



Greater Los Angeles Chapter *Japanese American Citizens League*

Newsletter no. 445

October 2022



VIRTUAL MEETING/PROGRAM

Sunday, October 9, 2022

1:00 p.m.

Virtual Program: 1:00 p.m. *Lil Tokyo Reporter* and *A Rebel's Outcry*

Speaker: Jeffrey Gee Chin, Director of *Lil Tokyo Reporter*, and guests

Business Meeting: 2:00 p.m. or after the program

The short film (30 minutes) *Lil Tokyo Reporter*, celebrating its 10th anniversary, will be shown virtually. Academy Award winner Chris Tashima stars as activist Issei Sei Fujii set in 1935 in Los Angeles. Sei Fujii, founder of *Kashu Mainichi*, was a proactive advocate who accomplished much for the Japanese American community, including overturning the Alien Land Law in 1952.

After the film, Director of *Lil Tokyo Reporter*, Jeffrey Gee Chin, and special guests will talk about the recently released and award-winning *A Rebel's Outcry*, an illustrated biography of Sei Fujii published by Little Tokyo Historical Society.

For Zoom link to the film and program, email Louise at greaterlajacl@gmail.com



l-r: Assistant Alissa Tomiyama, *Bill Nishimura, Director Jeffrey Chin, Executive Producer Carole Fujita, Associate Producer Yukio Kawaratani, Actor Hiro Matsunaga, Associate Producer Karen Chu

*Bill Nishimura's father is from the same city (Iwakuni, Yamaguchi-ken, Japan) as Sei Fujii. Bill's father knew Sei Fujii from childhood in Japan and later in Little Tokyo. Bill knew Sei Fujii while growing up locally in California. According to Carole, Bill was interviewed and much of what he talked about is in the script.

Program report: *Lil Tokyo Reporter*

An interesting and informative program about Sei Fujii was enjoyed by a large gathering at the February GLAS Meeting. The presentation was given by the Executive Producer, Director and other members associated with the video "*Lil Tokyo Reporter*". The meeting was also the Annual o-sho-ga-tsu for our Club and there were lots of tasty food.

Sei Fujii led a most interesting and productive life. He was an Issei who graduated from the USC Law School, but could not practice law because he was not an US citizen. He therefore partnered with a friend he met at USC, Marion Wright. They formed a powerful legal team with Wright being the lawyer and Fujii being the translator.

In the early part of the last century, Issei doctors could not get staff privileges at local hospitals. The Japanese doctors thus had the dilemma of where to bring their patients. So five Issei doctors decided to build a hospital. A Nisei doctor bought the land and when they proceeded to incorporate, the California Secretary of State denied them on the grounds they were aliens ineligible for citizenship. Fujii and Wright challenged this all the way up to the US Supreme Court and won. Their tenacity resulted in the Japanese Hospital which opened in 1929.

Sei Fujii started the Japanese language paper *Kashu Mainichi*. One purpose of the paper was to explain to the Issei readers how to get along to live in America. Sei wanted the Issei to know that the Nisei were American citizens and were not returning back to Japan.

Soon after the war, Sei Fujii challenged the California Alien Land Law. The Law stated that aliens ineligible for US citizenship could not own land, e.g., farms and homes, and could not sign a lease for farm land for longer than three years. This severely restricted Japanese farmers. Fujii's case went all the way up to the California Supreme Court and in 1952 the Court ruled that the Alien Land Law was unconstitutional.

In the 1920's and 30's, there were gambling dens in Japanese towns up and down the West Coast. When the Japanese farmers came to town to sell their crops, many would afterwards stop in Japanese Town and then go the gambling dens. Naturally, they would lose their hard-earned money. In order to stop this, Sei started a crusade against the Tokyo Club in Los Angeles in the *Kashu Mainichi*. In retaliation, the gambling den owners set out to kill Sei. The video "*Lil Tokyo Reporter*" tells about this part of Sei Fujii's life.

Sei had a mistress, Mrs. Sato, whose husband would not give her a divorce. So she and Sei fled to Japan and had two sons. Then Sei came back to America and met another married woman, Mrs. Matsuo. He married her and had two children. Sei lived a most colorful life.

The video was shot last October in Little Tokyo and Chinatown. The Director was Jeffrey Gee Chin, the Executive Producer Carole Fujita and the actor playing Sei was Chris Tashima. Six hours of filming has been reduced to 30 minutes. Now the background sound and music, computer augmentation and other post production work is being done. The video will be released in May. They hope it will qualify for the Academy Awards category of *Live Action Short Films*.

report by Kanji Sahara

Thank you to Kanji for recommending a program on *Lil Tokyo Reporter* and for writing a report. Kanji had met Carole Fujita in August on the bus trip to Heart Mountain and national parks.

Kanji mentioned he volunteered to be an extra for the movie. He was filmed for about 7 seconds walking in front of the former Nishi Hongwanji (now JANM). He wonders whether the segment will survive editing.

Tonga: Cultural Traditions and Where Tonga Is Today Post-Volcanic Eruption, Earthquake and Tsunami

Report of in-person program on Sunday, September 18, 2022, 1:00 p.m.
at Faith United Methodist Church, Torrance
cosponsored by Faith's Social Action Committee and GLA JACL



From left, 1) Minister Ainise Isama'u is Church Life Coordinator at Faith. She is in last semester at Claremont School of Theology. There are 11 UMC Tongan churches in Southern California. Ainise may eventually be assigned to one of them. Ainise is President, Board of Directors Executive Committee, United Women in Faith, a national organization. Ainise is 2nd daughter. 2) Rev. Amelia Sivi Finau, a UMC minister, is mother of 4 daughters. Rev. Finau was the first Pacific Islander to become a UMC elder in United States. 3) Tema Finau is a UMC missionary. She is Youth and Children's Ministry Coordinator in nonprofit homeless shelters in Tampa, FL. She is first daughter of Lile Lokotui. 4) Lile Lokotui, oldest daughter of Rev. Finau. 5) Mele Finau, 3rd daughter 6) Anntalisa Finau, 4th daughter

The speakers are wearing the Tongan traditional attire for women, puletaha. Rev. Finau is wearing a kiekie, waist garment. The sisters are wearing ta'ovala, waist mats.

They were wearing somber colors because they were attending a funeral after the program.

For snack after the program, the family provided a Pacific Islander dessert – panipopo - haupia rolls or rolls with coconut cream. Panipopo was also provided for snack after the 10:30 service which Ainise and Rev. Finau co-preached. The panipopo came from Poly Grill & Bakery, 1329 E. Carson St., Carson, owned by an aunt.

Tonga is an archipelago of 171 islands, 45 are inhabited, located south of Samoa. Population is 105,000, 70% reside on main island, Tongatapu. Capital and largest city is Nuku'alofa. Tonga has the only remaining monarchy in the Pacific.

Religion is 98% Christianity with 54% Methodism. The royal family belong to the Free Wesleyan Church. Everyday life is influenced by Polynesian traditions and by the Christian faith. Sundays are sacred in Tonga. On Jan. 15, 2022, an underwater volcano located 40 miles north of Tongatapu, erupted with the force hundreds of times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Undersea telecommunications cable connecting Tonga to the rest of the world snapped. The 150,000 diaspora were in prayers. Communications was restored a month later. Whole communities were left under a blanket of volcanic ash and mud from the tsunami that followed the eruption About 84% of population was affected. There were only 3 deaths. Tonga is in phase of reconstruction.

Following the presentation on Tonga, donations were received for Tongan Relief. The donations will be sent to the UMC California-Pacific Conference to be used for Tongan Relief. GLA JACL donated \$50 to the Relief.

The recording of the program is on the GLA JACL website: www.glajacl.org in Programs.

report by Louise Sakamoto, (with help from the presentation, Ainise and Wikipedia)

Ainise's script for the presentation on Sep. 18, 2022, 1 pm, at Faith UMC
(The presentation differs in many ways from the script.)

PLAY VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVMu3UmkBTE> **END at 3:02**

MOM:

As you have just seen, on January 15 a volcano erupted in the island kingdom—one that NASA scientists later claimed was hundreds of times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic bomb.



The blast dumped a layer of ash several inches thick onto buildings, cars, plants, and trees and generated waves that reached estimated heights of 50 feet, sweeping away coastline villages and resorts. Rushing water pushed boulders and debris onto roads. The undersea telecommunications cable connecting the South Pacific nation of 105,000 residents with the rest of the world snapped.



LILE:

And yet, the people of Tonga feel that they have been the subject of the prayers of the worldwide community.

Anxious about the fate of our loved ones, many in Tonga's 150,000-person diaspora held all-night prayer marathons, organized vigils, and used social media to implore fellow believers to plead to God for the safety and protection of their loved ones.

There were many sleepless nights for all of us Tongans around the globe. We were desperately waiting to hear any word of life from the kingdom. While our communication line was down with family and the people of Tonga, we leaned onto our faith. We knew that our communication line with God was always open and that we could petition for God's mercy and protection.

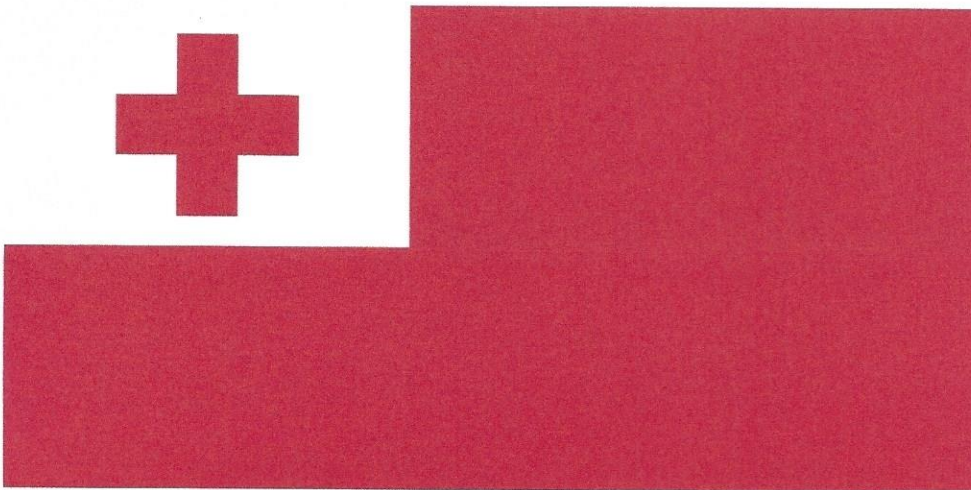
Many see the hand of God looking out for the kingdom of some 170 islands, given the disparity between the intensity of the disaster and the low number of casualties (three in total).

Many have been in prayer day and night, thanking God that he spared Tonga because when you try to see Tonga, you almost have to use a magnifying glass; it's just a little dot. The tsunami and the eruption could have wiped Tonga out in a second.

NISE:



We weren't just crediting the prayers that began after the volcano went off. Many point to King Tupou I, who dedicated the islands to God and in 1839 adopted a new motto for his kingdom: *Ko e 'Otua mo Tonga Ko Hoku Tofi'a* ("God and Tonga are my inheritance"). Tupou I was among the first generation of Tongans to become Christians after Western missionaries arrived at the end of the 1700s.



In addition, in 1875 it was written into the nation's constitution that a new plain red field with a white rectangle and red cross top left was adopted. The national flag can never be changed. All the elements of the flag reflect Christianity.

Even Sundays are sacred in Tonga. Many businesses and transport are closed on this day. Bakeries are open only in the morning so people can purchase bread and butter for teatime after church. The only distinct sound that is heard is the ringing of a bell or lali. Letting the village know that church will be starting.

TEMA: We also hold the 4 Gold pillars sacred. In her speech at the opening of the Tonga Cultural and Heritage Society (1964), Queen Salote emphasized four values that underpin the reciprocal relationship between the nobility and the people of the fonua (land).

These four Pou (Pillars) are:

- i. Faka'apa'apa (acknowledging and returning respect)
- ii. Anga fakatokilalo/loto tō (humility, open to learning)
- iii. Tauhi vaha'a/vā (keeping the relationship ongoing, alive and well)
- iv. Mamahi'i me'a (loyalty and passion in application of self).

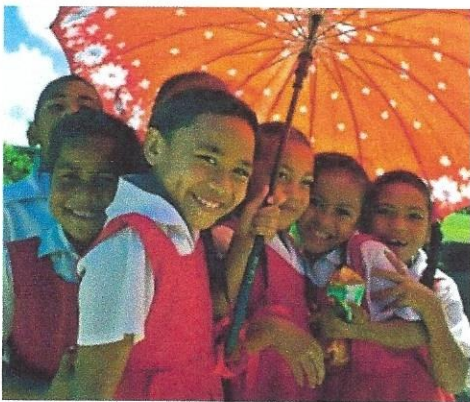
'Ofa (love and care, kindness) is the foundation/ground on which the Pou stand.

MELE: Today, the only remaining monarchy in the Pacific is overwhelmingly Christian. Protestants make up nearly two-thirds of the population (64.9%), with the majority—including the royal family—belonging to the Free Wesleyan Church.

Tongans, like all Pasifika people, see themselves connected and are a part of the *moana* (ocean). For this reason, when Tongans are in diaspora all over the globe, we still feel connected through the moana. After all, there is only one moana.

“A hymn, called *'Eiki Ko e 'Ofa 'A 'Au* ('Lord, How Great Is Your Love'), all Tongans learn growing up. The hymn is immensely heartfelt and meaningful for Tongans; many know it from memory. The lyrics of this song were shared on all social media pages after the volcano and tsunami. The lyrics bring a sense of peace and remind us to lean and trust in God alone. The song uses the ocean as a metaphor, and it is an accurate account of Tongans expressing their love for God and vice versa. For Tongans, the ocean is not only a symbol of life; it is their lifeline, a way of life, an eternal inspiration.

ANNTALISA: Since the eruption, relief has been traveling across the ocean, with New Zealand, Australia, the US, and the UK sending ships. Tonga remained a COVID-free country until the supplies arrived. Thankfully Tonga was prepared. With over 70 percent of the country having received at least a second dose of the vaccine, Tonga has reopened its borders after nearly two years.



Despite the destruction, life has been returning to normal (at least for the pandemic). Last week, children returned to school and churches opened their doors. Even as ash still covers large parts of the islands, the people of Tonga continue to gather together to help one another.

Tonga was to a large extent saved by forces that are beyond us. It was almost like a miracle. If we're estimating the explosion to have been [many] times the explosion in Hiroshima, it's just a surprise and wonder that we're still here. We are in God's hands. He has brought us through a number of disasters and we've come out safe and sound.

UNDERGRADUATES

Erica Harris

**JACL Chapter:
Greater Los Angeles
Recipient of the
Henry and Chiyo
Kuwahara Memorial
Scholarship
University of California,
San Diego**



Notables

Erica Harris is the first in her family to attend college. She is a student pursuing a bioengineering degree with a minor in business at the University of California, San Diego.

Personal Statement

"Many famous people have stated, 'Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it,' which is a quotation I full-heartedly agree with. With hate being based on discrimination that is often fueled by a lack of understanding and the spread of false information, when people can't identify a reason for why terrible things happen, a group is singled out to become the scapegoat and faces punishment they never deserved in the first place.

"Japanese Americans saw this during WWII with the internment of Americans of Japanese heritage. For the whole Asian American community to be made victims of ignorance, misinformation and irrational fear is abhorrent (Covid). In this modern time where a large number of individuals and families are struggling as a community, it is up to every person to share compassion and kindness to one another. . . ."

in their pasts can share their stories so us from younger generations can understand the perspectives from those hurt most throughout history.

"I am just one person, but I do my best to reach out to the people I really care about and ask how they and their families are doing. . . . I hope to spread awareness of how important it is to make sure we're listening to both sides of the story to get the full truth of what goes on in the world and in the past. . . . We need to remind each other that we are all working together."

"By recognizing my own shortcomings and identifying how much I do not know, I believe I can come from a mutual place of understanding in using education to share the bad side of history, along with the good. I have never been a blogger, or an activist, but I cannot just listen to the news, see all the hate acts that are occurring and do nothing.

"That being said, I want to collect resources for people who are discriminated against and/or are victims of hate crimes so even if the unimaginable happens, hopefully they could receive the support they need. I also want to create a safe place for people who are especially isolated in these socially distant times and a comfortable environment where those who have faced especially rough times

PACIFIC CITIZEN Scholarship Issue,
Sept. 23 – Oct. 6, 2022, p.11



**Congratulations
to
Erica Harris**
Recipient of the
H & C Kuwahara
Memorial Scholarship

www.glaajacl.org

greaterlajacl@gmail.com

2022 HANA UNO SHEPARD SCHOLARSHIP AND CHAPTER FUNDRAISER

Late donors were Susan DeGracia and Junko Ikeda.

Fundraiser total now: \$2,895.80



A fundraiser for the Terasaki Budokan was a dance with the band, Kokoro, on September 10. Because of the possibility of rain, the venue was changed from the Budokan to Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Kanji Sahara was a sponsor of a table of 10, which included dinner box. Kanji is pictured with members of the Nishi Week court. Miss Tomodachi is GLA's 2016 scholarship recipient, Maile Yanguas.