



PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL - Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928



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Board Member MESSAGE

A Reflection on Sakura

By Spencer Uemura

It's May and we are deep into Spring! It is around this time of year that I tend to feel a renewed energy for pursuing goals in my life that have laid dormant over the winter months. The world seems to blossom in a burst of colorful petals and birdsong as I also come to life again.

As I write this, I reflect fondly on my Hanami outing to see the sakura on the waterfront a few weeks ago. My spouse and I bundled up our infant daughter and went with some of her family into the blustery cold to see this year's blooms. The waterfront was packed! I was both surprised and moved to see so many people out on a chilly weekday morning, doing something that feels so Japanese and so very Portland. The pom poms of delicate blush pink petals were so idyllic, I wished I was taller so I could see them up close.

However, it struck me that the crowds of people (and dogs and strollers) were noticeably dense around the cherry blossom trees, and lacking in the adjacent Japanese American Historical Plaza. The stones engraved with the experiences of our elders and ancestors sat lonely, overshadowed by the floral display just feet away. How many of the visitors learned that the trees were planted along the waterfront as a gift from Japan for the Plaza's dedication? But maybe these are just my own assumptions about what I saw. Maybe I have my own feelings

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

May 5
Cinco de Mayo
Children's Day

May 6
Oregon Rises Above Hate Celebrates
Asian and Pacific Islander Month
Old Town | 10am - 4pm

May 7
Rose City Cemetery Clean-up
9am - 12pm

May 14
Mother's Day

May 25, 2020
George Floyd is killed

May 27
Rose City Cemetery Clean-up

May 29
Memorial Day Service
Rose City Cemetery | 1pm

May is Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

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of guilt for not sharing this history with my White in-laws and my connection to it. Silencing myself felt safer than letting them know this deep part of my experience.

As a Japanese American mental health therapist, I feel like the month of May is my time to shine. It is designated as both Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. As a response to fears of stigma and judgment, we can often hide our emotional experience and the impacts of our heritage. But in my professional role, personal life, and as a community member, I know the impacts that shame and silence have on our physical and emotional health. They can eat away at our self-esteem and challenge our resilience, exacerbating experiences like anxiety and depression, and leave us feeling lost.

We Japanese Americans are truly privileged to have an increasingly diverse community, full of intersecting and diverging experiences. These stories are vital to our strength. We cover a range

of generations, from Shin-Issei recent immigrants to the Rokusei sixth generation descendants of immigration. We are multiracial and monoracial, bilingual and beginners, spiritual and secular. We are straight, queer, cisgender, transgender, and nonbinary. We exist across all of these experiences and identities, and we are here to stay.

So what are we to do? Maybe you're like me, and you find yourself hiding parts of your heritage and cultural experience with others. Maybe you notice the ways that you try to put up a front, to convince others that life is not difficult for you. My encouragement is to start small and experiment with new ways of relating to those around you. This might mean sharing Japanese food with a friend who wants to try new food, opening up to a family member about some challenges in your life, or otherwise practicing making yourself more visible in your relationships. Like the waterfront sakura, your experiences are important and they deserve to be witnessed and appreciated.

May we see each other and allow ourselves to be seen.

As before, I'm happy to be a resource for those who might have questions about mental health therapy. Seeking additional support can be a difficult but important first step, and I'd love to help if I can. Feel free to contact me at Spencer@pdxjacl.org.





Kakehashi 2023:

A Reflection on Identifying as Japanese American



The Kakehashi Project is a partnership with the JACL and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help introduce Japanese Americans 18 to 27 years of age to their Japanese cultural heritage. Next year we anticipate the program being completely open again. Applications will be available at the JACL website.

By Lauren Sadataki

In March, I had the opportunity to join 36 other participants and three chaperones from across the country to participate in the first in-person KAKEHASHI Project trip in three years. On this trip, I had the pleasure of traveling to Gifu, and I also had the opportunity to meet high-ranking representatives of the Japanese government, including Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and Special Adviser to Prime Minister Kihara Seiji and Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa Yuumi. One thing that stood out to me was that everyone greeted us by saying, "Welcome back to Japan" rather than "Welcome to Japan," acknowledging our family's history.



This trip was not my first time traveling to Japan, but it was the first time I was able to meet and travel with individuals who identify as Japanese American in a similar age range. Throughout my life, my family has been involved in the

JACL Cleveland chapter. Every summer, we have a community picnic. It was through this involvement, that I was able to learn about the Kakehashi program. Visiting Japan with the intention of making a cultural pilgrimage was very different than visiting Japan as a tourist.



I was adopted from China, but I identify as Japanese American. One of the most memorable experiences on this trip, was that I was able to meet another participant, besides my twin, who was also adopted from China and was raised in a Japanese American household. We immediately connected during the trip, and soon realized that our stories were very similar. Prior to the trip, I felt confused about my identity, but the Kakehashi program enabled me to embrace that I identify as a fourth-generation Japanese American woman. It was very refreshing to hear that other participants could not speak Japanese, and no one judged one another for not being able to because we all understood why.

My favorite part of the trip was in Gifu Prefecture. Gifu is known for its beautiful waterfalls and abundance of nature, similar



to Portland where I currently reside. In Gifu, we had the pleasure of traveling to the timeless village of Shiragawa-Go, a historic mountainside settlement registered as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. It was fascinating to see how everything in the village was created with a purpose. For example, farmhouses were built to face the sun so that snow would melt from the roof to provide water for crops. We also visited the Gifu Sekigahara Battlefield Memorial Museum, where Japan was reunified under the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600. Despite not hearing about this battle prior, it is considered as impactful to a nation's history as Waterloo or Gettysburg.

Another memorable moment was the opportunity to meet with the Gifu World Youth Organization. Through this meeting, we were able to connect with community members aged 10 to 80+. I was amazed by the sheer number of community members who attended. During this meeting, we shared our

families' stories of immigration. Though I had assumed that Japan did not particularly care about those who had left the nation, it was clear some still do. Despite a few difficulties communicating, many community members asked insightful questions about our American experiences, and it was reassuring to hear that many community members wanted us to return to Japan and stay with them in the future.

Prior to the Kakehashi program, I was hesitant that I would be able to connect with my fellow participants. But, after the fact, I am blown away by the level of connection I was able to feel and am appreciative of the various conversations we had about our identities. I can now confidently say that everyone who was in Group A is my friend, and we continue to stay in touch via group chat and by planning meetups. By participating in the program, I feel an even stronger connection to my Japanese American identity and am more motivated to get involved with the Japanese American community in Portland. I am extremely thankful to JACL for organizing this program, and especially to our JICE coordinators, Hiroko Taniguchi and Haruka Tsuda, as well as local travel agent Ryohei Shimizu for going above and beyond. I highly encourage anyone who identifies as a Japanese American to participate in this program if they are able.



Photo Corner



An Asian Festival was held on April 8th at the Lake Oswego H.S. Connie Masuoka leads the children in the Cats and Cradle game. It was a big draw for the JACL table.



The Hashi Game was also popular as many students were very good using their chop sticks to pick up their candy.



Chip Larouche, Debbie Hamada, and Connie Masuoka manned the Portland JACL table on April 8th at the Lake Oswego High School.

Photos by Setsy LaRoche



"Passing It On: The Yasui Family and Japanese Americans in Hood River" was presented on Saturday, April 15th at the Columbia Center for the Arts, in Hood River, Oregon. The event featured Dr. Linda Tamura discussing the history of the Yasui family with Barbara Yasui and Maija Yasui with a surprise video presentation from Dr. Homer Yasui who is 98 years old living in Seattle now. Photo: L to R: Maija Yasui, Linda Tamura, and Barbara Yasui.



A 99th Birthday celebration Open House for Sahomi Tachibana was hosted by her daughter Elaine Werner and Ty Fredette on Sunday, April 16th.



SATURDAY, MAY 6

Come celebrate Asian/ Pacific American Heritage Month in Old Town!

Kick-off is at 10 am

10 AM Listen to Elected Officials & Community Leaders speak about AANHPI issues, including

US Representative Suzanne Bonamici
Multnomah County Commissioners Lori Stegmann & Susheela Jayapal
All five Vietnamese American members of the Oregon Legislature
Beaverton City Council member Nadia Hasan

11 AM Visit community organization tables and Old Town Museums, enjoy AANHPI food carts and entertainment by community performances, including

Ziggie Mandela	Lee's Association Lion Dance	Portland Taiko
Brandon Michael	Ken Yoshikawa	DJ Anjali
Paul Susi	Alex Dang, emcee & performer	And more . . .

On Flanders Festival Street (between 3rd & 4th in Old Town)



JAPANESE AMERICAN
MUSEUM OF OREGON



Coalition of
Communities of
Color



ORAH is a coalition of people and organizations who seek to give voice to AANHPI (Asian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander) communities. We are proud of our diverse backgrounds and families. We will not let those who spread lies, fear, and hate about us define who we are or our place in society.



Please visit
oregonrisesabovehate.com
for more information.



Iko no Kai - MAY 2023

1333 SE 28th Ave / 503-238-0775

MON	TUES		THURS	FRI
1 Kenchin Udon *Vegetarian <i>Knife Sharpening</i> 11:15am Chair Yoga 12:30pm Mahjong	2 Chicken Tikka Masala 12:45pm Sing a Long	X	4 Sweet & Sour Pork 10:45am Move On Class	5 Thai Chicken & Rice
8 Omurice Chicken & Rice Omelette 12:30pm Mahjong	9 Panko Shrimp Bao Buns 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing a Long	X	11 Grilled Miso Cod 11am Blood Pressure	12 Basil Pork Bingo
15 Grilled Saba 12:30pm Mahjong	16 Beef Chap Chae 12:45pm Sing a Long	X	18 Fried Spring Rolls 10:45am Move On Class	19 Chicken Nanban Ohana Lunch
22 Chicken Karaage 12:30pm Mahjong	23 Miso Ginger Pork 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing a Long	X	25 Birthday Sushi 11am Blood Pressure	26 Honey Walnut Shrimp
29 CLOSED for Memorial Day Holiday	30 Fresh Salad Rolls 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing a Long	X		

Cooks: Naomi Molstrom-M Kyoko Adcock-Tu Rieko Shimada-Th/F

Suggested Lunch Donation: \$9 for seniors 65+ / \$11 for adults under 65 / \$ 6 kids

Reservations preferred / Indoor Dining Limited

*** For reservations please call and leave a message or email:**

(ph) 503-238-0775 (email) ikoinokai7@gmail.com

Seating at 11:30 am with lunch served promptly at noon

**** vaccination card and signed COVID waiver will be required in order to dine indoors**



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If you would like to contact the Board, their email address is **First Name@pdxjacl.org**

Edited by Chong Sim (simc0186@gmail.com)