



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

*Florin Japanese American Citizens League*

- *Sacramento Valley*

Andy Noguchi and Josh Kaizuka, Co-Presidents

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# Co-President's Message



By Josh Kaizuka

We are already over three months into 2025. Hopefully, everyone had a happy and safe holiday season with family and friends.

After a busy year, our chapter had a great year-end celebration and recognition of outstanding leaders in our community. It was so heartwarming to share this with everyone at our 89th Annual Awards and Installation event in December.

It continues to amaze me how our chapter not only works on our yearly events but also manages to get involved and contribute so much throughout the year. Whether it's a special one-time Florin event or a project with others, our chapter is always on the go. Of course, it takes members who volunteer their time because they believe in giving back, paying it forward, or simply because it is fun and the right thing to do.

While there are many things going on these days and we can't do everything, we do focus on core issues because our chapter has a legacy of being one of the most active chapters in the JACL. At times, we are called "the troublemakers," but if speaking out for the civil and human rights of others when some won't is trouble, then that's okay. As Representative John Lewis said:

"Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year; it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

So, if you're feeling discouraged and hopeless right now, know that it will get better. Maybe not today, maybe not this year, but in the long run, things will improve if we all stay diligent, make some noise, and get into good and necessary trouble.

## Florin JACL-SV 89th Anniversary Event

By Marielle Tsukamoto

The Florin Japanese American Citizens League - Sacramento Valley (Florin JACL-SV) recently celebrated its 89th anniversary, honoring outstanding individuals and organizations for their dedication to civil rights, cultural preservation, and community service. The event highlighted the chapter's continued commitment to justice, equality, and heritage.

During the event, Co-President Josh Kaizuka reflected on the mission of Florin JACL-SV. "The Florin JACL has long been a cornerstone of the fight for civil rights, equality, and justice—not only for Japanese Americans but for all people," he said.

Josh emphasized the chapter's collaborative work, including partnerships with organizations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) on projects like the Florin Manzanar Pilgrimage, which raises awareness of past and present civil rights struggles. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)**

# Florin JACL-SV 89th Anniversary Event

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## ***Honoring Community Leaders and Volunteers:***

### Carole Hisatomi Women's Leadership Award – Sharon Ito

Veteran journalist Sharon Ito was honored for her remarkable career and dedication to the community. Over her 30 years in journalism, she was one of the few Japanese American news anchors in local television. Sharon has also served as emcee for numerous community organizations, including Florin JACL-SV.

Beyond her media career, she has been a dedicated advocate, contributing her time and expertise to nonprofits and civic initiatives, including the California Stop the Hate campaign, which combats anti-Asian hate.

### 2024 Leadership Award – Jennifer Kubo

Recognized for her 41 years of service to Florin JACL-SV, Jennifer Kubo received the 2024 Leadership Award. Since 1983, Jennifer has been instrumental in strengthening connections between Florin JACL-SV and the Florin Buddhist Church, where she also serves on the board. Her dedication, creativity, and reliability make her a cornerstone of the organization.

### Next Generation Leadership Award – Krista Keplinger

Krista Keplinger received the 2024 Next Generation Leadership Award for her passion and commitment to advancing civil rights. She has actively worked to support the Florin JACL-SV mission of preserving civil rights and heritage for all and looks forward to continuing her involvement in advocacy efforts.

### Community Leadership Award – Jan Ken Po Gakko

The Community Leadership Award was presented to Jan Ken Po Gakko, a Japanese cultural school founded by dedicated parents committed to preserving their heritage. The school has served more than 500 families and continues to inspire children to take pride in their Japanese American identity, family, and community.

As the school approaches its 50th anniversary in 2026, it remains a vital institution in California's Japanese American community and the first Japanese cultural school established in the state.

**(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)**

# Florin JACL-SV 89th Anniversary Event

**(FROM PAGE 3)** Cheryl Miles, a past president and longtime Florin JACL member, served as emcee for the evening's festivities. Cheryl is a dedicated leader in the Japanese American community, the first community president of the Sacramento Police Department, and co-founder of Closing the Gap, a nonprofit that helps disadvantaged high school students pursue higher education.

She guided the evening's program with efficiency and skill, and in a rare event for large celebrations, the program even ended 30 minutes ahead of schedule!

Finally, the success of the event would not have been possible without the dedication of committee members and volunteers. A special thank-you goes to Chiaya Rawlins, who ensured that all guests enjoyed a delicious meal. Additionally, Florin JACL-SV extends its deepest gratitude to its generous sponsors:

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As Florin JACL-SV celebrates 89 years of advocacy, the organization remains steadfast in its mission to preserve civil rights, promote social justice, and honor Japanese American heritage. With dedicated leaders and a strong community, the chapter is poised to continue its work for generations to come.



# Florin JACL Members at the MLK March

Instead of sitting in front of the TV on January 20, 2025, we went out to join the MLK 365 March this year. It was a bit chilly in the morning, but gathering together with others to remember the dream and the fight for civil rights and social justice by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warmed us up.

The march organized by MLK 365 had an incredible turnout of people. Once the march started, it was hard to see the front of the line as we marched through Sacramento. We also ran into many friends as we made our way through William Land Park!



The walk itself was somewhere around 3.5 miles and it was great to meet new people, talk, and get out for a good cause.

The 43rd annual march really instilled a commitment to walk with people from other races, religions, or culture and work to build authentic bridges of understanding and human values 365 days a year.

## 14th Annual Mochi Madness

By Judy Fukuman, Mochi Madness Chairperson

With gratitude and appreciation, I wish to convey a BIG THANK YOU to all who volunteered and participated in the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Mochi Madness held on January 26, 2025, at the Buddhist Church of Florin. This year, in addition to sponsors Buddhist Church of Florin and Florin JACL-SV, we had the honor of having the Sacramento Japanese Network/Sumirekai join as a partner to our event. The weather was perfect for mochi making with a



great crowd of about 160 people participating in this event. It was a fun day for all ages to help pound, form the mochi cakes, and sampling the mochi treats! The lucky participants tasted ozoni soup (clear broth soup with mochi and various ingredients), mochi with sweet bean (an), oshiruko or zenzai (Azuki or red sweet bean soup), mochi with kinako (soy powder) and sugar, and daikon oroshi (grated Japanese radish) wrapped in Nori/seaweed.

**(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)**

# 14th Annual Mochi Madness



**(FROM PAGE 5)** This year, we had the privilege of having guest author—Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson—read her book “The Mochi Makers,” a wonderful book based on her family tradition of making mochi. She was a nice addition to our Mochi Madness event and people went home with a wonderful new book to their collection.

Also, in attendance were representatives from the Jan Ken Po Gakko organization who will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year.

We had so many volunteers from grade school age to people in their 80’s! Arigato-gozaimasu to all! Thank you especially to Jennifer Kubo and the Church members for opening up the church and setting up the tables, etc., Greg Umeda and his crew for transporting and setting up their family equipment at the church, to the emcees Krista Keplinger and Josh Kaizuka, to the Registrars Mana Nozue and Eileen Otsuji, Tasting Station Chairs and their crew Andy & Twila Noguchi, Helen Sakaishi, Katsuko Hirota, and Patti Sanui, mochi cutting chair Christine Umeda, Rev. Noritake Imada, the Buddhist Church of Florin for hosting the event, and to those who stayed and helped clean up! At the end of the day, it was very rewarding to see so many who came out to participate on this beautiful day to make and taste delicious Mochi!



## Speaking Out for Migrant Farmers

By Josh Kaizuka

We started the year by joining the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement’s press conference at the Robert Matsui Federal Building to call for an end to the rhetoric about detaining millions of migrant farmworkers who help put food on our plates. As we all heard, the use of the Alien Enemies Act (Act) of 1798 was touted as the basis for the attempt to detain millions of undocumented individuals, many of whom are hard-working laborers.



(Josh Kaizuka, Fauziya Faruk, Dean Johansson, Omar Altamimi)

The Act is something our community has firsthand experience with, as it was used after the attack on Pearl Harbor to begin rounding up and detaining Japanese immigrants. This ultimately led to the incarceration of 125,000 people solely because of their ancestry, even though most of them were Americans. Florin JACL-SV was among the many organizations speaking out, including our friends at CAIR-SV/CC.



# 2025 Northern California Time of Remembrance

By Donna Komure-Toyama

The yearly Northern California Time of Remembrance (NCTOR) is sponsored by the Florin-SV, Lodi, Placer County, and Sacramento JACL chapters. Each year the planning committee spends a year planning this event and pondering what topic to focus on. This year's event, held on February 8, focused on Black reparations and reparative justice.

Like the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) that held public hearings, gathered documents and information, and made recommendations about the incarceration of Japanese American during World War II, the California Reparations Task Force had a similar mission. The Task Force was established by the State Legislature and Governor Newsom to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans and on June 29, 2023, the Task Force issued its report and recommendations. The NCTOR committee was aware that attorney Don Tamaki, who in the 1980's served on the pro bono legal team that reopened the Fred Korematsu case, was a member of the Task Force. The Committee also reached out to Loyola Marymount University psychology professor Cheryl Grills who served on the Task Force. Together this dynamic duo provided reflections, insights, and stories on America's longstanding history of racial hierarchy, inequitable treatment, and deliberate use of division and blame. The panel also spoke about their current work to obtain legislation to create a public education fund, similar to what was recommended by CWRIC.



Thanks to Josh Kaizuka, the program was recorded and is available at [www.nctor.org](http://www.nctor.org), click on "Past Events." The committee's objectives for this year's program were to provide introductory information about Black reparations, to learn the connectedness between the Japanese American and Black American experiences, to understand that standing up for one community helps all communities, and to leave the program with empathy, curiosity, and openness to learn more.

Committee members: Roger Fujii, Donna Komure-Toyama, Gina Moeller, Kiko Omori, Steve Sasaki, Miko Sawamura, Marielle Tsukamoto, Katie Uemura, Christine Umeda, Nancy Whiteside, Wendi Yamashita.

Special thanks to our Sponsors and California Museum.

## 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.



# Membership Updates

The JACL-Florin chapter is grateful to those who join or renew their membership every year. We press for social justice with nonviolent marches and demonstrations. We continually collaborate with other organizations who share our passion for promoting social justice and equality! Our letters, civil discourse, and community presentations educate the public on JACL's legacy for civil rights, which must continue now more than ever. Help us continue to preserve history and culture through informative and social events.

Welcome to Our Newest Members:

Juline Fujii  
Evan Jujii-Sisler  
Jonah Lee  
Jennifer Morita  
Jean Murata  
Mana Nozue  
Joyce Ouye & Bryan Hart  
Akira Ransibrahmanakul

Thank You to Our Most Recent Renewing Members:

Devon Akiyama  
Calvin Asoo  
Albert Chin  
Eric Fujii  
Paula Higashi  
Roy Imura  
Amy Kautzman and Kimberly Nader  
Jane Komure  
John Marshall  
May Morishima  
Katherine Morris  
Carolyn Murata  
Nadine Nakata  
Chiaya Rawlins  
Sharon & Gerry Shelton  
Howard Shimada  
Sharon Takeda  
Annika Tamaki  
Sheryl Tokunda  
Takashi Yogi

If anyone has not renewed or would like to join please go to <https://www.florinjacl.com/florin-jacl-membership-email-list.html>. Or contact me, Katherine L. Morris at [katmorris77@hotmail.com](mailto:katmorris77@hotmail.com), (916) 719-8389.

Thank you again for being a member of our community! Due to your ongoing dedication, we can continue to defend civil liberties both locally and nationwide. We hope to see you at our events!



# Kansha History Project Returns in August

By Josh Kaizuka

Last October, we co-sponsored an event with the Adult Buddhist Association of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento and the Sacramento JACL on the Kansha History Project. This project was funded by individual donors, APIs Rise, the Vesper Society, California Humanities, the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, and the time and labor of 150+ volunteers.



The Kansha History: Nikkei Farm History project documents and publishes the losses suffered by Nikkei (Japanese American) farmers during World War II. Many had invested their entire savings, as well as their labor, skills, hopes, and dreams, into these farms, which they were forced to surrender. The losses in crops, structures, land, and housing were recorded by federal field agents. These records offer a window into the family and community life of thousands of Japanese Americans. Today, volunteers are restoring this history by transcribing these records and making them searchable for descendants and communities. Florin-Sacramento Valley members also volunteered and assisted with the initial research.



At the event, project coordinator Amanda Mei Kim discussed how Nikkei farmers contributed 40% of California's agricultural produce before WWII and raised nearly 100% of all tomatoes, celery, strawberries, and peppers.

Did you know that about 6,000 farms, covering 200,000 acres, were lost under duress in California? In Sacramento County alone, 19,127 acres were lost. In San Joaquin County, nearly 19,000 acres were lost, and in Yolo County, 11,600 acres were lost.

Amanda Kim will return in August to the Buddhist Church of Sacramento where she will present more data and share stories about how farmers and their families organized themselves and worked together to protect their capital and community. Amanda will also discuss her findings on how the government destroyed many records and why.

Keep an eye out for flyers later this year!

For more information about the project, go to <https://kanshahistory.org/>



# 2025 JACL National Scholarship Applications

Freshman Applications due Monday, March 3, 2025!

General and Arts Applications due Friday, April 4, 2025!

[Learn more & Apply Now! \(CLICK HERE\)](#)

Florin JACL also has several local scholarships available in the areas of civil rights, grassroots advocacy, public service, law, community organizing, and teaching.

Applicants just need to include the information in the personal statement section of the National JACL application. National JACL will then forward the applications to the respective local chapters. Don't delay, Florin JACL distributed close to \$10,000 last year!

For more information, please contact Karen Yamamoto for more information at [karenyamamoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karenyamamoto@sbcglobal.net) or 916-213-2544.

## The Manzanar Baseball Project

By Paul Hironaka

It all started with a dream. A dream of playing baseball again on the original main baseball field at Manzanar Internment Camp. This dream was of a visionary who has a passion for the game of baseball. And, telling the story of the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

This visionary is Dan Kwong. Dan's mother was incarcerated in Manzanar with her family. Dan started playing baseball at age 15. He joined the Lil' Tokio Giants of Los Angeles in 1971. He is still an active player and coach on the team.

On September 26, 2024 Dan's dream came true. But it wasn't without a lot of preparation and a lot of hard work. First of all, the tumbleweeds had to be removed the original field. That process started a year before the actual game. That was done by Dan and many volunteers who came out several times to remove the tumbleweeds.

Then Dan consulted with Manzanar archaeologist Jeff Burton to find out where the original plate and bases were. They researched where original wood pilings were for the backstop and fencing down the lines originally were. They used archival photos by Ansel Adams and others to make the backstop and fencing accurate. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)**



(Mike Miklaus, Bobby Umemoto, Dan Kwong, Marty Sakata, Paul Hironaka)

# The Manzanar Baseball Project

**(FROM PAGE 10)** Many generous people have helped Dan on this project. But probably the most helpful among many was Chris Siddens. Chris is a retired contractor who knows how to weld, do concrete and many other construction skills. Chris is a friend of Alisa Lynch Broch, Florin JACL friend and former ranger at Manzanar.

The 24-foot-tall backstop frame had to be made out of steel rather than wood for safety and for it to last for years to come. Days before the historic game, part of the right field fencing made out of wood blew down in a wind storm. But before the metal framing could be used, it had to be approved by Jeff Burton. The backstop and fencing had to be true to the original specifications.

So that is part of the back story. Let's fast forward to the games that were played.

The historic games were played on October 26th. The first game was the Lil' Tokio Giants against the Lodi Templars. The two oldest Japanese American teams in California. The second game was an all-star game between North and South. The second game featuring period uniforms and equipment from the 1940's.



When I stepped on the field to umpire the first game with my good friend Mike Miklaus (who also umpires for Florin Athletic Club and the Lodi Templars), I was surprised I didn't get teary eyed or even get goosebumps. What I did get was a sense of awe. Looking out at the field with not one blade of grass. Then looking to the west at the majestic Sierra Mountains. Then, looking east at the Inyo Mountains. I imagined what the baseball players saw 80 years ago when they stepped on that field.

It was a nice day with surprisingly no wind. Which is typical for this area. It couldn't be a more perfect day to play some baseball.

Prior to the first game, I was informed there would be a ceremonial first pitch. And no matter what, the batter was not to swing and they would immediately take the ball out of play. Later in the game, they had the pitcher, catcher, and batter (Logan Morita whose grandfather played on this field) and Dan Kwong signed the baseball. The baseball will be put in the Manzanar museum in the baseball exhibit forever.

It was an honor and a privilege to umpire these historic baseball games on this hallowed ground with my friend Mike. And to participate in the preservation and remembrance of my heritage. While umpiring these games, I wore my mother and father's family number prominently on my shirt pocket to pay tribute to their sacrifices and hardship during their incarceration.

The next game is tentatively scheduled for October 18th. It will be open to the public only if the Manzanar Baseball Project gets enough funding to put on the event. They will need money for infrastructure since the park service most likely will get little financial assistance from the incoming administration. Please consider making a donation to [mzbbp.org](http://mzbbp.org) so the public can come to watch these historic games.



# League of Dreams – A Civil Rights Story

By Rick Uno

The Florin – Sacramento Valley JACL (Florin) is planning on a premiere showing of a film produced by Lane Nishikawa on Saturday, July 28, 2025, at 1 PM, at the California History Museum. “League of Dreams” covers the history of the JACL, highlighting immigration to the United States, the ensuing backlash, the incarceration during World War II and the civil rights issues of today.

Although the Japanese American concentration camps closed 80 years ago, the political climate that led to the mass incarceration and today’s climate with the recent presidential campaign and election bear several similarities. The anti-immigrant, racial intolerance, and threats to anyone who does not adhere to Make America Great Again thinking are frightening reminders of what occurred in the past. Florin and our allies need to strive to prevent it.

After the film, there will be a question-and-answer session with Lane Nishikawa. The planning committee is working on lining up a representative from the National JACL to also participate in the session. Sharon Ito, a recent recipient of our chapter’s Community Service Award, and whose family members were incarcerated during World War II, will act as emcee for the event.

Our planning committee includes Andy Noguchi, Twila Tomita, Josh Kaizuka, Christine Umeda, Judy Fukuman, Karen Yamamoto, Ernie Takahashi, Michelle Huey, Aileen Nishio, Ruth Seo, Titus Toyama and Rick Uno.

Admission will be \$20 for general and a discounted rate for students. Sponsorships at \$100, \$250 and \$500 are available, please contact me at: [Rickuno54@gmail.com](mailto:Rickuno54@gmail.com). If you are interested in helping with our event, please email me. Florin is looking forward to an interesting event featuring an important film and follow up discussion. See you there!

## Art Exhibit at UNR

By Scott Matsumoto

Your humble newsletter editor enjoys travelling to various museums, galleries, and exhibits across the country. One of the galleries was at the University of Nevada, Reno’s John and Geraldine Lilley Museum of Art.



The exhibit, “Resilience: A Sansei Sense of Legacy,” consisted of eight sansei artists who intertwined art with their overall view of the effects of Executive Order 9066 closed in November. The exhibit included replicas of identification tags from Tule Lake, Heart Mountain, and Amache. The artwork was created by Wendy Murayama and consisted of the names of incarcerated individuals and was strung from the ceiling representing each location.