

Nishio, Maki Honored at DOR

Community leaders, Alan Nishio and Professor Mitchell T. Maki, were honored at the 2001 Day of Remembrance program on Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo.

"On this Day of Remembrance we not only remember the signing of Executive Order 9066, but we celebrate signing of the redress bill, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988," co-host Kathy Masaoka of NCCR.

Among those instrumental in the redress campaign were honorees Nishio and Maki.

Alan Nishio

Long time Asian American activist Nishio was selected at this year's recipient of the NCCR's "Fighting Spirit Award." Given in conjunction with each DOR program, this award honors individuals who have exhibited a strong commitment to the struggle for justice and have shown the fighting spirit necessary to help win redress for the Japanese American community.

"It's such a community effort by so many people that it's always awkward to get an award for an individual," Nishio said. "But I'm very honored to join other Fighting Spirit Award winners like Jim Matsuoka, Fred Okrand, Jimmie Omura, Michi Weglyn, the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee and many others ... It's an honor to be part of the redress movement ... of a movement for social change, because you realize that collectively you can make a difference."

Nishio, who currently serves as the associate vice president of student services at California State University, Long Beach, was one of the early participants in the "Asian American Movement," a call for social change that swept through college campuses and Asian communities during the 1970's. He was heavily influenced by the civil rights movement and the opposition to the war in Vietnam.

After graduating from UC Berkeley, Nishio, a native of Culver City/Venice, returned to southern California to participate in a master's degree program in public administration at USC. At USC he started his career as assistant director at the Center for Social Action. After graduation, he accepted the position of director for the Asian American Studies Program at UCLA. Many have credited him with developing this program into one of the largest centers of Asian American scholarship and activity in the nation.

Beyond his work at College campuses, Nishio was one of the earliest of the Sansei generation who sought to resurrect and save the historic Little Tokyo community. He was a founding member and president of LTPRO, the Little Tokyo Peoples Rights Organization. In the 70's, this grassroots group challenged the evictions caused by the redevelopment that took place in Little Tokyo. The redevelopment threatened to displace many cultural groups, social

challenged the evictions caused by the redevelopment that took place in Little Tokyo. The redevelopment threatened to displace many cultural groups, social service organizations and elderly issei tenants who lived in the small hotels in the area.

Moving LTPRO forward, Nishio helped to bring the organization into the campaign for redress in 1980. He was a founding member of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations, now known as the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress. He has served as co-chairperson of NCCR and is widely credited as one of the architects of NCCR's historic lobbying effort to Washington, D.C. in 1987.

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He serves on the boards of Visual Communications and the Japanese American Community Services organization, which had a long history in the Japanese American community.

He remains very active in Asian American affairs, having served as past president of the Little Tokyo Service Center. He is currently on its board.

NCCR member, Jim Matsuoka stated, "We are extremely fortunate to have someone so dedicated and so talented as Alan working for our community. He is what our Fighting Spirit Award is all about!"

Mitchell Maki

The Japanese American Citizens League Pacific Southwest District presented its Community Achievement Award to Maki, assistant professor in the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research and a respected scholar on the Japanese American redress movement.

In Sept. 1997, Maki, along with Dr. Harry Kitano and Megan Berthold, received a Civil Liberties Public Education Fund grant and coordinated the "Voices of Japanese American Redress Conference" held at UCLA. This conference brought together seventy of the high profile participants in the redress campaign to engage in discussions and an analysis of the movement.

Along with Kitano and Berthold, he authored "Achieving the Impossible Dream, How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress," a detailed description of the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. In Dec. 2000, the book was a recipient of the Gustavus Myers Outstanding Book Award, given to books addressing the study of bigotry and human rights in North America.

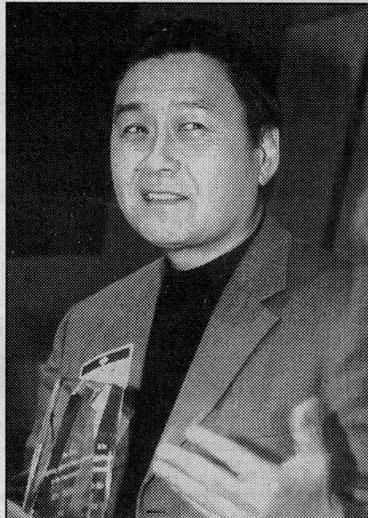
In 1998 Maki received the UCLA Department of Social Welfare's nomination for a university wide distinguished teaching award. He received his bachelor's degree in public affairs and his master's and doctorate degrees in social

work from the University of Southern California. Maki is a licensed clinical social worker.

Maki serves on the boards of the Asian American Drug Abuse Program, Inc., the Bruggemeyer Memorial Library in Monterey Park and is also a member of the advisory board for the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program. Maki has served as the vice president of the East Los Angeles chapter of the JACL and was an active member of the JACL PSWD's Civil Rights Caucus.

"When Beth Au (director of JACL-PSW) called me a couple of weeks ago and said I had been chosen for this award, my immediate reaction was embarrassment, great embarrassment, because I knew I would be here today in the presence of people like Alan Nishio, Kay Ochi, Richard Katsuda, and all the attorneys that made redress possible," Professor Maki stated. "These are the real heroes of the Japanese American community. These are the people who made justice and redress a reality ... These are the people who made this country a better place for my kids.

"I deserve no award for serving this community. Our community deserves to be served," Maki declared.



Alan Nishio



Mitchell Maki

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