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JACL Chicago Chapter

JACL *er*

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Happy New Year Message from Lisa Doi

Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu! Happy New Year!

In 2020, JACL Chicago celebrated our 75th anniversary. We planned a big celebration in April and are looking forward to when we get to reschedule. Whether or not we get to have a party, an anniversary like this offers a chance to look back at what has gotten



JACL Chicago this far: you—our members and community.

On April 15, 1945, twenty five Japanese Americans became the charter members of JACL Chicago, the first JACL chapter in the Midwest. These initial members strove to make a new home in a new city and sought to build a vibrant Japanese American community here. Most had been forcibly removed from their West Coast homes,

confined in desolate parts of America, and resettled to Chicago. It was their experiences, from pre-war anti-Asian immigration policy to post-war racism, that pushed them to form JACL Chicago, whose ongoing mission is to secure and maintain the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry.

This is, for better or a worse, a timeless mission. In the past year, we have seen the start of a national reckoning with justice for Black lives, we have seen a surge in anti-Asian-American harassment, and we have seen what can happen when communities

Continued on page 2

SAVE-THE-DATE

**Demand Citizenship
for All**

April 24 · 2pm - 3pm

See page 8 for details

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 5/15/21.

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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Happy New Year continued

come together to take care of each other. In 2020, members of our chapter participated in Tsuru for Solidarity's Tsuru Rising program, a national gathering of Japanese Americans in solidarity for immigration justice and racial justice. Locally, we also had chapter members attend Nikkei Uprising's ongoing protests at Cook County Jail. We are planning virtual programming in 2021 to continue to stand in solidarity with Black communities and immigrant communities. We are also planning virtual programming on community building and community safety, including Bystander Intervention training with Asian Americans Advancing Justice and more.

Already in 2021 the chapter and members have pushed for the passage of HR40. HR 40, or the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, is a bill in Congress to create a commission to study the history and legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing discrimination and to propose reparative solutions. Our chapter joined over 300 Japanese American individuals and community organizations in sending a letter to the House Judiciary Committee urging them to pass HR 40. Also, our Day of Remembrance program, which you will read much more about in this issue, connected the Japanese American Redress Movement with this current fight for Black reparations locally and nationally.

I am also excited to announce the new faces of JACL Chicago. You can read more about our new board members Kelly Ijichi and Kenton Knop, and our new chapter Programs and Office Manager Veronica Murashige, in this edition! Though this means we are saying goodbye to longtime supporters Carol Yoshino, Bryan Hara, and Mari Yamagiwa, we see them off with great thanks. Each of them contributed so much to the chapter and, along with each of you, helped shape our organization into what it is today. 🍀

NGN Origami Workshop

by Ty Yamamoto

On January 30, Next Generation Nikkei hosted a youth-oriented origami workshop to bring together our community and ring some joy into 2021. Not only was this our first event of the year, it was also our first event as a new board. During our first few meetings as a board, we brainstormed a number of ideas for our first event and



WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS SHOW EACHOTHER THEIR FINISHED PIECES.



decided that an origami workshop was the perfect fit. This event would allow us to introduce ourselves to the community through the art of paper folding while also giving Nikkei youth around Chicago a fun activity to start the new year. Along with fellow board members Ellie and Kelsi, I helped lead the planning for the event including detailing the agenda and creating graphics for social media. Getting to work with such a great team was a truly gratifying experience. During this past year, I've really missed getting to plan out events like this and it was awesome to have the opportunity to brainstorm ways to help unite our community despite still being in the midst of a pandemic.

When I joined the board late last year, I was determined to use my position to stay connected to the Nikkei community in Chicago while also learning more about our unique culture and history. Origami has been an important part of my life ever since I first learned to fold in kindergarten. I've always loved folding little animals and creations during class, at home and with friends. During moments where I've felt disconnected to my Japanese

heritage, origami has always helped me feel like a part of my culture. Throughout the pandemic, origami has helped bring me feel more at peace by putting my energy toward something creative and mindful. I've also had the opportunity to work as an origami teacher twice a week for the Japanese Culture Center, which is one of the reasons I wanted to help lead NGN's workshop.

Attending and teaching the workshop was such a wonderful experience. Seeing so many Nikkei children and their parents joining to fold and bond as a community brought me so much joy and excitement for our community's future. Getting to have our board members introduce themselves to the wider Nikkei community was so cool to see and I'm so excited for the other events we have planned for the year. Ever since I was a kid, teaching friends to fold paper cranes has felt like an important way for me to stay connected to my culture, and being able to spread that to a virtual community was such a gratifying experience. 🍵

NGN Making Art with Archives

by Nalani Saito

As part of JACL's Day of Remembrance programming, Next Generation Nikkei (NGN) hosted a youth-oriented workshop entitled Making Art with Archives. Participants were asked to either bring or select an archival piece tied to Japanese American history. During the event, after reviewing the historical context that led to, and through, the incarceration of Nikkei, we discussed why we chose our archival piece and took creative, individual time to make art with our artifacts. Some folks chose to work with physical paper and others used Google slides as their virtual canvas. Many people chose to collage with their artifact, weaving images and text to reinterpret their artifact.

NGN originally chose to lead this workshop in alignment with our values of education and advocacy: to hold space for new

learnings around incarceration with the intention of inspiring collective healing and connecting across personal histories. I was struck, as participants shared the art they had created by the end of the workshop, by the freshness of it all. Though many of the artifacts that people brought looked like images I had seen before—black and white photos of Nikkei families, the curved script from diaries kept during incarceration—the artful products that we came away with provided a more contemporary perspective, a closer view into the images. In some ways, through sharing our art with one another, we were seeing the original archival pieces through the eyes of current descendents of the camps—the Nikkei who make up a multigenerational legacy. I am so grateful for all who shared in this workshop with us. 🍵



2021 Day of Remembrance

by Brian Ozaki

The 2021 Day of Remembrance event hosted by JACL Chicago, JASC, Japanese Mutual Aid Society and the Chicago Japanese American Historical Society featured a powerful dialogue that evoked incredible reflection, engagement and education in an effort to build an understanding across the horrific experiences of the Japanese American and the Black/African American communities. Lisa Doi, President of the JACL Chicago chapter, kicked off the event by reminding us of the power of history and community as we look to build a more just

author John Tateishi (*Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American Reparations*) and Robin Rue Simmons, Alderwoman of Evanston's 5th Ward, to provide context and understanding between the Japanese reparation experience and the current effort to provide long overdue reparations for Black/African Americans in the United States, as well as Robin's progress toward reparations in Evanston. Robin and John each provided poignant historical and current-day context, as well as the experiences that continue

allowed for further engagement and learning between guests and the panelists. While we missed our time together, the conversation conveyed the importance of unity, justice, and the need to address the sins of the past in order that we live into our motto of *Never Again*. 🌱

2021 Day of Remembrance Reflection

by Mary Doi

I moved to Evanston in 1990 to live near friends. Evanston, as John Tateishi mentioned during the 2021 Day of Remembrance program, has some beautiful lakefront spaces as well as university amenities like theaters, concerts, and open classes for community members. Evanston also imagines itself as progressive community, but like many places, also has a long history of racial discrimination, especially against Black Evanstonians. I know there used to be a Black YMCA in town, and I would guess that if I walked into the cafeteria at Evanston Township High School, I would see a fairly segregated room.

I am happy to learn more about Evanston's reparations program. I think Alderwoman Robin Rue Simmons and others in Evanston set a clear path for reparations. They had a specific premise in looking at housing discrimination and community economic disinvestment; they had a clear historical record; and they had a solid way to apply the program—having a new tax source was an added benefit. It was a strategy that I'm proud worked in Evanston, but I do not know if it would work everywhere.

The DOR program ended with the question of what Japanese Americans can do to support broader reparations movements like HR 40. I think these are important questions. I see our best role as being broadly supportive. Passing a bill like HR 40 will be challenging, but its enactment offers a space for the Black community—which is not homogenous—to collectively consider what repair looks like. This is the legacy I take from redress: for my family, the apology from the government was an important step in healing. 🌱



2021 DOR SPEAKERS. CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: JOSINA MORITA, ROBIN RUE SIMMONS, AND JOHN TATEISHI.

and equitable society. Recordings of the Chicago Nisei Post Posting and Retiring of Colors welcomed and closed the event. Buffalo Grove High School junior Marisa Kurowski, the great granddaughter of Pat and Noboru Honda, provided a riveted reading of an excerpt of the evacuation notice to help the audience remember the atrocities of Executive Order 9066. The testimonies of Jitsuo Morikawa and Chiye Tomihiro offered chilling recollections of the personal, familial and community impacts from experiencing internment/imprisonment. Their testimonies reminded us of the ongoing horrors afflicting generations of Japanese Americans post-internment.

Josina Morita, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, facilitated a dynamic conversation between

to harm communities who experience inequity and injustice at the hands of the United States government. The event centered around themes such as apology, vindication and acknowledgement as a means to recover and repair. While no dollar amount could ever make up for slavery or the internment of citizens, the act of remuneration and reparation also fulfills a promise to undo psychological trauma suffered by those directly harmed as well as their descendents.

This lively virtual event brought together over 200 attendees spanning multiple geographic locations and communities. While this year's event necessitated a virtual platform, the event still brought its usual heart, soul and commitment to social change. Questions from the audience

John Tateishi and the Redress Campaign

by Bill Yoshino

The story of the redress campaign comes in two stages: the establishment of a federal commission to investigate the incarceration of Japanese Americans, then the legislation in Congress that would provide for an apology and individual compensation through the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. It was during the first stage of the campaign where John Tateishi made a significant contribution.

John's primary contribution to redress was his work to establish the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in 1980. This effort consisted of a campaign to lobby the legislation through Congress, which resulted in creating a vehicle that would investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the issuance of Executive Order 9066 and to recommend remedies. In effect, this was the first official government effort to tell the story of incarceration since Gen. John DeWitt's infamous Final Report in 1942.

The significance of the work of the CWRIC cannot be overstated. With its team of researchers and framework of holding hearings throughout the country, the commission served to educate the public about the devastation of incarceration. John had the insight to understand the incarceration wasn't simply a collective experience that happened to a group of people. Instead, it was an experience made up of 120,000 individual stories that were different and unique. John told these stories to the media and to anyone who would listen.

John always looked to the human side of the incarceration. This was brought home clearly at the redress hearing in Chicago in 1981, when Tom Watanabe testified. Tom recalled that he was living in Boyle Heights in Los Angeles when he and his pregnant wife were sent to Manzanar. During the latter stages of her pregnancy, she was given salt tablets because of the stifling summer heat. Her bloating became extreme to the point where she quit taking the pills. Soon thereafter, Tom's wife delivered twins and she began hemorrhaging. She died shortly after the delivery. Within two days, Tom's twin infant girls also died. In the haze of what followed, Tom said that he was never informed how or why his children died and he didn't recall seeing the death certificates. Tom ended his testimony wondering where his wife and children were buried and whether it was in an unmarked grave at Manzanar. He concluded his testimony by saying, "This is the thought that has haunted me all through these years."

There were many heart-rending stories that surfaced during the commission hearings, but Tom's story stood out because what can you say about someone who lost his entire family and didn't know where they were buried? John could have walked away from this, but he didn't. He and his staff were determined to find what happened. Through extensive record searches that began with the Bishop County Coroner, to crematoriums in San Bernardino County, and finally to records at Evergreen Cemetery in Los Angeles, they were able to find the location of the remains of Tom's wife and their children.

As a leader in the redress campaign, John's strength was that he understood the psyche of the Japanese American community and the personal tragedy of their experience. John understood that the abandonment of our community during World War II was a debilitating assault on identity and self-esteem and that the redress campaign was the culmination of a long journey to gain back self-respect.

Would our community have won redress without John? Yes, we would have. But at a time during the early months of the campaign, when someone needed to step up, he did. In his role as JAACL's director of the Redress campaign, John inspired and galvanized. His gift was that he thoughtfully articulated the pain and tragedy of that terrible experience for all to hear. He was there at an important time to help point a direction that finally brought all of us to August 10, 1988 and the signing of the Civil Liberties Act. 🌸

Legislation to Teach Asian American History Introduced in General Assembly

by Bill Yoshino

Legislation has been introduced in the Illinois General Assembly that will require schools to teach a unit on Asian American history with a provision that also describes the teaching of the WWII incarceration. Titled the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History Act (TEAACH), the bill was introduced in the House (HB 376) on January 29 by Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz and in the Senate (SB 648) by Sen. Ram Villivalam on February 24.

The TEAACH Act addresses a longstanding grievance by the Asian American community, the omission of the history and contributions of Asian Americans from the school curriculum. Prior to this, the Illinois School Code simply made mention of Asian Americans among a long list of other ethnic groups whose role and history could be taught. The language in the TEAACH Act states that a unit of Asian American history "shall" be taught, along with suggested content areas.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago is leading the legislative campaign. JAACL Chicago, represented by Lisa Doi and Tonko Doi, is a member of the campaign steering committee. The goal is to gain approval of the TEAACH Act in the House and Senate during the current session of the Illinois General Assembly, which ends in June.

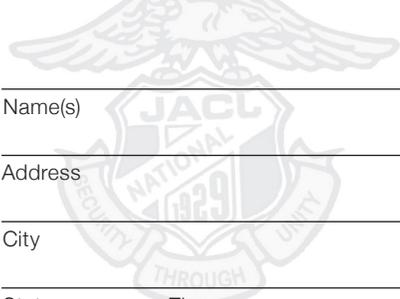
The effort to gain passage of the Act will require the community to contact and persuade their legislators to support the TEAACH Act. Recently, Veronica Murashige, Ross Harano, and Bill Yoshino were part of a delegation that met with Rep. Kelly Cassidy. Tonko Doi and others met with Rep. Maurice West. This effort must be joined with the efforts of many others to ensure the success of this campaign.

Key organizations supporting the campaign are the Chicago History Museum, Equality Illinois, Illinois Council

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for the Social Studies, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, Chicago Teachers Union, Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education, and Illinois Families for Public Schools, among many others.

JACL Chicago urges your participation in the TEAACH Act campaign by contacting your state representative and state senator. If you would like to assist the campaign in this way, JACL Chicago will send you information to help you persuade your legislators. Please contact JACL Chicago for this information at veronica@jaclchicago.org.

New JACL Chicago Board Members and Staff . . .



Kenton Knop is an associate attorney at Masuda, Funai, Eifert & Mitchell in Chicago, IL. Kenton focuses his practice on matters concerning the sale of goods and related commercial litigation, data privacy laws and data breach response, intellectual property and antitrust matters. As part of his commercial practice he drafts and reviews distribution agreements, sales terms and conditions, confidentiality agreements, and license agreements. In addition, Kenton's practice includes non-profit organization law, including counseling clients on establishing non-profit organizations and obtaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status for such organizations.

Before law school, Kenton participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program as a Coordinator for International Relations for the City of Asahikawa, Hokkaido, Japan. As an undergraduate

at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kenton participated in a year-long study abroad program at Nanzan University in Nagoya, Japan. Kenton currently holds Level One certification for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.



Kelly Ijichi is a Chicago chef and co-owner of Mom's—a Japanese comfort food restaurant operating in partnership with Marz Community Brewing in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. She completed her BA in Culinary Arts at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island.



Veronica Murashige started as the chapter Programs and Office Manager in January. Her involvement with the JACL Chicago chapter began in 2019, when she participated in the Kansha Project. She became a member of the Kansha Alumni Leadership board afterward to help plan the next trip. She has also transcribed interviews documenting the stories and incarceration of Japanese American families during World War II for the Japanese American Service Committee. Veronica graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in Environmental Studies.

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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

Friday, April 9 7:00 pm	Midwest Youth Virtual Civic Dinner If you are interested in attending or learning more, please contact Kendal Takeshita at mdcyouth@jacl.org
Wednesday, April 14 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street
Saturday, April 24 2:00 – 3:00 pm	Make Calls to Demand Citizenship for All sign up and more information here: http://bit.ly/3IDQXEx
Friday, April 29 5:00 pm	JASC Scholarships Due
Wednesday, May 11 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street
Wednesday, June 8 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	JACL Chicago Board Meeting JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N. Clark Street