

September/October 2015

No. 111

A publication of the
JACL Chicago Chapter

JACL *er*

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US-Japan Symposium

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JACL Chicago Annual Meeting

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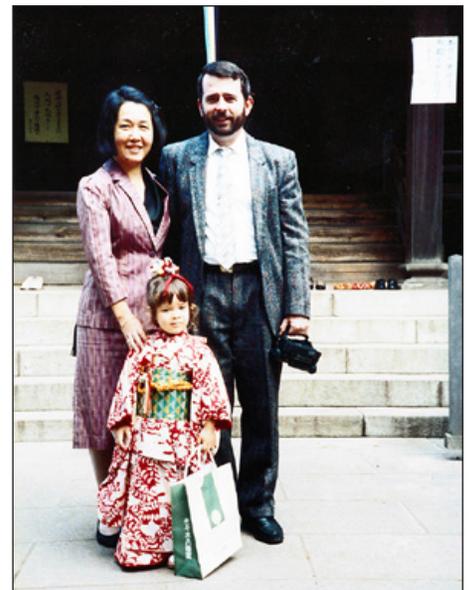
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Identifying Japanese American

By Jeannie Harrell

This past April, I visited Los Angeles for the first time in my adult life. My first stop was Little Tokyo, where I had a delicious ramen-and-gyoza lunch, checked out the Nihonmura Plaza mall (and *definitely* did some shopping), and concluded my day at the Japanese American National Museum. Walking up the glass stairs to the Common Ground exhibit with the real Heart Mountain barracks looming above, I knew I would walk out of the exhibit with a dramatic new perspective on who I am.

Though I identify as "Japanese American," I'm relatively new to the Japanese American community. My father left his California hometown for Japan in the early '70s to travel and teach English for about two years—which turned into five years, then ten, until Tokyo became home and he eventually met my mother. I was born in 1989. My mother embraced her role as the parent of a Japanese child: she cooked Japanese meals, helped me make Japanese friends, and signed me up for Japanese-language workbooks by mail (non-school homework: a Japanese staple!). My father, himself white and American but aware of Japanese American history, made sure I had some Japanese American education to match. He ordered me books about the experiences of those interned during WWII, and talked with me about my identity as a Japanese/American mixed person in relation to the long-thriving Japanese American community in the United States.



JEANNIE AT AGE 3 WITH HER PARENTS AT HER SHICHI-GO-SAN CEREMONY.

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 11/16/15.

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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Identifying continued

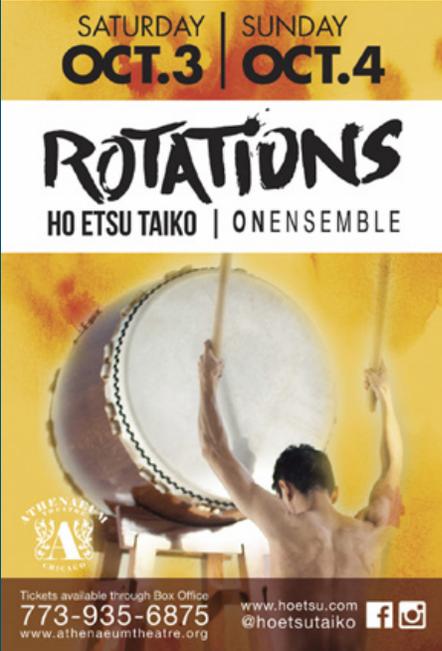
As I walked through the JANM exhibit, past the historical accounts of the brutal mistreatment of Japanese immigrants in America, I couldn't help but think, "If I'd been born a few generations earlier, this could have been me." But the truth is that it *wasn't* me—my family tree is separate from the branches of Japanese American history. So I turn the gaze to myself: What am I? I guess I would be considered *shin-Nisei*, but in the sense that my father is from America and I'm from Japan, I'm also a sort of reverse immigrant to the US. The lines aren't clear.

I'm certain I'm not alone in having a hazy view of my mixed Japanese identity. I am learning that the global Nikkei population is not so easily defined. We are all over, and we are all kinds of people, and I'm sure that many of us—if not all—have struggled against fixed definitions.

JACL Chicago reached out to me this past March, when I made local news for vandalizing a restaurant whose signage was racist towards Chinese people and Asians in general. In the midst of the misguided reactions to my offense, JACL was so encouraging of me. The warm welcome into the organization, and the community around it, made me feel validated as a Japanese American in a way I've never before experienced.

As we close the 20th-century chapter of Japanese American history, the legacy of Japanese people in America will unfold to include people who identify as Japanese American in many different ways. I'm honored and excited to be a member of JACL and a part of that legacy. 🇺🇸

Jeannie Harrell is a JACL Chicago member.



**SATURDAY | SUNDAY
OCT.3 | OCT.4**

ROTATIONS
HO ETSU TAIKO | ON ENSEMBLE

Chicago's own Ho Etsu Taiko is excited to announce ROTATIONS, a collaborative performance celebrating Japanese taiko-based music in America. Ho Etsu Taiko invites Los Angeles' innovative On Ensemble to join the stage and share original material that expresses the development of taiko as a performance art, written specifically for ROTATIONS. The two ensembles, each with different approaches and influences, will play new compositions as well as each ensemble's own music. Catch this unique blend of sounds for one weekend only at Athenaeum Theatre's main stage on October 3 and October 4, 2015.

Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N Southport

Concert dates:
Sat October 3rd (7pm) &
Sun October 4th (2pm)

Ticket Link:
www.athenaeumtheatre.org/rotations

Tickets available through Box Office
773-935-6875
www.athenaeumtheatre.org

www.hoetsu.com
@hoetsutaiko

NCJAA Autumn Concert

Asako Hirabayashi with Emi Tanabe perform Baroque and original music
Sunday, September 27, 3pm

North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago

For more information, contact Rie Katayama at: riekatayama8@gmail.com

JACL Convention Reflection

By Rebecca Ozaki, JACL Chicago Board Member

This past July, I was fortunate to attend the JACL National Convention for the first time after receiving a scholarship from the JACL National Youth/Student Council (NY/SC) and support from JACL Chicago. Because I recently joined the JACL Chicago board and started playing a larger role in JACL Chicago, it was the first time I felt compelled to attend the National Convention and see for myself what happens when all 100+ chapters congregate to influence the future of the organization. The convention was a space to connect and reconnect with other youth and chapters, share ideas, and gain a better understanding of the challenges and strengths of JACL on a national level.

There were a handful of powerful moments that happened during the sessions at convention. The first was when the NY/SC brought a resolution for JACL to support HR-40, a bill to create a commission to study the long-term impacts of slavery on the African American community, to the floor. Many of my peers stood at the microphone, eloquently explaining to the crowded room JACL's duty as a civil rights organization to stand in solidarity with other communities of color; especially in this case, because Japanese Americans succeeded in gaining reparations decades after incarceration during World War II.

The second moment was when an emergency resolution for JACL to support the transgender community was brought to the floor. Various chapter members shared stories of transgender family members, explaining the urgency for JACL to support the transgender community due to high depression rates, bullying, and suicide occurring every day. During convention, JACL leaders continued to highlight that our organization is an organization of firsts; the first to take a stand against injustice. When these two resolutions were passed by the council, I could feel solidarity in the room from all of us knowing that history was being made.

JACL Responds to Wesley Clark's Comments on "Radicalized" Muslims

JACL National Press Release

General Wesley Clark's call for internment camps for "radicalized" Muslims is troubling. In 1988, the United States apologized to Japanese Americans for the injustice of summarily incarcerating our community during World War II. It was a time of fear and backlash toward Japanese Americans stemming from causes even beyond race.

The true character of a nation is evident during troubling times when our security, real or imagined, is threatened. In 1942, the threat of an internal enemy was made to appear real when our government knew otherwise through findings from the FBI and other intelligence agencies. As a result, 120,000 Japanese Americans were forced from their homes, dispossessed of their property, and confined in concentration camps located in remote and desolate places. This action ignored due process and equal protection, rights guaranteed by our Constitution.



Photo courtesy of Lane Mita

JACL CHICAGO DELEGATES AND MIDWEST YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES (L TO R): JAMES OZAKI, BECKY OZAKI, BRYAN HARA, LANE MITA, KRISTEN YANG.

In those moments, I revisited a memory from when I was about ten years old. My grandfather stood at the front of a crowded room during the Day of Remembrance, urging other Japanese Americans to stand in solidarity with Muslim and Sikh Americans following September 11th. He said that it was our responsibility to speak up for and stand with all communities and people that face injustice. I always return to this moment because it was the moment I realized that I too am responsible for being an advocate and empowering others. From attending Convention to working with JACL Chicago, I am proud to be a part of the Japanese American Citizens League because I know the values that are ingrained and intertwined with this organization and its history. After returning to Chicago, I am excited to keep in touch with all the inspiring individuals I met at convention so we collectively can continue to play a role in shaping the future of JACL. 🌟

It's important to draw lessons from the Japanese American experience. An apology by government is exceedingly rare. Its offering attests to the scale of governmental wrongdoing that was embedded as law in the case of Fred Korematsu, which caused Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson to caution, "The principle then lies about like a loaded weapon, ready for the hand of any authority that can bring forward a plausible claim of an urgent need..."

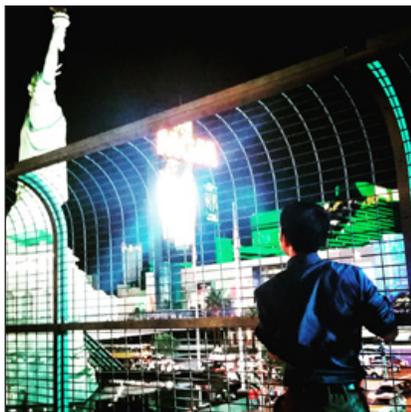
The threat of terrorism is real, but we must remain circumspect about the solutions we pursue. The apology to Japanese Americans says that we owe it to ourselves, to our own sense of honor that we do not go down a path that jeopardizes the rights of Americans. A response of mass segregation was wrong in 1942, and is no more right today. 🌟

Convention, Community, and (Instagram) Captions

By James Ozaki

This past July was my first time attending the JACL National Convention, and I was fortunate to have been selected to be a part of the National Youth/Student Council's Youth Delegate Program. Since this was my first convention, I didn't really know what to expect. I thought it would be a bunch of Japanese Americans coming together to talk about internment camps and civil rights—and I wasn't too far off.

But what I was really looking forward to was meeting other Japanese American youth, because if there's one thing I've always felt was missing from my life as a Japanese American, it's a sense of community with other youth and other Japanese Americans. The main thing that struck me when I met the other youth at convention was the diversity of the group, in terms of geography, racial/ethnic makeup, and age (since youth apparently includes everyone 25 and under). It was very interesting to hear how people came to know their Japanese American identity, how to be more inclusive of the *shin-Nisei*



JAMES' WINNING INSTAGRAM PHOTO.

Photo courtesy of James Ozaki

population, what kind of challenges people have faced being mixed race, and that I wasn't the only one who felt disconnected from a Japanese American community. But what I realized was that even though we aren't together all the time, as young Japanese Americans, we form and are part of a community that supports us all.

I felt this sense of community when I won the Instagram photo contest, then had to sing in front of pretty much everyone attending the convention, after some people started chanting "Sing." The theme of the contest was "The American Dream." In my caption, I talked about how I felt disadvantaged as an Asian American wanting to be a singer, since the general perception is that Asian Americans become doctors or lawyers, but not singers. There isn't much Asian American representation in the media, whether movies or music, and I would like to be someone who can help break that stereotype, by encouraging others to pursue their dreams, or setting an example through my own participation and work.

It's important for Asian Americans not to be boxed in by walls of stereotypes, even if those stereotypes might seem positive (like being good at math or science). Coming out of convention, I have a newfound sense of community, and am more comfortable going my school, church, and other communities sharing my Japanese American identity. 🇺🇸

James Ozaki attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

JACL Midwest Office Secures Funding to Educate Teachers about Incarceration

JACL National Press Release

National JACL, through its Midwest Office in Chicago, has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$165,831 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to conduct two educational conferences for teachers about the Japanese American incarceration during the summer of 2016.

Titled *Civil Liberties in Times of Crisis: The Japanese American Incarceration*, the project will provide an opportunity for middle and high school teachers from throughout the United States to participate in intensive sessions about the incarceration. Conference presenters will include Dr. Lane Hirabayashi and Dr. Valerie Matsumoto from UCLA, Dale Minami, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, John Tateishi, June Aoki Berk, Minoru Tonai, Sharon Ishii-Jordan, and Greg Marutani.

The presenters will cover a range of topics about the incarceration, including its psychological impact, its constitutional significance, the Redress Movement, the military accomplishments of Japanese Americans, and personal accounts including resistance. Participants will visit the Japanese American National Museum, tour Historic Little Tokyo, visit the

section of Santa Anita Race Track that served as a detention facility, and visit Manzanar National Historic Site.

Co-directors for the project are Christine Munteanu, JACL Assistant Program Director, and Bill Yoshino, JACL Midwest Director. In commenting on the significance of the grant, Yoshino noted, "The funds from NEH provide JACL an opportunity to deliver its message to educators that the tragic experience of Japanese Americans during World War II should be a required lesson for all students." Munteanu added, "This immersive training will allow educators to recognize full impact of the incarceration experience while also exploring its nuances and ongoing significance. We're grateful to NEH for this opportunity."

The grant is provided from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Education, Landmarks of American History and Culture: Workshops for School Teachers. 🇺🇸

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Summer Celebrations!

Nikkei Picnic and Ginza Holiday



All Photos: Robert Brown



Symposium on "US-Japan Relations: 70 Years and Beyond" Saturday, Nov. 21 2015 in Harris Hall at Northwestern University, Evanston.

Seventy years have passed since the end of World War II, and over this complex period of geopolitical change there has been a constant and strong partnership built on trust that has developed between Japan and the United States. Over these many decades, this relationship has grown stronger such that these two countries are now among each other's strongest of allies and trading partners. Comments from Japan's Prime Minister Abe, his Cabinet Ministers, and Parliamentarians have all stated that the strength of the U.S.-Japan relationship has benefitted greatly from the sustained and unwavering efforts and reputation of many Japanese Americans serving at the highest levels including the former Senator Inouye, Secretary Mineta, Secretary and Chief of Staff Shinseki and many others, who have given selflessly to establishing and sustaining good relations.

This one day Symposium "US-Japan Relations: 70 Years and Beyond" is intended for a diverse audience to engage in a series of topics over four sessions:

- I. Historical and cultural perspectives that shape the Japanese American identity;
- II. Issues that affect and concern the Japanese American community;
- III. Asian American intergroup relations; and,
- IV. Evolving Asia and Asian American relations

Each session will have a set of expert panelists and moderator to engage in lively debate and discussion.

For more information, contact Bill Yoshino at byoshino@jaal.org

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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

September 9–12	Kansha, Too! Los Angeles, CA
Wednesday, September 23 7 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street, Chicago IL 60640
Saturday, October 3 9 AM	JACL National Board Meeting 321 N. Clark Street, Suite 1000, Chicago, IL 60654
Sunday, September 27 3 PM	NCJAA Autumn Concert (Baroque and original music) North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago IL Donation: \$15 (NCJAA, CJC, Futabakai), \$20 non-members, Free under 16 yrs. old
October 3–4	ROTATIONS Performance by Ho Etsu Taiko On Ensemble Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N Southport, Chicago, IL Tickets: www.athenaeumtheatre.org/rotations
Wednesday, October 14 7 PM	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street, Chicago IL 60640
October 17–18	Midwest District Council Meeting Cincinnati, OH