

# THE RICE PAPER



APRIL 2014

A NEWSLETTER OF THE  
TWIN CITIES CHAPTER OF  
THE JAPANESE AMERICAN  
CITIZENS LEAGUE  
WEBSITE:  
[WWW.TWINCITIESJACL.ORG](http://WWW.TWINCITIESJACL.ORG)

## Twin Cities JACL Education Committee Needs YOU!

Leaders from the National JACL have selected the Twin Cities as one of five locations to present a teacher training workshop, "Constitutional Vigilance in Times of Crisis." Several times in our nation's history, political leaders have been faced with balancing constitutional rights with issues of national security. This workshop, planned for spring of 2015, will cover the historical background of the Japanese American incarceration during WWII and connect it to current events with the ongoing lessons of civil liberties, discrimination, and justice. The project is sponsored by the National JACL with funding from the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program. The TC JACL Education Committee is looking for volunteers to help with the planning and implementation of this project. If you are interested in volunteering to help, please contact Carolyn Nayematsu, [nayem001@umn.edu](mailto:nayem001@umn.edu) or (651) 699-7407.

Other recent activities of the Education Committee include participation in the Minnesota Council for the Social Studies and Great Lakes Area 2014 Annual Conference, and fulfilling speaking requests.

On March 2, Sally Sudo and Lucy Kiriara set up a display table at the Sheraton Hotel in Bloomington, and Sally spent the next day with educators providing information and distributing complimentary resource materials, including the Twin Cities JACL curriculum guide on the MIS Language School at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling (CD-ROM), the Densho Civil Liberties Curriculum (CD-ROM), and the National JACL Education curriculum guide on "A Lesson in American History: Japanese American Experience." A grant from the JACL Legacy Fund supported the chapter's participation in the conference. Three teachers requested a speaker on the Japanese American World War II Experience. Participation in the conference was made possible through a grant from the JACL Legacy Fund.



*Sally Sudo staffs the Twin Cities JACL Education Committee display booth at the Minnesota Council for the Social Studies and Great Lakes Regional 2014 Annual Conference, Bloomington, MN, March 3, 2014. The chapter's tri-fold displays on incarceration and the Military Intelligence Service Language School were exhibited. Resources materials were distributed for no charge to interested teachers. Photo credit: Cheryl Hirata-Dulas.*

### NEWSLETTER

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Scholarship Committee holds one seat

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## Education Committee Cont...

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For the first school speaking engagement, Sally gave a 40-minute presentation on March 11 to 10th grade history students at Christ's Household of Faith School in St. Paul. Afterwards, Sally was interviewed by three of those students for their National History Day project. This year's theme is "Rights and Responsibilities in History," and in addition to the interview, the students also used materials from the Twin Cities JACL educational resources collection for their project.

On March 20, Sally participated in the My Mankato "One Book, One Community" program. The book selected this year was "When the Emperor was Divine" by Julie Otsuka, and organizers gave out 500 free copies. Sally's presentation on the Japanese American Experience During World War II was the first of three accompanying events organized by Delta Kappa Gamma, a group of women educators in Mankato.

Over 50 people attended the program, and one participant commented on Facebook: "Outstanding Community Read Program last night! Sally Sudo from the Japanese American Citizens League (and an internee at a camp as a child) gave the audience a vivid picture of life as a Japanese American in the internment camps during WWII."

The two other events in conjunction with the program are: screening of "A Time of Fear," a documentary about the two camps in Arkansas on March 27, 6:30-8 p.m., and a discussion of Otsuka's book, led by retired English teacher, Beth Christensen, on April 3, 7-8 p.m., both to be held at the North Mankato Police Annex Meeting Room at 1001 Belgrade Avenue, North Mankato.

We are in the planning process of bringing to Minnesota an exhibit titled, "Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers Fighting on Two Fronts," curated by Eric Saul, retired from the Military Museum at the Presidio in San Francisco. The photographic exhibition chronicles the history of Japanese American Nisei soldiers from the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) who served during World War II to prove their loyalty to the country of their citizenship, the United States. This exhibit was presented at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, and opened at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii in Honolulu in March 2014.

The Education Committee has done preliminary work, including meeting Eric Saul at Sally Sudo's home in December 2013, and meeting with representatives from the Minnesota Historical Society in March to discuss possible venues for the exhibition, including Fort Snelling Visitors Center and the Minnesota History Center.

**Lastly, the Twin Cities Education Committee is accepting nominations for its inaugural "Power of Truth" Teacher Award, which will recognize a Minnesota educator in grades K-12 (not limited to a classroom teacher) who goes beyond the required Minnesota curriculum standards in teaching about the Japanese American World War II experience. The educator who is selected will be honored with a monetary award and recognition at our chapter's annual banquet in Fall 2014. The deadline is June 15, 2014, and nomination forms can be found at [www.twincitiesjacl.org/education](http://www.twincitiesjacl.org/education).**

Please feel free to contact the Education Committee with questions about any of our projects or programs. Current members are: Sally Sudo (chair), Carolyn Nayematsu (co-chair), Janet Maeda Carlson, Lucy Kirihara, Lil Grothe, Sylvia Farrells, Gloria Kumagai, Matthew Walters, and Cheryl Hirata-Dulas.



*First-hand experiences during World War II were shared by Sally Sudo at the My Mankato "One Book, One Community" program on March 20, 2014. The speaking engagement was the first of three accompanying events around the book, "When the Emperor was Divine" by Julie Otsuka. Photo credit: Lucy Lowery.*

# RICE PAPER

## Festival of Nations

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### Volunteers needed for the Festival of Nations!

We will be having a sales booth as in previous years and will have a special origami instruction area this year too. This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we appreciate all of your help. We are looking for volunteers for the following jobs and times:

#### Volunteer Descriptions

##### Inventory Delivery

Coordinate a truck and driver to pick up inventory from a garage in Minneapolis and deliver it to the booth at the Festival. Setup the cords and lights on the booth.

##### Booth Setup

Unpack and setup the booth displays.

##### Sales People:

Add up purchased items, take cash and make change without a cash register, and restock display tables. Items for sale include decorations, toys, crafts, kitchen items, and other trinkets.

##### Instructors:

Teach kids and adults how to make a simple origami dog or cat, or a medium frog or crane. Instructions and materials for these projects will be provided. This is a great opportunity for younger members to learn teaching and communication skills.

##### Booth Takedown

Pack up remaining inventory. Coordinate a truck and driver to bring inventory back to the garage.

#### Volunteer Schedule

##### Tuesday, April 29

- Afternoon 1 Delivery

##### Wednesday, April 30

- Evening 5 Setup

##### Thursday, May 1

- 8:00-12:00 5 Sales people 4 Instructors
- 12:00-3:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors

##### Friday, May 2

- 9:30-2:00 5 Sales people 4 Instructors
- 2:00-6:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors
- 6:00-10:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors

##### Saturday, May 3

- 10:00-2:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors
- 2:00-6:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors
- 6:00-10:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors

##### Sunday, May 4

- 10:00-2:00 3 Sales people 3 Instructors
- 2:00-6:00 4 Sales people 3 Instructors
- 6:00-8:00 4 Takedown

All volunteers will be given an admission ticket good for the whole day and a parking pass.

If you are interested in volunteering, please let Jenny Olsen know which day, timeslot, and job you're interested in.

[jenny.monchichi@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.monchichi@gmail.com)

612-280-3571.

# RICE PAPER

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## Festival of Nations Future Chair

We are looking for someone interested in learning the ropes of coordinating the Festival of Nations Bazaar and Demonstration booths. This person will work with Jenny Olsen this year and take over next year. Activities of the Chair include:

### Bazaar Booth:

- Representing JACL at the festival coordination meetings (2 per year)
- Picking out new items and ordering inventory
- Recruiting volunteers to price items before the festival, to sell items at the booth during the festival, and to count inventory after the festival
- Preparing paperwork, inventory sheets, price tags, signs, etc.

### Demonstration Booth:

- Recruiting volunteers to train others and make inventory to sell, to sell items at the booth during the festival, and to teach visitors origami during the festival
- Buying supplies
- Organizing training and inventory making workshops

If you are interested in learning more about the position, please contact Jenny Olsen 612-280-3571 or [jenny.monchichi@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.monchichi@gmail.com).

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## Obituary

### Yutaka “Toke” Semba

Yutaka Semba, member of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team and officer in the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, died on January 24, 2014, from heart failure, in Tacoma, Washington. He was 95.

Born June 2, 1918, in Tacoma, Washington, to a Japanese-American family, Semba attended Lincoln High School in Tacoma. In January 1942, while an undergraduate at the University of Washington, he was drafted into the army and trained in Arkansas. After a year in Ft. Leavenworth, Semba volunteered for the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, the all Japanese-American regiment. During the war, the other members of his family except his father were sent to the Tule Lake relocation camp under Executive Order 9066. His father, Thomas H. Semba, was a prominent leader in Tacoma’s Japanese-American community. On the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, his father was seized by the FBI and sent to a detention camp in Missoula, Montana. Semba did not see his father again until his release from a second detention camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1945. While serving in the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Battalions 2 and 3 were sent to fight in Italy; Semba stayed in the U.S. with Battalion 1 to train other Nisei volunteers. As Battalion 1 was preparing to go overseas, the war ended. Semba was sent to serve as First Sergeant at the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Fort Snelling, Minnesota in July 1945.

After discharge from the army in July 1946, Semba finished his education at the University of Minnesota and graduated with a business degree. He became an Internal Revenue Agent Conferee for the Treasury Department in St. Paul, Minnesota, and retired in 1975. In 1943, Semba married Mitsuko Nakao, who died in 1987. He remarried in 1991, to Ruth Sanmonji, who died in 2004. He is survived by his sister, Mayme Nishimura; nephews, Robert, Richard, Charles, and Mark Nishimura; nieces Laura, Jan Buday and Mary Sugimoto.

# Reflection on the 2014 JACL/OCA DC Leadership Summit

Matthew Walters



My greatest fear in life is small talk. Laughing at the right times, maintaining proper eye contact, sipping a beverage, and staying aware of what is happening elsewhere in the room are just a few of the many activities I find nightmarish to juggle.

Thankfully, two hours of intense juggling at the Saturday evening welcome reception paid off, and I became acquainted with a few other summit participants, including Steve (a hapa from LA), Robert (a shin-nisei with a PhD from MIT), my roommate Leonard (an Chinese American from Honolulu). It was my honor to attend this year's DC Leadership Summit, co-organized by JACL and OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates and held March 8--11, 2014 in Washington DC.

Stuart Ishimaru, recently appointed head of the Office of Minority and Women Inclusion, spoke at the reception. He commented most memorably about how much DC has changed since he first came for law school many years ago. For example, the only place to get Asian food in DC those days was a tiny Chinese restaurant that greeted you with a bread basket and marinara sauce. Ishimaru reflected thoughtfully on his long career and the importance of increasing Asian American representation in politics.

Later that evening, I also had the pleasure of meeting two Hmong Americans from Minnesota, Kham and Liz. Coincidentally, Liz and I actually met last year. She was working in Senator Amy Klobuchar's office when I visited with a group advocating for immigration reform during the JACL National Convention.

The next morning, we were up bright and early for breakfast at the National Education Association, where most of the workshops would be held over the next few of days. The first activity was led by Tom Hayashi, executive director of OCA, and proved to be the most astounding society simulation activity I have ever taken part in. Without going into too much detail, I would describe it as a carefully designed game that, despite everyone's individual efforts, gradually separates participants into classes. For all but the highest class, winning becomes more or less impossible as the rounds progress, creating disappointment and even desperation in lower class participants.

The post-reflection activity focused on the futile aspects of class and mobility. I also took away some of my own points as well that I would add if I ever decided to facilitate a similar activity myself. In particular, many individuals were forced to make difficult decisions that pitted their own advancement against the advancement of others in their class. I would have liked to see a greater discussion about this phenomenon and its significance to civil rights movements, as I think being prepared to recognize and weigh individual and group interests is a critical skill of leaders.

That afternoon, Bree Romero from the Leadership Conference Education Fund and Terry Ao Minnis from Asian Americans Advancing Justice prepared us to advocate for immigration reform and the Voting Rights Amendment Act during our Tuesday visits to congresspeople. The Voting Rights Amendment Act (VRAA) is designed to replace the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that was struck down by the Supreme Court last year. The purpose of both acts is to require certain districts with a history of racial discrimination to clear any voting procedure changes with the federal government prior to implementation. It was struck down because the formula used to determine which districts were subjected to this preclearance requirement was considered deprecated.

One of the major dangers of failing to pass the VRAA is vote dilution. This happens when a district composed of blocks, in which one representative is elected per block, changes to an "at-large" district, in which the same number of representatives are elected by the entire district. This effectively allows 50 percent of the district to control all of the elected representatives. The problem comes in when some of the blocks tend to vote differently from the rest. For example, a predominantly Latino block in an otherwise white district can no longer elect a Latino representative because their vote has been diluted by transition to the at-large system.

Later that afternoon, we attended a social media training workshop led by Vincent Paolo Villano from the National Center for Transgender Equality. He is also co-founder of The Brain Trust, a digital strategy start-up. This was an exceptionally engaging and informative presentation from someone who is both an expert on social media campaigns and an outstanding presenter. Vincent's talent lies in his ability to simplify the sometimes bewildering online world using common sense procedures and guidelines. His presentation was so inspiring, I have kept all of my notes in hopes of launching an online TCJACL campaign to reach younger audiences.

After this, we formed advocacy groups to plan out our conversations for Tuesday morning congressional visits. Our all-hapa group included Steve (from LA) and Emi (a shin-nisei from DC). We planned to use a recent case of a Los Angeles court that applied the VRA to challenge at-large voting policies of a district. Nearly half of the constituents in this particular district were Latino, but the at-large structure diluted their vote, resulting in just a single Latino council member being elected in the past 50 years.

## LEADERSHIP SUMMIT Cont...

Finally, it was time to relax at karaoke in Chinatown. I decided not to subject colleagues to the terror of my own singing, but really enjoyed listening to so many fantastic voices. In particular, Ken, a lawyer from San Francisco, and I connected over our 90s musical tastes. Nia, a Samoan American and charter school co-founder, left everyone speechless with her rendition of Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You."

The next morning, we attended a briefing by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI). Speakers discussed immigration reform, the Affordable Care Act, and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI, "ann-ah-pea-see"). The last was of particular interest to me given my work in education. It is a new designation that allows institutions of higher education providing inclusive programming to access federal funds, not to mention one of the longest acronyms I have ever encountered. During the breakout session, I asked the AANAPISI speaker how institutions receiving federal monies were to be evaluated on their use of the grants. The program is just starting up, so he could not offer a clear answer. Given my familiarity with the politics of higher education at the University of Minnesota, these kinds of grants often fall into the hands of administrators unqualified to leverage the funds appropriately, so it will be interesting to see how WHIAAPI intends to ensure these federal monies result in effective interventions.

That afternoon, we attended a variety of workshops and panel discussions on advocacy and immigration reform. These discussions provided additional insights into the lives of immigration lawyers, policy advocates, and administrative aides.

Among these workshops was a presentation from State Farm, a major sponsor of the Leadership Summit and of JAFL for many years. I never imagined I would be impressed by an insurance company, but they have a long history of admirable measures to improve the health of communities. Evannah Johnson, an eloquent speaker, shared information about several substantial grant programs targeting youth and non-profit organizations.

Before dinner, we visited the National Memorial to Japanese American Patriotism. I wrote about visiting this memorial during the National Convention last year in a previous issue of Rice paper. It combines historical elements of the Internment/Incarceration, 442nd Infantry Regiment, and Redress, and is centered around a beautiful sculpture depicting two cranes entangled in barbed wire. Unfortunately, I was disappointed in the docents, who seemed a bit unprepared for our visit. Having knowledgeable docents is important not only for the younger generations of Japanese Americans in attendance at the summit, but the diverse AAPI group from OCA, many of whom come with limited knowledge of the Internment.

That evening, we were honored by the presence of Chris Lu, deputy secretary of Labor. He is among the highest ranking AAPIs in the country and former classmate of President Obama at Harvard Law School. A surprisingly personable and engaging speaker, he stressed the significance of having chosen public service over private practice. He also spoke highly of the President as a classmate, reminiscing that even back then Obama commanded an awe-inspiring respect when he spoke up in class.

The next morning, Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa and Congressman Mark Tanaka spoke to our group at the Cannon House Office Building. Both were unsurprisingly excellent speakers. Tanaka's told a particularly impactful story about visiting Seattle years ago to find the location of the property his issei grandparents purchased with their life savings (and then placed in the name of their nisei children because isseis could not own land). The internment began, and they subsequently lost the land because they were unable to make the required payments while incarcerated. After reviewing historical maps and other information, Tanaka was shocked to realize that the property was directly adjacent to the ritzy hotel he was staying at in downtown Seattle. His story left us in awe at the sheer quantity of wealth taken from his family as a result of the internment.

We then proceeded to get into our advocacy groups and visit our assigned congressperson. We were sent to meet with the legislative aide of Karen Bass (Los Angeles, D-37). I was not particularly happy with the way the meeting went. I was shocked when, instead of inviting us into an office (as did the two aides we met with during the National Convention), she pulled a chair right up to our couch in the waiting room. This not only resulted in her towering intimidatingly over us, but also in relaying the message that this was to be a quick and unimportant meeting. Steve did his best as a constituent to convey our message that passing the VRAA will require a bipartisan effort, but she did not seem to understand this and appeared to perceive our visit as more of an annoyance to her office than anything else. One explanation is that Bass seems recently to be putting more of her energy toward her role on the foreign affairs committee than her role on the judiciary committee (where the VRAA is currently being pushed).

## LEADERSHIP SUMMIT Cont...

After our Hill visits, we returned to the National Education Administration and wrapped up the summit. We were each asked to reflect briefly on our time in DC. I said that the summit really made me feel that JACL and OCA complemented each other in many ways and that I would like to see greater collaboration between the two organizations. There was not quite enough time elaboration, but I had two major reasons for thinking this.

The first reason concerns the membership body. JACL has a strong civil rights legacy due in part to the lasting impression of the internment, but is suffering organizationally from an aging and declining membership. While OCA is also suffering from membership aging and decline, it a relatively newer organization with a more inclusive Asian American focus. (For example, although OCA originally stood for Organization of Chinese Americans, it recently rebranded itself as OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates.) Moreover, OCA membership is largely Chinese American, which is a growing demographic in the United States, thanks to an influx of Chinese students seeking education and employment in the US. This dynamic membership body is furthermore better supported by substantially larger portions of membership dues going directly to the individual chapters. This is in sharp contrast to the vast financial disparities created by JACL National membership policies.

On the other hand, I also believe there is a lot OCA can learn from the civil rights legacy of JACL. For example, I was disappointed by a recent press release from OCA National regarding California Senate Constitutional Amendment No. 5. OCA avoided taking a position on this amendment that would permit the reintroduction of affirmative action into California public schools and universities, and instead attacked the bill's introducer, Senator Edward Hernandez, on the grounds that Asian American communities were not sufficiently consulted. Although JACL has unfortunately failed (as of March 22, 2014) to take a position on this particular issue as well, the National organization has in the past taken bold positions on controversial issues, sometimes to the disappointment of its own membership. For example, pursuing redress itself was a highly controversial decision. I feel the National leadership bodies of both organizations need to remain committed to taking bold, ethical stances on issues, even if such stances may warrant careful explanations to apprehensive membership bodies.



Being selected for the JACL/OCA DC Leadership Summit was truly an honor. Despite the frequent necessity of small talk, I found the summit a rich and valuable experience. I highly recommend it to others on account of the wonderful people who attend, exposure to the dynamic activities of social justice organizations in DC, and thought-provoking workshops. I would like to sincerely thank JACL and OCA for giving me this opportunity.

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