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Reflections on the JACL National Convention



by [JK Yamamoto](#)09/06/2019



By ANDREW GRUHN

This year's JACL National Convention in Salt Lake City was a wonderful way for me to learn more about processes associated with the maintenance of a national organization. While there, I was able to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues that the JACL currently faces and had many opportunities to meet many veteran members from all over the United States.

Hearing everyone's perspectives during the National Council meetings was quite informative and gave me a glimpse of the discourse required to ensure that the JACL takes the right course of action when addressing the many issues that it

faces. Additionally, there were many interesting presentations and seminars that covered a wide variety of interesting topics such as tracing one's own heritage and educational methods for teaching youth about the internment of Japanese Americans.

As a delegate for the Greater Los Angeles Chapter along with Mr. Kanji Sahara and Ms. Miyako Kadogawa, I was able to vote and speak on resolutions and amendments to the Constitution. Having the opportunity to voice my opinions in front of the National Council inspired me to become more active within the JACL. It also made me realize the importance of youth involvement within this organization.



The convention included a visit to the site of the Topaz camp in central Utah, where more than 11,000 Japanese Americans were held during World War II. (Photo by CORY SHIOZAKI)

One thing that really stood out to me was the division that still exists between the JACL and those individuals who were unjustly incarcerated in Tule Lake. Resolution 3, which intended to apologize to the Tule Lake incarcerated on behalf of the JACL for discrimination based on a differing perspective on whether an individual decided to cooperate with or “resist” against the government based on the infamous Questions 27 and 28 of the Loyalty Questionnaire.

Even 76 years later, people on both sides are still passionate about this subject and because of this, a schism still remains within the Japanese American community.

After lengthy debate, the National Council voted in favor of the apology. Even though we achieved a small victory, we cannot say that this issue is resolved. In order for us to put this issue to rest forever, we must continue to reconcile with those who may still harbor resentment towards our organization. Only through resolving this issue can the JACL be strengthened as a civil rights organization by representing the united voice of all Japanese Americans and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Overall the convention was a wonderful, educational, and exciting experience. It highlighted all of the important work that the JACL does to change our country for the better. I am so grateful that I was able to attend the National Convention and I thank the Greater Los Angeles Chapter for giving me this opportunity.

Andrew Gruhn was a GLA JACL's 2015 scholarship recipient. He graduated this summer with a degree from UC Riverside's College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. He is a GLA board member and was sponsored by GLA to the convention.