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JACL *on*

In this Issue:

- page 1 Bridging Communities in Chicago
- page 4 Building a Bridge: Bridging Communities Reflection
- page 4 JACL Statement on Religion Laws in Indiana and Arkansas
- page 5 Osh's Corner: Go USA or Go Inspiration?
- page 5 2015 JACL Golf Tournament Registration Form
- page 6 JACL Chicago Bids Winter Farewell at the *Spring Shake*
- page 8 Midwest District Council Meeting Report
- page 9 JACL Project: Community! Day Camp
- page 10 JACL, the Commemoration in Selma, and the Voting Rights Act
- page 10 Happy 100th Birthday to Alyse Azuma!
- page 11 Thank You to Our Donors and Advertisers
- page 12 Calendar of Events



Photo: CAIR- Chicago

BRIDGING COMMUNITIES PARTICIPANTS WITH CHAPERONES AND MUSEUM STAFF AT THE WWII JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT MUSEUM IN McGEHEE, AR.

Bridging Communities in Chicago

By Christine Munteanu, Assistant Program Director

Background

When the National Park Service (NPS) raised the idea of expanding the Bridging Communities program to the Midwest last fall, Bill Yoshino (JACL Midwest District Regional Director) and I jumped at the opportunity. Bridging Communities is a JACL high school leadership program funded by NPS's Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant. The program examines the parallels between the Japanese American WWII incarceration and the post-9/11 experience of the Muslim American community. The goal of Bridging Communities is to empower young people to speak up against prejudice and stereotypes and develop as active leaders within their communities and beyond.

Bridging Communities has run from JACL's west coast district offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle for several years, but this year was the first time the program

Continued on page 2

**2015 Scholarship Luncheon
May 17th**

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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.

Article submission deadline for our next issue is 6/19/15.

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

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Bridging Communities continued

has taken place in the Midwest. JACL district offices have partnered with regional CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) offices and other Muslim American community organizations in their areas to promote collaboration and solidarity between the two communities through this program.

Bill and I met with CAIR-Chicago staff members Gerald Hankerson, Outreach Coordinator, and Fatima Ahmed, Youth Program Coordinator, in November. Within the span of four months, we planned the Chicago version of Bridging Communities from scratch: developing the schedule and curriculum, planning the logistics, developing marketing material, and recruiting participants.

Ultimately, we ended up with sixteen high school students participating in the program. The majority were Muslim American, and there were a few Japanese American and Latino students as well, making for a diverse group of participants.

The Program

The first session of Bridging Communities took place in early March, and began the process of identity exploration and community building for the group. The session's activities highlighted the group's diversity while also drawing out the commonalities that the participants shared. The students began thinking more deeply about the many identities they hold, including class, gender, generation, religion, race, and ethnicity, as a primer for understanding the ways in which certain groups (like Japanese Americans and Muslim Americans) have been targeted by bigotry and hate due to their identities.

The second session the following week focused on Muslim American identity and history. Gerald Hankerson of CAIR-Chicago facilitated an interactive presentation that provided a historical and global overview of Islam before focusing on the diversity of the Muslim American population. He also led a discussion on the ways in which Muslim Americans have been stereotyped and corrected common misconceptions about the Muslim community.

We met early on the morning of Friday, March 27 to board a bus to make the long journey to Little Rock, Arkansas for the program's third session. The weekend in Little Rock was



THE MEMORIAL CEMETERY AT ROHWER.

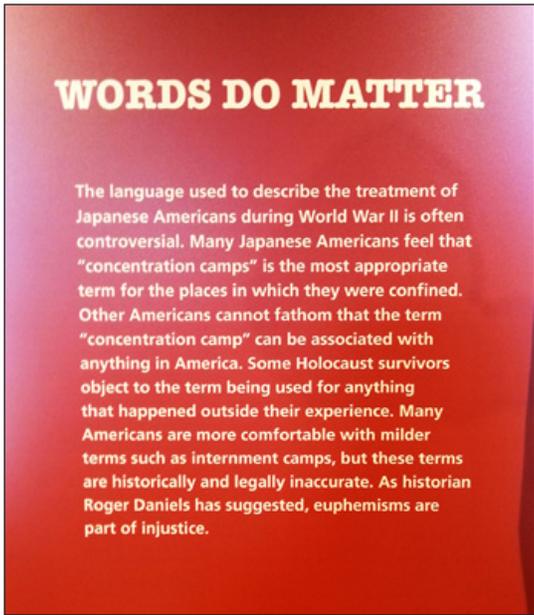
Photo: CAIR-Chicago

packed with educational tours and discussions. On Saturday, we began our day with a tour of Little Rock Central High National Historic Site, where we learned about the challenges faced by the nine courageous black students known as the “Little Rock Nine” who chose to enroll in the newly integrated high school. From there, we visited the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center to learn more about local African American history. The tour guide at the cultural center facilitated an important discussion about the ways in which young people play a role in combatting bigotry and promoting inclusion and diversity.

We spent Saturday afternoon at the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, where we heard the personal story of Richard Yada, a Japanese American who was born at Rohwer and still lives in Little Rock. The staff of the Butler Center also showed us a portion of their extensive collection of art, documents, and artifacts created by the internees at Rohwer and Jerome, and we spent a few hours poring over autobiographies written by Japanese American high school students incarcerated at Rohwer.

On Sunday, we drove two hours from Little Rock to visit the small town of McGehee, Arkansas, accompanied by Mr. Yada. McGehee is the closest town to Rohwer, and it now hosts the WWII Japanese American Internment Museum, which opened in 2013. Though small, the museum’s exhibit was excellent and comprehensive. Personally, I especially enjoyed the section that addressed the controversy around terminology, and concluded that continued use of euphemisms perpetuates injustice (pictured above).

After our visit to McGehee, we drove twenty minutes to Rohwer. Very little of the camp remains; most of the land is now privately-owned farmland, and only a small strip at the southern border of the site shows any evidence of what used to be there. A small cemetery and a memorial honoring Japanese American veterans



A PANEL AT THE WWII JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT MUSEUM IN McGEHEE, AR ON THE POWER OF WORDS.

Photo: Christine Munteanu

has remained carefully preserved through the efforts of Mr. Yada’s family. More recently, through another NPS JACS grant, informational kiosks were installed, with narration by George Takei, who was incarcerated at Rohwer as a child. If you look north across the corn fields, you can just make out a smokestack, which marks where the camp’s hospital used to be.

A week after our return from Arkansas, we hosted the final session at the Midwest Buddhist Temple. This culmination event gave the students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the program, and the students worked in small groups to create posters that captured what they learned and felt throughout Bridging Communities. Over fifty

people attended the culmination, as participants invited their family members to share in their reflections. It was a celebration of community, new friendships, and honoring history, and was a fitting and heartwarming way to end the program.

Reflections

One thing that really struck me when running this program was the impact visiting Rohwer had on all of the participants. It was clear from the students’ emotional reactions that this is a history that involves us all. Many of the students were angered by how little remains of the camp; several of them commented, “It’s like the government is trying to erase what they did.”

When Mr. Yada spoke to the group, he shared that both he and his father before him work to educate others about the camps so that no one ever forgets what happened to the Japanese American community during WWII. Being a part of the Bridging Communities program was both a privilege and a responsibility; the participants now have the knowledge and experience to educate others to make sure this history is not forgotten or repeated. 🍄

Make Your Reservations Today!
JACL Chicago Scholarship Luncheon
May 17, 12 pm
 Call 773.728.7171 or
 go to www.jaclchicago.org



2015 JACL
Golf Tournament
Thursday, July 23
 See page 5 for details.

Building a Bridge: Bridging Communities Reflection

By Sydney Hamamoto, Bridging Communities Participant

One of the questions on the Bridging Communities application form asked how I identified and why. I had scoffed, because the first thought that came to my mind was, “I’m Japanese American because my ancestors were born in Japan and I was born in America,” an easy question with an obvious answer. The “why” seemed trivial and meaningless to me. However, once I began attending the Bridging Communities sessions, I realized the “why” might be the most important part.

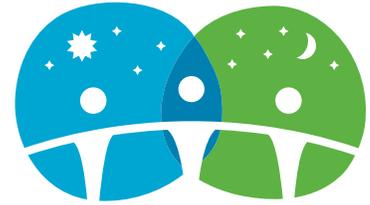
I had never deeply questioned what it meant to be Japanese-American before I began to compare my identity with others’. I knew I ate *ozoni* on New Years, saw the value and reward in humility, and understood the importance of family, but the Japanese aspect could be switched out with any other country, and suddenly I wouldn’t identify as Japanese American anymore. So there had to be something that I was missing, and learning more in depth about the Japanese internment led me to that something.

Once at Rohwer, that something was hard to miss. There isn’t anything left of the camp except for the cemetery and the hospital smokestack. It was surreal walking around the cemetery and gazing out over the massive field that once fenced in thousands of Japanese

Americans. A quiet hush came over the group and I struggled to reconcile this place with the stories my grandparents had told me of cramped barracks, looming guard towers, and giant mess halls. They may have been located at a different camp, but their rights were still violated - even if they didn’t believe so.

These camps were the reason I never felt particularly close to my roots, because after them, many Japanese quickly assimilated and tried to forget about where they came from. These camps are the reason my family doesn’t have many meaningful heirlooms passed down from generation to generation because they were all left behind or stolen while my ancestors were corralled like animals. These camps are the reason I am Japanese American. This is my history and I wouldn’t be who I am without it.

One of the questions posed towards the group towards the end of the program was if we thought internment camps could happen again. The immediate reaction was a chorus of no’s, but then the idea of internment camps taking a different form was suggested to us. Perhaps they couldn’t happen again physically, but mentally? They may already be in play in America. Our society is so quick to judge and stereotype people based solely on ignorance and



BRIDGING COMMUNITIES

fear. It’s easy to lock everyone from a certain group in a mental box and label them as a threat, and most of the time, it’s a subconscious act. However, that in itself, is an injustice. We need to be able to learn about each other and bring different viewpoints to the conversation. We have a responsibility to ourselves to learn about who we are, how we identify, and why we identify that way.

Discovering the answer to those questions will never be easy, so respecting others going through the same internal questioning is of the utmost importance. That’s why having these types of dialogues is imperative for everyone and why I couldn’t be more grateful for the opportunity to participate in Bridging Communities - an aptly named program. Differences, both large and small, flow between people that prevent them from truly connecting with each other, and it’s only when both parties choose to build a bridge over those differences that life become so much more peaceful and meaningful. 🌉

JACL Statement on Religion Laws in Indiana and Arkansas

By Bill Yoshino, Midwest Regional Director

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) has a longstanding policy of protecting the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) community to marriage equality and to live their lives without fear of discrimination. As the first non-LGBTQ organization to come out in support of same-sex marriage in 1994, JACL strongly opposes the passage of any law that may cause discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

Recently, Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed a law that could allow businesses

and individuals to discriminate against LGBTQ individuals under the guise of religious freedom. Shortly thereafter, a similar law was passed in Arkansas. Supporters of the law argue that religious liberties are under attack, and that the bill is not anti-LGBTQ.

However, the public outcry was swift and forceful in denouncing the law, and members of the business sector threatened economic consequences. This caused the governor and legislature in Indiana to backtrack and amend the law so that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act cannot

be used as a defense in some kinds of discrimination cases.

Jeffrey Moy, JACL Vice President for Public Affairs, commented, “Religious freedom is a founding principle of this country and must be protected. However, protecting one community must never come at the expense of another. The public outcry in response to the recent bills in Indiana and Arkansas underscores this point, and hopefully will lead to more conscious consideration of these issues as similar bills are drafted in other states.” 🌉

Osh's Corner



By Michael Oshita, Board Member

Go USA or Go Inspiration?

It's a fight that many are saying is occurring 5 years too late. On May 2nd, Manny Pacquiao will take on undefeated Floyd Mayweather Jr at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas in what will be the richest boxing match in history.

Now, I'm not much of a boxing fan—never have been and probably never will be. But on May 2nd, I can tell you where I will be: on the couch ordering the \$100 PPV (with a few friends chipping in of course—don't worry Mom and Dad) watching what will be the greatest boxing match in my lifetime.

Some say this is a matchup of two boxers past their prime. That's probably true—these guys are no spring chickens. Mayweather is 38 and Pacquiao is 36. But for bandwagon fans like me, who have waited years to see this fight happen, we're just happy the two will get into the ring on May 2nd, and prove who's the better fighter.

As for who do I want to win, that's tough. On one hand, you have Emmanuel Dapidran Pacquiao, who grew up in General Santos City Philippines. He had to drop out of high school due to extreme poverty and left home at age 14 because his mother wasn't making enough money to support her family. Then you have Floyd Mayweather Junior from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mayweather also grew up in poverty, his mother addicted to drugs and his father spending 5 and half years in prison for cocaine trafficking.

The American in me wants to see Mayweather win so I can have that same sort of nationalistic pride that comes around when the Dream Team won a gold medal in Barcelona in 1992 or when the Men's Hockey Team made the Gold Medal game in 2010 in Vancouver. But I'm cheering for the underdog in this case. I've always wanted a chance to view history if the opportunity is there, and Pacquiao has an opportunity to do something that no man has done in the last 47 tries: take down Floyd Mayweather Jr. Not only that, but a Pacquiao victory would mean so much to the 100 million people of the Philippines. Less than two weeks before his bout against Mayweather, Pacquiao took a break from training to meet with Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, the chair of the Philippines' peace panel, who's leading negotiations between the government and a rebel separatist group called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The fighter publicly endorsed a bill that aims to ease tensions back home before returning to the gym the next day. He's done the hard work, now all that's left is to finish the job.

Take it down Manny. Make history. 🇵🇭



Thursday, July 23
1st tee time set for 9:30 AM
GLENCOE Golf Club
\$85 per golfer

GLENCOE Golf Club 621 Westley Rd., Glencoe, IL \$85 per golfer (Sign up individually or as a foursome.)

Cost includes a round of golf with cart and a meal following your play.
 Please RSVP to the JACL office by July 15, 2015.

2015 Golf Tournament Registration Form

Please enclose entry fee(s) for all golfers (\$85/person) listed on the registration form. We will inform you of your starting time. **Registration deadline is July 15th.**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Please list other golfers in your group:

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Please make checks payable to **JACL CHICAGO**

Mail to: JACL Golf Tournament, 5415 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640-1294



JACL Chicago Bids Winter Farewell at the **SPRING SHAKE**

By Carol Yoshino, Spring Shake co-chair

On the heels of a frigid winter, JACL Chicago welcomed the first signs of spring at the Spring Shake, which was held on Saturday, March 14 at the White Eagle Restaurant in Niles.

If the photos seen in this issue of the JACLER indicate that fun was the evening's theme, it was! It's just what was needed to shake off the winter blues and welcome spring's arrival — something we Chicagoans very much look forward to.

For those who couldn't come — you missed out on a night filled with camaraderie as attendees reconnected with old friends while meeting new ones. Multiple generations mingled with each other and everyone was able to get in their exercise by dancing the Jitterbug, Stroll, Wobble, Electric Slide and anything else the tempo led their feet to do. Music and entertainment was provided by Kenny Takaoka and "Husky Love" followed by DJ Ben Stover's "Electric Blue Entertainment."

Along with acknowledging the change in season, Spring Shake also celebrated the inauguration of the 2015 Board of Directors for the Chicago Chapter. Congratulations to Bryan Hara, President, and Board of Directors Tonko Doi, Marisa Fujinaka,

Sharon Hidaka, Glenn Inouye, Lane Mita, Robert Mita, Megan Nakano, Michael Oshita, Rebecca, Ozaki, Lisa Sloan, Bob Takagi, Phyllis Tamada-Brown, Judy Tanaka, Tad Tanaka, Cary Wong, Tom Yatabe, Ron Yoshino, and Pat Yuzawa-Rubin.

The event also served as JACL Chicago's fundraiser for its youth programs — including Project Community Day Camp and the Kansha Project. Sponsors and donors for the Spring Shake are listed elsewhere in this issue. The 50/50 raffle was a success — congratulations to Al Hara for having the winning ticket, and our thanks to him for donating back all of his winnings!

Special thanks to Phyllis Tamada-Brown for all her great graphics work, Bob Brown for being our photographer extraordinaire, the White Eagle Restaurant for being such great partners in planning this event, and to Kansha Project alums and those Board members who diligently sold raffle tickets all evening.

On behalf of co-Chairs Tonko Doi and Carol Yoshino and JACL Chicago, thank you to everyone who came and supported this event. We'll see you next year! 🍀



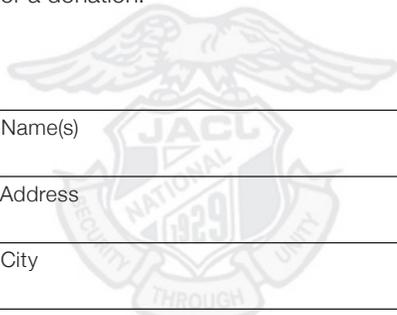


Photos: Robert Brown

LEFT: 2015 JACL CHICAGO BOARD OF DIRECTORS. (L TO R) PHIL WONG (GENERAL COUNSEL), BOB TAKAGI, SHARON HIDAKA, MARISA FUJINAKA, TOM YATABE, REBECCA OZAKI, RON YOSHINO, JUDY TANAKA, MIKE OSHITA, CARY WONG, PAT YUZAWA-RUBIN, PHYLLIS TAMADA-BROWN, LISA SLOAN, GLENN INOUYE, BRYAN HARA (CHAPTER PRESIDENT), AND BILL YOSHINO (MIDWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR) SWEARING IN THE BOARD. NOT PICTURED: TONKO DOI, MEGAN NAKANO, ROBERT MITA, AND LANE MITA.

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In memory of: _____

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 5415 N. Clark St.
 Chicago, IL 60640



Photo: George Hanazono

MIDWEST DISTRICT COUNCIL DELEGATES AT THE SPRING 2015 MEETING.

Midwest District Council Meeting Report

By Bryan Hara, JACL Chicago President

The Midwest District Council (MDC) met in Indianapolis, IN on May 18 and 19 for its Spring 2015 meeting. Representatives from the Chicago, Houston, Hoosier, Detroit, Cincinnati, Dayton, Wisconsin, St. Louis, and Omaha chapters were present.

The weekend began with a performance on Friday evening by Ken Oguss, a professional story-teller, who told several Japanese folktales. The evening's line-up included twists on old favorites like "Momotaro" and "Urashima," as well as lesser-known stories from remote mountain villages of Japan collected by Hiroko Fujita.

During Saturday's business session, National JACL staff members Bill Yoshino and Christine Munteanu provided updates on national programs including National Convention, Teacher Training Workshops, Campus Outreach, Bridging Communities, DC Leadership Conference, and Civic Engagement. In addition, Christine provided updates on JACL Chicago's Kansha Project and Kansha, Too!, and opened the Kansha, Too! program to any interested applicants from the MDC.

Ryan Kuramitsu, the MDC Youth Representative, gave a report on the NY/SC's recent activities, including upcoming summits. Colleen Morimoto gave the MDC Governor's report.

Also on Saturday, the Hoosier Chapter put together a wonderful panel on fundraising featuring experienced

development staff from Christel House. The panelists shared important information regarding the fundamentals for fundraising, distinguishing the types of fundraising approaches (individual, corporate, and foundations), and current national trends. They also provided help and information regarding the challenges that JACL chapters face in this area. The day concluded with reports from each of the chapters, highlighting their activities.

On Sunday, Eric Langowsky, a freshman at Indiana University and member of the Hoosier chapter, presented on his experience as a youth delegate at last year's JACL Convention and emphasized how much he has learned because of JACL.

Our day concluded with Emily Eggleston, who presented her research on the lasting impact Japanese Americans incarcerated at Amache had on the soil and landscape of the area. The beautiful gardens created inside barbed wire were a lasting testament to the internees' hard work, perseverance, and desire to make the camps "feel more like home," and serve as a fitting reminder of the impact that the legacy of our families has on us to this day.

The next MDC meeting will be hosted by the Cincinnati chapter in the fall. 🍁

JACL Project: Community!

DAY CAMP

July 20-29



JACL's free summer camp program for 7 to 9 year olds is back for 2015! Over six half-day sessions over two weeks, campers will learn about Japanese American culture and history, try different cultural activities and crafts, and learn the importance of tolerance and diversity.

DATES: July 20-22, 27-29

TIME: 10 AM to Noon

LOCATION: JACL Chicago Office
5415 N. Clark Street

CONTACT

Marisa Fujinaka, mfujinaka@jacl.org
Christine Munteanu, cmunteanu@jacl.org
773-728-7171

Send completed registration forms to: Project Community Day Camp, 5415 N. Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640 or email chicago@jacl.org

REGISTRATION FORM

Student's Name

Gender

Age

Grade in Fall

Parent/Legal Guardian

Cell Phone Number

Home Address

Email Address

Dietary/Physical Restrictions

JACL, the Commemoration in Selma, and the Voting Rights Act

By Bill Yoshino, Midwest Regional Director

On March 25, 1965, on the steps of the Alabama State Capital, at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery March, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., declared, "It is normalcy all over Alabama that permits the Negro from becoming a registered voter . . . The only normalcy that we will settle for is the normalcy that allows justice to roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream . . ."

A delegation from JACL spent three days in Selma and Montgomery, joining with thousands of others in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Freedom Marches including the "Bloody Sunday" confrontation with Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The delegation included JACL Fellows Craig Shimizu and Korinne Sugasawara, National Youth/Student Council representatives Ryan Kuramitsu and Kota Mizutani, and JACL Midwest director Bill Yoshino. Todd Endo, who took part in one of the original marches, also joined the JACL delegation.

The group visited many of the historic sites, including traveling the route of the original marchers from Selma to Montgomery, the Dallas County Courthouse where African Americans were denied their right to register, Brown Chapel AME Church that served as a staging area for the marches, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and the Civil Rights Memorial at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery.

In 1965, the Selma to Montgomery marches focused national attention on voting rights for African Americans. Many marchers were beaten and some were killed in pursuit of this fundamental right. At the time, no African Americans were registered to vote in places like Lowndes County near Selma, despite representing upwards of 88% of the population in the county.

The future of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was a major theme during the commemoration weekend. In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down key provisions of the VRA that called for pre-clearance for changes to election laws in certain areas of the country that had a history of erecting barriers to registration. Last year, Congress sought to restore these provisions through bipartisan legislation in The Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014.

JACL continues to underscore its support for this measure. As stated by Kota Mizutani, "On the JACL trip to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Selma, we were reminded that today, the very rights that cost the lives and livelihood of countless people are under threat.



JACL REPRESENTATIVES CRAIG SHIMIZU, RYAN KURAMITSU, KOTA MIZUTANI, AND KORINNE SUGASAWARA JOIN A COALITION OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN GROUPS AT SELMA.

Photo: Bill Yoshino

Without the protections of voting rights, we cannot fully honor the struggles of the past nor can we use our own voices to advance civil rights and equality."

This is echoed by Ryan Kuramitsu, who said, "Fifty years ago, faithful Americans of all backgrounds marched together to secure federal voting protections for Black Americans. What I learned this weekend is that these women and men's sacrifices are best honored when we fight to ensure continued protections of voting rights. The Voting Rights Act Amendments have been renewed under conservative and progressive administrations. They are not partisan issues, but common ground." 🌱

Happy 100th Birthday to Alyse Azuma!



Photo: Julie Azuma

ALYSE AZUMA (RIGHT) WITH HER SISTERS, AMY IKO AND NOREEN ENKOJI

Alyse Azuma celebrates her 100th birthday as an active and vibrant member of the Chicago Japanese American community. Arriving in Chicago in 1943 from Tule Lake, she worked at General Mailing on the South Side, then as a bookkeeper for a small business until her retirement over 35 years ago.

Throughout her career and retirement, Alyse has always been an active participant in her community from Ellis

Community Center on the South Side, then to the Tri-C church on the North Side. She dotes on her granddaughters, Sophie and Miranda, and is the perfect aunt to many, many nieces and nephews.

Alyse volunteered for many years at the Japanese American Service Committee. She is still active at her residence at Bethany, where she greets everyone by name.

Thank You to Our Donors and Advertisers!

(as of 4/27/15)

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(in memory of Sue Kuramitsu)

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

We welcome your participation.

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

Calendar of Events

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| Wednesday, May 13 7 PM | JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street |
| Sunday, May 17 12 PM | Scholarship Luncheon Maggiano's Little Italy, Skokie, IL |
| Monday, May 25 11 AM | Memorial Day Service Montrose Cemetery, 5400 North Pulaski Road |
| Wednesday, June 10 7 PM | JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street |
| Saturday, June 20 2 PM | Kansha Project Culmination Midwest Buddhist Temple, Chicago, IL |
| Wednesday, July 8 7 PM | JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 North Clark Street |
| July 13–15 | JACL National Convention Las Vegas, NV |
| Thursday, July 23 9:30 AM | JACL Golf Tournament Glencoe Golf Club, 621 Westley Rd., Glencoe IL |