto: A Song in Movement'
San Marino, CA
June 28; 3-4:30 p.m.
Huntington Library
1151 Oxford Road
Price: Museum Entry Fee
 Join JANM at this special screening of Todashi Nakamura's film, which chronicles the life of L.A.-born artist, dancer, singer, author and activist Nobuko Miyamoto.
Info: For tickets, visit <https://www.huntington.org/event/land-community-festival>.

'Paper Flowers' Play
Hollywood, CA
Thru June 28
Promenade Playhouse at LAPAC
1534 N. Highland Ave.
Price: Tickets \$18
 In this new play, set in 1970s Chicago, a Japanese American mother confronts memories of Japanese incarceration and finds strength in love and community. Use code JANM at checkout for \$5 off.
Info: Visit <https://www.hollywoodfringe.org/projects/13651?tab=tickets>.

'Washoku: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine'
Los Angeles, CA
Thru Oct. 18
Japan House Los Angeles
Ovation Hollywood Complex
6801 Hollywood Blvd.
Price: Free
 This exhibit invites visitors to explore the rich culinary heritage at the heart of Japan. Presented for the first time outside of Japan, it offers an in-depth look at the ingredients, evolution and inspirations behind this UNESCO-recognized cultural tradition.
Info: Visit japanhousela.com.

Genki Living Workshops: Walking Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA
June 13; 9 a.m.-Noon
South Coast Botanic Garden
26300 Crenshaw Blvd.
Price: \$20; Registration Required.
 One of Keiro's most popular workshops is back. Register now, as spots are filling for this afternoon of a staff-led walking tour that includes a guided warmup activity, lunch and refreshments and an opportunity drawing amid the beauty of the botanical garden.
Info: Visit <https://give.keiro.org/event/>

[genki-living-workshops-walking-2026/e763274](https://www.genki-living-workshops-walking-2026/e763274).

PNW

'Minidoka on Our Minds' Exhibit
Portland, OR
Thru June 14
Japanese American Museum of Oregon
411 N.W. Flanders St.
Price: Museum Admission
 This exhibit celebrates 25 years of preservation at the site where many Nikkei from Oregon and Washington were incarcerated during WWII. Artwork by survivors, descendants and Japanese American youth explore the park's history.
Info: Visit <https://jamo.org/minidoka/>.

'The Yasui Family: An American Story' Exhibit
Portland, OR
Thru Sept. 6
The Oregon Historical Society
1200 S.W. Park Ave.
 Through photographs, personal journals, documents and objects, this exhibition explores how the Yasui family reflects the complexity of the American story.
Info: Visit ohs.org.

MDC

Summer Obon Festival
St. Paul, MN
Aug. 16
Como Park
1199 Midway Pkwy.
Price: Free
 Save the date for this annual festival will feature booths, food, Japanese dancing, martial arts and taiko demonstrations, as well as a Japanese lantern lighting ceremony at the Conservatory Pond.
Info: Visit tcjacl.org to help volunteer.

IDC

Wine Dinner Fundraiser
Salt Lake City, UT
June 20
Salt Lake Buddhist Temple
211 W. 100 S
Price: \$80 Plus Suggested Tip
 This special fundraiser dinner features a five-course meal with wine pairings. Funds raised benefit the temple's youth group. It is customary for attendees to tip either \$10 or \$15, which is given to guest chefs who volunteer their time for this event.
Info: To register, visit <https://www.slbuddhist.org/new-products-1/wine-dinner-seating>

2026 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage
Powell, WY

July 23-25
Heart Mountain Interpretive Center
1539 Road 19
Price: Registration Prices Vary and ends June 30.
 This year's event explores "What It Means to Be American: Voices From Heart Mountain" and centers on the voices and experiences of Heart Mountain survivors and descendants. A live performance of "Defining Courage" will also be featured.
Info: Visit heartmountain.org.

EDC

1st Asian Food Festival
Boston, MA
June 20; 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; June 21, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Rose Kennedy Greenway, Atlantic Ave.
Price: Free
 This festival features mouth-watering Asian street food, fun games and family-friendly activities, plus music and a DJ bringing the vibes all day long.
Info: Visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/753139524144514>.

Seabrook 81st Obon
Bridgeton, NJ
July 18
Seabrook Buddhist Temple
9 Northville Road
Price: Free
 Come celebrate Japanese culture, community and tradition! Enjoy Bon Odori dancing, taiko drumming, delicious food and family-friendly fun. A free souvenir booklet will be given to every attendee.
Info: Visit sbtanj.org.

'Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American World War II Experience'
Delray Beach, FL
Thru Aug. 30
Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens
4000 Morikami Park Road
Price: Museum Admission
 This exhibit brings the Japanese American war sacrifice home to Florida, exploring the historic Yamato colony.
Info: Visit morikami.org.

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Kyoko Oda Dead at 80

Lifelong educator sought reconciliation, harmony.

By P.C. Staff

Some knew her as Mrs. Oda. To others, she was Principal Oda. To her friends, depending on where she was during her 80-plus years of life, she was Nancy; to others, Kyoko. It mattered not. As William Shakespeare wrote, "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

So it was for Kyoko Nancy Oda, who died May 15, just days short of her 81st birthday. By any name, she was formidable yet approachable, resolute yet understanding, a reflection of the meaning of her given name when she was born on May 20, 1945.

In a video played at the 2024 Day of Remembrance in Los Angeles, Oda said: "When I was born, my father wrote a poem that said: 'At this moment, the world is in chaos and the future is unknown. It is critical for the world and the family to be united as one and cooperate in harmony. Therefore, I name this baby Kyoko.' Kyoko means harmony. So that poem has given me purpose to bring people together in peace."

As an educator whose 32-year-long career included teaching and serving as a school principal in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Oda also found purpose in uplifting others. One of her former students, Vivien Lou Chen, recalled in her LinkedIn account how, as a sixth-grader, she was bused to Riverside Drive Elementary School in Sherman Oaks, Calif. "Without Mrs. Oda, I would never have made it out

of the barrio in East Hollywood, gone to college or had a career in journalism. She served as my first bridge toward a better life."

Born in the waning months of World War II to Yuriko and Tatsuo Inouye when they were incarcerated at an American concentration camp for ethnic Japanese that came to be known as the Tule Lake Segregation Center, Oda would dedicate a big portion of her life's later years toward shining a light on lesser-known aspects of the Japanese American incarceration experience: as president of the Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition (the City of Los Angeles turned the site into a historic cultural monument), working on getting translated her father's incarceration diary for subsequent publication as "Tule Lake Stockade Diary" in 2020 and organizing for the construction of a WWII Camp Wall in Torrance, Calif.

Oda also strove to live up to the spirit of her given name. She worked to reconcile not just the injustice visited upon her family and other ethnic Japanese by the federal government, but also any unfairness by elements within the Japanese American community, including some in JACL, against Tuleans, those from the camp that was for the so-called troublemakers.

As a member of the San Fernando Valley JACL chapter, she worked with others to have JACL apologize for its treatment of Tule Lake internees, not dissimilar to how JACL itself worked to have



Kyoko Nancy Oda (left) as she was in her younger years to her students and (right) more recently speaking in Little Tokyo on March 18, 2025, against misuse of the Alien Enemies Act.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ODA FAMILY AND GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

the federal government apologize for its treatment of mainland Japanese Americans in 1988 (see Aug. 16, 2019, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/pubecaw9).

It was a contentious issue that prompted letters to the editor to *Pacific Citizen* from those opposed to an official apology from JACL (see Oct. 11, 2019, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/mjfh47f9). Even after JACL made an official apology, Oda worked to hold JACL's feet to the fire regarding 2019's Resolution No. 3 (see April 21, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/39te89fb).

After the 10 War Relocation Authority-operated camps closed with the end of WWII, Oda's family returned to the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles. As a child, she attended Maryknoll School in Little Tokyo.

Among the many achievements and accolades Oda received in her life: earning the rank of *shodan* in judo, being awarded a Women of the Year award in 2010 from the Japanese Women's Society of Southern California and the Downtown Los Angeles JACL



chapter; and, from the Japanese government, an Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, for "enhancing the social welfare of Japanese American society and promoting the friendly relationship between Japan and the United States."

Oda, who lived in Van Nuys, Calif., was a lifelong member of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center, at which she had served as president of its board of directors.

Kyoko Nancy Oda was predeceased by her son, Daron Tatsuro Oda, and her sisters, Frances Takeda and Ernie Jane Masako Nishii. She is survived by her husband, Kay Oda, and their son, Jon (Monique), and daughter-in-law, Yvonne.

A celebration of life is scheduled for June 7 at 3 p.m. at Nishi Hongwanji in Little Tokyo.

To view a video featuring Kyoko Oda on the book "Tule Lake Stockade Diary" that was presented by San Fernando Valley JACL chapter, visit tinyurl.com/ycyd3y5h.

News Briefs

A4 Taps 2 for Board of Directors

The Asian American Arts Alliance (A4) announced that Izumi Fukushima and Townshine Wu have joined its board of directors. ¶ The Television Academy Foundation announced Kevin Iwashina was among three members newly elected to join its board of directors.

Perry's Personal Ass't Iwamasa Will Serve 41-Months in Prison

The Department of Justice announced that Kenneth Iwamasa, the live-in personal assistant of "Friends" actor Matthew Perry, who died Oct. 28, 2023, of a ketamine overdose, was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison for "obtaining and repeatedly injecting" Perry with ketamine. The 61-year-old Toluca Lake, Calif., resident became Perry's personal assistant in 2022. ¶ The Monterey County Sheriff's Office announced the arrest of GuoGuo Lu, 36, of Mountain View, Calif., for allegedly setting fire to the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, the first Zen monastery to open outside Japan. Lu faces charges including arson, making criminal threats, committing a felony hate crime and terrorizing by destructive device, explosive. ¶ Texas authorities charged Ae Son Han, 67, with murder for allegedly helping her husband, Seung Ho Han, 69, carry out two fatal shootings during a May 5 business meeting. He was charged with two counts of capital murder and three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

— P.C. Staff

Rep. Barney Frank Dies at 86

Congressman was '80s redress campaign leader.

By P.C. Staff

Barney Frank died May 19. The quick-witted Democrat who served for 32 years as a United States representative for suburban Boston and the state of Massachusetts was 86.

According to the *Associated*

Press, Frank — who after retiring had moved to Ogunquit, Maine, with husband Jim Ready — entered hospice care in April after a diagnosis of congestive heart failure.

Frank was best-known for his cutting humor; as the first member of Congress to voluntarily reveal he was gay (1987) and later marry

a person of the same gender (2012); and for financial reforms known as the Dodd-Frank Act, with Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

Lesser-known now was his leadership role in Congress as an advocate for Japanese American redress that culminated with President Ronald Reagan signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

It called for an apology from the federal government for its World War II-era treatment of ethnic Japanese in America, for citizens and legal resident aliens then-prohibited from becoming naturalized, along with monetary compensation for still-living Japanese Americans who had experienced the abrogation of their constitutional rights.

In 1988, JACL led a group called Southern California Friends for Redress to honor Frank for his redress efforts and leadership (see Feb. 5, 1988, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/3b87wftz). "Barney Frank was a leader of redress. He was one of the champions for that legislation,"



FROM 1988: Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) was saluted Jan. 30 for his efforts in the passage of H.R. 442 in the House. (From left) Rep. Norman Mineta, George Ogawa, JACL-LEC Executive Director Grayce Uyehara, JACL National President Harry Kajihara, Rep. Frank, Marleen Kawahara, Rep. Robert Matsui and George Takei.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON/PACIFIC CITIZEN PHOTO ARCHIVE

said Trisha Murakawa, who is currently serving as El Camino Community College board of trustees president and was active in JACL at that time.

"He worked side-by-side with the Japanese American members of Congress. Not having a

Japanese American constituency of significance and not being Japanese American himself and not being personally affected by the incarceration, that showed great political courage and conviction of justice. And it showed the kind of person that he was."

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