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JACLer

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JACL 2022: A Year In Review

by Lisa Doi

Although JACL Chicago spent most of 2022 with reduced capacity, I wanted to share some reflections on what we accomplished this past year and what we look forward to in 2023.

We started this year by participating in the annual Day of Remembrance program which celebrated the TEAACH Act (Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History). As of this fall, young people across Illinois are learning about the important contributions made by Asian Americans—including the very people who led JACL and the Chicago chapter over the years. We are contributing to that effort through the Our Story program, which we hope to be fully running for the 2023-2024 school year. Our Story brings a new generation of speakers to classrooms and community spaces to share the important history of Japanese American incarceration and its legacy today. For more information, please visit www.jaclchicago.org/our-story.

In the spring, we honored two new scholarship recipients (which you can read about in Christine Munteanu's piece on pages 2-3). We also brought back the Kansha Project. This year, 22 young Nikkei from Chicago and the Midwest traveled together to Little Tokyo, Los Angeles and the Manzanar National Historic Site. You can hear about participant Hana Arata's experience on page 6. We are excited to build upon this youth engagement with the return of Next Gen Nikkei and the Kansha Project Alumni Leadership Board. Both are great ways for younger Nikkei to get involved in the Japanese American community in Chicago, meet friends, and shape the future of our organization. If you or someone you know would like to join, please check out the Kansha Project (@kanshaproject) and Next Gen Nikkei (@nextgennikkei) on Instagram.

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation for all our members and supporters. I know we have been much less visible (this is the first JACLer we've sent out in a year) and slow to respond. I appreciate your patience and ongoing support. I am so thrilled to welcome Rebecca Ozaki as JACL Chicago's Program Director. You may recognize Rebecca from her own long-time commitment to JACL Chicago and National as well as her family's legacy as multi-generational leaders in our organization. I was lucky enough to participate in Kansha with Rebecca in 2012 (time flies!) and am very excited to continue to work alongside her. You can read more about Rebecca on page 3 & 5.

Continued on page 2

**JACL CHICAGO
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
GUIDELINES**

See page 4

IREI MONUMENT

See page 8

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 February 3, 2023.

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

JACL Chicago Chapter
5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640-1294

Phone: 773.728.7171

Fax: 773.728.7231

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A Year In Review continued

I also want to thank our amazing board who has stewarded JACL Chicago well over the past several years. This organization would not continue to exist without them and our many other wonderful volunteers who do so much to advance our mission of civil rights.

In 2023, please stay tuned for our scholarship program, Next Gen Nikkei events, the Kansha Project (and a return of Kansha, Too! soon), Our Story, and many more events and programs. I am also looking forward to working with the board on a strategic visioning process to understand where we are going as a chapter. I know you will hear more from us and we will have ways for you to participate. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me at president@jaclchicago.org to share any questions, comments, or thoughts on what makes JACL Chicago matter to you.

Thank you again for your ongoing support,

Lisa Doi
President, JACL Chicago

Awards Ceremony Recap

by Christine Munteanu

On the afternoon Sunday, May 15, 2022, JACL Chicago's Scholarship Committee hosted our first in-person JACL Chicago Scholarship event in 3 years. Held at the recently renovated Robert Crown Community Center in Evanston, this year's awards ceremony may have looked different from our traditional luncheon held at Maggiano's, but the spirit of community, celebration, and connection remained the same.

The continued uncertainty, disruption, and occasional chaos of the last 3 years has had a profound impact on young people, especially those trying to pursue an education and finish high school, graduate college, and try to have a somewhat normal school experience. Yet what has been demonstrated by our scholarship winners from 2020, 2021, and 2022, is that they've responded to these circumstances in ways that make it clear that JACL's mission, our legacy and history, is present and relevant to this day.

Whether it's by being a speaker at our Day of Remembrance program, volunteering to help the less privileged in your community, attending protests and participating in letter writing campaigns



CHRISTINE MUNTEANU, SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRWOMAN, WELCOMES EVERYONE TO THE 2022 AWARD CEREMONY

to elected officials, using their art as a way to raise awareness, or enrolling in an Asian American Studies class, our scholarship winners have shown resilience, commitment, and strength in ways that reflect the legacy of our Nikkei community's experience.

This year, we awarded two scholarships. The Miyasaki Family Scholarship, presented by Gary Shimomura, president of the Japanese Mutual Aid Society of Chicago, was awarded to **Marisa Kurowski**, a graduating senior at Buffalo Grove High School who entered the University of Arizona this fall. The Mas Nakagawa Memorial Scholarship, presented by JACL Chicago Board member Lisa Sakai, was awarded to

Mari Kodama, a graduating senior at Oak Park and River Forest High School who entered Ithaca College this fall. Learn more about our scholarship winners and the people the awards honor at jaclichicago.org.

Our program also included heartfelt updates and reflections from past scholarship winners, who shared ways they have remained engaged with JACL Chicago's mission.

- Malorie Ishii, 2021 Mitzi Shio Schectman Memorial Scholarship winner
- Sam Nishimura, 2020 Mas Nakagawa Memorial Scholarship winner
- Lily Ng, 2020 Miyasaki Family Scholarship winner

Ty Yamamoto, one of the co-leads for Next Generation Nikkei (NGN), JACL Chicago's youth and young-adult led program, shared his own journey to becoming engaged with the Chicago Nikkei community, and the innovative and creative opportunities NGN has provided for young people to get involved with the chapter.

The scholarship program would not be possible without our donors: Ron, Bill, and Larry Yoshino, Lary Schectman, Lisa Tomiyama, Japanese Mutual Aid Society, as well as our chapter board who act as stewards for our restricted and endowed scholarships that have been set up over the years. Through the uncertainty and disruption of the last 3 years, they have continued to support the scholarship program to provide financial support and stability for our young scholarship winners, and we are so grateful for their ongoing support and commitment. The resilience and health of our scholarship program is a reflection of the importance of education to our community, the incredible commitment of our donors, and the values and priorities of our chapter.

I would like to also thank the members of the JACL Chicago Scholarship Committee: Brandon Ishikata, Joyce Morimoto, Judy Tanaka, and our two newest members, Cheryl Jue and Kelly Iwanaga-Becker.

Finally, please save the date for our 2023 Scholarship Ceremony, which is scheduled for Sunday, May 21, 2023! 🎉

Back to My Roots

by Rebecca Joy Ozaki

One of my most formative memories is my grandfather speaking up at Day of Remembrance right after September 11th. He said with conviction, "we need to stand with our Muslim and Sikh brothers and sisters." He challenged the room by saying it was our responsibility not only to educate about incarceration but also to actively work with other communities towards a world we want to live in. I remember how proud I felt at that moment to be his granddaughter. Although I didn't truly realize the magnitude of what he said until I got older, that's the moment I look back to remember that in moments of fear, we need to take a stand and call out injustice more than ever.



REBECCA WITH HER GRANDFATHER, SAM OZAKI

As I was exploring my own identities as a bi-ethnic Filipina Japanese Yonsei and Chicago native, my early years with JACL Chicago played an integral part in my development. From my involvement in the very first Kansha trip in 2012 and participating on the Kansha Alumni Board, as Next Generation Nikkei co-chair and JACL board member, scholarship recipient, and briefly, JACL National Youth Program Coordinator. Beyond the programs it was the people and the fact that we were building something meaningful together; the evening workshopping at the office for Kansha Alumni Leadership Board (ALB), the intergenerational gatherings at the Nisei Lounge, crying at Kansha, and

Continued on page 4



LEFT: MARISA KUROWSKI RECEIVES THE MIYASAKI FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP FROM GARY SHIMOMURA, PRESIDENT OF THE JAPANESE MUTUAL AID SOCIETY OF CHICAGO
BELOW: JACL BOARD MEMBER, LISA SAKAI, PRESENTS MARI KODAMA WITH THE MAS NAKAGAWA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP





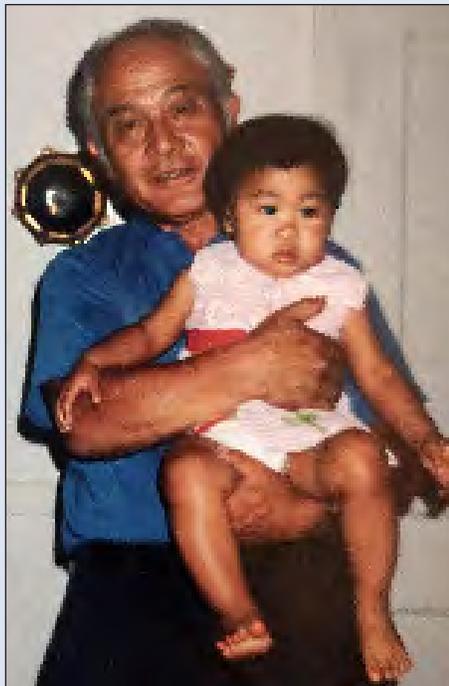
REBECCA WITH HER SON, KAI JUSTICE OZAKI-LUMBERA

the random weekend hangouts. Furthermore, the invaluable mentorship that I have received throughout the years has guided how I practice fighting for social justice for groups outside of the Japanese American community.

When I transitioned off the board, I started graduate school for Social Work studying organizational change where I was student body president. During that time, I also worked with amazing staff and students at the Asian American Resource and Cultural Center assistant teaching and running programs around Asian American identity. Post graduation, I immersed myself in community organizing at a local organization with powerful elders. We

worked in coalitions and held actions for quality in-home care, caregiver rights, and fought for the right to age in place with dignity. When the pandemic hit, we recalibrated and held virtual memorials as beloved members passed, recorded our elder's stories, and we started healing circles to process and reflect with community. I want to take all that I've learned and reinvest my skills and knowledge in the place where I truly started my journey.

One of the primary reasons I wanted to work for the Chicago Chapter is because I want my 4 month old son to grow up knowing what it means to be part of this community and to be proud to be Asian American. The hate crimes against Asian Americans made me angry and fear for my elders in a way I've been privileged to that point to have never experienced. I often felt alone in my grief. As a new mom, I want my child to be surrounded with love, be exposed to social movements and change, and have the opportunity to discovering his Filipino-



REBECCA AS A CHILD WITH HER GRANDFATHER, SAM OZAKI

Japanese roots. I'm excited to be back to work alongside our community to continue to grow leadership in impactful programs like Our Story and Kansha. Just as mentors and family have helped me to find my own voice, I hope to support others in exploring their identity and rooting themselves in our rich history.

I deeply value JACL's ability to honor the past and believe in a vision to build a future where the organization continues to uplift our diverse

community in new ways, embraces a



REBECCA AT A RALLY AGAINST FAMILY SEPARATION AND DETENTION

commitment to intentional intergenerational healing, and acts as a leading force in civil rights and racial justice. Growing up, my grandparents showed me by example that we each have a responsibility in making this world a better place. We can't be complacent but need to take a stand. I can only hope to continue their legacy and lead by example for my son too.

You can contact Rebecca Ozaki, JACL Chicago Program Director, at rebecca@jaclchicago.org or 773.728.7171. 📞

**JACL CHICAGO'S
ANNUAL MEETING**
December 14th
6:30 – 8pm

See page 9 for more details

2023 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 \$2,000 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 2023.
- **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 2023. Students deferring enrollment will not qualify for the 2023 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 2 awards in their lifetime.

- **Scholarship Luncheon:** Scholarships are traditionally awarded at the annual Scholarship Luncheon held in May. Given the evolving situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the status of the 2023 Scholarship Luncheon is tentative. We will prioritize the health and safety of our community, and the Scholarship Committee will make a decision about hosting an in-person luncheon by April 2023. For now, we ask that all applicants please hold Sunday, May 21, 2023 as the tentative date for the luncheon.
- **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 by December 2022.
- 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.
- Electronic submissions will not be accepted.
- Applications must be received or postmarked by **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**. Late applications will not be considered.
- Send complete application packet to:
JACL Chicago Scholarship Committee
5415 N. Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60640
- Applicants will be notified of the Scholarship Committee's decision by April 2023. All decisions of the Scholarship Committee are final.

For questions or more information, visit <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.

How to Make a Home (Kansha Project Culmination Project Statement)

by Hannah Arata

Before leaving for Kansha, I read a book called *Four Treasures of the Sky* by Jenny Tinghui Zhang about a young woman who is kidnapped from China and smuggled to San Francisco in the 1880s. This line from one of her first interactions with a Chinese person in America really moved me: *“You remind me of my son, one of them tells me, tears filling his brown eyes. You remind me of everything, I want to reply. It is a childish truth. What he reminds me of is something I did not know was missing—the feeling of being where you should be.”*

I decided to do a spin on an online quiz turned collage/zine to help conceptualize the ridiculousness and utter confusion that goes into creating an identity and sense of home for yourself and how there will never be clear, final answers to these questions. Ultimately, I made this as a reminder and affirmation to myself that there is no single identity a person can have and there is no single place a person can call home. As we talked about in Kansha orientation, this is a lifelong process.



While on Kansha, I thought a lot about mutual recognition, community, “where you should be”, and what that means in terms of self-identity, belonging, and the concept of home. For my culmination project, I focus on Home and how it plays into my life and into the lives of those who were incarcerated. I was especially affected by the personal objects and mementos in JANM and Manzanar because I really saw myself, my family, and my culture reflected through them.

As I write this update in November, five months after returning from Kansha, I find myself inspired to venture deeper into my personal creative practices and am now able to incorporate facets of history and reflection into my own work. As time has passed, I find it easier to express my JA identity with my close friends and family. In areas where I once felt uncomfortable or ignorant of my own identity, I now feel like I am able to verbalize and speak confidently about myself and my culture.

On Christmas day, I'll be leaving Chicago to take a two-week trip to Japan to see family I haven't seen since 2018 and to travel to places I have never been before. I am curious to see how my relationship with Japan has transformed as I have discovered new pieces of my JA identity. 🇯🇵

Step 2: Surround yourself with good people



Once you have your singular home, fill it with people. Ideally, with people who look like you so you don't feel alone. Who do you invite inside?



I've only been around people who look like me in sporadic and limited moments. I can't imagine living in a permanent place where everyone looks like me. I guess that sounds nice and affirming in some ways -- a place where everyone has similar names or similar tastes in foods; a place where the people start to feel like Home.

Of course, I'd like to invite my family and friends into my home. But I don't look exactly like either sides of my family and I look different from all of my friends. If it's ideal to invite people who look like me, then who is left to invite in? I've always felt at Home with these people. But is that the wrong answer?



NEXT →

Step 3: Decorate!



Once you have your home and your people, you can collect treasures to beautify and personalize your space. What will you bring into your home?



Personal objects mean a lot to me. The amount of little knickknacks I've collected is probably a problem, but they allow me to share my identity and keep pieces of myself as a reminder of who I am. Having connections to inanimate objects can be a form of safety in itself. Sometimes I have to ask myself, if I had to evacuate my home, what would I bring?

You can always take Home with you – take the same precious objects from place to place, wear them down through travels and constant motion until those objects become Home more than the physical space. You work with what you are given to resemble a home you used to have, a place or time where you felt comfortable and safe. When they take Home away or when you move from place to place, never let discomfort take over; stay connected to who you are.

When I was a kid, I had a stuffed Psyduck that I brought everywhere with me. After over 20 years of companionship, many stitches, a trip around the world, and a stint in college, he now rests comfortably on a chair in my apartment.



SUBMIT



DONE!

Congratulations!
How does it feel to have your home?
How safe and comfortable you must be now!

es. You remind me of my son, one of them tells me, tears filling his brown eyes. You remind me of everything, I want to reply. It is a childish truth. What he reminds me of is something I did not know could go missing—the feeling of being where you should be. There is a difference between being a newcomer to a city and being in a




The Kansha Alumni Leadership Board will restart in the new year to plan Kansha 2023!

Interested in joining or want to learn more? Visit <https://jaclchicago.org/programs/kansha-project/>

Irei Monument

by Kenji Kuramitsu

“We make the absent present again.”

These were among the words spoken by scholar and Buddhist priest Duncan Ryūken Williams during an August ceremony commemorating the creation of the Ireichō, a fulsome tome containing the names of each of the 125,284 Nikkei who were incarcerated during world war two.

In late summer of this year, community and religious leaders convened at Los Angeles’ Japanese American National Museum to participate in a public ritual of remembrance. Those present included survivors, descendants, park rangers, media workers, and scholars of historical memory. Evoking monument-making practices conducted by incarcerated and the later establishment of pilgrimages to their former camp sites, the event centered around an interfaith liturgy redolent with themes of memory and repair.

The root of the word liturgy means “the work of the people”—though spearheaded by Williams, this gathering truly spanned a collective effort. Attendees harvested soil samples from the 75 desert landscapes, urban mansions, military installations, and federal prison sites used as wartime prisons, earth that was fused into a single ceramic tile placed in the Ireichō. JACL Chicago President Lisa Doi and I were invited to join the procession to represent the prison site at 4800 S. Ellis in Hyde Park/Kenwood, which cloistered area residents like gardener Soji Osato after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

What does it mean to “make the absent present again” in a felt way? I came of age in the decades after the redress and reparations era, what religion scholar Jane Iwamura calls the “new testaments” of the community. It is moving to imagine the impact of this public testimony on both speaker and listener—how beholding the indignities and particularities faced by survivors occasioned seismic psychological shifts.

The founders of the mental health field famously conceptualized the work of



PROCESSION ON JANM PLAZA



LISA AND KENJI WALKING IN THE PROCESSION TOGETHER

healing as a kind of archaeological commitment to reconstructing psychic objects, ones “lost by mechanical violence, by fire and by plundering.” In narrating our

experiences in the presence of witnessing others, underground phenomena may metabolize into a more formulated grief—a palpable, contoured loss which can be mourned and subsequently internalized.



ABOVE: KENJI TOUCHES IREITO BOOK AND CERAMIC MONUMENT RIGHT: KENJI AND HIS GRANDFATHER HAWA (HOWIE) KURAMITSU

During the Ireichō ceremony, I found myself thinking of my late grandfather Howie Kuramitsu (who, it must be remarked, just loved ribbing me about my occasionally acerbic or overwrought writing style in articles like this). His passing occurred at a time in which public mourning was largely inhibited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like those in camp who crafted stone and wooden monuments

Continued on page 9



ANNUAL MEETING

Join JACL Chicago for our Annual Member meeting to gather in community, reflect on the past year and look towards the future!

DECEMBER 14 | 6:30 - 8PM

**KONBINI & KANPAI
1433 W. BELMONT
CHICAGO, IL 60657**

JACL CHICAGO CHAPTER
Japanese American Citizens League

out of the materials most immediately at hand, we scrambled to engage in the rituals of remembrance with rather limited equipment—a Zoom session for “talking story,” an intimate liturgy, a quiet cleaning out of his apartment. Liturgy, the work of the people, helped us to feel and to mourn at a time when we most needed to feel connection and stability.

Story and pilgrimage matters. Ritual and remembrance matters. JACL Chicago’s essential work and programming matters now more than ever—I am proud to be part of a community committed to the delicate, precious task of making repair and carrying the names of our ancestors into a shared future. 🍄

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

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Chicago, IL 60640



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KANSHA & NEXT GEN. NIKKEI KICK-OFF

December 3rd, 2022 @ 3-5 PM

Calling all Kansha alum, NGNs, & JA YPS!
Join us to reconnect & learn more about
JAACL Chicago's upcoming program plans!



Konbini & Kanpai

1433 W. Belmont
Chicago, IL 60657

RSVP

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Japanese American Citizens League

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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

Saturday, December 3rd, 2022 3:00 – 5:00 pm	Kansha & Next Gen. Nikkei Kick-Off! Konbini & Kanpai 1433 W. Belmont Chicago, IL 60657
Wednesday, December 14th, 2022 6:30 – 8:00 pm	JACL Chicago Annual Member Meeting Konbini & Kanpai 1433 W. Belmont Chicago, IL 60657
Thursday, December 15th, 2022 4:00 – 6:00 pm	Fred Korematsu Court Case Reenactment Hosted by CBA's D.I.C.E Committee, Young Lawyers Section and Japanese Bar Association of Chicago Chicago Bar Association 321 S. Plymouth Ct
Monday, January 16th, 2023	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, January 30th, 2023	Fred Korematsu Day
Thursday, February 2nd, 2023 Time TBA	PAVE (Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment) Mayoral Forum Location TBA
Sunday, February 19th, 2023 Time TBA	Japanese American Day of Remembrance Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60614