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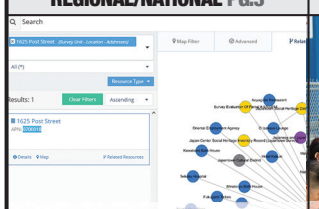
JCCCNC TURNS 50

PG. 10

Sept. 14, 2023

POSTMASTER: Please Do Not Delay

REGIONAL/NATIONAL PG.3



S.F. TO SURVEY J-TOWN

REGIONAL/NATIONAL PG.3



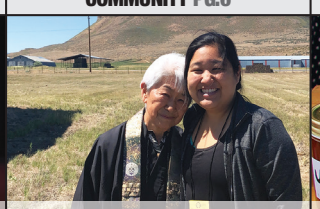
ROSA PARKS JBBP'S 50TH

REGIONAL/NATIONAL PG.5



MASCULINITY AND IDENTITY

COMMUNITY PG.6



DHARMA TEACHER LAUDED

FOOD PG.8



YUMÉ BOSHI

Spotlight

At 'The Center' of San Francisco's J-Town

By TOMO HIRAI
Nichi Bei News

Among the many nonprofits in San Francisco's Japantown that were founded 50 years ago as the Redevelopment Agency moved in on the ethnic enclave to enact the community's second era of mass removal, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, also known as "The Center," stands out as a gathering place intersecting with much of the community.

"It's aptly named," said Linda Mihara, owner of neighboring Paper Tree. "It really is the cornerstone of the community, and it has been for all the past generations that have been, all the way from the *Issei* to currently."

Gathering Space for Community

Conceived in the 1960s during the outset of the redevelopment era of Japantown, the community center incorporated in 1973 was part of a Redevelopment Agency-initiated effort to adhere to community needs following a lawsuit by the Western Addition Community Organization. Dean Ito Taylor, executive director of Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, said the founding of ethnic studies, anti-war movements and the new consciousness of Asian and Japanese American identities inspired many of the organizations now celebrating their 50th year today, but the community lacked a gathering space.

"We had individual service providers taking care of essential services that we saw were lacking for Japanese and Asians in general, but people needed to gather and take pride in the community," Ito Taylor said. "So leave it to the *Nisei* to kickstart the thing into action, right? Because it took money and everybody else was worried about supporting their nonprofits and the nonprofit services. I think almost everybody who was working in Japantown or a nonprofit, or one of the churches, was somehow involved. They were involved by word of mouth, or volunteering, or on the board, or fundraising or whatever. It was an idea that really brought people together, because it wasn't a political thing, it was more of a community issue."

Ito Taylor said his organization, then-known as Nihonmachi Legal Outreach, as well as Kimochi, Inc., helped secure federal and state funds for the community center's construction using NLO's status as a nonprofit serving low-income people and Kimochi's status as a senior service organization. After building and completing the first phase of the JCCCNC in 1986, Ito Taylor said a number of organizations rented office space in the community center, including his organization. The organization's leadership, however, felt it was necessary to do more than just be a rental space.

Paul Osaki has helmed the JCCCNC as its executive director for 33 years. He initially only planned to stay for a year after being hired as the organization's inaugural program director in 1988.

"There were no programs here. And there were really no rentals or events happening here," Osaki said. "The only thing that was really there was all these offices used to be leased to different nonprofit organizations. So there was Theater Yugen, there was Nobirukai, there was NLO, there was JAM — Japantown Art & Media, of course, Kimochi, and so they were mainly admin offices. So when I came in, the board wanted to start to see more programs, activities here, rentals, things to bring people into the center."

Osaki, whose father, Wayne Osaki, designed the JCCCNC as its architect, said he was moved to stay to support the *Nisei* who believed in the community center's vision: a place that was owned and funded by the Japanese American community.

"They wanted a place for the community … where they can have those kinds of activities, but it'd be a place that we owned and could never be taken away from us again. That was really their big goal, and so my promise to them was that I was going to make sure that was going to happen," Osaki said.



LIFELONG CONNECTIONS — 2017 Shinzen Program participants from America and Keimei Gakuin in Kobe meet in Japan.
courtesy of JCCCNC

That vision, however, was easier said than done. Building the community center took money and the building's gym would not be completed until April of 1990. The JCCCNC, Osaki said, with no track record of fundraising at the time, arranged a special loan package with Union Bank, Sumitomo Bank and Sanwa Bank to fund its mortgage.

"If we didn't raise the money, they would have to foreclose on the center, right? Which they would never do. So they did a consolidated loan package with the three banks, which is really unusual, but that way, no one bank would have to take the hit in case something happened," Osaki said.

The community, especially its *Nisei*, however, believed in the JCCCNC. Osaki said the community center had nearly 1,300 paid members when he first started, their contributions and additional fundraising helped burn their 30-year mortgage in just 10 years in 1996.

Since then, Osaki said the community center has expanded its programs and efforts. Taking to heart the *Nisei*'s wishes to stay self sufficient, Osaki said his organization supports itself through lease income, fundraising, program and class fees, rental fees and membership fees. Around 1,000 people are members today.

"So people are members here for basically three or four reasons. One is to support the Center. One is because they want to be part of our community. The other one is because they believe in our cause, and what we're doing. And then there's a small percentage that join because they get discounts on classes or percentage off of restaurants and stuff," Osaki said. "We have people that have been members for a long time, or new members, who will never set foot into the Center, but they continue to support us because they believe in us for different reasons, and a lot of them, I think it's just to be part of a community."

Program Development

Even with the stalwart support, however, Osaki said it is difficult to keep things running. The community center is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends with a staff of about 10 people.

"Is it ideal for us with so few staff? No, it's stressful, right? But we have to be if we really want to be a community center serving all the different constituencies," he said.

The community center has since become a centrally located community space used by the young and old. From pickleball to mahjong, the organization welcomes more than 150,000 people through its doors each year, including young families.

Erika Tamura, program director of youth development at the Japanese Community Youth Council, said the JCCCNC became the site of their Halloween Carnival after it outgrew their Pine Street location, and many of their programs, such as the Tomodachi Summer Program and *Kodomo no Hi* celebration in May. For Scott Okamoto, board president of the JCCCNC, these programs have become an opportunity to re-engage with the Japantown community.

"When I was a kid, I did a lot of sports at the center, and a lot of Boy Scout activities," he said. "When I became an adult and started my career, I was basically based downtown. I didn't get to Japantown much, so I wasn't there a whole lot. That was probably in my 20s and 30s. But then as soon as I had kids, I started coming back to the Center more frequently, because there are a lot of things that are there for the kids, like *Kodomo no Hi* and the Halloween festival."

Beyond the Japantown community, Osaki also said he spearheaded efforts to form the California Japanese American Community Leadership Council, which helped organize the annual Nikkei Community Internship program, which takes place in the three historic California Japantowns. He also established grassroots relationships with Japanese organizations through the Shinzen Basketball program, which Ito Taylor's own son had taken part in for multiple years, both as a player and an assistant coach.

"I think the Center really made our family and my son, in particular, focus on his heritage," Ito Taylor said. "We wanted to expose him to his heritage, both in terms of being Japanese American, but also part of the Japantown community. … The community center gave him an opportunity to experience both."

Lori Matoba, deputy director of the JCCCNC, said she took part in the first Shinzen exchange as a coach for the girls' team in 1998.

"For many of them, it was their first time to experience Japan, so to see a *shinkansen*, or try Japanese food in Japan, or see the differences and commonalities between their life as a Japanese American and a person in Japan," she said.

Osaki said he initially organized

(continued on page 12)

Tabemasho 2023
Celebrating Generations
Saturday October 7 | 2:00 - 5:00 PM
Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California
1840 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
FEATURING SPECIAL ARTISANS FROM JAPAN:
TANAKA KAMA INDUSTRIES
NAGASAKI PREFECTURE
&
MORIE AND SACHIKO WATANABE
14TH GENERATION DARUMA MAKERS
SHIRAKAWA FUKUSHIMA PREFECTURE
FESTIVE JAPANESE ATTIRE SUGGESTED – GET CREATIVE!
PRESENTING SPONSOR: $10,000
BENEFACTOR SPONSOR: $5,000
PATRON SPONSOR: $3,000
COMMUNITY (NONPROFIT) SPONSOR: $2,000
INDIVIDUAL TICKET: $200
PURCHASE AT BIT.LY/TABEMASHO2023 OR
BY CALLING THE CENTER AT (415) 567-5505
CELEBRATING THE GENERATIONS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS
WHO TURNED DREAMS INTO REALITY

FROM ONE VISION, MANY DREAMS: 50 YEARS OF MILESTONES

Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

The celebration of our 50th Anniversary is a tribute to the vision of the Nisei and the thousands of donors, members, volunteers, community individuals and organizations, all of whom made this milestone a reality. The Center was built upon the foundation of many dreams for generations past, present, and those yet to come, who will write new chapters for our Center and the community. - With deep gratitude, from the Board and Staff of the Center



1973 – **The Center incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. 1980** – **"Vision 80s,"** the $3 million capital campaign led by Mayor Dianne Feinstein and Yori Wada begins. As membership grows to 1200 members, over $1 million is raised through grassroots fundraising, public and private contributions, and individual giving. **1984 – Community groundbreaking ceremony** held on October 5. **1986** – **Center opens its doors to the community. Construction on the first phase of the building completed. 1990** – **The second phase of the Center is completed,** and an open house is held to present the Nisei Community Hall (gymnasium). **1994 – Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan** visit the Center.



The Kristi Yamaguchi Goodwill Tour to Japan helps strengthen relations and raise awareness of Japanese American achievements in Japan. **1995** – **Earthquake strikes the Osaka-Kobe area of Japan.** The Center raises over $600,000 in direct relief funds for victims of the tragedy and sends five tons of relief goods to Japan. **1996** – **The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi gift of $500,000** leads the fundraising campaign to retire Center's mortgage.

1997 – Celebrating the **40th Anniversary of the San Francisco-Osaka Sister City** relationship, the Center leads more than 300 youth, business, civic and community leaders to Japan, including the inaugural trip of the ***Shinzen Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program.*** **2000** – The Center organizes the **Nikkei 2000 Conference**, the first national gathering of Japanese American communities in the United States. The three day conference was attended by over 500 individuals, including citizens from Canada, Japan and South America. The Center helped organize the inaugural **Japanese American Leadership Delegation to Japan**, now administered in Washington, DC. **2002** – **Japanese American Sports Hall of Fame** honors five individuals: Wat Misaka, Ann Kiyomura Hayashi, Tommy Kono, Kristi Yamaguchi and Wally Yonamine, at Pacific Bell Park. Convenes the first **Japanese American Cultural Centers Summit** and the **45th Anniversary of the S.F.-Osaka Sister City Relationship**, bringing S.F. 49ers to Osaka. **2005** – The Center organizes the **California Nisei High School Diploma Project**, and more than 1,500 Nisei received their diplomas during High School commencement ceremonies throughout the State. The Center organizes the **California Japantown Landmark Project,** a permanent outdoor historic monument in the three-remaining historic Japantowns (San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles).



2008 – The Center receives the **Preserve America Community** designation for Japantown awarded by the White House. **2009** –The Center organized the **Nisei College Diploma Project,** which assisted California colleges and universities in honoring over 900 Nisei who could not could not receive their college diplomas during WWII due to E.O. 9066. **2011** – **The Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund** (NJERF) was established to aid the victims and survivors of the disaster in the Tohoku region of Japan. Over $4.2 million is raised. Inaugural trip of the **Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program,** a youth leadership exchange to Japan.

2015 –The Center honors **World Champion San Francisco Giants** baseball stars Norichika "Nori" Aoki and Travis Ishikawa. **2020** – The Center closed its doors for 417 days due to Covid. Over eight months, the Center hosted 96 online programs with 950 virtual participants from 35 states and registrants from Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

2023

The Center celebrates its 50th Anniversary "Celebrating Generations."





Entertainment+Arts

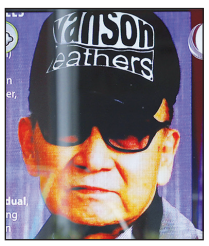
Johnny's talent agency admits sexual abuse by founder, head resigns

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The niece of Johnny Kitagawa said Sept. 7 she has stepped down as president of Johnny & Associates Inc., Japan's top male talent agency founded by her late uncle, after acknowledging he sexually abused aspiring teenage pop singers for decades.

In the first press conference held by the agency since the allegations were widely reported by the media earlier this year, Julie Keiko Fujishima apologized to the victims and said she would remain as a representative director "to fulfill my responsibility of providing redress for the victims."

Noriyuki Higashiyama, 56, a veteran TV personality long represented by the agency, widely known as Johnny's, said he had taken over as president after Fujishima's resignation on Sept. 6.

"It may take a long time to regain the trust lost due to the deep mental and physical wounds Mr. Kitagawa inflicted on his victims, but I am willing to dedicate the rest of my life to addressing this issue," Higashiyama said, adding he would quit showbiz by the end of this year.



Johnny & Associates Inc. late founder Johnny Kitagawa (L). Kyodo News photo

Kitagawa was one of the Japanese entertainment industry's most powerful figures, propelling numerous groups such as SMAP and Arashi to stardom before his death in 2019.

But he was able to sidestep allegations of abuse for decades, raising suspicions of organized complicity and cover-ups within the agency.

Mainstream Japanese media refrained from reporting the allegations, apparently due to the long-standing relationships that many outlets have with the agency. Performers represented by the agency are widely used on television shows and by advertisers.

Higashiyama admitted to "poor communication" within the agency in the past and laid out plans to establish a committee to oversee redress for victims and put in place external compliance officers.

The acknowledgment of Kitagawa's actions by Fujishima and Higashiyama comes just over a week after an external probe set up by the agency concluded it had concealed the late founder's sexual abuse that occurred from the early 1970s through to the mid-2010s.

The probe's report into operations at the company recommended Fujishima stand down over concerns her family ties would compromise organizational attempts to reform in the scandal's wake.

Fujishima's late mother Mary Yasuko Fujishima, Kitagawa's older sister, was cited in the report as a major factor in the long-term cover-up of sexual abuse at the firm.

Fujishima, who currently holds 100 percent of the company's shares, acknowledged the drawbacks of family-run management and expressed her intention to discuss her ownership stake with the new management.

But Higashiyama said there were currently no plans to change the firm's name, arguing that rather than representing the late founder, it "more importantly expresses the energy and pride that talents have cultivated over the years."

Shimon Ishimaru, a former agency member who currently serves as deputy head of an association of Kitagawa's alleged victims, said "It is gratifying to see the sexual abuse acknowledged, and the path to apology and redress opened."

But some other victims were less optimistic, with Yasunobu Shiga, a former member of the idol group Ninja, criticizing organizational changes as "superficial."

"The name 'Johnny's' should not even exist given the extent of sexual abuse that occurred," he said.

Allegations against Kitagawa came under renewed scrutiny in Japan after the BBC aired a documentary in March featuring interviews with multiple people claiming to have been abused by him.

Several former members of the agency have since come forward with allegations of sexual abuse by Kitagawa when they were teens, and a U.N. human rights delegation in early August issued its own conclusions regarding the company following interviews in Japan with multiple alleged victims.

Guinness World Records said Sept. 6 it had removed from its Website records held by the pop mogul for the most No. 1 artists, the most No. 1 singles and the most concerts produced by an individual, saying it did "not feel appropriate to leave them published" after recent revelations.

FROM PAGE TEN: Japanese Cultural and Community Center celebrates 50th anniversary

the program to promote U.S.-Japan relationships among *Sansei*.

"It became a challenge trying to figure out how to get *Sansei* to go to Japan. And then, in working with the (Japanese) consulate, we decided, 'Well, let's do a youth program for their kids, and then the *Sansei* parents have to come with them as part of the program,'" Osaki said. "But then it obviously grew from there, and it just became a real important experience."

Earthquake Relief Center

Prior to the first Shinzen Program, however, the JCCCNC also established strong connections with Osaka and Kobe following the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, where the nonprofit raised around $600,000 in relief. The relationships the community center built then, as well as the lessons they learned in organizing a relief campaign, informed their efforts to establish the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund in 2011 following the Great East Japan Earthquake, *tsunami* and nuclear triple disaster.

"I still remember, I came into the office and I called all the staff into the main office, and I said, 'OK, look, we're going to have to do something to help support the disaster relief in northern Japan.'" Osaki said. "Everything that we were doing work-wise, we just dropped. We just turned into a relief center."

Being one of the first organizations to set up a fund and have a clear plan for how the funds would be used for relief, reconstruction and further support, the NJERF fund raised more than $4.2 million.

"There were kids doing events, there were schools doing events, there was business owners cutting hair for Japan, restaurants donating, just individuals, organizations wanting to support, so there's a lot of different things going on every week," Matoba recalled. "We went online, Facebook Causes, we did social media, then we had board volunteers, just random people coming in to help processing donations and send acknowledgements."

Osaki said the community center is listed as one of the biggest contributors to earthquake relief in the region, and the only organization that is not a dedicated relief organization. The fund continued to support after care for the victims of the disaster, including seniors who had no place to move and remained in "temporary" housing more than a decade later up until last year.

Adjusting Toward the Future

While the JCCCNC past experiences with earthquake relief and statewide and national partnerships within the Japanese American community have helped build its capacity and grow its programs, the community center has also had to adjust to the new makeup of Japanese Americans. According to Okamoto, who is grandson of the founding board president Takeo Okamoto, the faces of Japanese Americans are changing as mixed-race families have become the norm and many younger *Nikkei* no longer live anywhere close to Japantown due to how expensive San Francisco is. He went on to say that technology has become a factor as well, since the pandemic has moved society online. He added, however, that he also wants to further expand the organization's reach as the "Northern Californian" cultural and community center.

For staff, Osaki and Matoba said making their programs available online has also been a boon, however, as following the accelerated efforts to move online during the pandemic allowed the organization to reach participants in 34 states and five different continents. Osaki noted that a participant from Alaska continues to participate in online classes today.

"It's great that we have a facility, but if you live in Sacramento or Los Angeles or Hawai'i or Wisconsin and you're interested in Japanese culture, how can we reach you? It's difficult to come here. So that online component of putting out classes and workshops and some of the things we did during the pandemic that we still do, I think kind of opened our minds to something that we can do and I think we should do," Matoba said.

Celebrating 50 years, the community center also looked at doing something new. While the annual "Tabemasho" fundraiser still invites artisans from Japan and celebrates the community center's 50 years, leaders said they put the most effort into their two 50th anniversary celebration programs: Center Fest, a 21-plus dance party held in June and a Nobuko Miyamoto concert in August. While the Miyamoto concert, which catered to *Sansei* and older community members, was deemed a success, Okamoto expressed his surprise at how successful Center Fest was.

"I don't know why, but we hadn't really considered having a party in the gym with ... a live band and a DJ, and food and drinks. I mean, that sort of feels like it should have been a no-brainer, but that was not only very, very successful (but) multiple people came up to me that night and said, 'this is great, when are you doing it again?'" Okamoto said.

Cultivating Meaningful Work and Talent

Osaki, who has been leading the organization for three decades, said he and his organization have been considering the future leadership of the organization as well. According to the executive director, they are almost done with putting together a succession plan that has been in the works for the past two years. Both Osaki and Matoba expressed their faith in the younger generations taking the lead when the time comes.

"I think over the last four or five years, we've brought on a lot younger staff, and so just hearing from them, what things they're interested in and hearing what they have to say about where we need to go, I think is important," Matoba said. "Hopefully, we will be here 50 years from now. I won't be here, but hopefully the center is here and hopefully we'll still be thriving then."

Osaki also reflected on how the *Nisei* entrusted him with their vision despite his lack of the skills and education to lead a nonprofit organization — by training he is a creative arts therapist.

"I think The Center has to be open to those leaders that may not necessarily have the skills yet."

Osaki had invested his faith in some of the younger employees at the community center in years past and they went beyond his expectations. Aya Ino, a Nikkei Community Internship fellow in 2005, joined the organization's staff in 2009 as a program associate and was promptly assigned to help locate *Nisei* and arrange for the conferment of college degrees that they were denied due to the wartime incarceration after the passage of then-Assemblymember Warren Furutani's A.B. 37.

"I turned that whole program over to these interns that had just become staff. I just told them what they needed to do after the legislation was passed by Warren, and that they needed to contact all the colleges, community college, state college, universities, private universities, they needed to talk to their admission people, … and they did all of that. And in the end over 900 *Nisei* college graduates went through that program," Osaki said.

Ino said she connected with a number of universities including the University of California, Berkeley, and her *alma mater* University of California, Los Angeles and other Southern Californian universities.

"That was like one of the most meaningful things I've worked on," Ino told the *Nichi Bei News*. "Seeing these families, the honorees, ... it was just such a moving experience for me."

Ino has since left the community center to work in the corporate sector and now serves on the JCCCNC's board of directors. She reflected on the skills and experiences she garnered working at the community nonprofit.

"I was able to gain so many different kinds of skills, whether it's like technical office skills within different tools and platforms, or if it's like being a leader," Ino said. "Being the sort of the younger person as an intern, especially in a big community town hall or something, I was always the quieter one, kind of observing. But as you get to know folks, as you get to know the content, the history and the context of what's going on, it empowers you to speak up, it empowers you to challenge folks, and share new ideas."

Osaki said he felt confident where his organization is headed. He hoped that he has "done a good enough job" to be able to gracefully leave when the time comes.

"Obviously, change is always difficult, but it's necessary and, I think, the one thing about 'founder executive directors' is knowing when to leave so you don't get kicked out," he said. "If you're there too long, and they depend on you, then you didn't do a good job, they need you too much. So hopefully I did a good enough job that they don't need me anymore."