



# Greater Los Angeles Chapter

## *Japanese American Citizens League*

Newsletter no. 438

March 2022

### **VIRTUAL MEETING/PROGRAM** **Sunday, March 13, 2022**

**2:00 pm Program: Furusato: The Lost Village of Terminal Island**  
**Moderator: Mitchel Matsumura**

#### **1:00 pm Business Meeting**



Program: The 42 minutes film will be screened with a panel of Terminal Island residents and descendants to follow screening.

A little known corner in the Port of Los Angeles was once home to nearly 3000 Japanese immigrants and their families. These pioneers of the fishing industry prospered for several decades until 1941, when World War II triggered the tragic end to their tight-knit village. The Lost Village of Terminal Island is the story of this unique place as told by its original inhabitants, the American-born Nisei who spent their childhood there. From its formation nearly 100 years ago to the ongoing struggle to keep the community alive, these Nisei will always consider Terminal Island their Furusato – Home Sweet Home. The 2007 film is narrated by Rob Fukuzaki, ABC7 sports anchor and directed by David Metzler.

For a Zoom link to the meeting/program and information, email Louise

#### **GLA JAACL Scholarship Application**

The Greater Los Angeles Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League is seeking eligible candidates for its annual Hana Uno Shepard Memorial Scholarship of \$1,000. An applicant must be a graduating high school senior with a high achievement record, from a single-parent family, of Japanese descent, and a resident of Los Angeles or Orange County. The scholarship may be applied to any college, university, community college, fine arts, or vocational school.

The scholarship is given to financially assist students and to help applicants become acquainted with the mission and vision of JAACL, a civil rights organization that strives to promote a world that honors diversity by respecting values of fairness, equality and social justice.

The Hana Uno Shepard Scholarship was established in 1992 as a memorial to Hana Shepard, a passionate GLA Chapter member for many years. Before passing in 1987, she was active in the redress movement for the unconstitutional incarceration of people of Japanese ancestry during World War II.

Applications can be found at high school counselors' offices or may be found on the GLA website at <https://www.glajacl.org/scholarship>. Applications can be submitted through a Google form on the website, emailed to [greaterlajacl@gmail.com](mailto:greaterlajacl@gmail.com), or postmarked on or before May 15, 2022. Any questions, please email [greaterlajacl@gmail.com](mailto:greaterlajacl@gmail.com).

GLA members: Contact Scholarship Chair Layne Sakamoto at [laynesakamoto@live.com](mailto:laynesakamoto@live.com)

or (310) 897-0398

## Look to the Sky: America's Concentration Camps



John Tonai

**John Tonai** was GLA's February virtual program speaker. He showed photos from his documentary photographic exhibit "Look to the Sky" of camps Amachi, Gila, Heart Mountain, Jerome, and Manzanar. Tonai's commentary of each black-and-white photo shown was interesting, informative and enlightening. One looked at the photos with new eyes. John Tonai will show photos of camps Minidoká, Poston, Rohwer, Topaz and Tule Lake at a later date.

*report by Louise Sakamoto*

The presentation was recorded. John Tonai gave GLA permission to have it available on GLA website. The following bio and project statement are John Tonai's.

Following, also, is announcement of the program that appeared in RAFU SHIMPO, 2/1/2022 issue, p.3

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## John Tonai

### Bio

John Tonai was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, California. After having lived in Sioux Falls, SD, Greeley, CO and Minneapolis, MN, he currently lives in Woodland Hills, CA. He received a Masters of Fine Arts in Photography from the University of Minnesota, and a Masters of Art in Visual Art from the University of Northern Colorado. In addition, he received a BA in History and Secondary Teaching Credentials from the University of Sioux Falls.

His thesis work for his MA involved visiting and photographing the 10 WRA concentration camps from 1990-1992. The photographs have been exhibited in Los Angeles, CA (Japanese American National Museum and Family Expo), Minneapolis, MN (PArts Gallery), Laramie WY (University of Wyoming), San Francisco, CA (National Japanese American Historical Society) and Independence, CA (Manzanar National Historic Site). He continues to return to photograph the sites to document the changes that have occurred.

Tonai recently retired as an Associate Professor of Photography to return home to California. He currently works at the Japanese American National Museum as a Production Coordinator and Collections Photographer.

# Look to the Sky: America's Concentration Camps

## Project Statement

*Look to the Sky: America's Concentration Camps* is a documentary photography project depicting the contemporary physical conditions of the 10 WWII War Relocation Authority camps. The title, *Look to the Sky* was inspired by the artist Chiura Obata. During my research into the camps, there was a story of how the incarcerated at Topaz were complaining to Obata about how awful it was at the camp. His response was to tell them to look around. During the initial visits to all ten sites I was inspired by the contrast between the mostly dead and ruined areas on the ground and the beautiful sunsets and clouds in the sky. This became the inspiration for capturing the camps in a way that emphasized both the horrors and beauty of the camps.

As a Sansei who was born 15 years after the closing of the camps, I have no firsthand knowledge of what it was like to be forced from my home and sent to what are essentially prison farms in rural areas of America. Unlike many others of my generation, stories of "camp" were regularly told to my sisters and me by our parents-so much so, that after awhile, many of their stories were tucked away in my memory, to be completely forgotten.

The project started when I decided to travel down to Amache and photograph the camp. I was living in Greeley, Colorado at the time and it was around a 4 hour drive. When I arrived and starting taking photos of my father's family barracks and the surrounding roads, all of the stories he told me, the ones I so callously ignored, came flooding back to me. I could see my father walking down the road with his friends, running indoors at the approach of a summer storm and going to block dances. This became the pivotal moment that I knew I had to photograph all 10 sites with the goal of possibly providing the descendants of the incarcerated the inspiration of finding out their family stories.

The initial project took place from 1990-1992. Since that time I've revisited most of the sites and recorded the changes that have taken place. In some cases objects and building have been destroyed or removed (Some examples include: the diving platform at Heart Mountain, the firehouse and outbuilding at Tule Lake, the auditorium at Poston) and in other cases, buildings have been returned to the sites and/or have been fixed up, and reproductions have been built (The auditorium at Manzanar was still a working garage for the Inyo County when this project started, the mess hall and barrack was returned to Minidoka and the original water tank and a recreation hall was returned to Amache).

The first exhibit opened on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first people to enter the Owens Valley Reception Center, which eventually became the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Since that time it has been exhibited in various forms at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in 1992, the Family Expo at the L.A. Convention Center in 1994, at Parts Gallery in Minneapolis, MN in 1997, the University of Wyoming in Laramie, WY in 1998, at the National Japanese American National Historical Society in San Francisco, CA in 1999 and at the Manzanar National Historical Site in 2004.

# Presentation by 'Look to the Sky' Author

**John Tonai to discuss images taken at 10 JA camps for GLA JACL virtual program on Feb. 13.**

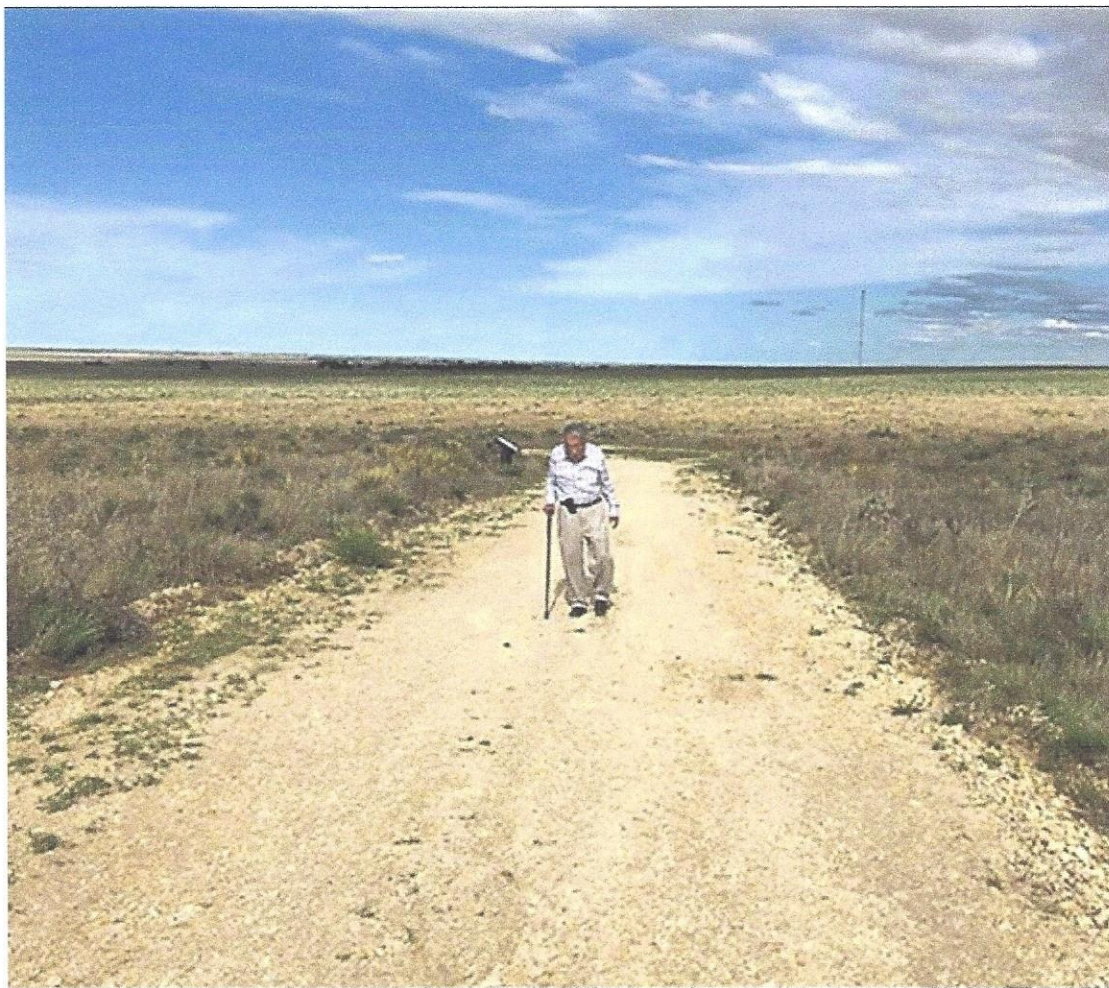


Photo by John Tonai

John Tonai's father, Minoru Tonai, walks up the gravel road away from the Amache, Colo. block where members of his family and he lived during World War II.

The Greater Los Angeles JACL Chapter will present a virtual program on Sunday, Feb. 13, at 1 p.m.

“Look to the Sky: America’s Concentration Camps” is a documentary photography project by John Tonai depicting the contemporary physical conditions of the 10 World War II War Relocation Authority camps.

The initial project took place from 1990-1992. Since that time, Tonai has revisited most of the sites and recorded the changes that have taken place.

Tonai will talk about the photos in the exhibit.

The exhibit has been shown in various forms at different venues, including the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

The title comes from Tonai being inspired by the contrast between the mostly dead and ruined areas on the ground and the beautiful sunsets and clouds in the sky. This became the inspiration for capturing the camps in a

way that emphasized both the horrors and beauty of the locations.

Tonai recently retired as an associate professor of photography at University of Northern Colorado. He currently works at JANM as a production coordinator and collections photographer.

For a Zoom link to the program and more information, email Louise at \_\_\_\_\_

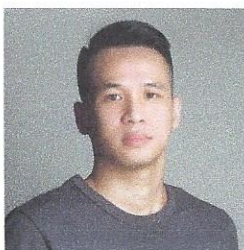
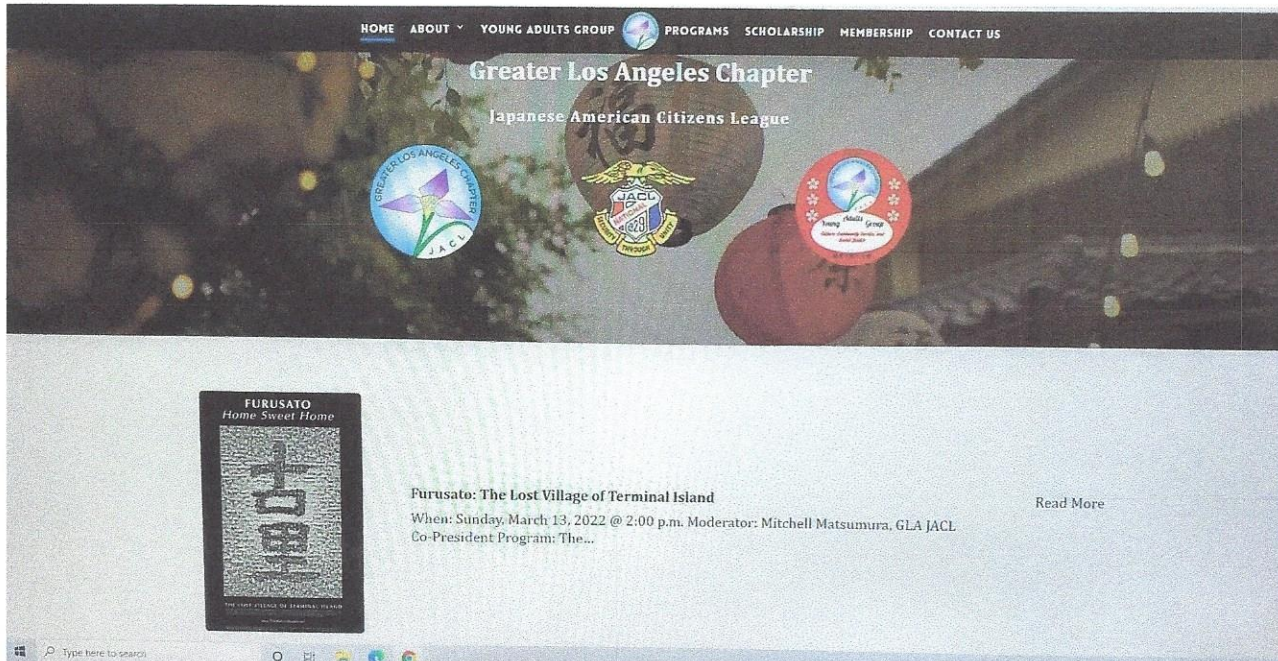


screen shot by Nancy Takayama, PSWD Vice Governor, formerly PSWD Governor

**GLA JACL meeting & installation, 2/13/22**  
 Attending from top left:  
 M. Kadogawa, Susan DeGracia, Mitchell Matsumura, Andrew Gruhn, Louise Sakamoto, Joyce Okazaki, Kanji Sahara, Ryan Yoshikawa (PSWD Governor), Layne Sakamoto, A. Okada, Janet Okubo



**Introducing Ryan Yoshikawa**, new Pacific Southwest District Governor: Ryan Yoshikawa grew up in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA and graduated from UC Irvine with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering. At UC Irvine, he was involved with the Nikkei Student Union, Tomo No Kai, where he was introduced to the SELANOCO Chapter of the JACL. He has served as a board member since 2017 and has served as the Chapter President. He is honored to serve the Pacific Southwest District in memory of his late great granduncle George Wakiji, and all of the great leaders of the JACL.



Aidan Nguyen

**Aidan Nguyen** is the web designer and developer for the newly launched website for Greater Los Angeles Chapter of JACL. He is also the website developer for Pacific Citizen, the National Newspaper of the JACL. Aidan is currently a Software Engineer working for The Aerospace Corporation in El Segundo, California. His hobbies include reading, running, and creating things. He also enjoys exploring new places, eating good food, and spending time with family and friends.

## \$5,000 received from the Aratani Foundation

In January, the Aratani Foundation awarded GLA \$5,000 for its Scholarship Fund. Each year since early 2000s, M. Kadogawa, as the GLA Scholarship and Chapter Fundraiser Chair, solicited donation from the Aratani Foundation. Each year, the Aratani Foundation gave \$250 to GLA's Scholarship Fund. The Aratani Foundation is closing in 2022.

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Shared from the 2/23/2022 The Rafu Shimpo eEdition

## ABC Unified Expands DOR Program



Front row, seated (from left): Kanji Sahara and Misa Chomori. Second row (from left): Mike Hatchimonji, Min Tonai, Hal Keimi, Jenny Chomori, Joyce Okazaki, Grace Hatchimonji, Nancy Oda, Kay Oda. Third row (from left): Dr. Valencia Mayfield, Richard Murakami, Audrey Rios, Ernie Nishii and Bryan Glonchok.

The ABC Unified School District, located in Cerritos, Artesia, Hawaiian Gardens, and portions of Lakewood, Norwalk, and Long Beach, is expanding its lauded and unique "Day of Remembrance" program to Grades 3-12 and to all schools in the district.

Jenny Chomori, co-chair with Kyoko Oda, noted, "This dramatic expansion of the program and extension into March for our survivors to communicate the story of their lives to young future leaders of America will be transformative of the ABC community. Technology is expanding our reach and impact. While before we only reached 5,000 a year in a grueling schedule, we can personally reach over 13,000 students."

Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services Dr. Valencia Mayfield and Carol Castro worked to embed the program into the curricula and as part of a larger program throughout February and March, with March culminating in the "personal experiences" portion of the lessons.

ABC School Board member Ernie Nishii, who spearheaded the idea four years ago after being elected, stated, "Our aim is that students don't just read a paragraph of history but rather the personal nature of the experience will be imprinted on the students' hearts — imprinted such that when they see civil rights abuses to others in the future they are motivated to fight the mob and stand up for what they know is right. These seniors are heroes that will impact our world long into the future."

**In the picture are GLA members Kanji Sahara and Joyce Okazaki. Also pictured is Min Tonai, John Tonai's father.**

## New Leadership at Minidoka National Historic Site, Friends of Minidoka



**News Release Date:** February 10, 2022

Jerome, Ida – The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the selection of Kurt Ikeda and Emily Teraoka to serve as the Director of Interpretation and Education and Lead Park Ranger, respectively, for Minidoka National Historic Site near Jerome, Idaho. And Friends of Minidoka is equally pleased to announce the selection of Robyn Achilles to serve as the Executive Director for the organization.

Minidoka National Historic Site, established in 2001 as a unit of the National Park Service, interprets the exclusion and unjust incarceration of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II; over 13,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated at Minidoka alone. Since 2003, Friends of Minidoka has supported the mission of Minidoka National Historic Site by engaging in education, research, and historic preservation activities.

Ikeda will manage the site's interpretation, education, and community outreach programs and Teraoka will oversee all aspects of the visitor center operations and further development of the site's interpretative exhibits and programming. Achilles brings over 20 years of non-profit leadership experience to Friends of Minidoka, most recently with the Community Library in Ketchum, ID. All three identify as descendants of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans and bring their personal identities and professional experiences to the education and preservation of the site.

"We are beyond fortunate to have staff as talented and dedicated as Kurt, Emily, and Robyn on our team" said Wade Vagias, Superintendent for three National Parks in southern Idaho, including Minidoka. "The future of both Minidoka National Historic Site and Friends of Minidoka is so bright with these three individuals in positions of leadership."

"We are so grateful to have Robyn as our new Executive Director," said Andy Dunn, President of Friends of Minidoka. "Her passion, vision, and leadership abilities bring so much to Friends of Minidoka. Robyn hit the ground running and has already shown that she is the perfect person to take Friends of Minidoka to the next level. As the partner organization for Minidoka National Historic Site, working with NPS is a huge part of what we do, and we are equally excited about the new staff there. Our two organizations had big shoes to fill, but Kurt, Emily, and Robyn are more than capable to usher in a new era of preserving and protecting Minidoka's legacy."

The news release appeared in RAFU SHIMPO 2/24/2022 issue, p.1