

KOKORO

the heart and soul of our community
san mateo chapter Japanese American citizens league dec 2008

www.sanmateojacl.org

inquiries: mary jo kubota-arcarese, 650.593.7358

San Mateo JACL is dedicated to promoting the historical and cultural understanding of the Japanese American experience and to protecting and advancing the human and civil rights of our multi-ethnic society through educational and community programs.

Articles must be submitted before the first Friday (one month prior to publication) and in electronic format [Microsoft WORD, Calibri font] to katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com

THANK YOU FROM SAN MATEO JACL FOR A PRODUCTIVE 2008!

"That's the true genius of America. That America can change. Our union can be perfected. What we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow." -- Barack Obama, President-Elect

The San Mateo Chapter of JACL had a small but participatory Board in 2008. We, with the help of our many supporters, accomplished the following:

- Published and mailed our monthly newsletter *Kokoro*.
- Raised funds intended for scholarships with our Golf Tournament and Burger Booth.
- Supported an OCA Voter Education Program at San Mateo Public Library.
- Donated funds to support the Japanese American Community Center.
- Provided Day of Remembrance educational materials to all San Mateo County schools.
- Assisted with the planning and implementation of the May 2008 Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration at Central Park in San Mateo.
- Supported the May 2008 Immigrants Day Festival at the San Mateo County Historical Museum in Redwood City.
- Participated in the July 2008 JACL Biennial Convention at Salt Lake City.
- Supported the planning of a recognition event for Japanese American students at College of San Mateo who had to withdraw from college due to military service or who, due to Executive Order 9066, were removed to relocation camps. The event should be forthcoming and will be announced in *Kokoro*.

Thank to the Friends of San Mateo JACL



He wants to be a doctor. Thanks for JACL's work in equity and social justice, he can.

Thanks to the generosity of the friends of San Mateo JACL listed here, the 2008 Board of Directors were able to proactively pursue the goals set forth in our chapter's mission statement. A special thanks to Craig Ichiuji, Ted Yamagishi, Allan Sakamoto, Annette Motoyama, and Todd Hanamoto, who supported our chapter both financially and with volunteer time spent organizing and implementing our fund raisers. We decided not to send out our usual Holiday Fundraising Letters this year due to the poor economy and the fact that we did not give out any scholarships in 2008. Thanks to those who have donated to our chapter in the past. Happy Holidays! Please contribute to San Mateo JACL with your effort and involvement.

DEYOUNG MUSEUM PRESENTS SURVEY OF 20TH CENTURY ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN ARTWORK

The focus of an exhibit at the Deyoung Museum in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park is "Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900-1970;" the exhibit runs through January 18th.

According to an article titled "Forgotten American Artists" by Jesse Hamlin [*San Francisco Chronicle* 11/12/08], the focus of scholarship has been the big names in contemporary Asian American Art such as Isamu Noguchi or Yasuo Kuniyoshi. When guest curator Mark Dean Johnson, painter, professor at San Francisco State University, and principal editor of *Asian American Art: A History, 1850-1970*, started researching by going through archives of the Deyoung and other museums, he came across hundreds of obscure Asian American artists. Johnson stated, "We also learned why some of this material had fallen into obscurity. One of the reasons was because a lot of this art looks like it's incorporating iconography, or a stylistic approach, that isn't European. Some of it looks a lot more Asian than it actually is." The implication is that these artists did not gain financial success or recognition because of racial prejudice.

An interesting story associated with this article revolves around San Francisco collector and dealer Wylie Wong who, 30 years ago, came across a pile of old hand-colored photographs in a dumpster in Chinatown. One picture he salvaged from the debris is described as follows, "One of them was a lovely portrait of a Chinese opera actress, standing before a pagoda-roofed backdrop painted in deep Renaissance perspective, her face, shoes and gown brightened with paint and glitter. It was taken in the 1920s by May's Photo Studio in San Francisco, run by Isabelle May Lee and her husband, Yai S. Lee. Wong kept the picture for his personal collection."

The above picture, as well as other artists working in other media such as Chee Chin S. Cheung Lee, Chiura Obata, George Matsuburo Hibi, and many more, are part of the display.

ASIAN-AMERICAN VOTERS ARE READY TO ASSERT THEMSELVES

In the above-titled article in the *Honolulu Advertiser* [11/2/08] by Jesse Washington, Associated Press, it was stated that Asian Americans, who have historically had a low profile in American politics, are now becoming more prominent. The numbers of Asian Americans, who tend to be highly educated, have grown 25 percent in the past seven years to 15 million. Jane Junn, associate professor of political science at Rutgers University, is quoted as saying: "Educated people are more likely to vote, and 50 percent of the Asian population has a college degree, compared with 25 percent of the U.S. population." Junn's parents were born in Korea.

Similarly, Loc Pfeiffer, a 41-year-old lawyer, whose parents brought him to America from Vietnam, says that as Asian Americans set down roots in the United States, the less likely we are to be "passive."

With the recent conclusion of the presidential campaign, whereas in the past Asian Americans were overlooked, this time, both Democratic and Republican campaigns focused on sending "language-specific volunteers to register voters from particular counties."

Paul Nguyen was quoted in Washington's article as saying that Asian America had to learn to form a "bloc" to "demand something in return for their votes," but: "We never ask for anything. We always work for what we get." He continues, saying that the diversity of Asian Americans is something that impedes coalition-building.

CHANGING THE WORDS WE USE CAN CHANGE OUR PERCEPTION OF UNDOCUMENTED RESIDENTS

George Muñoz's article in the September 2008 issue of *Poder Enterprise Magazine* believes that calling people "illegals" is wrong. Violating immigration laws, in his view, is not an automatic crime. Thus, there are 12 million immigrants in the United States who should not be characterized as "criminals" or "illegals."

U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey said in a speech before the American Bar Association, explaining his decision not to take legal action against certain violators of civil laws, "Not every wrong, or even every violation of the law, is a crime. In this instance, the two joint reports found only violations of the civil service laws." In like manner, most violations of immigration laws are civil infractions, not crimes or felonies. Muñoz continues: "Under the law, the 'unauthorized presence' of foreigners in our country because of lack of a valid visa or document is subject to a due process hearing and deportation if the infraction is not cleared up. This is a civil—not a criminal—proceeding."

Further, Muñoz feels there is an assumption that these 12 million undocumented immigrants entered the United States illegally. It is estimated that 5 million of the 12 million entered legally with the proper visa or paperwork but have overstayed their visa term. He identifies this as a "civil infraction" that "subjects them to deportation, but [is] not a crime." Muñoz believes that those who violate other civil laws are not called "illegals," so why should undocumented individuals be called such; in the case of employers who know they hired undocumented workers, only the immigrant is called "illegal" and the employer is not.

A POEM DEDICATED TO ALL WORLD WAR II INTERNEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Inspired by the pilgrimage to Honouliuli and other internment events, Sen. Will Espero (D-20th—Ewa Beach, Waipahu) wrote the following poem in commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the opening of the Honouliuli World War II internment camp.

Never again, Never Forget

I see the image of his face
As we remember this infamous place
Birds are singing in the trees
A calming stream flows to the sea
People once taken from their homes
On a journey to the unknown
Families saddened and torn apart
Kept together by loving hearts
Men of stature and dignity
Consumed by a frenzied inequity
Who knows where their souls have gone
But the memory lingers on
Amidst the pain and tears we shed
We honor the living, we honor the dead
Reasoned thinking had gone astray
Lost . . . but found on another day
Fathers, wives, children, men
Shall not be imprisoned, never again
A nation's deed, remorseful regret
A moment in time we'll never forget.

March 2, 2008

HISTORY LESSON: IN PRAISE OF MITSUYE ENDO, FROM THE DENSHO ARCHIVES

Mitsuye Endo initially sued to regain the job she was wrongfully fired from after the attack on Pearl Harbor. While detained at Tule Lake, California, she was recruited as a test case by lawyer James Purcell to challenge the legality of the mass incarceration. The 22-year-old Endo was chosen for her fully "American" credentials: as a Nisei, she was a U.S. citizen; she was raised Methodist, the State of California employed her in Sacramento; her brother served in the U.S. Army; and she did not speak Japanese and had never been to Japan.

Purcell filed a writ of *habeas corpus* on July 12, 1942, demanding to know the cause for her imprisonment and arguing that detaining a person who declared allegiance to the United States was illegal. Endo's case was argued on July 20 in the federal district court in San Francisco. Nearly a year later, on July 3, 1943, the judge issued a verdict. He dismissed the case without comment - declining to decide an issue that affected 70,000 other Nisei citizens. Endo appealed. She likely never met her lawyer, and never appeared in court, but Endo demonstrated considerable personal courage by turning down a leave clearance granted in August 1943. She remained voluntarily confined until her appeal was heard by the Supreme Court in October 1944.

Endo's case was the only victory among the four Supreme Court challenges to the wartime treatment of Japanese Americans. It was a limited victory. The ruling ordered Endo and other designated loyal detainees to be freed, but it did not question the government's imprisonment of them in the first place. Chief Justice William O. Douglas wrote: "We are of the view that Mitsuye Endo should be given her liberty. In reaching that conclusion we do not come to the underlying constitutional issues which have been argued." Douglas maintained the legitimacy of the executive orders that authorized the mass removal and detention by pronouncing them necessary for "prevention of espionage and sabotage," and not "discriminatory action ... taken against these people wholly on account of their ancestry."

While concurring with the verdict, Justice Frank Murphy refuted Douglas's reasoning: "I join in the opinion of the Court, but I am of the view that detention in Relocation Centers of persons of Japanese ancestry regardless of loyalty is not only unauthorized by Congress or the Executive but is another example of the unconstitutional resort to racism inherent in the entire evacuation program."

Historians have commented on Endo's case far more than the plaintiff herself, who left camp to lead a quiet life in Chicago. With the husband she met at Topaz, Endo raised a family and worked in the mayor's office of human relations. Shunning attention, she did not play a part in the battle for redress.

Japanese American Citizens League
415 Claremont San Mateo CA 94401

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