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JACL Chicago Chapter

JACLer

In this Issue:

- page 1 Message from the JACL Chicago Board
- page 3 Solidarity, Like Remembrance, is a Call to Action
- page 3 The Stakes of Reparations
- page 4 Tsuru Rising Weekend Unites Chicago Nikkei for Justice
- page 5 Tsuru Rising Weekend: Reflection
- page 6 Resources for Continued Learning and Engagement
- page 7 Join/Renew Your Membership and Donate
- page 8 Calendar of Events

Stay tuned for upcoming JACL Chicago programs:

Virtual Arts & Activism Panel - Saturday, August 15, 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Mass Incarceration Workshop - Late August

Open Mic Night - September

Message from the JACL Chicago Board

Dear JACL Chicago Members,

This is a special issue of the JACLer focused on Black lives. We are asking you, our members, to read this issue, learn more about issues of anti-Black racism, particularly via policing and incarceration, and take action. Across these pages, we offer some ways for you to begin or continue this process.

This issue is coming late. We took time for us, the JACL Chicago board, to learn more before communicating with and engaging our members. There is much that the JACL Chicago board, members, and friends in the Japanese American community in Chicago need to do in this moment to learn from Black experience and center Black lives. We are excited for this work and, perhaps, cautious. To do this well means developing a practice of solidarity, one that balances reflection and action.

Opportunities for Reflection & Learning:

Chicago Education Series: August 2020 & Beyond

JACL Chicago is joining with other Japanese American organizations in Chicago to embark on a three part educational series. This series will begin in August and will offer a chance for our members and friends to learn more about the state of policing, anti-Black racism, and structural violence. It will culminate in an intergenerational conversation in which we will learn from each other and call on each other for support and guidance. More information on this series is forthcoming. Please check www.jaclchicago.org and our social media for updates at the end of July.

Tsuru for Solidarity: Community Conversations August - October 2020

JACL Chicago is also joining with others in the Japanese American community at a national level. We encourage our members to join Tsuru for Solidarity's Community Conversations. The program launched on July 25th with a workshop focused on

Continued on page 2

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.

For More Information

For information about the JACL Chicago Chapter, call 773.728.7171, or visit www.jaclchicago.org

Contact Us

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Go Green!

If you would like to receive a copy of this newsletter electronically, and receive JACL news and updates via email, please email info@jaclchicago.org and let us know you'd like to be added to our electronic mailing list!

Advertise in the JACLER!

Go to www.jaclchicago.org for details on how to place your ad today.

- Affordable Rates
- Targeted Community Audience
- Support JACL Chicago



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Message from JACL Chicago Board continued

Japanese American identity and intergenerational experience. The second program will take place in August and will focus on policing and mass incarceration. You can watch the July program, learn more about upcoming events, and register at www.tsuruforsolidarity.org.

National Youth/Student Council Workshop on Anti-Blackness August 21nd @ 6pm PDT

JACL Chicago's Next Generation Nikkei is also collaborating with JACL's National Youth/Student Council conversation on anti-Blackness. We encourage our younger members to join. If you would like to participate, please email mkuramoto@jacl.org.

Opportunities for Action & Healing:

Defund Cook County Jail Sundays from 1-3pm CDT

JACL Chicago members have been attending weekly gatherings at Cook County Jail towards ongoing efforts to defund the jail in the next Cook County budget. Japanese American participation is coordinated by Nikkei Uprising, an emerging coalition of Japanese American activists in Chicago including members of the JACL Chicago board. If you would like to join us at these gatherings, typically on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, please email nikkeiuprising@gmail.com.

Black & Nikkei Affinity Space

There are members of our community who are both Black and *Nikkei*. We must listen to and learn from these community members. A group of multiracial Black and *Nikkei* organizers are gathering for conversation and organizing. If you identify as Black and *Nikkei* and would like to participate or learn more, please email tsuruforsolidarity@gmail.com.

A Just Chi

If you are looking for other actions being taken by Asian American communities, we encourage you to join A Just Chi, an educational and advocacy group affiliated with Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago. To learn more, you can email Andrea Chu at achu@advancingjustice-chicago.org.

As you read this issue and as new programming emerges, please reach out with questions, ideas, suggestions, and more. You can contact our chapter president, Lisa Doi, at president@jaclchicago.org.

We hope you will join us,

JACL Chicago Board 🇺🇸

Like Us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/JACLChicago

Solidarity, Like Remembrance, is a Call to Action

By Justin Valas, JAACL Chicago Member

Growing up in a rural town, far from other Japanese Americans, it wasn't until college that I was able to start learning stories of other Japanese Americans and connecting in a deeper way to our collective legacy. It was learning about Yuri Kochiyama and Richard Aoki that not only helped me to see a part of myself in our stories, but also connected me to other Japanese Americans with whom these stories resonated. When I think about what this moment calls us to –what Japanese American solidarity with Black liberation means to us as a community– it is a call to honor our histories by recommitting to action.

This moment also calls the names of friends and members of our community who are both Black and Japanese American. I see you, I hear you.

While we listen to stories of Black lives taken from us by state violence, my heart breaks. I have spent the past few weeks navigating waves of grief and rage and love as I pore back through materials and information in response to other lives that had been taken in a seemingly endless scroll. We know that Japanese Americans have been involved in the fights for civil rights and liberation as part of the Third World Liberation Front, organizing alongside undocumented youth, or any of the numerous spaces in which members of our communities showed up on the side of civil rights. Our community has also felt the stings of white supremacy and state violence, most visibly during incarceration in the 1940s, and found ways to organize and fight back. The fact that we're still fighting these fights can be consuming.

Understanding that a part, though not the entirety, of our shared story as Japanese Americans is rooted in solidarity gives us something to reflect upon as we engage in this moment. One need only look at the mission of JAACL, "whose ongoing mission is to secure and maintain the

civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry" to see that our work carries both the weight of history and a commitment to the moment. Now is a moment for Japanese Americans to listen to Black community members and answer the call of Black-led organizations. We should



Photos: Kat Nagasawa

RECALLING THE WWII INCARCERATION, CHICAGO JAPANESE AMERICANS PARTICIPATE IN THE 2019 RALLY AND MARCH TO PROTEST THE INDEFINITE DETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS AND SEPARATION OF FAMILIES AT THE BORDER.

join conversations about the systems that target Black communities and how we can help change them. We must uproot anti-Blackness in ourselves and

commit ourselves to advancing racial equity. At Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago, where I work as the Policy Director, one of our efforts has been to engage our communities through our Racial Equity Pledge, which you can read and sign at www.advancingjustice-chicago.org/racial-equity/.

While the experiences of our community are not the same, the touchstones of our experiences and an understanding that white supremacy hurts us all point us in the direction of solidarity and collective liberation. Our Japanese American community has experienced surveillance, incarceration, and state violence. Our families fought for reparations, changes in policy, and for civil rights. These parts of who we are compel me towards solidarity, particularly in this moment. For me, this remembrance –like solidarity– is a call to action in defense of Black lives and towards Black liberation.

The moment is now for our communities to show up. Conversations are happening. Momentum is building. We cannot wait on the sidelines while solidarity calls.

Justin Valas is a mixed roots, third generation Japanese American and currently serves as the Policy Director at Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago. 🌱

The Stakes of Reparations

By Eric Langowski, Next Gen Nikkei Board Member

The power of redress lives on today. It funds our community organizations, elevates our story to a wider audience, and serves as an irrefutable argument against those who try to argue our incarceration was justified. Our community fought forty years for reparations. It came a generation too late for the majority of our Issei ancestors. Many leaders, in JAACL, NCCR, and NCJAR, valiantly fought for redress to occur as fast as possible so that no more incarcerated would die without receiving (if they wished) the apology and reparations.

Continued on page 5

Tsuru Rising Weekend Unites Chicago Nikkei for Justice

By Brandon Lee, JACL Chicago Board Member

On June 6 and 7, Japanese Americans across the nation took action as part of Tsuru Rising, a virtual gathering of over 1,000 *Nikkei* who participated in panel discussions, regional community building, and direct action. The goal of the weekend was to gather as a community in the name of social solidarity - both with each other as Japanese Americans as well as with Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities united in struggle.

Here in Chicago, members of Nikkei Uprising organized one of the day's seven direct actions, which took place in different cities across the country. Twenty community members gathered at Cook County Jail with the Chicago Community Bond Fund to declare our support for Black lives, to call for the shifting of resources from incarceration to education, and to immediately release people being held behind bars in the prison as COVID-19 spreads quickly in close quarters.

We were joined by Cassandra Greer-Lee, who shared a testimony as part of the program. Her husband Nickolas died from COVID-19 in Cook County Jail, and she has been holding a standing protest outside Sheriff Tom Dart's office to call for justice for Nickolas and the six others who died behind bars from the virus.

Several Nikkei community members shared their own families' stories, including SJ Doi who spoke about the death of her great-grandmother while incarcerated at the Santa Anita assembly center. Anne Watanabe shared how her family was incarcerated in Canada, and called on our community to support the movement for Black lives and opposing anti-Black racism in ourselves.

We laid cranes on the fence outside Cook County Jail in memory of those who have died - whether from COVID 19, at the hands of police violence, or in World War II concentration camps. Members of Ho Etsu Taiko also played as part of the program.

Our demonstration wrapped up with a call to action:

1. Demand that Kim Foxx, the Cook County State's Attorney, release as many people as possible from Cook County Jail because of how quickly COVID-19 can spread in prisons;
2. Call on local officials, including Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot, to cut the budgets of police departments, while redirecting that funding to support education, healthcare, and housing in Black communities;
3. Listen and donate to organizations led by Black youth. We chose to contribute to Good Kids Mad City, a local group led by Black youth that engages in community organizing, direct action, and mutual aid.

As members of Nikkei Uprising, we are committed to continuing working towards abolition of the



Photos: Kat Nagasawa

RIGHT: CASSANDRA GREER-LEE, WHO SHARED HER HUSBAND'S STORY ON TSURU RISING STREAM, JOINS CHICAGO NIKKEI FOR THE ACTION AT COOK COUNTY JAIL.

BELOW: PARTICIPANTS REMEMBER AND HONOR THE LIVES OF BLACK AMERICANS AND JAPANESE AMERICANS



Continued on page 7

Tsuru Rising Weekend: Reflection

By Elaine Kaneshiro, JACL Chicago Member

You can't understand most of the important things from a distance... You have to get close. (a line taken from Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson)

My Facebook post on June 1st, 2020...

I am Japanese American.

My parents experienced racism and mass incarceration during World War II.

I am privileged.

I am part of the problem.

I was feeling angry, frustrated, sad and helpless, following the killing of George Floyd and the ensuing protests and marches.

One week later, I had the opportunity to get a little closer. I participated in the Tsuru Rising Action at the Cook County Jail as part of the Tsuru for Solidarity weekend of events. Truthfully, this was beyond my comfort zone...I was a little anxious on the drive down, but the group was well-organized and prepared. (Fortunately, I didn't need the phone number to call, if arrested!) The 30 minute live-action was carefully scripted with Cori's excellent narration tying our *Nikkei* history with the mass incarceration in our jails. I learned that the Cook County Jail is the largest single site jail in the US, and that most of the inmates are there awaiting trial because they cannot afford to pay the bail that would release them to wait at home. And without masks, gloves, cleaning supplies, and ability to keep distance, Covid-19 was spreading and taking lives....amongst them, Nickolas Lee's. You can't help but be moved by Cassandra Greer-Lee's story of the loss of her husband. I learned so much...it felt good to participate.

This also gave us an opportunity to express our solidarity with Black Lives Matter. Of course, "All lives matter" but the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others and the blatant and implicit racism that has permeated every facet of our culture make it clear that Black lives haven't mattered, and that's why the BLM cry is loud and important today.

I do not want my silence to be construed as complicity with police brutality and racial injustice. So, getting closer, pushing out of my comfort zone, and feeling uncomfortable through protests, books, articles, movies, virtual programs, online videos, social media posts and conversations with family and friends, I am learning and trying to figure out my responsibility and role in this movement.

So grateful to Nikkei Uprising for helping me on this journey. 🌸



Photo: Kat Nagasawa

ELAINE KANESHIRO CARRIES CRANES MADE BY CHRIST CHURCH OF CHICAGO MEMBERS TO HANG ON THE FENCE OUTSIDE THE COOK COUNTY JAIL.

The Stakes of Reparations continued

Black Americans have fought generations and generations for reparations. As Martin Luther King, Jr. aptly said, justice too long delayed is justice denied. Every day is a day which past wrongs, such as redlining and Jim Crow, compound to unjustly and unfairly harm Black Americans. Every day is a day which current wrongs, such as mass incarceration and housing/loan discrimination, compound to unjustly and unfairly harm Black Americans.

I study one of these wrongs---the economic injustice of property taxes. In theory, everyone should pay taxes based on how much their home is worth. However, homeowners in Black communities almost always pay higher tax rates than homeowners in white communities due to systematic government failures. In Detroit, Black communities have tax rates up to twenty times higher than white communities. When Black homeowners were unable to pay the grossly overinflated rates, the city took their homes evicting tens of thousands of families per year. In Cook County, low-income and Black homeowners were overtaxed by \$2.2 billion from 2011 to 2015---and still pay more than their fair share today.

JACL has long supported H.R. 40 (a bill in the House of Representatives to create a commission to study reparations) and supported reparations for Black Americans. We must not passively support this position. You can join JACL in supporting H.R. 40 (www.jacl.org/join-us-in-support-of-h-r-40/) and other local reparations proposals that are under consideration across the Chicago area. Each day of delay is a day in which Black America is harmed. Each day of delay is the possibility that reparations will come another generation too late. 🌸

Resources for Continued Learning and Engagement

Structural Racism and Justice System

13th directed by Ava DuVernay (documentary film):

Available on Youtube (currently free) or Netflix

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander (book)

If you are interested in engaging 13th or The New Jim Crow with others, there are many free discussion questions and study guides available online.

In the Wake by Christina Sharpe (book)

The Atlantic - "The Case for Reparations": www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/



For Further Reading on prisons and policing:

Golden Gulag by Ruth Wilson Gilmore (book)

The First Civil Right by Naomi Murakawa (book)

Prisons of Poverty by Loic Wacquant (book)

Japanese American/Asian American Solidarity

Densho Statement – "Asian American Anti-Blackness Is Real – And So Is Our Responsibility to End It":

www.densho.org/asian-american-anti-blackness-is-real-and-so-is-our-responsibility-to-end-it/

Unmargin – "A Politics of Our Time: Reworking Afro-Asian Solidarity in the Wake of George Floyd's Killing":

www.unmargin.org/apoliticsofourtime

Nichi Bei - "DISSENT: A call for solidarity with Black-led fights for liberation": www.nichibei.org/2020/06/dissent-a-call-for-solidarity-with-black-led-fights-for-liberation/

Japanese Americans for Justice: www.jasforjustice.com/

Read and sign Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago's Racial Equity Pledge: www.advancingjustice-chicago.org/racial-equity/

Join JACL in supporting H.R. 40 and sign up to receive updates: www.jacl.org/join-us-in-support-of-h-r-40/

Race Forward – "10 Ways to Start a Conversation About Race": www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/10-ways-start-conversation-about-race

Local organizations to follow and support:

Black Lives Matter Chicago

www.blacklivesmatterchicago.com/

GoodKids MadCity

www.instagram.com/gkmc18/

Brave Space Alliance

www.bravespacealliance.org/

Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression

www.caarpr.org/

Care Not Cops

www.twitter.com/care_not_cops

Chicago Community Bond Fund

www.chicagobond.org/

You may follow us online (Facebook - www.facebook.com/JACLChicago) or join our email list to stay updated with upcoming programming on related topics.

To sign up for our email list, please send your name and email address to us: info@jaclchicago.org

prison industrial complex. After the Tsuru Rising weekend, we have returned to Cook County Jail to join Cassandra in demonstrations demanding justice for Nickolas and other prisoners who died from COVID. We have joined in other movements across the city to demand resources for Black communities, and have begun to learn from one another about issues facing Indigenous communities in Chicago and beyond.

If you're interested in joining us, Nikkei Uprising holds meetings every other Sunday, and joins together to attend local actions in between. Send a message to nikkeiuprising@gmail.com to hear more about what we have going on. 🗳️



Join or Renew Your Membership to JACL Chicago Today!

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.

Name(s) _____

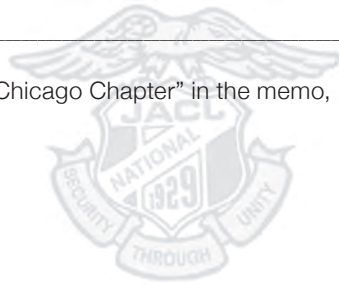
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make check payable to **JACL** with "Chicago Chapter" in the memo, and mail with this form to:

JACL National Headquarters
 Membership Dept
 PO Box 45397
 San Francisco, CA 94145-0397



Membership

Fee

- Individual \$75.00
- Couple/Family. \$125.00
- Student/Youth \$35.00
- 1000 Club. \$200.00
- Century Club \$350.00
- Millennium Club \$1,000.00
- 1000/Cent/Mill Club Spouse . \$50.00
 Spouse Name: _____

Make a Donation to JACL Chicago Today!

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 a donation.

Name(s) _____

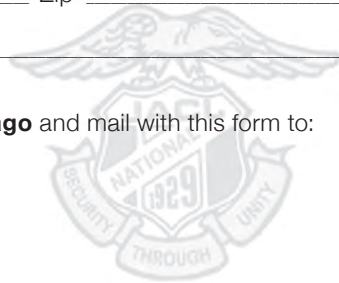
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Please make check payable to **JACL Chicago** and mail with this form to:

JACL Chicago
 5415 N. Clark St.
 Chicago, IL 60640



Donation amount: \$ _____

In my name: _____

Anonymous

In memory In honor of: _____

If you'd like an acknowledgement sent to another person, please include their name and address:

JACL

Japanese American Citizens League

CHICAGO CHAPTER

5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640-1294
p: 773.728.7171
f: 773.728.7231
e: info@jaclchicago.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.

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

Calendar of Events

June 13 - August 16

TADAIMA! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage

You may find the schedule and more information on www.jampilgrimages.com

Friday, July 31

6:30pm – 9:30pm

JACL Chicago Virtual Trivia Night

Registration is online at: bit.ly/JACLChiTrivia

Wednesday, August 5

7:00pm – 9:00pm

JACL Chicago Board Meeting

Saturday, August 15

4:00pm – 6:00pm

Virtual Arts & Activism Panel

Registration form to be shared on the JACL Chicago Facebook and www.jaclchicago.org

Friday, August 21

6:00pm

National Youth/Student Council Workshop on Anti-Blackness

To participate, email Mieko Kuramoto at mkuramoto@jacl.org

Late August

Mass Incarceration Workshop

Time and registration form to be announced on the JACL Chicago Facebook and www.jaclchicago.org