



Greater Los Angeles Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League
Newsletter 460 April 2024

**GREATER LOS ANGELES CHAPTER
VIRTUAL PROGRAM/MEETING**

Sunday, April 14, 1pm – 2pm

“BY GEORGE!” Film by Janice Tanaka

Join virtual screening and meeting on Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83749585696?pwd=SDBOSDJzemtrcmI1VUR6QnlXNlQ1dz09>

Meeting ID: 837 4958 5696 Passcode: 254290



George Izumi prepares cakes for the holidays in a photo from the 1960s. Grace Pastries expanded from its original store in the Crenshaw District to become one of the most well-known bakeries in Los Angeles.

Moderator: Mitchell Matsumura

The film profiles George Izumi, owner of Grace Pastries in Los Angeles' Crenshaw District. Director Tanaka's WIP project will tell the story of the Black/Japanese America intersection that took part during the 1960s/1970s, where African Americans and Japanese Americans alike found a place of shared identification.

After the film there will be Q&A and a presentation of
“Signposts of the Japanese American community of Crenshaw.”

For information email: greaterlajacl@gmail.com

Hana Uno Shepard Memorial Scholarship

GLA annually awards the Hana Uno Shepard Memorial Scholarship. Applicants 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. GLA provides the scholarship recipient with 4 years of JACL student membership.

In February, the application process may be started. The deadline to submit the application is May 15th each year.

The GLA application is available in 3 ways:

- The high school counseling office may have the GLA forms.
- The application is available as a [Google form](#).
- The application is available as a [printable document](#).

Applicants have 3 options for submitting their applications:

- Application may be filled out manually and emailed to greaterlajacl@gmail.com.
- Application may be completed online through the Google form.
- Request snail mail address from greaterlajacl@gmail.com.

For application questions and additional information: greaterlajacl@gmail.com
National JACL provides a variety of scholarships. See [scholarships](#).

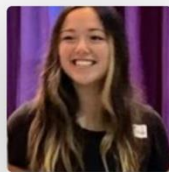
2023 Scholarship Recipients



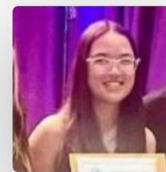
Caitlyn Chailitilerd



Kristi Ikemoto



Taylor Jo-Gibson



Mia Hennequin



Winston Clark



Satoru Eto



Jade Shimamoto



Shieru Wada

Registration is now open for the 2024 JAACL National Convention!

**Join us in historic Philadelphia this summer, July 10-14, as we celebrate our community and build on our convention theme:
“Looking into the Future Together!”**

For information: <https://jacl.org/2024-jacl-national-convention>





On Sunday, February 25, Robert Shoji virtually showed two of his short films to GLA JACL which were premiered by Visual Communications at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

THE FOURTH MARCH (2022)
SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS (2023)



THE FOURTH MARCH (8 mins.)

Many are familiar with the three civil rights marches (collectively known as the Selma to Montgomery marches) that happened in Alabama in March of 1965. There was however a fourth march with Martin Luther King Jr. and a young 21-year-old Japanese American activist. This fourth march has been forgotten by time.

The Japanese American activist is Kiyoshi Kuromiya, nephew of Yosh Kuromiya, a Nisei member of the Fair Play Committee (FPC). This film brought to light a beating Kiyoshi suffered in Montgomery Alabama during a march where he was supporting Black voter rights in March of 1965. This incident led to the fourth march that included Kiyoshi and Martin Luther King Jr.

Kiyoshi Kuromiya (1943-2000) was an author and civil rights, anti-war, gay liberation, and HIV/AIDS activist. He was born in Wyoming at the Heart Mountain incarceration camp.



SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS (8 mins.)

Grief is something we all experience but rarely discuss openly. During the pandemic many have been examining their lives and deciding what changes need to be made. I hope that by acknowledging and remembering someone important in my life, change happens and more conversations open up about grief.

“See You In My Dreams” is a loving remembrance of Robert’s older brother David, who passed away at a young age.

Louise Sakamoto, VP - Membership

Victory of the Sperl Building Boycott Campaign

SPERL ACCEPTS COMMUNITY DEMANDS; NEXT TENANT WILL BE ANOTHER JAPANESE RESTAURANT – BOYCOTT IS OVER!



On March 17, 2024, Tony Sperl, the landlord of Suehiro Cafe, emailed Little Tokyo Against Gentrification (LTAG) suggesting that he was finally ready to accept community demands that no gentrifying businesses be brought into the former Suehiro Cafe space. His email stated the following:

“No dispensary, strip club, McDonalds or franchise by our Collective or Tony at 337 E. 1st Street or anywhere else in Little Tokyo...”

LTAG immediately replied asking Sperl to confirm that he had accepted our demands, to which Sperl has not responded. However, Sperl has since informed the Little Tokyo Business Association that his next tenant in the Sperl Building will be another Japanese restaurant.

For the last two and a half months, LTAG has picketed in front of the Sperl Building in the aftermath of Sperl’s shameful – and initially illegal – eviction of Suehiro Cafe. The LA Times reported and an independent LTAG investigation confirmed that Sperl had spent years attempting to acquire a marijuana dispensary license for the building, and Suehiro owner Kenji Suzuki revealed that Sperl had previously expressed a desire to make Little Tokyo’s 1st Street into “a new Melrose.” In response, the Little Tokyo community asserted our right to self-determination, threatening to boycott any marijuana dispensary or other gentrifying business brought in to replace Suehiro Cafe. Nearly 1,000 community members signed a pledge to boycott any store that failed to meet our demands, while dozens of volunteers braved wind and rain to picket the Sperl building every Saturday since the eviction.

It should go without saying that no new Japanese restaurant can replace the 50+ years of community-building that Suehiro Cafe represents for Little Tokyo. Nonetheless, Sperl’s agreement to bring in another Japanese restaurant proves that our community has the power to stop landlords and developers from destroying Little Tokyo. At this very moment, Colorado-based developer Continuum Partners is preparing to start a multi-billion dollar development at the Cold Storage building on 4th and Central—a development that currently promises to include a luxury hotel, luxury apartments, and the bare minimum amount of legally required affordable housing. Our community’s victory in this fight proves that we have the power to reject these attempts to gentrify Little Tokyo. We in LTAG are ready to fight Continuum Partners, Sperl, or any other gentrifier who dares to threaten our community.

Little Tokyo Against Gentrification (LTAG) is a united front organization consisting of J-Town Action と Solidarity (JAS), Save Our Seniors Network (SOSN), and the Greater Los Angeles chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (GLA JACL).



ROGER M. YANAGITA

Monument Will Memorialize Thousands of Unlawfully Incarcerated Japanese Americans

The Rafu Shimpo Foundation announced that among its 2024 recipients of its grants from funds raised by its Charity Golf Classic is the World War II Camp Wall (WWII CW) Monument. Other organizations to receive grants this year include, but are not limited to, Kizuna, Lumbini Child Development Center, Nikkei Games: Games for the Generations, Nisei Week Japanese Festival and Rising Stars.

The basic concept for the camp wall monument was the dream of Kanji Sahara, who was eight years old when he and his family were forced to leave their home and their family produce stand and were unlawfully held first at the Santa Anita Racetrack and then in a concentration camp run by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) in Rohwer, Arkansas.

When Sahara retired after working as an engineering supervisor for General Dynamics, he began volunteering at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) as a docent. He also got involved in the Tuna Canyon Detention Station (TCDS) project to memorialize the site where many Issei were incarcerated soon after the war began. That project wanted to turn the site into a Peace Park and Sahara suggested there should be a wall with the names of those unfairly held there.

Sahara's idea grew into the concept of having a group of camp walls with the names of all of the individuals who were unfairly held by the U.S. government. In a 2018 oral history Sahara did with Densho, he said it was important that each of the 10 major WRA camps had its own space somewhere.

"And then I'd also like to see an outdoor monument for the people that were incarcerated in these ten camps," he said in the interview. "So that'd be a huge project, building these outdoor monuments for these people."

In discussions with the TCDS committee, the idea was expanded to include any person who was held in an assembly center or any of the Department of Justice and Immigration and Naturalization Service camps. The ability to have access to a comprehensive list of the thousands of names of those imprisoned was enhanced through the cooperation of Dr. Duncan Williams, director of the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religion and Culture at the University of Southern California. Dr. Williams' Ireizo project compiled the names of over 125,000 persons of Japanese ancestry held by the U.S. government. Those names were collected into a book that is currently at JANM.

The major breakthrough for the WWII CW project was when California State Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) introduced a bill into the state legislature that eventually procured \$5 million in 2021 to build a monument consisting of 12 eight-foot-tall reflective black granite walls with the names of thousands of Japanese Americans inscribed.



Top: Roger M. Yanagita's design of the World War II Camp Wall consists of 12 eight-foot-tall walls to be built in Torrance's Columbia Park. Each wall would represent a different wartime concentration camp with names of each person incarcerated in that camp. Above, Yanagita also designed the Go For Broke monument, dedicated in 1999.

After his bill was signed into law, Muratsuchi stated, "I am pleased to deliver state funding to build this memorial, so that we will never forget the lessons of the World War II Japanese American mass incarceration. This has been a dream for many South Bay residents like Dr. Kanji Sahara of Torrance, who has been doggedly pursuing this memorial project for years. I want to thank Torrance Mayor Pat Furey and the City Council for supporting this project with a proposed site at Columbia Park in North Torrance, home to the largest Japanese American community in the mainland United States."

While securing the major portion of the funding is usually the hardest challenge, the organizers, who formed into the WWII Camp Wall Committee, still had to convince the City of Torrance to provide the site for the monument. The City of Torrance had expressed a willingness to allocate the land, but the told the WWII Camp Wall Committee that it needed to develop the specifications for such a project. The state grant required a municipality to oversee the funds and the construction of the monument.

The WWII Camp Wall Committee, led by Sahara who is now President emeritus, President Nancy Hayata, Vice Presidents Kyoko Nancy Oda and Kristen Tang, Treasurer Kaitlyn Tang and Secretary Marlen Diaz Sanchez, successfully recruited professionals to handle the technical specifications of the monument.

Gregg Maedo of Gregg Maedo + Associates volunteered to create the design of the walls and the layout. Architect Roger

Yanagita developed the site plans, including the specifications and a path for visitors to walk through that was submitted as part of Muratsuchi's bill. Ann Burroughs, President and CEO of the Japanese American National Museum and Bruce Embrey, co-chair of the Manzanar Committee, were brought on as Community Liaisons.

Provided with the necessary requirements, the Torrance City Council in April of 2023 unanimously approved that the World War II Camp Walls monument would be built in Columbia Park, near the intersection of 190th Street and Prairie Avenue. Plans also call for a 25-foot flagpole with nighttime lighting and two paths for educational display panels.

Torrance City Councilman Jonathan Kaji said at the time, "As a Japanese American councilman on the Torrance City Council, I offer my congratulations to Torrance resident Mr. Kanji Sahara, along with the members of the memorial committee. The site at Columbia Park is significant since Japanese families had previously owned and farmed on the property and the City of Torrance is home to a large Japanese American and Japanese expatriate community."

"Kanji Sahara never gave up his dream to honor his parents and community who were incarcerated during World War II," Kyoko Oda told The Rafu Shimpo. "Kanji campaigned for several years to discuss the wall design, location, and meaning to anyone who would listen."

"We're deeply grateful to Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi for his wisdom and strength to make this happen."

Hayata added, "On behalf of the camp wall committee, I'd like to thank everyone that lent support to this project. The wall will be a place for people to see family history, a place of education, and a place for all to learn and spread the word that this must never again happen to any group of people, anywhere at any time ever again."

The City of Torrance began receiving the funds from the state grant in January of this year. It will then solicit the professional services to manage, design and build the memorial. To oversee the project, Torrance Mayor George Chen will name three members to a five-member advisory committee. Hayata was already named as one member by the State Assembly and Priscilla Ouchida, State Senate legislative director and former Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) national director, was picked by the State Senate.

Hayata, upon her appointment, gave credit to Sahara for his vision of the camp wall monument. "It was his concept, his idea, his dream to build the monument," she explained.

For more information or to make a donation to the World War II Camp Walls monument project, go to: <http://www.wwiicampwall.org>.

The WWII Camp Wall: The Journey Through My Eyes

By NANCY TERAMURA HAYATA

Having recently taken on the role of the Board President of the WW II Camp Wall (WWIICW) committee, I wanted to explain why I chose to take the responsibility for what I believe is a vital project for our Japanese American community and our country today.

There was once a time when it was so common to hear the question: "What camp were you in?" within the Japanese American community. This was often followed by a response in which the person would give the camp's name along with the block and barrack number because it was their home during World War II. As I write this, I realize that it's something that I rarely hear anymore as most of the individuals who lived through this unjust experience have passed.

As a child growing up in the San Fernando Valley, my friends were, for the most part, non-Japanese. But for me, my brother and two sisters, Saturdays were cultural days. Unlike our friends from public school, we were sent to Japanese language school on Saturdays. In all honesty, I have never met anyone that says they became fluent in Japanese by attending what we called J-school. But in retrospect, we learned other important cultural traditions and values through this exposure.

To be fair, those of us that did not speak Japanese at home did pick up a few Japanese words and phrases. But we learned so much more by seeing how our parents interacted with other Japanese: the etiquette, respect, obedience, and most of all, the commitment to community. I also chose to learn classical Japanese dance after J-school, something that I continued through my junior year in college.

Eventually my family started attending Buddhist church on Sundays. So, weekends were spent in a Japanese environment, and as I got older, weekdays were spent in a basically white world. I grew up going to schools that were as much as 99% Jewish. Since my father was a kibe (born in the U.S., educated in Japan), it was almost like living in two different worlds, weekdays vs. weekends.

Many of my parents' generation did not speak much about their days in camp during the war. But when we were young, my father took the family to see both Tule Lake, where he was interned and Manzanar, where my mother was interned. And I recall taking my mother to the Manzanar reunion when I was in college. But for the most part, camp life was not a topic that came up much within our family.

Both of my parents lost their fathers in camp. My paternal grandfather was hospitalized in Monterey when the war started. Both of my grandfathers and one of my aunts were exempt from being relocated to camp until such a time that they could be put in a hospital in camp. My auntie tells me how she watched her father die from the lack of good medical doctors. My father was able to leave camp and was being sent to college in Omaha, Nebraska, thanks to a government worker's wife recognizing his intelligence. If the war hadn't ended when it did, he may have obtained a college degree.

I got into UCLA as a math major, not learning until after my father's death that his dream was for me to become a math professor, the profession he was denied. After the war, he had to go to work to support his mother and three sisters. I switched to English as my major, and finally finished with Japanese. Then I went on to fashion design school. That was my dream in life.

I supported myself from my junior year in college and through fashion school doing telephone sales. Over the years, I've held so many random jobs, including running my own telephone sales company, a shuttle/limousine service, book-keeper, graphic and web development and collections manager. I also worked in the A-list celebrity world of fashion. I only mention my diverse work background because I believe that it helped prepare me for the work that I'm doing today with the camp wall project.

Once I started fashion school, I lost contact with the Japanese American community. Following school, I settled in the South Bay, got married, and became a mother. Gardena and Torrance have stores, markets and restaurants to fill one's needs for things Japanese.



Courtesy Nancy Hayata

WWII Camp Wall board members and friends at the Torrance City Council meeting to approve the project: seated—Kanji Sahara. Standing, from left—Roger Yanagita, Marlen Sanchez, Kristen Tang, Nancy Hayata, Kay Oda, Kyoko Oda.

Things changed right around 2015 when Kyoko (Nancy) Oda reentered my life. She had met my mother cleaning toilets back during my J-school days. She asked me if I could print some business cards and stationery for her for the Tuna Canyon Detention Station (TCDS) project. This project seeks to commemorate the site where Issei community leaders were held at the beginning of the war. I asked her if they had a logo. She wondered if they needed one. In response, I designed a logo and printed her business cards. She sent a TCDS board member, Kanji Sahara, to pick them up from me, which changed my life.

My interactions with Kyoko and Kanji led to me becoming a TCDS board member. Kanji lived about a mile from me, so eventually I was driving him to meetings and gatherings that we were both attending. He asked me if I would write essays for the TCDS traveling exhibit. I said yes, and nearly wrote a book on Nikuma and Ted Tanouye.

Around 2019, TCDS proposed building a Peace Park on the land where the Tuna Canyon detention station once stood. At the same time, Kanji suggested that there should be a wall there with the names of the detainees at the TCDS site. This grew into the idea that there should be a wall for each of the camps, and that each wall should list the names of all of the incarcerated. When the dreams for a Peace Park were put on hold, Kanji's vision went full speed ahead on the camp walls concept. Little did I know that I was being groomed for the role that I now hold.

Kanji could no longer drive at night, so if there were an evening event that he wanted to attend, he would invite me along. We would meet several times a week to discuss the camp wall concept, to look at potential venues, and to solicit funding. Kanji would speak wherever he could get on an agenda, and he would talk about the project to anyone that would listen.

After the pandemic hit and without ever speaking a word about it, all work on the camp wall project came to a halt. Then, just as the world started to have hints of getting back to normal, Kanji received an email from California State Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi, asking if he could put together a camp wall project proposal for him by the following week.

OF COURSE THAT WAS POSSIBLE! After the proposal was sent, Assemblyman Muratsuchi introduced a bill for funding for the project in the amount of \$5 million. The dollar amount was beyond our wildest dreams, and the one requirement was that the monument be situated in the city of Torrance, which is part of the assemblyman's district.

Things went into high gear. We needed a crew to get a proposal together for the city. A lot of our support came from our friends and families. I happened to be working at the time on the website for a project in Orange County. I asked my friend, Jesse James, if I might contact the architect and engineer on his project to commemorate the history of Japanese American farmers in Fountain Valley. That is how

Gregg Maedo came to design the WWII Camp Wall monument, and how Sandra Ichihio volunteered to analyze the project and provided us with our first cost estimate.

Kanji had me draft the proposal for the city of Torrance, but when we met with their city planning department, Pat Furey (mayor at that time), and the city council members, we did not have a soils report. Because our cost estimate was not complete, the city of Torrance told us that they needed a completed soils report, detailed drawings of the monument, and a full cost estimate. In response to this and other details, our group decided that we needed to incorporate as a non-profit organization. Again, a community member named Nathan Watanabe filled our technical requirements pro-bono.

The result of all this hard work from so many volunteers was the Torrance City Council unanimously approved the creation of the WW II Camp Walls monument in its Columbia Park. It was a major step forward, but there remain many more tasks to see this to completion. It was at this point that Kanji, who will turn 90 this year, wanted me to become board president. I felt that he should be president since this was his dream, but it was becoming obvious that Kanji's memory was fading. Eventually he became emeritus, and I moved up as president.

I mentioned before that my diverse history of employment undoubtedly prepared me to lead this project. I've had to hurdle many walls and I believe that my varied experiences in social settings and jobs have helped me with this. But while the World War II Camp Wall project has been boosted by the funds from the State of California and the cooperation from the City of Torrance, we still need raise even more funds and gain more public support for this project to be successful.

The main goal of this monument is an important lesson for the world to hear. This monument will have twelve walls. The largest two walls will face the corner of 190th and Prairie in Torrance's Columbia Park. We have tentatively calculated these walls to be 40 feet in width. With walking space between these walls, that will be the width of at least two homes on an average city block. The walls will hold a total of approximately 160,000 names (some individuals and families were held more than one camp). That shows the vast number of people that were unjustly uprooted from their homes and sent to live in remote areas of the United States.

We need to educate the masses on the fact that this happened, and more so that it never happens again. I see myself as a worker bee. One of a huge colony of worker bees that must work in unison towards a huge goal. If we all work together, I have faith that we can accomplish our goal...education.

So why? Why do I take on this challenge at this stage of my life? The project is huge. This is a national monument, and I realize that there is a mountain that I must still climb to succeed in getting national recognition for the monument. The responsibility I feel is enormous.

Thinking back to my childhood and my upbringing, I remember my favorite designer, Sue Wong, stating, "Japan is often described as a 'high context culture,' where a shared culture and non-verbal cues convey more than words." I believe that although it felt as though we did not learn much going to Japanese language school, just being there, and seeing our parents interact at the community center, served to teach us so much in nonverbal actions. They showed us to have pride in the Japanese community center. And they showed us how important working together by volunteering to make the community center a better place is. My father's family is from Shiga, and my grandfather was huge on the teachings of Nakae Toju and the concept of filial piety.

Since Kanji asked me to carry the WWIICW to fruition, I feel that I must honor his trust in me and to do my best to fulfill this wish. I find it a true honor that he would trust me with this task to not only complete his dream, but to ensure the stories of our Issei and Nisei generations are permanently memorialized. If you would to join us in this important project, please go to our website at <http://www.wwiicampwall.org>.