

July/August 2016

No. 116

A publication of the
JACL Chicago Chapter

JACL

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JACL Transition: The Work of JACL Continues . . .

By Bill Yoshino

Uncertainty often accompanies periods of transition unless it is used as a time to refocus and rededicate our commitment in ways that will advance efforts to carry out JACL's core mission. JACL president, David Lin, and members of the National Board have asked me to serve in the interim until a new JACL executive director is selected.

I accepted because after all the years I've served on the JACL staff, I continue to believe this organization has the capacity to be a leader especially in areas such as education and youth development while still tending to issues of social justice that have defined our history and truly improved the lives of Japanese Americans.

There will be challenges, even in this transition period. Within the last two weeks, JACL has lost the services of two full-time professional staff members. We wish the best to Priscilla Ouchida and Christine Munteanu. And yet, even with their resignations, we haven't decreased our program portfolio and activities, placing even more responsibility on existing staff to perform.

So, what's on our program horizon, and what can you expect from your national staff? Our national convention is scheduled

for July 11-14, in Las Vegas. Our goal will be to successfully conduct the business of JACL where the National Council will elect new officers, debate policy issues, recognize our awardees, find renewal in the inspiring words of our presenters, and importantly, approve a biennial budget, which proposes to reduce staff positions even further, a prospect that will clearly weaken our organization.

After the convention and extending into early August, we will implement an education program funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities where we will host two weeklong sessions with 72 teachers from throughout the country. The teachers will tour the Japanese American National Museum, attend presentations given by experts on many aspects of the incarceration including by former incarcerated. They will visit Santa Anita and Manzanar to bear witness to those places of confinement during WWII.

In September we will begin conducting the next the Kakehashi program, a unique opportunity for students and young adults to gain insight into a variety of fields including the culture, politics, and economics of Japan. Beginning with trips in September, the program will host 200

Continued on page 2

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

Article submission deadline for our next issue is 8/19/16.

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

For More Information

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

Contact Us

JACL Chicago Chapter
5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640-1294

Phone: 773.728.7171
Fax: 773.728.7231
Email: chicago@jacl.org
Web: www.jaclchicago.org

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JACL Transition continued

participants in three groups extending into early 2017.

Throughout the fall our civic engagement program, funded through a grant from the Coulter Foundation, will challenge our chapters and members to engage in voter registration, voter education, and get-out-the-vote efforts to be active participants in citizenship responsibilities. Of course, there are additional important programs such as scholarship, NY/SC, Legacy Fund grants, leadership, and the Smithsonian project beckons as a centerpiece in 2017, when we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the signing of EO 9066.

Farewell to Christine!

By Carol Yoshino, JACL Chicago Member

Some six (or maybe closer to seven) years ago, a young woman applied to National JACL for a position as the Ford Fund Fellow at the Midwest JACL Office. She had outstanding credentials: a bachelors degree from Wesleyan University, a stint as an AmeriCorps volunteer with work experience with the then Asian American Institute (now known Advancing Justice). A native of New Brunswick, New Jersey, Christine Munteanu had moved to Chicago to start her career — and we JACLers, especially in Chicago, have greatly benefitted from her contributions.

During her tenure Christine has become a part of our Chicago JA community and grown in her expertise in becoming an integral part in creating JACL Chicago's Project Community! designed for high school students and Project Community Day Camp for kids between 6 and 10 years old. Then came the Kansha Project. Christine has been the driving force in establishing this project for young adults as well as its offshoot Kansha Too! for adults held last September. In each of these programs, Christine showed her creative skills in establishing program content that would be both meaningful as well as fun for the young participants. The young students, teenagers, young adults, and "regular" adults all learned a

I am hopeful the JACL National Board will move quickly with its search and selection process to identify and hire a JACL executive director. In the meantime, to see us through this period of transition, we have a staff composed of experienced and committed individuals including Patty Wada, Tomiko Ismail, Stephanie Nitahara, Matt Walters, Mariko Fujimoto, and Mei Kuang. In addition, we value our energetic fellows and interns, Merissa Nakamura, Emil Trinidad, Malin Ouk, and Jennifer Kaku.

There is much to do. We need your cooperation. The work of JACL continues. 🌱

great deal from her program designs and admired her for her unfailing commitment to her work.

A few years ago, Christine's Ford Fellowship turned into a full-time job as Assistant Program Director with JACL National. Her portfolio included working on anti-defamation and hate crime issues, conducting multiracial identity workshops at national educational conferences as well as at campus student conferences, working with JACL's National Youth Student Council, and in her "spare" time, writing numerous grants to fund JACL programs, as well as earning a Masters in Education in Youth Development from the University of Illinois Chicago.

So it is with deep regret that we say "farewell to Christine" from her JACL National staff and JACL Chicago duties, as she takes the next step in her blooming career as Assistant Director for Multicultural Student Affairs at Northwestern University.

Christine, you have our utmost admiration, respect, and gratitude for your commitment to JACL, our Japanese American community, and for simply being our wonderful friend! While we will miss you day-to-day, we know we will still see you as you continue being "one of us." 🌱



2016 JACL Chicago Golf Tournament

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Glenview Park Golf Club

800 Shermer Road, Glenview, IL

9:00 am

Cost: \$85/golfer (Lunch will be served after golf.)

Please RSVP to the JACL office by July 15th.

[Go to jaclchicago.org](http://jaclchicago.org) for information and registration form.

The Manzanar Fishing Club Screening and Director Q&A

By Mari Yamagiwa, JACL Chicago AmeriCorps VISTA

On Tuesday, June 14th, JACL Chicago hosted a free screening of *The Manzanar Fishing Club* and a Q&A with the producer/director, Cory Shiozaki at Christ Church of Chicago. Over 130 community members attended the event!

Cory Shiozaki is a *sansei* with family roots in Chicago. He is also a docent at the Manzanar National Historic Site and a licensed and bonded trout fishing guide for the Eastern Sierra. *The Manzanar Fishing Club* was an idea that was first conceived in 2004, and after years of research and collecting interviews and stories, the documentary was released in 2012. *The Manzanar Fishing Club* has received several awards and has been featured many times for screening events on the West and East coasts. But this was the first time the film was shown in the Midwest.

The evening began with screening the documentary which set the historical backdrop of the Japanese American incarceration during WWII and the struggle that came along with that experience. The film then goes on to share the stories of men and women who would sneak out of the Manzanar concentration camp to go fishing in the nearby streams and mountains. They would later return to the barbed wire enclosure. The powerful stories in the film demonstrate resilience, creativity, and just a human desire to be free.

During the Q&A portion of the event, Cory answered questions from attendees and was able to give additional insights about Manzanar, the incarceration, and the internal struggle that many experienced. In addition to this, about a half dozen former internees attended the event. We had the privilege of hearing some of their first-hand stories from places like Manzanar and Terminal Island. Several people also commented on how this film and story relates to current issues of discrimination including anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment.

This event was made possible by the volunteers who provided snacks and helped make sure everything went smoothly, the

support of Christ Church of Chicago, who donated the use of their space and equipment, and a grant from Illinois Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly. I hope we can continue to provide opportunities for our community to come together and explore our history! 🇺🇸



Photo: Susan Takaki

DIRECTOR CORY SHIOZAKI ANSWERS AUDIENCE QUESTIONS AT THE SCREENING OF *THE MANZANAR FISHING CLUB*.

2016 JACL National Convention

July 12 – July 15

Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

For more information go to
www.jacl.org/2016convention

2016 JACL Chicago Scholarship Luncheon

By Judy Tanaka, JACL Chicago Scholarship Chair and Board Member

JACL Chicago Scholarships were recently awarded to six outstanding students. More than fifty JACL members, supporters, students and their families attended the JACL Chicago Scholarship Luncheon on May 22 to celebrate the students' achievements and recognize the people on behalf of whom the scholarships were donated.

Robert Mita, JACL Chicago Community Outreach Co-chair and parent of three past scholarship recipients, served as emcee. Megan Nakano, JACL Chicago President Emeritus, spoke eloquently to the attentive audience:

"Our founders chose the name Japanese American Citizens League very deliberately. Back in 1929, they understood the value of their citizenship and the freedoms and rights that were promised with it. Their pride in their citizenship made their treatment during WWII that much more insulting. It is the charge of our legacy to ensure that all guests and citizens alike feel welcomed in this country and that their civil rights be protected. We must hold our politicians and each other accountable to a higher American ideal."



2016 JACL CHICAGO SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS.

TOP ROW: MARY COOMES, JAMES OZAKI, DELLINGER SATO, AND RYAN CHIOU

BOTTOM ROW: ELIZABETH ODA AND ARIELLE KATZ

This also marks the first year that the Chiye Tomihiro Memorial Scholarship was presented, funded by her generous bequest to JACL. In addition to serving as chapter president, board member and dedicated JACL member, Ms. Tomihiro shared her WWII experience in many forums including in testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Her purpose was to educate so that the injustice of internment would not reoccur.

As tradition, the luncheon profiled each student awardee as well as described the scholarship that was being awarded. The students and their awards are listed below. The chapter thanks the generous donors and JACL Sponsor-A-Grad supporters who make the scholarship program possible. Also, appreciation is extended to the dedicated and hard-working scholarship committee of Bob Brown, Marisa Fujinaka, Rosemary Lee, Joyce Morimoto, Christine Munteanu, Megan Nakano, Rebecca Ozaki, and Ken Yoshitani. 🌸

2016 JACL Chicago Scholarship Winners

John Iwaoka Memorial Scholarship

Ryan Chiou,
Highland Park High School

Mas Nakagawa Memorial Scholarship

Dellinger Sato,
Luther College

Hank and Mary Sakai Memorial Scholarship

Arielle Katz,
Glenbrook North High School

Mitzi Shi Schectman Memorial Scholarship

Elizabeth Oda,
Aurora Christian High School

Chiye Tomihiro Memorial Scholarship

Mary Coomes,
University of Chicago
James Ozaki,
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

June 9, 2016

Dear Chicago JACL Scholarship Committee,

I am deeply honored and beyond grateful to JACL for selecting me as the recipient of the 2016 John Iwaoka Memorial Scholarship. I cannot thank you enough for your generosity. After my brother, Tyler, passed away from neuroblastoma cancer, I have known that it is my purpose in life to find a cure for this malicious pediatric cancer. I was thrilled when I was accepted at Washington University in St. Louis, renowned for its medical research opportunities, but I was uncertain how I was going to afford such an expensive tuition. I now have JACL to thank for helping me pursue my dream of finding the cure for neuroblastoma cancer.

It is because of JACL's generosity that I am more motivated than ever to reach that goal that I set for myself 11 years ago. I will honor John Iwaoka's dream by pushing myself with increased determination and becoming a more involved Member within JACL to give back and pass the gift forward. I would like to someday fund a scholarship for JACL of my own. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to follow my dream and honor my brother Tyler's death and John Iwaoka's legacy.

Sincerely,
Ryan Chiou

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2016 Chicago Nikkei Community Annual Memorial Day Commemoration

By Erik Matsunaga

In 1935, the Japanese Mutual Aid Society of Chicago began purchasing burial plots at Montrose Cemetery on the city's North Side. Due to discrimination of the day, Montrose was one of few cemeteries in the area that would inter the remains of deceased persons of Japanese ancestry. In 1937 the Mutual Aid Society erected a Japanese Mausoleum and in 1938 began hosting an annual Memorial Day commemoration.

The majority of Japanese Americans in the Chicago area today are descendants of late 19th and early 20th century immigrants who, along with their American-born children, fell victim to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which forcibly removed all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast in 1942, spreading them among ten concentration camps further inland.

Prior to this, however, there were roughly 400 documented persons of Japanese ancestry living in Chicago, who were not affected by E.O. 9066's mass incarceration. Because the West Coast remained closed to Japanese Americans until 1945, many resettled in Chicago due to its wealth of employment and educational opportunities. Through work and study early-release programs, and finally the closure of the camps, from 1942-1945 the Japanese American population in Chicago swelled from 400 to over 20,000.

The Japanese Mutual Aid Society was instrumental in assisting these early re-settlers with housing, translation, as well as medical and legal services. As subsequent organizations were formed to lighten the load of transitioning former internees into their new homes, the Mutual Aid Society reverted to its maintenance of the mausoleum and purchasing of burial plots on behalf of the community.

2016 marked the 78th annual Chicago Japanese American Community Memorial Day Commemoration at Montrose Cemetery's Japanese Mausoleum. With



ABOVE: POSTING OF COLORS BY CHICAGO NISEI POST #1183.
RIGHT: THE CHICAGO SOYOKAZE CHORUS, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. HISASHI SHOJI.



Photos Tom Yatabe

approximately two hundred-fifty people in attendance, it set under way at 11 a.m. with the Posting of the Colors by Chicago Nisei Post #1183's Color Guard. Founded in 1949 by World War II veterans as the Rome Arno Post, the American Legion Chicago Nisei Post—which it was renamed in 1953—counts over 200 members nationwide from all branches of the military, representing veterans of campaigns dating from World War II through the present.

Ceremony emcee Robert Kumaki, Vice President of the Japanese Mutual Aid Society, followed with both opening remarks outlining the historical context of Montrose Cemetery with regard to the *Nikkei* community, and introductions of a series of bilingual Japanese/English prayers, chants, and songs led by the clergy and choirs of Chicago's various *Nikkei* religious groups. An offering of flowers was then presented by representatives of several Chicago Japanese American organizations.

The torch of Chicago's Japanese American community's leadership has been passed through the generations from the founding *Issei* of the pre-war period to the largely resettled post-war *Nisei*, and now the *Sansei* who have been raised as native Chicagoans. As a *Yonsei* I have begun attending community events with my *Gosei* children, and see others doing the same.

On a personal note, 2016 is the 112th anniversary of my Japanese ancestors' arrival to the United States. For all their battles with discrimination and trials toward becoming accepted as fully American, I think the *Issei* generation would be heartened to know that their lives and contributions, as well as those of their American-born descendants who fought and died under the U.S. Flag on the world's battlefields, have allowed for us to finally be able to assemble at will for such events without suspicion or hostility. 🇺🇸

Kansha Project Culmination

By Lane Mita, JAACL Chicago Youth Committee Co-Chair, ALB Finance Committee Chair

I have to say being a part of the Kansha Project has been such a rewarding experience. I was able to channel some of my enthusiasm for the program through the Alumni Leadership Board (ALB) where I am the chair on the Finance Committee. The Kansha Project has grown so much over the years, and this year marked the 5th year anniversary. I had the opportunity to emcee this year's culmination, which was held at the Skokie Banquet and Conference Center on June 18th.

Each year, following the trip to LA and Manzanar National Historic Site, participants share their experience and reflections with the Japanese American community in Chicago. Originally, participants created videos that captured their time in California, but the facilitators believed that the participants could appreciate their experience more without having to record everything. This year, the participants were able to share their experience through a medium of their choosing. Projects that were on display included art, spoken word reflections, a coloring book, and picture albums among other projects. It was a great change of pace for the program. Every time I go to a culmination I leave feeling inspired by the passion of the program participants.

During this year's "Question and Answer" portion, I noticed that members of the community want to see this program grow into a national prospect. I definitely would love to see this becoming a national program, but I believe that our ALB needs to grow first. Our program coordinator, Christine Munteanu, worked hard behind the scenes and successfully guided the ALB during its pilot year. Christine has done so much for our community, and we thank her for all of her work as her time with the JAACL has come to an end. The ALB is always considering ways we can further develop the Kansha Project, and perhaps it may one day expand to a national program.

I greatly appreciate the community coming out and showing their support for the Kansha Project! The Alumni Leadership Board had set a fundraising

goal of \$15,000 in January of this year. Throughout the past few months, the Alumni Leadership Board held fundraising events at the Nisei Lounge in Wrigleyville and Lou Malnati's Pizza in Lincolnwood. The Kansha Project is also funded by the JAACL Legacy Fund Grant program, the Chicago Japanese American Council, and

many individual donors! The alumni board is proud to present to the community that we have exceeded our goal of \$15,000 and we have raised **\$15,187!** We would not be here without the support of the community and we're looking forward to the future of the Kansha Project. 🙏



1 KANSHA PARTICIPANTS RESPOND DURING Q & A.



2 KANSHA PARTICIPANT MIKI TAKESHITA HAS A DISCUSSION WITH JAACL BOARD MEMBER, PAT YUZAWA-RUBIN.



3 KANSHA PARTICIPANTS GREG KIMURA AND KRISTIN OSAKADA AT A KANSHA PROJECT DISPLAY.

4 KANSHA PROJECT ALUMNI AND ALUMNI LEADERSHIP BOARD THANK CHRISTINE MUNTEANU FOR HER DEVELOPMENT AND DEDICATION TO THE KANSHA PROJECT PROGRAM.



Photos: Robert Brown

5 Year Reflection

By Rebecca Ozaki, JAACL Chicago Youth Committee Co-Chair, ALB Program Committee Chair

I stood at the Manzanar cemetery staring out at the mountains with the wind gusting; forcing flocks of colorful paper cranes to glide across the dirt, getting stuck in the shrubs outside the wooden fence. The silence forced me to reflect on what has changed the community since the last time I stood in that spot in 2012, during the Inaugural year of the Kansha Project and more importantly, where the Kansha Project is headed.

Five years ago, the Kansha Project began a movement in our community. For many of us, the Kansha Project was the first time we found people like Christine Munteanu, Bill Yoshino, John Tateishi, and other Kansha participants that made us feel like we belong and that we have a stake in the future of our ever-changing Japanese American community. Five years later, we've returned from the 2016 Kansha Project where Alumni of the program spent the past nine months planning, implementing, and facilitating the trip (thanks to our fearless leader, Christine). As a facilitator on the trip, it was powerful to see our hard work manifest itself, to see the direct impact of the Kansha Project on this year's brilliant participants, and most importantly to hear how they are planning to be involved in the Japanese American community moving forward. It's even more powerful to know that the Kansha Project can be a fully youth-driven community project because it shows that although the city of Chicago is dwindling in physical community space and Japanese American owned institutions, we are simultaneously growing our youth power to connect our community beyond physical boundaries.

During the Kansha Project, we hear the stories of leaders from the past that have given my generation the opportunity to create the community we want to believe in. Leaders like Yuri Kochiyama, Fred Korematsu, my grandfather-Sam Ozaki, and Bill Yoshino have shown us what justice, compassion, and community look like. What I learned from the Kansha Project

this year is that we do not all need to be civil rights leaders to move our community forward and reflect social justice values but we do need to find our own place in this story in a way that makes the most sense for each of us. We need to understand the history of the community and make sure we stand next to other marginalized communities in solidarity.

Standing in Manzanar concentration camp watching those paper cranes move in the wind made me feel like healing has begun for me and the community. We are rebuilding the Japanese American community into the space that we want to see. As we transform and look forward to the next five years of the Kansha Project, I'm excited to figure out together what we want our community to be and what communities we will stand in solidarity with to make this happen. In the next five years, we can potentially expand the program

beyond Chicago and we have opportunity to bridge communities through having other community youth participate in the Kansha Project. In the next five years, the Kansha Project might look different but the impact will be the same. Let's figure out what that looks like together. 🌱



Photo: John Adachi



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Kansha Project 2016 Reflection

By Miki Takeshita, Kansha Project Participant

“ In February 1942, the War Relocation Authority began to establish centers where Japanese Americans, including those born in the United States, were interned. Though this was clearly racial discrimination that violated constitutional due process requirements, the Supreme Court ruled that such internment was lawful in 1944, when it decided *Korematsu v. United States*.”

These were the two sentences written in my US history textbook that I used in high school. That was it. Only two sentences. Just two incredibly reductive sentences that are a complete insult to the Japanese Americans who lived through this horrible experience.

As an 11th grader who used this textbook during her US History course, I merely glossed over these two sentences, not understanding the significance of their emptiness. Since then, I have declared a history major and am currently in the process of researching for my senior thesis, but I have to admit that I've become largely desensitized to history. From the day I read those two sentences to my last day of history class just two weeks ago, I've come to realize that I've liked history because it was intellectually stimulating. I liked the process of doing research, liked touching old documents

or objects in the archival center or formulating an argument in my head and piecing all pieces of the puzzle together. I liked learning about people's stories, as long as they weren't traumatic or in any way related to mine. It's easy to write about displaced tenants in postwar New York when you're not one. It's easy to write about the Chinese during the Opium War when you're not one. And when you go to a school like mine that emphasizes the life of the mind, it's easy to get caught up on theory rather than the real importance of history, like what it can teach us about humanity and what lessons we can learn from it.

This trip has deeply instilled in me two lessons that have allowed me to grow as a historian, something that school was not able to teach me. One is that history is a mish mash of individual experiences that have shaped the course of events. It is not dictated by a common one-stream narrative that has been fed to us constantly. The Japanese American experience cannot be limited to a narrative, because it is incredibly diverse and complex. There were ruptures in the Japanese American community over the loyalty questionnaire, whose two questions broke apart families. Further ruptures in the family happened when at the mess hall kids would eat with other

kids and not with their families. Tensions arose during the talks of reparations. We learned about the generational divide, and how the *Sansei* were inspired by the Civil Rights Movement to bring justice to their parents. We learned about how the very organization that organizes the Kansha Project was in hot water 40 years ago for even bringing it up in the first place. These are the things that should be written about in textbooks.

Even this group reflects the diversity of the Japanese American community. We don't consist of only people whose family members were incarcerated. I am a *Shin-Nisei*, whose family wasn't incarcerated, and there are some others on the trip whose family members have never been in the incarceration camps either. Some of us live in Boston, Hawaii, New York. We have different career paths, different personal interests. Some of us speak Japanese, some of us don't.

But this trip brought a halt to our lives and brought us together to the same place. I find it profound that despite our differences many of us at this time were probably asking the same questions in our head about our identity and what it means to be a Japanese American. And what this trip has provided me is a visceral experience, one that would

2016 Kansha Reflection

By Lisa Doi, ALB Program Committee Member

My grandparents passed away the year before I participated in the Kansha project. After traveling to Little Tokyo and Manzanar, I realized that there were so many questions that I could never ask. Were they scared? How was the food? Did they ever see their homes again? The answers died with them.

The Kansha Project started a four year long funeral. I thought the Japanese American community was dying and I was looking for a way to embalm the memories. But returning to work on this years' Kansha Project with the ALB

changed my mind. This is a story of birth, of non-linear time. Watching the way that the group grew and changed over four short days showed me that the Japanese American community in Chicago is growing, drawing on sources I could never have imagined. The way forward draws from the past, but is not completely beholden to it. 🍡

KANSHA PROJECT PARTICIPANTS WITH ALAN NISHIO AND STEPHANIE NITAHARA AT THE HOME IS LITTLE TOKYO MURAL.



Photo: Lisa Doi

not have happened if I had stayed in Chicago and just read some books on my own. We all felt the dust raging at our faces and our bare knees at Manzanar, whether we were out in the field doing service work under the sweltering sun and felt the eyes of tourists looking at us like we were an exhibit, or if we were out on our own walking through the barracks, listening to the stories of the incarcerated and taking in the silence of our surroundings. We all felt the vibrancy of Little Tokyo as it strives to become a more

inclusive neighborhood that is warding off those who do not respect the space, we all sat in that one room at the Whitney Portal Hostel just last Friday and shared our vulnerabilities. We all came together as a community to deal with the trauma and grief of learning about our identity and legacy as Japanese Americans.

Leaving Los Angeles and going on the plane to New York, separated from the others who were headed back to Chicago, left me feeling uncertain and shaken. As I started my job that morning, I wondered if others felt the same as they resumed their daily life activities. I wondered, *what's next for me?* While the rest of my summer days were predictable, I felt somewhat lost. Many of us had talked about our own personal uncertainties, like where we stand in the Japanese American community, what steps we take now to become more involved in the community, quarter-life crises, figuring out if we wanted to stay in Chicago or move elsewhere. Ironically



KANSHA PROJECT PARTICIPANTS AND CHAPERONES VISIT THE CEMETERY AT MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE WITH NATIONAL PARK STAFF.

Photo: Kenji Negi

paragraphs because this is not just Japanese American history; this is American history, and it deserves to be treated as such. And a big part of that must be a full incorporation of the incarceration camp experience in school curricula. Just two hours after returning from Manzanar, I was in Santa Monica where I saw a man preaching hateful lies about Islam to a group of curious onlookers. If most of them believed him, they will tell their friends and family, who will tell their friends and family. This is

I felt myself wanting to return to the comfort of Manzanar, surrounded by the beautiful Sierra Nevada mountains and by those that I had started to consider family. Was this in any way reminiscent of the same uncertainty the *Nisei* felt when they left the camps, their future unknown, with only \$25 and a train ticket in hand? Did they also feel uncertain about leaving behind their community?

This uncertainty will continue to persist as I go about my life figuring out my passions and interests. But one thing is certain: there needs to be a dramatic reform of the way Japanese American history is taught, not only to vindicate the Japanese American community but to further prevent the discrimination and even incarceration of other minority communities. The mainstream narrative must be dismantled to include the stories of individual experiences, oral histories, and how the aftereffects of the camp experience still is prevalent today. It deserves more than two sentences or two

the kind of rhetoric that got Japanese Americans incarcerated in the first place. How do you teach empathy? How do you get people to feel the dust, to feel the heat, to empathize with the sadness and the trauma of a community they don't identify with? Now that people are fighting ideologies rather than an actual country, how does this change how the Japanese American community can support those who are subject to discrimination and hate crimes?

I don't really know the answers to these questions. But this is something I've committed myself to thinking about, and I am incredibly grateful for the chance I had to ask them and to be in conversation with other Japanese Americans on these hard topics. It's a dialogue that I'm hoping to continue with all of you and many other members of the Japanese and non-Japanese community as my responsibility. 🌱

Reflection on Kansha 2016

By Kenji Kuramitsu, ALB Program Committee Member

As a member of the Kansha Alumni Board, I helped chaperone this year's trip to Los Angeles and Manzanar. I first attended the Kansha Project as a participant two years ago, where I was cut to the heart. There, I met a community that I didn't know I was a part of. Manzanar left me altered, marked and sent away with a new theology, a new community, even a new name.

In the camp's museum this past weekend I happened across a guestbook that had been laid out for visitors to record their thoughts. There was a lot of beauty in those pages. Then I glimpsed something that seized my attention.

*"Make America Great Again!
Vote Donald Trump!
Let's do this to the Muslims!"*

To see this scribbled on the side of a building somewhere, or on a sign at a white nationalist rally is an entirely different experience than finding it written in a safe place that is supposed to belong to us. Someone ostensibly drove hours into the middle of the desert to stain this sacred space with their prejudice.

Two years ago, in the town neighboring Manzanar, we visited a Chinese restaurant for dinner, where everyone quickly delved into our food with exhausted smiles. After spending the day working in the desert, as we ate I was wearing my kufiyah (a traditional Middle Eastern headscarf), when an older white waiter stormed past me and tore it off my head. Stunned, I returned the garment to my head. No one else had seemed to notice. The man (the restaurant's owner!) re-approached and demanded that I take that thing off my head right now. Confused, I voiced protest. I didn't know what was going on. He demanded again that I remove the garment, and I told him firmly but shaking, no. He stormed off, but continued to glare for the rest of the meal. Our group, shaken, cried in the hostel for what felt like hours afterwards.

When an act of prejudice occurs so near to an intimate place that is supposed to be sacred, it wounds twice over. The

violence is, in a sense, doubled. It robs a vulnerable community of what precious sense of security they have. This is what happened when a white supremacist terrorist shot up a black church in Charleston last summer. With news of the shooting of a gay nightclub in Orlando this Sunday, once again a marginalized community is feeling similarly shaken. These are supposed to be sanctuaries that are protected from wider currents of exclusion and prejudice, not their epicenters.

On our first day in Little Tokyo, we were taken on a political tour by Alan Nishio and Stephanie Nitahara. As we walked around the neighborhood, we heard compelling stories of the various ways that the neighborhood has long resisted incursions by powerful city interests who seek to extinguish the community's authentic Japanese American identity through political bullying and gentrifying. They would rather carve this space into parking lots and yuppie kitsch, we learned, than let its original inhabitants thrive. But the community is fighting back.

It struck me on the final day of our trip: we are each a Little Tokyo. There are vast forces outside of each of us trying



Photo: Kenji Negi

SOME OF THE KANSHA PROJECT PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS IN FRONT OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM.

to encroach upon our identities, maiming our dignity and self-sufficiency. As a Japanese American, powerful interests will try to parcel you apart, claiming that you cannot be all of who you are. And yet as the poet Lucille Clifton writes: "come celebrate with me — every day something has tried to kill me and has failed." Something has tried to crush and silence us, and it has failed. Ha! Won't

you sing with me? We need to speak, to sing, to dance and write and dream and tell our stories, particularly the stories of the camp experiences, because no one else will.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to work, laugh, and cry alongside this year's participants.

They are the true players here. I pray that our community is there to support them when they need it most. Our future as *Nikkei* is in very good hands. 🌱

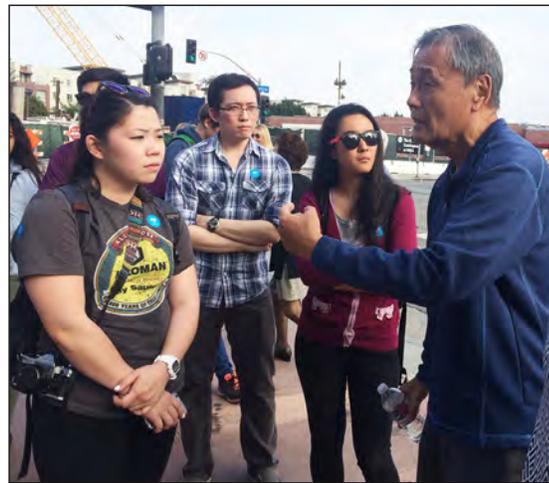


Photo: Lisa Doi

ALAN NISHIO LEADS KANSHA PROJECT PARTICIPANTS ON A POLITICAL TOUR OF LITTLE TOKYO.

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Go to jaclchicago.org
or call 773.728.7171 for details.

Chicago Nikkei Picnic

Saturday, July 30th · 11 AM

Bunker Hill Forest Preserve, Grove #7
Touhy & Harts Rd, Niles, IL

Facing Forward: A Panel Discussion on Mixed-Race/Ethnic Japanese Americans and Community

Tuesday, July 19th · 6:30 – 8 PM

JASC
4427 N. Clark Street

JACL

Japanese American Citizens League

CHICAGO CHAPTER

5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640-1294
p: 773.728.7171
f: 773.728.7231
e: chicago@jacl.org
w: jaclchicago.org



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.

Go Green! Receive the JACler newsletter (in full color), news and updates via email. See page 2

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, July 6 7–9 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street, Chicago
July 11 – 14	JACL National Convention Las Vegas, NV
Tuesday, July 19 6:30 – 8 PM	Facing Forward: A Panel Discussion on Mixed-Race/Ethnic Japanese Americans and Community JASC, 4427 N. Clark Street, Chicago
Thursday, July 21 9 AM	2016 JACL Chicago Golf Tournament Glenview Park Golf Club, 800 Shermer Road, Glenview, IL
Saturday, July 30 11 AM	Chicago Nikkei Picnic Bunker Hill Forest Preserve, Grove #7, Touhy and Harts Road, Niles, IL
Wednesday, August 10 7–9 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street, Chicago
August 12 –14	Ginza Holiday Festival Midwest Buddhist Temple, 435 W Menomonee Street, Chicago