On a sunny Sunday afternoon in March, JACL Chicago co-hosted a music and storytelling event at Case Calle 20, an art gallery in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood. Titled Bridge: Bridging the Japanese American & Latino Communities, the event’s goal was to connect the Japanese American and Latinx communities through an exchange of narratives.

The concept of Bridge developed from conversations between Kansha Alumni Leadership Board (ALB) member Keilyn Kuramitsu and Javier Suárez, the owner of Case Calle 20. Javier regularly hosts storytelling workshops at his gallery that emphasize the experiences of marginalized individuals and was eager to facilitate an exchange that would allow each community to hear the other’s narratives.

While Bridge focused on Japanese American stories, we are hoping to organize a future event that will allow Japanese Americans to hear the experiences of Chicago’s Latinx community as well.

Bridge was Headlined by Julian Saporiti and Erin Aoyama, who form the Brown University-based musical duo The No-No Bay Project. They bookended the event with Erin Aoyama and Julian Saporiti of The No-No Bay Project share pieces from their Multimedia concert.

Continued on page 1
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 5/15/18.**

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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**JAVIER SUÁREZ, OWNER OF CASA CALLE 20, INTRODUCES THE EVENT AND WELCOMES THE ATTENDEES TO THE SPACE IN PILSEN.**

With a wide spectrum of performance mediums and topics, Bridge succeeded in sharing more than just historical facts with the non-Japanese American audience members. While I cannot speak for those attendees, based on conversations I heard at the concluding reception, it appeared that many of them came away with a new perspective on the trauma and emotions caused by the incarceration experience. Furthermore, as one of the event organizers, I found it uplifting to see members of different communities under the same roof interacting with one another and discussing issues of marginalization and solidarity. Coalitions are certainly not formed in one afternoon. Hopefully though, Bridge acted as a starting point for further dialogue and future coordinated action. I look forward to next hearing the narratives of the Latinx community and continuing to build upon this relationship between our two groups.

**SAVE-THE-DATE**
**Kansha Project Culmination**
**Saturday, June 23**

*More info coming soon!*
February and March were filled with a number of exciting civic engagement opportunities sponsored by JACL Chicago, JASC, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Chicago. I had the good fortune of being able to join in on a few of these events and I am incredibly appreciative to all the organizations, and their respected members, who were instrumental in the planning and implementation of these programs. After participating in the phone banks and the voter education event, I walked away a much more knowledgeable individual on the election process.

The voter education event took place on Tuesday, February 27th at JASC. The evening consisted of two presentations; the upcoming Illinois Primary (held on March 20th) and the need for a fair tax system in Illinois. There is a myriad of reasons why voters are hesitant to cast their vote in any given election. Oftentimes, it is because they do not see how their vote could make a difference. You hear it time and time again, “does my vote really matter?” The answer is yes! The reality, is that the margin of victory (MOV) in state and local elections have historically been incredibly small. This means that a candidate can win by the slimmest margins. For example, at the 2014 Illinois General Elections, Robert Dold beat Brad Schneider by 4,856 votes and kept his seat as U.S. Representative for Illinois’ 10th congressional district. Even more fascinating, approximately 19,754 people in the 10th district identified as AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander). This demonstrates that the AAPI community is greater than the margin of victory! If we are able to mobilize our community and cast our votes, there is no way that any candidate can ignore the issues we are advocating for. Our voices in unison are too powerful to silence because we have the potential to decide an election. How empowering!

Continued on page 4
In the weeks following, two phone banks were held on March 8th and 13th to encourage members of our community to go out and vote in the upcoming primaries. Voter turnout is traditionally low in primary elections which can be discouraging. We don’t want a small number of people deciding who will represent their party. The more involved in the election process, the better.

The first phone bank we were able to call hundreds of members of the Japanese American community and at the end of the night we were all exhausted yet grateful for the progress we had made. Ask anyone, phone banking is not always the easiest work because many people you call are annoyed, tired, or uninterested in what you have to say. But studies show that it is, in fact, effective in getting people to the polls. It can also lead to some very satisfying conversations and this was especially relevant when it came to the second phone bank as we called members from our very own community! It was not uncommon to see a familiar name come up on the call sheet and have a nostalgic conversation. On a side note, all the catered food at these events was unbelievably delicious and I was able to break bread with some lovely members of our community!

I am hoping to connect more with members of the AAPI community and become a more informed and engaged citizen in the political process. We hope you join us as we continue this work in the fall for the Illinois General Election!
On March 6th, members of JACL Chicago’s Kansha Project Alumni Leadership Board (ALB) welcomed university students who were participating in a social justice pilgrimage to the city of Chicago. Youth from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles were hosted by Chicago Regional Organizing for Antiracism (CROAR), a national organization working to dismantle institutional racism with an active Chicago chapter. CROAR reached out to JACL Chicago to learn more about the work of our organization and young people.

Students visited socially-engaged nonprofit and activist groups including the #LetUsBreathe Collective, the Inner-City Muslim Action Network, the American Indian Center, and JACL Chicago, inviting ALB members to join at these and other site visits. Students also visited sites of historic racial importance including the Martin Luther King, Jr. monument in Marquette Park, and the Hyde Park house used by the Department of Justice for internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Throughout our time at the JACL office, participants were exposed to history of the Nikkei community in Chicago. Many who had been familiar with the events of the wartime incarceration were not aware of the legacy and history of Japanese American resettlement throughout the rest of the United States. The visiting students, ten women of color from across California, also shared about their experiences of riding the Red Line from the South Side up to the North Side to the event. According to participants, the experience of participating in public transit and witnessing firsthand the intense segregation of our city was a shocking one. This and other reflections were powerful reminders of the work still left to do.

Parts of this workshop, designed by ALB members Lisa Doi and Kenji Kuramitsu, drew from material used in the JACL Chicago’s Next Generation Nikkei gathering with National Youth/Student Council members this October. Staff person Mari Yamagiwa presented on the history of JACL, and chapter Youth Chair Lane Mita gave some context for the history of Kansha Project and the Kansha Project Alumni Leadership Board. Participants also engaged in icebreaker and partnered reflection activities, discussed themes of urban movement and public memory, and watched the short experimental horror film *Seppuku*, by Yonsei filmmaker Daryn Wakasa, a project funded by the Japanese American Confinement Sites grants.

Joy Bailey, a community organizer with Chicago ROAR, expressed gratitude on behalf of the group for their visit to JACL Chicago. She explained, “Many students didn’t know about the history and experiences of Japanese Americans and were inspired and moved to learn more. Several students really appreciated the activity where JACL [members] asked them to write down whatever was on their mind and heart that was keeping them from being fully present during the week and to put it in a basket which JACL would hold for them. They were really touched and were better able to let go and be present the rest of the week.”

Welcoming pilgrimage participants to our offices was also a special experience for alumni of the JACL Chicago’s Kansha Project, who have in the past participated in a similar trip experience to the West Coast. Many thanks to Christine Munteanu, Keilyn Kuramitsu, Mari Yamagiwa, and Lisa Doi for the attention and support. May we continue to hold one another in care, support, and radical solidarity.

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**Japanese American Memorial Day Service**

**Monday, May 28**

**11:00am**

Montrose Cemetery

5400 N Pulaski Rd, Chicago
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The JACL is a community organization that ensures the protection of your rights. Help us continue to be a strong voice for you and your family by supporting us with your membership or a donation.

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Chicago, IL 60640

Spring Midwest District Council Meeting
By Bryan Hara, Chapter President

Over the weekend of March 9, 2018, JACL Chicago participated in the Spring Midwest District Council (MDC) meeting. Chapter representatives from Chicago, Omaha, St. Louis, Dayton, Cincinnati, Wisconsin, Detroit, Minnesota, and Indiana were all in attendance. The JACL National Youth Student Council (NYSC) held a youth summit alongside the MDC meeting. The NYSC participants and MDC chapter representatives were able to come together to discuss and strategize youth initiatives within the district and chapters.

MDC voted to support a separate NYSC budget, so youth programs could be funded through the JACL National budget. In addition to normal district business such as the education report, budget report, and preparation for the JACL National Convention, the Wisconsin chapter had two keynote speakers that presented on the intersections of photography and social justice work. The meeting was a success, and our Fall 2018 MDC meeting will be held in Minnesota.

JACL National Convention
July 18-22
Philadelphia, PA

For more information go to jacl.org/2018-convention

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Greg Kimura
Michael Oshita
Nancy Rivera
Bill and Carol Yoshino
*(in memory of Dale Nomura)*

**Kansha Project**
Clay Cerny
Janis Jasper
Masahito Kimura
Mari Langowski
Junko Mizuta
Richard and Joyce Morimoto
Christine Munteanu
Anne Shimojima
Mari Yamagiwa

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Join us for the Kansha Project Culmination
Saturday, June 23
*More info to follow*

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Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 9</td>
<td>JACL Chicago Board Meeting</td>
<td>JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N Clark St, Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 16</td>
<td>Asian American Action Day</td>
<td>Springfield, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 20</td>
<td>Scholarship Luncheon</td>
<td>Maggiano’s, 4999 Old Orchard Shopping Center, Skokie</td>
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<td>Thursday, May 24</td>
<td>Kansha Nisei Lounge Fundraiser</td>
<td>Nisei Lounge, 3439 N Sheffield Ave, Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, May 28</td>
<td>Memorial Day Service</td>
<td>Montrose Cemetery, 5400 N Pulaski Rd, Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 31</td>
<td>Kansha Coffee Conversations</td>
<td>Time and location to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday/Sunday,</td>
<td>Japan Fest - more info at: japanfest-chicago.org</td>
<td>Forest View Educational Center, 2121 S Goebbert Rd, Arlington Heights</td>
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<td>June 2-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 13</td>
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