



The Seattle Race Conference will take place at the Seattle Center Northwest Rooms on Saturday, October 11th from 8 AM to 4 PM. The conference is free and open to the public. This year's theme "Movements for Reparations: Restoring Racial Justice, Building Unity & Healing Our Diverse Communities" is very appropriate given the 20th anniversary of Redress. The featured keynote is Dr. Raymond Winbush, Director of the Institute for Urban Research at Morgan State University and editor of the anthology, *Should America Pay: Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations*.

Seattle JACL has been a part of the committee to help plan this important event and we look forward to seeing our members participate and be a part of the community dialogue on the Redress Movement. For more information on workshops, speakers and registration, please visit [www.seattleraceconference.org](http://www.seattleraceconference.org) or call (206) 448-9000.

## JACL National Conference

Seattle JACL was well represented at the 2008 Biennial Convention in Salt Lake City by Board Delegates Dawn Rego and Kyle Funakoshi, as well as the attendance of Elaine Akagi, Arlene Oki, Elsie Taniguchi, Chris Batalon and Shea Aoki.

Several bills passed that were sponsored by the Pacific Northwest district, two of which were met with some opposition:

The first bill was to encourage that JACL move towards an annual convention. Currently, the conventions are held once every two years. This was the third conference where the idea of an annual conference was introduced.

The second controversial bill was to allow the National Executive Director's office to be located at any JACL district office. The current constitution specifies the national headquarters office in San Francisco. However, Executive Director Floyd Mori has been located in Washington DC. Several organizations sited the good work that Mori has done working out of DC as proof that the National Director needs the flexibility to move to wherever the organizational need is greatest.

Seattle JACL also wrote/sponsored a bill to recognize this year as the 20th anniversary of the redress bill, which unanimously passed.

Finally, Seattle JACL member and past President Cherry Kinoshita and current Board Member Irene Ishii introduced the winning nomination for JACL Educator of the Biennium Award – Dr. Tetsuden Kashima. In addition to his years of teaching at the University of Washington and contributing to key pieces of research on the Asian American community, Dr. Kashima was one of the co-chairs of the group to bring together "The Long Journey Home" graduation ceremony at the University of Washington.

Last month marked the 20th Anniversary of the passage of the Civil Liberties Act, often referred to as Redress. In commemoration, a large audience was addressed from an auditorium stage within the Bank of America Building. Moderated by Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos, panel members Sam Mitsui and May Namba spoke of their experiences in being removed from their Seattle area homes, taken to the Puyallup fairgrounds, later named Camp Harmony, and finally to the Minidoka camp in Idaho. Their stories diverged regarding personal struggles, but both found life hard under the government forced conditions that would exist after the bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War II.

A documentary film, *And Justice for All*, provided a history on the work around Redress. The film showed how key players from the JACL and elected officials argued and fought, but ultimately worked together, convincing lawmakers that apologizing and giving redress to Japanese Americans for the hardships endured was the right thing to do.

Speakers who followed were Tom Kometani, a former governor of the Eastern District Council of JACL, detailing the grassroots effort of the Redress campaign and Rod Kawakami, attorney for Gordon Hirabayashi and others who violated Executive Order 9066.

Bring the issue to present day America, Abdulla Jama, from One America (formerly the Hate Free Zone) spoke about Arab and Muslim American experiences, a comparison to those faced by Japanese Americans.

The push for the passage of Redress was extraordinary in that no other group of people had taken an idea and formed it into Federal legislation. The Seattle Chapter can be proud of its integral part in Redress as it continues to fight the racism and discrimination existing today.

## Seeking former residents of Pinedale Assembly Center

Located on the outskirts of Fresno California in 1942, the area know as the Pinedale Assembly Center was a temporary holding area for Japanese Americans, later sent to Tule Lake.

In 2006, the JACL Central California District and the Central California Nikkei Foundation formed the Pinedale Assembly Center Memorial Project Committee. The Committee went through a lengthy process to have the former Pinedale Assembly Center registered as a historical landmark.

A dedication will be held at the Pinedale Assembly Center Memorial on February 16, 2009. The Committee is hoping to find and invite any former residents of Pinedale to the memorial dedication. Please contact Elaine Akagi for more information,

## President's Message

by Dawn Rego, President

Aloha everyone. My name is Dawn Rego and I am honored to serve as the 2008-09 Seattle JACL President. I appreciate being a part of this organization that has a rich history of fighting for civil rights in the Asian American community.

Throughout this past year, I have attended several events and activities, and JACL's legacy and presence in Seattle is as strong as ever. JACL Seattle continues to be an influential organization, and continues to be viewed as one of the premier community organizations in Seattle. I am especially proud of our history and involvement in the reparation movement.

To continue this legacy, there are several directions that I believe this organization needs to go. In other words, it's important to continue to honor our past, but not simply rest on our laurels. If we are to honor the work that giants like Toru Takeshita or Cherry Kinoshita have worked on, we must continue to look to our past, and also look ahead to representing interests of a new generation. My presidency throughout this year has been looking at the things we do from this perspective.

Many people have commented on my last name not being one that is traditional Japanese American. Several have already surmised that my own background is multiracial. Growing up in Hilo, on the Big Island of Hawaii, my unique background being Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, Chinese and Japanese wasn't very unique; I was one of the crowd. Several call me mixed, hapa or half. In the past I have taken pause to embracing those names. The reason is that I am 100 percent Japanese, as well as 100 percent Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese and Chinese. In other words, I am 100 percent American. My background is representative of a new generation of JACLers.

In addition to the opportunity for our organization to take a fresh look at representing the needs of our new generation, we face several operational challenges. Although Seattle was one of the few JACL chapters that experienced a rise in membership last year, we have been experiencing a declining this year, and we need your support in renewing your membership and helping to get others...your friends and family...to join our organization. We need you to help out. As they say, many hands make light work.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and donations to JACL. It is through your support that the board and committee members are able to honor the work of our past and help us to continue to do the innovative work that benefits the Asian and Pacific Islander community. But, like many other non-profit organizations, we must continue to find new revenue sources so that we can expand our work.

Though we are facing these challenges, know that the JACL Board continues to work hard to keep this organization going. Rest assured that the Seattle JACL continues to have passionate people working toward your needs, and your community. Thanks, once again, for your continued support and keeping us a strong organization.

### Passing of Leaders

Seattle JACL has lost pivotal leaders in the Japanese American community—we honor their leadership and dedication.

#### Toru Sakahara

A pioneering attorney with commitment to civil rights, he was instrumental in the repeal of the Alien Land Law in 1966, which prohibited land ownership by Asians in Washington State. He had a strong commitment to the JA community, including involvement and leadership in Seattle JACL (serving as President in both 1948 and 1957), Seattle Japanese Community Service and the Seattle First Hill Lions Club.

#### Cherry Kinoshita

Her leadership was a foundation in Redress and in 2004 she received the Jefferson Award, a national honor given to "ordinary people who do extraordinary things" for her work. She served as Seattle Chapter President in 1977, Vice Governor of the Pacific Northwest District and Vice President on the National JACL board.

#### Minoru Tsubota

He was a member of the famed 442 and a charter member of the Nisei Veterans Committee. He also served on the Japanese Community Center board, was Director of the North American Post and active in the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple. He was Seattle Chapter President in 1960. For all of his community involvement, the Emperor of Japan awarded him the Order of the Rising Sun, 5th Order of Merit, Gold and Silver Rays.

#### Charles Tsukasa "Chuck" Kato

His tireless advocacy and persistence was instrumental in the Redress movement, and after its introduction into legislation, he served as Co-Chair for the Washington Committee on Redress. He served as the Seattle Chapter President in 1980. He worked for the Corps of Engineers and Commerce Department for three decades, retiring in 1992.

*Our sincerest condolences to the families and friends of Toru, Cherry, Min and Chuck—our thoughts and prayers are with you all.*

### Aki Kurose Cleanup

Twelve die-hard JACLers came out to help with the annual JACL Aki Kurose school cleanup day on Saturday, August 16. JACLers worked hard to landscape, picking up trash, weed and lay bark around the school's entrance. The principal and several teachers on hand were very appreciative of the effort.

Seattle JACL's advocacy helped change the name of the school to Aki Kurose in honor of her work and activism with the Seattle School District.

The school is currently looking for tutors to assist with their efforts. If you are interested in tutoring, please contact Dawn Rego at



## Perspective on Minidoka

Another successful Minidoka Pilgrimage was completed with about 250 people in attendance, including Emily Momohara and Anna Tamura helping out wherever they could. Below are the experiences expressed by Bill Tashima.

We're on a bus, driving down the road in a convoy with probably five, maybe six others. One of our stops is the Idaho Agricultural Museum, a hodgepodge of relics—one exhibit is a full barrack from Minidoka. People start talking about how cold and hot the barracks got, and how much dust blew in. There is a pot belly stove in the room, one person tells me how they struggled to keep the fire going; how they had to get coal everyday; and how the Issei managed to somehow get the biggest pieces of coal. A guide tells us that the only things originally provided in the barracks were the cots and a stove. I think of all the furniture that internees made for themselves, from chairs, tables, and dressers, to Buddhist shrines.

We get back on the bus and head to Minidoka. The area looks green as we pass the wide irrigation canal. When we get off the bus, I recalled what May Namba had told me at the 2003 Pilgrimage. "This doesn't look the same...when we were here it was nothing but dirt and dust."

We tour for three-quarter mile, which feels like three under the hot sun, and reach the camp's root cellar—a long semi-underground dwelling with a sod roof. It was designed to hold the vegetables produced by the camp through the heat of summer and cold of winter.

One reason why JAs were interned in this part of Idaho was the Bureau of Public Lands had this area slotted for future agriculture use. By 1944 Minidoka was producing a million pounds of potatoes and hundreds of thousands of pounds of carrots, beets, and other vegetables. It was the Nikkei who broke the land, dug irrigation canals and started farming, laying the basis for the verdant area that exists there today.

We reach the location of the former Honor Roll where there is an entrance garden, designed by Fujitara Kubota. The design of the garden can be interpreted as an abstract American eagle, against a giant "V" for a victory walkway. When looked at in different perspectives, this design completely hide aspects of the camp: barbed wire, watchtowers and barracks.

One memorable part was listening to Mako Nakagawa. She was always indebted to hakuji (white) children who would brave the fence at Puyallup; Nisei kids would pass money through the fence; hakuji kids would run and get the ice cream. It was a bond that existed between children; a relationship without prejudice.

Back on the bus, I begin to feel a little overwhelmed by the experience. I try and imagine how utterly frightening the internment must have been. Having the hysteria of Pearl Harbor and everyone hating you; having to leave your home and pack your belongings into two suitcases; living in horsecostalls at the Puyallup fairgrounds; taking a long ride with the windows drawn; getting on the bus and then arriving at a hot, dusty Minidoka. I think I would have probably cried for a week, but the Issei and Nisei had to "gaman", just persevere.

## The Journey for The Long Journey Home

by Kyle Funakoshi

One of my most touching experiences working with the Seattle JACL was serving on "The Long Journey Home" committee. This event, in my opinion, is one of the best collaborative efforts that I have seen over the past four years that I served on the Seattle JACL board.

To give some background, Seattle JACL was approached in early 2007 by Dr. Tetsuden Kashima to participate in a committee that worked towards honoring a group of around 430 Japanese Americans who were at the University of Washington during 1941-42 with honorary bachelors degrees. Previous to this event, the University had only awarded eight honorary degrees.

Seattle JACL was one of two community organizations that participated on the planning committee. Later on, the University of Washington Nikkei Alumni Association led a subcommittee of fifteen other Japanese American organizations, in which we had also participated.

Though the initial intent for this event was to honor the remarkable lives of the Nikkei class of 1941-42, the ceremony touched all corners of our community.

In addition to the homecoming and graduation ceremony, there were several family graduation parties that happened following the event. In many instances, four generations of Japanese American families were hearing for the first time the stories of the camp incarceration of their parents/grandparents/great-grandparents.

The event was well-covered by local, national and international media, educating a new generation of Americans about the Japanese American internment experience.

This event was a fantastic collaboration between the University of Washington and the Japanese American community. Several other universities on the west coast have attempted to do programs like this. However, the University of Washington has been the most successful in turning out large numbers of people.

The success of the turnout can be attributed to both the University and the Japanese American community coming together and approaching this ceremony in a culturally sensitive manner. The outreach was done the old fashioned way, through our relationships and a little arm twisting. Though it took a lot of energy and time to get some of the graduates to turn out, in the end, it was universally acknowledged that they were all glad they participated.

To me, the ceremony represents one of the few times where several entities came together to do the right thing, and did not clamor to take the credit. It took the work of dozens of entities to make one special event!

### Information

**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 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 Dawn Rego prior to the meeting.

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**Article and Event Submission:** Board members should submit materials to the editor 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.

Seattle Chapter JACL website: [www.jaclseattle.org](http://www.jaclseattle.org)  
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### 2008 Officers and Board Members

- President ..... Dawn Rego
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- 1st Vice-President ..... *To be identified*
- 2nd Vice-President ..... Doug Honma
- 3rd Vice-President ..... Elaine Akagi
- 4th Vice-President ..... *To be identified*
- Treasurer ..... Jeffrey Hattori
  
- Corresponding Secretary ..... May Namba
- Recording Secretary ..... *To be identified*
- Historian ..... Akemi Matsumoto
- PNWDC Board Delegate ..... Kyle Funakoshi

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**- Save the Date -**  
Seattle JACL Annual Installation Banquet  
Marriott Waterfront Hotel  
January 24, 2009

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Seattle Chapter  
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