Greetings from Chapter President Lisa Doi

By Lisa Doi, JACL Chicago President

Happy New Year!

I want to take some time, at the beginning of my term as President of the Chicago Chapter, to introduce myself to our members and talk about JACL Chicago in 2019 and beyond.

My first memory of being involved in the Japanese American community in Chicago is from when I was about four years old—the Field Museum hosted “Strength and Diversity: Japanese American Women 1885-1990.” I remember walking around the museum in an adult sized t-shirt that came down to my ankles, unsure what it meant to be a Japanese American woman, but proud nonetheless. I grew up with a strong sense of Japanese American community; attending the Midwest Buddhist Temple, annual Day of Remembrance, and cooking oshogatsu. I continued to develop my racial identity as a multiracial Asian American, but it wasn’t until college, when I participated in the first year of JACL Chicago’s Kansha Project that I re-explored what it means to be a Japanese American woman.

In my time working with the Kansha Project, I have realized how lucky I was to have such a strong connection to the community and, in particular, to be able to look up to a group of strong and diverse women. In my experience of the Japanese American community in Chicago, I see women as historians and archivists, educators who lead youth taiko and preschools, storytellers and reporters, cooks and healers, community anchors

Continued on page 2
and connectors, and as activists who work tirelessly to build community and pass on Japanese American history. There are two stories that I want to highlight, first, the group of women who founded the Kansha Project. Much like “Strength and Diversity,” this rooted the Kansha Project as a community led and community funded effort. Second, this summer, during the Families Belong Together march, I got to watch Jean Mishima share her story to an estimated 60,000 people in Daley Plaza. To me, these role models speak to the best of what the Japanese American community can be.

This sets me up for how I envision the future of JACL Chicago, I want to express the gravity that I feel to be able to stand on the shoulders of those Issei, Nisei, and Sansei, and the new generations of Nikkei in Chicago, who I have long admired. I look to the past to find four principles to guide us forward: first, JACL Chicago must continue to be a civil rights leader in the Japanese American, Asian American, and Chicago community: this is our founding mission and must remain our north star. Second, we must invest in young people to craft our organization for the future. From the stories I have heard about the Junior JACL to my own experiences with the Kansha Project and Next Generation Nikkei, I know engaging younger members now is crucial for our success in the future. Third, so many of our greatest accomplishments have come when we draw on our strength as a community. This means ensuring that our organization is best serving our members and expressing appreciation for our many donors that make our programs possible. Finally, we need to carry Japanese American history into the 21st century—developing new generations of storytellers and exploring new avenues and methods in research and preservation.

I am excited for the future of JACL Chicago and look forward to serving as President.

With gratitude,
Lisa Doi 📈

Save the Date
Our Story: The Japanese American Incarceration
April 4, 2019
A JACL Chicago program to provide an understanding of the Japanese American incarceration and its impact on individuals, our community, our Constitution, and our values of democracy.

Watch for more info to follow.
The Kansha Project is a JACL Chicago program that connects self-identified, Japanese Americans, ages 18-25, from the Midwest to their identity, history, and community.

Participants engage in an in-depth examination of the WWII confinement site experience through an immersive educational trip to Los Angeles’ historic Little Tokyo neighborhood and Manzanar National Historic Site. Through workshops with local experts and community activists, historical tours, and group reflections, participants work to interpret and promote the stories, lessons, and the legacy of the Japanese American confinement site experience.

2019 Program Dates:

Orientation: June 15
Trip: June 16 – 19
Culmination: June 23

Why should you apply?
Here’s what some alumni of the Kansha Project have said about their experiences:

“As someone who moved to Chicago from Japan for college and did not have any family members who were incarcerated during WWII, I was unsure of what to expect from Kansha. I ended up getting much more out of the trip than I ever could have imagined. While I could have stayed at home and read about the Japanese American immigrant experience and WWII incarceration, actually visiting the places where this history occurred and hearing the perspectives of multiple experts made this learning much more impactful. Furthermore, it was truly a privilege to experience this journey with our wonderful three facilitators and fellow participants. Our daily discussions helped me think about my own identity in relation to the history and themes we were learning about, and it was helpful to be surrounded by others who were going through a similar process. Perhaps this is what I found most special about Kansha; I cannot think of another opportunity where I would so quickly become so comfortable with a group of twelve people who were previously strangers.”
—Henry L. (‘17)

“At first I didn’t think that much of it, it was a part of my grandparent’s history and we kind of learned about it.

—Emily H. (‘12)
in school but when it came down to writing the application it started to really get me to think about the details of why they were there, what life there was like, what the aftermath was like and the fact that our grandparents did not talk of these things at all. It wasn’t until we were actually at the Manzanar internment camp site that it really hit me. As we toured the site and saw some of the conditions and the areas that they called “home,” my heart broke. The reality of it all came down on me and the different emotions that I hadn’t felt when I had previously thought about that event came up, feelings such as anger, sadness and frustration. All I could think of was: how could this happen? how could they do this? and most of all: why? If you are on the fence about going on the Kansha my advice is: Go. Go because this is a part of your history, go because what happened our people is being forgotten, go because learning about it and being there are two very different things and most of all go because it is going to happen again if we stand by, uneducated, and let our ancestors’ voices go unheard.”  
—Leanne O (*17)

“When I applied to the Kansha Project, I had no clue what to expect. I applied thinking it would be a good chance to experience something new but that was about as much as I thought about it. The trip itself was valuable and life changing with the things that I learned about my own identity and the Japanese American incarceration. More than that, I have been connected with an inspiring group of peers that I care about deeply and want to affect a positive change in the world by sharing this story. I feel immense gratitude towards the Kansha Project.”  
—Greg K (*16)

Kansha Project applications are due March 1st. More information can be found on our website at: jaclchicago.org/programs/kansha-project.

Justice for Grace Watanabe Update

To inform our membership, JACL Chicago will be sending updates regarding the Grace Watanabe case.

Overview of the Case
Grace Watanabe, a 97 year old Japanese American survivor of the Poston incarceration camp with no living relatives, is the victim of an extensive financial exploitation scheme, allegedly perpetrated by employees of Symphony Residences of Lincoln Park (Symphony), whose role was to care for Ms. Watanabe, but instead robbed her of most of her estate. According to the Public Guardian’s office, five employees stole over $750,000 from Ms. Watanabe. These employees include Symphony’s Business Manager, Activities Director, Assistant Activities Director, receptionist, and hairdresser. The Public Guardian’s office described the situation at Symphony as “wholesale corruption, from top to bottom.” Symphony Post Acute Care Network operates a large chain of dozens of nursing homes in the Midwest. The civil case is currently in Probate Court and is in the discovery period. The criminal case is currently being handled by the Chicago Police Department and is also in the investigation phase.

Status of the case
The Grace Watanabe case can be simplified into two areas of the justice system. The civil side and the criminal side. The civil side, led by the Cook
County Public Guardian’s Office, will seek restitution in full for Grace Watanabe from the individuals and institutions involved. On the criminal side, a Chicago Police Department detective is investigating, and there may be criminal charges filed against the individuals. Because of how extensive this case is, the length of time of theft, and the connections between alleged perpetrators, both the attorneys and detective on the case require time to gather as much information and evidence as possible.

Civil Side: The Cook County Public Guardian’s office has appointed a guardian ad litem for Grace Watanabe and will be assisted in the lawsuit by the private law firm, Levin & Perconti to pursue the five individuals who allegedly stole from Ms. Watanabe along with Symphony for restitution in Probate Court. The first act of the Public Guardian’s office was to remove Ms. Watanabe from Symphony and place her in an undisclosed nursing home where she is safe and well cared for. Since then, the Public Guardian’s office has been in the discovery phase of the civil case. The December 5th hearing was to give a status update and continue to request more time for discovery and depositions. The attorneys for Ms. Watanabe will be in the discovery period, gathering more evidence, until a March 2019 court hearing date is determined. The Public Guardian’s office has been very proactive on this case and has continuously met with JACL Chicago leadership in working together to seek justice for Ms. Watanabe. JACL Chicago will keep the community updated on the next hearing date.

Criminal Side: The Chicago Police Department (CPD) has assigned this case to a detective in the Financial Crimes Division. JACL Chicago has spoken with the detective and they are in the middle of their investigation of gathering evidence against the individuals involved to submit to the States Attorney’s Office for potential criminal charges. Due to it being an ongoing investigation, the detective is limited to the information they are able to share with the community. JACL Chicago has been assured that they are working on the case and because the burden of proof is higher than in civil court, CPD needs to gather enough evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. Once all evidence is gathered, the detective will submit the evidence to the States Attorney’s Office, who will determine whether to seek criminal charges. JACL Chicago will keep the community informed on when the case will be turned over to the State Attorney’s Office.

What JACL Chicago is doing
JACL Chicago formed a committee following our annual meeting consisting of Bryan Hara, Mari Yamagiwa, Bill Yoshino, and Ross Harano. The goal of this committee is to stay up to date with the case, work with the Public Guardian’s Office to assist Grace Watanabe in any way, properly disseminate information and updates regarding the case to the community, and create the proper organizational strategy to aid in the restitution for Grace Watanabe.

Up to now, the committee outreached for turnout for the December 5th hearing which included over 30 community members. The judge took notice along with the attorneys present. They ran out of space in the court room and it was standing room only. After the hearing, the committee had the attorneys for Grace Watanabe address the community that turned out to answer questions and give updates on the case. On December 10th, the committee met with the Public Guardian Attorney, the law firm of Levin & Perconti, a representative from the States Attorney’s Office, and the Public Guardian’s Public Relations representative. The committee has begun initial conversations with media outlets and will issue a statement soon. They have also spoken with the detective on the case to find out the status of the criminal side of the investigation. The committee will also take charge in reaching out to other organizations for support.

What you can do
Since the case is currently in discovery period, there will not be any hearings until March of 2019. We ask that all community members wishing to support, stay up to date with this case and be ready to show up for Grace Watanabe when needed. In the meantime, with the new year and Ms. Watanabe not having any living relatives, community members are welcome to write letters to her. Letters may be addressed as:

Grace Watanabe
c/o JACL Chicago
5415 N Clark St
Chicago, IL 60640

The committee will deliver the letters to the Public Guardian’s office to give to Ms. Watanabe. This is a great way to support Grace Watanabe and show her that she has a large family that cares for her in the Japanese American community.

AACC Lunar New Year Celebration
Saturday, February 23
5:00pm

Hyatt Regency O’Hare
9300 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont

www.aacchicago.org
Apply for a JACL Chicago Scholarship!

Scholarships range from $1,500 to $5,000+ and are open to undergraduate and graduate students who have demonstrated a commitment to JACL’s mission.

Find details and program guidelines on page 7.

Resolutions for the New Year

From my family to yours, I hope you had a wonderful holiday and a Happy New Year. I spent the time with family and friends which, as I have become older, has become something that I put a higher importance on especially since losing my mom 15 months ago.

As we enter 2019, I have three resolutions. The first is the one that I make every year and that is to be healthier this year than in previous years. This means going to the doctor for regular checkups, dentist for cleanings, and anything else that bothers me.

The second is to be a better friend/family member/husband. I know that as we all get older, that we get busier with other commitments that distract us from spending time with those that we care about. I’ve been lucky to be blessed to have some amazing people in my life that I can always turn to support me in times of need. This year, I will repay that by making time for those individuals and re-enforcing our relationship.

The last one is to help grow the foundation that my family started in January 2018. Our mission from the beginning was to spread awareness within the Asian American community about the importance of blood donation for those battling blood cancers as my mom did, but also to have Asian Americans add themselves to the national bone marrow registry as well. This way, we can help potentially save others battling these horrible diseases. According to a national report released last year demographic patterns of blood donors and donations in a large metropolitan area, Asian Americans only make up 2.2%.

On March 23rd from 8:00 AM-12:15 PM at the Japanese American Service Committee, we will be hosting our second annual Gregg and Robyn Oshita Foundation Blood Drive in partnership with Be the Match, Heartland Blood Center, and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. I encourage all of you that are able bodied to sign up for a donation time and become regular blood donors. In the case of my mom in her battle with AML, she needed regular transfusions and platelet donations on a weekly basis to help her continue her fight. If we can even make a small contribution to the number of Asian American blood donors then we are a success. Through our efforts last year, we had 27 individuals donate blood and also 8 individuals add themselves to the national bone marrow registry.

For more information, please contact me directly via email: michael.oshita@thegrofoundation.org

I look forward to seeing you on March 23rd.
2019 JACL Chicago Scholarship Program Guidelines

GENERAL INFORMATION
The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the nation’s oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization whose mission is to advance social justice and promote the legacy and cultural heritage of the Japanese American community.

The Chicago Chapter of JACL offers scholarships ranging from $1,500 to $5,000 to undergraduate and graduate students who have demonstrated a commitment to JACL’s mission. Scholarships are awarded based on an applicant’s understanding of and alignment with JACL’s mission, as well as academic performance and extracurricular involvement. Scholarships are open to all, regardless of race or ethnicity. Previous JACL Chicago scholarship winners applying for a second award must demonstrate sustained engagement with JACL.

Funding for scholarships is provided by generous donations from JACL Chicago members and the greater Chicago Japanese American community.

ELIGIBILITY
- **JACL Membership**: Applicants who have not previously received a JACL Chicago scholarship do not need to be JACL members to apply for a scholarship. If selected to receive a scholarship, first-time winners will receive a one-year student membership to JACL Chicago as part of their award. Previous winners must have a current student or individual JACL Chicago membership valid through the end of 2019.
- **Enrollment Status**: Applicants must be full-time students at an accredited college, university, or other institution of higher learning in the United States for the fall of 2019. Students deferring enrollment will not qualify for the 2019 scholarship program. Awards are contingent on proof of enrollment.
- **Residency**: Applicants must be residents of the State of Illinois (although attendance at schools outside of Illinois is permissible) OR actively enrolled in an accredited Illinois university, college, or institution of higher learning at the time of application.
- **Limits**: JACL Chicago scholarship winners are limited to receiving a total of two (2) awards in their lifetime.
- **Scholarship Luncheon**: All scholarship winners are required to attend the Scholarship Luncheon on **Sunday, May 19, 2019**. Awards will be distributed on this date. Any awardee who does not attend without prior approval from the scholarship committee will forfeit their award.
- **Taxes**: Scholarship awards may be considered taxable income. Awardees will be required to provide their Social Security Number and will be issued an IRS 1099 Form.

HOW TO APPLY
- Application forms will be available at [www.jaclchicago.org](http://www.jaclchicago.org) or the JACL Chicago office by December 2018.
- All application materials, including application form and supplemental pages, official transcript(s), and recommendation letters must be included in one complete application packet. Do not submit materials separately. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications must be received or postmarked by **Friday, March 1, 2019**. Late applications will not be considered.
- Send complete application packet to:
  - JACL Chicago Scholarship Committee
  - 5415 N. Clark St.
  - Chicago, IL 60640
- Electronic submissions will not be accepted.
- Applicants will be notified of the Scholarship Committee’s decision in April 2019. All decisions of the Scholarship Committee are final.

For questions or more information, visit [http://jaclchicago.org/programs/scholarship-program/](http://jaclchicago.org/programs/scholarship-program/) or contact Christine Munteanu, JACL Chicago Scholarship Committee chair, at scholarships@jaclchicago.org.

**NOTE:** The Japanese American Citizens League administers a National Scholarship Program that is separate and independent from the JACL Chicago Scholarship Program. For information about the JACL National Scholarship Program, please visit [www.jacl.org/jacl-national-scholarship-program](http://www.jacl.org/jacl-national-scholarship-program).
About a year ago I came across a startling fact: from May 1942 to September 1945, Indiana University (IU), my alma mater, denied admission to Japanese Americans because of their ancestry. Over these 40 or so months, at least a dozen Japanese Americans applied to IU, including several transfer students, an individual from Indiana who worked at an IU-affiliated hospital, and an incarcerated Nisei for whom attending college was freedom. Every application was unique, but all received the same response: Indiana University does not accept Japanese Americans. At a time when most of our community was behind barbed wire, the rejection letters that these Nisei received might have seemed like an expected injustice. But these letters were not sent by the military. They were sent by American colleges.

Nisei Wartime Education

In 1941, about 3,250 Nisei were enrolled at West Coast colleges. A year later, 2,600 joined their families in the concentration camps and 600 transferred to other colleges. With about 4,000 Nisei due to graduate from high school in 1942, around 7,500 Nisei were unable to continue their education. Recognizing this, the American Friends Service Committee and other activists formed the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) who would be the primary placement office for Nisei during the war.

A few institutions, such as the University of Nebraska, Washington University at Saint Louis, University of Minnesota, and Earlham College, offered hundreds of young Japanese Americans the opportunity to rebuild their lives. For the majority of schools, Japanese Americans were not admitted: some were simply unable to secure military permission, others unable to overcome community anti-Japanese sentiment, and still others were unable to overcome their own prejudices.

My Alma Mater: A Case Study of Education Denied

In May 1942, the Indiana University Board of Trustees held a meeting at which Ora L. Wildermuth, President of the Trustees, made the following statement:

As I see it, there is a difference in Japanese and Germans or Italians—they are Aryans and can be assimilated but the Japanese can’t—they are different racially. I can’t believe that any Japanese, no matter where he was born, is anything but a Japanese.

IU’s Trustees then ruled that “no Japanese be admitted to Indiana University” beginning a three-year period where education was denied to young Nisei. The next week, IU’s President Herman B Wells, approved a form letter to be sent to every Japanese American applicant which said due to the “present uncertain military status of the southern Indiana geographical zone…this University is not accepting Japanese students at the present time.” A few weeks later, an unnamed Nisei wrote Wells to inquire about IU’s medical school. Wells’ response was that “it is necessary to limit the number of admissions from other states.” These two justifications for denying admission are representative of the larger struggle that Nisei faced. Colleges deny applications every day in nebulous processes and often for arbitrary reasons. At IU, an unstated subtext to these rejection letters was Wildermuth’s racism, but, as Japanese Americans looked to restart their lives, Nisei continued to apply.

Kansha: Shikata ga nai no more

When I think about what my grandmother experienced and all the sacrifices she made so I could undertake this research today, I feel kansha (gratitude). When my grandmother left Amache to attend college, it was the last time she ever saw her father alive. For the Nisei I came across in the archive, I could not
help but wonder: were they able to find another college? On the West Coast, Sansei activists were able to secure apologies and retroactive diplomas for Nisei forced to withdraw from schools like the University of Washington and the University of California. Here, in the Midwest, the stories of rejection have been largely forgotten. But not erased.

I am proud to tell the Nisei story and advocate for extensions of redress to my state. For the first time, the names of three Nisei veterans are now included in IU’s official registry of veterans. Additionally, in October 2018, in partnership with others on campus, the Wildermuth Intramural Center, a gym named after Board President Wildermuth, was “de-named” and I believe an apology is in the works for IU’s Japanese American ban. Still, there is so much more to be done. My next project is titled: Japanese Americans Deemed Inadvisable at the University of Chicago. If you have a family story of education denied or an institution you would like to research, please reach out to me at erhlango@gmail.com.

**Selected Sources**

- Jenness Evaline Hall, “Japanese American College Students during the Second World War: The politics of relocation” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1994)
- Indiana University Archive Collections 213 and 218
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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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Go Green! Receive the JACLer newsletter (in full color), news and updates via email. See page 2

## Calendar of Events

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<th>Event Details</th>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, January 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>JACL Chicago Board Meeting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00pm – 9:00pm</td>
<td>JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N Clark St, Chicago</td>
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<td><strong>JACL Chicago Board Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N Clark St, Chicago</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, February 17</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day of Remembrance</strong></td>
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<td>2:00pm – 4:00pm</td>
<td>Chicago History Museum, 1601 N Clark St, Chicago</td>
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