

# KOKORO

the heart and soul of our community  
san mateo chapter Japanese American citizens league mar 2009  
[www.sanmateojacl.org](http://www.sanmateojacl.org)  
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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](mailto:katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com)

JACL WORKS TO EDUCATE ALL STUDENTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY ABOUT DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

## Tanforan Assembly Center Commemorative Garden



*This garden memorializes a time when this site, then the Tanforan Park Racetrack, was transformed into a temporary assembly center for persons of Japanese ancestry. On February 19, 1942, in the absence of charges or due process of law, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This act set into motion the forced evacuation of 7,800 San Francisco Bay Area Japanese Americans, who lived under armed guard for eight months in horse stalls and makeshift housing at the Tanforan Assembly Center. They, along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans residing in the western states, were later forcibly removed to, and confined in, government detention camps in the nation's interior.*

***May we honor this period of history by our remembrance and just action.***

San Mateo JACL observed February 19, 2009, Day of Remembrance, by sending letters to all public and private schools in San Mateo County that included a photograph of the Tanforan Commemorative Garden in winter.

## ABE-KOGA, FORMER SAN MATEO JA CL BOARD MEMBER, SWORN IN AS MOUNTAIN VIEW MAYOR

Margaret Abe-Koga was sworn in as mayor of Mountain View on January 6, 2009, making her the first Asian American woman to serve in this capacity. Abe-Koga had served as vice mayor for the past year and succeeded Mayor and Council Member Tom Means.

Abe-Koga was born and raised in the Peninsula, graduated from Harvard University, and served on the staff of Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Palo Alto). In an article by J.K. Yamamoto for the *Hokubei Mainichi*, it was reported that Abe-Koga was elected to the Santa Clara County Board of Education and appointed to the Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission and Human Relations Commission. She was elected to the City Council in her second campaign for a seat, in 2006.

Her husband, Yotto, and daughters Aili and Aina were able to attend Abe-Koga's swearing in. Her mother was watching the proceedings from home and, even though Abe-Koga's father had passed away over one year ago, she said, "He was the one that taught me about giving back to the community. When I was first elected to the council, I remember him saying that only in America can the daughter of immigrants be elected to one day serve as a mayor. And so I hope he is watching from above with pride."

Abe-Koga served on the board of San Mateo JA CL, and her background in civil rights makes her understand that diversity must be protected. She said, "I love Mountain View in part because of its appreciation of diversity. And that is why I've been disturbed by recent incidents of anti-immigrant and racist sentiment. . . . I myself have recently received a racially derogatory e-mail from a constituent." She continued, "I know that when times are tough it is easy to scapegoat and blame others, but this is not a community that does that. We must join together to declare that such sentiment and behavior is not acceptable in this community."

There had recently been incidents in Mountain View — a vandalized school sign; middle school students chased down a street by BB gun wielding teens; a neighbor unhappy about Latino day laborers; and now this email to Abe-Koga, who has vowed to take action to united the community against irrational bias and hatred. It's even more important to be proactive during times of economic duress.

We wish Margaret Abe-Koga the opportunity to fully exercise her leadership and creativity as mayor of Mountain View.

## IT'S A BOY!

An article by this title written by Mike Swift that was published in the *San Jose Mercury News* [January 7, 2009] discusses how researchers have discovered that some Asian immigrant groups in California are using medical technology to better the 51% chance of having a son after having one or two daughters prior. State birth records show that ethnic groups have the same chance of having a son as a first or second child. But among Indian, Korean, and Chinese parents who first had girls, the chance of having a son increased with each subsequent birth. The numbers published are as follows: Indian, 57.9%; Chinese 52.1%; Japanese 50.8%; Korean, 51.6%; White, 51.2%; Black, 51%.

The research was produced by independent teams of economists who arrived at similar conclusions about families who first had girls and then used "modern technology" to have a son. For example, in Santa Clara County, Asian mothers are more likely to give birth to sons than White or Latino mothers.

One of the researchers is co-author Douglas Almond, who produced the Columbia University study. The other economist, Jason Abrevaya, Texas, found "some couples have manipulated the natural odds of having a son or daughter; it does not identify the means they used to do it." In Swift's article, Dr. Jeffrey Steinberg, Fertility Institutes of Los Angeles, uses preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PMG). PMG harvests fertilized embryos, identifies their sex, and implants the chosen gender. PMG costs \$18,000 per attempt.

Stern includes that "The U.S. is one of a very few countries that does not ban using techniques like PGD for gender selection. (PGD was developed to screen for hereditary diseases like cystic fibrosis.) Among Steinberg's Chinese clients who use PGD to assure a son, 40 percent come from the Bay Area, 40 percent travel from China, and 20

percent come from Southern California and the rest of the world. He also sees large numbers of Indian parents from the Bay Area.” Both Chinese and Indian cultures valorize having a male offspring, with some Hindus believing that “only a son can perform certain funeral rites for a father.”

On the other hand, Deepka Lalwani, head of Indian Business & Professional Women, and Preeti Shekar, journalist and activist, believe there are “sexist and racist” implications to technologies such as PGD.

#### PDFS OF KOKORO TO THOSE WHO HAVE EMAIL ADDRESSES ON FILE

In 2009, we will make our newsletter *Kokoro* available in pdf form for those who have email addresses on file and discontinue mailing paper copies in order to save costs and to be more green. However, if you receive *Kokoro* electronically but would prefer to receive hard copy, we are happy to mail it to you. Please contact Kate at 650-574-6676 for newsletter questions or concerns. Thank you very much. Just a reminder that deadlines for material should be well in advance of one month prior to the date of expected publication of our newsletter. Thank you again for your continued support of our newsletter.

#### VIETNAMESE AMERICAN IS FIRST IN CONGRESS

Anh “Joseph” Cao was only 8 years old when his parents sent him and his siblings to the United States as a refugee escaping the fall of Saigon. While his parents remained in Vietnam—his father, a South Vietnamese military officer, was to spend years in prison—in 1979, Cao and his uncle, brother, and sister boarded a military transport plane to freedom. Since then, he ended up as an attorney and now, in 2009, is a congressman who defeated an 18-year incumbent.

An article by Kevin McGill published in the *San Jose Mercury News* [January 7, 2009] quotes Vu H. Pham, curator of the Smithsonian Institution’s Vietnamese American exhibit on this historic election: “We fled . . . a political regime that was persecuting our people. So now, to come here, not only for survival but for freedom, but to take that many levels higher—to become part of that political freedom, that Democratic process—that’s the strongest statement of what that says about us as a nation.”

#### CULTURAL NOTE: SHISHU, or TRADITIONAL JAPANESE EMBROIDERY

Shishu, or embroidery, is a 1600-year-old Japanese traditional needle art. It was brought to Japan from China by Korean artisans who came to the court of the Japanese emperor. As with other ideas that originated elsewhere, it has become uniquely Japanese with the passing of time. Shishu has a richness of texture and symbolism that clearly distinguishes it from either Chinese or Korean work. Over the centuries, Japanese artisans have developed Japanese embroidery to the highest degree of excellence and elegance that we know today. Although best known for its application on kimono and obi, the “discovery” of this art form by the western world has resulted in the adaptation of its unique techniques in enhancing other needle art forms. Japanese embroidery is among the most challenging forms of needle arts. The rich colors and patterns hold an irresistible appeal.

Instruction in the basic techniques of traditional Japanese embroidery is an orderly progression of phases that should be taken in turn. While there are forty-six basic techniques, some phases cover a number of procedures, and others focus on only one. Shishu is stitched with handmade needles made especially for this needle art form and differs from the more familiar punch embroidery technique, bunka, which uses a punch implement. Our Community Center offers weekly bunka classes if you are interested in learning more about a related needle art form; please contact them if you are interested in learning bunka in a pleasant and supportive environment (650-343-2793).

#### LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING IS PART OF INAUGURAL BENEDICTION

The Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” words by James Weldon Johnson and music by R. Rosamond Johnson, was part of the inaugural benediction of the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama. The Methodist minister, 87-year old Rev. Joseph Lowery, co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. Martin Luther King. Rev. Lowery began the benediction with the second stanza of “Lift Every Voice and Sing:”

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears.  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we meet Thee,  
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,  
True to our God, true to our native land.

Rev. Lowery has dedicated his life to fighting for civil rights.

**TET AND CHINESE NEW YEAR OBSERVATION WERE BULLISH!**

Tet, or Vietnamese New Year, has many traditional objects with symbolic meanings. Chinese New Year also has similar things and adornments.

Peach and quince blossoms have a pleasant fragrance that wards off evil spirits and symbolizes new beginnings. It is hoped that life will also blossom in the coming year.

Red envelopes have a lucky color and the money inside is lucky money. Older people give red envelopes to children, who wish their elders good health and a long life.

Platter of five fruits is an offering to the ancestors. In Vietnamese, papaya means enough; persimmon means rosy; pineapple means sweet smelling; mango means plentiful; oranges or grapefruit are valued for their color and shape.

Incense can travel between the earth and the heavens, creating a bridge between the living and the dead.

Firecrackers are loud and drive away evil spirits while welcoming ancestral souls.

Carp is the vehicle for the three Kitchen Gods.

Fortune sticks are shaken out of a tall wooden cup to reveal your fortune for the year.



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