

THE RICE PAPER

A newsletter of the Twin Cities Chapter
of the Japanese American Citizens League
e-mail info@tcjacl.org

website: www.tcjacl.org | @TwinCitiesJACL
April 2021

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Wow. What a year 2021 has turned out to be. I think many of us were hoping for a much-needed reprieve from 2020, but I don't think we've seen it yet. Yes, things are different. A lot of things, like the availability of COVID-19 vaccination, have greatly improved. A lot of other things, like the escalation in violence against our Asian elders, have unfortunately gotten much worse.

And yet, we persevere! The legacy of Japanese Americans is one of facing adversity and thriving in spite of it, a legacy of "gambaru" and "go for broke" that never gives up. The Executive Board and I are committed to continuing the fight on behalf of our community. For an illustration of this commitment, I direct you to the article written by JACL member Cheryl Dulas on our response to the City Council of Ramsey, MN and their hijacking of the WWII Japanese American incarceration experience for their political agenda (see pages 6-11).

I would also like to reflect on the recent police killing of Brooklyn Center resident Daunte Wright. It has been less than a year since Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd, and the Twin Cities community is reliving all of that trauma again. After George Floyd was murdered, it felt like everything was finally going to change. People around the world took to the streets demanding justice. Americans everywhere began having serious conversations about systemic racism and police reform with their families, in their communities, at their places of worship, and even at their places of work. Yet, what we've seen in the past weeks illustrates just how little has changed since George Floyd and how far we still have to go. Yes, Derek Chauvin has been convicted for murder, but this is not justice. His conviction is accountability. We still need to do the work to make sure this can never happen again, and watching what happened to Daunte Wright reminded us that we're still not even close.

In keeping with the JACL's mission statement, we have a duty to "secure and maintain the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry." I take this duty extremely seriously. The struggle for equality and justice is not a new one nor is it one that will ever end. That is why we must remain united as a community and continue to support one another however we can against the common enemy of white supremacy. I am extremely grateful for all of the advice, assistance, and inspiration that I have received from my fellow Twin Cities JACL members. I am also energized by the 18 members of our new Social Justice Committee. We'd love for you to join us!

The chapter has also taken additional actions that could not all fit into this newsletter including:

- building solidarity with other minority communities in the Twin Cities
- speaking out against anti-Asian hate and violence
- supporting H.R. 40 for Black Reparations
- protecting the Japanese and Japanese American seniors living at Sakura Gardens Intermediate Care Facility in Los Angeles who are in immediate danger of being evicted
- supporting a moratorium on police use of facial recognition software in Minneapolis
- supporting the proposed charter amendment to restructure the Minneapolis Police Department

As the global pandemic finally shows signs of beginning to wind down (at least in the US), we are looking forward to the day when we can once again gather in person. If all goes well, it may be in time for Obon at Como Park! In resuming our regular in-person activities, we're going to need a **Webmaster!** If you are interested in getting involved with our activities, whether they be in Scholarships, Education, Events Planning, or Social Justice, please feel free to reach out to us!

ありがとうございました。

Thank you.

In solidarity,



Vinicius Taguchi

Twin Cities Chapter President

Midwest District First Vice Governor (elected at MDC April meeting)

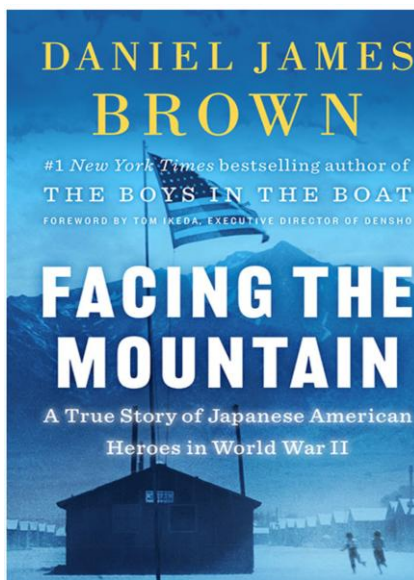
Upcoming Events

Tuesday, May 4 – Augsburg College Professor Andrew Aoki will present a workshop on redress.

Saturday, May 8, 4:00 p.m. – Book Club

The book, Adrift at Sea, will be discussed in a virtual meeting. Contact Elaine Koyama if interested.

Tuesday, May 11, 7:00 p.m. CDT



You are invited to a
Virtual Book Launch

Facing the Mountain:

A True Story of Japanese
American Heroes in World
War II

With Daniel James Brown, author
and Tom Ikeda, Executive
Director of Densho

Tuesday, May 11, 7-8 p.m. CDT
Free (pre-registration required)

RSVP:

<https://densho.org/mountain/>

Facing the Mountain is an “unforgettable chronicle of war-time America and the battlefields of Europe. It portrays the journey of four Japanese American families and their sons.” The book grew out of conversations between Brown and Ikeda in 2015.

Brown, a NY Times best-selling author, has also written, The Boys in the Boat.

For additional information, visit Daniel James Brown’s website.

**Invitation to a Virtual discussion on the Intergenerational Trauma of Japanese Americans –
Wednesday, May 12 – 8:00 p.m. CDT**

The event is free to the public. RSVP to sandiegojacl@gmail.com by May 11 for the link.

The poster features a dark background with a faint, stylized image of a person's face. The text is white and yellow. At the top, it says "the San Diego JACL invites you to a virtual discussion on the Intergenerational Trauma of Japanese Americans". Below that, the date and time are listed: "Wednesday, May 12, 2021" and "6:00 pm - 7:30 pm Pacific". Two speakers are featured with their photos and titles: Dr. Debra Kawahara, Assoc Dean of Academic Affairs at California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University, San Diego; and Dr. Donna Nagata, Professor of Psychology, Clinical Science Chair, Dept. of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A moderator, Gabby Masuda Ambata, is also listed with her photo. The bottom of the poster includes the text "Please join us via Zoom for a panel discussion on the intergenerational impact and trauma of the Japanese American incarceration during WWII" and "free to the public" and "rsvp to sandiegojacl@gmail.com by may 11 for link". There is also a small logo for the Japanese American Citizens League.

the San Diego JACL invites you to a virtual discussion on the
Intergenerational Trauma of Japanese Americans

Wednesday, May 12, 2021
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm Pacific

Dr. Debra Kawahara
Assoc Dean of Academic Affairs
California School of
Professional Psychology
Alliant International University, San Diego

Dr. Donna Nagata
Professor of Psychology
Clinical Science Chair
Dept. of Psychology
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Please join us via Zoom for a panel discussion on
the intergenerational impact and trauma of the
Japanese American incarceration during WWII

Moderator
Gabby Masuda Ambata

free to the public
rsvp to sandiegojacl@gmail.com by may 11 for link

Monday, May 17, 8 p.m. – Twin Cities Public Television presenting “Armed with Language”

June – Go for Broke will conduct a workshop on the 442nd/100th battalion.

July 15-18 JACL National Convention online

2021 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage – July 22-24, 2021

Besides announcing the July Pilgrimage, the Heart Mountain Foundation is launching the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain. The Institute will “serve as a place for organizations, researchers, thought leaders, and civic groups to come together to solve problems, to resolve differences, to find common ground, and to use the lessons of history to show that people with differing viewpoints can work together to create a better America and shine the light of hope for generations to come.” The Heart Mountain Interpretive Center is located at 1539 Road 19, Powell, WY 82435; phone 307-754-8000; website www.heartmountain.org; on Facebook and Twitter.

Obon Festival/Summer Picnic – Sunday, August 15

Two of our favorite summer activities are being combined! We hope you can attend. Watch for details.

Save the Date – Saturday, November 13 – Sukiyaki Lunch!

The Chrysanthemum Banquet Committee has decided on a different format for our traditional get-together. In preparation for the chapter’s 75th anniversary next year, we are planning on a sukiyaki lunch, based on Kimi Hara’s original recipe. However, events such as this one requires a lot of volunteers, on Friday, November 12, for food preparation and set up, and on Saturday, November 13, for cooking, serving, and clean up. We hope to have some entertainment as well. Look for updates and details in the coming months. Submitted by the Committee – Amy Dickerson, Sylvia Farrells, Gloria Kumagai, Carolyn Nayematsu, and Phil Nomura

It's Been a Busy Year So Far

The Twin Cities JACL has had a busy four months since the new year began, and because of COVID, virtual meetings are still the norm. Highlights of the last four monthly board meetings are:

January 19, 2021

- The Twin Cities chapter now has a post office box, located in downtown Minneapolis at the Main Post Office. You now have a place to send mail! Address is Twin Cities JACL, P.O. Box 582665, Minneapolis, MN 55458.
- Vini Taguchi, president, has created an Instagram account for us (twincitiesjacl) and linked it to the Facebook Page (TwinCitiesJACL).
- Education: Chair Carolyn Nayematsu reported on the 2nd workshop held for the 25 registered participants of “The Next Generations: A New Telling of the Japanese American WWII Experience”. The training involved the use of Densho’s website to research family and Japanese American history.
- Youth Committee Chair Kendal Takeshita is also the National Youth/Student Council Midwest District Conference Youth Representative. Discussions with youth from all over the country have centered on thoughts about climate change, the quarantine and social anxiety. Its opinion pieces will appear in The Pacific Citizen. Two summits have been held on Racial Justice and Get Out the Vote. Kendal was interviewed about identity on a “Yonsei Podcast.”

February 16, 2021

- Education: Participant Sally Sudo showed the slide presentation she has used in the past. It is hoped that the other participants will use her slides as templates for their own presentations.; Karen Tanaka Lucas also discussed how she used Sally’s slides in her presentations. Kimmy Tanaka showed how to use the Google form of power point. Phillip Ozaki from the JACL National Education Committee was in attendance

Vini asked the board to brainstorm how the chapter can increase our capacity – suggestions included better use of resources, stipends, and rewards.

March 16, 2021

- Education: John Matsunaga’s recent talk was a powerpoint presentation of events leading up to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII. The March 22 workshop will feature Kimmy Tanaka who will show her video on the Military Intelligence School and Peggy Doi will present her powerpoint program about her dad, Bill Doi.
- Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) is working on a documentary feature, “Speaking the Enemy’s Language” (the working title) with members of our local chapter members giving feedback.
- Treasurer Elaine Koyama has doing research on Fort Lincoln which housed German, Italian, and Japanese enemy aliens and prisoners of war. Her research includes how farming affected the camps and the relationship between incarcerated and the local Japanese American prewar settlers.
- Membership: It was recommended that the chapter follow up with past scholarship recipients to encourage JACL involvement.
- Social Justice: The committee met on March 15 and formed a Tsuru for Solidarity subcommittee. Kent Mori is spearheading a group for street protest action. Another subcommittee will help draft letters.
- Obon: The Festival will be held on August 15.
- National Board meeting is on March 20 with attendance open to those interested. Registration required.
- MDC meeting was on April 10.
- The Chrysanthemum Banquet committee has met to consider a different format for November 2021.

April 20, 2021

- Finance Committee announced that the chapter's investments have been reallocated so that 80% is now in stocks and bond with 20% cash versus 46% in stocks and bonds with 54% in cash. Without the Festival of Nations as the major fundraiser, new and different avenues for funds are needed.
- Social Justice: Membership is at 18. On behalf of the TCHACL, Haruka Yukioka spoke at the March 28 Capitol Vigil and Megan Boyle spoke at the Black and Asian Solidarity Rally on April 18. In addition, a statement regarding the Daunte Wright killing was released by our chapter.
- Email Blast participants stands at 491. Insta gram has 217 followers. Facebook has 297 likes.
- U.S. House Resolution 40, to establish a commission to study Black reparations, will be brought to a full House vote 30 years after being first introduced.
- The Summer Picnic will be combined with the Obon Festival on August 15.
- Education: Seven workshops have been held so far. Gloria Kumagai's presentation showcased her father and his involvement in the 442nd Regiment/100th Battalion in WWII. A reminder that all workshops have been recorded and are available for viewing. Contact Carolyn Nayematsu at nayem001@umn.edu.

January 23, 2021 Visioning Session

The following stances were passed by the YCJACL Board during the January Visioning Session. The wording was finalized during the monthly February Board meeting;

Homelessness and poverty should be addressed, resolved, and decriminalized.

- There should be no death penalty. The death penalty in Minnesota should remain abolished.
- We support restorative justice and oppose the use of arbitrarily criminalized acts/substances to repress minority communities
- We oppose migrants and refugees living in the constant fear of deportation, particularly those who fled dangerous circumstances in their home countries.
- Community safety should include a combination of police and alternative public and community services.

Other topics under consideration include: housing affordability, community displacement, drug decriminalization, sex work decriminalization, prison reform, solidarity with other Asian American communities, and segregation.

Other Events/Information of Interest

MnDOT announces winners of “Name a Snowplow” contest: The contest was described in the January issue of the Rice Paper. Here are the results. More than 122,000 cast votes for the 8 winners which are Plowy McPlowFace (Metro District), Duck Duck Orange Truck (District 1), Plow Bunyan (District 2), Darth Blader (District 3), Ope, Just Gonna Plow Right Past Ya (District 4), Snowbi Wan Kenobi (District 6), F. Salt Fitzgerald (District 7), and The Truck Formerly Known As Plow (District 8).

“Our League of Dreams” – Documentary of the 90-Year History of JACL: JACL National and film producer Lane Nishikawa have agreed to work together to produce the first educational documentary film

about JACL's history. The project received a \$25,000 Japanese American Community Foundation Grant Award with the assistance of the San Diego Chapter.

The plan is to film interviews in 17 cities. The grant award will cover only the costs of shooting in the first five cities, so your individual donation or chapter donation is needed. A GoFundMe account has been set up.

Young Professionals Caucus (YPC) Organizes: This affinity group for self-identifying young professionals that plans to provide a "space for sharing experiences, building and deepening relationships, and collective growth through monthly virtual community spaces, innovative inter-chapter programming, and open forums for uplifting advocacy, resources, and encouraging direct action and dialogue.

A survey collected information so as to compile an internal contact list for members, present and future. The information will help with developing future programming.

JACL Anti-Hate and Hate Crime Resources: Go the website at jacl.org. Click "Policy" at the top. Scroll down to "Resources".

Anti-Asian Racism is Alive and Well – submitted by Gloria Kumagai

Over the past year, the number of anti-Asian racist attacks has increased and become more violent. From comments, such as "Go back to China" to brutal attacks on Asian Americans, especially elderly women, to the killing of 6 Asian women in Atlanta. Those attacks have left us with feelings of anger, grief, and helplessness. In Minnesota, we have not been immune to this anti-Asian racism as local Asian Americans have endured racist comments, being spit on, and shoved.

Asian Americans continue to be strangers in this country. Again, we heard Asian Americans sharing their stories of growing up in the 1980s and 90s being taunted for how they looked and constantly asked, "Where did you come from?" and "Where did you learn to speak English?" The very same experiences that many of us had as children during the 1950s and are still having as adults.

The escalating violence against us is inexcusable. The killing of 6 Asian women in Atlanta is not considered a hate crime – suspect has a sex addiction and was having a bad day! One of the latest brutal attacks on an elderly Asian woman occurred where there were bystanders who did not attempt to come to her aid. What does this say about the value of our lives? Not being able to feel safe outside of one's home in one's own country is a heavy burden.

After the Atlanta killings, Mary Oishi, Albuquerque Poet Laureate, posted her poem, "The model minority had a few bad days" on YouTube" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6I2H1ny1_NE. What is so sad is that our few bad days began in the 1880s and have continued to this day. That is a lot of bad days and trauma for us. The national report regarding Asian American/Pacific Islander hate crimes has been compiled by Stop AAPI Hate, stopapihate.org. The website has information on how to report a hate crime and how to safely intervene. Information and resources are also posted on national JACL's website, <https://jacl.org/antihate-program>.

Now that anti-Asian racism is being recognized on the national level, there have been some actions implemented. President Biden met with Asian American leaders in Georgia. He has announced actions to respond to anti-Asian violence, xenophobia, and bias:

- Reinstating and reinvigorating the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, with initial focus on anti-Asian bias and violence - Erika L. Moritsugu will serve as deputy assistant to the president and liaison to the A.A.P.I. community,
- Funding for AAPI survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault

- Establishing a COVID-19 Equity Task Force committee on addressing and ending xenophobia against Asian Americans
- Establishment of a Department of Justice cross-agency initiative to address anti-Asian violence
- Launching a new virtual bookshelf of federally-funded projects that explore and celebrate Asian Americans' contributions to the United States
- Funding critical research to prevent and address bias and xenophobia against Asian American communities

President Biden also met with Asian American lawmakers on April 16.

On April 14, the U.S. Senate advanced an Anti-Asian hate crimes bill on a vote of 92-6.

In Minnesota, the Combating-Hate bill (HF 1691/SF 2003) is being debated at the legislature.

Besides these efforts, there are actionable steps you can take:

- Join our chapter's local social justice committee – contact Vini Taguchi, taguc006@umn.edu
- Connect with Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) - <https://caalmn.org/take-action/> – webinars are offered on Asian American social justice issues
- Check in with your family members and friends to offer support during this challenging time.
- Find Asian American/Pacific Islander organizations and fundraisers to support at gofundme.com/aapi
- Support hate crimes legislature.

With these national, state, and personal efforts, will there finally be justice for Asian Americans or will it continue to be just us?

After the Atlanta killings, Mary Oishi, Albuquerque Poet Laureate, posted her poem, “The model minority had a few bad days” on You Tube. If you haven't viewed it, you should.

A Big Thank You to the Recent Donors of the TCJACL Educational Committee – submitted by Karen Tanaka Lucas

While COVID19 has shut down parts of our lives, many activities of the TCJACL have continued and adapted despite the lock downs. TCJACL has had to cancel picnics, banquets, and festivals but meetings over Zoom have flourished and opportunities have expanded to include participants from coast to coast.

The Education Committee has produced 7 workshops as part of the “Next Generations: A New Telling of the WWII Japanese American Experience” in order to train and expand our pool of speakers and show contemporary relevance of our experiences. We have continued to represent the JACL on the Exhibits Advisory Committee to the Minnesota Historical Society and Historic Fort Snelling in order to further the story around the contributions of the Military Intelligence Service and Nisei veterans. We are also participating in this story through the new upcoming documentary “Armed With Language” to be featured on Twin Cities Public Television on May 17. We helped to present this year's Day of Remembrance featuring Frank Abe and his video “Conscience and the Constitution.”

The Education committee of the TCJACL would like to take this opportunity and begin using the Rice Paper to acknowledge our most recent donors. Over the years we have been fortunate to have had the support of many individuals who have directly enabled the exhibits, panels, publications, film showings and talks you may have had a chance to participate in.

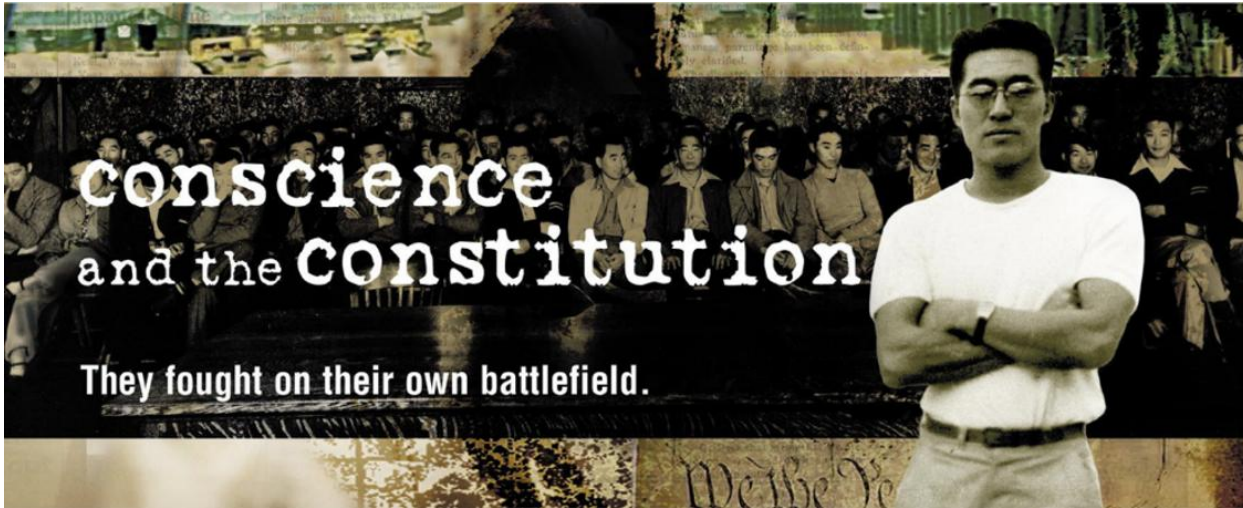
We would like to express our appreciation for the recent generosity shown towards the Educational Programming of the TCJACL to: Les and Karen Suzukamo, Anne and James Widtfeldt in memory of Mikio Kiriara, Cheryl Hirata Dulas and Dan Dulas in memory of Peter Matsumoto, and The Japanese American Citizens League Legacy Fund.

Recapping Recent Local Events

Letter to U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler – February 15

From the Executive Board conveying strong support of House Resolution 40, documenting the “legacy of enslavement and exploring forms of remedy, restitution, rehabilitation, and other forms of repair” due to human rights violations experienced by Black Americans.

Day of Remembrance – Sunday, February 21



On February 21, 2021, the Twin Cities JACL commemorated the 79th anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066 with a Day of Remembrance virtual webinar featuring the film, “Conscience and the Constitution.”

The hour-long, award-winning PBS documentary tells the story of the draft resistance movement at Heart Mountain during World War II, which was the largest organized resistance to incarceration. A panel discussion followed the screening..

Frank Abe, the film’s writer, producer and director, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and spent his teen years in California. He graduated with a degree in theater directing from the University of California, Santa Cruz. In addition to the documentary film, Abe is co-editor of “John Okada: The Life and Rediscovered Work of the Author of No-No Boy” (University of Washington Press), and co-author with Tamiko Nimura of an upcoming graphic novel on camp resistance entitled, “We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration” (Wing Luke Museum & Chin Music Press). According to an interview in 2019 by Bruce Ruttledge of the *North American Post*, Abe is also working on an anthology of Japanese American incarceration literature to be published by Penguin later this year.

TCJACL President Vinicius Taguchi moderated a lively and informative post-screening panel discussion that included the film creator Frank Abe, Council on American-Islamic Relations – Minnesota (CAIR-MN) Executive Director Jaylani Hussein who participated from Somalia, University of Minnesota student and TCJACL member Haruka Yukioka, and University of Minnesota student Ismahan Ali.

A recording of the panel discussion can be viewed on the East Side Freedom Library YouTube account at <https://youtu.be/M6q6tM66gfgg>. The event video has been viewed more than 1800 times across Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube.

Co-sponsors and collaborators with the Twin Cities JACL were the East Side Freedom Library, CAIR-MN, and the Asian-American Student Union (ASU) and Al-Madinah Cultural Center (AMCC) at the University of Minnesota. The program was funded by the Karen and Les Suzukamo Fund of the Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation.

The overall program rating was “very successful” according to the post-program evaluation by registered participants.

Comments included:

-I loved hearing viewpoints from the different age perspectives.

-Enhanced video

-Excellent job!

-I found the panel conversation after the film very powerful. I am so grateful for that added part.

-At first I was concerned that we wouldn't have an opportunity to hear much from the students, but I was happy to see when time was made to hear from them as well. It was a very interesting program...liked it a lot. We've been to several Day of Remembrance events, and we were talking about how we learned a lot we didn't know at this one.

-Just curious, are there some in the film or their offspring here in MN?

-Not sure if there's anything you guys can change on your end, but the closed captioning on the video was lagging behind.

-Even though the discussion lasted for over an hour, the time flew by quickly.

-Thank you for this event. It's so difficult to be in spaces where some community members treat resisters as threats/pariahs--and those who want to know more and to support resisters as dangerous radicals. I think JACL could do more in the healing (there are still events that give too much over to veterans who don't want to acknowledge resistance as a significant part of our history and resisters as important members of our community). This program was important for community healing, especially in the current moment. It was great to see the conversation with Jaylani Hussein and Ismahan Ali. Haruka Yukioka was great. Thank you so much to Frank Abe for the film.

-It was done so well.

-I'm really glad that people from CAIR joined in across time zones and continents.

The responses included suggestions for content of future programs.

Support of CAAL (Coalition of Asian American Leaders) Legislative Priority on Post-Conviction Relief (PCR) bill – February 22

TCJACL added its name to support a new bill that would allow those facing deportation due to prior convictions to have a judge review whether there were any defects in the conviction.

Invitation to Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice (AMAJ) Community Conversation – March 11 and Sign-On to Letter in Support of Georgia Asian American Community – March 17

The purpose of the meeting on the 11th would be for Asian Minnesotans to discuss and reflect upon the increase in attacks and violence directed towards Asian Americans in the United States. The tragedy in Georgia with six Asian women killed prompted a letter calling for allies of AMAJ to stand with them in grief and solidarity against systemic racism and gender-based violence.

Congressional Hearing on Discrimination and Violence against Asian Americans – March 18

The U.S. House Judiciary Committee (Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties) held hearings on Discrimination and Violence against Asian Americans. The first panel included Congresswomen Doris Matsui, Judy Chu, and Grace Meng, as well as Senator Tammy Duckworth. Regents Professor of History and Asian American Studies at the University of Minnesota Erica Lee was

on the second panel. The hearings were live on the committee website. Professor Lee believes that this is only the second time in our history that Congress has held hearings on the subject. The first time was in 1987!

Invitation to Community Discussion, “Unheard Stories: Asian Americans Experiencing Hate” – March 24

This discussion featured U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar, MDHR Commissioner Rebecca Lucrto, and CAAL Network & Executive director Bo Thao-Urabe. Organizer was AMAJ.

Invitation to the “Stop Asian Hate” Commemoration Rally” – March 28

The location of the event was in front of the Minnesota State Capitol with music, speeches, raps, and ending with a Thai Lighting Ceremony and Candlelight Vigil. More than 20 Asian American groups sponsored the rally.

More Asian Minnesota Alliance for Justice meetings and events

- April 8 – meeting with government officials
- April 14 – meeting with Minneapolis Public Schools leadership
- April 23 – community safety training (nonviolent peace force)

Printed below is a very thorough recounting of the involvement of the TCJACL with the Ramsey City Council that occurred in March. Thank you to Cheryl Hirata Dulas who has put the events in perspective.

Twin Cities JACL Acts Swiftly to Condemn Ramsey City Council Member’s Comparison of the Mask Mandate to the Japanese American Incarceration

Printed below is a very thorough recounting of the involvement of the TCJACL with the Ramsey City Council that occurred in March. Thank you to Cheryl Hirata Dulas who has put the events in perspective.

At the March 9, 2021, Ramsey City Councilmembers Chelsea Howell and Ryan Heineman presented Resolution #21-067 to the Ramsey City Council, which instructs that “No City Resource be Utilized in the Enforcement of Executive Order 20-81,” known as the mask mandate.

Councilmember Howell stated:

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Out of fear, Americans of Japanese descent were placed in Japanese internment camps on American soil, established by Executive Order 9066 of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942.

Just because something has been made a law or a mandate does not make it moral or just. While it was considered legal at the time, there are moments in the history of our country where the government has acted unlawfully and reprehensibly from a moral and Constitutional perspective.

According to the 14th Amendment, the State cannot deprive us of life or liberty. The government does not have the right to restrict somebody’s ability to breathe. The Executive Council does not have the right to restrict somebody’s ability to breathe, specifically 5.6 million Minnesotans. No one has the right to restrict somebody else’s ability to breathe. To breathe freely or not to breathe freely, that is an individual’s decision, not the decision of the government.

The City Council adopted the resolution by a vote of 4-3, despite concerns voiced by the City Attorney about possible legal ramifications. Mayor Mark Kuzma, who had returned to work the previous day after recovering from COVID-19, voted against the resolution.

The Twin Cities JACL Executive Board took swift action, sending a letter, dated March 11, 2021, to Ramsey City Councilmember Chelsea Howell condemning her use of the Japanese American WWII incarceration to challenge Minnesota Governor Tim Walz' Executive Order 20-81. The letter read, in part:

Dear Ramsey City Councilmember Chelsea Howell,

The Twin Cities chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League is deeply concerned by the weaponization of the Japanese American incarceration experience to challenge Minnesota Governor Tim Walz's Executive Order 20-81, commonly referred to as "The Mask Mandate." Your comments at the Tuesday, March 9th, 2021 Ramsey City Council Meeting conflate the systematic imprisonment of 120,000 innocent men, women, and children of Japanese descent, many of whom were US citizens, to a life-saving and common-sense public health measure taken during a time of global emergency due to the still-raging COVID-19 pandemic.

We absolutely object to the use of our community's experiences in your comparison. You argued that "the State cannot deprive us of life or liberty," yet, through your actions, you are risking the lives and liberties of your fellow Minnesotans while the State is doing its best to protect us all. To date, facemasks remain the most safe, effective, and accessible method for curbing the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus. Particularly in this time of heightened anti-Asian sentiment and racialized violence, your careless and misinformed comments undermine public health efforts at the disproportionate expense of Communities of Color....

Ramsey Mayor Kuzma then reached out to the Twin Cities JACL. He invited Vinicius Taguchi, chapter president, and Sally Sudo, a Nisei whose family was forcibly moved to Minidoka incarceration camp, to address the Ramsey City Council on March 23, 2021 during the Citizen Input part of the agenda. The full text of the statements by Taguchi and Sudo can be found on pages 9-11.

While Taguchi was giving his statement, he was abruptly interrupted by a resident who question Mayor Kuzma about whether non-residents of Ramsey are allowed to speak. The Mayor responded that this portion of the meeting is reserved for citizen input and outside citizens are permitted to speak. The resident persisted and asked for clarification from the City Attorney, who confirmed that there is no residency requirement.

After Taguchi's and Sudo's virtual testimonies, Councilmember Howell defended her position, reading a prepared statement:

Historically when we have been pressured by those in government to look the other way and not question their actions, innocents have suffered consequences. My deliberations in council pointed to that historical reality which Sally expounded on. I will go on standing against those who use the power of government to abuse the rights of citizens, in fulfillment of my oath to uphold the Constitution. We will have to agree to disagree.

Including Taguchi and Sudo, a total of 22 community members spoke during the Citizen Input portion of the meeting, which lasted about 1-1/2 hours. Thirteen speakers supported the resolution, while nine opposed it.

One supporter of the resolution, Mayor of Oak Grove, Dan Denno, mischaracterized the issue and also misrepresented Sudo's country of citizenship declaring, "I'm surprised that the Japanese woman who spoke was willing to accept the infringement on her rights with this government and complained about the infringement of her rights before."

Jonathan Kent, a resident of Minnetonka, spoke in person at the meeting, and observed that he found it striking, remarkable, and disrespectful that here was someone who lived through an atrocity and shared her experiences, and rather than being in a mode of listening, some audience members were rolling their eyes and scoffing.

Kent then directed his comments to Councilmember Howell and stated, "I was hoping to hear remorse from you given your comments last meeting. It seems to me that you have learned very little, if anything, from the testimony

of someone who is a survivor of an internment camp.” He urged the councilmember to ponder that and work on listening rather than speaking of a history that she does not have much working knowledge of.

Finally, Kent offered an analogy and asked the audience to “imagine if I likened the oppression of a seat belt to shadow slavery.” He asserted, “I don’t know if anyone would get behind that statement, but that’s essentially what you [Councilmember Howell] have done. It’s a little bit of a different cultural reference, but it’s not that far of a jump if you really think about it.”

Following Kent’s comments, Councilmember Howell continued to maintain and justify her position by reading verbatim, for the second time, the prepared statement that she gave in response to Taguchi and Sudo’s testimonies.

In closing the Citizen Input portion of the agenda, Mayor Kuzma expressed disappointment in the Council’s unwillingness to rescind the resolution despite growing concerns from businesses and residents and a strong statement from the Attorney General that the Executive Order takes precedence over the measures passed by any lower unit of government. He also stated that the resolution places the City in a difficult predicament and has opened up the City to legal liability.

After the meeting, Mayor Kuzma sent an email to Taguchi and Sudo affirming that their message was “important and needed to be said and explained. While it may have fallen on deaf ears, I do believe the majority of our community that was watching on our cable feed agrees and is angered by this reference that Chelsea [Howell] used.” - submitted by Cheryl Hirata Dulas



TCJACL Chapter President, Vinicius Taguchi (left) and former Minidoka incarcerated, Sally Sudo (right) Addressed the Ramsey City Council virtually on March 23, 2021 to express concerns about a Councilmember’s use of the Japanese American incarceration experience to justify her contention that masking and other COVID-related orders implemented by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz are an infringement on constitutional rights. Images from QCTV

Twin Cities JACL in the News

Following is a summary of media coverage on this issue.

1. Twin Cities JACL’s response to a Ramsey City Council member’s comparison of the mask mandate to the Japanese American incarceration on March 9, 2021
 - A. “Ramsey City Council member blasted over comments about Japanese Americans: Japanese American group takes issue with comparing mask order, internment”
 - B. **By Tim Harlow, Star Tribune, March 15, 2021**
<https://www.startribune.com/ramsey-city-council-member-blasted-over-comments-about-japanese-americans/600034584/>
 - C. “Ramsey councilor condemned for comparing mask mandate to Japanese internment:

She made the comparison in support of her resolution to not use city resources to enforce the state's mask mandate”

By Melissa Turtinen, Bring Me the News, March 15, 2021/updated March 18, 2021

<https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/ramsey-councilor-condemned-for-comparing-mask-mandate-to-japanese-internment>

D. “JACL condemns comparison of mask mandate to incarceration camps”

By Randall, AsAmNews – March 16, 2021

<https://asamnews.com/2021/03/16/remarks-called-careless-and-misinformed/>

E. “Japanese American Citizens League condemns Ramsey council member’s comments”

By Emilee Wentland, ABC Newspapers - March 22, 2021

https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/free/japanese-american-citizens-league-condemns-ramsey-council-member-s-comments/article_f7af8bfc-8b6b-11eb-935b-df894a141fe6.html

2. President Vinicius Taguchi and Sally Sudo spoke at the March 23, 2021 Ramsey City Council meeting on behalf of the Twin Cities JACL to address the remarks by a City Council member

A. “After mask mandate vote, Ramsey is a city divided. Some say move was a victory against ‘tyranny’; others say it's bringing belligerence”

By Tim Harlow, Star Tribune - March 24, 2021<https://www.startribune.com/after-mask-mandate-vote-ramsey-is-a-city-divided/600038079/>

B. “Anti-maskers defend comparison to incarceration camps”

By Louis Chan, AsAmNews – March 26, 2021

<https://asamnews.com/2021/03/26/audience-members-accused-of-disrespecting-survivor-of-incarceration-camp/>

C. “Ramsey divided over council resolution: Crowd shows up at meeting to voice concern, support for council’s controversial action”

By Emilee Wentland, ABC Newspapers - March 31, 2021

https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/free/ramsey-divided-over-council-jaresolution/article_183ec2d4-91ed-11eb-84a6-5b1eb67ae0c4.html

Media coverage list compiled by Cheryl Hirata Dulas

Statements to the Ramsey City Council – March 23, 2021

Vinicius Taguchi:

Good Evening. My name is Vinicius Taguchi, and I am the chapter president of the Twin Cities Japanese American Citizens League. The JACL was founded in 1929 and is today the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization. Thank you, Mayor Kuzma, for the invitation to join you all tonight. It is particularly meaningful because tonight marks one week since the tragic anti-Asian hate crime in Atlanta, GA that claimed the lives of eight of our fellow Americans, six of whom were Asian women. I will now read their names, and I ask that you all please join me in a brief moment of silence.

Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Ae Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, and Daoyou Fend

The recent surge in high-profile attacks against Asian Americans is part of a long history of anti-Asian discrimination, which Councilmember Chelsea Howell alluded to and dangerously mischaracterized during the March 9th Ramsey City Council meeting. It may be surprising to some of you that this current violence is occurring, but it is very familiar to us, and it will continue reoccurring as long as Asian women continue to be fetishized, exoticized, and objectified, and as long as Asian Americans continue to be underrepresented and regarded as a "model minority" whose experiences with racism are often ignored. Not only is that detrimental to our communities, which are diverse in cultures, languages, immigration histories, and the barriers they face in America, but the “model minority” myth also drives a wedge between Asian Americans and other Communities of Color in the fight against anti-Blackness and all types of systemic racism. Because of the "model minority" label, Asian Americans are often used as political pawns to further agendas

that work against our community, as was the case with Councilmember Howell and the other councilmembers who supported the anti-mask motion.

Now, it is my distinct honor to introduce Ms. Sally Sudo, a highly respected member of the Twin Cities Japanese American community, who is here to respond to Councilmember Howell's comments.

Sally Sudo:

My name is Sally Sudo, and I am a retired teacher from the Minneapolis Public Schools. I am also a survivor of an American concentration camp.

When I heard that some of your council members had equated Governor Waltz's mandate requiring every Minnesotan to wear a mask during the pandemic to the Japanese American experience during WWII, I was appalled and felt I had to set the record straight. I want to thank the city council for giving me the opportunity to be here today to share my experiences with you.

There is no comparison between Governor Waltz's mask mandate and the Japanese American experience in WWII. I think if you reflect on what actually happened at the time, you will see that this is the case.

I was one of the 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States who were rounded up from their West Coast homes and sent to an American prison camp during WWII. Our only crime? Looking like the enemy.

My father came to this country as a teenager in 1899. He worked hard and sacrificed a lot to give his American born children a chance at the American dream. How many of you had ancestors come for similar reasons? He settled in Seattle, WA and found a job in the restaurant industry. He lived there as a law-abiding legal immigrant for decades, because America did not allow Asians like him to even apply for naturalization.

Six weeks after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which declared the West Coast a military zone, and the military would decide who could or couldn't live there. The only ones removed were people of Japanese ancestry. You only had to be 1/16-part Japanese for the order to apply to you.

Our family was sent to Minidoka, ID. Two-thirds of us were American citizens, because we were born in this country and should have been protected by the Constitution. We had committed no crime. We were not given due process. Yet through it all, my parents and older siblings obeyed the government orders to show their loyalty to this country.

The government declared it was a military necessity to prevent acts of espionage or sabotage. The government's own internal review done by the Office of Naval Intelligence declared the Japanese on the West Coast to be fiercely loyal to the United States, and as proof, not a single person of Japanese ancestry in the mainland United States, and the territories of Hawaii and Alaska was ever found guilty of such acts. A Congressional Commission held in 1980 established that there was no military necessity to remove the Japanese from their homes. Rather, the root causes were years of racial discrimination, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership.

We were first housed in horse stables and livestock building at the fairgrounds while the government built more permanent prison camps. Ten camps were built in remote, desolate areas of the United States. These camps were surrounded by barbed-wired fences and armed guards in watch towers had their guns pointed at us 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I was only 6 years old.

In the prison camps families were confined to one of six rooms in an unfinished barrack building with no running water. The only electricity was a light bulb that hung down from the open rafters. Tar paper on the outside of the barrack buildings was our only protection from the harsh winters, when it could get as cold at 20° below zero, and the hot summers with temperatures soaring to 110°.

My parents and older brothers and sisters withstood all of this and held back their feelings of being persecuted and unfairly imprisoned. My brother, Joe, volunteered to serve in the U.S. Army the day after he graduated from the first graduating class at Minidoka High School in June of 1943. He felt that being willing to fight and die for a country that had imprisoned the rest of his family was the only way to show his loyalty. He made this sacrifice for his family, so that we could all point to him and say "I am an American too." He was assigned to the Military Intelligence Service which had its language training school in Minnesota, first at Camp Savage and later Ft. Snelling. Joe went on to serve in the Philippines- interrogating Imperial Japanese prisoners of war and translating captured documents. His was one of the first units to enter Occupied Japan. My brother, Tom, served in the Korean War. My brother-in-law, Kenny, fought the Nazis in Italy with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. All three of them were buried with military honors at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery.

Our family came to Minnesota straight from the camps after the war ended in August of 1945. We had nothing left in Seattle to go back to. When you are imprisoned for 3 ½ years and are unable to pay your mortgage or property taxes, you lose your home and your business. Joe had told us that Minnesota seemed to be a friendly and welcoming place. When we moved into our south Minneapolis home, we began receiving anonymous letters in the mail, "We don't want any Japs in the neighborhood. Get out or else!"

Words matter. What leaders say matters. They have consequences. Because of phrases like “the China Virus” and “Kung flu”, we are again seeing a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans. Misleading terms like “model minority” are continually used to minimize our struggles and invalidate other communities of color. We have to learn from our past mistakes, or our country will never become the “more perfect union” that we are all striving to be.

Moreover, actions matter. If my older brothers and sister were still alive today, they would be wearing a mask during this pandemic. I know this because they knew what it meant to sacrifice for others. They spent much of their youth having to shoulder adult responsibilities to help our family survive the experience of living in a concentration camp, helping translate and explain to my bewildered parents what was happening, and caring for us younger siblings. In addition, we all learned in church to “love our neighbors as ourselves”. My brothers and sisters would never behave in a way that would endanger their neighbors, friends, or family. And I certainly know that my brother Joe, who was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and volunteered to serve his country, would do the same.

There is no comparison between a mask mandate to preserve the public’s health and the incarceration of United States citizens based on their ancestry. The Japanese American experience in WWII is a story of loyalty and patriotism in the face of blatant racial discrimination. To use this story as a justification to defy a government mask order is not only wrong, it is offensive. You have it backwards. Japanese Americans in WWII made individual sacrifices for the sake of other people. In defying the mask mandate, you are choosing your own comfort, and convenience over the health of other more vulnerable people in your neighborhood, your town, your state, and your country.

My parents and older siblings, like many of your parents, grandparents and ancestors, made many sacrifices. As a result, there are dozens of their grandchildren and great grandchildren now living the American dream here in Minnesota and across the United States. Their sacrifices deserve to be honored. To use them in the manner that you have done is to do them a disservice.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening.

Letter from Social Justice Committee – March 14

Called for concrete steps to be taken toward ensuring police violence comes to an end, including

- Passing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in the U.S. Senate
- Passing 9 bills proposed by the Minnesota Coalition for Police Accountability

News from and about National JACL

Details about “News from and about National JACL” can be found on its website – jacl.org. Click “Media”. All of the Weekly Digests, Statements, and Announcements are located there. The Weekly Digest announces events that will be occurring before the next Rice Paper is emailed.

JACL Statement Submitted to House Judiciary in Support of HR 40 (African American reparations – February 24

JACL Concerned by the Initiation of Mass Incarceration of Children at Carrizo Springs, Texas – February 24

Black + Japanese American Reparations – an Ito Center 2021 Virtual Event Series and Book Club – Register at DORNSIFE.USC.EDU/CJRC or go the Japanese American National Museum website for more information.

University of Maryland’s Historic Preservation Program: Allen Hendershott Eaton Collection & and Art and Artifacts of Japanese American WWII Incarceration – March 4-5

Community and Faith Organizations Concerned over Vandalism of Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple – March 4

Tsuru Rising! Youth Speak Out! – Activism for our Future – March 6

LGBTQ Nikkei Conversation Series – Lessons from Two Pandemics: AIDS and COVID 19- March 7

10th Annual Films of Remembrance – shown through March 7

. Go to www.filmsofremembrance.org for more information.

Zoom Webinar, “Responding to Anti-Asian violence in the Japanese American Community” for San Francisco Japantown and the greater Japanese American Community – March 9

JACL Statement on the 10 Year Anniversary of the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami – March 12

JACL Mourns Loss of Lives in Atlanta - March 17

Open JACL National Board Meeting – March 20

The Board hosted its quarterly board meeting, the first open to the public meeting of 2021

Tell eBay to Stop Selling WWII Japanese American Incarceration Artifacts! – April 6

The TCJACL has signed on to a letter about the selling of artifacts at the request of David Inoue, JACL Executive Director.

EBay will adhere to guidelines and keywords that can be used in the future.



President Biden announces 11 Judicial Appointments Including Japanese American Candidate – April 6

Four of the eleven nominees are Asian American. JACL has sent a letter of endorsement on behalf of Regina Rodriguez for nomination to the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado. Ms. Rodriguez’s mother and her grandparents, all American citizens, were incarcerated at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.



Jerome/Rohwer Virtual Pilgrimage – April 6

2021 Reintroduction of the Japanese American Confinement Education (JACE) Act – April 6

JACL Statement on the Derek Chauvin Trial – April 21

JACL Applauds Senate Passage of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE (National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality) Act – April 22

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Thank you. Your TCJACL Board of Directors

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