



# *Florin J.A.C.L. Newsletter*

*Florin Japanese American Citizens League*

- *Sacramento Valley*

Andy Noguchi and Josh Kaizuka, Co-Presidents

P.O. Box 292634, Sacramento, CA 95829

Website: [www.florinjacl.com](http://www.florinjacl.com)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/florinjacl](https://Facebook.com/florinjacl)

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## ***Fall 2024 Newsletter***

In this newsletter:

Page 2: Co-President's Message

Pages 3-4: A Repeat of Past Failures of Democracy?

Page 5: Reclaiming Sacramento's Japantown

Page 6: Florin's Japantown, Nikkei Dogs Fundraiser

Page 7: JACL National Convention

Page 8: Kansha History Presentation

Page 9: Florin JACL Statement on Anti-Haitian Statements

Page 10: Ice Cream Social Recap, New Members

## Co-President's Message



By Josh Kaizuka

2024 seems to have gone by so quickly as we approach the holiday season.

In addition to our regular events such as Mochi Madness, NCTOR, the Florin Manzanar Pilgrimage, Ice Cream Social, Women's Forum, Obon Workshop, Nikkei Dogs, and our upcoming 89th Annual Awards and Installation Luncheon, we have been working on several projects.

Since our winter newsletter, we helped support an event in Little Tokyo at the Japanese American National Museum titled "Our Fragile Democracy" on February 24. More on that is in the newsletter. Many of our members supported and even worked on the Sacramento Japantown Art Mural project, which was completed for AAPI Heritage Month. We were sponsors for the Sacramento premiere screening of Kinsukuroi at the B Street Theatre and the "Kansha History Presentation: The Incredible History of Nikkei Farmers in the Delta" at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento.

On the advocacy side, we supported efforts at the former Tule Lake Segregation Center. Our members, Yoshinori "Toso" Himel, Paul Masuhara, and our good friend Mark Merin, continue to litigate on behalf of the Tule Lake Committee. We also submitted a letter supporting a Land Acknowledgement for the Folsom Unified School District after a board member attempted to equate the dispossession of Japanese Americans' property during WWII with efforts to adopt a formal land acknowledgment statement by the school district.

Additionally, we co-sponsored a resolution at this year's National JACL convention, calling for National JACL to advocate for a ceasefire in Gaza, allow the sustained and free flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and suspend military aid, assistance, and diplomatic support to Israel until it does so. We also called for the resolution to be sent to President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and leaders of the U.S. House and Senate. The resolution passed overwhelmingly.

Our board also felt it was necessary to issue a statement denouncing the anti-Haitian hate and racist statements being made. That statement is included in this newsletter. More recently, a statement was made equating the imprisonment of January 6 defendants to the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans during WWII—an outrageous and false equivalence. It demeans the work of the Japanese American community in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1988 and the continuing educational work to prevent a mass loss of liberties and civil rights from happening again.

Florin JACL-Sacramento Valley continues to collaborate with numerous local organizations on anti-hate work, supporting various projects, and advocating for social justice issues.

As we approach the end of the year, I want to thank our executive board members, chairs, committee members, our over 200 members, and our many collaborating organizations and friends. With your support, we have been able to continue our civil rights and social justice work for 89 years, and we look forward to continuing this important work into our 90th Anniversary!

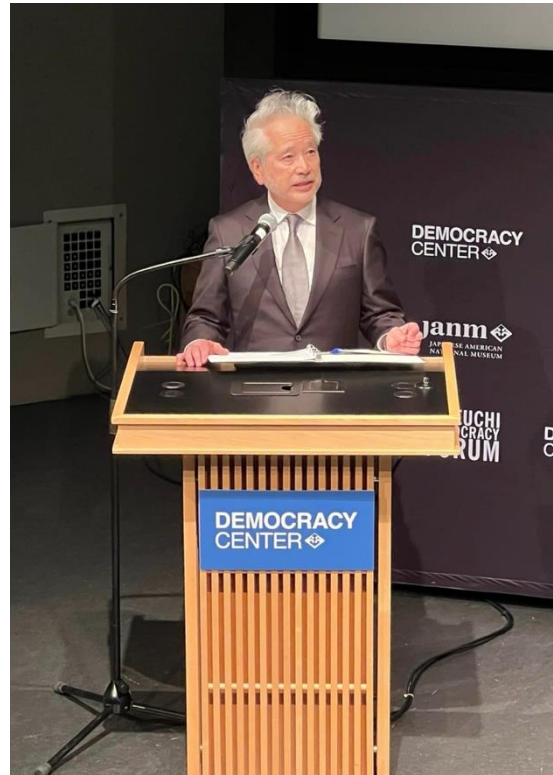
See you at our Anniversary Awards and Installation Luncheon on December 7!

# A Repeat of Past Failures of Democracy?

By Josh Kaizuka

On August 10, 2023, California Attorney General Rob Bonta issued a formal apology on behalf of the state for its involvement in the mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, an injustice that resulted from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. This apology marked a significant moment of reparative justice, recognizing the state's complicity in one of the most infamous violations of civil liberties in U.S. history.

Key figures, particularly Asian American leaders, played pivotal roles in this effort. Don Tamaki, a Japanese American attorney, was a central figure in the legal battle that overturned the wartime conviction of Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American who challenged his incarceration. Tamaki's long history of advocacy for Asian American rights, including his work on the California Reparations Task Force, demonstrates the enduring struggle for justice and accountability. Appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom, Tamaki has been instrumental in addressing issues related to reparations for African Americans as well, making connections between the historic wrongs done to Japanese Americans and the broader racial injustices in American history.



*(Don Tamaki)*



*(Ann Burroughs w/JANM and Attorney General Rob Bonta)*

The apology from California was led by Rob Bonta, a Filipino American and the state's first Asian American attorney general. Bonta emphasized the importance of acknowledging past injustices to prevent them from being repeated. His leadership in issuing this apology aligns with his broader commitment to civil rights, further cementing his role in promoting reparative justice for historically marginalized communities.

This acknowledgment took place against the backdrop of a broader conversation about the fragility of democracy and civil liberties. On

February 24, 2024, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Los Angeles hosted a symposium titled "Our Fragile Democracy: Historic and Present-Day Attacks on Our Civil Rights and Civil Liberties." The event featured both Tamaki and Bonta, exploring the historical injustices faced by Japanese Americans and the ongoing challenges to civil rights in the U.S. today. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)**

# A Repeat of Past Failures of Democracy?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

In his keynote address, Tamaki drew a direct link between the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the rise of conspiracy theories and misinformation in modern America, particularly in the aftermath of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. He warned that when truth is undermined and racism prevails over constitutional principles, democracy itself is at risk.

Bonta, in a “fireside chat” with JANM CEO Ann Burroughs, discussed the motivations behind the state’s apology and emphasized the importance of truth-telling as a means of addressing historical wrongs. Reflecting on the legacy of former California Governor Earl Warren, who had supported Japanese incarceration during World War II before becoming a champion of civil rights as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Bonta acknowledged the complexities of history and the need for continuous reflection and accountability.

The symposium also featured a panel discussion on how historical precedents of racial injustice continue to manifest today. Participants discussed topics ranging from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to contemporary alien land laws and the discrimination faced by Asian Americans in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The panelists, including legal scholars and activists, highlighted how these historical injustices have shaped the legal and social frameworks that continue to affect marginalized communities today.

One notable speaker, Clay Zhu, co-founder of the Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance, shared his personal experience as a first-generation immigrant and the fear he felt during the height of anti-Asian sentiment in 2020. His work, which focuses on challenging discriminatory laws and practices, underscored the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.



*(Josh Kaizuka, Elizabeth Sarine, Cindy Liu, Warren Den, Matthew Weisbly)*

In conclusion, the apology from California and the discussions held at the symposium serve as reminders that the fight for civil rights is far from over. As Tamaki aptly noted, democracy is fragile and must be actively protected through truth, accountability, and the unwavering defense of civil liberties for all.

The work to obtain the apology and the symposium at JANM was spearheaded by Elizabeth Sarine, who herself is a Deputy Attorney General, learned about her office’s past history during WWII and reached out to others including our Florin-Sacramento Valley Chapter to get the apology and the educational symposium done. Congrats to Elizabeth!

# Reclaiming Sacramento's Japantown: The Art Mural

In a vibrant effort to honor and remember its cultural heritage, the community came together to bring the Sacramento Japantown Art Mural to life. It is a powerful work of art that pays tribute to the community's history and resilience. This mural stands as a visual representation of the neighborhood's past, while also serving as a rallying cry for its revitalization.

Created by local artist, Karen Tsugawa, the mural captures key elements of Japanese American culture, from traditional motifs to historical references, including the struggles faced during World War II. It portrays the spirit of a community that once thrived in the area, emphasizing the importance of memory and identity.



*Miko Sawamura, Jason Jong, Sharon Ito, Jamie Katanayagi, Jim Tabuchi, Karen Tsugawa, Hach Yasamura, Barbara Takei, Michelle Huey, Josh Kaizuka*



*Josh Kaizuka, Koji Lo, Michelle Huey, Karen Tsugawa*

The "Reclaim Japantown" project involved extensive community collaboration. Community volunteers helped prep and paint the mural with many sharing personal stories and experiences that shaped their lives. This engagement not only enriched the mural's narrative but also fostered a sense of belonging and pride among locals. It took less than two months from the start of the public campaign to complete the mural with over 90 donors with over 30 of them pledging \$1,000!

As passersby stop to admire the mural, they are reminded that there was a Sacramento Japantown and learn its significance in Sacramento's history. The artwork not only

beautifies the neighborhood but also serves as a reminder of the ongoing journey toward reclamation and revitalization of what once was part of a thriving Sacramento West End cultural district.

The "Reclaim Japantown" mural stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the Japanese American community, inviting all to reflect on the past while looking forward to a brighter future. It is a vibrant symbol of hope, resilience, and unity in the heart of Sacramento.

Thanks and gratitude to the Single Springs Band of Miwok Indians Tribal Council for quickly authorizing the mural on their recently purchased land within days requesting permission.

## Read About Florin's Lost Japantown and Florin JACL

The article about Florin's lost Japantown by David Hosley offers a poignant exploration of a once-thriving Japanese American community. It details the vibrant history of Florin, highlighting its roots in late 19th-century immigration and how strawberry farming contributed to its growth. The piece also sheds light on the significant role of the Florin chapter of the JACL in advocating for desegregation in local schools and their ongoing activism.

A key focus is the impact of Executive Order 9066, which led to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Tragically, only about 10% of those incarcerated returned after the camps were closed, resulting in the irreversible loss of Florin's Nihonmachi.

For a deeper understanding of this important historical narrative, you can read the full article [here](https://asamnews.com/2024/07/20/obon-festival-traditions-florin-sacramento-county-history/) or go to <https://asamnews.com/2024/07/20/obon-festival-traditions-florin-sacramento-county-history/>.

The series is supported by the California Public Library Civil Liberties Project and the Takahashi Family Foundation.

## Fun Time at Nikkei Dog Scholarship Fundraiser!



We had a really great turnout at this year's Nikkei Dogs event with tasty hot dogs, chili, rice, veggie & macaroni salads, and of course all kinds of yummy cupcakes. This year's event was coordinated by Cindy Kakutani with head chef Patty Sanui. Nikkei Dogs is possible with the wonderful recruited volunteers helping put on another successful event. Nikkei event was attended by over 130 guests and sponsored by over 20 Gold, Silver, and Bronze donors!

In addition to the tasty food, bingo was a big hit, face painting, and the anticipated raffle prizes with a great variety of donated items and up to a \$100 cash prize.

Josh Kaizuka along with Katherine Morris called the numbers for Bingo. John Kanemoto called the exciting senbei stacking contest that went down to the wire with the winner having a very unique stacking method leading to the win, but it was very close to the end.



John returned to call the raffle numbers and close out this year's successful event.

A big thank you to all the donors, volunteers, everyone who attended, and a special thank you to Cindy Kakutani and Patty Sanui who have been organizing the event. We are recruiting the next lead event coordinator for next year so let us know you can join the FUN and help!



# 2024 JACL National Convention

By Krista Keplinger

This year, Koji Lo and I had the honor of being sent to Philadelphia as delegates representing the Florin-Sacramento Valley chapter at this year's convention. It was wonderful having the opportunity to explore the City of Brotherly Love—and get both of our resolutions and the budget passed!

This year, our goal was to ensure the passage of a resolution addressing the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, urging the U.S. government to stop arming Israel, and opposing domestic hate crimes and bias against Palestinian, Arab, and Jewish Americans. Our chapter, along with a transcontinental team of people in the Berkeley, Seattle, and Twin Cities chapters, as well as people in the NCWNP District Youth Board, NYSC, IDC, and EDC, worked for months ahead of time to 1) craft a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and beyond and 2) get as many people we could on board.

The resolution, also known as R-1, passed by a large margin and with very little amendments, which we were absolutely delighted by. However, the passage of this resolution and National JACL taking a meaningful stand is only one, tiny step.

As of now, over 43,000 people have been killed—and the death toll is rapidly climbing. The U.S. government continues to arm the Israeli military, despite this being in violation of both international humanitarian law and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as well as the Israeli government deliberately preventing food and aid from reaching Palestinians. Additionally, the Israeli government is now bombing and potentially preparing to invade Lebanon, expanding the scope and devastation of this conflict further—immeasurably so. Now, more than ever, it is important to take a stand and hold the U.S. government and their allies accountable.

The passage of this resolution was a win for JACL, but the cessation of this crisis will ultimately require even more effort—but I know that we're ready to keep fighting for what's right. I'm grateful to have been part of the process to pass this resolution both before and during convention.

Some highlights from convention (aside from the passage of R-1, of course!) include visiting the Ginger Arts Center in Chinatown, which is a community art center for youth, run by youth, and making gorgeous block prints; meeting Helen Zia, activist and author of *Asian American Dreams*, and Senator Mazie Hirono of Hawaii; exploring the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and eating a Philly cheesesteak for the first time (delicious, but my heart belongs to bánh mì)!

All in all, the months of preparation and stressing were totally worth it—the business portion went well, the budget passed in about twenty minutes. We also learned a lot at the workshops, and were able to reconnect with old friends and allies while forging new connections to further the work of JACL.



# Kansha History Presentation – The Incredible History of Nikkei Farmers in the Delta

Did you know that prior to WWII that Nikkei farmers were responsible for 40% of all agriculture grown in California including nearly 100% of all tomatoes, celery, strawberries and peppers? That over 6,000 farms or 200,000 acres of farmland in California lost during WWII from Nikkei farmers? That in Sacramento County 583 tracts comprising of 19,127 acres were lost? In San Joaquin County 339 tracts comprising of 18,998 acres?



This is just some of the interesting things attendees learned from Amanda Kim with the Kansha History Project on October 13, 2024 at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento where over 225 people attended.

The Kansha Project started by Amanda Kim in 2023 with just 25 youth volunteers has grown to over 100+ and is working to review all available 6,000 records of Nikkei farms in California by 2025 and expand into Oregon and Washington in 2026. As Kim explained when asked why these records exist, it was collected by the “Farm Security Administration” which was set up

to assure the public that produce supplies would not be affected by incarcerating Japanese American farmers because there were plenty of non-Japanese Americans who would take over.

Through a review of these records, the project hopes to connect families and communities to their history, appreciate the full contribution of Nikkei farmers, and correct the record and change how archives are maintained and shared.

For more information and to volunteer, go to <https://kanshahistory.org/>

The event was sponsored by the Adult Buddhist Association of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento and co-sponsored by the Sacramento and Florin-Sacramento Valley chapters of the JACL. Funding for the project comes from individual donors, APIs Rise, Vesper Society, California Humanities, Wildseed Fund, and the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program.

	Tracts	Acres	Avg Acres
Colusa	10	984	98
Placer	215	9,823	46
Sacramento	583	19,127	33
San Joaquin	359	18,998	53
Solano	74	6,696	90
Stanislaus	53	1,782	34
Sutter	53	2,112	40
Yolo	157	11,652	74
TOTAL	1,504	71,174	47



# Florin JACL-SV Rejects and Denounces Anti-Haitian and Racist Statements

The Florin-Sacramento Valley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (Florin JACL-SV) rejects and denounces the anti-Haitian statements made by former President Donald J. Trump and Senator J. D. Vance falsely claiming that the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio, are “stealing and eating pet dogs and cats from the residents who live there” and creating a “rise in communicable diseases.” These statements are nothing more than xenophobic racist attempts to marginalize and divide people for political gain.

Despite Vance seemingly admitting later that he made up the story for attention, stating, “If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention . . . then that’s what I’m going to do,” this bigotry has nonetheless resulted in the nearly 20,000 Haitians in Springfield being harassed; their businesses vandalized; and schools, hospitals, and government buildings to be evacuated because of bomb threats.

The flagrant lies and unbridled white supremacist ideology espoused by Trump and Vance must not be accepted as free expression of opinion, but repudiated as xenophobic incitement to commit hate crimes against the Haitian community. Hate speech leads to hate crimes. These are not new expressions of hatred, but rather another mark in the long, indelible stain upon our nation’s history of discrimination against immigrants and communities of color.

The Florin JACL-SV has a long history of standing against racism and bigotry. We are reminded of how racism affected Japanese Americans during World War II with the incarceration of 120,000 men, women, and children; how immigrants were denied land ownership due to the Alien Land Laws; how communities of color were falsely labeled as “blighted, diseased, and crime-ridden” and wiped out through redevelopment; how Southeast Asian immigrants fleeing American aggression against Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were faced with hostility and discrimination in the United States; and how anti-Asian hate has resurfaced in recent years due to racist statements for political gain.

We remain committed to building empathy and understanding between all people as well as fighting for racial equity, and we will continue to work alongside our allies in the pursuit of institutional change—because our own historic experience obligates us to do no less. Florin JACL-SV strongly urges all to stand against xenophobic, racist hate and take action for all immigrants who are unjustly forced to live with the fear, harassment, and trauma as a result of marginalization and violence.

## Follow Us on Facebook

The Florin JACL-SV is dedicated to providing the most current chapter news, list of upcoming events, and resources to help you stay informed on local and national news. Follow us on Facebook [\*\*@florinjacl\*\*](#).



# 2024 Ice Cream Social and Scholarship Awards

It seems like it was forever ago when we held the last in-person Ice-Cream Social at the Fletcher Farms Community Center, but we finally did it this year!

Headed by Howard Shimada and the scholarship chair, Karen Yamamoto, we had a great time not just eating scoops of ice cream and root beer floats, it was a time to honor our very deserving scholarship awardees, Linnea Tamaki, Jaelin Umeda and Nola Nishio. It was great to hear from them and also to have their families join in the recognition.



We also had our mini-Florin Manzanar Pilgrimage reunion recapping our 2024 three day experience to Bishop and Manzanar.



## Membership Update

Thank you for being a member of our community! As you may know, active membership is an essential element in a strong JACL chapter. Thanks to your renewing membership, we can continue to defend civil liberties both locally and nationwide. We hope to see you at our events!

Welcome to our Newest Members!

Madeline Do

Justin Hite

Janice & Michael Luszczak

Lisa Shigenaga & Gregory Wada

Robbie Uno