

JACL

Japanese American Citizens League

CHICAGO CHAPTER

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The Japanese American Citizens League is a non-profit human and civil rights organization dedicated to preserving the civil liberties of Japanese Americans and of all Americans.

We welcome your participation.

Download New Scholarship Guidelines and Applications at jaclchicago.org

Calendar of Events

November 8-9	Midwest District Council Meeting St. Louis, MO
Wednesday, November 12 6 –9 PM	JACL Chicago Annual Meeting & Dinner JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street
December 24 – January 2	JACL Chicago Office Closed Happy Holidays!
January 30	Fred Korematsu Day
Sunday, February 15	Day of Remembrance Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street
Saturday, February 28	AACC Lunar New Year Dinner Hyatt Regency O'Hare

JACL *er*

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Message from Our New President

By Bryan Hara



For those of you that may not know me, my name is Bryan Hara. I am so grateful and excited to be representing JACL Chicago as the new President.

First, I want to thank all the members and supporters of JACL Chicago for your ongoing engagement and investment in our community. I also want to thank the JACL Chicago board for their time working tireless hours, their passion, and their support. Finally, I want to thank Megan Nakano for all her years of commitment as the President of JACL Chicago. Because of all of you, our chapter and our community is as strong as it is today. Our Japanese American community has made huge strides over the years, and we must use that momentum to continue on the path of social justice.

Continued on page 2

Reflections from Our Past President

By Megan Nakano



It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as the President of JACL Chicago for the past decade. I am forever indebted to our community for continuing to support this organization and its mission to secure and maintain the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry.

During my tenure, the chapter has focused on broadening our relationships in the community and on developing programming directed at youth. As a grassroots organization, we depend on a small group of core supporters to provide the manpower and funds to conduct our programming and

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Securing and maintaining the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry.

The JACLER is published by the JACL Chicago Chapter for its members, supporters and friends. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

For More Information

For information about the JACL Chicago Chapter, call 773.728.7171, or visit www.jaclchicago.org

Contact Us

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5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640-1294

Phone: 773.728.7171
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Message from Our New President continued

I am of the Yonsei generation, born on the northwest side of Chicago to Albert Hara and Patti Sugai. As a child of the 80's and 90's, I remember my parents taking me to programs and events run by the JACL, JASC, and Tri-C. The Japanese American community felt so warm and welcoming as I grew up. The community was connected and everyone knew each other, and truly embodied the term "community."

In 5th grade, I moved out to the suburbs and the demographics were very different. There was less diversity and throughout middle school and high school, I grew ashamed of my identity as a Japanese American and an Asian American. It was very clear that I looked different from everyone else. Hearing racist words thrown at me, especially in sports, such as "Jap", "Chink", or "Go back to where you came from", were things that I internalized and led to a rejection of my own identity. I remember one specific instance where a friend told me that my family and I caused the bombing of Pearl Harbor. All I could think was, if he only knew... If he only knew that my grandfather fought in the 442nd. If he only knew that my family was taken from their homes and thrown into incarceration camps with only what they could carry on their backs. If he only knew how generations of Japanese Americans had to deal with this history and pain.

Sadly these experiences only increased my shame of being Asian American. I only hung out with white kids and tried to fit in to be as "white" as possible. This continued throughout my college years without me ever realizing I was never actually comfortable in my own skin. No matter the situation, in the back of my mind I was always on the defensive against potential narrow-minded comments or actions that might come my way.

A few years after college, remembering my times when I was younger, I began volunteering with JACL. From there, I switched careers and got a job at Asian Americans Advancing Justice — Chicago (formerly Asian American Institute), a non-profit organization that empowers Asian Americans through education, leadership, policy, and research. I have learned so much throughout my experience at this job. I have had the opportunity to work on development and fundraising, youth development, curriculum development, legal advocacy, organizational development, and finance and operations, among many other areas. My hope is to take all this knowledge and use it to continue growing JACL Chicago and its mission.

You may be wondering why I told you all of this. I truly believe that it is our job to not only make sure the injustice that happened during WWII never happens again to anyone, but to ensure that our children do not grow up in a world of racism and lost identity. We need to educate everyone about our unique experience as Japanese Americans and how that has affected so many lives. While the world may have improved, I can tell you that our children and youth are still going through the same struggles that you and I went through as kids. Is our community as strong as it was when I was little? Is it as strong as when you were little? Why shouldn't our youth get to enjoy that same Japanese community experience and be proud of who they are? There is still a lot more work to do!

If any of my story resonates with you, you are a believer in JACL Chicago's mission. As a believer in our mission, I challenge each of you to become more involved in whatever way you can. If you know youth that should have the opportunity to participate in our programs, make sure to spread the word. If you aren't a member and want to donate to help build our programs for our community, please do so. If you have time and skills that you want to volunteer, please let us know. It is my pleasure to have accepted the presidency for JACL Chicago, and I look forward to the impact we will have and the great things we will be accomplishing in the future. 🍀

maintain our operations, and we rely entirely on our reputation and the goodwill of the community for survival.

With an aging and changing Japanese American demographic, it is critical that we look beyond our traditional base of supporters in order to maintain and grow our membership. We must strengthen our relationships with other Japanese American and Asian American organizations, other civil rights groups, educational institutions, corporations, and government agencies to share resources and expand our reach. And we must ensure that young Japanese Americans appreciate the legacy of the JACL and come to take responsibility for its future.

To this end, we made a concerted effort to support organizations with complementary missions and conduct joint programming with them. JACL Chicago hosted the 2010 JACL National Convention and the 2014 Asian American Coalition of Chicago's Lunar New Year Celebration which were prime opportunities to strengthen our community and corporate and civic partnerships while raising our profile, highlighting our accomplishments, and addressing issues that are important to us.

Programs such as our annual scholarship program, Project: Community!, Project: Community! Day Camp, and Kansha Project focus on inspiring the next generation to take on leadership roles by instilling in them a deeper appreciation of their Japanese American identity. We educate participants on our shared history, expose them to JA resources and role models, and challenge them to engage in meaningful discourse with their peers so that they will come to gain a better understanding of the Japanese American community and their place in it.

With a robust and talented board in place, a dedicated volunteer base, and a sound financial portfolio, I am confident that JACL Chicago will continue to increase in strength and influence. I thank all of you for your endless support in the fight for a more just and welcoming America for all. 🍀



Spending Time With Those You Love

When I think of fall, I think of changing leaves, hayrides, hot chocolate, and cooler temperatures. I think of football, kids going back to school, and hot apple cider. And for me personally, fall is a wake up call that the holiday season is just around the corner.

Holidays are a time for family. I have so many great memories growing up of gathering around the Thanksgiving table, sitting in front of the Christmas tree, and eagerly awaiting the ball drop on New Year's Eve. I am very fortunate to say that I grew up in a very loving family. We may not have been rich, but my sister and I always knew that our parents loved us and worked hard to provide a good life. My sister and I were taught the value of an education, to respect your elders, and to treat others that way you want to be treated. It's lessons and values that I carry on today.

Now that I'm 29 and getting older, I wish I could go back and change the past. As a little kid, holidays were all about one thing: presents. It's all about what Santa will bring. I think when I was a child, I took family time for granted because I assumed it would always be there. I was 8 when I first experienced the death of a loved one. While I was lucky enough to spend 8 years with this person, I wish I had spent more time with him. But I can't change the past; I can only look change how I do things in the future.

When my relatives and I get together, spending the most time I can is the most important thing. It's all about about everyone catching up, talking and informing everyone about what is going on in their lives. I wish we could all sit there for hours upon hours on end but the truth of the matter is, we're not kids anymore. We all have responsibilities and for some even families now that take a higher priority.

Death, for all of us, is an inevitable part of life. While we never can outrun it, what we can do, and what I urge all of you to do, is to spend as much time as you can with the ones that you love. Sit and have a meal together, learn stories about your loved ones that you never knew before. With all the technologies we have nowadays, you don't have to rush home to watch that TV show you love or the football game of your favorite team. DVR it. Believe me, you'll thank me later. Because when those loved ones are gone, they're never coming back. And the last thing you want is to live with regret that you wish you had spent more time together with that person. Happy holiday season everyone. 🍀

Please join us November 12th

2014
Annual Meeting
& Dinner

6 pm Dinner, 7 pm Meeting
JACL Office, 5415 North Clark

rsvp: 773.728.7171

The Way I See It . . . **Not Your Model Minority**

By Ryan Kenji Kuramitsu

Japanese Americans have had some nasty slurs hurled at us over the years: japs, dogs, nips, traitors, and plenty worse besides. However, as much as these monikers have wounded us, I frequently find myself having to deal with another label, one that ranks among the most pernicious insults to ever brand our community.

That title? Model minority. This is the belief that Asian Americans are inherently more intelligent, industrious, innovative, diminutive, or resourceful than other racial minorities. This mythos comes into play every time our community is complimented for our supposed natural bravery or beauty, every time we're exclusively assigned a "positive stereotype." You've mostly heard this attitude manifest itself in jokes, or casually concealed in prejudiced speech that appears to flatter us.

The troubled history of this trope can be traced back to the incarceration age, when Japanese Americans were able to "prove our worth" to the white majority by the merit of our Nisei's blood, sweat, and tears. Ever since, white supremacists have consistently pointed to our example as irrefutable evidence of the fact that other minority groups simply don't work hard enough to succeed in this country – oh, why can't the blacks and Latinos be more like those industrious, well-behaved Japanese?

But, of course, no ethnicity possesses a natural proclivity for poverty. It's not playing Oppression Olympics (crying I'm more persecuted than you!) to recognize that systematic oppression is profoundly diverse. That is, institutional injustice is not monolithic but chimeric, its tentacles snaking outwards in a million cruel ways.

White supremacy affects different communities differently. Not all marginalized peoples are uprooted and sent to domestic concentration camps. Some are forcibly deported, or marshaled onto dwindling reservations. Others are spared the barbed wire, simply deprived of all professional and economic opportunity, their neighborhoods slowly ghettoized and gentrified. Others still are simply killed by police officers.

Our community cannot advantage its own liberation at the expense of all other oppressed groups. While we should be proud of our accomplishments, we must never intimate that they are the result of our natural superiority, and never passively accept any narrative that paints us in this light. Ultimately, one can't unilaterally extoll the unique virtues of Asian Americans without implicitly cutting down other people of color. We can't believe in "Tiger Moms" without believing in Welfare Queens.

Japanese Americans must actively shed the bizarre, reptilian title that is model minority. To accept this reputation is to try and squeeze our prickly, beautiful, expansive culture into an impossible box that, on closer inspection, is actually a coffin. Japanese Americans are not demure, farcical, harmless. Our community has teeth. And we must shred this myth that tries to sterilize our humanity, mischaracterize our triumphs, and divide us from our friends and neighbors. 🐉

Have something you'd like to say? Submit your comments via email to chicago@jacl.org, or by mail to JACL Chicago Chapter, 5415 N. Clark St., Chicago, Illinois 60640

The views expressed in "The Way I See It . . ." column do not represent a position of the JACL or its Chapters.

Why I'm a JACLER

As a life-long JACLER, I continue to support the JACL for doing what it's done for 75+ years — advocate for the rights of Japanese Americans (and all others as well). Most importantly, I support the JACL's work in the education of JA history and its leadership development programs for young adults. Project Community! for high school students and Project Community! Day Camp for little kids expands young Japanese American's awareness of their own history and identity. The Kansha Project for young adults continues to grow that awareness to provide a more nuanced understanding of their rich JA history.

— Carol Yoshino

The reason my husband and I joined the JACL initially is because they offered a wonderful health insurance plan only for JACL members.

Being a member for many years, I understand now what the JACL stands for. I know that we can make our voices heard all the way to Washington DC.

When there is a racial hate crime or insensitive words are used against the Asian community, JACL staff contact the media to let the public know that we will not tolerate these actions.

I have 2 grandchildren who are bi-racial, African-American and Japanese-American. The JACL stands up and protects their rights. So, now, for them and me, I am a member of the JACL.

— Tonko Doi

Film Review: *Dear White People*

By Christine Munteanu

Last week, I watched a film called *Dear White People*, which follows the experiences of four black students at a predominately white, fictional Ivy League university. It was refreshing to see a movie that focused on the experiences of people of color, rather than the mainstream movies I usually watch that are almost exclusively about white people. Even though I know very little about black identity struggles specifically, as a person of color, there were many moments that I found relatable, familiar, and funny.

I enjoyed the film overall, but as a mixed race Japanese American I was bothered by the portrayal of a biracial black character named Samantha White. Sam is the outspoken, radical leader of the Black Student Union's protests against discriminatory university policies. She hosts a controversial campus radio show that speaks to the black experience, is well-versed in the history of civil rights, and is the new head of an all-black residence hall.

The film follows Sam's struggle with her identity as a biracial black woman. The fact that she is half white is highlighted throughout the film as the reason she feels the need to "overcompensate" through her activism as a way to prove her blackness. Sam's white boyfriend, Gabe, whom Sam repeatedly pushes away as she organizes protests and implements new policies in her residence hall, tells Sam that she is denying her true self by being so militant — after all, he knows she secretly listens to Taylor Swift. Meanwhile, Sam's white father (literally, Mr. White) is suffering from health issues, adding a sense of urgency to Sam's feeling that she must "choose a side."

At the end of the film, Sam casts off her "black rebel" persona to reconcile with

Gabe and embrace her white identity. Her relationship with Gabe, which suffered as Sam doubled down as a black activist (even as he dismissed her commitment to her cause), is restored when Sam apologizes for rejecting him. Instead, Sam veers towards the other extreme, moving out of the all-black dorm, distancing herself from her black friends, questioning the future of her radio show, and even changing her hair.

What I saw in the ending was a white man imposing his own vision of a mixed race woman's identity upon her, leading Sam to break with her previous understanding of who she is.

A major misconception about the mixed race experience is the idea of an immutable conflict between your various "sides." Mixed race identity is framed in a way that forces a choice between two or more incompatible identities (i.e. being black or white, being Asian or white, but never both). At the same time, this framing suggests that to make this choice is to deny an essential part of who you are. Whether you are choosing to "pass" as white, or embrace your identity as a person of color, the assumption is that a percentage of you remains unfulfilled and excluded. But identity is not a static math equation where the sum of our parts need to neatly add up to one. Having a loving relationship with your white parent, dating a white person, or enjoying Taylor Swift is not mutually exclusive with identifying as a person of color.

I was disappointed that a film that got so many things about race and racism right could get its portrayal of multiracial identity so wrong. *Dear White People's* treatment of Samantha White played along the tired stereotypes of the "confused mixed race person," whose loyalties, beliefs, and identity are torn between her two different sides. Instead of mixed race characters who are forced to make a choice between being white or black, it would be nice to see mixed race characters who recognize and accept the fluid and nuanced nature of their racial identity. This type of portrayal will help add to an understanding that we all carry multiple identities that form our sense of self; a sense of self that, as Walt Whitman once wrote, can contradict itself because it "contains multitudes." 🌈



Being mixed race myself, I felt frustrated and betrayed by this ending. My issue isn't that Sam chose to reject her blackness; she has the right to define her identity for herself. What I found problematic was the implication that her identity as a black activist was somehow inauthentic because she is half white.

2015 Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Chicago Chapter



NEW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is a national civil rights and education organization founded in 1929 and with chapters across the country. Since its founding, JACL has taken an active role in dismantling discriminatory barriers for all Asian Pacific Americans.

The Chicago Chapter of JACL administers a scholarship program to help qualified students pursue their educational goals. The program awards several scholarships each year that are funded by generous donations from community sponsors. The scholarships provide financial assistance to promising students who have demonstrated academic excellence and school/community service with a special emphasis on involvement with JACL, social justice, and service within the Japanese American community.

SCHOLARSHIP CATEGORIES

- Scholarships are available to graduating high school seniors entering as freshman to a school of higher learning, continuing undergraduate students, and graduate students.
- Entering freshman should complete the FRESHMAN application. All other applicants should complete the GENERAL application form.
- JACL Chicago reserves the right not to make awards in every category depending upon the type and qualifications of the applicant pool.

ELIGIBILITY — NEW REQUIREMENTS

Scholarship applicants must meet all of the following eligibility requirements.

1. Applicant must be a JACL member at either an Individual or Student/Youth Level. (Parent membership will not meet this requirement.) If the applicant is not a member, he/she must join JACL at the time of application – for information, visit jaclchicago.org or call the JACL Chicago office at (773) 728-7171.
2. Applicant must be a full-time student at a college, university, trade school, business school, or other institution of higher learning within the United States in the fall of 2015. Students deferring enrollment will not qualify for the 2015 scholarship program.
3. A high school senior applicant must be a resident of the State of Illinois for at least one year prior to graduation or graduate from an accredited Illinois high school. Undergraduate and graduate students must be Illinois state residents although attendance at schools outside of Illinois is permissible.
4. Applicant may apply under only one scholarship category (Freshman or General) during the same year.
5. Applicants are not limited as to the number of times they may apply for a scholarship subject to the limitation on the number of awards as outlined in eligibility requirement #6.
6. **NEW:** Recipients of JACL Chicago scholarship awards are limited to one award in each of two categories for a total of two awards. The two categories are (1) graduating high school student and (2) college undergraduate, graduate, law, or medical student. Applicants may win one award as a graduating high school student and one award as a college undergraduate, graduate, law, or medical student. **Undergraduate and graduate applicants may not use high school activities in their applications.**
7. **Scholarship recipients must attend the annual scholarship luncheon scheduled for Sunday, May 17, 2015,** to receive

their awards. Requests for exceptions to attendance must be submitted in writing to the Scholarship Committee at least three weeks in advance of the luncheon and approved by the Scholarship Committee.

8. Note: JACL also administers a National Scholarship Program in addition to the Chicago scholarship program. Each program has its own application. The Chicago application is available at www.jaclchicago.org, and the national program application is available at www.jacl.org. Students may apply for both local and national scholarships in the same year.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

1. Applications will be available at www.jaclchicago.org by the end of November 2014 or from the JACL Chicago Office.
2. The following is a condensed list of supporting documents required to complete a JACL Chicago Scholarship Application: JACL Application, JACL involvement, Personal Statement, Two Letters of Recommendation, Official school transcript(s), SAT and/or ACT test score verification (applicable to graduating high school seniors), Extracurricular activities, Work experience and Community involvement.
3. Two (2) letters of recommendation must be submitted with the application. One letter must be from a teacher, counselor or school administrator. The other could be from the same or employer or community leader. **Recommendations must be in sealed envelopes with the seal signed over by the writer.**
4. Applications and all supporting materials — official transcript, SAT and/or ACT documentation, and letters of recommendation — must be complete in one package to be considered for an award. Materials may not be submitted separately.
 - Your name should appear at the top right of each page and all pages should be numbered
 - Do NOT staple the application or materials – use a paper-clip or binder clip
 - All responses must be typed or printed legibly – **email addresses should be readable**
5. If the SAT/ACT scores are not contained in the official transcript, other official documentation of test scores must be submitted with the application. (Freshman applicants only.)
6. Application and supporting materials must be received by or postmarked no later than Monday, March 2, 2015.

JACL Chicago Scholarship Committee
5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640-1294

Decision of the Scholarship Committee is final.

KEY DATES

November 2014 – Applications will be available for download from the JACL Chicago web site (<http://www.jaclchicago.org>) or by calling the Chicago JACL office at 773/728-7171.

March 2, 2015 – Applications must be received or postmarked by this date for scholarship consideration. Applications must be complete for award consideration.

April 2015 – Scholarship applicants will be notified of the results of the Scholarship Committee's evaluation.

May 17, 2015 – Annual Scholarship Luncheon. Recipients must be present to receive awards unless an exception is approved by the Scholarship Committee.

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General

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(in memory of Violette Maeda)

Fred and Chiyeko Tsuji
(in memory of Aya Yamada)

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(in memory of Brooke Whitted)

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