

I. Sojourners,

Visionaries open hands to
the earth, harvest hope for
a future

In America.



II. A Journey detained,

Interned by injustice.

Manzanar, Tule Lake,
Poston, Gila River,
Minidoka, Heart Mountain,
Amache, Topaz, Rohwer,
Jerome

What lies before us?

III. Footsteps lead to destiny.

We dance honoring
ancestors who claim our
home, and freedom to
pursue our dreams.

Our voices carve a path for
justice: Equal rights for all.

We prevail. Our future
harvested from generations.

From my life opens
countless lives.

The journey
continues...

Janice Mirikitani
Poet Laureate,
City of San Francisco



CALIFORNIA JAPANTOWN LANDMARKS

Recognizing California's Japantowns

2005 | San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles

The California Japantown Landmark is a permanent outdoor historic exhibit that unifies and tells the history of the three remaining historic Japantowns in the State of California (San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles).

At the Nikkei 2000 Conference, community leaders and members felt the need to develop a plan to honor the Japanese American heritage for generations to come. The California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CJALC) proposed projects to preserve the history the Japantowns to the California State Legislation. Amongst various propositions to ensure the longevity of the Japanese American (JA) community, one included the construction of historical landmarks.

In 2005-06, the three-sided, nine-foot tall landmarks were unveiled in each Japantown. The monuments capture the hopes and struggles of the Japanese American community, providing millions of Japantown visitors the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the history and challenges of the JA community in California. Each of the panels is dedicated to a significant point in JA history and is accompanied by an eloquent poem written by Poet Laureate Janice Mirikitani. The first panel, "The Beginning," depicts the Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) establishing the nation's first Japantowns, selling fruits and vegetables. The second panel, "The Exodus," portrays the injustices Japanese Americans faced through forced removal from their homes into internment camps due to Executive Order 9066. The third panel, "The Promise," illustrates three generations of Japanese Americans dancing at Obon; thereby the Sansei (third generation) representing the promise of California Japantowns' sustainability and prosperities.

The first monument was installed June 2005 in San Francisco's Peace Plaza. During that fall of 2005, the second monument was established in front of the Issei Memorial Building in San Jose. The last monument was placed at the Union Center for the Arts in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles in August of 2006.

With all three monuments established in their respective spaces, visitors are able to recognize any Japantown in the state of California by its consistent landmark while understanding the long and complex history of Nikkei's throughout the nation.