

January/February 2015

No. 107

A publication of the
JACL Chicago Chapter

JACL *on*

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The Nikkei are not a Gated Community

By Ryan Kenji Kuramitsu, Midwest District Council Youth Representative

Last winter I boarded a plane and flew across two time zones to visit relatives on O'ahu. After squeezing into a rental car and drudging up Honolulu highways and slim sidestreets for the better part of an hour, my family finally arrived at our cousins' for



their annual New Year's Eve party.

There I had a distinctly new experience: near the base of the neighborhood I saw a guardhouse. Inside was a man with a clipboard and a tie. A serrated fence and metal bars stretched out across the entire

street, swinging aside only after my dad gave our name to the watchman.

Continued on page 2

Alice Esaki, Dedicated Midwest Office Staff Member, Passes at 90

By Bill Yoshino, Midwest Regional Director

Alice Esaki, who worked in the JACL Midwest Office for over 20 years, passed away on November 22, 2014. Alice began working in JACL office during the 1970s and continued for over 20 years while also working at Senn High School.

Alice worked in the office throughout the entirety of the Redress Campaign and focused much of her time on the JACL Redress campaign during the 1980s. Alice was responsible for coordinating letters and mailings to members of Congress in the Midwest as well as sending memos and other directives to the JACL chapters in the region.

Continued on page 3

JACL

Japanese American Citizens League

CHICAGO CHAPTER

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, suggestions, and article submissions.

Article submission deadline for our next issue is 2/13/15.

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
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Gated Community continued

As we drove up the hill, the very idea of a gated community began to sour in my stomach. I wondered how a child growing up in a place like this might begin to understand the world. What message would these metal walls send? Would they think that our people, the ones who look like us, are the good guys? Would a child living here eventually come to believe that those people, the outsiders, are unsafe, the bad ones? I silently resolved to avoid living in a place so clearly cut off from my neighbors.

In many ways this experience served as an example of bigger trends within our country. It is not uncommon for ethnic groups in the United States to maintain strict racial boundaries, especially against outsiders who are frequently granted limited social access. Then and now, segregation and separation distinctly mark many communities' experiences in the US.

In stark contrast, the posture of today's Nikkei community is one of open arms. From the sky high rates of intermarriage between Japanese Americans and other ethnic groups to the scattering of our citizens across the country, our community's borders could not be less closed. Gone is the age of isolationist "Sakoku," when Japanese citizens couldn't even leave the island under penalty of death; today, when we are at our best, Japanese Americans have spurned cultural solitude in favor of a more porous approach, where our social harbors remain open to foreign exchange and influence.

I am proud to be a member of a community so intentionally marked by this history of hospitality. One of the goals I have as a Japanese American is to continue to embrace and seek to understand my neighbors of different colors and creeds, and to work with these other marginalized groups to promote justice and human rights. Notably, none of this organic activism and relationship-building can happen from behind dividing walls and closed gates. Then and now, the Nikkei were never meant to be a gated community. 🌱

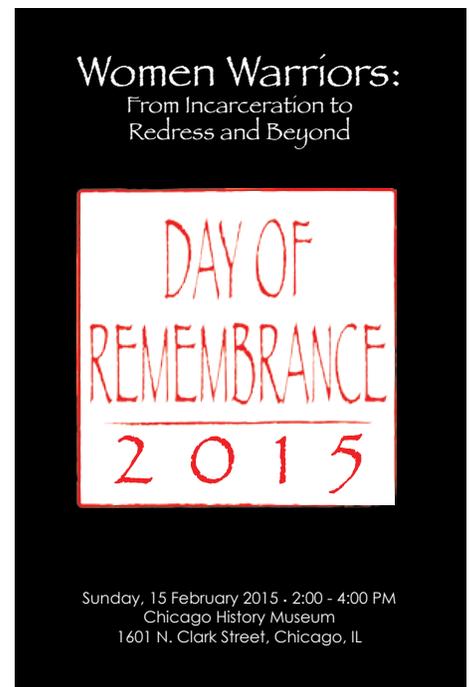
SAVE-THE-DATE

2015 Day of Remembrance

Guest speaker, Peggy Nagae, will talk about Japanese American women's leadership and lessons learned from World War II to Coram Nobis to Present Day.

Sunday, February 15, 2015
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Chicago History Museum
1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago

Free and open to all.





Lin Joins Teammates in Human Rights Statement

On Tuesday December 9th, the Los Angeles Lakers wore black t-shirts with the phrase “I Can’t Breathe” during warm-ups prior to their game against the Sacramento Kings. The phrase is in reference to the last few words of Eric Garner, who was killed on July 17th during an altercation with NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo. This moment was significant because it was the first time a non-African American player wore one of the shirts. That player was Jeremy Lin. Lin, as most of you well know, took the NBA and the sports world by storm back in 2012 while a member of the New York Knicks.

What’s significant about the statement made by the Lin is that he is expressing not only his support of his African American teammates, but the belief in a broader human issue of improper treatment of another race. Lin has experienced his own share of

racism while on the path to the NBA. Since he was a kid growing up in Palo Alto, he was told that Asian Americans couldn’t reach the highest levels of professional basketball. His senior year, he won the California State Title and was named North California Player of the Year. And he received zero Division 1 scholarship offers. At Harvard, fans and opponents would hurl racist slurs at him, which didn’t change in the NBA. But Lin never said anything. He let his play do the talking. And he’s become a huge influence to millions of kids everywhere who know to reach for your dreams as long as you’re willing to work for it.

I admire players like Jeremy Lin, Kobe Bryant, and LeBron James all taking a stand when it comes to social issues. Too many times athletes tell you the politically correct thing rather than say what they really want/mean. As someone who has interviewed athletes before, I found it extremely difficult to get straight answers from them. Statements like Lin’s, Bryant’s, and James’s are good for sports. If anything, it shows people that NBA players are just like us and that they stand up for issues that they believe in. The NBA has come out and said they support the players but wish they wouldn’t make changes to their uniforms to do so. In other words, they’re staying neutral so not to make one side or another mad at them. That’s what happens when you’re a multi-billion dollar industry. Lin’s display expresses the possibility of players crossing racial lines to support beliefs. It’s definitely progress from where sports used to be. I hope these types of statements continue and it leads to positive changes.

So I say bravo to you Mr. Lin. Continue fighting the good fight. 🍀

Alice Esaki continued

Alice also helped with the preparation of witnesses who would testify before the federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, the official governmental entity that produced a report and findings about the internment for the Congress. Moreover, Alice was selected to provide written and oral testimony before that commission when they held hearings in Chicago in 1981. Following passage of the redress legislation, Alice helped locate individuals in the Chicago area who were eligible to receive redress payments.

Alice was born in Seattle, Washington on February 18, 1924. During her early teens, her parents sent her to Japan to care for her grandmother where she spent six years, including the period of World War II. Following the war, she translated for both the Japanese and American governments. She was most proud of her work locating newly orphaned children in the rubble and abandoned buildings of war-torn Japan

Alice was a community activist. She volunteered by serving as PTA president, Local School Council representative, Girl Scout Cookie Captain, and at the North Shore Baptist Church pastoral

care team. She served on numerous boards, committees, and task forces. In remembering Alice, JACL Midwest Director Bill Yoshino said, “Alice was a unique person. She defied the stereotypes of Asian Americans, and at the same time displayed kindness, and she was ever helpful to everyone. I have no doubt about her legacy she leaves to her children and grandchildren about never being fearful about recognizing wrongdoing and even more so, in speaking up when fairness is at stake. It’s a lesson for us all.” 🍀

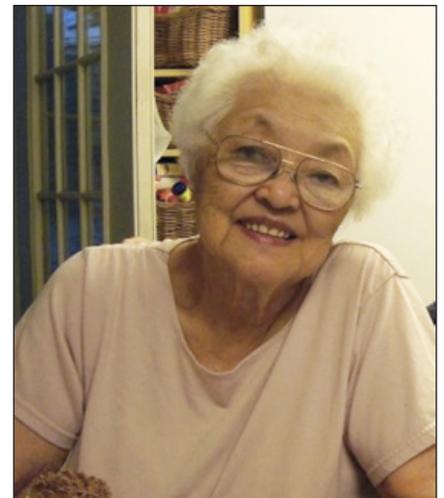


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ESAKI FAMILY

2014 Annual Meeting Draws Large Crowd

Marisa Fujinaka, Board Member

On November 12, 2014 JACL Chicago hosted their 2014 Annual Meeting at the chapter office in Andersonville. With a packed room and abundance of food, the chapter presented a productive annual meeting. Board members and Committee Chairs presented the chapter's annual report and announced new programs and events for the coming year.

The meeting began with remarks from past Chapter President Megan Nakano, who thanked everyone for their tireless dedication to the organization. Megan will remain on the board and is excited to see where the chapter is headed.

New Chapter President Bryan Hara also thanked attendees for their continuous support and introduced a new committee structure. He further explained how the modified structure focuses on the sustainability and effectiveness of the organization.

Here are highlights from 2014:

- Day of Remembrance (DOR) was held at the Chicago History Museum and highlighted the experiences of the Heart Mountain draft resisters.

- The Kansha Project took 10 participants to Manzanar National Historic Site in Southern California. Concluding the program, participants presented videos reflecting their experience in the program. Kansha will continue into its fourth year and applications are available on the Chapter website.
- The Finance Committee reported that the chapter has been fortunate to receive generous bequests and donations from the community, leaving it in a more secure financial position.
- The Chapter website (www.jaclchicago.org) has been revamped and now has its own Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/JACLChicago>). Be sure to check it out!

In 2015 JACL Chicago will host a community dance for the Inaugural in March and organize several movie nights throughout the year. The Chapter will also run the national program, Bridging Communities, where 15-20 high school students will pilgrimage to the Rohwer Incarceration Site in Arkansas. (See enclosed insert.)

JACL Chicago continues to further pursue its mission of securing and maintaining the civil rights of Japanese Americans and others who are victimized by injustice and prejudice. Please keep a look out for 2015 programs and events on the chapter website at www.jaclchicago.org. 🍀



Photos: Robert Brown

1. CHAPTER PRESIDENT, BRYAN HARA, WELCOMES GUESTS AND OUTLINES HIS PLANS FOR THE CHAPTER; 2. TONKO DOI, DEVELOPMENT CHAIR, GOES OVER 2015 GOALS; 3. YOUTH CHAIR, LANE MITA, SPEAKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHAPTER'S YOUTH PROGRAMS; 4. OPERATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR, CARY WONG, EXPLAINS THE AREAS HIS COMMITTEE OVERSEES; 5. CO-CHAIRS FOR THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE, SHARON HIDAKA AND BOB MITA, EXPLAINS THE SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES.

Kakehashi Project Promotes Cultural Exchange

Christine Munteanu, Assistant Program Director

The Chicago Japanese American community participated in a day of cultural exchange through the Kakehashi Project on November 13 at the Midwest Buddhist Temple. Japanese college students from Toyo University in Tokyo and Tohoku University in Sendai visited Chicago and gave presentations on a wide variety of topics. A group of students spoke about Japanese wrapping culture, which included a demonstration on how to use a *furoshiki* (a traditional Japanese wrapping cloth) to wrap everything from boxed gifts to wine bottles. Other presentations explained how to create an attractive and healthy bento box meal and highlighted elements of Japanese public safety.

After the students' presentations, Bill Yoshino, JACL Midwest Regional Director, and Kiyo Yoshimura, a former WWII incarcee, spoke about about the Japanese American incarceration during World War II. Yoshino laid out the larger context of the Japanese American incarceration, while Yoshimura shared her own personal experiences during the war. The students' questions to Yoshimura following her talk were thoughtful and insightful, and revealed how deeply the students



KIYO YOSHIMURA DESCRIBES HER EXPERIENCES IN AN INCARCERATION CAMP DURING WORLD WAR II TO THE VISITING TOYO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.



TOYO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOURED THE MBT TEMPLE AND GARDEN.

connected with her story. The students also took a tour of the temple sanctuary and the Japanese garden.

As a *shin-Nisei*, it is always fun for me to see the similarities and differences between modern Japanese culture and Japanese American culture. Japanese customs, traditions, and values have been translated and adapted by the Japanese American community, as well as in Japan, as times and technology changes. The two cultures face each other through slightly warped glass, offering not perfect mirror images, but reflections and diffractions, and the Kakehashi presentations highlighted the parallels between these two communities.

The Kakehashi Project is an important reminder of the ways that the Japanese American community is still deeply tied to the Japanese people, and emphasizes the value of continued cultural understanding and connection. 🍵

Fall 2014 MDC Meeting Hosted by St. Louis Chapter

The Midwest District Council (MDC) met in St. Louis, MO, on November 8 and 9 for its Fall 2014 meeting. Representatives from the Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Houston, Omaha, St. Louis, and Wisconsin chapters were present.

Midwest Regional Director Bill Yoshino reported on the most recent teacher training workshops held in Milwaukee, Merced, and Phoenix. The workshops have been highly successful, reaching over 100 teachers. The program is funded by the National Park Service Japanese American Confinement Sites (NPS JACS) grant. The next workshops will be held in Houston and Minneapolis. Yoshino also introduced a new workshop series being developed by the Midwest office that will address stereotypical media representations of Asian Americans.

Christine Munteanu, Assistant Program Director, spoke about Bridging Communities, a JACL youth program being adapted for Chicago. The program, also funded by the NPS JACS grant, brings together Japanese American and Muslim American high

school students to explore the parallels between the Japanese American incarceration and the post-9/11 experience of Muslim Americans. The program will include a trip to Rohwer, Arkansas, and will be implemented in Chicago in March 2015.

MDC Governor Colleen Morimoto reported that the 2015 and 2016 JACL National Conventions will both be held in Las Vegas, NV.

The meeting also featured a panel discussion around recent events in Ferguson, MO. Representatives from JACL, Anti-Defamation League, and the St. Louis Post Dispatch spoke about media depictions and police brutality.

A major outcome of the meeting was a plan for developing fundraising initiatives at the district level. District meetings will be used as training opportunities for grant-writing and other skills training so chapters can find local funding to supplement declining membership dollars.

The next MDC meeting will be held in Indianapolis in April 2015. 🍵

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Important!!!!

Make sure you choose “Japanese American Citizens League Chicago, IL.” There are other JACL chapters listed. 🇺🇸

Asian American Coalition of Chicago (AACC)

Annual Lunar New Year Celebration

Saturday, February 28, 2015

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2015 KANSHA PROJECT

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JACL Chicago Committees, Chairs, Responsibilities & Contact Info

Communications Committee

Committee Chair: Phyllis Tamada-Brown

Responsibilities Include: JACLER newsletter, Chapter website, Social Media (Facebook).

Community Outreach Committee

Committee Co-Chairs: Sharon Hidaka and Bob Mita

Responsibilities Include: Chapter representation and/or participation in community events such as Day of Remembrance, Ginza, Nikkei Picnic, Holiday Delight, among others.

Development Committee

Committee Chair: Tonko Doi

Responsibilities Include: Fundraising and membership.

Operations Committee

Committee Chair: Cary Wong

Responsibilities Include: Building, Finance, Legal, and Accounting.

Youth Development Committee

Committee Co-Chairs: Lane Mita and Becky Ozaki

Responsibilities Include: Scholarship Program, Young Professionals, Kansha Project, and Day Camp.

Visit www.jaclchicago.org for more information or call 773.728.7171.

Thank You to Our Donors and Advertisers!

(as of 12/15/14)

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Shu Miyazaki

Rick & Joyce Morimoto

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(In memory of Arthur Nishimura)

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5415 North Clark Street
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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.

2015 JACL Chicago Scholarship Applications Are Due March 2!

Go to www.jaclchicago.org for Guidelines and Applications

Calendar of Events

December 24 – January 2	JACL Chicago Office Closed Happy Holidays!
Wednesday, January 14 7–9 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street
Saturday, January 17 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Asian American Leadership Forum Columbia College Chicago, Film Row Cinema, 8th Floor, 1104 S. Wabash St., Chicago
Friday, January 30	Fred Korematsu Day
Wednesday, February 11 7–9 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street
Sunday, February 15 2–4 PM	Day of Remembrance Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street
Monday, February 16	Bridging Communities Application DEADLINE (see insert for details)
Saturday, February 28	AACC Lunar New Year Dinner Hyatt Regency O'Hare