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JACL Chicago Holds Day of Remembrance Vigil at Broadview ICE Facility

by the Rev. Kenji Kuramitsu, Priest Associate, St. Paul and the Redeemer Episcopal Church

Each Day of Remembrance, I am struck by time's rapid clip—how many years have accrued since Executive Order 9066, how fewer and fewer survivors remain to place that era in living memory. This is often a sad realization, as the witness of these ancestors remains more essential than ever.

This year, I was grateful that JACL Chicago made the bold decision to hold a vigil on February 19, Day of Remembrance, outside of the ICE concentration camp in Broadview, IL. About 75 participants gathered a short distance from the dilapidated-looking prison to raise their voices, exchange and listen to prepared remarks, and participate in a ritual led by local Buddhist clergy and liberation thinker Rev. Patti Nakai. Families held photographs of their incarcerated ancestors and lifted up signs calling out inhumanity and violence, then and now. Many tears flowed as intergenerational stories were shared and the feebleness of our individual voices joined in a collective shout: No, never again. Wrong in 1942, wrong now!

Speakers documented the litany of racialized abuses to which they and their communities had been subjected, drawing obvious connections between the wartime



THE REV. KURAMITSU SPEAKS FROM A BULLHORN OUTSIDE THE BROADVIEW ICE DETENTION FACILITY.

PHOTO BY ALEC OZAWA

Broadview continued on page 10

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 Oct. 14th, 2026.

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

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PHOTOS BY TOM YATABE

NISEI POST VETERANS CONCLUDE THE MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE.

Memorial Day Service Honors Rich History of Chicago's Japanese Americans

by Tom Yatabe

By 1934 Chicago's Japanese population had grown to about 300. As their numbers grew, there was a disproportionate number of cases of single restaurant workers who died without relatives or funds. Between 1920 and 1934, 80 percent of those who passed were without means and needed assistance with their final expenses and burials. Due to discrimination, graves were scattered in various cemeteries, many untraceable. Concerned employers began a movement to raise funds for proper end-of-life services.

In 1934, a small number gathered and established the formal organization. The group appealed to the Japanese community to join the new organization, aptly named the Japanese Mutual Aid Society of Chicago (JMAS). The society's purpose was threefold: to purchase centrally located cemetery lots; to help pay for final expenses of those who died without family or funds; and to provide necessary social services to the Japanese community.

The organization was formally launched



THE JAPANESE MUTUAL AID SOCIETY MONUMENT AT MONTROSE CEMETERY.

in January 1935 with the election of board members and the purchase of lots in Montrose Cemetery. Some funds were donated by Japan's Ambassador, Hiroshi Saito. Mr. Saito later wrote the inscription now designating the Japanese Mausoleum at Montrose Cemetery. These lots formed the nucleus of the Japanese section of the cemetery. Construction of the Mausoleum was completed by May 1937, and an unveiling ceremony was held on Memorial Day 1938, the first official Memorial Day service. The JMAS became a focal point of activity

Memorial continued on page 15

'Enough' premieres at Chicago's Day of Remembrance, highlights past and present injustices

by Mary Samson

Approximately 150 people attended Chicago's 2026 Day of Remembrance program on Sunday, February 22 at the Chicago History Museum in recognition of the impact of Executive Order 9066. Full Spectrum Features presented the premiere showing of "Enough," the third installment in a trilogy of films concerning the Japanese American incarceration experience of World War II. The 20-minute film focused on redress issues and was filmed on the campus of Northeastern Illinois University, the location where the 1981 Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) hearings occurred.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Ashley Cheyemi McNeil, director of education and research at Full Spectrum Features. Panelists included Britt Dantley, Psy.D, licensed marriage and family therapist, Certified Clinical Trauma Professional; Rebecca Ozaki, program director at the Japanese American Citizens League - Chicago chapter; Scott Sakiyama, JD, organizer of efforts to resist the abuse of federal power through ICE; Brian Tee, director, producer and lead actor in "Enough"; and myself, a former redress activist. Following the panel discussion, a reception was held featuring Kansha Project participants' Culmination projects.

A NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR JAPANESE AMERICAN
REDRESS MEETING
AT SAM OZAKI'S HOUSE.



PANELISTS BRIAN TEE, BRITT DANLEY, SCOTT SAKIYAMA AND REBECCA OZAKI. PHOTO BY DANIEL SANJI.

Also, the DOR Committee's sponsoring organizations—Chicago Japanese American Council, Chicago Japanese American Historical Society, JACL Chicago, Japanese American Service Committee, and the Japanese Mutual Aid Society of Chicago—provided information about their organizations.

It was eerie and bone-chilling to participate in a panel discussion of similar present-day violations of civil rights and intergenerational trauma some 40 years after my involvement with the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR) class-action lawsuit began at the CWRIC hearings. I never imagined that the political and social climate of our country would tolerate violations of civil liberties experienced today.

Tee's creative work establishes a jumping-off point for educational venues and illustrates how storytelling is effective in connecting the past to the present. Ozaki's and Sakiyama's activism experiences shed light on current harms and gave positive voices to their bold stands for community support and aid. Danley offered practical methods for dealing with the physical aspect of trauma.

Over time, it has become apparent that redress is the tip of the iceberg of intergenerational trauma resulting from Executive Order 9066. The need for support and healing of trauma within our community is far-reaching. I now realize that during the '80s, I subconsciously avoided dealing with interpersonal issues by immersing myself into the academic process of redress; my self-awareness has expanded due to the courageous efforts of community members.

Today, our nation again faces issues of civil rights violations and polarizing viewpoints. Questions arise, such as: How did we get here? How are the forces that supported "other-ism" in the past similar to those of today, and how are they different? "Enough" sparks much-needed discourse between historical background and our contemporary lived experiences. 🍵



PHOTO BY EDDIE SATO

SAVE
the DATE

An Immersive, Live Show
that Dares Us to Live Courageously



DEFINING COURAGE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Athenaeum Center, Chicago, IL

WWII Stories of the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team,
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STORY BOLDLY

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JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

OUTSIDE IN
THEATRE



TAKAHASHI
FOUNDATION

JACL Chicago and Nikkei Uprising Attend No Kings March 2026

by Emma Wilkinson

Wednesday evening before a No Kings rally means it's time to gather at the JACL Chicago office to connect with other rally attenders and create our new poster masterpieces. Poster-making was an inspiring activity the last time I attended a rally with JACL Chicago and Nikkei Uprising in October 2025. All day, I looked forward to this gathering. In the early evening, I headed for the JACL office.

When I arrived, a cheerful Jeannie Tomoda Harrell greeted me and led me to the others; two poster-makers painstakingly traced out "NEVER AGAIN" on a banner while others sketched posters representing each of the incarceration camps. Armed with pencils and markers, we created masterpieces charged with our anger and sadness at the state of the world. ICE is harassing and killing our neighbors, the U.S. military is senselessly killing civilians abroad, and all the while, U.S. democracy, civil rights, and social services are rapidly eroded.

With so much wrong in the world, I struggled to land on one message for my poster. Working on the camp posters gave me time to think. The bean-throwing holiday of Setsubun was on my mind, and I settled on a design linking ICE agents with *oni*— "ICE OUT!" "*Oni wa soto!*" Perhaps it's niche, but I was satisfied. With conversations held and posters made, I headed out into the evening. At home, my poster rested by the door and waited for its big day.

On Saturday, March 28, I took the Red Line to reach downtown. Our JACL Chicago–Nikkei Uprising contingency gathered with the Coalition Against the Trump Agenda (CATA). As we waited for everyone, we checked in with friends and made new connections. I treasure these moments when I can be in community with people with whom I share similar values, perspectives, and cultural contexts. Our conversations teach me about important current



PHOTOS BY JEANNIE TOMODA HARRELL



JACL CHICAGO AND NIKKEI UPRISING GATHER BEFORE THE START OF THE NO KINGS MARCH AND TAKE TO THE STREETS ON MARCH 28.

events, historical context that inform the present, and the everyday happiness of those around me.

JACL Chicago and Nikkei Uprising members are intimately familiar with how quickly the U.S. government will violate peoples' civil rights to maintain control. We collectively participate in actions like No Kings to remind the world of another

period in history (of many) when the U.S. government brutalized people under its control. Members of our contingent recounted moments that others in the march noticed our signs. Surprise and recognition filled their expressions at these reminders of past injustices echoed in our present. Through these interactions, we remind Chicago of the devastating history of Japanese incarceration and connect it to the senseless brutality of ICE.

Participating in No Kings with JACL Chicago and Nikkei Uprising empowers me. I feel more connected with the Chicago Nikkei community—a community I am newer to than most attendees as a Californian Shin Nikkei. As a progressive movement, we are stronger together, united across countless communities and life histories all demanding justice and a better future. I am grateful for these connections, and I look forward to standing in solidarity with you next time. 🌱



PHOTO BY JACK SHIMABUKURO

THE GROUP VOLUNTEERING AT MANZANAR HISTORIC SITE.

Kansha Project 2026: Remembering to Remember

by Jack Shimabukuro

The night before I left Chicago to co-facilitate the 2026 Kansha Project trip, I was kept awake by an intense feeling of dread. Not about flying. Not about the logistics. Not about the participants. I knew the trip was going to be a success because of all the work and intention the Kansha Alumni Board had put into the months of planning it. This worry was purely personal. Feeling burnt out by the state of the world, could I be an effective guide on this emotional whirlwind of a trip?

This doubt was quickly dissuaded by the thoughtfulness of the participants. Our first day was packed with a history

presentation by JANM, neighborhood tours by the Little Tokyo Historical Society, and a workshop on multiracial identities by Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai. With this foundational knowledge, the participants explored what it means to be Japanese American. We determined that, with our wide range of experiences and identities, we all have a place in the Nikkei community.

The next two days were spent primarily at Manzanar National Historical Site. The group toured the site following the story of Sueko Kunitomi, a survivor of the camp. Listening to her narrative in

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PHOTO BY GABBY SENNO

THE 2026 KANSHA PROJECT FACILITATORS.

Kansha continued from page 6

the wind-battered desert, the participants got a visceral glimpse into what life was like in Manzanar. We also helped clean up the grounds and plant greenery around the visitor center. Through this cultivation of history, we were able to remember and honor our ancestors.

Back in Little Tokyo, our last day was one of activation and reflection. We met with organizers from Nikkei Progressives, who showcased how to practice solidarity through their activism around L.A. and the country. Then the participants ended the trip with an identity workshop from Stephanie Nitahara. Regarding our Japanese American identities, we reflected on where we came from and what we want to do next.

That burnout I felt coming into this trip was quickly healed and replaced by a deep sense of gratitude. While incredibly fun, the trip is also emotionally and physically taxing. Yet, the group showed up and supported one another. From the sharing of stories to snacks, the participants were both incredibly vulnerable and compassionate. In just four days, it was inspiring to see this group of strangers come together to build a



community. I just felt lucky to be a part of it.

This Kansha trip was a much-needed reminder that I need to cultivate gratitude more. Despite how chaotic the world may feel, there is much to be grateful for in our everyday lives. These acknowledgements are what keep me grounded. I am grateful to participants for being incredibly vulnerable, funny, and lovely. I am

grateful for the Kansha ALB, especially the Programs team of Ayako, Emily, Julia, and Becky, for their time and care in planning this life-changing trip. And I am especially grateful to be part of this Kansha community. Here's to 15 more years and beyond! 🌻

The graphic for the Kansha Project's 15th Anniversary Fundraiser features a stylized illustration of a mountain range with snow-capped peaks. A large orange sun with the number '15' in blue is positioned behind the mountains. In the foreground, a blue bus is driving on a road. The word 'KANSASHA' is written in large, blue, hand-drawn letters across the middle of the image. Above the bus, the words 'GO GO GO' are written in orange, with a Japanese character (五) inside a circle next to each 'GO'. Below the illustration, the text 'KANSASHA PROJECT'S 15th ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER!' is written in bold, orange, sans-serif capital letters. Below this, a paragraph of text in white, sans-serif font invites people to join the celebration. At the bottom, the date 'SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, Oct 18th, 2026' and the location 'LOCATION: Kamehachi - Northbrook' are written in bold, orange, sans-serif capital letters.

**KANSASHA PROJECT'S
15th ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER!**

Join us in celebrating 15 years of Kansha at our **Go Go Go Kansha!** fundraiser! Kansha alumni, family, friends, and supporters are invited to gather for a fun afternoon at Kamehachi to reconnect, share memories, celebrate the community we've built, and support the future of the Kansha Project. We'll also be honoring Kansha visionaries Bill Yoshino and Pat Harada for their lasting impact. We hope you'll join us for this special milestone celebration!

SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, Oct 18th, 2026

LOCATION: Kamehachi - Northbrook

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JACLChicago](https://www.facebook.com/JACLChicago)



PHOTO BY JEANNIE TOMODA HARRELL

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS IN ATTENDANCE FOR THE 2026 SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON. FROM LEFT: EMIKO TAHARA, HYO AMANO, GABBY MATSUSHITA, AVA YATABE, THOMAS YATABE, DANIEL SANJI, AND EMMA WILKINSON.

JACL Chicago Celebrates the Next Generation of Leaders at the 2026 Scholarship Luncheon

by Lisa Sakai

On Sunday, May 17, JACL Chicago hosted its annual Scholarship Luncheon at Maggiano's Old Orchard in Skokie. The event celebrated nine outstanding student leaders dedicated to advancing social justice and preserving Japanese American heritage. Scholarship Committee Chair Christine Munteanu praised the recipients for their deep-rooted community activism, saying, "I find myself filled with hope in the resilience of our community, and today is an opportunity for us to recognize the ways the work and leadership of the awardees help advance our mission."

Here are the 2026 Scholarship recipients:

Chiye Tomihiro Memorial Scholarship

Chiye Tomihiro was a dedicated JACL

leader who spent her life educating the public on the illegal incarceration of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government during World War II. This year's awardees are:

Addyson McGarry: A graduating senior from Lane Tech College Prep High School, Addy is a triathlete and a competitive rower heading to Duke University. She was a state finalist for her "I Am an American" history project and her Heart Mountain textile project was selected for display at the Art Institute of Chicago. She also manages the social media for the congressional campaign for Phil Andrew and, this summer, she will be interning at a law firm specializing in civil rights.

Maya Ostermann: A York Community High School graduate who earned a perfect ACT score, Maya is also the

founder and director of "Climbing is for Everyone" — an initiative that brings free rock-climbing opportunities to financially underserved youth. Maya researched Japanese American students who attended her school after release from World War II internment camps. Her research has led her to volunteer as an intern at JACL Chicago, where she built JACL Chicago's membership database and researched local Japanese American history. She is also headed to Duke University to study biomedical engineering.

Yoshino Family Scholarship

Presented in memory of Maurice and Misako Yoshino, this award supports students prioritizing educational excellence and community accountability. This year's awardees are:

Scholarship continued on page 9

Daniel Sanji: A returning scholarship recipient and Northwestern University doctoral student in social psychology, Daniel's current research focuses on how stereotypes of Asian Americans are used to divide Asian communities from each other as well as from other communities of color. He has received numerous awards for his research, including the prestigious National Science Foundation Fellowship. He has been active in JACL Chicago, serving on the Kansha Alumni Leadership Board and participating in Camp Daikon.

Emma Wilkinson: A fourth-year Linguistics Doctoral candidate at Northwestern University, Emma graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of California in 2021. Her sociolinguistics dissertation preserves oral histories, studying how Chicago-area Japanese Americans convey identity through speech patterns. She has been active in the anti-racist, feminist Northwestern University Graduate Workers' union, serving as its treasurer, steward, and a member of their financial committee.

Tomiyama Family Scholarship
Honoring the civic legacies of Tak and Todd Tomiyama, this scholarship recognizes youth who amplify community voices. The 2026 award goes to:

Thomas Yatabe: A Deerfield High School graduate heading to Auburn University in Auburn, AL, to study nursing, Thomas is active in both his school and community. He is a member of Cultural Connections, a club that engages in discussions and events that support AAPI students. He

also designed an innovative platform that provides students with simple "intervention scripts" to interrupt discriminatory language around school. This project will be implemented at his high school.

**Mas Nakagawa
Memorial Scholarship**

Established in memory of a legendary graphic artist and 442nd Regimental Combat Team veteran, this fund backs students in creative arts. The two awardees for 2026 are:

Emiko Tahara: A BFA student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Emiko fuses their Nikkei identity and community into filmmaking and studio art they create. Since taking part in Kansha, their involvement in the JA community and social justice has deepened with increased involvement in JACL Chicago, Nikkei Uprising and through volunteering in immigration legal defense for people seeking asylum.

Hyo Amano: A third-year film and television student at DePaul University, Hyo has made the Dean's List for seven consecutive quarters and earned the Global DePaul Scholarship. As a film studies major, he has written and directed multiple short films. Last year, he was the lead writer and artist on a project that created an immersive interactive novel on the migrant experience.

**Japanese Mutual Aid Society
(JMAS) Scholarship**
JMAS provides community support and scholarships to the Chicago Japanese American community. The 2026 awardee is:

Ava Yatabe: A Deerfield High School honor student and varsity cheer

captain who volunteers at a local hospice, Ava was recognized with the Deerfield High School Heart of a Warrior award last January. Inspired by her great-grandfather Thomas, a JACL Chicago founder, Ava attended many JA community events. She will study biology and neuroscience at the University of Miami.

Miyasaki Family Scholarship
Founded in 2019 and administered through the JMAS, this award honors Aki and John Miyasaki by helping youth become active, contributing members of their communities. This year's awardee is:

Gabby Matsushita: A New Trier High School graduate who made the honor roll all four years, Gabby also tutored other students through the New Trier Instructional Leadership Corp and Kumon Learning Center. Founding the "Origami for Good" club, which bridged cross-cultural connections, earned her the Bronze Presidential Volunteer award and the Bronze Congressional Award. She will attend UCLA this fall to pursue the sciences or international studies.

Carrying the Legacy Forward
Through pursuits spanning civil rights law, nursing, psychology, sociolinguistics, biomedical engineering, business and visual art, these nine scholars demonstrate that the future of the community is highly intentional, intersectional, and resilient. By investing in these young leaders, JACL Chicago successfully ensures that the vital fight for civil liberties, dignity, and historical memory burns brightly for generations to come. 🌸

KANSHA 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday, October 18
Kamehachi Northbrook, 1320 Shermer Rd, Northbrook

RSVP online at <https://bit.ly/kansha15th>

A First Annual Yuri Kochiyama & Malcolm X Birthday Extravaganza

by Kikis Serikaku

Happy birthday to beloved civil rights activists Yuri Kochiyama and Malcolm X! On May 23, JACL Chicago, in collaboration with our friends at Nikkei Uprising and Midwest Books to Prisoners, threw a kids' educational birthday party to celebrate the shared birthdays of Yuri and Malcolm. We were generously hosted by Justin Valas and his family at Restoried Books in Albany Park.

The kids were encouraged to move freely between stations including origami, birthday-card creation for our state's imprisoned community, zine-making, and decorating everything from tote bags, bookmarks, and their very own pairs of Yuri's famous cat-eye glasses.

Kiyomi Negi-Tran donated an original mural of Yuri and Malcolm for the kids to take pictures with and share what similarities they felt they shared with both leaders. We read "The Bridges Yuri Built" by Kai Naima Williams and Anastasia M. Williams, and "Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly" by Walter Dean Myers and Leonard Jenkins. And, thanks to the kind donations of our community, we were able to send families home with their own copies. After each reading, we invited the kids to join us in dance movement and protest chanting—they were marvelous at both.

Despite our best efforts to make the event



PHOTO BY KIKIS SERIKAKU

THE COLORFUL SNACK SPREAD AT THE YURI KOCHIYAMA & MALCOLM X BIRTHDAY PARTY.

holistically enjoyable, I think we must admit that the singing of "Happy Birthday" and the distribution of cupcakes may have literally taken the cake.

It was a wonderful and optimistic experience sharing legacy, inter-community comradery, art, space, and celebration. A very special thanks to Becky Ozaki for her leadership, Justin Valas and his family at Restoried Books,

Nikkei Uprising, Midwest Books to Prisoners, every community member who joined our Zoom calls with enthusiasm or contributed in any way, and to all of our lovely neighbors who chose to join us on such a special occasion.

For me, it was the best day ever. Happy birthday and thank you, Yuri and Malcolm, and we can't wait to see you all next year! 🍷

Broadview continued from page 1

mass incarceration of Japanese Americans and the unbridled terror being poured out on the most vulnerable today. I shared the story of one of my parishioners who had been held in Broadview and the "shared syntax of supremacy" connecting "Midway Blitz" and EO9066 with fascism abroad and the many race-based expulsions populating U.S. history.

In a statement to the Chicago Tribune, government spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin called our analogy-making "historically illiterate ... deranged and lazy ... a garbage comparrison [sic]." It has been said that one should never

wrestle with a pig, because you only end up getting dirty, and the pig (fascist or otherwise) enjoys it, but let us pretend for a moment that history doesn't rhyme and consider the violence of immigration enforcement entirely on its own. On a moral level, severing people from their loved ones and stealing them away from their adopted land is an act of unconscionable cruelty, which cannot be justified by appeals to paperwork.

In the most famous of his prison letters, Martin Luther King Jr. quotes Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich: "Sin is separation." For King, there is nothing more sinful, more unjust and against divine will, than cleaving human beings from the natural

fellowship they are meant to enjoy with others in "Beloved Community." In this way, separation through incarceration and deportation is an infernal form of violence that effaces our collective humanity.

Eighty-four years have passed since EO9066, yet the wounds left on our families have not healed—in large part because our nation has failed to refuse the repetition of atrocity. It will take more than raised voices or sharp words to dispel the long shadow of the prison. Yet I am proud to be a member of a community bringing ceremony, living memory and prophetic witness to the very gates of hell—which shall not prevail against us. 🍷

Asian American Action Day 2026 Recap: Protect Our Futures

by Jenn Brown

On May 6, 2026, JACL Chicago joined nearly 500 community members from across Illinois in Springfield for the 13th annual Asian American Action Day (AAA Day), organized by the Pan Asian Voter Empowerment (PAVE) Coalition during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. JACL Chicago is one of PAVE's 19 member organizations, a coalition that has worked since 2011 to increase civic participation and advance policies that support Asian American communities across Illinois. This year's AAA Day theme, "Protect Our Futures," reflected a shared commitment to defending democracy and protecting communities amid growing economic uncertainty, attacks on immigrant rights, and threats to public programs.

Building on past victories such as the TEAACH Act, the Language Equity and Access Act, and major wins from AAA Day 2025, JACL Chicago joined PAVE again in 2026 to continue advocating for policies that protect our communities' futures.

In a year marked by the Trump administration's heightened immigration enforcement in the Chicago region, including Operation Midway Blitz and public scrutiny over aggressive enforcement tactics, AAA Day's call to "Protect Our Futures" felt especially urgent. PAVE's 2026 agenda responded directly to this climate by calling for stronger protections for immigrant communities, including law enforcement accountability measures that would restrict the use of masks by

law enforcement and require officers to identify themselves. The agenda also urged lawmakers to preserve essential services, healthcare access, legal protections, immigrant services, Access to Justice funding, and senior supports like the Community Care Program, while advancing progressive revenue solutions to help fund the programs our communities rely on.

JACL Chicago members participated in targeted lobbying efforts led by JACL Chicago staff to help advance PAVE's 2026 legislative agenda. Our team's assigned targets included Representatives Will Davis, Bob Morgan, and Carol Ammons. Later in the day, Asian American Legislative Caucus members State Representatives Theresa Mah and Abdelnasser Rashid, and State Senator Ram Villivalam, spoke at the rally in support of immigrant justice and the PAVE agenda.



THE JACL CHICAGO
COMMUNITY AT AAA Day!
BACK ROW, FROM LEFT:
BRANDON LEE, BRYAN HARA.
FRONT ROW, FROM LEFT:
JEANNIE TOMODA HARRELL,
KIKIS SERIKAKU, REBECCA
OZAKI, JENN BROWN.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
JEANNIE TOMODA HARRELL

Following AAA Day, PAVE member organizations continued pushing legislators to fund the programs and services our communities rely on. That advocacy helped secure one concrete progressive revenue win: on June 1, 2026, the Illinois General Assembly passed SB 3019, which included a new digital advertising tax to help fund critical public programs.

AAA Day 2026 demonstrated the continued unity and political power of Asian American communities in Illinois. Thank you to the JACL Chicago members who participated and represented our chapter in Springfield. We hope even more members will join us for Asian American Action Day 2027 as we continue working together to protect our futures. 🌱

A Conversation to Heal

by Cindy Moy

Step into the conversation vulnerable; leave the conversation with community connection and a sense of comfort and belonging. In March, I participated in JACL Chicago's Intergenerational Conversations: Ripples of The Past. The program was designed to create a space for Chicago-area Nikkei to "reflect on, and heal from, the generational impact of mass incarceration." It was that and so much more.

One's identity can be defined by race, ethnicity or gender. Our lived experiences intertwine with the experiences shared with others. Experiencing racism or acts of hate, or hearing stories of our own relatives living through the incarceration of Japanese Americans, evokes a wide range of emotions. Coming together with others for conversational storytelling brings forth those raw emotions and creates a community of empathy, strength and understanding.

I am a Sansei Japanese American. My brothers and I grew up in Chicago. My last name represents my husband's Chinese American ethnicity and my children and I now carry his parents' story as immigrants to America. I also carry the stories of my own parents who were born in California and incarcerated at Heart Mountain and Poston as teenagers.

Discovery....

Having participated in Intergenerational

Being able to label it as trauma is an important step I needed to take.

Conversations, I discovered that I had suppressed the trauma from my parents' incarceration experiences. They thought they were protecting us from their trauma. I thought I was protecting my children as well.

Being able to label it as trauma is an important step I needed to take.

I have a deep respect for my parents, relatives and all incarcerated individuals for their strength and resilience they endured and the challenges of resettlement. My parents didn't talk about it. They internalized their trauma and focused on assimilation. I did the same for my children. The difference is, my children want to talk about it. I realize that I need to turn the trauma into action.

During the program, your story is yours to share. As discussions occur, a feeling of mutual respect and understanding naturally develops. The group dynamics ebb and flow with periods of words and silence. The unspoken common bonds of empathy and care resonate and the time passes much too quickly.

Connecting the Dots....

As part of my own healing journey, I reflected on events leading me full circle back to the Japanese American community in Chicago. I remembered my visit to the Minidoka National

Historic Site where I felt the overwhelming sadness standing in the barren desert. I cried as I imagined my parents and family members entering Heart Mountain and Poston.

My journey continued with listening to Kansha cohort members during their Culmination presentations. Sharing a story and reliving with others, deepens our shared past and inspires change.

When I visited JANM and the memorials in Los Angeles,

I signed the Ireicho book. There, I reflected, touched family history and revealed more questions to ask.

A New Perspective and Direction.....

Now, in 2026, Intergenerational Conversations has given definition to hidden feelings. Reading would not evoke the same emotional responses and depth of understanding I felt that afternoon. The power from reflecting and learning builds strength and courage to continue the conversations. This ensures the stories will live on, and will be how I will heal.

This is a crucial, critical and impactful program which teaches, enriches and amplifies voices in our community. 🗣️



SAVE THE DATE!

KANSHA too!

OCTOBER 2027

WHAT IS KANSHA, TOO?!

Kansha, Too! is an adapted version of JACL Chicago's Kansha Project. Kansha, Too! explores the history of the Japanese American WWII incarceration and its continued impact and ongoing legacy in the Japanese American community. The program consists of a trip to Los Angeles' historic Little Tokyo neighborhood and a day-trip to Manzanar National Historic Site. This program is for everyone who's asked, "Can I go on Kansha, too?"

JACL
Japanese American National Council
CHICAGO CHAPTER

MORE INFORMATION AT:
JACLCHICAGO.ORG/PROGRAMS/KANSHA-TOO/ OR SCAN QR CODE

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Remembering Tad Tanaka

by Bill Yoshino

Tad Tanaka was not an ordinary volunteer and board member with JACL Chicago. Tad's innate kindness, concern and generosity were hallmarks of his service to JACL and the community.

Tad passed away in November 2025 at the age of 90, and in April 2026, his family held a memorial service for him where his children, Joyce and Stanley, recounted memories of their father. The attendance at the service displayed Tad's wide circle of friends, as well as his participation in his church and community.

Tad's qualities as a generous and caring person were always present. Many former board members recount how Tad always brought snacks and beverages to meetings during his years as a member of the JACL Chicago board of directors. Christine Munteanu, who worked in the JACL Midwest Office for many years, remembered attending her first JACL event where she knew no one. The event was held across the street from the JACL office and nearby where Tad lived in his apartment building. No doubt feeling concern about Christine's safety in getting home that evening, Tad took the initiative to give her a ride.

In my own time as JACL Midwest Director, I recall that Tad would occasionally stop by the office saying, "Let's get some lunch," and then stealthily pay for the meal. And when a Thai/Sushi restaurant rented retail space in his apartment building, Tad did all he could to help them succeed by having JACL Chicago host an event at the



TAD TANAKA (CENTER) WITH BOB TAKAGI, FORMER JACL BOARD MEMBER (LEFT), AND TAD'S WIFE TAKAKO (RIGHT).

restaurant. The only time I heard Tad say anything even remotely critical was when he commented that the restaurant's sushi chefs packed the rice too tightly in their maki. Instead of being critical, he would usually just shrug and say, "I don't know."

Tad's service to JACL Chicago included being a member of the Building Committee, which oversaw all aspects of maintenance, repair and management. His living next door to the JACL office benefitted the chapter greatly. Tad would often stop by the office to change burned-out lights, check on the furnace or make sure the garbage cans were put in the alley.

Clay Cerny, who has rented space at the JACL office for over 20 years, said, "Whatever problem we might have had at the JACL building, Tad took it on and fixed

it. At the same time he was always smiling and caring." Moreover, Tad also kept the JACL board informed about neighborhood issues through his service as a board member of the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce.

Lary Schectman, former chapter president and member of the Building Committee, characterized Tad as always being there when needed and always providing solutions for the constant array of building issues. He remembers "yelling" at Tad to climb down from a ladder and getting a response back in Japanese that roughly translated to, "mind your own business and don't worry about it." Tad's service was neither ordinary nor minimal, and JACL Chicago appreciates his unique contributions. 🙏



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In memory of Tad Tanaka
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Cary Wong 🌸

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in the Japanese community by visiting the sick, arranging for — and frequently paying for — medical and legal aid, and assisting in establishing a Japanese language school. It continued its work until the outbreak of World War II when ordered to cease all activities and to not congregate in groups larger than three. By 1946, the JMAS largely reverted to its original function, but continues a scholarship program in conjunction with JACL Chicago, supports the Nikkei Picnic, and hosts the annual Memorial Day Service, which began with a cleanup a couple of days prior.

The Memorial Day Service is an opportunity for the Nikkei community to pay their respects and honor our Japanese American veterans who gave their lives to an ideal from which they were often excluded. 2026's ceremony was emceed

by JMAS President Gary Shimomura. The colors were pre-posted and scriptures, readings, hymns, and chants were provided by Christian, Tenrikyo, and Buddhist church representatives, some in both English and Japanese.

Nineteen Nikkei organizations, including JACL Chicago and Nisei Post veterans, participated in the Presentation of Flowers ceremony, a beautiful, quiet, solemn, and thoughtful act. Japan's acting Consul-General, Naoya Kishi, offered what were perhaps the most poignant remarks. He reminded that for a time Japan and the United States were at war and were mortal enemies, but that in time there was healing and now Japan is one of our greatest allies and friends. These are powerful words and a sentiment that will hopefully be applied to the coming days. Finally, the ceremony ended with a playing of Taps, an emotional reminder of the cost of freedom. 🌸

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JACL
Japanese American Citizens League
CHICAGO CHAPTER

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

Calendar of Events

Saturday - Sunday, July 11 - 12, 2026 11am - 6pm / 11am - 4pm	Japan Festival Chicago Skokie Sports Park East, 3333 Oakton St., Skokie, IL
Wednesday - Saturday, July 29 - Aug. 2, 2026	JACL National Convention Paris Las Vegas Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026 7 - 11pm	Toro Nagashi: Lantern Ceremony Osaka Gardens at Jackson Park, 5900 S. Cornell Dr., Chicago, IL
Friday - Sunday, Aug. 7 - 9, 2026 5 - 8pm / 11am - 8pm / 11am - 4pm	Ginza Holiday Festival Midwest Buddhist Temple, 435 W. Menomonee St., Chicago, IL
Thursday, Aug. 27, 2026 6 - 7pm	Gardens of Resilience: A Panel Discussion (in-person and livestream) Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL
Sunday, Sept. 20, 2026 6 - 8pm	Live show: <i>Defining Courage</i> Athenaeum Center, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago, IL
Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026 Save the date. RSVP info to come!	Full Spectrum Features: <i>Reckoning with Redress</i> official launch Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL