



Los Angeles Day of Remembrance 2023
Saturday February 18th, 2023

The annual Los Angeles Day of Remembrance (DOR) commemorates the signing of Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Executive Order 9066 authorized the US military to remove Japanese Americans from the West Coast and set into motion their incarceration in concentration camps during World War II. This year's theme, "Uniting Our Voices: Making Democracy Work for All," illustrates how individuals and communities are powerful when they come together in support of one another and how democracy is only as strong as those who fight for it.

DOR Committee Co-chair Richard Katsuda noted the importance of putting democracy at the forefront of the committee's work considering the events of January 6, 2021: "For the last few years, the DOR Committee has been deeply concerned about the threats to our democracy that culminated in the events of January 6, 2021, and the ongoing disinformation around election denialism and attacking the rights of minority peoples. We believe that people often feel helpless in combating such threats and that it is important to rally ourselves and feel the power that comes from working together in one united voice."

The program will feature a conversation between traci ishigo, co-founder of Vigilant Love and Manjusha P. Kulkarni, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate. ishigo has extensive experience in community building, in particular with Muslim Americans, to combat Islamophobia and white supremacy. As part of Stop AAPI Hate, Ms. Kulkarni, Russell Jeong of San Francisco State University, and Cynthia Choi of Chinese for Affirmative Action created a nationwide database to collect and document hate crimes against Asian and Pacific Islander Americans since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Kulkarni will address the group's work in coalition building with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

DOR Committee Co-chair Matthew Weisbly expressed the wishes of the committee: "We are honored to have Manjusha Kulkarni joining us for this year's DOR. The work she and

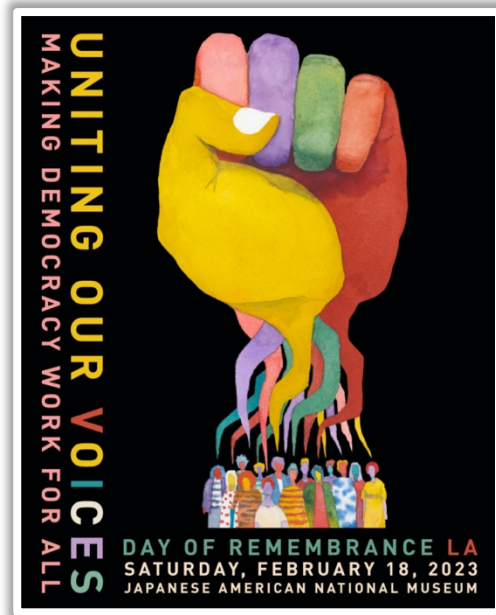


Illustration and design by Rob Sato

her colleagues have done over the last several years in helping to combat anti-Asian hate is nothing short of remarkable. It has helped our AANHPI community feel seen and heard during such a confusing and terrifying time. We look forward to a lively and riveting discussion at this year's DOR event and hope all those in attendance will join us in standing together in community to combat hate and violence wherever it may appear." This year's program will be dedicated to Jim Matsuoka, a revered Nisei former incarcerated who fought for Japanese American redress and reparations as well as other forms of social justice. Jim was a founding member of NCRR in 1980 and remained a stalwart leader for the many grassroots campaigns in which NCRR was involved. He always spoke out, whether to call out unjust actions by the government, corporations, or even fellow community members, or to call for solidarity and unity with other communities in their pursuit of justice.

The 2023 Los Angeles Day of Remembrance is organized by: Go For Broke National Education Center, JACL - Pacific Southwest District, Japanese American National Museum, Little Tokyo Service Center, Manzanar Committee, NCRR, Nikkei Progressives, OCA - Greater Los Angeles, PANA.

To RSVP for the 2023 Day of Remembrance, go to: <https://www.janm.org/events/2023-02-18/2023-los-angeles-day-remembrance>. The Day of Remembrance will also be livestreamed on the Japanese American National Museum's You Tube channel: [youtube.com/JANMdotorg](https://www.youtube.com/JANMdotorg).

NP/NCRR Reparations Committee ***2022 - A Year Packed with Learning and Building Ties***

In 2022 the NP/NCRR Reparations Committee continued its bi-monthly PODs to deepen and challenge anti- Blackness in ourselves. The Education team led off each committee meetings with study on the Executive Summary of the CA Task Force 2022 report. We hope that these practices will build a strong foundation of knowledge and prepare us for our workshops in the community which we launched with the Manzanar Committee in December.



August.

The 2022 Day of Remembrance's theme "*Power of Communities: Building Strength Through Collective Action*" was deepened through a conversation with Dreisen Heath, traci kk and Kathy Masaoka on our history and current work on both JA and Black reparations. Kay Ochi represented the committee in a program sponsored by the African American Reparations Networks (AARN) called "Building a Coalition: Multiracial and Interfaith Allyship for African American Reparations" with faith leaders in

traci kato-kiriyama, Dreisen Heath and Kathy Masaoka speak at the 2022 Day of Remembrance

We were lucky to have Kenniss Henry, Female Co-chair of N'COBRA come out for a week in November to speak at our brunch via Zoom and to help us build ties with other individuals and organizations in support of reparations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the KW Lee Foundation and the California Black Power Network. She was here in LA to speak at a conference on Liberation Based Healing where she was joined on a panel with Kathy. Kenniss immersed herself in Little Tokyo and refers to all of us as "her Japanese American family."

National, Local and International Work

On the national level, the newly launched National Nikkei Reparations Coalition was able to hold a Week of Action guided by the three co-chairs, traci kato-kiriyama (NP/NCRR), Lisa Doi (JACL/Tsuru) and /Emily Akpan (Tsuru/NY DOR). The Week of Action included a program on Black and JA solidarity with Akemi Kochiyama, Miya Iwataki, Dreisen Heath and Kennis Henry, a workshop to share our principles of unity as a coalition and a Day of Action with people across the country calling and emailing Congressmembers and the White House to support an Executive Order for HR 40. In December, the NNRC signed onto a letter to the White House, again pushing for an Executive Order. We continue to participate on the "Why We Can't Wait" coalition as well as with other national groups, such as the African American Redress Network and the Reparations Movement Monthly Meetup, led by Nkechi Taifa, to learn about the reparations work across the country.

Locally, we participated at the September hearings of the CA Task Force with Miya Iwataki, Ron Wakabayashi and Mitch Maki expressing solidarity with reparations and sharing some of our history. The LA Reparations Commission has just started its hearings or "homecomings" to give space to people to speak. Internationally, Kathy M was invited to a convening called by Nikole Hannah-Jones in Italy to share the experiences of the Japanese American grassroots redress movement with others from the US as well as Africa.



Miya Iwataki's testimony at the CA Reparations Task Force hearing

Film Screenings

NP/NCRR and NNRC sponsored two film screenings and conversations: "100 Years from Mississippi" with Tarabu Beterai and Nobuko Miyamoto in conversation with Nick Nagatani and Sequoia Mercier in May and "A Vanished Dream: Wartime Story of My Japanese Grandfather" with photojournalist, Regina H Boone in conversation with Emily Akpan. Both were very well received and attended via Zoom.

Coming up in 2023:

The committee will continue to follow the CA Task Force as it prepares its final report and recommendations on remedies as well as the LA Reparations Commission which has now has some staff to support the work and outreach. Our focus will be conducting

workshops and continuing to learn both from our own history of redress as well as from the work on Black reparations. We celebrate the victory of Bruce's Beach and understand that there will be much discussion about what is true reparations and who should receive it. We will be sponsoring a speaking tour this summer with Dreisen Heath and others (via Zoom) starting in Los Angeles.

Let us know if your organization, group or church would like us to have a discussion on reparations – we see this process as co-learning! Email NikkeiProgressives@gmail.com

PHOTO GALLERY



NCCR Members join Nikkei Progressives' Get Out the Vote in Japanese Village Plaza, November 2022



NCCR members join community supporters of Kelsey Ino, who won a seat on the LA Community College District Board.



Zoom photo with NP/NCCR Reparations Committee members in conversation with Nkechi Taifa of the



NCRR Remembers: Isa Meksin, a longtime NCRR supporter who passed away at the age of 94 in 2022, pictured here with Kay Ochi

A “Changemaker Celebration” for Judy Nishimoto Ota
Saturday March 26th, 2023



“Remembering and Learning from the Legacy of Judy Nishimoto Ota”

By Kathy Masaoka, LTSC Board Member and Yasuko Sakamoto, Former LTSC Director of Social Services

2022 marked twenty years since the passing of Judy Nishimoto Ota, a trailblazer at Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) **who helped shape the organization into the esteemed affordable housing developer it is today.** Judy began her career as a tenants’ rights attorney for Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles but left legal work to join LTSC. Judy directed its first affordable housing project, the 42-unit San Pedro Firm Building in Little Tokyo, in 1990. She became the first Director of LTSC’s housing arm (LTSC Community Development Corporation), and then later became the : first Chair of its Board of Directors. Former

LTSC Executive describes

Director, Bill Watanabe, working with Judy in this way:

Image description: Judy Nishimoto Ota in front of the San Pedro Firm Building (1989)

“Have you ever imagined being a cowboy riding on the back of a wild bull? I haven’t either but it sort of describes the experience of trying to supervise someone like Judy who had great intelligence and immense passion for the cause of making housing more affordable for those in need. After we finished our first housing project, Judy was already working on a new, much larger affordable housing project in Little Tokyo which eventually became Casa Heiwa. LTSC had become a major player in developing affordable housing—and it was Judy’s drive and vision that pushed us forward—like a bull that cannot be contained or tamed. I think Judy would be pleased with the work LTSC has accomplished thus far, especially since she helped to lay the foundation for that work.”

Dean Toji, a former LTSC Board Member who also worked with Judy on the LTSC Housing Committee, remembers Judy’s belief in “doing big things”. Chancee Martorell, Executive Director of Thai CDC, called Judy her “mentor and a disruptor of the status quo.” Erich Nakano, LTSC Executive Director, first met Judy in 1991 at an internship fair while he was at UCLA’s Urban Planning school. “Because I had been involved in earlier activism in Little Tokyo from the 1970’s to fight displacement of low income residents, there was an immediate connection. I signed up as an intern and have been at LTSC ever since! **Judy was a “force of nature”** always driving, pushing forward, looking for ways to fight for affordable housing, to secure justice for residents, to dive into opportunities to build housing and bring back seniors and other residents who had been displaced. I miss her energy and determination. She left a legacy which will live on in the community development side of LTSC’s mission.”

Thanks to Judy’s foundational work and vision, LTSC has now built over **1,000 units of affordable housing across the greater LA area, with 600 units in the pipeline**, impacting thousands of people in need of affordable housing. As LTSC continues to expand its portfolio, we celebrate Judy and her values, and learn from LTSC’s 30+ year history of housing development in Little Tokyo. Please join Judy’s family, friends, and LTSC colleagues in a “Changemaker Celebration” honoring Judy and her impact on the nonprofit affordable housing sector. This free event will include food, music, salsa dancing (Judy’s favorite!) and a tour of the San Pedro Firm building (LTSC’s first affordable housing project). **Please save the date for**



ROBERT GABRIEL / Los Angeles Times
Bill Watanabe and Judy Nishimoto-Aguilera of Little Tokyo Service Center renovated building in background.

Relocating Little Tokyo Elderly Shocks Group Into Builder’s Role

By KAREN E. KLEIN
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

It is just a small room with a Murphy bed, a bathroom and a kitchen. The “view” out the window is of a brick wall a couple of feet away.

But the apartment in Little Tokyo’s San Pedro Firm Building has been home to Yoshiko Takai for the past 42 years.

Takai was 26 years old in 1950 when she left Wakawama, Japan, and came to Los Angeles, finding a job in a sewing factory and settling in Little Tokyo. The years went by, but Takai stayed, content to live surrounded by the sights, sounds and faces of the homeland she left behind.

Five years ago, however, the city of Los Angeles’ Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) targeted the Firm building for demolition to make way for an ambitious office development and civic center expansion north of First Street, between San Pedro and Alameda streets.

Enter the Little Tokyo Service Center, an 11-year-old community organization that provides counseling, referrals, escorts and interpretation to the Japanese community of Los Angeles. Intervening in city politics and

marshaling on the mayor’s office hardly fit the group’s profile.

But like more and more grass-roots groups, the center realized that the local housing situation, especially housing for the elderly and those on a low income, was not something it could leave in the hands of commercial developers.



THE COMMUNITY BUILDERS
First in a series on neighborhood groups who are creating low-income housing and grass-roots leaders.

The LTSC bought the Firm building in December, 1989, capping off a seven-month struggle to preserve the building as low-income housing. The group has spent the past year refurbishing it from the ground up.

The idea of becoming nonprofit developers and undertaking the renovation of the building themselves originally left the LTSC staff stunned.

“We didn’t really seriously even think about that possibility at first,” said Bill Watanabe, LTSC’s executive director.

“We absolutely never saw ourselves doing anything like this,” said Judy Nishimoto-Aguilera, an attorney who is now the housing program coordinator for LTSC. “But all the players in this struggle really evolved over the years.”

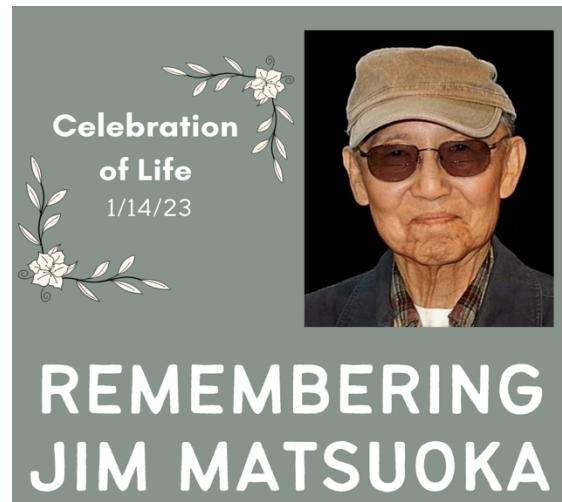
Watanabe, for one, had seen Little Tokyo’s small stock
Please see TOKYO, K7

Sunday, March 26, 2023 at 2:00 PM at Terasaki Budokan. Registration information to come soon.

NCRR REMEMBERS

Celebrating the Life of Jim Matsuoka *by Kathy Masaoka*

On January 14, 2023, over a hundred people braved pouring rain [to celebrate the life of Jim Matsuoka at the Japanese American National Museum](#), which had generously donated the venue for the event. Another 100 watched the program on the livestream provided by the Tuesday Night Project team. It was a program that reflected the love and respect that so many held for NCRR's fearless Jim, who had passed on October 22, 2022.



A committee of folks from NCRR, the Manzanar Committee, close friends and James Matsuoka, met to plan the program that included music, videos, a slideshow and testimonials to Jim. Musician/pianist Scott Nagatani, who got to know Jim through the planning process, volunteered to play some of Jim's favorite jazz pieces and crafted a remarkable slideshow with photos of Jim's life from childhood, teenage years to adulthood, that brought out the many sides of Jim. Most of us knew only slices of Jim's life but not the whole of him so [this slideshow](#) was very enlightening and moving.



The committee wanted Jim to have the first and last word, so the program began with the video of his testimony at the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in 1981 where he slammed his fist on the table, saying "I will not be rushed by this government ever!"

The two emcees, kyoko nakamaru and traci kato kiriyama, set the tone by sharing their feelings of loss as well as joyful stories about Jim. Jim's voice and lessons were expressed in video clips that were followed by speakers Alan Nishio (on video), Kathy Masaoka from NCRR, Hussam Ayloush from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, LA and Bruce Embrey from the Manzanar Committee.

They shared the role that Jim played in founding both NCRR and the Manzanar Committee and his critical contribution to the redress movement, to ongoing education about the incarceration and to demonstrating solidarity with other communities.

Andy Espinoza, a friend from Cal State Long Beach EOP, shared stories from his daily conversations. He had commissioned a painting of Jim at Manzanar by artist Willies Loya and donated several prints to NCRR. Jenny Chomori of the Manzanar Committee explained that sales from the prints would be used for their student awards program in Jim and Sue Embrey's names.

The program drew to a end with an "open mic" with friends sharing remembrances of Jim, a video message from Japan and clips of Jim at Tuesday Night Café. His son, James, expressed his appreciation to all of Jim's friends and his family and revealed his plans to publish Jim's children's story called "Inky and the Treasure of Manzanar." But it was Jim who had the last word. [In a 2011 video of the DOR at UC Riverside.](#) Jim recited a poem and offered a "toast." Here are his words:

*"Let's look forward to the coming year
If we stand resolute there is nothing to fear
So, let's pick up a glass to toast the new season
For a land filled with hope, justice and reason
With smiling faces, no one with a grump
Because you know we didn't vote for Trump
So, with drink in hand among those we hold dear
Let's give a big cheer for a better new year!
Kampai – Salud – Cowabunga!"*



Jim speaks to Vigilant Love youth about his WWII confinement at Manzanar in 2019