

Volunteers Needed to Ensure API Voting Rights

by Cathy Malla Lowenberg

The right to vote is the cornerstone of any democracy. But for Americans who "look foreign" or don't speak English, too often the simple act of voting becomes more of an uphill battle—a battle in which many of our community members end up surrendering.

Although APIs first began immigrating to this county in the 1840's (Filipinos started arriving in the 1400's), it wasn't until 1952 that all foreign-born Asians were eligible to become naturalized citizens. Chosen by an all-white electorate, lawmakers had full reign to enact discriminatory laws—bans on interracial marriages, immigration restrictions, and land ownership discrimination.

Fifty years later, the API community is still vulnerable and underrepresented in the voting booth, and until we have full API voter participation, there will be: unequal access to government services, English-only laws, and unfair employment practices.

In 1975, Congress added Section 203 to the Voting Rights Act, finding that "citizens of language minorities have been effectively excluded from participating in the electoral process."

In a nutshell, Section 203 says that for counties where there are more than 10,000 or over five percent in a single minority ethnic group who don't speak English, the county must provide translated services. According to the 2000 census, King County meets this threshold for Chinese American voters, and must provide registration forms, voting notices, ballots, and voter assistance in Chinese and the appropriate spoken dialect.

On Primary Election Day, I volunteered as one of seven Section 203 Poll Observers. We dropped in on twenty polling places like New Holly, Yesler Terrace, Aki Kurose Middle School, Beacon Hill Elementary, Cleveland High School, and El Centro de la Raza. These polling places were identified by census data to be in the highest Chinese American precincts in the 11th and 37th legislative districts. Each polling location was evaluated based on a 4-page set of criteria. Were there Chinese Signs displayed, Chinese Language instruction sheets, Ballots and voter registration forms in Chinese, Interpreters? What dialect did they speak? How did the Poll Workers treat voters of varying ethnicities and English speaking capabilities?

Based on objective data collected at twenty polling locations, the situation for non-English speaking Chinese voters is dismal. None of the polling locations had signs or instructions in Chinese. Dialect-speaking interpreters didn't know there were Chinese Ballots or Registration Forms. One volunteer Poll Observer from Lake Washington JACL was even told by an official King County Poll Inspector that there weren't Chinese ballots because "voters are

Scholarship Fundraising Raffle

by Linda Tanouye

In the coming months, chapter board and installation banquet committee members will be selling raffle tickets to benefit our scholarship fund. These tickets will be on sale for five dollars each or you may purchase five tickets for \$20. We will have advanced ticket sales up to the date of our January 2003 Installation Banquet. The grand prize is \$1000, with second and third place prizes of \$500 and \$250 respectively.

We will also have an on site raffle at the installation banquet to benefit the chapter. At the door we will be selling raffle tickets to win one of three theme baskets or a wheel barrel – all filled with goodies. Themes for the three baskets are: decadent chocolate and homemade chocolate goodies; relaxation and beauty items; and Asian arts, crafts, and foods. The wheel barrel will come stocked with a variety of beer, wine, party favors, and hors d'oeuvres.

It is our hope that this will be a fundraiser that will be both fun and profitable. Please support our chapter's scholarship activities by purchasing raffle tickets and by donating any items that you wish. We will gladly accept gift certificates, coupons, pledges or gift items. Many of our previous scholarship winners have gone on to provide great service to our community - let's continue this fine tradition! These scholarships go to aid worthy young people pursuing their academic careers. Please call Linda Tanouye at: (253) 826-5422 if you have any questions or would like to make a donation.

Seeking Nominations for Year 2003

The Seattle Chapter JACL is accepting nominations of persons for its officer and board positions for the year 2003. Individuals who are interested in serving as an officer or board member or who wish to submit the name of someone to serve, must submit your name or those of others who have given their consent to:

Nominations Committee chairperson, Vicki J. Toyohara, who can be reached at: (206) 464-6771 (Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, daytime) or (425) 865-0272 (Thursdays, Fridays, evenings and weekends).

The Board will accept additional names at its October board meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, October 16, at 6:30 PM, at the Seattle JACL office located at: 316 Maynard Avenue South, Room 111. No additional nominations for officer or board positions will be accepted after the closing of nominations at the October 16, 2002 board meeting.

Serving on the Seattle JACL Board provides Nikkeis with a meaningful opportunity to be involved in the community. Please contact Vicki Toyohara for further information.

President's Message

by Arlene Oki, President

The month of September was particularly significant as this nation held numerous observances to commemorate the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Though it provided an opportunity for personal reflection and to remember the tremendous sacrifices made by courageous firefighters, police, armed forces personnel and ordinary citizens, it also hardened our collective resolve to make America the great democracy that it could be.

Efforts to protect the constitutional rights of ALL Americans got a big boost on Saturday, September 21 at the "Justice for ALL: the Aftermath of September 11th" public forum. The event was sponsored by over 80 organizations and attended by over 1,000 people to hear from victims of indiscriminate acts of hatred and government actions that have hurt their communities. We also were encouraged to find that local and national media covered the event so well. The Seattle chapter felt privileged to be on the organizing committee and members who attended felt truly inspired by all of the speakers. We felt proud to be represented by Mako Nakagawa who presented an emotional and strong statement about her own family's experience following EO 9066. Kudos to Karen Yoshitomi and Tatsuo Nakata for working closely with the Hate Free Zone Campaign group. I was told that the idea for using a hearing format came from Karen who remembered the hearings conducted by the Wartime Commission on the Evacuation and Internment of Japanese Americans in the early 1980s.

Sincere congratulations to the Nikkei veterans of the 442nd, 100th and MIS for being selected to receive the 2002 *We the People* Award bestowed by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, PA. The *We the People* Award honors individuals or organizations who best exemplify the qualities of active citizenship as defined by our nation's Founders and who have made a noteworthy contribution to constitutional principles. Ceremonies will be held on the Battleship New Jersey on November 11.

Thanks to Tone Shimizu for making arrangements for President-elect Tatsuo Nakata, Second Vice President Joy Shigaki and me to meet Tadahiro Abe, the new Consul General of Japan, at his Seattle office. Each of us appreciated the warm hospitality

shown by Consul General Abe and his highly capable staff members. Our discussion touched on a broad range of issues: economic, environmental, cultural, and, of course, baseball. We were very encouraged to learn of Consul General Abe's interest in our activities, especially those that support youth leadership development.

Also in September, Seattle JACL members Shea Aoki, Jeffrey Hattori, Darrell Mihara and myself met with Jerry Arai, Dee Goto, Chuck Kato, Cherry Kinoshita, Toru Sakahara, Tazue Sasaki, Yutaka Sasaki, Ken Sato and Mas Tahara to explore the feasibility of developing a Nikkei cultural/community center. Chuck Kato brought architectural drawings that were rendered over 25 years ago and provided us with a history of the Nikkei community's efforts to build such a center in Seattle. Dee Goto and Yutaka Sasaki also shared information about past efforts that they were involved in. Though he was not present at the meeting, Tomio Moriguchi dropped off materials related to the National Nikkei Heritage Centre in Burnaby, British Columbia.

We are very excited to sponsor a crafts class for JACL members and friends who want to learn how to make ornamental Japanese boxes from milk cartons. Our instructor will be the talented Nobi Takahashi who is also well known to us as Kazzie Katayama's sister. We will need empty milk cartons so start saving yours now. The class is free though there will be a nominal charge for materials purchased by our instructor. Space limits us to only 25 participants, so please call Kazzie (206) 722-2266 as soon as possible to reserve your place at the table.

Before closing, I want to remind all members that they are welcome to attend our monthly meetings in our offices at 316 Maynard Avenue South. They begin at 6:30 PM on the 3rd Wednesday of every month except August and December. If you have an interest in any of our activities, we'd welcome an e-mail message from you.



Announcements

Thank You

Newsletter sponsored in part by these generous donors:

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Events Calendar

Oct. 19-20 – JACL Pacific NW District Council meeting, Dupont, Washington. Contact: (206) 623-5088.

Oct. 26 – Nikkei UW Alumnae Association Reception, Kawabe House, 7 PM. Contact: Elsie Taniguchi (206) 824-2402.

Nov. 5 – General Elections, 7AM - 8 PM. Contact: King County Elections Office, (206) 296-8683.

Nov. 17 – Retirement Dinner for Justice Charles Z. Smith, Four Seasons Olympic Hotel, 411 University Street, Seattle, 6 PM. Contact: Kazzie Katayama, (206) 722-2266.

Nov. 19 – Japanese ornamental box-making class, JACL office, 316 Maynard Ave. S, 6:30 PM. Contact: Kazzie Katayama (206) 722-2266.

Jan. 25, 2003 – Board Installation Banquet for Seattle Chapter Japanese American Citizens League, DoubleTree Hotel Seattle Airport, 18740 International Blvd, Seattle, 5 PM. Contact: May Namba, (206) 784-3824.

Hapa Group Forming

by Cathy Malla Lowenberg

I still remember the first time I came to a JACL meeting. I had just run into Arlene Oki at a Bill Clinton rally at the Pike Place Market where it was raining buckets. Arlene encouraged me to tag along with her to a JACL board meeting. At first I resisted and tried to make one lame excuse after another—it's so late, it's really rainy—the works. In actuality, being "only part" Japanese, I didn't know how I would be accepted at a Japanese American community meeting. But when Arlene explicitly said she wanted to see more "hapas" involved, something clicked and I decided to check out JACL.

I can't speak for other mixed-race JAs, but from my own experience it seems like my own sense of racial and Japanese American identity is a complex, ongoing process—even after 30 years! Sometimes people who are not "mixed" forget that it takes "two to tango" in the race/identity dance—often self-identity changes simply depending on how the person I'm talking to interprets my features, phenotype, or last name.

I remember the confusion of being complemented on my English speaking ability and being referred to as a "well intentioned white person" at a UW Asian American student organization—both on the same day! (By the way, I was the president of that student organization at the time.) I remember resenting being told by my peers and family members what box I should check on my college applications and the 2000 census. I remember a feeling of empowerment reading Maria P.P. Root's "Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People" and picking up Mavin Magazine for the first time. I remember taking pride in the achievements of famous mixed J.A.'s like Lindsay Yamasaki, Ann Curry, Sean Ono Lennon, Jennifer & Meg Tilly, and Apollo Ohno, but at the same time rolling my eyes that y'all only "claim us when we're famous." I remember the anguish of overhearing whispers that "outmarriage and diluted blood" are diminishing the Japanese American community.

I remember the devastation of learning that Nicole Howard's only real chance of finding a bone marrow match is from another hapa who matches her ethnic and genetic mix.

Spread the word that Seattle JACL is starting a hapa discussion group. The sky's the limit—we can coordinate Panel Discussions, Community Forums, Literary Nights, Bone Marrow Drives, you name it. Our first meeting will be on Monday, October 21 from 5:30 – 7:30—dinner will be provided. I'm still looking for a meeting place, hopefully someplace in the U-District. Please e-mail me at <jaclhapa@hotmail.com> if you can be part of a steering committee to plan the agenda for the October 21 meeting.

Recent Membership

Individual

Lori Aoki (New)
Ann Fujii-Lindwall

Yuriko Kojima
Ryan Minato

Please Don't Forget – Justice Smith Retirement Dinner

Justice Charles Z. Smith – a life long champion for social justice, diversity, and the betterment of the human condition – is retiring as Washington State Supreme Court Justice after 14 years of dedicated leadership and service. The Seattle JACL is organizing tables to attend a retirement dinner to recognize our dear friend. The dinner will take place on Sunday, November 17th at 6 PM, at the Four Seasons Olympic Hotel. Tickets are \$95 per person.

We would like to have as many JACLers at the dinner as possible to thank and honor Justice Smith. Please call Kazzie Katayama at (206) 722-2266 to RSVP...today!

Voting, continued from page 1

supposed to be literate." The Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) in California reported that non-English speaking voters are routinely asked to show proof of citizenship.

Seven Poll Observers and twenty Poll Locations is a good start, but to collect meaningful data on how King County is meeting the needs of non-English speaking voters, we need to have dozens of volunteers observing 50 to 100 polling sites. The Seattle OCA has taken the lead in this effort and will be crunching numbers and compiling anecdotes to report to King County Elections, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

JACL members who care about social justice and the right to vote must step up and volunteer as Poll Observers on Tuesday, November 5—General Election Day. Contact: (206) 683-8988 or <c_lowenberg@hotmail.com>.

Aki Sogabe: Japanese Farmers at the Pike Place Market

Please send me _____ sets of "Japanese Farmers at the Pike Place Market," a five-card set. I have enclosed \$15 for each set, plus a \$1.50 postage and handling fee."

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE (indicate whether day or evening/weekend): _____



Please send completed form to: Seattle Chapter JACL
PO Box 18558, Seattle, WA, 98118-0558

Mission Statement: The Seattle Chapter JACL is a non-profit, grassroots civil rights organization dedicated to empowering our local community through high-quality programs and strategic partnerships focusing on activism, education, and youth leadership development. As a chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, we strive to be a leading Asian American advocacy group for civil and human rights while promoting and preserving the values and cultural heritage of Japanese Americans.

Chapter Board Meeting: Our primary means of carrying out our mission is a monthly meeting, held at 6:30 PM on the third Wednesday of each month, except August, at the chapter office, 316 Maynard Ave. S., Seattle. Those wishing to make presentations or be added to the meeting agenda should contact President Arlene Oki prior to the meeting. All are welcome.

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Article and Event Submission: Board members should submit materials to the editor (nakata_ta2001@yahoo.com) by the Friday after the monthly board meeting. Calendar items emphasize chapter or community events not likely to be covered by community newspapers or by other newsletters.

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E-mail address: email@jaclseattle.org

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