



2017 JAPANESE AMERICAN
LEADERSHIP DELEGATION



We are a diverse group. We hail from 10 states across America, from Hawaii to the East coast. We are multigenerational, from Shin-Issei to Gosei. We work in businesses, city government, the judicial system, and nonprofit organizations that are focused on social, economic, historical, and cultural issues, and the future, of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

We bring our unique perspectives, and we all love the history, culture, and the arts of our ancestors, of the country of Japan. But as you look at us, you see the faces of the Japanese American community, with our own history -- the Japanese American experience over the past 130 years in America.

We started our trip in Kanazawa. This was the first time that arts and culture were included as a selection criterion for the JALD. The delegation came to believe that the cultural connections are key factors in the people-to-people relationships that are central to the USJC mission. The Kanazawa trip provided a framework for our entire experience. We hope that arts and culture remains a key component of future trips.

We experienced a tea ceremony at the Ohi Pottery, learned that “everything is nothing” at the D.T. Suzuki Museum, and reveled in the vibrancy of community at the 21st Century museum. We drank at the Fukumitsuya Sake brewery, ambled though the parks and gardens, and marveled at the old architecture of Kanazawa. Last, but certainly not least, we feasted on delicacies prepared by the extraordinary chefs of Kanazawa.





We quickly learned that history frames how tradition exists. Studying the roots of the art form is the best way to guide the future transformation of the art form. As Matsutaro Fukumitsu of the Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery explained, "Succession of innovation is the genesis of tradition."

As we continued our journey to Tokyo to meet with various business, arts and culture, and government leaders, we were constantly challenged to learn more about, interpret more, and respond more to

our experiences as Japanese Americans and U.S.-Japan relations.

Current events dominated the discussions in our many meetings with senior business and government leaders. Topics ranged from the new administration in the U.S., to the future of the security alliance -- especially since that very same week North Korea had fired missiles toward Japan. But here too there were recurring themes.

Business and government leaders were unanimous in recognizing the importance of Japanese-Nikkei relationships, in their desire to work closely with the U.S., and in searching for new ways to collaborate as an economic and security partner. We heard about Womenomics and the change (albeit slow) that is beginning to happen for women in Japan. The Japanese are committed to being leaders in sustainability and in the environment. And there was a palpable sense of excitement surrounding the 2020 Olympics and a desire to show the world that "Japan is back."





The delegation spent a week with front-row seats to Japan's continuing evolution. Japan is building upon an extraordinary cultural heritage that has been updated to J-Pop and anime. Japan is working to understand how to respond to security issues in today's ever more dangerous world. Japan is responding to the need to preserve the environment and build more equality for women. From the delegation's vantage point, it is clear that through these changes, the Japanese spirit will be constant.

After we finished our amazing week of experiences and meetings, we realized that our USJC journey is just beginning. We understand that we have a deeper mission in our lives -- to share the Japanese and Japanese American experience. We thank everyone for teaching us so much, changing our lives, and connecting us to our heritage and culture in Japan.



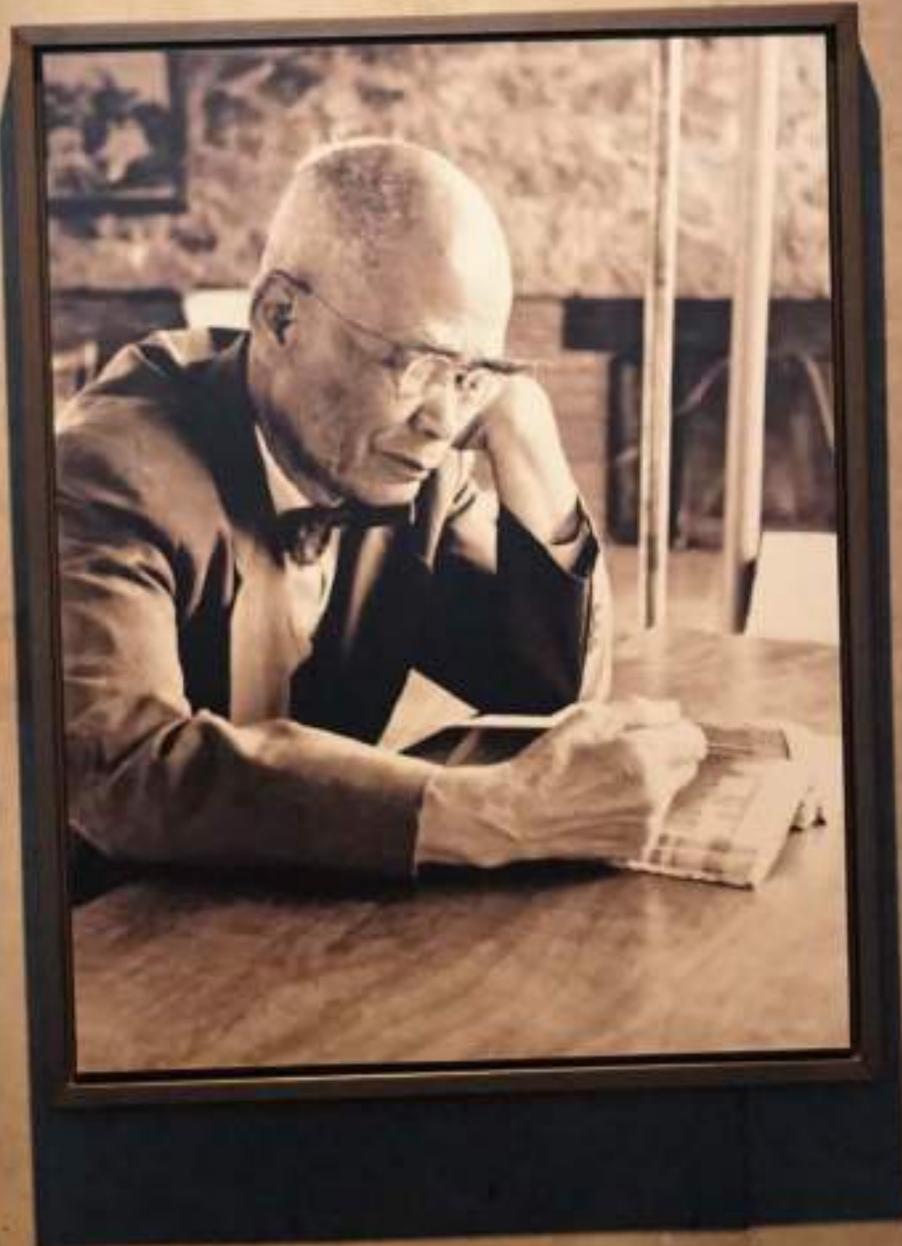
The delegates are profoundly grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their sponsorship of the program. Their financial support makes the program possible. But perhaps even more important is their programmatic support. This support helps open doors and provides the JALD with access to Japanese leaders. The 2017 delegates all thank the consulates in their local regions for supporting their once-in-a-lifetime experience. In particular, the delegates thank Consul Shigeru Kikuma of the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles for his guidance and expertise throughout the trip.

JALD 2017 recognizes the entire staff of the U.S.-Japan Council for making our trip so extraordinary and for ensuring that the trip ran so smoothly. However, we all recognize that the first person in the people-to-people connections of the U.S.-Japan Council is Irene Hirano Inouye. Her leadership and vision drive the JALD program and inspire us all. We cannot thank her enough.



CULTURE





“We cannot all be expected to be scientists, but we are so constituted by nature that we can all be artists – not, indeed, artists of special kinds, such as painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, etc., but artists of life.”

D.T. Suzuki



Our journey started in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture. In many ways, from its Zen beginning at the D.T. Suzuki Museum, the trip was a cultural, an intellectual, and -- for some of us -- a spiritual awakening, through the lens of being Japanese American.

As we moved through Kanazawa, we learned something fundamental and new during each visit. Ohi Chozaemon demonstrated through his pottery how history is passed down through the generations through art and explained how the political stability and economic prosperity of the region contributed to cultural growth and the fostering of tradition. From craftsmen in equine hardware, arms, and weapons came artisan centers. From the simple ceremony of *chado*, arose the need for accompanying artisans in lacquer, wooden boxes, *washi*, sweets and confectionery, blacksmithing, and pottery. He also taught us about the *tokonoma*, literally translated, a bed/floor room/space where one can exhibit something of beauty. It is the heart of the home, as culture and art is the soul of a nation.



The story of how Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery uses *hyakunensui*, mountain waters that take 100 years from Mt. Hakusan to reach their wells in the production of their smooth and elegant sake sparks the imagination. In the production of sake, which is utilized in many traditional ceremonies, there is respect for nature, tradition, and history.

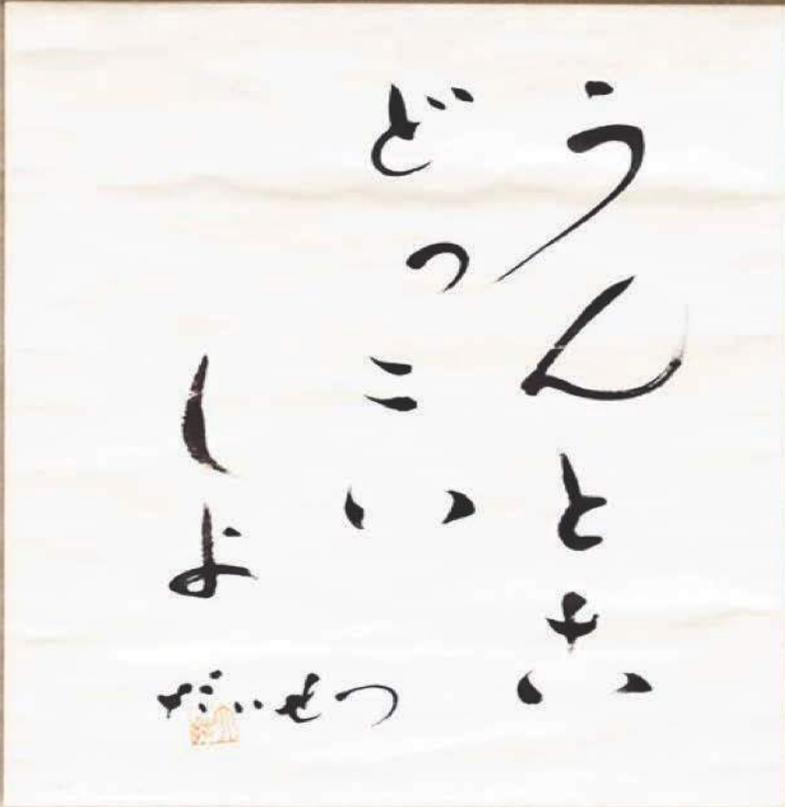
Even the *kaiseki* cuisine is based on beauty, balance, and respect. Chef Shinichiro Takagi of *Zeniya* explained that he uses the language of food to

express his ideas of Japanese art, philosophy, and tradition.

Our Kanazawa trip ended with a symposium, a stimulating discussion revolving around issues of modernization, preservation, diversity, tradition, economic development, and cultural identity. The importance of culture and art in community engagement and economic revitalization was a narrative that was resounding.



SUZUKI
MUSEUM



The first stop in our cultural tour of Kanazawa was a spiritual trip through the Daisetzu Suzuki Museum. D.T. Suzuki was a Buddhist philosopher who was born in 1870 and lived to the age of 95. He wrote hundreds of books and was known for bringing Zen and Shin Buddhism to the Western World through his translation of Chinese writings into English.

We had the pleasure of being escorted by Mihoko Okamura, D.T. Suzuki's personal assistant from the early 1950s until his death in 1966. Ms. Okamura was born in the United States, but now lives in Kyoto. As a Japanese American, she was interned during the war at Manzanar. She regaled us with personal stories of D.T. Suzuki and an understanding of Zen. An energetic and adventurous spirit, she explained fundamental Zen concepts that kept us challenged.

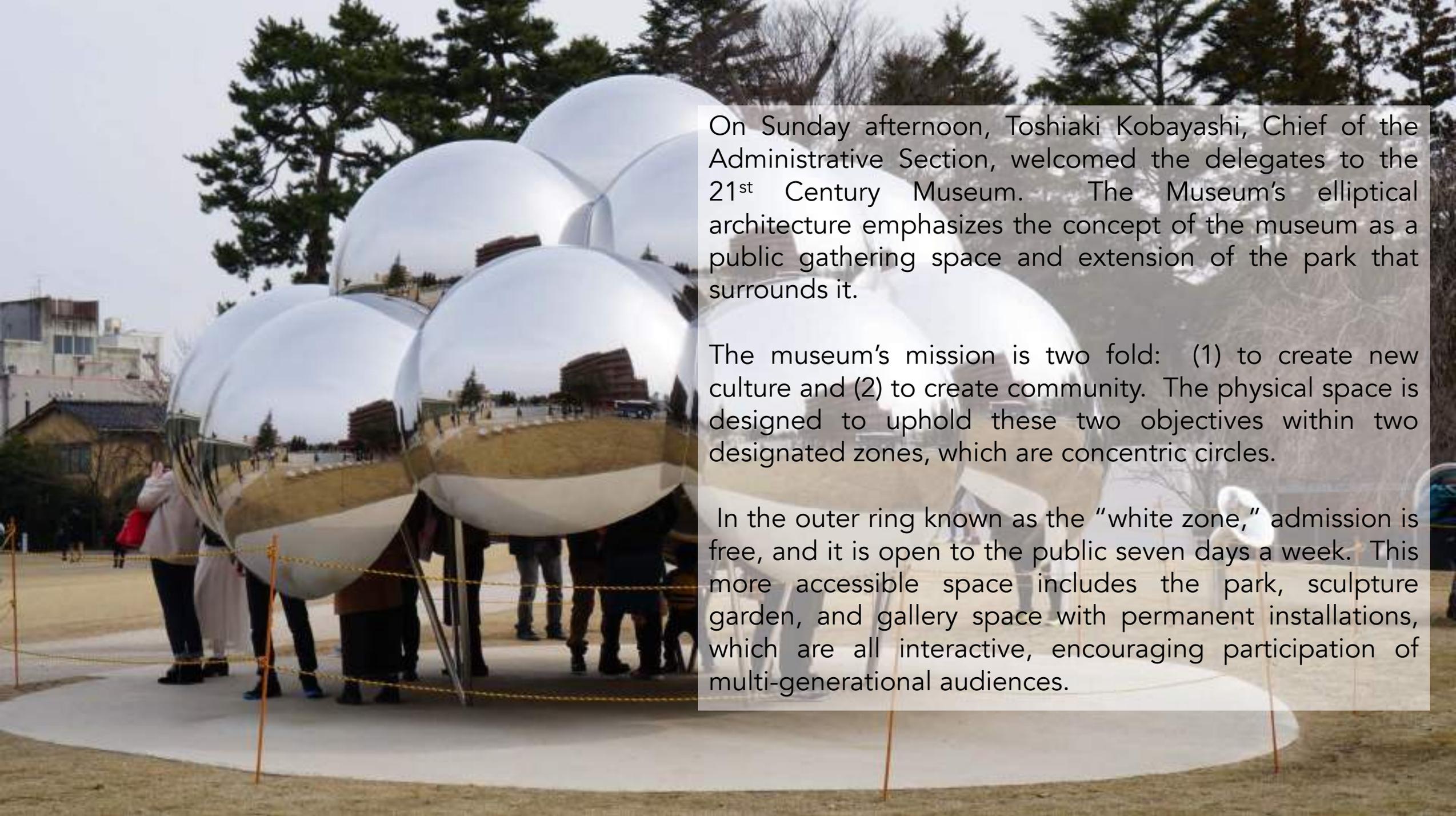
Yoshio Taniguchi, a famous Japanese architect, designed the museum itself. Mr. Taniguchi has a strong connection to Kanazawa through his family. Although a small building in size, the views are expansive and simple, providing the viewer many opportunities for contemplation. The three principal gardens connected through corridors are the Vestibule Garden, the Water Mirror Garden, and the Roji Garden. It was the beginning of a very insightful experience in Kanazawa.

A group of people are gathered in a museum setting with a teal background. In the foreground, a man in a brown sweater is smiling and looking towards a woman in a grey sweater. Another woman in a black jacket is laughing and looking upwards. In the background, other people are visible, including a man in a blue shirt pointing upwards and a man in a dark jacket looking at a phone. The overall atmosphere is lively and social.

21st

CENTURY MUSEUM

March 5, 2017



On Sunday afternoon, Toshiaki Kobayashi, Chief of the Administrative Section, welcomed the delegates to the 21st Century Museum. The Museum's elliptical architecture emphasizes the concept of the museum as a public gathering space and extension of the park that surrounds it.

The museum's mission is two fold: (1) to create new culture and (2) to create community. The physical space is designed to uphold these two objectives within two designated zones, which are concentric circles.

In the outer ring known as the "white zone," admission is free, and it is open to the public seven days a week. This more accessible space includes the park, sculpture garden, and gallery space with permanent installations, which are all interactive, encouraging participation of multi-generational audiences.



A “people’s gallery” is specifically for exhibition of local artists, many of whom are associated with the Kanazawa Art School. The inner core of the museum referred to as the “blue zone” lends itself to a more traditional museum model with paid admission and featuring curated, temporary exhibitions of international contemporary artists.

The Museum opened in 2004 in the center of Kanazawa. Previously, the land was the site of an elementary school located across the street from the Ishikawa Prefecture government buildings; however, when the government decided to move to the suburbs, the area became desolate. As a result, community leaders believed that a museum would help revitalize the area, boost the surrounding retail shops, create a sense of community for multiple generations, as well as attract tourism to the center of Kanazawa. The result has been overwhelming.

Following Mr. Kobayashi’s presentation, the delegation enjoyed the current exhibition, The Boundary between Kogei and Design, as well as permanent pieces, including two crowd-pleasers, James Turrell’s Blue Planet Sky and Leandro Erlich’s The Swimming Pool.

A small, dark, textured ceramic cup sits on a bamboo mat. The cup is the central focus, with a blurred background showing another similar cup further down the mat. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the pottery and the mat.

OHI POTTERY MUSEUM

March 5, 2017



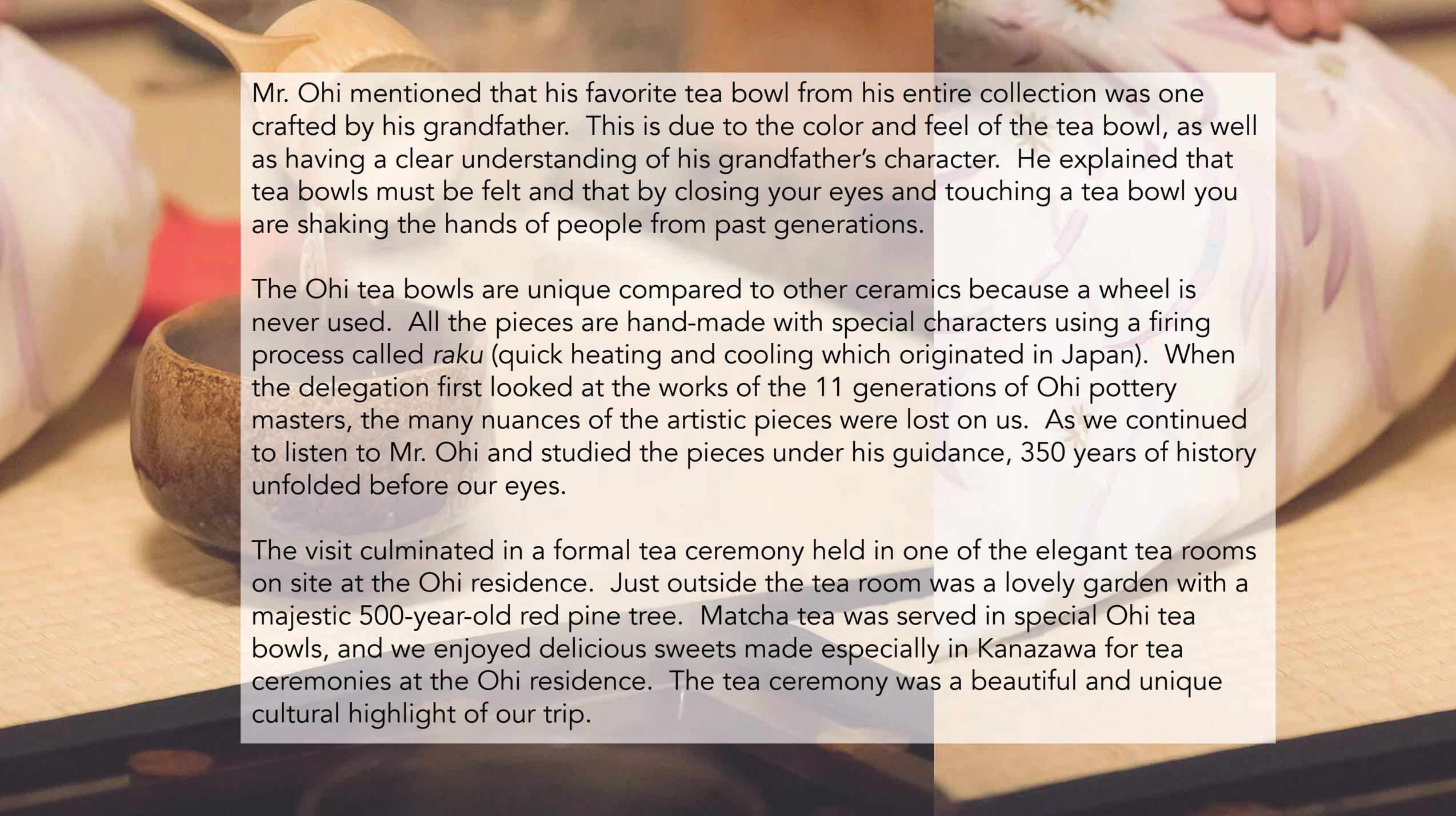
The third museum on our first day in Kanazawa was the Ohi Pottery Museum, where we were met by the engaging and knowledgeable ceramic master, Toshio Ohi. Born in 1958, he is an eleventh-generation pottery master of his family (Ohi is the family name, as well as the style of pottery), and he has succeeded to the family name of Ohi Chozaemon. Ohi Chozaemon is a native of Kanazawa and earned his M.A. in Fine Arts from Boston University.

The first Ohi pottery master (Chozaemon), who was from Kyoto, established the Ohi family kiln in 1666 after he accompanied tea master Senso Soshitsu to Kanazawa at the invitation of Lord Maeda Tsunanori. The great Ohi family pottery tradition has spanned over 350 years in Kanazawa.

Many topics were covered, including how the political stability in Kanazawa led to a flourishing cultural milieu. Mr. Ohi explained how his contemporary work always embraces history and tradition.

He expressed concern over the Japanese people losing appreciation for culture due to children not growing up in three-generation homes. The decrease in what he described as educational generational living has contributed to diminishing interest in tradition and history. His grandfather was a strong influence on him - his first memory is of drinking from a handmade tea bowl with his grandfather.



A person wearing a white kimono is shown from the chest down, pouring tea from a light-colored wooden bowl into a dark, rustic ceramic tea bowl. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the person and the tea room setting.

Mr. Ohi mentioned that his favorite tea bowl from his entire collection was one crafted by his grandfather. This is due to the color and feel of the tea bowl, as well as having a clear understanding of his grandfather's character. He explained that tea bowls must be felt and that by closing your eyes and touching a tea bowl you are shaking the hands of people from past generations.

The Ohi tea bowls are unique compared to other ceramics because a wheel is never used. All the pieces are hand-made with special characters using a firing process called *raku* (quick heating and cooling which originated in Japan). When the delegation first looked at the works of the 11 generations of Ohi pottery masters, the many nuances of the artistic pieces were lost on us. As we continued to listen to Mr. Ohi and studied the pieces under his guidance, 350 years of history unfolded before our eyes.

The visit culminated in a formal tea ceremony held in one of the elegant tea rooms on site at the Ohi residence. Just outside the tea room was a lovely garden with a majestic 500-year-old red pine tree. Matcha tea was served in special Ohi tea bowls, and we enjoyed delicious sweets made especially in Kanazawa for tea ceremonies at the Ohi residence. The tea ceremony was a beautiful and unique cultural highlight of our trip.

KENROKUEN GARDEN

March 6, 2017





On our last outing before the symposium in Kanazawa, we visited Kenrokuen Garden, widely known as one of top three landscape gardens in Japan. The garden, situated outside Kanazawa Castle, was created for the Maeda family that ruled the Kanazawa region for centuries.

We walked through a portion of the garden with Mr. Hamada, the garden's chief. He explained the six attributes for the garden's design (spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, water courses, and panoramas) and pointed out some features, beginning with the waterfall above the pond at the Renchimon entrance. Not only is the waterfall a scenic element, but it also prevented eavesdropping on meetings held in the nearby teahouse.

Just a few of the other highlighted features included the large fountain powered by the elevation drop from the large Kasumigaike uphill; the bridge and the base of the lantern at the pond, which echo a koto's bridge; and the source of the garden's water, an 11-kilometer underground aqueduct that was constructed in the 1600s over the course of only nine months.

We admired the *yukitsuri*, the distinctive bamboo and rope support for tree branches in the garden and around town, and a 190-year-old tree before spending a few minutes exploring the Seison-kaku, a two-story villa that one of the Maeda lords built in the garden for his mother in 1863. Although brief, our walk on that blustery and rainy afternoon highlighted the beauty of the Kenrokuen Garden.



FUKUMITSUYA SAKE

BREWERY

TOUR

March 6, 2017





Our second day in Kanazawa began boldly in the morning with a tour of the Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery. Founded in 1625, Fukumitsuya has a longstanding tradition of brewing the highest quality sake. The brewery came of age during Japan's Edo era when the exquisite food culture of Kanazawa flourished, and is now an integral part of the culinary scene.

We were honored to be hosted by Matsutaro Fukumitsu. He became the 13th president of Fukumitsuya in 1985. Our tour began with Mr. Fukumitsu immersing our delegation in the rich

history and cultural evolution of Kanazawa. His presentation was titled, "Succession of innovation is the genesis of tradition."

We were fascinated to learn that Kanazawa was fortunate to evade significant wars and natural disasters over the last 400 years. This long period of peacetime allowed skilled artisans, as well as the samurai to develop and cultivate traditional crafts and gastronomy, two principal features of Kanazawa culture.



Another key component to the success of Kanazawa's development over the centuries was the "Machishu," or local community leaders who were instrumental in stewarding public-private partnerships, infrastructure planning, and urban revitalization rooted in culture and tradition. The powerful leadership from the Machishu also catalyzed high levels of civic engagement within the Kanazawa community, which shared and embodied common core values of innovation, respect for tradition, and collaboration.

These values were clearly evident as we toured the Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery. We were able to hear and see first-hand how, over the years, Fukumitsuya was able to innovate across many aspects of its manufacturing process, from the rice milling stage to koji making and everything in between.

There was no better way to end our tour than with a generous tasting of all of Fukumitsuya's various sake brands, including its prestigious junmai daiginjo Kagatobi brand. In the end, our delegation could connect to and deeply appreciate the message Mr. Fukumitsu delivered to us: "It is old and it is new. Succession of innovation is the genesis of tradition."





“CULTURE AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT: A JAPANESE
AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE”

March 6, 2017

ケン・ラッサー
Mr. Ken Russ

ウエンディ・タカヒサ
Ms. Wendy Takahisa



This year's delegation participated in the Japanese American Leadership Symposium in Kanazawa. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) with the assistance of the U.S.-Japan Council and was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ishikawa Prefectural Government.

The event was titled, "*Culture and Community Engagement: A Japanese American Perspective.*" The forum was organized around the presentations of three delegates, who shared their experiences and ideas on the potential impact of cultural activities in developing community engagement and regional revitalization.



The goal of the event was to engage Japanese and Japanese American community leaders to share ideas and create dialogue to gain insight and discuss possible solutions that could benefit both countries. The panelists included Delegate Leslie A. Ito, President and CEO of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC) located in Los Angeles; Delegate Wendy Takahisa, Executive Director, Office of Community Relations at Morgan Stanley in New York; and Delegate Ken Russell, Commissioner of Miami's District 2.

The symposium, attended by 150 participants, was moderated by Masayuki Sasaki, General Manager, Office for Promotion of the Creative City and Distinguished Professor at Doshisha University, and Irene Hirano Inouye, President of the U.S.-Japan Council. Mr. Sasaki provided welcoming remarks, emphasizing that engagement is the key to bringing culture and community together.

Although the United States and Japan have different cultures, recognizing that difference and having the tolerance to work together to build inclusive societies is the key to maintaining strong U.S.-Japan relations. Mr. Sasaki commented that it was particularly significant that this meeting was occurring in Kanazawa, a city with such a rich history and commitment to preserving and advancing the arts and culture in Japan.

Ms. Hirano Inouye provided a brief overview of the U.S.-Japan Council and discussed the TOMODACHI Initiative. A video was shown highlighting past JALD participants, and their involvement and activities since their Japan trips.



A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored top, is seated at a podium and speaking into a microphone. The podium has a white sign with Japanese characters. Two water bottles are visible on the podium. The background is a warm, textured wall.

The topic of Ms. Ito's presentation was "*Sustainable Little Tokyo: A Multi-Generational, Community-Driven Initiative.*" She briefly shared her family background, including her family's internment during WWII. She also recounted the story of her great-grandfather who used his life savings to give back to the community after the Great Earthquake in 1906 in San Francisco.

As the President and CEO of the JACCC, Ms. Ito oversees one of the largest ethnic and cultural centers of its kind in the United States. She spoke of her involvement in Little Tokyo, which has served as the hub for Japanese arts and community in Los Angeles for 130 years. She discussed the pressures to preserve the community, and the challenges to keep it relevant, by cultivating new audiences and striving to achieve economic and environment sustainability. She observed that Little Tokyo is more about place-keeping as opposed to place-making, an observation that parallels the cultural preservation of the Kanazawa area.



Mr. Russell presented "*Community Development Through Green Space.*" His priorities include addressing transit solutions, smart development, homelessness, green space, and affordable housing initiatives in Miami, Florida.

Along with the Consul General of Japan in Miami, Mr. Russell has begun work to restore and activate Miami's Ichimura Gardens. He recounted the success of Omni Park in Miami, previously blighted empty space that was transformed into a free park and community space, including art and musical performances. Using the focus of creating community green spaces in solving urban issues has led Mr. Russell to success in becoming a commissioner for his city and the first Japanese American elected official in Miami.

Ms. Takahisa spoke on "*Culture and Community Development.*" She described her family background -- a Japanese father and a Jewish mother -- and the discrimination they endured.

Ms. Takahisa's presentation focused on the revitalization of the Chelsea area, which is her neighborhood on the West Side of the borough of Manhattan in New York City. The neighborhood has transformed from a distressed industrial area to a vibrant mecca for the arts, through the efforts of local artists and arts organizations. This revitalization has led to a growth in tourism with openings of galleries and restaurants. The resulting gentrification, however, has significantly increased housing costs, displacing longtime residents and eliminating affordable housing.





Mr. Fukumitsu, President of the Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery, and the former mayor of Kanazawa, Mr. Yamane, both spoke briefly on the history of Kanazawa and importance of arts and culture to their city. They emphasized the need to honor and preserve the culture of the past, but also recognized the necessity to be creative and evolve to create a unique identity that resonates with current trends and demands.

The symposium concluded with a general discussion by the participants on the meeting's topic of arts and culture in activating community engagement. Each of the panelists closed with brief remarks, emphasizing that this trip to Japan was transformational to all of the delegates and recognizing the need to protect our cultural treasures and traditions for future generations.

After the symposium, a lovely reception was provided where the participants could meet personally and continue the discussions from the meeting. Mr. Russell provided concluding comments and a kanpai toast. Always the entertainer and a former yo-yo champion, he performed a yo-yo demonstration for the audience.



JAPAN FOUNDATION CENTER FOR GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP LUNCHEON

March 8, 2017





The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership hosted a roundtable luncheon in the historic Meiji Kinenkan Banquet Hall in Tokyo. In attendance were members of the CGP staff and special guests from the cultural and arts community.

The theme of the luncheon was the role of culture in community development. The program was organized around the presentations of the three guest speakers: Tamotsu Aoki, Director General with the National Art Center in Tokyo; Masahiko Sato, Jazz Pianist; and Asano Yagi, Architect with SANNA architect office.



The Master of Ceremonies for the event was Junichi Chano, Executive Director of CGP. Ambassador Hiroyasu Ando, President of the Japan Foundation, who welcomed the JALD members to Tokyo, offered a warm greeting and opening remarks. Ms. Hirano Inouye thanked the Japan Foundation CGP for hosting this luncheon every year and for their efforts in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations.



Interesting discussions took place at each of the tables during lunch. Delegates Lynn Nakamoto, Jason Fujimoto, and Gary Yamashita provided summaries of the discussions that ensued at their tables, which ranged from empowerment of women in leadership to the importance of arts and culture in society.

Participants also discussed the constant need for arts organizations to fundraise, as the cultural programs are often the first to experience cutbacks when budgets are reduced. This is part of an ongoing philosophical debate regarding the role of the government versus the public to support the arts.

In Japan, certain segments of the arts need to be supported by the government to be sustained. The delegates expressed that their experiences on this trip inspired a deeper appreciation for their Japanese heritage and a greater understanding that, regardless of our diverse backgrounds, it is our common Japanese culture that binds us together.

Ms. Yagi, an architect born and raised in California, spoke about her firm's design work on the 21st Century Museum in Kanazawa and how the museum started off as an architectural competition. The design was developed for the building to serve not only as museum, but a public facility and meeting space as well. It was designed to invite visitors from all directions of the museum.





The attendees were provided with a special treat at the end of the program when Mr. Sato sat at the piano and performed a musical number for the attendees. He dedicated his improvisational jazz piece for Mr. Yamashita, who celebrated a birthday in March.

Delegate Roy Hirabayashi closed the luncheon, thanking the Japan Foundation CGP for hosting the luncheon, and expressed appreciation to the guest speakers for their presentations. The delegates had the pleasure of visiting the beautifully landscaped Japanese gardens, which represented its own form of art.



CULTURAL LEARNINGS

The 2017 delegates were delighted that the cultural component was such a key feature of the JALD trip and that many cultural leaders were part of the delegation. The cultural experiences in Kanazawa became the backdrop of our trip; its themes were woven throughout our trip. We are grateful to the Center for Global Partnership, which sponsored and arranged for the cultural component of our trip, and to Executive Director Chano, the Japan Foundation, Japan Foundation President Ambassador Hiroyasu Ando, Secretary General Misako Ito of the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural & Educational Interchange, Program

Coordinators Yosuke Sato and Haruko Yuda, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The resilience and innovation of the Kanazawa community in light of the national economic slump is a testament to the power of their respect for tradition, art, and history. The inspiring cultural leaders and artists who we met in Japan reflect that same philosophy. They are working vigorously to keep their country one that values their cultural heritage and philosophy, keeping an eye on the past while moving forward to the future.

MEETINGS WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS

In our meetings with public officials, three topics emerged: (1) stability and change in the bilateral U.S.-Japan relationship during the new Trump administration; (2) mutual protection and cooperation between the United States and Japan in an area of the globe with aggressive state actors; and (3) Japan's economic progress in the face of internal challenges, such as the aging of the overall Japanese population, and external ones, including the need to address climate change. We became grounded in those issues over the course of the week, after hearing from a variety of perspectives, both Japanese and American. Undergirding all of our discussions, at least implicitly, was the primary reason for our visit to Japan, namely, the importance of developing people-to-people relationships to strengthen the bridge between Japan and America.



PRINCESS TAKAMADO

Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado welcomed us for a visit at her residence in Akasaka Estate on our first full day in Tokyo. Over tea and Japanese sweets, our conversation with Princess Takamado covered a range of topics, which often arose from details shared during our individual introductions.

The conversation, among other topics, touched upon the recognition of multiracial citizens in the United States and the importance and role of tradition, such as we experienced in Kanazawa. The delegation was honored to meet a member of the Imperial Family, and Her Imperial Highness helped to make our experience a memorable one.

UNITED STATES EMBASSY

March 7, 2017

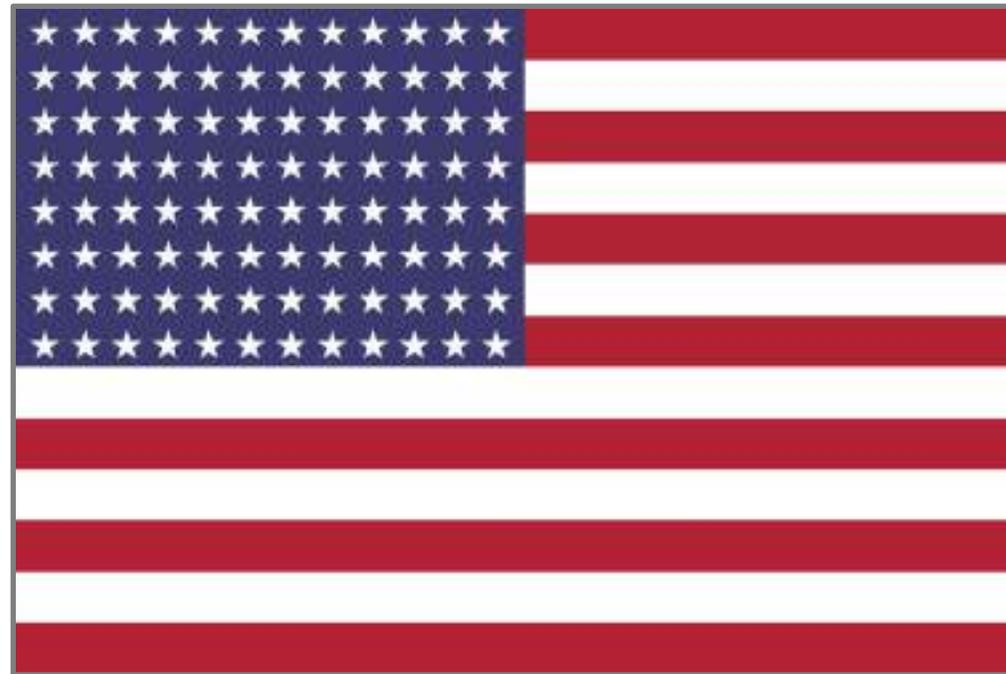
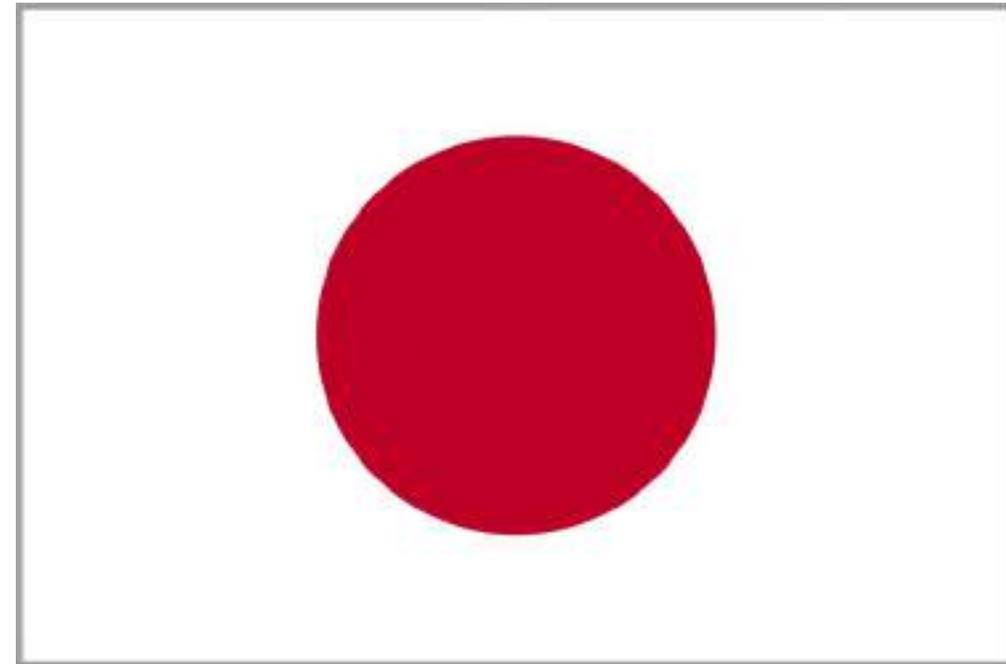


Through our visit to the U.S. Embassy, we walked onto American soil in the middle of Tokyo. We met with three Foreign Service officers: Dale Kreisher, Public Affairs Secretary; Drew Schufletowski, Political Secretary; and Alexei Kral, Economic Secretary. Mr. Kreisher, one of the officers working in public diplomacy -- press, information, culture, and education -- began the meeting and introduced his colleagues.

Mr. Schufletowski described his portfolio, which includes supporting the bilateral political relationship, monitoring Japanese politics, and coordinating with Japan in foreign policy and security matters. He noted that, under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, America has obligations and a commitment to Japan. He provided several examples of ongoing cooperation between the U.S. and Japan, e.g., Japan formed a National Security Council in 2014 modeled after the U.S. National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a diplomatic exchange program with the U.S. Despite the challenges in the transition period - a new ambassador to Japan had not yet been appointed - Mr. Schufletowski expressed reassurance for the stability of the U.S.-Japan alliance, noting the recent visit of Secretary of Defense Mattis to Japan and Prime Minister Abe's visit with President Trump in Florida.

Mr. Kral spoke about Japan's long-term economic challenges and an area of potential cooperation between Japan and the U.S. He noted the “hollowing out” of rural Japan, especially agricultural and fishing communities, caused by the aging population and the low birthrate, coupled with migration of young people to cities. The ongoing challenges in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster were also a topic of discussion. Mr. Kral also noted effects of China’s economic rise, despite international concerns regarding its foreign policy, human rights violations, and cyber tactics.

In response to a query, Mr. Kral pointed out that the economy, science, and technology are central to Prime Minister Abe’s platform and that the recent withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would not spell the demise of a strong economic relationship between the two countries. Finally, Mr. Kral discussed environmental and energy issues. Energy, he noted, provides a potential area of cooperation, giving examples such as Japan's clean coal technology and American energy commodities.





日系人リーダーの表敬を受ける安倍首相

丸亀製麺の導入事例公開

人材管理ツールのカオナビ活用事例！採用難を乗り越える為の人材管理術とは kaonavi.jpへ進む



PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE



Prime Minister Abe warmly greeted us and began his remarks by recalling his recent trip to Hawaii to meet President Obama and their visit to Pearl Harbor. He also talked about the dinner he attended with 1,000 Japanese Americans in Hawaii. The Prime Minister spoke highly of the Issei spirit that brought the Japanese to Hawaii and the U.S. mainland and recognized the efforts of the Japanese American community to help bridge and strengthen the relationship between Japan and the United States. Building on his theme of the relationship between the two countries, Prime Minister Abe announced that President Trump had called him

regarding the North Korean missile launch to express that the U.S. was "with Japan 100 percent."

Delegates Leslie Ito and David Boone briefly spoke to thank Prime Minister Abe and to acknowledge his recognition of the Japanese in America. Ms. Hirano Inouye also spoke, thanking the Prime Minister for his support of the JALD program and the US-Japan Council. Our visit ended with a much-anticipated opportunity for each of us to shake the Prime Minister's hand and to have an official photo taken with him.



The delegates met and heard from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe the day after North Korea had launched ballistic missiles that fell into the sea off Japan's northwest coast. We had a tightly scheduled time slot at the residence and workplace of the Prime Minister, the Kantei, an impressive, modern building.

We were escorted and seated in a formal meeting room set up to accommodate the press corps. In the hallway outside, a large crowd of journalists milled about, waiting. Just before the Prime Minister was announced, they were invited in and stood at the back of the room facing us. The Prime Minister then briskly walked in while cameras were clicking away.



DINNER WITH DIET MEMBERS

March 7, 2017

Dinner was hosted at a Chinese restaurant in Akasaka by Representative Taro Kono and attended by several Diet Members from the Liberal Democratic Party. In attendance were Chairperson of the National Safety Commission Jun Matsumoto; Representative Karen Makishima; Representative Kiyoshi Odawara, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs; Representative Keisuke Suzuki; Representative Shintaro Ito; Representative Takashi Yamashita; Kazuya Maruyama, Member of the House of Councilors; and Representative Masahiko Shibayama, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister.

Representative Makishima was the emcee of the evening's informal program. Representative Kono made brief welcome remarks to the delegation. He has been involved since the inception of JALD. Others introduced themselves, some including their affiliations with the United States as students. Many also stressed the importance of U.S.-Japan relations and cooperation in order to protect both nations.

Mr. Matsumoto is Minister-level.





Toward the end of dinner, Representative Kono exclaimed, "It's time for yo-yo!" That was the signal for the yo-yo diplomacy to begin, with the spotlight on our JALD professional yo-yo player, Ken Russell. The room reverberated with "Sugoi!" as each yo-yo trick was performed. Representative Yamashita, who skillfully played yo-yo, reminded the group that, "like politics, timing is everything." Yo-yo diplomacy gave way to karaoke diplomacy as our hosts shared *omotenashi* through singing. The evening was captured moment by moment by Representative Matsumoto, who diligently snapped photos and by the next day had generously produced CDs for each of us to remember the evening.



STATE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TADAHIKO ITO

March 8, 2017





This year, our delegation met with State Minister of the Environment Tadahiko Ito. Minister Ito introduced himself by recounting that he had met Ms. Hirano Inouye years ago while attending the opening of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, an event that prompted him to write about the diaspora of Japanese who had emigrated and succeeded in other countries.

In his overview, Minister Ito described the contribution that Japan has committed to make in accordance with the Paris Agreement at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference: Japan's overarching goal is to achieve a 50% reduction of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. He noted that, at the same time, Japan faces the challenge of meeting its economic goals, particularly maintaining a high gross domestic product.



Minister Ito also introduced us to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Medal Project. The project involves recovering gold, silver, and copper from Japan's electronic device recycling program to make all the medals for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We followed up with discussion and questions on other topics of interest to the delegates. Those included the profitability of companies that engage in sustainable business practices, the handling of nuclear components used in power plants (among other things, Minister Ito is in charge of nuclear accident reduction), and whether any Japanese coastal cities are experiencing daily effects of sea level rise (no reports of such problems). It was an informative meeting on a core subject of international concern.

SPEAKER YOHEI KONO

March 9, 2017



The delegation met with Yohei Kono, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and distinguished leader in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He is the longest serving Speaker in Japan, having served in that office from November 2003 until August 2009. Additionally, he has served as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the President of LDP.

Speaker Kono is an ardent supporter of the JALD program and has personally met with almost every delegation. He welcomed us to Japan and was pleased to hear of our cultural immersion in Kanazawa. He spoke on a broad range of topics, including the political stability of Japan under the five-year tenure of Prime Minister Abe, changes to the political landscape in Europe and the United States, diplomatic challenges facing Japan in its East Asian relations, and political and security challenges



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

March 10, 2017

Our delegation gathered at Kichijo for lunch with officials from the North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), including the Deputy Director-General, Keiichi Ono. He was accompanied by four other officials from MOFA: Yukiko Matsuda, Principal Deputy Director, First North American Division; Momoko Ichikawa, Researcher, First North American Affairs Bureau; Hiroshi Ogihara, Director, North America Economic Coordination Division; and Shogo Toyota, Senior Coordinator, Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Division.



In introductory remarks, Deputy Director-General Ono highlighted the fostering of people-to-people relationships that have led to a deeper connection and alliance between Japan and the United States. During lunch, at one end of the table, some of the delegates and officials from MOFA had the chance to talk about women in the workforce in Japan. Some specific topics addressed were work-family balancing issues, the choices and struggles that women face in the workplace, the efforts that Prime Minister Abe has made to support women in the workplace, and how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an equal-opportunity employer. We learned that some working women forego having children due to the long work day, lack of good childcare, changing family structure, and employers' policies for returning mothers. Additionally, cultural family and societal dynamics play a role in how women fare in the workplace. Changes, however, are occurring in Japan, including efforts to promote women in the workforce, given economic pressures exacerbated by the aging population and declining birthrate.



AMBASSADOR MASAHARU KOHNO

March 10, 2017

A current special envoy to the Middle East and former ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Masaharu Kohno met with the delegation just after he had returned from Washington D.C. His mission was to determine ways in which the U.S. and Japan can collaborate in the Middle East peace process. Naturally, the Ambassador addressed a number of Japan's foreign relations concerns during the course of our meeting; but perhaps more significantly, he also told us his view of the importance of the JALD program.

Ambassador Kohno shared his thoughts on the

Middle East peace process and the effectiveness of the responses to the stalemate there, as well as Japan's responses to the territorial issues with Russia and China. The recent missile launching by North Korea and the U.S. response alongside Japan was also a topic of conversation. He explained Japan's role in today's uncertain geopolitical environment and the need for a strong relationship with ASEAN countries as well as other nations. It is clear that collaboration and a strong alliance between the U.S. and Japan is necessary in tackling issues that will impact the world order.



The Ambassador also described himself and Ms. Hirano Inouye as the father and mother of the JALD program. In analyzing what is the most solid part of the U.S.-Japan relationship, the Ambassador explained his belief that people-to-people connections, such as student summits, grassroots connections, and sister city relationships, are critical. He related the story of John Manjiro, who was shipwrecked and then rescued by American whalers in the 1800s. They brought him back to the United States and provided him a warm welcome, an education, and a new life. On Manjiro's return to Japan, he served as a bridge and informal ambassador between the two nations, and his experience living in, and knowledge of, America would have an everlasting impact on the two countries. Ambassador Kohno offered advice to the delegates to view our trip as the beginning of a journey to learn more about Japan, to share our experiences with others in our respective communities, and to build bridges between our countries.

Ambassador Kohno summed it by encouraging us to learn new things, make new friends, and cultivate new experiences in the future. The delegation's meetings with public officials gave us a great start.



A resilient working relationship between the United States and Japan must include strong ties with the business community. Each of the four meetings the 2017 delegation held with the business community highlighted different perspectives and yielded new insights. But there were common themes and issues.

The current state of American politics was a backdrop for all meetings. Business leaders were concerned about rhetoric that seemed to indicate a new American isolationism, tangibly demonstrated by the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP. Concerns about North Korea, which had just launched four missiles into the sea off Japan's northwest coast, also informed the meetings.

Delegation members sought to remind the business leaders about America's diversity, seeking to assure them that relations with the U.S. can and should go beyond federal politics. There was also some sentiment that the North Korean threat might serve to bolster ties between the U.S. and Japan.

The meetings also included discussions on the role of women in Japanese business and the changes occurring as a result of Prime Minister Abe's Womenomics platform.

KEIDANREN MEETING

March 7, 2017

The Keidanren Japan Business Federation has been in existence since just after World War II. The goal of this group of leaders in Japanese business and government has been to grow the Japanese economy by taking on national and global challenges. With so many issues facing the Japanese economy, the transitions occurring in the United States have created a challenge. Keidanren has a history of direct action and resolution. The meeting with Keidanren confirmed that the current members are continuing that tradition

Vice Chair of the Board of Councillors, Haruo Murase started the conversation with an optimistic view of the recent meeting between Japan's Prime Minister Abe and the U.S. President, Donald Trump. Our discussion took place just one day after the Korean missiles were launched as a display of aggression toward both the U.S. and Japan. A silver lining in the dark cloud may be the galvanizing effect it is having on our two countries. President Trump called the Prime Minister to promise complete support from the U.S.



While the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP was disappointing to Japan and the Keidanren, these recent displays of solidarity between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe hint at the potential to come back to the table with a new trade agreement that will be beneficial for both countries.

In an effort to understand the diversity of the U.S. market and its interaction with other countries, Keidanren members asked about the difference between the Latin and Asian markets within the U.S., noting that Latin American communities in the U.S. tend to retain their cultural identity and language. Keidanren members asked why Japanese Americans had assimilated and about the effects of this assimilation.





After World War II, when the Japanese Americans were released from the concentration camps, there was a strong desire to assimilate and become “American” as quickly as possible. On the other hand, more Latinos have retained their culture, creating a marketing opportunity for American companies. The Latino community is served by Spanish-language commercials and television channels. While the Latin American market is difficult to reach, the U.S.-Latino market could be an excellent gateway for Japanese companies looking to enter South America.

Women members of Keidanren spoke to the delegation about the role of women in Japanese corporations and the need to continue to foster a better climate for women in business. Delegation members reminded Keidanren that having diverse viewpoints improves decision-making and strengthens businesses.



Both Keidanren members and delegates expressed support for Prime Minister Abe's efforts to find common ground with President Trump. As participants observed, one area to emphasize is the Japanese history of investing in U.S. infrastructure and natural gas. Japan's commitment to investment that will create in jobs in the U.S. dovetails with President Trump's priorities. This can create opportunities for new approaches and a win-win for both administrations. Prime Minister Abe has found that what will help President Trump can also help Japan. Participants noted that U.S. Vice President Pence would soon be visiting the

Japanese Minister of Finance, which should move these talks forward.

Delegates encouraged Keidanren to concentrate on communicating the message of Japan's previous and growing relationship with the U.S. While Keidanren members noted that the divided United States has created political turmoil, the delegation noted that this political controversy has ignited healthy citizen activism. More Americans have become engaged with political and economic issues. They are paying attention, so messaging from Japan is crucial.

The delegation advised Keidanren members to focus on policy, rather than political rhetoric. American policy has remained relatively stable despite the Americentric rhetoric. Putting "America First" will entail building strong trade relationships around the world. As a major partner, Japan should be able to benefit.

Finally, the delegation noted that, regardless of rhetoric or policy at the U.S. federal level, individual states still need significant funding for major projects and partnerships. The delegation recommended that Japan engage at the state and municipal level with trade missions and propose partnerships locally in the U.S.



FORUM 21 MEETING

March 8, 2017

在米日系人リーダー交流会



This year marked the 13th meeting between JALD and Forum 21, including many of its 40 current members and some of the nearly 1000 graduates. Delegates Michael Takada and David Boone helped lead the discussion, which was scheduled to cover two very compelling topics: (1) Japan's role in the changing international world and (2) Fostering leaders to bring about sustainable growth – what makes an effective leader?

The meeting took place just days after North Korea had launched missiles into the Japan Sea. As it had for many other meetings, this set the tone for much of the meeting. After graciously acknowledging the tremendous work done by Ms. Hirano Inouye and Senator Daniel Inouye, 93-year old founder and Forum President Shoichi Umezu recognized the difficult history of racism and persecution that Japanese Americans have faced in the United States. He expressed respect for the delegation and congratulated us on becoming active leaders.



Then Mr. Umezu shifted the conversation, expressing concern about the environment, including describing Japan as in crisis. Domestically, Japan is dealing with a debt of almost \$1 trillion, an aging society with a low birth rate, declining competitiveness, and the aftereffects of the Fukushima earthquake. Outside of Japanese domestic issues, Forum 21 is concerned about the expansionist policies of China, the North Korea missile tests, and the withdrawal of the U.S. from the TPP.

Takashi Matsumoto, reminded the Forum that 2017 is the 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution, and cautioned about growing income disparities. Yoshikuni Kanai warned that the growing populist movements around the world, wherein people want strong leaders, can be dangerous, reminding the audience that Hitler was born from such an environment.

Forum 21, which was established as a leadership development program for business and government executives to make recommendations on national policies and issues, was an ideal forum to discuss these concerns. The overriding sentiment during the meeting was the need to continue to strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship; working together on both security and economic issues, Japan and the United States can play a lead role in creating and maintaining an orderly world.



Forum members reiterated that the U.S. is the most important partner for Japan, and expressed concern about some of the rhetoric coming from U.S. President Donald Trump. We were urged to ask Forum 21 for help and reminded that “America First” should not be “America Alone.”

In response, JALD members sought to help allay some of these fears. Delegate Ken Russell spoke as a local politician and a small business owner. He advised Forum21 members to separate rhetoric from policy and reminded everyone that from chaos comes opportunity, adding that, therefore, the current environment was creating a lot of opportunity. He stressed the importance of relationships beyond the federal level, including local government, business, and people-to-people connections that are at the core of the U.S. Japan Council.

Although the U.S. withdrawal from TPP created some consternation, numerous delegates reminded the Forum that business relations would continue, including the examples of Boeing in Washington State and Toyota in Texas. These Japanese investments create U.S. jobs and need to be promoted. Mr. Boone addressed the issue from the military perspective. He reminded Forum 21 that the military was very motivated to help after 3/11. He stressed that Japan is America's most important ally, training together, working together, and sharing similar values. He noted that the recent aggressions by North Korea might bring Japan and the U.S. even closer together, as we recognize our shared interests, and might be the impetus for Japan to grow its military.

The second major discussion topic was leadership, including how to build, create, nurture, and sustain leaders. Delegate Gary Yamashita cited the need to create an environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity.





Forum 21 actively cultivates this, as was demonstrated by the report from its 2016 class. That incisive report focused on a Japan that is wary of the pace of change and can be too slow to react. In addition to focusing on security, the social system, and economics, the report identified three essential character traits of the Japanese people -- harmony, receptiveness, and questioning -- and counseled that, for Japan to succeed, all three must be in balance.

The 2017 Forum 21 class, which is scheduled to report at next year's meeting, will focus on how to shape the strength of Japan. It should be another engaging discussion.

JAPANESE AMERICAN

March 8, 2017



The lunch with Japanese American leaders residing in Tokyo gave the delegation a chance to hear about life in Japan from the unique perspective of Americans who look Japanese, and are culturally connected to Japan, but are definitely American. The four leaders, Paul Yonamine, Ernest Higa, Royanne Doi and Dr. Grant Mikasa, were generous with their time and frank about the challenges they each faced. All four are working to balance tradition and the need for change. These four leaders are serving as human Nikkei bridges between the two countries.

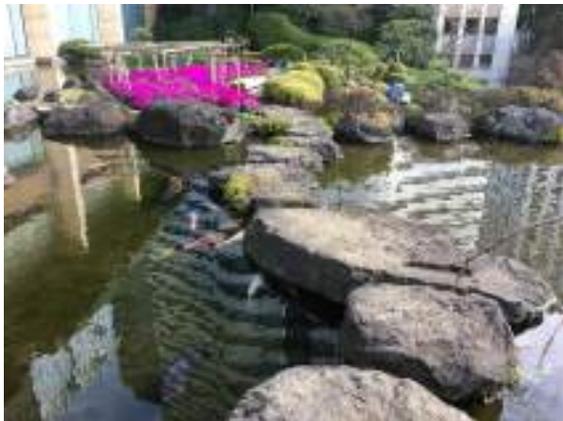
All four spoke of the need to “assimilate, but be different.” All believed that their strengths and successes were derived, in part, from their unique knowledge of both countries and cultures, coupled with a drive to perform. They noted that change in Japan is a bit slower than in the U.S., but that changes are happening. Ms. Doi noted that in the last few years, she was beginning to see real changes in opportunities for women in Japan.



The leaders counseled us on the importance of strategic networking. Following up on our Forum 21 discussion, delegate Jason Fujimoto asked about the leadership qualities that are important in Japan. Both Mr. Yonamine and Mr. Higa spoke about the need for leaders to become more agile and to recognize that failure is a part of learning. Japan is not yet Silicon Valley; there is still a “craftsmen” mentality.



All spoke about the lingering effects of 25 years of deflation and recession, but noted that as result, the recent economic downturn did not feel like as catastrophic. There is now optimism, with the Olympics coming to Japan and an uptick in students studying abroad.



These Nikkei leaders are helping to lead the way in Japan’s efforts to globalize.

This was Mr. Yonamine’s last lunch with JALD, as he is planning to retire and return to America. The 2017 delegation is grateful for his ongoing commitment to U.S.-Japan Council.



KEIZAI DOYUKAI MEETING

March 10, 2017



Our last business leader meeting, and our last meeting, was a discussion with a panel of members of Keizai Doyukai, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, and to meet staff members of the association. Rebranding as Doyukai, the association has approximately 1400 top executives from Japanese corporations as members.

We spoke with Yukio Tada, the Doyukai Chairman's special envoy to the United States and chair of Doyukai's Americas-Japan Relations Committee, and two vice-chairs of that committee, Kay Deguchi and Hideyuki Takahashi. Of special interest was Mr. Tada's recent visit to Indiana and Washington, D.C., which included attending the National Governors Association 2017 winter meeting.



In light of the recent change of administration in Washington, D.C. and changes in the states, Mr. Tada and Doyukai communicated a clear message to lawmakers and their staff that Japanese firms are significant and steady business partners. Japan is the number one international investor in 40 states. Japanese investment in the United States has reached a trillion dollars and has created more than two million jobs.



Given their extensive and varied experience in international executive management, all three panel members invited us to engage in what became a lively and frank exchange concerning Japanese outreach and business image in the United States beyond just outreach to federal governmental officials. The discussion was an excellent conclusion to our week of meetings in Japan.

CONCLUSION

A common thread from all business meetings was the need to stay engaged. The current environment presents enormous challenges, including (but not limited to) political rhetoric, nativism, militarism in North Korea, environmental issues, women's issues, the economy, and the business climate.

Addressing these issues will require close cooperation. The people-to-people connections forged on the trip have created a strong foundation that will enable us to work together on future solutions.

The delegation and Japanese business leaders spoke with one voice regarding the importance of the JALD program. We are committed to remaining engaged and optimistic about what the future will bring.

REFLECTIONS

David Boone
Gary Yamashita
Jason Fujimoto
Ken Russell
Leslie A. Ito
Lynn Nakamoto
Michael Takada
Patrick Oishi
Roy Hirabayashi
Sawako T. Gardner
Wendy Takahisa



David Boone

JALD was a powerful experience on many levels. I am not a novice to Japan or to the Japanese, having had a long and recurring relationship with Japan throughout my life. However, the relationships, reflections, and thoughtful discussions added a new dimension to how I think about Japan and how I think about myself as a Japanese American.

Our trip to Kanazawa exceeded all expectations. The focus of art and culture was never a strong interest area for me personally, but as we met with and explored different artists and cultural centers, a theme surfaced that was both a surprise for me and an area of great interest and reflection. What I expected was a continuous review of art forms that would be beautiful but rarely relevant to the themes of current conflicts and geopolitical challenges. What I received, however, was so much more: With each artist, a surprising link to the past. A deep understanding as to the history and culture that evolved to create their art forms and views toward how they would evolve in the future. Beyond the facts of the past, there was a spirituality that is hard to describe but ever present in each art form that shaped how the artists thought about the world. This was a gift for me that I had not anticipated.

Kanazawa, as one of the great centers of history and culture for Japan on par with Kyoto, embraces a concept of new and old simultaneously. The people in Kanazawa respect and acknowledge their history while striving to innovate moving forward. However, while they understand their history, it is the values that they want to embrace and hold as a torch to light their way. These values are timeless and provide a sense of purpose for their community, even as they contemplate what the new Shinkansen line or the 2020 Olympics will do for them and to them as they move into the future. It is truly an opportunity for us to learn as our communities in the U.S. strive to deal with issues such as our diversity challenges. What will be our enduring values as we move forward into our destiny?



We left Kanazawa and traveled back to Tokyo, almost regretfully, as we departed one world and arrived in another -- leaving the serene and reentering the chaotic world of a capital city. As we met with many senior business and government leaders to exchange views, there were themes in our discussions tied to the issues of the day, from the new administration in the U.S. to the future of the security alliance -- especially with North Korea lobbing missiles at Japan. But here too there was an order, a structure and patterns.

We saw in the leadership of Japan a desire for continued world order, for ultra-collaboration on issues, and for the United States to maintain preeminence as a world leader with which Japan could align. We heard about the movement that the next generation of Japanese continues to make with social change in the role of men and women – albeit slow in progress. We heard that the Japanese want Japan to be a leader in sustainability and in the environment. We sensed an excitement surrounding the Olympics and being able to show the world that “Japan is back,” along with all the best that she can offer. And yet, as quickly as Japan will innovate herself into the future, will her people lose their link to their extraordinary cultural heritage? How does Japan maintain her identity in a fast moving evolution toward wherever she ends up? Will Japan stand up and take a leadership role in the region and in the world?

These reflections are very much a part of me as a “hafu” Nikkei. I have the opportunity to look at Japan from the outside looking in and to internalize Japanese behaviors at the same time. And that ultimately is the lesson for us all. We have the ability to use the great gift that was given us as Japanese Americans to strengthen the ties between both countries as well as in our own communities and even to transcend our experience to other cultures.

And lastly, it was an honor to participate in this program and to get to know 10 other amazing delegates who I know will be my associates, my collaborators, confidants, and friends for a lifetime.





Gary Yamashita

As I reflect upon the extraordinary journey that I experienced, I am still overwhelmed by many emotions in the afterglow of the trip. "Awakening", "pride" and "appreciation" are feelings that are predominant. The opportunity to participate in the Japanese American Leadership Delegation was one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career, which I will treasure for a lifetime. Although I was raised with traditional Japanese customs and have been involved in my local Japanese American community for most of my adult life, the JALD trip was truly an awakening for me, as I developed a clearer sense of my personal identity by reconnecting with my ancestral heritage and cultural roots. The trip enhanced a deep sense of personal pride in my Japanese heritage as I observed that many of the values with which I was raised are so ingrained in the everyday fabric of the Japanese culture. Although our two countries are distant geographically, as Japanese and Japanese Americans, we share many common principles and beliefs that closely bind us together. I also have a sincere feeling of appreciation for the privilege of participating in the JALD program and for being afforded the rare opportunities to personally interact with high-level Japanese dignitaries, political and business leaders.

Our journey began a month before the trip to Japan, with the JALD orientation in Los Angeles, which provided the delegates with a foundation of information that prepared us for our trip. We were briefed on a wide array of topics that ranged from cultural, economic and governmental issues, to Japanese customs, protocol and etiquette. As delegates, we became aware of the significant responsibility we each had as community leaders representing the United States. In preparation for the many meetings and encounters we would have during the trip, the delegates were encouraged to research and become informed on current events and issues that affect U.S. and Japan relations. With the recent presidential election in the United States, we were told to expect many questions regarding the direction of the new administration in Washington D.C.

The U.S.-Japan Council staff, many volunteers and Kaz Maniwa, provided invaluable information during our orientation on what to expect during our trip. Most importantly, the delegates had the opportunity to get to know one another, and also become acquainted with Irene Hirano Inouye, the leader of our delegation. We were also introduced to Shigeru Kikuma, the Consulate official in Los Angeles who accompanied us on our trip. When we all convened to begin our trip to Japan, we already felt a close bond between us that continued to flourish as the trip progressed and we shared many wonderful experiences together.

After arriving in Tokyo on our first day, we were off to Kanazawa the next morning on the new Shinkansen line to a city with a rich history and commitment to the arts and culture. During our visit, we were introduced to museums, restaurants, cultural centers and a sake brewery that was established 392 years ago. None of us anticipated the impact our visit to Kanazawa would have on us, as we left with a deep appreciation of the importance of our cultural treasures and the influence they have on society today. As we explored each destination, we became aware of the delicate balance between protecting and honoring our cultural past, and the necessity to remain relevant by evolving and embracing change to create new things. As we continued our trip, we observed this same dynamic when we met with senior leaders in business and government who were challenged with being mindful of the past, but the need to adapt to the future. We were all sorry to eventually leave the beauty of Kanazawa and the strong spirit of their community, but we were also excited for the meetings that awaited us in Tokyo.

Our schedule in Tokyo was often busy, energizing and at times challenging, as we moved quickly from one meeting to another. At each session, our delegation received the highest level of attention; we were treated as dignitaries. As we exchanged views with senior leaders in politics and business, we were asked the anticipated questions regarding the new Presidential Administration in Washington D.C.

We sensed concern and caution regarding the future direction of relations between Japan and the United States. There was also hope that the recent meetings between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump were establishing a solid foundation for strengthening ties between our two countries. Through our many meetings and personal interactions, we observed an overall sense of optimism in Japan's desire to implement social change and create economic growth and sustainability. It was also evident that Japan faces many complex demographic challenges with an aging population, shrinking workforce and rural communities grappling to sustain their declining economies. There was also excitement that the 2020 Olympics would provide opportunities for Japan to showcase itself on the world stage.

As our trip concluded, there were so many rewarding experiences that allowed me to gain a new personal perspective regarding my responsibility to work to strengthen U.S. and Japan relations. I now feel a strong sense of belonging to both countries. The many people to people interactions that occurred on this JALD trip are a testament to the value of the program which allows people from different countries to meet, interact and bond.

I am sincerely grateful to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S.-Japan Council and former Consul General of Japan in Denver Makoto Ito for their support of my nomination to the JALD program. I would like to also express my appreciation to Consul Shigeru Kikuma for his role in coordinating many of the events and activities during our trip. I am forever indebted to Irene Hirano Inouye for her tireless leadership and guidance during this amazing adventure. Finally, to my fellow JALD delegates, I am grateful for the privilege of getting to know such a talented group of special individuals. I am humbled to be included in this delegation that includes such prominent business and community leaders, three judges, a retired Navy Admiral and a yo-yo champion. I will always cherish our unique experiences together, especially the late night sushi, sake and ramen runs.

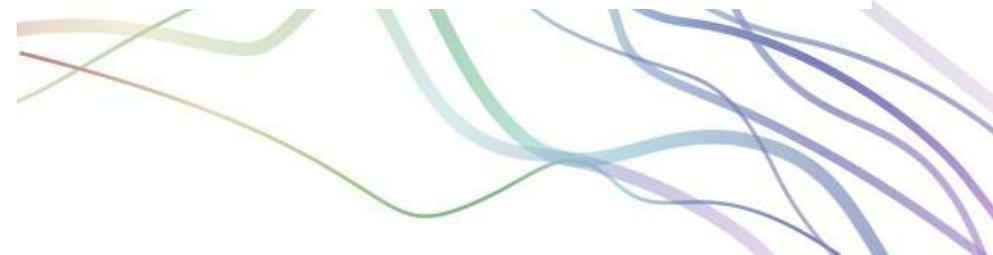
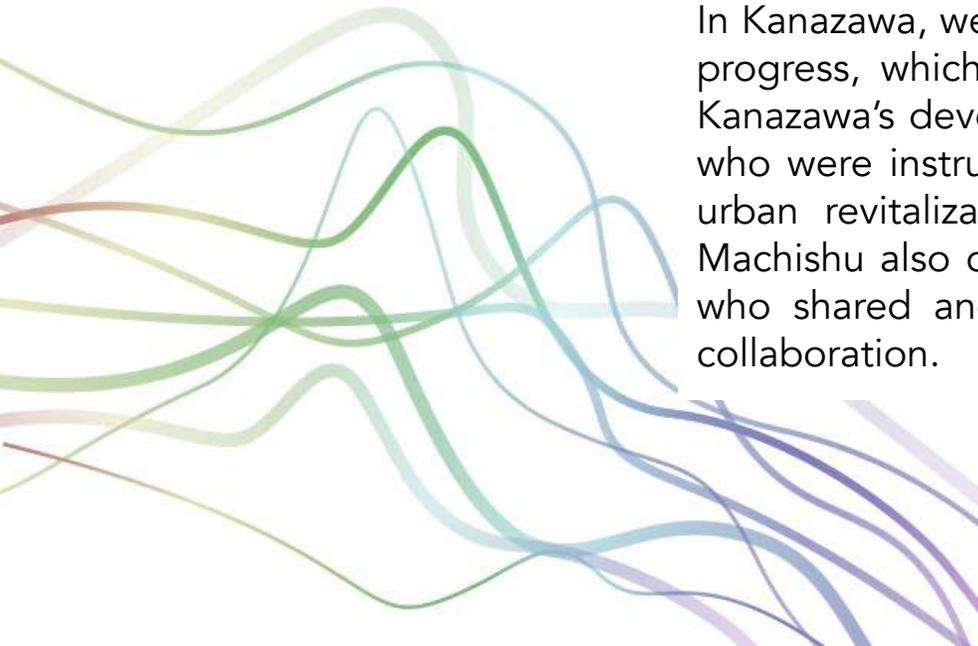


Jason Fujimoto

I have much gratitude for the unique and rich experiences garnered as a member of this year's Japanese American Leadership Delegation. It was eye-opening to see how the U.S.-Japan Council has established itself as such an important bridge and connector between the United States and Japan—I speculate there are very few U.S.-based organizations that can command as much respect and list as many deep relationships with another foreign government as the U.S.-Japan Council. It was also an honor to get to know and learn from so many of my fellow delegates who all brought with them their own special Japanese-American stories. The group's collective passion and engagement truly made each experience that much more powerful.

As I reflect on our journey, it's clear I take away a greater understanding and appreciation for U.S. Japan relations and our own important role in helping to foster and further strengthen this relationship in the communities we serve. At a deeper level, however, I also found several experiences that resonated strongly with my own heritage and values.

In Kanazawa, we learned about the intertwining influence of culture and community in societal progress, which parallels my hometown of Hilo, HI. A key component to the success of Kanazawa's development over the centuries was the "Machishu," or local community leaders who were instrumental in stewarding public-private partnerships, infrastructure planning and urban revitalization rooted in culture and tradition. The powerful leadership from the Machishu also catalyzed high levels of civic engagement amongst the Kanazawa community, who shared and embodied common core values of innovation, respect for tradition and collaboration.





Similarly, Hilo is proud to be the home of more multi-generational and century-old businesses per capita than any other town in the State of Hawaii. In my opinion, this did not happen by chance. As a town, Hilo survived 2 devastating tsunamis that defined Hilo's foundation of community as these disasters brought people together, created a sense of shared fate, and forced the town to rebuild together. Additionally, Hilo's frequent rain and atypical "paradise" weather minimized reliance on tourism and forced the town's businesses to survive and thrive by serving our local community. This meant not just selling to the community, but caring for and being a part of the community. Over the years, these influences catalyzed a deep bench of strong community leaders that helped unify and shape Hilo's values to what they are today.

For me personally, I am proud to represent a multi-generational and near century old business. As a Gosei and the 5th generation to run our family founded company that began 96 years ago, I carry in my heart a deep sense of responsibility, gratitude and respect. This feeling and sense of purpose is not something people can easily relate to, but I found this connection through our conversations with Mr. Ohi of the Ohi Pottery Museum and Mr. Fukumitsu of the Fukumitsuya Sake Brewery, both generational leaders of family founded enterprises going back many centuries. It was powerful for me to hear and feel from them the same sense of purpose that I carry every day. It was also humbling and put into perspective the fact that 96 years in their respective histories is truly a blink of an eye.



As I left Japan and returned to the United States only to be inundated with the “craziness” of American media and politics, it made me reflect and ask the question; what is America’s identity and what exactly are the values of our country? At the same time, I also realized America’s diversity and makeup of many different cultures from across the world. Is it realistic to expect a unified value system similar to Japan amid such diversity? Is this even important? America is after all the most powerful country on the planet with the mightiest economy and military, and this didn’t just happen with luck. What is most critical in the years ahead as globalization, competition, and the fight for power and resources continue? Can you pick and choose parts of culture to carry forward, or does that take away from the whole? What can we learn from both Japan and the United States?



In the end, there is clearly no one answer and perhaps our future lays in the message Mr. Fukumitsu delivered to our delegation during his stirring presentation to our delegation-- “It is old and it is new. Succession of innovation is the genesis of tradition.” Considering all of this, the mission of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation becomes even more important as we now embody the perspectives of both countries. I find myself in an especially influential situation, given Hawaii's dominant mix of Japanese Americans and unique geography in the middle of the Pacific. In Hawaii, Japan-U.S. related initiatives are and will continue to be at the forefront of many community organizations. I am excited to embrace both the old and new in the years ahead.



Ken Russell

It often takes some time to let experiences reveal their true meaning. The people we meet and the things we learn have an immediate impact, but the totality and deeper effect of those experiences and relationships become apparent only after some time passes and the subconscious can simmer. This is why I have waited until the final deadline to submit a personal reflection of my trip to Japan, and certainly by no course of procrastination.

In all seriousness, this brief journey to Japan has changed the way I view myself and has awakened a sense of responsibility to my identity that will undoubtedly guide my actions and intentions from here forward. I have always known of my Japanese roots and heritage. I have traveled there many times. As a Florida-born Nissei child of a Japanese mother who arrived in the 1960s, however, I had no personal association to the US internment camps of WWII that framed much of the Japanese American identity. The tour of the Japanese American National Museum at the start of our JALD orientation in Los Angeles was the beginning of my epiphany. In a distant, yet very tangible and personal way, I related to the experience of those who were taken from their homes during wartime under the guise of fear that they could be the enemy—just for looking like the enemy. I saw what President Franklin Roosevelt was capable of, despite his progressive nature and many good accomplishments. I saw how fear could justify the will of elected officials and blind the humanitarian vision of otherwise good-natured neighbors. I am an elected official, a good-natured neighbor, and a Japanese American. Suddenly, for me, this trip had a new sense of seriousness that was only betrayed by my constant, corny sense of humor. I now know that my responsibility as an elected official is to use my platform to encourage tolerance, empathy, and social justice. My job is to share the story of our past so that we never again allow fear and divisive rhetoric to blind our judgment or justify bigotry. All this, and it was only the first day of the orientation.

The actual trip to Japan, however, brought about a separate epiphany. The orientation had left me feeling under-qualified to represent my heritage. Even more so, the expectation that I would be able to address the Japan Business Federation and meet the Prime Minister as a representative of Japanese American leadership made me feel as an imposter. Yet, as each experience unfolded, as each introduction and discussion put me in a position of speaking for my country from my unique perspective, I realized that this is exactly my job and responsibility. When the high level executives of the Keidanren and the Keizai Doyukai expressed concern over the uncertain climate of business and trade under President Trump, I found myself encouraging optimism and opportunity. I recognized that the true story of Japanese partnership with America is not being told well enough. I realized that I have a responsibility to tell this story and build this relationship.

The first days in Japan were spent in the historic, cultural town of Kanazawa. It is my recommendation that a cultural and historical emphasis become a mandatory part of the itinerary. Before facing the socio-economic and political challenges of the week, this focus on the artistic and human history of Japan was the perfect preface to the rest of the journey. Seeing the deep-rooted pride of the Ohi pottery master and the meticulous perfectionism of the Fukumitsuya brewery workers gave us insight and background for all the meetings to come.

I will never forget the friendships I found on this trip, the flavors I savored, and the lessons I learned. Most importantly, however, the sum of these experiences brings a change in the way I carry myself. I know myself better. And I know what I am meant to do. Thank you.



Leslie A. Ito

As a Yonsei raised in the 1980s and 1990s, I grew up trying to distinguish myself as a Japanese American, an identity that felt very disconnected from Japan. My first trip to Japan was in the summer of 1993 during my first year of college. My grandparents felt that the best use of their redress money from the U.S. government was to take my sister and me to Japan and reconnect with our family, culture and motherland. We traveled with 20 other family members from Tokyo to visit our great-grandfather's home in Fukuoka. I remember feeling a sense of alienation and the general reaction to our Nikkei group as being condescending. When I came home, I admired the connections that my second-generation Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese American friends had and the fluidity with which they traversed cultural and geographic boundaries between the U.S. and their home countries, effortlessly, without the historical burdens of war. As an adult, I look back on this momentous trip and think about how identity was stripped from our family during World War II in the forms of language, culture and connection to Japan. My grandparents purposefully used their redress funds to make a cultural course correction.

I strongly believe that in the last decade, the willingness, interest and ability to understand each other, connect and build relationships between Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals has grown much stronger, due in large part to the U.S.-Japan Council, Prime Minister Abe, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their efforts and investments to build and nurture people-to-people relationships with Japanese Americans uniquely positioned as ambassadors between the two countries.



The Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD) has been a significant milestone for me, as it was a journey of cultural diplomacy between the U.S. and Japan and a personal journey. Our work began in Kanazawa, where I was part of a symposium on Arts & Culture and Community Development. I shared the great work that we are doing in Los Angeles with Sustainable Little Tokyo. Kanazawa and Los Angeles' Little Tokyo have many things in common, new public transportation and a growing economy centered on cultural assets and the dilemma of how to stimulate the economy and spur cultural tourism and at the same time, protect our cultural treasures and assets. As a direct result of this presentation, the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC) will host a college student from Kanazawa who is interested in learning more about our efforts in Los Angeles and the intersections between cultural and economic development.

One of the most memorable visits was to the Ohi Pottery Museum in Kanazawa and meeting Ohi Chozaemon, the 10th generation ceramic master who gave us a tour of the museum, enriched our understanding of Japanese culture and led us through a traditional tea ceremony. Ohi-sensei explained how his pottery, which is often viewed in a contemporary art context, always embraces history and tradition and the continuation of his family legacy. He reminded us how rare this connection between contemporary and traditional culture is because we no longer learn from our elders due to the discontinuation of multi-generations living together. As we continued to Tokyo, many of the delegates reflected back on that particular visit, connecting what we learned from the master ceramic artist to the values and traditions of how Japanese government and corporations operate and how all sectors must figure out how to embrace the future, make change while not sacrificing core values.

As an arts and cultural advocate, I loved that this short cultural excursion to Kanazawa that was organized by the Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnerships not only reverberated spiritually and intellectually with those of us that work in the arts and culture field, but it also impacted my colleagues from the private and government sectors too. Cultural values are the foundation of how we relate to each other; it's the glue in people-to-people relationships; and it's the reason why the work of JACCC is so important.

JALD provided unique experiences, from addressing Prime Minister Abe on behalf of the delegation with colleague, Admiral David Boone, to meeting with top Japanese business leaders and visiting with Princess Takamado. The greatest gift of the JALD trip was the opportunity to experience Japan with the other ten delegates. We were a diverse group in age, background, geography and our ancestral connection to Japan ranged from *Shin-Issei* to *Gosei*. Being able to share this special experience with each of them left me with a surprising sense of kinship. I am ever grateful for this opportunity and look forward to continuing to develop these relationships in the U.S. and Japan.





Lynn Nakamoto

I was familiar with Japan, but only as a tourist. I had visited Japan once before, in 1998. That was a three-week trip alone to explore Japan by rail during a sabbatical from work. The trip included visiting Hiroshima and Kumamoto, home cities of my ancestors. I was very much the tourist, a Sansei/Yonsei who did not speak Japanese and who got along in the era before smart phones with a backpack, a few thick travel guides, and a phrasebook.

The JALD trip was far different in design, content, and purpose than my earlier tourism in Japan. I knew before we embarked that the trip would greatly increase my knowledge of government and current social, economic, and political issues in Japan. I appreciated that I had time and opportunities to have conversations about social issues, including how women and lesbian and gay people are getting along in Japan, with Japanese participants at our meetings. And the summary of our meetings illustrates the kind of exposure we had to business and government leaders in Tokyo. It was a privilege to hear from them about Japan's economic and political challenges and goals.



What I did not expect was how much I would enjoy and admire Kanazawa and draw parallels between that city and my hometown, Portland, Oregon. I had not visited Kanazawa before. As we learned, the Shinkansen has recently, as of 2015, made the city easily accessible from Tokyo. Our visit to Kanazawa and the theme of this year's Japanese American Leadership Symposium -- Culture and Community Engagement -- resonated with my experience of living in Portland, which has a large "foodie" and creative arts and design culture. In our brief visit to Kanazawa, recognized by UNESCO as a creative city, I learned that Kanazawa has a deep appreciation for art and crafts, both traditional and contemporary, and for excellent food. I enjoyed our visits to the museums, and I loved walking through the garden, which also reminded me of Portland. I was impressed by what Kanazawa has done to showcase its long history of fine craftsmanship in so many areas and to revitalize its city center. My own feeling about Kanazawa was confirmed at the Symposium reception, when I had the chance to speak with a young chef who had ventured out -- including visiting Portland -- and returned with new ideas about making great food in the city. I wish I had had more time to spend there and hope to visit Kanazawa again, when I return to Japan for the 2020 Olympics.

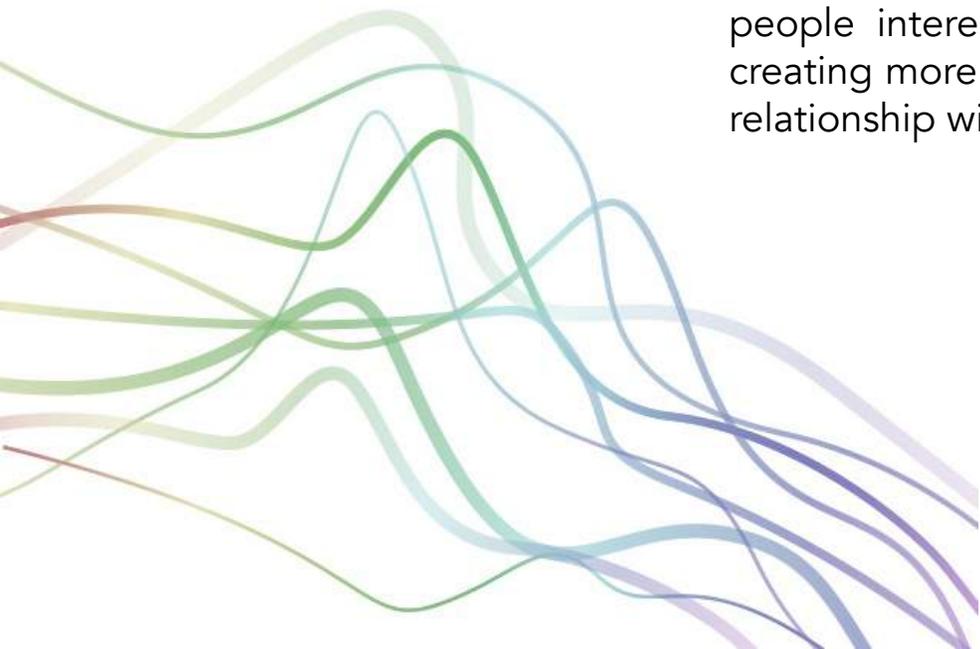
I am grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sponsoring, and to U.S.-Japan Council for organizing, this unique trip to Japan. I also thank Consul General Uchiyama in Portland and my accomplished fellow delegates. As intended, the experience sparked my curiosity about Japan and my relationship with Japan and its people. Although I will never be able to speak Japanese, I will never feel like a stranger passing through a foreign country in Japan.



Michael Takada

Finding appropriate words to adequately describe what I experienced and felt during my recent JALD trip is incredibly difficult. Like a number of my fellow delegates, I have been blessed to have had the pleasure of occasional visits to Japan over the years, but it is also accurate to say, almost without exception, few have ever seen Japan like this! I lost track of the number of times that all I could come up with were words repeated during orientation by Kaz Minawa: "Trip of a lifetime!"

I have always taken pride in my Japanese American heritage and my Japanese ancestry, with thanks to my parents and grandparents. Though not a good student during my Saturday Nihongo Gakko language school days as a child, by the time I reached high school, I realized the importance of working harder to become more proficient. In college, I continued taking courses in the language as well as Japanese and Japanese American studies. My life's journey includes working 15 years in the Chicago branch of a Japanese bank, helping establish its U.S. corporate customers base. Now, in my role at the Japanese American Service Committee, I, and my team, focus on providing social services and cultural programs and activities for people interested in Japanese American culture and history. We are also committed to creating more ways for the Japanese and Japanese American communities to be in a stronger relationship with one another, a core theme of the U.S.-Japan Council and the JALD program.



The wonderfully unique aspects of the JALD program were at once both overwhelming and humbling. When else can an individual find himself in the presence of leadership at the highest levels of Japanese government, corporate business, and nonprofit and cultural institutions? When was the last time you were invited to the Akasaka Estate to have tea with Her Imperial Highness Takamado? Have a private audience with Japanese Prime Minister Abe? Dinner and karaoke with members of the Japanese Parliament? Lunch and conversation with members of Keidanren? Tour a sake brewery that has been in business since 1625 with the original family's 13th president? Take part in a tea ceremony hosted by the 11th Ohi Chozaemon, whose family history spans 386 years of making beautiful pottery?

A truly amazing aspect of this adventure was the level of connection made during each and every encounter throughout the trip. Without exception, our visits with our Japanese hosts provided opportunities for meaningful dialogue, conversation, and relationship building for all parties. We learned about each another's thoughts around current issues and concerns in our respective societies; but, most importantly, we established a basis for building new friendships. Even before returning home, I found on several occasions where I was exchanging emails with people I had just met on our trip.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge how wonderful it was to experience JALD 2017 with the crew making up the 2017 delegation. What an honor it has been to be included in such accomplished company, and I am excited at the thought of seeing all the yet to be known ways our paths will cross in the future. And my heartfelt appreciation extends to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and to former Consul General Toshiyuki Iwado for supporting my application to the program. Last but not least, thank you to the U.S.-Japan Council, Irene Hirano Inouye, and her fantastic staff.

JALD 2017 indeed provided me with the trip of a lifetime!



Patrick Oishi

I was humbled and ecstatic to learn I had been selected for the 2017 Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD). Throughout the history of JALD, many distinguished alumni have represented the Seattle Chapter of the U.S.-Japan Council. I consider these people to be role models, mentors, and friends. Prior to leaving for Japan, the alumni shared with me many colorful stories of their JALD experiences. Their words could never have prepared me for the incredible journey that awaited me.

Kanazawa exposed me to numerous elements of Japanese arts and culture. In a matter of two short days, we were introduced to Zen Buddhism at the D.T Suzuki Museum, 350 years of pottery tradition at the Ohi Pottery Museum, incredible natural beauty and tranquility of the Kenrokuen Garden, and the art of sake making at the Fukumitsuya Brewery. A very special moment was being treated to a traditional tea ceremony at the conclusion of our Ohi Museum tour. Eleventh generation pottery master Toshio Ohi narrated the beautiful ceremony as his wife and mother served tea in intricate Ohi tea bowls. This was an extremely moving, almost spiritual experience for me. All of the experiences in Kanazawa were culturally enriching and provided me with newfound insight into my ancestral roots.

The level of access provided to our delegation was extraordinary. We had the privilege of meeting Princess Takamado of the Japanese Imperial Family. Her grace created a wonderful sense of serenity during our visit. Princess Takamado epitomized the kindness of the Japanese people I experienced throughout our trip. A true highlight was meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Tensions were high due to North Korea firing four missiles towards Japan. Despite this extremely troubling national security situation, the Prime Minister took time out of his extremely busy schedule to meet with us. The Prime Minister's comments focused primarily on his appreciation for the long-standing commitment of the United States to the security of the region.



Our delegation held productive meetings with business leaders from Forum 21, Keidanren, and Keizai Doyukai. We discussed important trade and business practices and policies that could further bilateral economic prosperity for the U.S. and Japan. We also had very positive meetings with leaders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliament, and Prime Minister Abe's cabinet. In particular, the time spent with Former Speaker of the House Representatives Yohei Kono stood out for me. Mr. Kono shared his abundance of knowledge and experience on topics including diplomatic and security challenges facing Japan. His frank comments provided great insight into the many complex issues facing Japan. I was thoroughly impressed with the influential government and business leaders with whom we interacted and their commitment to U.S.-Japan relations.

I will always value the great friendships and relationships developed during the JALD trip. Our delegation first met for orientation in Los Angeles a few weeks before traveling to Japan. Through our shared experiences in Japan, our delegation of eleven very diverse individuals developed close friendships. Sharing an evening of dinner, laughter, and karaoke with Japanese Parliamentarians was a special event. A few of us, including me, were nervous about performing karaoke, but Representative Taro Kono and Minister Jun Matsumoto put us at ease and made the evening very memorable. I also enjoyed meeting and speaking with a variety of USJC members and Japanese-American leaders. In particular, I valued their perspectives about American and Japanese cultural differences, as well as their appreciation on a whole for Japanese people and society.

I was born in Hawaii to a Nisei father and Sansei mother and grew up feeling quite Japanese. But looking back after my JALD experience, I now realize that I lacked a full understanding of my ancestry and cultural heritage. The JALD experience expanded my appreciation of numerous aspects of Japanese culture and my own heritage. This has deepened my commitment to U.S.-Japan relations and my own Japanese-American community. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S.-Japan Council for providing me this once-in-a lifetime opportunity and life-changing experience.



Roy Hirabayashi

I will never forget the experiences of meeting Mr. Toshio Ohi, an 11th generation potter, Mr. Masahiko Sato, a world renown jazz artist, Mr. Shin-ichiro Takagi, a 2-star Michelin chef, numerous top executives of major corporations, leaders of the Diet and a very special meeting with Prime Minister Abe, all within a week of nonstop meetings, conferences, tours and extraordinary meals. This is how I describe my experience as part of the 17th Japanese American Leadership Delegation to Japan. I am honored to have met 10 other amazing Japanese American leaders and I now have an extraordinary group of dear friends through our shared JALD experiences.

Our delegation began our trip in the city of Kanazawa. I was very happy to hear that many of the activities in Kanazawa were highlighting the arts and culture of Japan. We learned about the Maeda clan through the eyes of a potter, a sake maker and our guide through the Kenroku Gardens. It was fascinating to hear how over 400 years ago, the Maeda clan was able to establish a strong arts and cultural foundation that continues in the lives of the people of Kanazawa. More importantly, that history still defines the work of many of the artists and businesses in the Kanazawa area.

In Tokyo, we met with many different business/corporate leaders, Japan Foundation staff Japanese Americans in Japan and representatives of the Diet. Our JALD group was in Japan at a very unique time. It was just six weeks after President Trump took office, three weeks after Prime Minister Abe visited President Trump in WDC and Florida and right at the time North Korea launched four missiles towards Japan. International relations were tense for the entire world. It seemed as though everyone we met in Japan was curious about how we felt about our U.S. government.

It was interesting to hear the stories from various Japanese Americans who are now living in Japan. I enjoyed hearing about why they chose to stay in Japan to live and work, the challenges they faced and the identity challenges they encountered as a Japanese American in Japan. I was constantly reflecting on my past experiences of visiting Japan and my quest to define my own Japanese American heritage and the culture shock I experienced when I first visited Japan. I also learned a lot from my fellow 2017 JALD members. Their personal stories and insights added to the experiences I have had. We were constantly sharing and comparing stories during our trip. No matter how many times I have gone to Japan before, I always learn many new and different things. The JALD trip took that experience to a much higher level and will never be matched. The opportunity to meet different elected officials, corporate leaders, and public officials in many high profile situations was much more than I expected. We all had the agenda and the briefing of what we would be doing during our week of activities, but it was not possible to understand the amazing opportunity we would have to meet so many high-ranking individuals.

What I found most rewarding from the JALD trip was a reaffirmation of the work I do as a taiko artist. I have many times been questioned if my work with the Japanese drum in America is authentic. After hearing from how both artists and business people in Japan consider their relationship to traditional forms to contemporary work, I now know that I have been on the right path. I also have been reminded about the importance of telling the Nikkei story and how much more work needs to be done. We all need to do a little bit more to help ensure the Nikkei legacy survives to future generations.

I thank all my fellow delegates, the U.S.-Japan Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and especially Irene Hirano Inouye for providing exemplary leadership and work.



Sawako T. Gardner

The JALD experience has given me pause for reflection. The close-up perspective that this trip has offered is truly rare and unparalleled. This opportunity has been an honor, a privilege, and an adventure never to be forgotten. The JALD trip confirms the validity of people-to-people connections, and it demonstrated its ability to forge strong alliances between people that promote positive change, exchange of ideas, mutual respect, and a more genuine understanding of each country's values. The various meetings and discussions with the Members of the Diet, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, HIH Princess Takamado, and business leaders gave me a window into Japanese government, business structure, and societal norms, as well as the modern innovations that Japan has achieved, along with the progress needed, for Japan to stay an international leader.

Starting the trip with the incredible Kanazawa experience was an appropriate backdrop to the journey, because culture, history, and tradition form the defining heart of a nation. I thought about the importance of cultural identity and the keeping of tradition for the cohesiveness of a nation as I listened to Matsutaro Fukumitsu describe the artisanal production of sake, innovating without sacrificing history; Master Ohi Chozaemon pay homage to his ancestors through using century-old traditions in the art of making pottery, but carefully incorporating his modern touch; and the tribute to cultural values that Chef Shinichiro Takagi expresses in preparing *kaiseki* cuisine – that food is not simply sustenance, but the human expression of hope, and the appreciation of life. I realized that when inundated by the stressors of modern life, we lose sight of the spirituality of culture, and the tranquility and Zen in the simplicity of old traditions. It appears that given its homogeneous population and geographically insular location, Japan has been able to preserve its unique tradition and culture. In contrast, American culture has been one that has been defined by many immigrant populations starting with a revolutionary spirit, democracy, and fierce adherence to independence. To me, each country represents the old and the new, struggling to balance the virtues of the past with the evolution of the future.





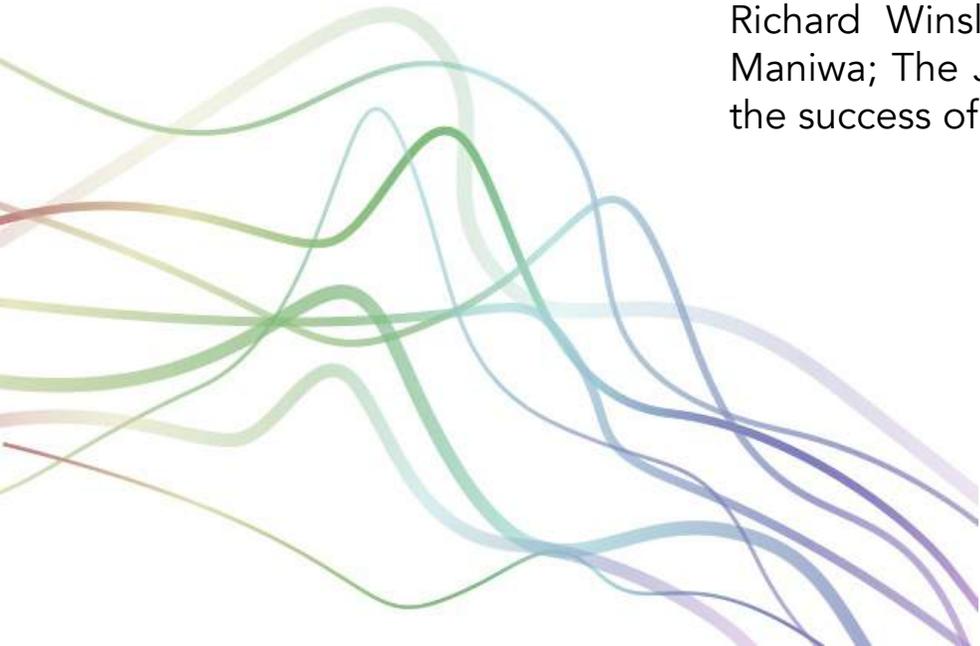
While we examined what role culture and tradition play in local and national policy considerations, we also thought about the timely question of leadership and what qualities make an effective leader. Along the same theme, I began to think about what actions leaders need to take. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor describes it best, as "building bridges." She gave the example of President Ronald Reagan building a bridge to equality by nominating the first woman to the U.S. Supreme Court. Many leaders in Japan and the U.S. are building bridges to better understanding, equality, diversity, and justice. Some observers may describe both Prime Minister Abe and U.S. President Barak Obama as strengthening the bridge for reconciliation when they made historic visits last year to the U.S.S. Arizona in Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima respectively. On a citizen-diplomacy level, individuals from both countries participate in programs such as the Kakehashi Project and the TOMODACHI Initiative. The Japanese American Museum in L.A. also memorializes a lesson in bridge building. Courageous men, women, and children lived through the dark chapter of sanctioned discrimination, yet exhibited stoicism, hope, and resilience. Colorado Governor Ralph L. Carr fought against the tide of racism, advocating for the equal rights of all Americans. Great American patriots such as Senator Daniel Inouye, Dr. Susumu Ito, and other members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team built bridges of trust so that other Japanese Americans could follow. I have been able to cross the bridge that they helped build.

With the recent passing of my father last August, the trip has been particularly poignant, as I know that he would have been proud. I feel that I missed an opportunity to ask him questions about his life, his family remembrances, and his observations about Japan. I have been inspired to inquire more about my family history through my mother, who has recounted many fascinating stories, and it is something I have started to share with my daughters. It is my hope that I serve as a bridge for my daughters to better understand their heritage and use that appreciation to implement positive societal change.



I am fortunate to have met my distinguished fellow delegates and to have made new friends here and in Japan. The hospitality and kindness shown by our fellow Japanese Americans living and working in Japan was unforgettable. The fact that I am Shin-Issei -- raised by Japanese parents in Japan, the United States, and Germany -- has given me a different perspective on what it is to be Japanese American. Growing up in different cultures, I felt that I did not quite fit in anywhere given my distinct Japanese appearance and unique cultural mien. This changed starting at orientation in L.A. I found out that I am now a part of a wonderful group -- thank you, my fellow delegates!

When I think about bridge builders, I think of Irene Hirano Inouye; she embodies the power of people-to-people connections. Her tireless energy and expert leadership in strengthening the alliance at all levels imaginable between the United States and Japan is truly an inspiration. I would also like to acknowledge and express my gratitude. I am forever grateful to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Boston Consul General Rokuichiro Michii and his dedicated staff at the Boston Consulate, including Consul of Political Affairs, Aiko Inoue, and Richard Winslow, Advisor; the U.S.-Japan Council and hard-working staff, including Kaz Maniwa; The Japan Foundation, Center for Global Partnership; and all who are involved with the success of the JALD program.





Wendy Takahisa

With the conclusion of our 2017 trip, there have now been 186 Japanese Americans fortunate enough to be part of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation. Every JALD member with whom I spoke used words like, “extraordinary” and “life-changing.” We all feel incredibly fortunate and humbled to have been chosen for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. How do I add to the beautiful reflections of so many others?

My father was a Nissei; my mother was of Eastern European Jewish descent. I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood. I did not know any Japanese-American families. Growing up, culture was one of the key ways that I felt connected to Japan. My family danced at Bon Odori festivals and I studied taiko drumming. I have always felt Japanese, while also Jewish and American. So I was not surprised that our cultural visits became a cornerstone of the experience and a crucial lens for the entire trip.

Going to Kanazawa was extraordinary. Since the Shinkansen only recently began serving “little Kyoto” as it is sometimes called, it has not become a major tourist attraction. Even many Japanese have not yet seen this incomparable cultural center. Its mix of tradition and innovation felt intensely personal to the artisans we met.

The D.T. Suzuki Museum is like no other museum I have ever visited. Museums are usually places for viewing objects, appreciating art or learning about history. In contrast, the Suzuki Museum was built for reflection. I sought a better understanding of Zen philosophy, and how the Circle, Triangle, Square painting embodies the entire universe, according to Suzuki-san.

The intensity of these places was matched by the people we had the privilege to meet. It was an honor to be guided through the D.T. Suzuki Museum by Mihoko Okamura, D.T. Suzuki’s long-time personal assistant. A new generation is re-imagining the traditional artistry of Ohi Chozaemon and the Fukumitsu Sake Brewery.

These meetings were emblematic of the people-to-people connections that made the U.S.-Japan Council JALD trip so special. I am eternally grateful to the Center for Global Partnership Japan Foundation for introducing me to these iconic masters.

After an amazing beginning, the delegation met with business and government leaders. Certainly, at the outset of the trip, I was looking forward to the honor of meeting with the Prime Minister, with Her Imperial Highness Takamodo and with numerous Ministers and Members of the Diet. However, I was surprised by the deep, substantive conversations that these esteemed government leaders were eager to have with the JALD. Our discussions - ranging from President Trump to the environment, the Trans Pacific Partnership to North Korea - hammered home for me the importance of the role that Japanese-Americans can and should play in U.S.-Japan relations.

Our meetings with business leaders also covered wide-ranging issues: Japanese investment in the U.S.; how to cultivate leadership; and the U.S. political environment. I was heartened to hear about how the role of women is changing, and hope that the 2017 JALD members helped to serve as role models for the business leaders with whom we met.

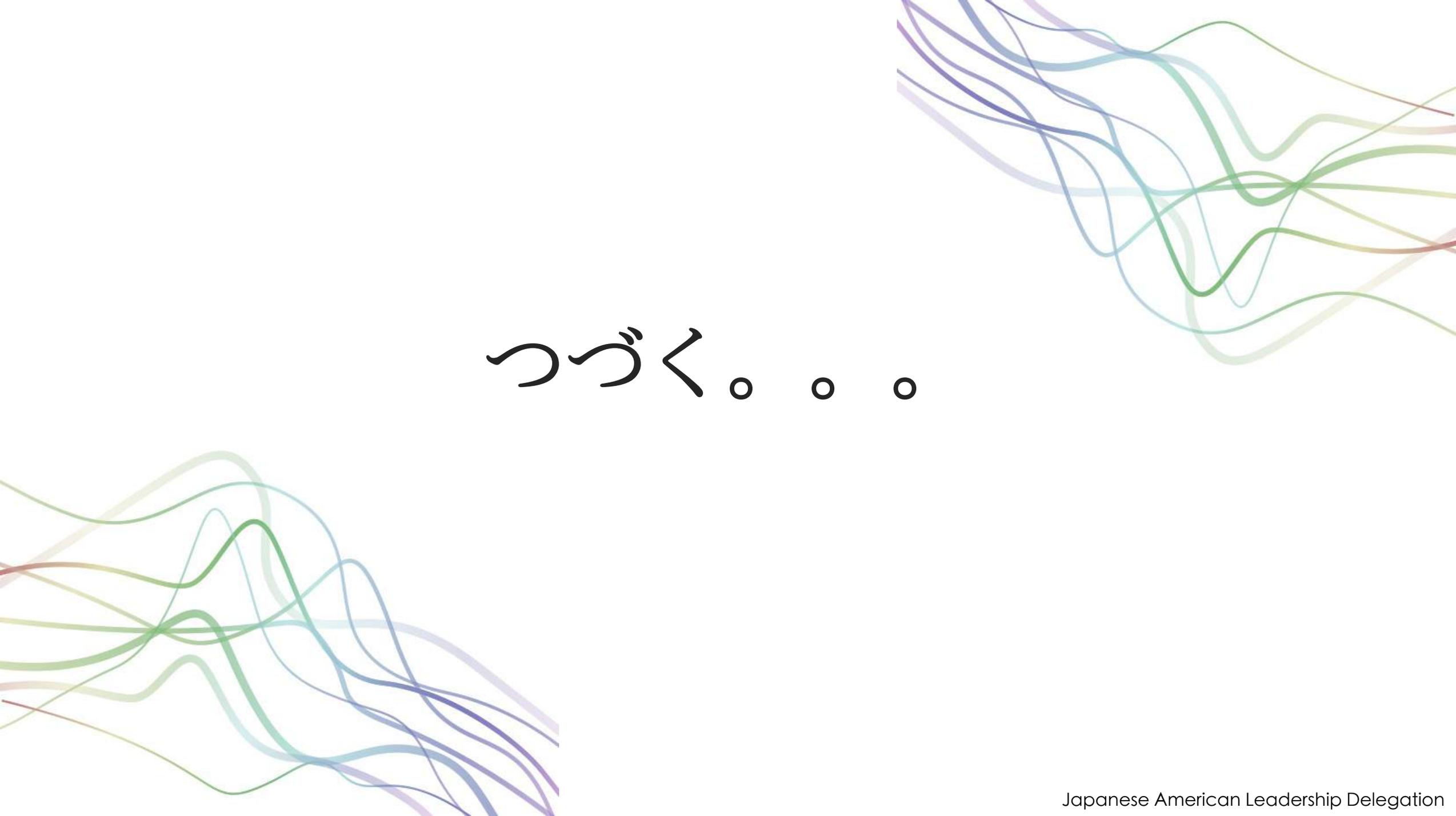
This was my fourth trip to Japan. But this trip truly changed me.

I came back from the JALD trip feeling both more Japanese and more American. I came back inspired to contribute more to the Japanese American community. I came back inspired to see how I can remain involved in U.S.-Japan relations. I have already participated in a conference on U.S.-Japan-Israeli relations, and a conference on U.S.-Japan business relations.

I am eternally grateful to Irene Hirano Inouye, whose leadership created the JALD program. Every person we met in Japan recognized her extraordinary vision, commitment and most of all – the execution of her dream. My participation was made possible through the support of Ambassador Takahashi, the Consul General of Japan in New York City and Fumihito Shinohara, the Vice-Consul of the Consulate-General of Japan in New York. I will never be able to adequately thank them for their sponsorship and their belief in me. And I must acknowledge my fellow delegates. It was an inspiration and an honor to be part of such an esteemed, thoughtful group of leaders.

At the D.T. Suzuki Museum I absorbed the idea that every moment in time is unique and we must focus on this present moment. During the trip, I focused on every present moment. But as for this once-in-a-lifetime trip - I will reflect upon it for years.



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