



JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN



Future of JTown Focus Groups 2021

Partnership with Japantown Task Force
& Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco

Conception

In November of 2020, Consul General of Japan Toru Maeda, Consulate General of Japan in SF Economic and Commercial Affairs Researcher and Japanese American Community Liaison Jackie Funasaki, Japantown Task Force (JTF) Board President Sandy Mori and JTF Executive Director Steve Nakajo met to discuss the Japantown community and the economic repercussions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Consul General Maeda expressed a concern for the future of Japantown and wished to hear from multiple generations, particularly the younger next-generation, to hear their inspirations and concerns. He believes that intergenerational communication can create change; and so the concept of the Future of Japantown Focus Groups was formed. Consul General Maeda sees the Japantown Task Force as visionaries and this project aligning well with the JTF mission.

Purpose

In partnership with the Japantown Task Force and the office of the Consul General, the goal was to host two or three focus groups to hear from the 'next-generation' in the community around the preservation and future of Japantown.

Timeline

- Nov 2020 Focus groups conceptualized
- Dec 2020 Goals were formalized, participant suggestions were collected, and a search for a facilitator began
- Jan 2021 Dates and planning processes were formalized and participants were sorted into groups
- Feb 2021 Formal invitations were crafted and sent
- Mar 2021 Cohort Group 1 Listening Session was conducted Mar 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm
Cohort Group 2 Listening Session was conducted Mar 18, 2021 at 6:00pm
- Apr 2021 Cohort Group 3 Listening Session was conducted April 1, 2021 at 6:00 pm

Cohort Creation

The participant selection was based upon three key criteria:

1. Young professionals within the SF Japantown community (approximate age range: 20-40 years old)
2. Long standing commitment to the community through volunteerism or work (5+ years of involvement)
3. Recommended by current Japantown community leaders

Outreach to various Japantown leaders who work with this age demographic provided 32 individual names. These names were sorted into three diverse cohorts considering age, affiliations and genders. Invitations were sent to individuals five weeks prior to the listening session event date.

During the invitation process, we saw a 50% unavailable rate due to work or family obligations, or no response. It was decided to open the criteria to a larger demographic, to include parents and individuals in their late 40s that frequent Japantown daily and have expressed deep appreciation and concern for the Japantown community. This expanded the reach of our Japantown community.

The final three cohorts consisted of 29 participants, approximately aged 20 - 50, who fall within the following segments of our community.

Raised in SF Japantown
Raised Outside of Japantown
Shin-Issei / Native Speakers
Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei, Hapa
Cultural Practitioners
Parents - Current & Alumni

Non-Profit Workers
Educators & Artists
Community Organizers
Merchants & Business Owners
Lawyers & Corporate Professionals

INITIAL ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED (20-40 age range):

APILO	Nakayoshi Young Professionals
First Voice	National Japanese American Historical Society
Ito Yosakoi	Nichibei Foundation
Japanese Community Youth Council	Nihonmachi Street Fair
Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California	No. Cal Cherry Blossom Festival
Japantown Community Benefit District	No. Cal Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Program
Japantown For Justice	San Francisco Taiko Dojo
Japantown Foundation	
Japantown Task Force	

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED WITH EXPANSION (20-50 age range):

Boys and Girl Scouts	Japanese Nationals Living in SF
Japanese Basketball Youth League	Japanese Nationals Working in Japantown
Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program - Rosa Parks Elementary School	Japanese Native Speakers
JET Program	Japanese American Business Owners
Japantown Church Organizations	Stanford University
Nihonmachi Little Friends	Tech Professionals from Yahoo and Google
Okinawa Kenjin Kai	Tokyo TV
Japanese Marketing Professionals	

Final List of Focus Group Participants

Clint Taura	Kyle Kurahara	Peter Weber
Elena Nielsen	Leslee Kurihara	Ryan Kimura
Eryn Kimura	Matt Okada	Ryan Takemiya
Haruka Roudebush	Max Nihei	Satoe Haile
Henry Ichinose	Maya Yoshikawa	Stephanie Doi
Hilary Nakano	Melissa Bailey	Stephanie Ichinose
Jeremy Chan	Mie Yaginuma	Steven Santa Maria
Kelly Yuka Walton	Naomi Funahashi	Yuji Uchida
Ken Takeda	Natasha Weiss	Yuki Nishimura
Kiyomi Takeda	Nina Sakamoto	

Pre-Event Communication

5 Weeks Prior Invitations were Sent

3 Weeks Prior RSVP Required
Bio & Headshots were Collected from Each Confirmed Participant

1 Week Prior Informational Packet Sent to Participants

Each participant received a pre-program PDF packet (see attached) via email with the following information:

- A welcome message with zoom link, program timeline and two questions:
 1. Think of your absolute favorite moment within Japantown and write down three emotions that come up for you
 2. Think of a person, past, present or future, that you admire for their strength and resilience, and has influenced your Japanese-American story. Bring a photo to share.
- Headshots and bios of their fellow cohort attendees, the Japantown Task Force and Consul General of San Francisco staff.
- The historical document provided by the National Japanese American Historical Society: 50 Years of Japan Center Peach Plaza & Pagoda San Francisco's Japantown 1968 -2018
- An excerpt of the current draft of the CHHESS report with a link to the full document
- [Links to Detailed maps:](#) San Francisco's Japantown in 1940, 1949, 1959, 1972, and 2004

Focus Group Event

Each Zoom focus group meeting of 9 to 10 participants opened with introductions of the Consulate General of Japan and Japantown Task Force staff. In each cohort meeting, Consul General Maeda expressed sincere concern for the survival of Japantown and his strong belief that the voices of younger generations need to be heard in order for post pandemic recovery to occur, as well as overall future prosperity.

The facilitator welcomed the participants and recognized their passion for the Japantown community, and thanked them for participating. We also reinforced that their voice was important in this discussion along with their fellow cohorts, and the Consulate General and Japantown Task Force staff would hear and incorporate their thoughts and concerns as the planning for the future of Japantown continues.

We proceeded to ask the participants to recall their favorite moment in Japantown and to enter their emotions in the chat. Here were their responses.



We then asked each participant to introduce their person of significance from the past, present or future, that they admired for their strength and resilience, and had influenced their Japanese-American story. Many of the participants shared photos of their own family, the importance of the next generation of children, spending time learning a language, experiencing cultural traditions with their grandmothers, hearing stories of

resilience as war brides, internment/incarceration and facing racism. Other stories included various migration journeys of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and extended family. Some stories included Japanese American farmers in the central valley, as well as 442nd Veterans. Other participants shared photos of significant Japanese-American activists and artists such as Jeff Adachi, Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, George Yoshida, Satsuki Ina and their Kyudo Archery sensei. Some shared their respect by honoring elders and leaders in the Japanese-American community such as Yona Abiko, Dr. Tsumori, Behn Nakajo, and Ryan Kimura.

The objective for this discussion was to hear the ideas, concerns and inspiration for the future of Japantown in an open, unstructured dialog. To start the conversation, the participants were asked to think of Japantown from two lenses; the emotional space and the physical space. Four questions were then placed in the chat to prompt and start dialog.

WHAT DOES A VIBRANT AND THRIVING JAPANTOWN LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

HOW DO WE BUILD ON OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY'S ASSETS, POTENTIAL, HISTORIC LEGACY AND RICH CULTURAL TIES TO JAPAN?

HOW DO WE CREATE A PLACE THAT PROMOTES PEOPLE'S HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING?

WHAT WOULD BRING A SENSE OF PRIDE OF HERITAGE TO OUR NEXT GENERATIONS?

In active dialog, we exceeded the 90 minute meeting time, and many felt the conversations were cut short. For the last session, we decided to increase the meeting time to 120 minutes. The conversations in each cohort were very engaging and different, but many of the outcomes aligned.

Discussion Summary

Importance of Arts and Culture

Art and Culture propels people forward. Authenticity of our Japanese cultural arts and food brings pride to our multi-generational community. Festivals and events provide opportunities to gather as a participant, volunteer, or organizer. More festivals would be preferred to be able to showcase our traditional arts and bring our community together, since many live outside of Japantown. The historic narrative of Japantown's resilience and immigrant story provides both a traditional and modern cultural understanding through murals, music, arts, and performance. A place and stage to rehearse, perform and showcase our arts and cultural groups would be welcomed as art helps preserve our language, traditions and culture by educating and uplifting our next generations.

Inclusiveness and welcoming

Being inclusive and welcoming of the people within and around our community will help bring healing to the neighborhood, reconciliation of the past, and build a stronger community as a whole. Currently, it takes deliberate effort to assimilate into our current community culture. By not welcoming others of diverse race and gender, we deter the next generations from wanting to participate in and preserve Japantown as a community. How do we do a better job of welcoming and supporting other communities of color, ethnicities and supporting gender equality? How do we support and align in solidarity with parallel communities who have faced similar historical immigrant and displacement trauma? Flying an LGBTQ flag would be an easy way to show support. How can we support, serve and welcome people where language isn't a barrier, including shin-issei, Korean, Chinese, Spanish and other ethnic bilingual communities that share our Japantown footprint and want to have a role to assimilate and feel included? How do we welcome every mindset and help whenever possible developing a community of inclusivity?

Commerce and Housing

Land ownership brings pride to our community. Mixed-use buildings including senior and family housing, office space and grocery and retail space would provide the opportunity for our youth to grow up together, our seniors to be better cared for, allow our community members to support each other, increase the safety of our neighborhood, and strengthen our economic ecosystem to support a vibrant work-live community. Assuming that the creation of more housing within the footprint of Japantown would increase density, some welcomed the idea, while others feared it would end up feeling over-built, like SOMA near the San Francisco Giants baseball

stadium. There is a deep appreciation for the historical buildings and legacy businesses established in the 114 year history of Japantown. Many of the cohort participants expressed interest in exploring opportunities to help the community own more land by way of contributing to an investment fund, or land trust. Affordable housing for our teachers, artists, professionals, families and those who work in the community would also be welcomed.

The types of businesses we have in Japantown should better reflect our cultural authenticity and be more relevant to the younger generations of Japanese-Americans. Currently there are a number of preferable options for them elsewhere. How do we attract more retailers from Japan to open satellite locations and connect our cultural community to modern Japan? The feeling of people walking around and eating outdoors creates a feeling of energy, citing Los Angeles' Little Tokyo's outdoor layout as a good example. Night life, food and cultural festivals and events create energy for our neighborhood. Retail can be the gateway to cultural arts and historical place-based education. Sub-cultures of modern Japan can reconnect old and new. Providing authentic Japanese experiences such as renting and wearing a kimono, new food or arts experiences unique only to San Francisco's Japantown and not found anywhere in the U.S would prove an investment to our economic recovery. Welcoming new businesses by assisting them to navigate the challenges of SF City Planning, various landlords, and marketing would help establish them quickly and help drive the economy.

Place-based future planning might include more Japanese architecture, green spaces, organic eateries, playgrounds, intergenerational housing and support, live-work spaces and safe places for our teens and youth to gather and enjoy together. Safety and cleanliness is a concern for those who ponder returning to live and work in Japantown.

Identity of our Japanese-American Community

The connection to Japan is fading. As our Japanese-American generations assimilate deeper into the multi-ethnic fabric of the Bay Area region, the understanding of authentic Japanese culture and traditions is diminishing due to inaccessibility and becoming less important to the family dynamic of our Nikkei community. We can bring back the spirit of our Issei community who came to America, worked together, provided assistance to each other, and created economic stability to build and establish a working sustainable community for all.

However, by returning the authenticity of our Japanese culture into Japantown, and working in unity for success, we have a great opportunity to share the traditional roots

and modern trends of Japan through food, arts, culture and fashion by connecting our community to its roots.

Healing our Community, Getting People Back to Japantown.

Property and pride were lost by the displacement of our Japanese-American community during World War II and Redevelopment. There is a strong feeling that our community needs to hold our current government accountable through acknowledgement and reparations. The SF Housing Certificate of Preference legislation is a start. Additionally, more affordable housing designated for our low to mid-income level community members, attractive office space, a movement of cultural story-telling of both the past and present through the arts, and reclaiming land-ownership with city fiduciary assistance were all cited as ways to build back our community.

Japantown's survival is dependent upon the ability of our community leaders to unify and work together towards a strategic collective vision and create a plan to move forward for the betterment of the entire community. A strong task force will ensure its success. Current politics among Japantown leaders is unknowingly holding back the preservation of this community.

Trust must be rebuilt within the community by supporting and mentoring the next generation to lead, having trusted community members at the table during discussions, and providing access to information on progress and issues concerning the community as a whole.

We are currently facing a historical shift in population, property use and ownership. The landscape of Japantown is changing as family businesses close, residents move away, and properties are being sold and developed. We have new immigrants coming to Japantown in search of inclusion. We have families wanting to bring their next generations back to Japantown after incarceration and redevelopment displacement. Festivals and events bring purpose to individuals of our Japanese-American communities through attending, planning, performing, or volunteering. Deeper relationships can evoke needed change amongst seniors and youth, nonprofits and merchants, foreign speakers and English speakers.

A resurgence of pride in our Japanese American community through honest engagement, inclusivity, arts and activism and looking at opportunities to integrate the authenticity of Japan's vibrant culture into Japantown may secure the economic recovery and cultural preservation of San Francisco's Japantown. Implementation of a master plan that includes city investments in rebuilding our neighborhood, which would

integrate all generational and income levels within our community into a healthy economic live-work-shop-play ecosystem and will ensure its existence for many generations to come.

Closing Comments

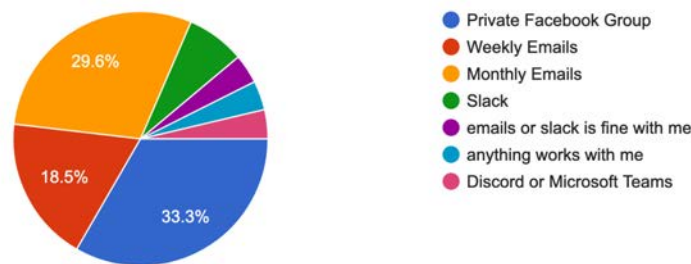
Sandy Mori welcomed all participants to Japantown Task Force board and committee meetings. She encouraged the participants to get engaged, learn the facts and feel free to reach out to our Japantown Task Force staff for any information. Building trust and having clear communication is important to progress. Japantown Task Force welcomes a youthful presence to all our meetings, and hope this group stays connected.

Feedback Survey

A post focus group participant survey revealed that 27 of the 29 participants want to stay connected and would like to continue being informed.

Which platform would you prefer?

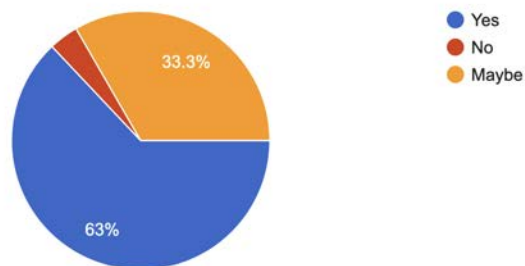
27 responses



Japantown Task Force will be creating a Private Facebook Group and a Monthly Email to all Participants starting July 2020.

Would you be interested in an organized monthly or quarterly meet-up open to all cohort participants? This might include with a speaker, or specific JTown discussion point, with a socializing/networking component (as recommended from feedback).

27 responses



Jackie Funasaki, Susie Kagami and Brandon Quan will co-host a quarterly meet-up. The first was conducted on May 27, 2020 where we shared the overall results from the three cohorts and had a lively discussion around Community Land Trusts and Investment Funds.

INTEREST IN MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

- A Japantown Task Force YouTube Channel will be created for easy access to meeting recordings
- All meetings are calendared on the [Community Events Page](#) of the Japantown Task Force website.
- Meeting agendas are posted on each committee page three days prior to the meetings. Agenda's include the online zoom or ring central link to attend, except for the Peace Plaza Committee.
 - Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee - 8

<https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/adhoc-japan-center-malls-technical-committee>

- Cultural Heritage - 12
<https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/cultural-heritage-sustainability-committee-meeting>
- General Board Meetings - 12
<https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/general-board-meeting>
- Land Use and Transportation Committee - 9
<https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/land-use-and-transportation-committee-meeting>
- Peace Plaza Committee - 8
<https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/peace-plaza-committee>
Contact Brandon Quan for link access: bquan@japantowntaskforce.org

- Committees Not Yet Formed
 - Small Business (Assistance?) - 3
 - Arts/Co-Creative Hub - 3
 - Community Land Trust - 3

Additional Comments Submitted:

Love the outreach. Keep it up! But unlike in previous efforts, I hope our ideas and suggestions don't fall on deaf ears or to our older community members unwilling to make changes.

Appreciate you all putting in the time to hear from the community on these issues. Excited to see the future of all of this. Thank you!

Thank you all for your tireless effort

I have many creative ideas for the future stewardship of Japan town and am excited to be a part of the conversation for a better tomorrow. I hope that I can serve in a way that is useful and impactful to my community that I care so deeply for and that has enriched so many people's lives as it has mine and my family. I have specific ideas about

representing the rich history, showcasing the artistic inheritance of our Bay Area Japanese American Art community as well as signifying a future for coming generations.

I know staff time is limited, but I would like to see a little more facilitation in the initial follow up sessions vs what seems to be an expectation to take it on ourselves. It can be hard to take over organizing and creating a structure/format for that when it wasn't something on our plates already, even if there is interest in participating. Other than that, I greatly enjoyed my cohort and thought it was a thoughtful pairing of individuals on the part of the organizers. I hope there is more possibility for mentorship and more opportunity for focus group participants to take on a level of leadership that isn't currently afforded.

The meeting times are problematic for me right now w/ babies. So that is my big challenge.

Thank you so much for all that you do, and for keeping us all in the loop. I hope to become more involved as things become less busy with work/life commitments (and as my toddler becomes more independent...), so I appreciate the information!

I look forward to learning more about how the focus group discussions will be utilized.

Hi! My feedback on the Focus Group session I went to is that smaller groups (5 people) might help to make events like this more intimate and allow for individuals to speak more deeply on what they care about. I could also tell there were quite a few participants who were much older than myself (e.g. forties and parents). Perhaps defining groups more tightly by age (e.g. first group: 20-25, second group: 25-30, etc.) would also help people to feel a little more comfortable speaking and would reveal interesting differences in how people feel about J-town based on age & stage of life. Anyway, I'm interested in seeing compiled notes from the document and appreciate being included!

JTOWN FOCUS GROUP ADVISORS



Sandy Ouye Mori, Japantown Task Force Board President

Sandy Ouye Mori has served the people of San Francisco for nearly five decades and her contributions to the API community have had an impact both locally and nationally.

Sandy held the position of Executive Secretary to the San Francisco Health Commission for fourteen years. Her tenure in public service also included her appointment, by the late Mayor George Moscone, to the Commission on the Status of Women in 1976. In 1979, Sandy became the President of the Commission, the first Asian American woman to chair a City Commission. She is a founding member of the National Pacific Asian Resources Center on Aging, which is based in Seattle, Washington.

A founding member of the Dignity Fund Coalition, Sandy's passion has been in improving the care and services for seniors. In 1971, she, together with Steve Nakajo, co-founded Kimochi, Inc., a non-profit community-based organization dedicated to providing much needed services to primarily Japanese American and Japanese-speaking seniors in the Western Addition/Richmond/Sunset districts of San Francisco. Presently, Sandy serves on the Mayor's Long term Care Coordinating Council. She is also the President of the Japantown

Task Force Board of Directors whose mission is to preserve San Francisco's Japantown, one of the three remaining Japantowns in the United States.

Jaclyn Funasaki, Japanese American Community Liaison to the Consulate General of Japan, San Francisco

Jaclyn Funasaki is originally from Pearl City, Hawaii and found her second home in the Bay Area after living in Washington State and Fukuoka, Japan. She has 10+ years of experience in the field of US-Japan relations and currently works in the Economic and Commercial Affairs Division of the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco. Her role focuses on advising diplomats on issues related to California and Nevada state economies and business environments, renewable and environmental policies, and various technological trends within Silicon Valley. She also serves as the Consulate's liaison to the Japanese American community.

Jaclyn holds a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing and Management, and a bachelors in International Business with minors in Psychology and Japanese. She is active in the Bay Area community, serving as Vice President of the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce of Northern California, Committee Chair for the Nihonmachi Street Fair, and Planning Committee Member for SF's Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. She currently resides in Oakland with her husband.





Susie Kagami, Facilitator

Susie Kagami is native Hawaiian, Japanese and Chinese American whose roots come from Fukuoka Japan, Canton China and the Hawaiian island of 'Oahu. Yonsei on her father's side, born in Los Angeles and raised in San Francisco. For the last 10 years, Susie has dedicated her personal time and career steeped in the Japantown community as a parent, volunteer, staff and board member for organizations such as Nihonmachi Little Friends, the Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program at Rosa Parks Elementary, the Japanese Culture and Community Center, Experience2, Taisho Basketball at the San Francisco Buddhist Church, San Francisco Taiko Dojo, and other cultural based non-profits such as the Oakland Asian Community Center, the Asian American Women Artists Association and the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. Passionate about the importance of ancestral knowledge through the traditions, culture, ceremonies and arts of her ancestors, she has been fortunate to learn and pass on much of the intrinsic values and epistemologies of her Japanese and Hawaiian culture to her son through education and travels to Hawaii and Japan.

Susie is currently a fundraising specialist, auctioneer and event producer with over eleven years of experience working for various Asian-American non-profit organizations in the Bay Area. Her passion lies in helping cultural and arts organizations strategically raise money through mission based messaging and creating donor relevant philanthropic fundraising opportunities to maximize proceeds and strengthen connections to their cause. As of March 1, 2021, Susie will be joining the Japantown Task Force team as *Strategic Partnership Coordinator* to assist with the future and vibrancy of Japantown in support of the Japantown Cultural District and the implementation of CHHESS.

JTOWN FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto is a visionary community organizer, multidisciplinary artist, bridge-builder, and a creative strategist. She is currently the Cultural District Project Manager at the Japantown Task Force where she led the community engagement process and composition of the (Cultural, History, Housing, Economic Sustainability Strategies) CHHESS.

Nina is a mixed ethnicity Shin-Nisei Japanese, Polish American. Growing up between San Francisco and Osaka, Japan, she feels a calling to unite people across barriers to celebrate the wisdom in ancient cultures, our unity amidst diversity, and to catalyze global collaboration on the transformation toward a more just, equitable, and regenerative future. Nina is fluent in Japanese and holds a BA in International Relations with a Minor in Environmental Politics.

Growing up, she went to Clarendon JBBP, and also attended SFJLC Hoshuko Japanese Saturday School for 10 years. Nina spent her Summers attending school in Japan for 10 years until 中学三年 (third year of middle school). She became more involved in Japantown during her college years, especially as a part of the Nikkei Community Internship where she interned at the JCCNC for half a year and produced the "Eye of the Beholder" JA heritage photo-storytelling contest and exhibition. Nina served as a Board member of the JAACL, and was a participant of the Kakehashi program. During college, she studied abroad for one year at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, and mastered level N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency (JLPT) Exam.

Nina expresses her artistic passion through many avenues including dance choreography, event production, eco-fashion design and workshops. Nina is the Founder of Wiz Amulets Symbiotic Living Jewelry, and "Aarrings," fashion made of living air plants that breathe and grow with you. She also produced and curated an environmental arts exhibition called ECOPOCA (エコポカ) Ecopocalypse, featuring 25 artists, which took the audience through the intersection of a nuclear apocalypse and an advanced eco-future. The exhibition addressed crises, such as the ongoing Fukushima nuclear issue, and transmuted them through the theme of "reviving our ancestral source eco-wisdom to co-create our eco-future." Nina is a learner of life and welcomes this valuable opportunity to connect and share!





Jeremy L. Chan

Jeremy Chan is an attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow at Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, focusing on elder law and mediation. While volunteering for Day of Remembrance as part of the Nikkei Student Union at UC Berkeley, Jeremy learned about the Japanese American internment and incarceration and its parallels with Islamophobia, inspiring him to pursue social justice law.

Jeremy has been involved with several Japantown organizations. In January 2017, he founded Ito Yosakoi, a yosakoi dance team based in Japantown at the JCCCNC. Jeremy has previously worked at and currently serves as a board member for the Japantown Task Force and the National Japanese American Historical Society. He also serves on the organizing committee for Japantown for Justice, and is an alumnus of the Nikkei Community Internship program. Jeremy sees his participation in Japantown as a way of giving back to a community that has provided him with a welcoming support network and a career path.

Jeremy received a J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law and a B.A. in Political Economy and Japanese from UC Berkeley. Jeremy was a leader for the Nikkei Student Union at UC Berkeley and the Asian Pacific American Law Association at UC Hastings, where he organized events including Day of Remembrance and Culture Show.

Stephanie Doi

Stephanie Doi was born and raised in the East Bay and is currently residing in San Francisco. She grew up with two sisters and was an active member of the Stockton Buddhist Temple and Stockton JACL, positing much of her Japanese American community, cultural traditions, and learned history growing up as a multi-generational Nikkei to these organizations, both of which she remains involved in today.

Her entry into San Francisco's Japantown was during the Kase and Nikkei Community Internship (NCI) Programs in 2017, where she was placed at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (the Center) in the Programs Department. She is now the Development Manager at the Center organizing and supporting fundraising campaigns and events throughout the year.

Stephanie graduated from Claremont McKenna College in 2017 with a BA in Psychology and Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust Sequence. In her final undergraduate year, she conducted a research study on perceptions of collective memory and history and remains passionate about the dissemination of accurate history. Stephanie is a San Francisco representative of the New Generation Nikkei Fund (NGNF) and a founding coalition member of Japantown for Justice.





Naomi Funahashi

Naomi Funahashi manages the Reischauer Scholars Program (RSP) and teacher professional development for the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE) at Stanford University. The RSP is an online course on Japan and U.S.–Japan relations that is taught annually to 25 selected high school students across the United States. As her students engage with diplomats, scholars, experts, and peers from across the U.S. and Japan, Naomi aims to deepen their cross-cultural understanding and broaden their global perspectives. She was the recipient of the national 2017 Elgin Heinz Teacher Award by the United States–Japan Foundation. Prior to working at Stanford, Naomi worked at the JCCCNC as program coordinator for the California Nisei High School Diploma Project (2004) and the “Preserving Japantowns” Symposium (2005).

She holds a BA in international relations from Brown University, teaching credential from SFSU, and her Ed. M. in Global Studies in Education from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Naomi is a Council Leader in the U.S.–Japan Council, a USJC Emerging Leaders Program alum, and former board member of the JCCCNC. She currently lives in Millbrae with her husband and two young sons (7yrs and 2.5 yrs old).

Satoe Haile

A graduate of Tama Art University, Satoe Haile has lived in the United States for almost 30 years. A trailblazer in Visual/UX design for corporations such as Google, Microsoft, Sony, and Adobe, Satoe now designs and creates digital environments for children at Google’s YouTube Kids.

A proud mother to three amazing kids, who all graduated from Nihonmachi Little Friends and Rosa Parks Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program, Satoe is an enthusiastic supporter and advocate for the preservation of authentic Japanese culture in San Francisco. She has led efforts to support her community via fundraising, spearheading volunteer committees and through corporate evangelism.

Satoe has had a long time passion for Japanese archery and is holding 4th dan level of skill. She is an active board member of Redwood Kyudojo, and to the delight of her family and neighbors, she has recently added master sourdough bread maker to her list of expertise.





Henry Ichinose

Henry Ichinose is nisei with both parents migrating here from Japan, native to San Francisco and is the second generation to carry on his family's wholesale seafood business. Japanese owned and operated since 1969, ABS Seafood have been supporters of the local seafood community for generations throughout the Bay Area since 1967. ABS Seafood also has a satellite office in Salt Lake City Utah, and during the pandemic, started True Fish, a direct to customer online storefront.

A graduate of Washington high school and an all star on the basketball team, he also spent much of his youth on the court as an Associates Basketball team-member, one of the many historic teams that were part of the Japanese-American Basketball Association created to provide community and socialization before and more importantly after incarceration during the war. As a father, Henry coached his children's teams for over 10 years. He

was also integral in starting the first girl's team for the Associates.

His children attended ABC Preschool at Pine Methodist Church, attended Rosa Parks Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program, Nihonmachi Little Friends After School Program, and attended the Japanese language tutoring program at Xperience2. Although Henry was a dedicated Troop 12 Boy Scout, his son belonged to Troop 58 at Konko Church.

Henry appreciates the historical significance of Japantown as an icon to the city of San Francisco and the country as a whole. He remembers Japantown as a place where he and his family went often, doing business in the community with restaurants and connecting to the community through activities at the Japanese Culture and Community Center of Northern California. He remembers spending much of his weekends at Japantown Bowl and would love to see a bowling alley or a place for teens back in Japantown. Henry would like to see Japantown rebound from where it is now, into a bigger more inclusive community with representation from Japanese companies, and bring more cultural awareness to the general public, especially in light of current anti-asian violence. Having a safe and fun place for families to gather, support local businesses and increase and educate others about our history and cultural heritage is important for the future of Japantown.

Stephanie Ichinose

Stephanie Ichinose has been an active member of the Japanese American community her entire life, and a proud resident of San Francisco for the past 25 years. Originally from Orange County, she grew up and found "her people" through youth programs at the Orange County Buddhist Church and SEYO Basketball League. Throughout her college career, she volunteered with the Los Angeles Buddhist Coordinating Council, which runs a summer camp for children. She also participated in the Nisei Week Queen and Court program which further expanded her view of the Japanese American community throughout Southern California.

Ms. Ichinose's community work in San Francisco has been centered on youth programs which her two children have been a part of. (ABC Preschool - Pine Methodist Church, Rosa Parks Elementary Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program, Nihonmachi Little Friends, Xperience, BSA Troop 58, Associates Basketball, SF Buddhist Church Jr. YBA). Japantown serves as a central hub of her family's daily activities.



As a communications consultant for tech companies and a small business owner, she has witnessed the swift and unrelenting dragnet of gentrification, yet holds hope for the future of Japantown as a cultural touchstone for generations to come. Ms. Ichinose believes in the importance of creating new opportunities to deepen community engagement and honor the rich cultural heritage of Japantown.



Eryn Kimura

eryn kimura (she, they) is a multimedia artist and facilitator, working in the intersection of transformative justice, relational healing, food and art. she is a product of j-town, having spent all her summers at jcyc, every week at the buchanan ymca, and later every week-end working at her brother's former purikura shop. she has participated in the community's various japan-us relationship programs, informing her participation in the jet programme from 2015 to 2017. her expansive vision for j-town in the future includes inclusivity, cultural vibrance, intergenerational healing and innovative ecosystems of care.

Ryan Kimura

Pronouns- He,Him

A fifth generation San Franciscan, born and raised in the City, Ryan is a partner, father and forever evolving teacher seeking to empower others. Throughout his eclectic career teaching, coaching and leading has always been a constant in his path.

Ryan spent two years as an English Teacher in Shizuoka Prefecture as part of the JET Program, he spent over 15 years as a martial arts instructor, and currently is a Learning and Development Leader specializing in diversity, equity and inclusion trainings for the City and County of San Francisco.

Specifically in the San Francisco Japantown community, he has worked as the Director of Programs and Community Affairs at The Center (Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California), ran the Pika Pika Purikura Photo Booth Shop for over 14 years, and has been a member and performer for over 30 years with the San Francisco Taiko Dojo.

Currently, he is a Board Member for The Center, and is a part of the Japantown 4 Justice Coalition, which is an organization that is working locally with the Western Addition to dismantle systemic inequity.

When he's not in the community, Ryan spends his time with his partner Laura chasing after their two bundles of joy, Maya (4) and Casey (2).





Kyle Kurihara

As a Fourth generation Japanese American, I grew up in Sacramento CA. My family was deeply involved with the Buddhist Church and all of its activities: Dharma school, basketball, scouts, etc. When I moved to SF in 2005, my first residence was in Japantown. Then, and now, many activities, organizations, and friendships have resulted from Japantown ties. I am a current member of JCCCNC and serve on the Board for Nihonmachi Little Friends, where my son attended pre-school.

Leslee Kurihara

Leslee Kurihara is a California native who grew up in the San Joaquin Valley. Her father, a second generation Japanese American (Nisei), was interned at age 4 in Poston, Arizona. He then would serve in the Army during his young adult life.

Leslee moved to San Francisco after college to start a family and a career in the Arts. Her art centers around the Japanese American experience and often looks specifically at Japanese cultural craft tradition mixed into assemblage. She has trained the Japanese Dye Craft of Shibori. Most recently she installed indigo dyed cloth wrapped around Japanese cedar in the Keihoku region of Japan. Her travels in Japan have been spent building relationships, donating time and exploring creative pathways, food and culture. This has helped forge a pathway creatively and generationally- exploring roots and heritage and merging those cultural traditions with her Japanese American experience in her work and life in San Francisco.

She has since begun furthering her education in Asian modalities of healing such as acupuncture.

Leslee's children attended Rosa Parks Japanese Bilingual Bicultural program as well as Nihonmachi Little friends, which imbued her family's connection to San Francisco's Historic Japantown. Her elderly father now resides in San Francisco's Japantown.



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Hillary Nakano

Hillary Nakano, is a fourth generation Japanese American, born and raised in Oakland. She obtained her undergraduate degree with a double major in feminist studies and Asian American studies from the University of California Santa Barbara. Upon graduation, she moved to Washington D.C. to work for the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). She later returned to the Bay Area to earn her law degree at the University of San Francisco.

Hillary is the co-chair of Japantown for Justice, a coalition of young, San Francisco Japantown leaders working locally to promote economic and cultural sovereignty in the Fillmore and Japantown. She also currently serves on the Board and Executive Board of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC). When Hillary is not fighting for social justice, she practices workers' compensation law, representing injured workers with Boxer & Gerson. She currently resides in Oakland with her husband, Stuart.

Elena A. Harumi Nielsen

Elena A. Harumi Nielsen was born in Southern California but raised in the East Bay. A biracial fourth-generation Japanese American, she grew up attending Dharma School, Nippongo Gakuen, and volunteering at community events such as the Diablo Japanese American Club's annual Obon festival. Elena attended UC Berkeley, became an officer for Nikkei Student Union, and graduated in 2014 with a BA in Sociology.

Following her graduation, she participated in the Nikkei Community Internship and Kase Programs at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California. She took part in First Voice's Suite J-Town performance and gallery project before moving to Tokyo, Japan, for the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program.

For over three years, she lived in Japan, co-founding the intercultural group Nikkei in Japan, before returning to San Francisco to serve as a princess on the 2019 Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Program court.

She has worked for SF Japantown organizations Japantown Community Benefit District, Kimochi, Inc., and Japantown Task Force, for whom she eventually served on their Board. Elena is currently Membership Coordinator at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California and a member of Japantown for Justice.





Max Nihei

Max Nihei is the Exhibitions and Collections Manager at the National Japanese American Historical Society. He has been managing collections access and preservation at NJAHS for 10 years. He received an M.A. in USF'S Museum Studies graduate program in 2014 and a B.A in History from UCLA in 2010.

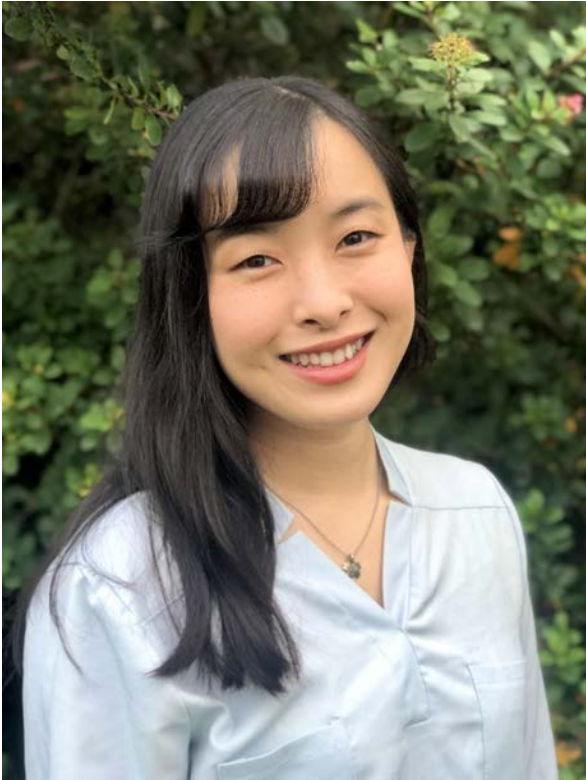
Max is a third/fourth generation Japanese American born in San Francisco who played for the BCSF Taisho basketball and Falcons baseball teams, became an Eagle Scout in Troop 29, and went to Chibi Chan preschool, JCYC summer camp and Youth Leadership Council. He was an NCI intern at Kimochi in 2009. He also volunteers for security and logistics for the Nihonmachi Cherry Blossom and Street Fair festivals annually.

Melissa Bailey Nihei

Melissa Bailey Nihei is the Program Development Associate for the National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS) and Administrative Assistant/Community Liaison for the Japantown Community Benefit District (JCBD). Melissa first began working at NJAHS in 2013 and at JCBD in 2019. She received a B.A. in History from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2012. Melissa was inspired to work in the Japantown community through her experiences studying the incarceration of Japanese Americans, as well as her own personal connection to this history through her grandparents. Melissa's maternal grandparents were incarcerated at Heart Mountain in Wyoming, and her paternal grandfather served at the Presidio of San Francisco during WWII, a story featured by the San Francisco Chronicle in April 2017.

Outside of work, Melissa served as a Board Member for the San Francisco Nisei Fishing Club from 2013-2015, and volunteers for the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair. Melissa is a second generation San Francisco native and resides with her husband and mother in the Outer Sunset district. She is of Japanese and Irish descent, and the proud auntie of 3 Gosei boys.





Yuki Nishimura

My name is Yuki Nishimura and I am currently in my final semester of my master's program at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights. I grew up in Sendai, Japan and moved to Palo Alto when I was five years old. Having attended all years of Hoshuko (San Jose Japanese Language School), I am fluent in Japanese, though I have much room for improvement.

During my undergraduate years at the University of Toronto, I studied neuroscience and found a love for taking an interdisciplinary approach to my work. I also have a passion for Naginata, a Japanese martial art, and am currently serving as the Northern California Naginata Federation Representative and Social Media Coordinator. In my free time, I volunteer with the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival and try to find ways to help the Japantown community.

Matt Okada

Matt Okada currently serves as the Director of Special Events and Communications at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC). He is a 4th generation Japanese American and grew up in Selma, CA, just 30 minutes south of Fresno. He moved to the Bay Area in 2012 after graduating from California State University, Fresno, with a bachelor's degree in Recreation Administration with an emphasis in Community Recreation. Matt has worked at JCCCNC since 2012 and previously served as the Director of Programs from 2014 through January 2020. Although not originally from the Bay Area, Matt has connected with culture and the Japantown community through his involvement with the JCCCNC. He has appreciated the sense of community that Japantown has provided him and considers it a second home.





Haruka Roudebush

Haruka Roudebush is a shin-issei Japantown denizen who was born in Tokyo and immigrated to the US at the age of 2, and grew up on the peninsula and east bay. Haruka currently serves as the Senior Programs Manager at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, coordinating various programs and workshops. He previously worked in prisoner rights advocacy for prisoners with disabilities and mental health issues in California state prisons before changing careers to community nonprofit work. His involvement with the Japanese American community began in college with Nikkei Student Union at UC San Diego, and he continued serving the Japantown and broader Japanese American community through various organizations over the past 15 years as a volunteer, board and staff member. He has previously served as the immediate past national VP of Membership of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), as a board member and secretary of the San Francisco JACL chapter, and is currently an executive board member of the JACL Northern California Western Nevada Pacific

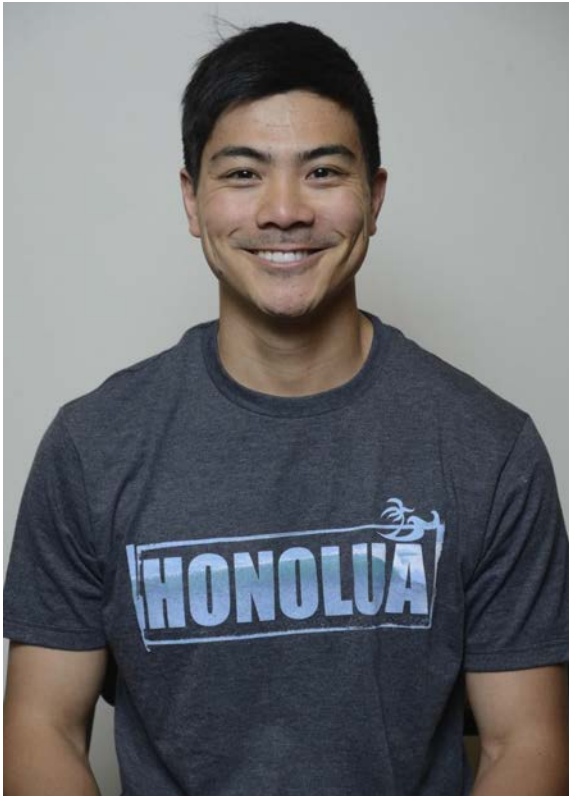
District. Haruka co-founded the Nakayoshi Young Professionals social and volunteer service organization, as well as the statewide New Generation Nikkei Fund crowdsourced grant program supporting Japantown-based community organizations in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. He is also an active member of the recently formed Japantown For Justice community group of primarily yonsei social justice activists and advocates.

Steven Santa Maria

Steven is a technical services manager at Human API, a healthtech company, and co-chair of Nakayoshi, which is Japantown-based community engagement organization. He is also a co-founder for a local online retailer called Kenshin which sells and promotes sake from various regions of Japan.



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He is
Sake,



Ken Takeda

- Shin-Nisei (parents were born and raised in Japan)
- Conversational in Japanese
- Married and father to a 2 year old
- Grew up in Southern California and moved to Northern California for university
- Moved to San Francisco in 2005 to work in Biotechnology industry (16 years in this field)
- Joined Nakayoshi Young Professionals in 2011 kickstarting Volunteer work in San Francisco's Japantown
- In 2013, joined San Francisco Taru Mikoshi committee which has organized the Mikoshi in the parade since 1968 in the Cherry Blossom Festival
- In 2016, co-founded with Japantown Chounaikai the annual festival Osaka Matsuri, celebrating Osaka's culture and food

Kiyomi Takeda

Kiyomi Takeda is a Shin-Nisei/Yonsei born and raised in San Francisco. She grew up attending Nihonmachi Little Friends, Clarendon JBBP and Soko Gakuen. She participated in J-league basketball, playing koto, and spending time in J-town. Kiyomi served as the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival Co-Chair from 2017-2020 after serving on the executive committee for over 10 years. She is now the Festival's Development Chair and is the Sakura Matsuri, Inc Secretary. Kiyomi also served as Board Chair of the Nichi Bei Foundation for 5 years after Co-chairing the Foundation's Annual Soy and Tofu Festival. She is active in Japantown for Justice as the Fillmore Relations Chair helping to deepen the relationship between the Japantown and Fillmore communities. She serves as the Nihonmachi Street Fair Asian Artisan coordinator, is on the Osaka Matsuri committee and is a member of the Japantown Chounaikai. She is one of the founding members of the New Generation Nikkei Fund. Kiyomi works for the California Pacific Regional Rehabilitation Center as an occupational therapist specializing in treatment for stroke survivors and individuals suffering from hand impairments. She currently lives in the Fillmore district with her husband Ken, 2.5 y/o daughter Himari and two bunnies (Azuki and Kinako).



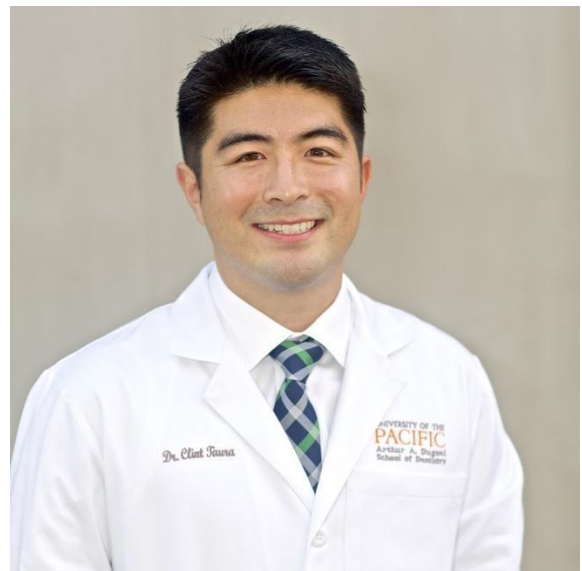


Ryan Takemiya

Ryan Takemiya is an actor, writer, community organizer, and a proud native Bay Area yonsei. He has been involved with SF Japantown for many years in various ways: He has sat on the board for Sansei Live, the Soy and Tofu Festival, and has helped produce the Japantown Foundation’s annual Osechi Ryori celebration. He has also produced many events at Pa’ina Lounge, and you may also recognize him as the co-MC of the annual Ginza Bazaar. Ryan loves SF Japantown and is highly invested in seeing it thrive for future generations.

Clint Taura

Clint is a dentist and owner of Japantown Dental. His practice focuses on treatment, education, technology and techniques to improve the longevity and health of the mouth. He is a former board member of Japantown Task Force and San Francisco Dental Society. He was a member of Nihonmachi Roots and the Sakura 150 Project. He currently is on the board for Nihonmachi Little Friends. He grew up in Japantown, going to the local schools and participating in local sports leagues. He married to Nikki, a SFUSD teacher, and has two young children.



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Yuji Uchida

My name is Yuji Uchida, I came to San Francisco from Tokyo, Japan in 1998, Currently, I have been with Nihonmachi Little Friends preschool in Japantown for the last 20 years and one of three main site managers. I am also the director and head instructor of Yujidojo where I mainly teach Gracie JiuJitsu I learned from the Master Ralph Gracie. The age of my students range from preschool to older adults.

My passion is to teach future generations about compassion and love through education which I do both at NLF and at Yujidojo.

Since I came to US, I learned so much of my roots by associating and working in Japantown SF. I would like to be any help enriching Japantown experience for everyone.



Yuka Walton

I am a 3rd grade teacher at Bret Harte Elementary School in the Bayview. I am proud to be a public school teacher in SFUSD because I deeply believe that all of us need to invest in the public good. When we privatize education, it disenfranchises the most marginalized children and families in our society.

In Japantown I am involved in a variety of organizations which are all near and dear to my heart.

- Co-Chair of Japantown for Justice: J4J is a coalition of Japantown leaders working locally to dismantle systemic inequity and promote economic and cultural sovereignty in the Fillmore and Japantown.
- Co-Chair of the Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Program: I believe that QP is an effective leadership pipeline for young women in our community. As an alumnus of the program, I don't think that I would be as involved in the community as I am today, if it weren't for the Queen Program.
- Executive Board Member of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California: The Center has been like a second home from childhood to now. It is an honor to serve on the board and further the work of the Center.
- Performer with Kagami Kai: I've been a part of this group since I was 5. Kagami Kai is my extended family. Sharing mochi-tsuki with the Bay Area brings me great joy.

In my free time, I love spending time with my cat Ryder and spending time with my family in SF, Hawaii, and Japan.



Peter Weber

Peter Weber has been active in a variety of organizations and roles focused on Japan-US relations, the Bay Area AAPI community, and the Japanese American community. He served as the JET Program Coordinator at the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco (2007-2012), the Japanese Culture and Community Center of Northern California Board of Directors (2011-2020), and volunteered as an Assistant Scoutmaster for Japantown's Boy Scout Troop 58 (2016-2019). He currently is on the Board of Directors of the JET Alumni Association of Northern California (2017-) and the Northern California Okinawa Kenjinkai (2020-), and co-chair's UCSF's Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance (APASA) (2020-). He is a Product Manager at UCSF's School of Nursing and lives in Alameda with his wife Ryoko, formerly a teacher at Japantown's Nihonmachi Little Friends, and his new twin daughters Keiko and Emiko. He is originally from Ohio and moved to the Bay area in 2007.



Natasha Tamate Weiss

natasha (tashi) tamate weiss is an energy worker and poet born and raised on ramaytush ohlone land (san francisco). her mother is from fukushima and her father is romanian-, lithuanian-, and german-jewish. through words, movement, music, and filmmaking, she alchemizes personal, collective, and societal pain and stagnancy into fluid transformation. she received her bachelor's degree from stanford university, and is a lifelong student of reiki and other traditional healing modalities. her films have been showcased by Kearny Street Workshop, Blackstar Film Festival, First Voice San Francisco, Harlem International Film Festival, Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, and the Allied Media Conference, to name a few. her words have been published by Glimmer Train Magazine, AK Press, and Mala Forever. you can read her current writing at tsukinowaguma.medium.com .

Mie Yaginuma

Mie Yaginuma, born Mie Kennedy (took Japanese grandfather's last name when he passed), grew up on the east coast oblivious of Japanese background until family moved to Tokyo when 9. Attended a local Japanese elementary school and adapted, feeling more comfortable speaking Japanese until put into an international school to relearn English. Thus started a career based on being bilingual and bicultural.

Worked at the I.M.F. Tokyo office bringing international scholars to Japan, then moved to San Francisco into the startup world, working to liaise between U.S. and Japanese teams, helping companies such as GREE International, Evernote, and Cookpad. Currently working at Scrum Ventures, VC firm linking global startups with Japanese corporations.

Mie has 2 daughters who are lucky to grow up with Nihonmachi Little Friends and Rosa Parks Elementary School, discovering what it means to have a cultural relationship with a location like Japantown that grounds them in their community.



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Maya Yoshikawa

I am Maya Yoshikawa, Susie Kagami invited me to be a part of this discussion group. I have been working at NLF since 2002-ish, as soon as I moved to SF from Orange County. I used to be a school counselor for middle and high school in the Anaheim area. I currently am a site manager, mainly for NLF's school age program.; as well as a parenting coach on the side. Let's see... what else... I am a proud mom of two, 14 and 8, and I appreciate that this community helped me to raise my children.

I moved to Salem Oregon when I was 19 years old as an exchange student. My purpose was to learn about and become a school counselor, so that I could implement the system in the Japanese educational system. I graduated with an MA in school counseling from Chapman Univ. in Orange County and served as a school counselor for a while, before I relocated to SF.

As much as I have passion for education, I do love to create and produce shows! Since one of my dreams is to produce and direct an educational TV show, I decided to be an intern at a TV station when I was 40 years old LOL!! I learned how to edit movies and produce tv shows while I worked there!

Currently, I am learning to be a "Liver" - a person who uses Live Launch Method to promote businesses. I offer group and individual parenting sessions through Live Launch, as well as help promoting other businesses by producing their Live Launch journey.