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JACL Chicago Chapter

# JACL *er*

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## JASC Fresh Market

2nd & 4th Thursday of  
the month

*See page 8 for details*

## SAVE-THE-DATE

JACL VIRTUAL NATIONAL  
CONVENTION

July 15-18

## Memorial Day Event

By Tonko Doi

**O**n a beautiful Saturday morning, the following members of Next Generation Nikkei met at Montrose Cemetery: Katherine Nagasawa, Veronica Murashige, Josh Fidler, Nalani Saito, Vianny Saito, Kristi Nakamura Lin, Ellie McCampbell, Kelsi DeSimone, Lauren Cannon, and Sydney Hamamoto, with help from Greg Kimura. Before the work started, Howie Hieshima asked the different organizations that were there if they would take a group photo holding signs that said “I am an American,” for a campaign sponsored by the National Veterans Network.



MEMORIAL DAY CLEAN-UP AT MONTROSE CEMETARY.

Then, with gardening tools in hand, Next Gen received instructions from Karen Kanemoto, Japanese Mutual Aid Society of Chicago, and Bob Hashimoto, commander of the Chicago Nisei Post 1183. The task that day was to place an American flag and plant flowers in front of veterans’ graves in time for Memorial Day. This is a job that was done by Nisei Post and friends in the past.

There are 236 veterans graves in the Japanese American sections at Montrose Cemetery. Regardless if you were a member of Nisei Post or not, you were honored that day. The ground was hard and dry, and the task was difficult. It is a job for young people. In two hours’ time, the job was completed. After that, we sat in a shady spot, ate

*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 7/15/21.

The JACLER is published by the JACL Chicago Chapter for its members, supporters, and friends. We welcome your comments, suggestions, and article submissions.

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For information about the JACL Chicago Chapter, call 773.728.7171, or visit [www.jaclchicago.org](http://www.jaclchicago.org)

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Memorial Day continued

our obento, and, suggested by Kat, shared our histories with each other. Karen told the history of the Mutual Aid Society, the organization responsible for the Japanese American gravesites at Montrose Cemetery.

Every Memorial Day, Mutual Aid sponsors a service at the cemetery. Members of the community and representatives of JA religious and social organizations gather to pay respects to those who passed away. Nisei Post posts colors at the Japanese Mausoleum, and ends the service with "Taps" and the retiring of colors. Last year, the pandemic forced the cancellation of the Memorial Day service. This year the program was a virtual one.

Nisei Post 1183 is an American Legion post, comprised mainly of JA veterans. Bob told the history of Nisei Post and why their legacy is important to the community. When prejudice prevented JA veterans from joining other American Legion posts, they decided to form their own group.

At the end of the day, we all learned from each other. Hopefully, when the ask comes next year, everyone will step up with tools in hand. I know the job couldn't have been done without Next Gen. Thank you. Both organizations are grateful to you who participated that beautiful Saturday morning. 🍵

## Justice for Nick Rally

By Cori Nakamura Lin

For the past year, members of Nikkei Uprising have been supporting Cassandra Greer-Lee, widow of Nikolas Lee, who passed away in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Cook County Jail (CCJ). In April, members of Nikkei Uprising and the greater Japanese American community joined Cassandra and other supporting organizations (including Southsiders Organizing for Unity and Liberation (SOUL), Chicago Bond Fund, The Chicago Justice Torture Center, and A Just Harvest) at a vigil to remember Nick, others who have died in CCJ, and those still held in inhumane conditions.

Together, we called not only for Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart to resign due to his role in this crisis, but also to permanently close Cook County Jail and use the funding for other community programs.

At the rally, Nikkei Uprising and other Japanese American community members dedicated a thousand folded cranes to this fight and performed taiko. We also made the following statement, clarifying why we consider closing Cook County Jail important to the Japanese American community:

"In this moment where anti-Asian sentiment is increasing and increasingly visible, we know that both the violence of police and prisons that targets Black, brown, and Indigenous people, AND anti-Asian violence are part of the same white supremacy system.



PROTESTERS CALL FOR THE CLOSING OF COOK COUNTY JAIL

Jail is dehumanizing and brainwashes those outside into believing that the lives of the people inside are not sacred. Japanese Americans were also considered disposable when the needs of white supremacy called for it, and we have been lifted up as model minorities when the needs of white supremacy called for it. Nikkei Uprising denounces the solution of increased policing that Lori Lightfoot and some people in Asian communities are calling for. We know that we will never be safe in a police state. No one will. We call for radical community investment, especially for youth who are impacted by state violence.”

A’Keisha Lee, an action organizer from SOUL, spoke further on why CCJ’s closure is important regardless of the pandemic: “COVID has merely magnified the truths we’ve known about jails and prisons. These institutions are, and have always been, places that spread infections and continue cycles of trauma. The only way to end the harm is to release people into a community that’s flooded with resources, like dignified work, affordable safe housing, nutritious food, and culturally appropriate-quality health care.”

During the event, Jason Matsumoto, Emily Harada, Anabel Hirano, and Tiana Pyer-Pereira from Ho Etsu Taiko invited any attendee



GERALD REED AND JASON MATSUMOTO PLAY THE TAIKO DRUM TOGETHER.

to play the taiko. They shared how taiko is physical, and can help express strong feelings related to incarceration or trauma. Gerald Reed, who had been released from prison for less than a week after 29 years of being wrongfully incarcerated, took the offer to play the taiko drum with Jason. It was extremely powerful to

watch Mr. Reed, a survivor of torture and the justice system, pound the taiko drum loudly, loud enough that the folks still incarcerated inside CCJ could hear. This was a precious moment of connection between different Chicago communities with different histories of incarceration.

It was an honor to use our words, music, and art in this ceremony, and to join with other Chicago organizations dedicated to re-building a system of true justice. Nikkei Uprising remains committed to the fight to close CCJ. 🌱

## Who Will Remember?

By Connie Shirakawa

“The Homeless Ghost,” my recent solo performance at the Lifeline Theatre, is a series of recollections inspired by my family’s life in Chicago, after my parents met in the Jerome, Arkansas concentration camp. Most of the stories were about living on the West Side and my idyllic childhood but also touched on darker memories, such as racism against Japanese Americans after the war and the long-term impact that the camps had on my parents. After this process, I began to have deep regret about how little I know about my family’s early history.

I carry so many unanswered questions now that my parents, grandparents, and only brother are all dead. I only know bits and pieces of my *bachan*’s story and my parent’s experiences in the camp, and I want to know more. Why did my *bachan* emigrate to California from her convent on the idyllic, balmy, palm-treed island of Miyasaki? What was it like to be a Catholic in a country of Buddhists?

When my brother Robert died 10 years ago, I decided that I would write a record of what it was like for us after my parents were forced to re-settle in Chicago. Luckily, at the time that I decided to write our family story, the Goodman Theatre was starting a personal narrative program in Chicago neighborhoods all over the city. At first, I found it difficult to think about things that happened years ago, let alone tell others about them. However, I made the discovery that remembering and writing my stories was not only cathartic for me, but also that the stories

that were the hardest for me to tell were the ones that people loved most. Eventually, my stories began to pour out of my memory and link together. Writing my solo show, “The Homeless Ghost,” started as a way to organize these memories, but it also became a way to survive and thrive when the pandemic turned our world upside down.

It is one of life’s true tragedies that all of your stories and the life lessons you learn die with you. If you do not tell your stories now, how will future generations know what happened? I invite you all to sign up for the “JACL Legacy Workshop” and join me and Goodman instructor Sharon Evans to help you remember and write your family’s personal stories. Contact Veronica Murashige ([veronica@jaclchicago.org](mailto:veronica@jaclchicago.org)) for more information.

“The Homeless Ghost” solo show and the JACL discussion session can both still be viewed online: <https://youtube/DhWxnkK ORs> (34 minutes) 🌱



YOUNG CONNIE WITH HER “BACHAN.”

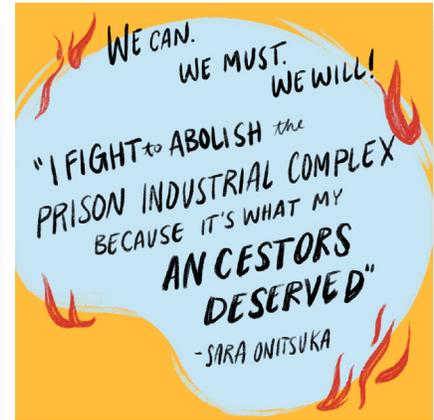
## Nikkei Abolition Study Group

By Mari Shiratori

On May 1st, over a hundred people of Japanese, Ainu, and Okinawan descent gathered over Zoom for the first session of the Nikkei Abolition Study Group (NASG). We discussed the basic

read a piece called, “Why Japanese Americans Should Join the Fight for Abolition”<sup>4</sup> by Sara Onitsuka published on the blog *Denshō*. During the session itself, two facilitators introduced the topics

If you are interested in joining, please register at [bit.ly/nikkeiabolition](https://bit.ly/nikkeiabolition) to get added to the mailing list. Please follow @nikkeiuprising on Instagram and Facebook for updates. We hope you’ll join us! 🌱



ALL ARTWORK BY CORI NAKAMURA LIN.

principles of abolition and how the Nikkei experience and abolitionism can intersect.

Nikkei Uprising, a Chicago-based Japanese-American abolitionist group, teamed up with New York Day of Remembrance Committee from New York City this past January to co-organize this multi-session study group. We wanted to create a monthly space to engage with the Nikkei community in a dialogue about the abolition of policing, surveillance, detention, and incarceration over several months. We based our structure loosely on the Abolition Study Group Guide created by the Abolition Journal, but changed some of the resources to fit a mainly Japanese-American audience. We will have five more sessions in the future covering the prison industrial complex; surveillance and policing; reform versus abolition; feminist, queer, and trans abolitionism; and abolitionist alternatives.

Before the first session, we sent out a short list of resources to engage with such as an episode of NPR’s *Throughline* called “American Police,” and Mariame Kaba’s “So You’re Thinking of Becoming an Abolitionist.” In addition to these general pieces that introduced the concepts of abolition, we also asked that everyone

and posed questions for participants to discuss in breakout rooms. Participants discussed their interpretations of the articles we read and the questions we asked during their breakout groups and shared them back afterwards.

We specifically wanted to engage in this topic with the Nikkei community because Japanese Americans experienced the unjust force of incarceration first-hand during WWII. For Shin-Nikkei, we must reckon with the violent imperialism that Japan inflicted on China, Korea, the Ryukyuan Islands, and other nations during the 20th century. To honor our heritage and our families, it is critical to examine what has been inflicted to our communities and what our communities have inflicted on others through an abolitionist lens so we can prevent history from repeating itself.

Our next session will be happening on June 12th at 12:00 CT. We will be discussing incarceration and the prison industrial complex in the upcoming session. The next session’s facilitators would like participants to reflect on the question, “Who profited or benefitted from Japanese and Japanese-American incarceration?”

## Know Our History!

By Vianny Saito

On Saturday, May 8th, NGN hosted an online event called “Know Our History!” Our hope for the event was to explore Japanese American history through the lens of tension and solidarity with other communities. We wanted to know more about the impacts of the war and resettlement on other communities of color, both in Chicago and at a national level. We also felt it was important to facilitate a discussion about translating what we’ve learned from our history into modern day solidarity.

The event was presented in the format of a timeline, starting with a national and Chicago-specific look at the pre-WWII era, moving into post-WWII and then the present day. The three of us wove together our own research and were very fortunate to have the expertise of our guest speakers, Eric Langowski and JJ Ueunten, both former NGN members. Eric spoke in depth about the resettlement time period in Chicago. He infused his presentation with little-known narratives of moments of solidarity between the Black and JA communities in the Chicago area,



HOSTS AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE "KNOW OUR HISTORY!" EVENT.

collective histories with war, imperialism, incarceration, and the complexity that comes with being JA, so that we can better show up for other communities and advocate for the liberation of all people.

Thank you to the 20 people who took time out of their weekends to attend our virtual history event and to Eric and JJ for bringing your expertise. These are not the stories that most people are taught growing up in the American education system. Knowing the histories and stories of people who have often been shut out of the "American" narrative is crucial for many reasons, but especially for standing in solidarity with other communities. To echo what Eric said during his presentation, having these conversations is an act of resistance. "How will you be more free when everyone is more free?" This was the last question that JJ asked of our event participants and is one that we could all spend more time asking of ourselves, and our loved ones. 🙏

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including the partnership between Horace Cayton and Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi, and spoke to divisions amongst Chicago communities that emerged during resettlement and are still present today.

Towards the end of the presentation, JJ spoke about the current day organizing work that is being done by Nikkei Uprising. JJ emphasized the importance of organizing as Nikkei to process our

## NGN Book Club Meetings

By Duncan Nakajima

This spring, ten members of Next Gen Nikkei and friends met to discuss George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy* as part of the inaugural NGN-sponsored Book Club. Mr. Takei's graphic novel provided a window into incarcerated life and the impact it left on the Japanese American community. The book club consisted of two sessions, the first an introductory meeting where participants got to know each other and discussed an op-ed Mr. Takei wrote in the Washington Post as a warm-up exercise to the second meeting a month later, where discussion of *They Called Us Enemy* took place.

During this first meeting, after introductions, participants read Mr. Takei's 2017 op-ed, "Internment, America's Great Mistake." In this article,

Takei describes the horror and cruelty of incarceration, and ties it to the present day treatment of Muslims. Plenty of insightful discussion took place amongst our participants, a mix of those who were well-versed in Japanese American history, and those who were newer to this history. The subjects of the phrasing of "incarceration" versus "internment" and the audience for whom the article was written were discussed in depth, with some positing the reason for choosing the word "internment" over "incarceration" could well have been an editorial one not from Mr. Takei. As we would see in *They Called Us Enemy*, this theory had some merit behind it, as Takei generally used the word "incarceration" to describe his family's experience.

For our second session, participants were encouraged to submit passages and frames they found thought-provoking from *They Called Us Enemy*. The last part takes us through post-incarceration life for the Takeis, with George attaining Hollywood stardom with *Star Trek*, and continuing to speak out about his experiences in the camps. What was evident from the particular frames that were submitted and the discussion around them was that several topics were at the forefront of our minds. The relationship between George and his father, Questions 27 and 28 (asking whether JAs would pledge to serve the United States and to swear allegiance and renounce loyalty to the Emperor of Japan), the radicals at Tule Lake, George's mother's struggle over whether to go to

*Continued on page 6*

Japan or stay in America and much more were covered in the hour we allotted for discussion. As a participant myself, I was grateful for the array of perspectives that our group brought to the table, and the space created by participants for honest and thoughtful discussion, and hope we can build on this in the future. 🍵

PARTICIPANTS AT THE NGN BOOK CLUB



## 2021 (Virtual) Scholarship Luncheon

By Christine Munteanu, Scholarship Committee Chair

**J**ACL Chicago's annual Scholarship Luncheon was held on Sunday, May 16 at 2 PM. The Scholarship Luncheon is an intergenerational community event that recognizes the accomplishments of students who have demonstrated a commitment to JACL's mission of advancing social justice and promoting the legacy and cultural heritage of the Japanese American community.

This year, the event was held virtually over Zoom, with over 35 people attending, including donors, awardees and their



**Malorie Ishii**  
Illinois State University

families, past scholarship winners, and community members. Though the "luncheon" part ended up being a bit of a misnomer (this was definitely a "bring-your-own-luncheon" situation!), this year's event was an opportunity to get back to basics, and highlighted the importance of community and connection.

The program included a chapter report from Chapter President Lisa Doi, who



**Jaclyn Chiou**  
Highland Park High School

shared past and future chapter events, including our 2021 Day of Remembrance program, ongoing advocacy in support of the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act, and the upcoming Memorial Day event at Montrose Cemetery. Kristi Lin, one of the co-leaders of Next Generation Nikkei (NGN), shared the creative virtual and remote engagement



**Kayla Chandler**  
Walter Payton College Prep High School

opportunities for young Japanese Americans across the Chicagoland area and beyond. The program also included a special acknowledgement of our 2020 Scholarship Winners.

Three scholarships were presented by donors. The Mitizi Shio Schectman Memorial Scholarship, presented by Lary Schectman, was awarded to Malorie Ishii, a second-year student at Illinois State University, studying Early Childhood Education from Nilus, IL. The Tomiyama Scholarship, reinstated last year in honor of Tak and Todd Tomiyama, was presented by Lisa Philibert and awarded to Jaclyn Chiou, a senior at Highland Park High School who is entering the University of Texas at Austin in the fall. The Yoshino Family Scholarship was presented by Ron Yoshino and awarded to Kayla Chandler, a senior at Walter Payton College Prep High School who is entering the University of Michigan in the fall.

After the close of the official program, Scholarship Committee members hosted short breakout rooms sessions to recreate the casual conversation and community-building that happens while we sit together and share a meal at the luncheon. This was an opportunity for attendees to get to know each other and (re)connect. NGN members Lauren Cannon, Ellie McCampbell, and Ty Yamamoto helped to host the breakout rooms by sharing how and why they got involved with JACL Chicago, and highlighted opportunities for future involvement. 🍵

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### Just Released!

The U.S. Postal Service released the Go For Broke Japanese American Soldiers of World War II on June 3rd.

This stamp commemorates the men and women of Japanese heritage who served in the U.S. Army's 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), Military Intelligence Service (MIS), 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion, Women's Army Corps (WAC), Cadet Nurse Corps, and Army Nurse Corps.

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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.*

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## Calendar of Events

<b>Thursday, June 10</b> 3:30 – 6:30 pm	<b>JASC Fresh Market</b> every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 3:30-6:30 pm 4427 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640
<b>Saturday, June 12</b> 12:00 pm CST	<b>Nikkei Abolition Study Group Session 2</b> Register at <a href="https://bit.ly/nikkeiabolition">bit.ly/nikkeiabolition</a> to get added to the mailing list. Follow @nikkeiuprising on Instagram and Facebook for updates.
<b>Sunday, June 13</b> 11:59 pm HST	<b>Kakehashi Program Applications Due</b> <a href="https://jacl.org/kakehashi">https://jacl.org/kakehashi</a>
<b>Monday, June 14</b> 5:30 pm PST	<b>Oregon JA WWII Veteran's Stamp Dedication</b> <a href="http://www.StampOurStory.org">www.StampOurStory.org</a>
<b>Thursday, June 24</b> 3:30 – 6:30 pm	<b>JASC Fresh Market</b> every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 3:30-6:30 pm 4427 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640
<b>Thursday, July 8</b> 3:30 – 6:30 pm	<b>JASC Fresh Market</b> every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 3:30-6:30 pm 4427 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640
<b>Wednesday, July 14</b> 7:00 – 9:00 pm	<b>JACL Chicago Board Meeting</b> JACL Chicago Office, 5415 N Clark St, Chicago
<b>July 15-18 2021</b>	<b>JACL Virtual National Convention</b> Details coming soon!