



## Heading to Tokyo, New Colleagues to Meet

The Midwest continued its strong tradition of fielding exceptional young leaders as **Mia Guild** and **Nolan Jimbo** were selected to this year's Emerging Leaders Program. Both will be making their way to Tokyo for the USJC Annual Conference, where they will engage with their fellow 2024 ELPs, as well as with ELP Alumni.

Mia, a long-time member of USJC, is the Chief of Staff at Hometown Food Company. "I'm so excited to be part of this year's ELP class," she said. "It's something I've wanted to do since college! As a college-aged student, the ELP's close knit community, energy, and passion for US-Japan relations left quite an impression. I am most looking forward to getting to know and learning from this year's class and eating lots and lots and lots of Japanese food."

Nolan is Assistant Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where he organizes exhibitions, performances and programs with a focus on artists of the Asian diaspora. "At this year's Annual Conference, I am most looking forward to connecting with my fellow ELP cohort mates and to discussing the ways in which arts and culture can continue to play a role in U.S.-Japan relations," he said. "During the rare spare moments between conference

events, I'm excited to take in exhibitions at museums and galleries throughout Tokyo, and hopefully conduct studio visits with local artists with an eye towards future projects at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago."

Congratulations to them both!

**Mia Guild** with her husband Thomas Remissong (top), taking a break from one of their favorite pastimes.

**Nolan Jimbo** (right).



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### Midwest ELPs

- 2023 – Mia Guild, Nolan Jimbo
- 2023 – Joe Galligan, Aila Gomi (OH)
- 2022 – Fumi Kikuyama Maher
- 2020 – Monika Oyama, Meredith Maimoni (CA)
- 2019 – Ryota Sekine, Naomi Hattori
- 2018 – Eric Hattori, Amy Rubinger
- 2016 – Kenji Negi, Andrea Sugano
- 2015 – David Kenji Chang, Miki Sankary
- 2014 – Stacy Uchida Brown
- 2013 – Brandon Mita, Amy Ancona Houlihan



# From Anna Ninoyu: Sound Bytes



I love autumn. It's a season of change – colorful landscapes, cooler temperatures, and the start of the baseball playoffs and football. It's also a time for reflection and planning.

As I paged through our previous newsletters, I was amazed by all we've accomplished together, not just under the banner of USJC-Midwest, but as part of the broader Japanese and Japanese American community. Many of us attend events hosted by other organizations led by USJC members, which demonstrates how inclusive, interconnected, and broad our network truly is. I want to encourage everyone to show up for one another.

USJC-Midwest is a member of the Chicago Japanese American Council (CJAC), a nonprofit umbrella organization that supports its members by coordinating, sponsoring, and assisting in their activities. CJAC's mission is to strengthen Japanese and Japanese American organizations through logistical support and by hosting events like Japan Fest, which promotes cultural awareness in Chicago. When we met with Ambassador Yamada earlier this year, he was intrigued and impressed by CJAC's intentional efforts to unite our communities, regardless of background or history. I'm excited about the impact USJC members can make and the thought partners we

have in CJAC. If you're interested, I encourage you to volunteer for the 2025 Japan Fest Planning Committee!

Developing new leaders is crucial for any organization, so congratulations to our Midwest chapter members **Mia Guild** and **Nolan Jimbo** on being selected for the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) 2024! We look forward to hearing about your experiences at the Annual Conference in Tokyo this year, and we're proud to have you representing the Midwest Region. The conference is just around the corner, so please register if you're planning to attend.

On a more professional note, I'm pleased to inform our USJC members

that the Japanese American Service Committee building project is nearing completion. Under the leadership of CEO **Mike Takada** (JALD '17) and board president **Stacy Uchida Brown** (ELP '14), this new facility will house JASC's adult day services, cultural programs, archive collection, and host countless community events. I'm proud of our collective effort and determination in making this project a reality: my firm METIS Design and our engineering team, the builders and owner's representatives, and JASC leadership. It will be the largest facility of its kind in the Midwest established by a Japanese American organization – something truly worth celebrating.



Ambassador Yamada Shigeo met with a small group of Japanese American leaders at the Consul General's residence on July 18. At the intimate lunch were **Anna Ninoyu**, **Stephen Toyoda**, **Marion Friebus-Flaman**, the Ambassador, Consul General Yanagi Jun, CJAC Chairman Col. Robert Hashimoto, **Megan Nakano** and **George Kobayashi**.



# Meet Our Newest Midwest USJC Members

## Saira Chambers

As Director of the Japanese Culture Center and Executive Director of the Japanese Arts Foundation, **Saira Chambers** has been spearheading Japanese cultural programs, education, and arts across Chicagoland for over 15 years. Directing over 600 annual programs, workshops, exhibitions, and events, her organizations reach nearly 200,000 individuals annually who wish to learn more about Japan. Saira's work aspires to explore the art, history, and culture of Japan globally to bridge cultural competence and informed cross-cultural perspectives. She also serves as President of the Garden of the Phoenix Foundation, where she works to restore the historic Japanese garden from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.



## Erik Matsunaga



**Erik Matsunaga's** investigations into the history of Chicago's Japanese American community have been featured by the Japanese American National Museum, WBEZ Radio, WGN News, Newberry Library, and others.

As a community historian, he established *Windy City Nikkei* to publish, present, and consult on topics ranging from WWII-Era Japanese American incarceration and resettlement to contemporary local issues, institutions, events, and personalities.

As a lifetime martial artist, in his spare time Erik operates Shobu Karatedo, a community-based Okinawan Shorinryu karate dojo at Ravenswood Fellowship UMC. While not religiously affiliated with the church, RFUMC was co-founded by resettled Japanese Americans and shares their space with various cultural and community groups.

Erik and his wife of 18 years, Christine, have four children and reside on Chicago's North Side. Together they manage Budlong Group LLC, a commercial and residential real estate and management company.

## Nolan Jimbo



**Nolan Jimbo** is a curator of contemporary art and writer based in Chicago. He is currently Assistant Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where his forthcoming projects include the first solo museum exhibition and book dedicated to Kenzi Shiokava, as well as *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind*, the artist's most comprehensive exhibition to date. Previously, he held curatorial positions at MASS MoCA, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Jimbo earned his MA from the Williams Graduate Program in the History of Art and his BA in art history, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, from Tufts University.



# Boys Night Out 3

On July 19, Midwest USJC, Consulate and community members stoked up on meat at Sun Wah BBQ before heading over to Konbini & Kanpai Lakeview to sample sake. Talk flowed as did the sake, and while the convivial group did not solve all our community's problems, we made great strides in getting to know one another better. Many thanks to **Bob Kumaki** for planning and hosting! We will probably drop the numeral in reporting on future BNOs, as this is fast becoming a regular event.



photo by Brian Ozaki



food photos by Daiki Ishiyama



photos by Michael Tanimura



(left) Joining us from the Japan Consulate were Japan Information Center Director Shibata Tsutomu and Deputy Consul General Kishi Naoya, along with **Joe Galligan** and Sako Rikidai.

(above) For some reason, **Bob Kumaki** looks even more Japanese in profile.

photo by Britt Yamamoto

On July 17 **Bill Tsutsui** (highlighted panel below) led us on a masterful examination of *Godzilla Minus One*. We explored *Godzilla* origins and filmography, and how this film fit into and/or modified the archetype.

July 29 (busy month!) saw us at Kamehachi for a pre-launch book discussion of *The Soil of Leadership* with author and long-time USJC member and advisor **Britt Yamamoto** >







Newish member **Dee Dee Ohara Blizard** (third from left, above) being in town from her usual haunts of Michigan and Japan was the occasion for gathering on Aug. 25 at Konbini & Kanpai Wrigleyville. It was also an excuse to indulge in chef **Eric Hattori's** cooking!

**Miki Sankary** (third from left, with newish baby Enzo) was in town for another event, but had time for brunch on Aug. 18.



## Advanced Leaders Collective Doubles Cohort

**Stacy Uchida Brown** was one of the 21 new members selected to the USJC Advanced Leadership Collective (ALC).

"I can't believe it's been 10 years since I was a part of the ELP program," Stacy said. "Engaging with like-minded leaders and mentors within USJC has truly changed my life. As I've stepped into the next stage of life, as a mom, a senior director, and nonprofit board president, ALC is a timely opportunity for me to form new bonds and learn from others as I strive to become a

better leader and citizen."

Stacy joins other Midwest members **George Kobayashi**, **Daniela One** and **Andrea Sugano** in this engaging and supportive group.

"ALC has been a great community for those of us navigating the mid-career/mid-life stage," Andrea Sugano commented. "As the program enters its second year in Tokyo, I'm excited to welcome the 2024 ALC class, reconnect with my class from 2023, and help represent our wonderful Midwest region."

## USJC Annual Conference

There is still time to register for the Annual Conference in Tokyo <https://www.usjapancouncil.org/annual-conference/>.

If you are attending the conference, please email Anna Ninoyu [aninoyu@metisdesignarchitects.com](mailto:aninoyu@metisdesignarchitects.com).

The Midwest group tries to get together for dinner at each AC.



# MEMBER NEWS



**Marion Friebus-Flaman** attended the National Association of Japan America Societies annual meeting in Portland, Oregon in August, and of course ran into a bunch of USJC members.

(far left) Current and past Portland regional chairs **Verne Naito** and **Mari Watanabe** flank Marion; (left) adds in our own **Kirk Zeller**; and (below) includes Consul General Yoshioka Yuzo (Portland Consulate), USJC CEO & President **Audrey Yamamoto**, **Naoko Takayanagi** and **Dale Watanabe**.



**Jean Fujii** (the region's first JALD back in 2005, before there was a USJC) took part in *Kansha Too!*, coordinated by the JAACL Chicago chapter. Participants explored the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration and its continued impact and ongoing legacy in the Japanese American community. The program included a tour of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, a tour of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and a pilgrimage to the Manzanar National Historic Site. Jean said that at JANM, it was especially meaningful to see the *Ireicho* (book of names) and stamp by the names of her family that had been incarcerated, and how at Manzanar, a small staff and many volunteers turned a barren land into a beautiful Japanese garden.



The Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) is opening its new building at 5700 N. Lincoln Ave. in Chicago on December 12! USJC members involved in JASC include CEO **Michael Takada**, Board President **Stacy Uchida Brown**, and board members **Marion Friebus-Flaman**, **Bob Kumaki**, **Michael Tanimura**, **Meredith Maimoni**, **Andrea Sugano**, **Kaz Maniwa**, and **Stephanie Nitahara**.

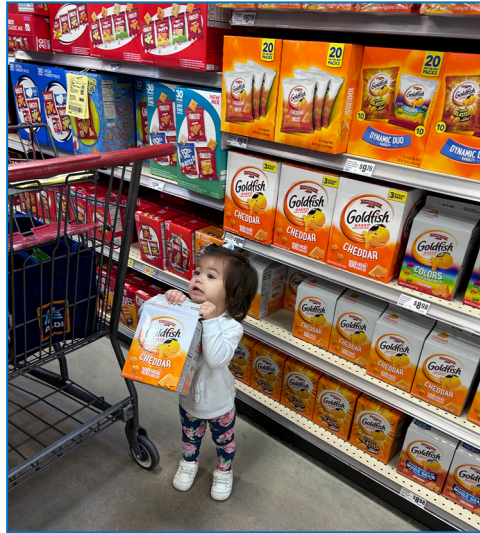
The new facility will allow JASC to grow its adult day service offering, provide space for cultural activities and community engagement, and elevate its Legacy Center historical archives, which preserves and tells the story of Japanese American history and resettlement in Chicago.

To help raise the last \$1 million of the \$10 million project, JASC has just launched its *Serve, Preserve, Grow Campaign*. To learn more about the campaign and how you can honor your family and the legacy of Japanese Americans, go to <https://jasc-chicago.org/about-us/spgcampaign/>.



# MEMBER NEWS

**Stacy Uchida Brown** started a new job in August as Senior Director of the Salty Snacks Business at Kellanova, overseeing commercial strategy for billion dollar consumer brands such as Cheez-It and Pringles, soon to be acquired by Mars Inc, joining even more delicious brands like m&m's, Snickers, Twix, Dove, and extra gum. Kellanova has offices in Chicago and Naperville, so she's looking forward to more work trips that bring her back to Chicago to see everyone! Sophie (checking out the competition) turns 2 this month and Sydney, age 4, just started Pre-K.



**Mia Kogure** recently began her MA in Sociology at the University of Kansas, focusing on research about gender roles in Japanese concentration camps. She plans to submit this research to the Midwest Sociological Society conference in Chicago next March. She hopes this will afford her the opportunity to meet other Midwest members.



**Rob Ohno**, President & CEO of the ANNIKA Foundation, was in South Korea recently for the ANNIKA Invitational Asia girls golf event, done in conjunction with Se Ri Pak (at left), LPGA and World Golf Hall of Fame member.



New mom of baby Enzo, **Miki Sankary**, is Development Manager at USJC, and one of our 2015 ELPs.



# MEMBER NEWS

## Teaching Teachers about Japanese American Resettlement

On July 23, **Erik Matsunaga** led a walking tour of Chicago's Historic Lakeview Japanese American community as part of Jason Matsumoto's Full Spectrum Features' National Endowment for the Humanities K-12 Institute, "Japanese American Post-War Resettlement in Chicago, 1943-1950." This 3-week, hybrid institute brought a nationwide cohort of educators to Chicago to engender a sense of living history through the connection of geography and stories told by local community members.

The tour was preceded by a classroom presentation at DePaul University, entitled

"Mapping JA Resettlement," by journalist Katherine Nagasawa (left), who flew in from California for the institute. Guest speakers along the route included Chicagoans Dwight Sora, who spoke about the Illinois Aikido Club outside its early 1960s commercial space at 3223 N. Clark; and Ross Harano (below left), who discussed the Japanese American Service Committee at its former Viking Hall location on the corner of School and Sheffield Streets. Written statements about the old Hamburger King restaurant and growing up on nearby heavily-JA populated Newport Avenue were provided by Paul Yamauchi and the late Mary Okumura, respectively.

After the tour, the Full Spectrum crew treated institute participants to lunch at Rice'N Bread (below), formerly Tom Yamauchi's Hamburger King, where JA legacy dishes – such as the Akutagawa, Yet Ca Mein, and anything with rice and gravy, – are still on the menu.



photos courtesy of Erik Matsunaga

Jason Matsumoto



Erik Matsunaga

