



**ILLUMINATING JOURNEY:**  
REPORT OF THE 2015  
JAPANESE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DELEGATION



# TOKYO & HIROSHIMA

MARCH 2015







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At the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo: the 2015 JALD members with USJC President Irene Hirano Inouye. Left to right are Mrs. Inouye, Toshiki Masaki, Robin Yasui, Yoshie Ito, Tyler Tokioka, Priscilla Ouchida, Lynn Hashimoto, Sach Takayasu, Rick Morimoto, Tracy Tsuetaki and Linda Taira.



## Japanese American leaders meet with Prime Minister Abe, celebrate 70 years of U.S.-Japan relations

*Visit underscores value of people-to-people exchanges and collaboration*

TOKYO -- As the sun set over this vibrant capital city on March 11, the 2015 Japanese American Leadership Delegation gathered in hushed anticipation at the official residence of the prime minister. The late afternoon appointment with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe capped a week-long delegation visit March 6-14 to Japan--sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs--to meet with government, business, civic and other leaders, and explore ways to further enhance the U.S.-Japan relationship.

This year's JALD members are from eight states and the District of Columbia, with ancestral roots

in prefectures that stretch across Japan. The meeting with Mr. Abe coincided with the fourth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and occurred as the two countries marked seven decades of peace and a strong security alliance.

"This year is the 70<sup>th</sup> year since the end of the World War II, and I understand that Japanese Americans have overcome many difficulties during this time. Allow me to express my sincere thanks to the efforts of Japanese Americans leaders in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations," said the Prime Minister in opening remarks to the group.

The meeting also came as the Japanese government began preparing for the prime minister's historic visit in the spring to the United States. Mr. Abe told the delegates that he looked forward to his official meetings in Washington, D.C., and interactions with Japanese Americans in their local communities.

The delegation expressed its appreciation to the prime minister for his government's support of programs, including the JALD program--now in its 15th year--that offer people-to-people exchanges and high-level opportunities for collaboration.

# Seventy years of friendship

## A triumph of peace and prosperity

TOKYO-- With the approaching milestone 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged for the JALD to meet with Japanese and U.S. government policymakers and advisers who looked back at seven decades of peace and prosperity, and ahead to a future of enduring friendship and security.

The delegation heard from Yohei Kono, who has served in various high-level government posts, including as speaker of the House of Representatives, chief cabinet secretary and foreign minister. In addition, about two dozen members of the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League, took time during a session of the Diet to meet with the JALD, and the delegation was given a briefing at the U.S. Embassy.

### *Moving forward*

During a special meeting with the JALD at the Foreign Ministry, former Speaker Kono wasted no time launching into a conversation about lingering resentments--*kodawari*--and issues even 70 years after the war. He minced no words on the need to move forward with nation-to-nation apologies to close these chapters and for leaders of the two countries to make reciprocal visits to Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Kono also renewed his call for a summit meeting between the two countries to discuss key subjects, including U.S. military bases in Okinawa, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and Japan's relationship with South Korea and China.

Led by Hirofumi Nakasone of the House of Councillors, the parliamentary group welcomed the JALD with remarks on the active role that Japanese Americans have in their respective fields and in their communities, and their ability to help influence issues relevant to bilateral relations.

The parliamentary league also addressed the need during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's trip to the U.S. to reinforce the strong security alliance

between the two countries, and they raised their concerns over the continuing controversy on the issue of comfort women in World War II, including the government's apology in 1993 in the so-called Kono statement when Kono was chief cabinet secretary.

JALD member Priscillia Ouchida, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League, offered that Americans value transparency and dialogue, and expect such enormously challenging and sensitive issues to require ongoing efforts and thoughtful discussion.

### *Japan-U.S. investments*

Other JALD members spoke of key areas that Japan can point to in its contribution to U.S. prosperity at the national, state and local levels, including the creation and sustainment of hundreds of thousands of jobs in the automotive industry alone. They also noted countless business and community partnerships and investments across the United States. JALD member Tracy Tsuetaki, an operating partner with private equity firm Symphony Technology Group in Chapel Hill, said that in his state of North Carolina and other areas, public interest in Japanese investment is often overshadowed by Chinese investment, even if the latter is significantly smaller in dollar value.

At the U.S. Embassy, Deputy Chief of Mission Jason Hyland and other top embassy officials described bilateral discussions as "intense" on a wide range of issues and expressed optimism about progress on trade and security agreements between the U.S. and Japan.

They foresee adoption of the TPP this year, with potential benefits in the energy and bioscience sectors, along with goods and services that target aging populations. Finally, in the run-up to the 2020 Olympics, they predict a large-scale need in Japan to make establishments and services more accessible to visitors, presenting opportunities for U.S. businesses and entrepreneurs.

Left: The delegation with members of the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League

Right: Yohei Kono at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs







Above: Shoichi Umezu, founder of Forum 21, prepares to open a meeting with his membership and the JALD .

Top right: JALD member Lynn Hashimoto shares her impressions with members of Keidanren, the Japan Business Federation. Women in the workforce was a major point of discussion. Bottom right: Keizai Doyukai, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, hosts the JALD.

## The changing face of business

### Perspectives from Keidanren, Forum 21 and Keizai Doyukai

TOKYO-- Japan's business leaders are seeing some promising signs of economic revitalization this spring--early indications that the country's fiscal health is improving. They point to a gradual recovery in the GDP evidenced by the first positive growth in four quarters.

The JALD discussed with some of Japan's most influential leaders these latest developments and other key issues for the economy, including the Abe administration's initiative to increase the number of women in the workforce (with a goal of raising to 30% by 2020 the percentage of women in leadership positions), as well as a declining birthrate and a resulting shrinking of the population.

During a lively discussion with Keidanren, the Japan Business Federation, its members and the JALD shared

examples of how their respective organizations are trying to close the gender gap by such means as offering more flexible work schedules, making changes in recruiting and retaining workers, committing to mentorship programs, and establishing official sections or functions to achieve greater diversity. Some challenges include cultural expectations--especially for managers--to work long hours, and the need for adequate child care and increased wages to help accommodate these demands.

JALD members also noted that with aging populations in both countries, workers must increasingly balance child and elder care with responsibilities at their workplaces. Suggestions were made for gender-neutral policies that allow men and women to not only better "balance" their home and work lives, but to achieve greater "work-life integration."

Haruo Murase, co-chair of the group's Committee of U.S. Affairs, noted Keidanren--which serves in part to establish the business community's consensus on domestic and international issues--has called upon the government to seek institutional reforms in Japanese companies that would encourage expansion of investments, increases in wages and support for the TPP.

Similar themes were raised at a meeting with Forum 21, a leadership development program for business and government executives and which makes research-based proposals and recommendations on national policies and issues. Shoichi Umezumi, principal and founder of Forum 21, said that while private company earnings are starting to show an upward trend, Japan still needs to implement more structural reforms to achieve long-term revitalization.

Discussion also turned to immigration and exposure to different cultures that can lead to new ideas. JALD member Sach Takayasu, president and CEO of Asian/Pacific Islander American Chamber of Commerce & Entrepreneurship (ACE), noted that by 2050, minorities will be the majority population in the U.S.--a situation she views as creating a stimulus for new business opportunities.

She also said that Forum 21, MOFA, the U.S.-Japan Council and the JALD share common missions of developing effective leadership for the 21st century. One way to facilitate this, she added, is by building a strong network of relationships enabled by discussions among and between these organizations and other groups.

At a meeting with Keizai Doyukai, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, Koichi Miyata, chairman of the Committee on Americas-Japan Relations, offered the organization's views on the progress and prospects of Abenomics. He cited recent improvements in the job market, consumer spending and corporate earnings, and emphasized the organization's support for the TPP to spur more investments and help further liberalize Asia-Pacific economies.

Founded in 1946 by business leaders united by a common desire to reconstruct Japan's economy, Keizai Doyukai has called for bold reforms to end deflation and stimulate growth. In its 2014 report, Chairman Yasuchika Hasegawa wrote that "there are many problems that Japanese companies and the government must overcome. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the difficulty of resolving these problems is on par with the difficulties that were surmounted in reconstructing the nation from the utter devastation of World War II."

JALD member Lynn Hashimoto, a senior attorney with Microsoft in Seattle, urged additional efforts on intellectual property protections to help further U.S.-Japan business and industry collaboration, as well as to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. Participants also expressed support for leadership programs that stimulate the exchange of ideas and sharing of best practices. Mr. Miyata noted that Japanese Americans can serve as important bridges for emerging leaders in the two countries.

Scenes from the meeting with Forum 21 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo



# Japanese Americans in Japan

## Learning to navigate the Japanese way

TOKYO--With the city beckoning through the window, Paul Yonamine, newly minted as president of IBM Japan, and other Japanese Americans hosted the JALD to discuss opportunities and challenges conducting business in the country. One key to success, the Japan-based leaders said, is understanding the many cultural differences as well as business practices and government regulations that define the markets in Japan and the U.S.

Ernie Higa, chairman and CEO of Higa Industries, offered as an example the Japanese market's desire for quality versus the U.S. market's emphasis on quantity, including "super-sized" products. In addition, he noted, Japanese consumers generally place a greater value on customer service than their American counterparts. The Hawaii-born Higa should know: among other successful ventures in the Japanese market, he launched Domino's pizza in Japan and re-introduced Wendy's hamburgers in 2011.

### ***Being Japanese American in Corporate Japan***

Mr. Higa and his colleagues acknowledge that being Japanese American may not be easy in Japanese corporate life, but it allows them to bridge two cultures and countries. While learning the language is important, so too is learning the "rules" of business and those that can be "broken," said Mr. Higa.

Eriko Talley, who is transitioning between a human resources executive position at Amazon in Japan and a similar post at Facebook in Singapore, returned to Japan from Silicon Valley to be with her mother. She recalled that her "Americanism" would often help her to do business in Japan. However, she said, this very attribute could turn into a detriment at times if others perceived her as acting too aggressively.

### ***A greater global approach***

While these challenges continue, Mr. Yonamine and the other Japanese American leaders said they believe more companies recognize they must take a greater global view, including looking harder at corporate performance and drawing on talent with broader skills. In addition, with a declining birthrate, more companies recognize markets are shifting and they need to expand their base. Japanese businesses in fact may look to Japanese Americans to assist them with access to the U.S. market, Mr. Yonamine said.

But against this backdrop, Dan Fujii, president and CEO of Everglory Group, who worked on the Mitsubishi Estate Company's 1989 purchase of Rockefeller Center, said that the financial sector in Japan still resists foreign investment and insists on long-standing business practices.

Change, they all agreed, takes patience and persistence.



The JALD lunch with Japanese American business leaders is a regular feature of the annual trip to Japan. Paul Yonamine, president of IBM Japan (third from left), led the discussion.



# An aging society and dementia

## Common problems demand sharing of approaches, information and innovation

HIROSHIMA -- In this country of 127 million people, Japan leads the world in an unenviable role: it has the largest growing population over 65 and must wrestle with the twin issues of an aging society--given more urgency by a low birthrate--and increasing cases of dementia. Yet Japan may also serve as the focus of innovation and show how these problems can be addressed through novel approaches and collaboration among medical, health and social welfare professionals, government officials and other experts.

With a molecular biologist and a gerontologist among its ranks this year, the JALD participated in a symposium in Hiroshima, "Aging and dementia: Conversation between the U.S. and Japan from research to health care," organized by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) and the U.S.-Japan Council.

Introducing the session, Japan's former ambassador to the United Nations, Tsuneo Nishida, said that dialogue is critically important to address global issues and find solutions. Hiroshima, he said, is a city ideally suited for *shimin shakai*--the general public--to examine a societal crisis.

"We do not have any hope of solving these problems of aging if we don't do it together," warned Robin Yasui, a JALD member and director of geriatrics at Denver Health in Colorado. Dr. Yasui was joined by fellow JALD panelists Rick Morimoto, a professor at Northwestern University in

*"Japan's super-centenarians hold important clues to healthy aging." -- Dr. Rick Morimoto*

*"We do not have any hope of solving these problems of aging if we don't do it together." -- Dr. Robin Yasui*

Illinois, and Linda Taira, a communications professional with Boeing and a former journalist based in Los Angeles.

Dr. Morimoto, whose family is from Hiroshima, specializes in research of and therapeutics for age-associated degenerative diseases. He walked the audience through neurological cellular processes that can result in damaged proteins and are typically associated with aging. According to Dr. Morimoto, understanding the biology of aging could help scientists to find ways to reduce the risk of dementia and age-associated neurodegenerative diseases.

### ***The role of super-centenarians***

Of special interest, Dr. Morimoto offered, are Japan's super-centenarians--individuals over 100 years old--who may hold valuable clues for research into aging and to identify key biological processes needed for healthy aging. It could be, he said, that people with high cognitive ability and longevity may have special protective genes, and enhanced stress resilience and cell-protective systems may prevent the accumulation of damaged proteins.

JALD panelists Linda Taira, Robin Yasui and Rick Morimoto listen to questions during the symposium.

Far right: moderator Dr. Atsushi Sunami.

Support for the symposium came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Consulate General of the U.S. in Osaka-Kobe, the Hiroshima Prefectural Government, and the Japan-America Society of Hiroshima.



# Addressing aging and dementia

## Continued

With Japan and the U.S. dealing with rapidly aging populations, the urgency is growing as well as the need to share critical biomedical knowledge, promote the development of new technologies and stimulate innovation.

Asked by Dr. Sunami about one thing the U.S. and Japan can start working on, Dr. Morimoto replied that the two countries could share data to compare those who are 100 years old and older to understand differences and commonalities. In addition, he said, there is an opportunity to compare genes of relatives of Japanese super-centenarians living in the U.S. to study the impact of environmental factors and whether longevity is strictly the function of “good” genes.

Dr. Morimoto said that DNA is likely to be just one key element to longevity and that environment and diet play important roles and may trigger certain molecular responses. Again, he suggested, it's an opportunity to compare Japanese Americans to their relatives in Japan.

Dr. Sunami agreed, noting that in recent years, Okinawa went from the first to 23<sup>rd</sup> in longevity and possible factors underlying this dramatic change are currently being studied.

### ***Care of the aging and sharing information***

Other areas where the two countries could collaborate are in geriatric care--addressing who will care for the elderly, where they will be cared for and how their care will be paid for, said Dr. Yasui. She explained that neither Japan nor the U.S. will have enough long-term care facilities to house and care for their burgeoning populations of the aged.

“The costs of current models is exorbitant and unsustainable as well,” she noted, with a Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare study in 2013 showing more than half a million people on waiting lists in Japan for long-term care facilities. The U.S. is hardly in better state, with a George Washington University study predicting 11 million Baby Boomers born between 1946-1964 will require long-term care in their lifetimes.

In addition to more standard arrangements such as senior living facilities with assisted living and skilled nursing, Dr. Yasui encouraged new approaches such as communal housing and technological advances in robotics that could more accurately monitor the health of the elderly, assist them in their daily activities, and even serve as companions.

Equally important, she added, is to find ways to keep seniors engaged in their communities, especially as more people live longer. Dr. Yasui said Japan faces additional issues of finding enough caregivers to fill the void as fewer multi-generational families live in the same household and more women--who might otherwise have acted as caregivers for elderly parents--remain in or return to the workforce or live separately from older relatives.

Ms. Taira added that these approaches and new ideas must be shared and communicated effectively so that those behind them can reach and engage key stakeholders. She also discussed the need to encourage more risk-taking, innovation and entrepreneurial efforts, and “thinking outside the box” in science, technology and math education.

The speakers agreed that challenges in these areas include protections for intellectual property and finding sources of funding, especially for research that may not yield results in the near term.

### ***CGP Luncheon; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare***

The delegation continued the discussion on these topics at a lunch in Tokyo sponsored by the CGP, with Dr. Kiyoshi Kurokawa, chairman of the Health and Global Policy Institute, as a special guest and speaker. Conversation over lunch emphasized the need for collaboration and funding, and international support for additional research.

Shared approaches and collaboration to address aging and dementia were further underscored during a meeting later in the week at Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. Katsunori Hara, vice minister for policy coordination, said his ministry is engaged in identifying technologies and joint development that might be possible, as well as implementing measures and policies that would support healthy aging.

The vice minister, who was joined by Masaaki Iuchi, deputy assistant minister for international affairs, also expressed interest in the potential of additional U.S.-Japan partnerships. He said the ministry is keeping an eye on several efforts in the U.S. and other countries, including the 2015 White House Conference on Aging--an event which occurs every 10 years to make policy recommendations to the U.S. government.

This year's conference occurs on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid and the Older Americans Act and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Social Security. Dr. Yasui noted that she participated in a community session the previous week related to this conference. While there is no shortage in identifying the problems that need to be addressed, she said, “there is a lack of answers about how we will face the challenges that not only lie ahead, but are facing us now.”



Katsunori Hara, vice minister for policy coordination at the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, talks to the JALD about how the government can support healthy aging.



# Hiroshima's miracle

## A legacy for the future

HIROSHIMA-- During a two-day trip here, the JALD met with the prefecture's governor, toured production facilities at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), and paid homage to the victims of the world's first atomic bombing.

The day began with a steady downpour matching the solemn mood as JALD members visited Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the adjacent museum. Several delegates have family ties to Hiroshima, with relatives who were directly affected by the bombing. No one seemed to mind that the heavy rain never let up during the morning visit.

Later, the delegation met with Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki, who discussed his hopes to further develop the prefecture as a global center for peace and to use the prefecture's "strengths and treasures" to attract and encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, international investment and economic growth. Gov. Yuzaki, who earned an MBA from Stanford University, is an advocate as well of more Japanese students studying in the U.S.

In his speeches and development initiatives, the governor has cited key factors for growth, including the prefecture's world-class manufacturing technology and talent base, advanced government functions and services, and a robust land, air and sea transportation network linking Hiroshima with other areas of Japan and cities in the Asia-Pacific region.

As additional proof of Hiroshima's awe-inspiring revitalization and rebuilding in the past 70 years, leaders at MHI opened the company's facilities in Hiroshima to the JALD. Plant leaders briefed the group on MHI's diverse portfolio at the site, and showed them new high-precision radiation equipment for cancer treatment that is already in use in some medical settings, and a factory in which compressors and steam turbines are built for use in the gas and oil industries.

MHI also noted the expansion of its presence in the U.S., with a new 100,000-square foot facility in the Houston, Texas, area. The plant is designed to produce compressors and steam turbines for the American market.

*"Let's utilize the many 'strengths' and 'treasures' of Hiroshima Prefecture to achieve innovation for the future." -- Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki*



Clockwise: Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki with delegates Robin Yasui, Lynn Hashimoto, Toshiki Masaki, Sach Takayasu and Tracy Tsuetaki.

In the rain at Peace Memorial Park

Briefing at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.



# Meeting HIH Princess Takamado

## An unforgettable appointment



### *Royal engagement*

Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado opened her residence on the grounds of Akasaka Palace to the JALD. She inquired about the JALD's meetings and discussed dynamic changes in Japanese society, the impact of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, and her advocacy of various causes, including education, sports, arts and culture, and environmental conservation.

With her late husband, Prince Takamado, the princess visited South Korea in 2002 for the opening of the Korea-Japan World Cup soccer tournament--a trip that helped promote bilateral relations between the two countries.

The princess spoke of her interest in the global environment, which led to her children's book, *Lulie the Iceberg*, published in 1998. *Lulie* is a young iceberg entranced by stories told by friends in the animal kingdom. *Lulie* eventually breaks off from Greenland's ice sheet and embarks on an epic journey to the South Pole.

Pictured from left to right are Irene Hirano Inouye, Rick Morimoto, Linda Taira, Robin Yasui, Sach Takayasu, Lynn Hashimoto, Tyler Tokioka, HIH Princess Takamado, Toshiki Masaki, Tracy Tsuetaki, Priscilla Ouchida and Yoshie Ito.





## Sushi and sake on the side

### Excursions add flavor to JALD trip

**TSUKIJI MARKET** -- With little time for sleep and anxious to squeeze a new experience out of their last full day together, members of the JALD eagerly donned bright orange safety vests and white rubber boots in the predawn hours of March 13. On the agenda was a specially arranged insider's look at the bustling, sprawling complex of what is arguably the world's most famous fish market.

Two seasoned veterans of Tsukiji--officially one of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Wholesale Markets--led the delegates through a warren of stalls and twisting alleys teeming with fish, fruit, vegetables and other perishables. By day's end, the bounty would end up in professional kitchens and households across Japan as part of a carefully choreographed dance weaving centuries of tradition with modern business, logistical and health and sanitation processes.

The JALD group dodged carts and peeked into private areas of the market; a lucky few sampled fresh *kamaboko*. At the appointed hour, the delegates witnessed the live drama of the morning tuna wholesale auction. Wholesalers inspected large frozen tuna, expertly picking at the tuna and rubbing the meat between their fingers. Even to novices, it seemed clear which tuna were the prize catches.

Row after row of tuna was sold off to the highest bidder. Tuna lying just feet from the delegation went on the auction block, selling for more than 6,000 yen per kilo. By the end of the morning, half the JALD group was invigorated and hungry, while the other half yearned for sleep.

That evening, the delegation celebrated a farewell dinner with plates of sublime *sashimi* among the many courses. No doubt the fish had been at Tsukiji that very morning.

# Time out for sake

## Brewery shows how it's done

SAIJO--At the Kamoizumi Sake Brewery in Hiroshima prefecture, the JALD members were treated to a special briefing and tour, including a chance to literally stir the pot--using large wooden paddles in gleaming vats of fermented rice brew--and sample the brewery's range of sake products.

Kamoizumi brewery, founded in 1912, is among nine in the Saijo district. According to Saijo breweries, the area's elevation and location in a basin-shaped plain ensures ideal weather and the district's best water is concentrated in a narrow strip of land.

To earn the Saijo appellation, sake must be made using Hiroshima's traditional three-stage brewing process, with Hiroshima-grown sake rice and water from wells maintained by the breweries. In addition, rice must be milled and polished to 50% or less for *ginjo* and 60% or less for *junmai*, and the finished product must pass a blind taste test by an appointed judging panel.

*Kanpai!*



Inspecting the vats on a tour of the brewery.

Below:

Hisao Maegaki, president of Kamoizumi Sake, on the far left, with JALD members in the tasting room.





2015 JALD



## ILLUMINATING JOURNEY: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



## Lynn Hashimoto

### *In my own words*

“A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” and “a life-changing experience.” These were the words local JALD alumni in Seattle used to describe the JALD program to me before I departed to Japan as part of this year’s delegation, and those words perfectly describe my own experience.

The week I spent in Japan this past March as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> JALD was one of the most enriching and energizing of my life.

Although I lived and worked in Tokyo from 2001 through 2010 (and so already had a deep affection for Japan and a strong interest in U.S.-Japan relations), the JALD program provided me with a unique multi-faceted lens through which to see both Japan and U.S.-Japan relations.

*Kinship.* First, I had the opportunity to learn more about and reflect on the many bonds that link Japanese Americans with the Japanese--things like grit and perseverance, the tendency to not dwell on the past but to look to the future. Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado movingly touched on some of these bonds when she graciously met with our group, and the JALD experience provided me with a better understanding of, and an immense feeling of pride in, my Japanese heritage.

#### *Regional Vitality.*

I was also moved by what I saw in terms of Japanese regional development. During the years I lived in Tokyo, I didn’t get to travel much within Japan, so my knowledge of the country outside of Tokyo was limited. It was incredibly stirring to start this year’s JALD program in Hiroshima and to see how far the relationship between the U.S. and Japan has come in the 70 years since the end of World War II. But, it was also striking to see the level of innovation taking place now in the Hiroshima area. Our visit to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, whose diverse portfolio of cutting-edge products was jaw-dropping, made me want to learn more about regional development in other prefectures and the ways in which the U.S. and Japan (or particular regions in the two countries) may be able to partner on regional growth initiatives.



At a Mitsubishi Corporation reception in Tokyo with Ambassador Ryozyo Kato, member of the board of Mitsubishi (on the left), and Minoru (Ben) Makiyara, senior corporate advisor, Mitsubishi

*Dialogue.* Another lasting memory of the JALD program was the openness, not to mention the hospitality and sheer warmth, of all of the Japanese people we met with. From Hisao Maegaki, the president of the Kamoizumi sake brewery in Hiroshima, who opened his brewery to us on a Sunday (when it is normally closed for business), to the Board of Mitsubishi Corporation, who hosted an intimate luncheon reception for us.

*Continued on next page*





## Lynn Hashimoto

### Continued

From Yohei Kono, who generously shared his thoughts on a whole host of topics with us, to his son, Taro Kono, who hosted a parliamentary dinner for us with lots of free-flowing discussion. From the Keidanren, who hosted a lively luncheon discussion on how to promote women in the workplace (among other topics), to the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, who not only sponsored a timely and informative symposium on aging and dementia in Hiroshima, but also hosted a luncheon for us at the Meiji Kinenkan, one of the most scenic spots in Tokyo. These are but a few examples--every group and individual we met with treated us as true friends, and they inspired me to want to learn more about Japan and to do what I can to build upon that friendship.

*Japanese American Network.* Finally, I had the honor to get to know, learn from and be inspired by the nine other Japanese Americans forming this year's delegation. Since our return to the U.S., we have continued to stay in close touch and I am certain that we will remain united for life--both as friends and as collaborative supporters of U.S.-Japan relations.

I am eternally grateful to have been part of this year's JALD and I look forward to keeping in touch and working with many of the people I met through the program in the months and years to come. I miss everything about the JALD experience, so I am spurred on by the knowledge that JALD is not the end, it is only the beginning.



## Yoshie Ito

### *In my own words*

Before leaving New York, I was filled with anticipation and excitement to be part of such a prestigious delegation and to have the opportunity to meet new people and places in Japan. The ten days I spent in Japan went far beyond what I expected. My experiences in Japan continuously impressed me moment by moment. Ten days could have been ten weeks or ten months and I still would not have been sated. One of the highest points of my visit was meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The day was 3/11/15, the anniversary of the massive Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, when the Prime Minister, always a busy man, was perhaps even busier than usual. Even so, he was gracious, as he reminded us of the important place Japanese Americans have in maintaining and strengthening U.S.-Japan relations.

March 11<sup>th</sup> also happens to be my birthday. Meeting the Prime Minister was perhaps the most unique birthday present I have ever had. As we talked, I learned that Prime Minister Abe is from Yamaguchi prefecture, the home of my grandfather. At the Forum 21 presentation, we learned from its founder, Shoichi Umezu, that Yamaguchi has been the cradle of Japanese leaders since the closing days of Tokugawa shogunate, starting with Shoin Yoshida, an intellectual whose vision help to inspire

the Meiji Restoration. I feel honored to come from such a distinguished lineage from Western Japan whose leaders have greatly influenced the nation's history.

At the meeting with Prime Minister Abe, I was able to meet with Eiichi Hasegawa, an advisor to Abe, with whom I had lunch with only a week earlier in New York City where we talked about future collaborations with Asia Society. We spoke about further developing the series of high-profile public programs that I am producing in close collaboration with the New York Japanese Consulate. Our goal is to heighten the visibility of Japan and Japanese issues in New York and across the U.S.

During a visit to Mitsubishi headquarters, I had a long conversation with Ben Makihara, senior corporate advisor to the Mitsubishi Corporation and its former CEO, who has had a close friendship with Ambassador Nick Platt, a former president of Asia Society and my mentor there. Mr. Makihara and I discussed the work Asia Society has done over the past 60 years for Japan, and the current agenda for Japan that I am shaping. For example, I recently developed a public



panel discussion on Japanese Womenomics in New York. To produce this program, I consulted with Sakie Fukushima, with whom I was able to meet in person at the Keizai Doyukai meeting.

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# Yoshie Ito

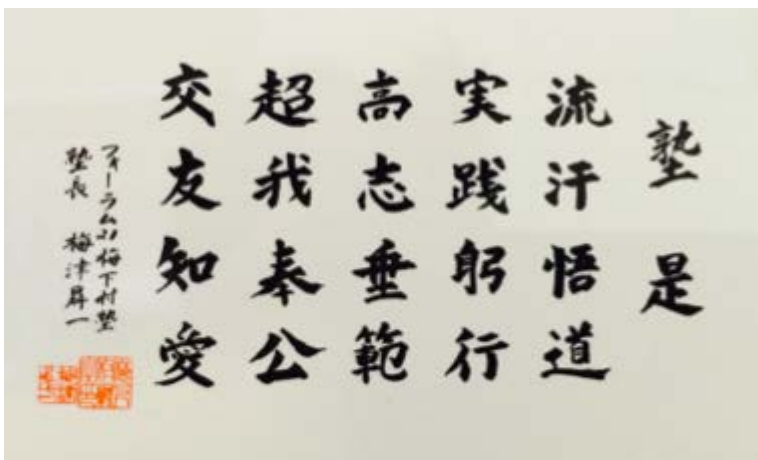
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To deepen my understanding of Japan, I was pleased to listen to the views of new Japanese friends, Yohei Kono and Taro Kono. I learned that Taro Kono had saved his father's life by donating a portion of his liver to him, a classic example of Japanese devotion to family. Fortunately for our delegation, Yohei Kono, for years a powerful insider in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, is someone willing to share his understanding of international relations with young Japanese and Japanese American leaders.

Princess Takamado was also especially gracious to our delegation, sharing her views about the state of Japan's economy and its quality of life. She talked specifically about the role of Japanese women in the work place. Finally, I was grateful to have a chance to exchange views with members of the American Embassy in Tokyo. We discussed the geopolitical situation in Northeast Asia and the various ways the regional issues are portrayed by the media on both sides of the Pacific and in the multiple countries involved.

One immediate and invaluable takeaway from my trip has been the many email exchanges that I have been able to establish with the people I met. My Japanese friends have already become advisers as I go through the process of curating new programs at Asia Society.

I want to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S.-Japan Council for giving me the opportunity to renew old friendships and establish new ones. The experience has hugely enriched my life and career. I feel that this experience has brought honor to my parents and the memory of my grandfather. I hope to express my gratitude to both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and U.S.-Japan Council as I work to strengthen U.S.-Japan relations at Asia Society.



## Toshiki Masaki

### *In my own words*

I have heard the term “life-altering experience” before but I didn’t really understand exactly what that is like until the six days ten of us spent together on 2015 JALD trip in Japan. Every day, we went to bed wondering how the next day could match what we experienced only to find the next day just as amazing...

Even now, I get chills every time I reminisce about an incredibly frank discussion with Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado about the current state of Japan and Japanese people and their outlook, or a meeting with Prime Minister Abe talking about the role we could play on further strengthening the U.S.-Japan relationship. And listening to the recordings of atomic bomb survivors’ first-hand accounts at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum gave me an entirely new perspective on that fateful day. In fact, ALL of the engagements and visits were so uniquely extraordinary that I can’t possibly characterize any one more so than the others.

There were, however, three special occasions that affected me personally:

-Speaking in front of over 25 members of the Diet was truly an emotional moment. I was in the Diet building on my sixth-grade field trip and I vividly remember a sense of awe walking into an assembly chamber and I could never have imagined that one day I would be speaking in front of one member of the

Diet, let alone such a large group.

-With Forum 21, both during and after the formal session, frank and constructive dialogues we had on women in the workplace were truly fulfilling because we got to share real life experiences and challenges we faced in the U.S., instead of talking just about abstract concepts.

-And at the Keidanren luncheon meeting, where I talked about encouraging and advising high school students attending Saturday Hoshu-ko to apply to U.S. colleges, a former student at the Hoshu-ko in the Detroit area sought me out to thank me for the work I am doing there – what a place to receive a validation for something I care about strongly!

Through all the engagements, we were reminded over and over that these personal dialogues are essential to understand what is really happening in Japan, and without them we might end up with misguided plans for what we want to accomplish. And two examples stand out where our thinking prior to the trip was considerably altered:

As sons and daughter of immigrants ourselves, we were eager to discuss the virtue of embracing immigration as a key driver for economic growth as a



countermeasure to Japan’s declining population. However, we learned that while this topic is discussed often in abstract, individual Japanese people are far from convinced that the declining population is a “real problem” so we realized that any discussion of promoting immigration must be very nuanced.

*Continued on next page*



*“I could never have imagined that one day I would be speaking to one member of the Diet, let alone such a large group.”*



# Toshiki Masaki

## Continued

On encouraging more Japanese college students to study abroad, particularly in the U.S., we learned that Japanese students have recently become very risk averse and comfortable staying in Japan (in addition to much higher costs of attending U.S. colleges) such that we need to be very innovative in formulating incentives.

Of course, all these incredible experiences were made possible due to the sponsorship by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, careful planning by the staff from MoFA and the U.S.-Japan Council and steady guidance by our fearless leader Irene and Consul Shimmura; so I'd like to express my deepest, heartfelt appreciation to all. And I make a personal pledge to contribute everything in my capacity towards the goal of further strengthening the U.S.-Japan relationship to repay the investment and confidence you all have placed in me.

Finally, to my fellow delegates, I knew we had an exceptional group even during the orientation by how well we related and worked with each other, but the bond we formed during the trip is so special that no words can accurately capture it, except that I know ten of us understand it exactly. I am so humbled, thankful, and proud to be a part of such an extraordinary group and looking forward to collaborating and having fun together soon and often.



## Rick Morimoto

### *In my own words*

Arriving from Chicago at the end of January, the 2015 JALD orientation in Los Angeles was a very nice respite. There, we all met for the first time in Little Tokyo where Irene, Shimmura-san, and staff from the U.S.-Japan Council and the Japanese Consulate in Los Angeles would brief us. As we went over the schedules and prepared for the upcoming trip to Japan in March, we were told that there would be little time for anything else. When I heard this, I thought.... could we really get *“that”* busy? Through the month of February, we received an increasing number of updates, and with each update, the schedule for Japan became increasingly filled with visits to Ministries, Keidanren, Parliamentarians, CGP, Keizai Doyukai, Forum 21, Mitsubishi Corporation, the U.S. Embassy, Prime Minister Abe, and more. But, even as we departed, it all seemed rather abstract even though each of us had been assigned homework and to prepare for presentations at each event.

In a blink, it began on March 7<sup>th</sup> as we all arrived in Narita from across the U.S. and assembled in Tokyo at The New Otani Hotel to reacquaint ourselves over dinner and to receive our initial instructions. The next day began for many of us with our first Japanese breakfast followed by a pleasant ride on the *shinkansen* to Hiroshima, a good omen sighting of the majesty of Fuji-san, and a relaxing afternoon at Hiroshima-jo viewing among other things, an exhibit of Japanese toilets from the feudal period. The next day began with a somber visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, followed by a stimulating meeting with Hiroshima Governor Yuzaki, and in quick succession the trip to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the JALD planned Symposium on “Aging and Dementia” sponsored by the Center for Global Partnership and ending with our first big reception and *meishi*-exchange. By the end of our first full day in action, it had become clear what it meant to be a member of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation. The next four days flew by impossibly fast, with meeting

Rick presenting a brief history of his Hiroshima family heritage at the CGP Symposium on “Aging and Dementia.”



upon meeting, and with each discussion even more interesting and engaged as we met with leaders of government and business, and ministries with responsibilities for foreign affairs and health.

In-between these carefully orchestrated moments, precisely chaperoned by Eiko-san and Irene, were excursions in Hiroshima to Kamoizumi for a sake tour and tasting and a spontaneous late meal of *Okonomiyaki*. Even Masaki seemed to enjoy the Hiroshima-styled *okonomiyaki* despite his Osaka loyalties. Tokyo provided its own intense charm with a special guided tour of Tsukiji market, which meant leaving the hotel at 4:45 a.m. to experience the 6 a.m. tuna auction, where we watched two deep-frozen *maguro* that had been caught off the Atlantic coast near New York City and

Ireland complete its journey to sushi restaurants in Tokyo that afternoon. When we found ourselves slightly ahead of schedule, there were brief stopovers at Toranomon Hills, Omotesando-dori, and Nihonbashi for *omiyage*-time. Particularly special for some of us were the ramen expeditions in Akasaka and Roppongi (with Ramen-master Stan Koyanagi), and spending time at Trader Vic's. Unforgettable was the evening of karaoke with “Taro Kono and the Parliamentarians.”

*Continued on next page*



# Rick Morimoto

## Continued

And then there was the visit with Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado at her residence in the grounds of the Imperial Palace; an ethereal moment of elegance and open exchange of ideas accompanied by tea, sweets and her penguin.

There is no simple way to describe the 2015 JALD experience, but that it exceeded all expectations. Unlike all previous JALD groups that included Japanese Americans who had not been to Japan, our group was the first comprised of Shin-Issei, Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei, all of whom had previously experienced Japan, some many times and for extended periods. But despite our shared familiarity of Japan, none of us were prepared for the intensity of events, the waves of emotion, and a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility that we, immigrants from Japan, were being asked for our opinions and advice to help strengthen the relationship between our countries.

As a Professor and scientist at Northwestern University, I have been invited frequently to Japan to serve as a scientific advisor and to participate in scientific symposia. On a number of these visits, my family (Joyce, Emiko, and Kenji) joined me as we lived in Osaka and Kyoto for extended periods. These experiences also gave us a special gift of being able to reconnect with our Hiroshima families. The JALD program, however, was completely unlike my previous visits as a biomedical scientist and academic. Scientists tend to stick to science and I am rarely asked for an opinion on political issues or governmental policies in Japan, and never on the topic of how being a Japanese American shaped my life events. So, for me, this was a very new and eye-opening experience, strongly influenced by the opportunity to meet and engage with the other delegates, as each member of the 2015 class was highly accomplished, articulate, and passionate about their interests. It was a remarkable opportunity and privilege to share this experience with them.



Ramen excursion in Tokyo with Tracy Tsuetaki, Yoshie Ito, Stan Koyanagi, Rick and Irene Hirano Inouye

## Priscilla Ouchida

### *In my own words*

As a person whose life was buffeted by what took place on the stage of U.S.-Japan relations, the 2015 JALD was a precious opportunity to obtain a first-person glimpse into what many would call the most important bilateral alliance for the United States. The JALD opened my eyes to the strength and importance of the relationship between the United States and Japan, and the opportunity for the Japanese American community to open new doors to further advance cooperation between the two countries. The potential for collaboration was emphasized at the symposium on aging and dementia which demonstrated a clear need to exchange information, technology and data to address a rapidly aging population.

I come from a family that migrated to the United States almost twelve decades ago, and that has lived for four generations as Americans. That status has not always been a comfortable one, and over the past century, Japanese Americans have teetered between not quite American and not quite Japanese. The JALD trip provided a powerful insight into both the past and the future.

Three events/meetings were particularly impactful: (1) The Symposium on Aging and Dementia held in Hiroshima on March 9; (2) the meeting with the Japan-U.S. Friendship Parliamentary Group; and (3) the intimate meeting with the former

Speaker of the House of Representatives Yohei Kono.

The Symposium, adeptly executed by Dr. Richard Morimoto, Dr. Robin Yasui, and Linda Taira, left me with the hope that a collaboration between Japan and Japanese Americans will open the door to improved health outcomes for Japanese Americans. There is little health data on Asian Americans or Japanese Americans in the United States, and health data from Japan would be a valuable resource for developing treatment and education programs for Japanese Americans. The lack of racially specific data has resulted in disparate health outcomes, and Japanese data will help fill the information gap and accelerate advances in medical practices.

The large number of Parliamentarians that attended the meeting between JALD delegates and the Japan-U.S. Friendship Parliamentary Group was a surprise and honor. The meeting highlighted differences in how issues are perceived in the United States versus how they are perceived in Japan, and identified an area in which a partnership between the two communities may be beneficial.

I was fascinated by the discussion with Speaker Yohei Kono, and his candid insight into Japan-U.S., Japan-South Korea, and Japan-China relations was



riveting. In one hour, I realized the severity of my visual impairment relative to Asian affairs, and the complicated factors that influence these relationships. There was so much more I wanted to hear and to learn.

The latter statement summarizes the trip. The strength of the trip was a combination of a well-executed program and the selection of colleagues whom I am proud to know. Thank you to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Consul General Masato Watanabe, and to the U.S.-Japan Council.

With former Speaker Yohei Kono





## Linda Taira

### *In my own words*

One evening in March, the phone rang in my hotel room in Tokyo. "Quick, Linda-san, look out the window!" instructed a fellow traveler. And there it was: a glorious view of the sun setting over Tokyo with Fuji-san in the distance, majestically juxtaposed against the jagged steel-and-glass skyline. That image captures the beauty and complexity of Japan for me.

As a child, I attended a school in Yokohama for American dependents, commuting daily from a traditional Japanese neighborhood to a school that looked as if it could be anywhere in America. It was a fascinating way to bridge two cultures.

Japan has always cast a magical spell. I've wanted to learn more about the country, its culture, history, people and politics. Being selected for the JALD gave me an extraordinary opportunity to do just that. My mother--a Tokyo native-- worked for the Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu for many years, so I recognized the importance of a program like this. Moreover, it is an honor to be among leaders who bear such impressive credentials.

I found myself sitting on a *shinkansen* preparing for a public symposium



After a meeting in Tokyo of Forum 21, Shoichi Umezu, founder and principal of the organization, patiently posed with members of the JALD program. He was uniformly praised by his membership for his strict discipline in achieving results.

Below: before meeting with the Prime Minister, reviewing final details with Irene Hirano Inouye, Toshiki Masaki and Tyler Tokioka.

alongside one of the preeminent microbiologists in his field and getting to know the first female leader of the Japanese American Citizens League.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by the U.S.-Japan Council, arranged a dawn-to-dusk schedule that provided exceptional access to Japan's leadership--from meetings with Prime Minister Abe and members of the Diet, as well as lunches, dinners and get-togethers with leaders of government, major companies and organizations and

even a member of the imperial family. And on our trip from Tokyo to Hiroshima, it was almost as if the Ministry managed to arrange for Fuji-san itself to be in full view.

Through our many excursions and interactions, we saw a rare glimpse of today's Japan from the inside out. Whether it was in the corridors of power in Tokyo or an auditorium with citizens of Hiroshima, we learned about some of the pressing needs and daunting challenges facing the country.



## Linda Taira Continued

What are some key concerns of CEOs in Japan? How is Abenomics working? Who are the emerging leaders who will someday take the reins of the biggest enterprises in Japan? We had remarkably frank conversations with leaders who gave their time, shared their ideas and asked for our perspective. We saw reflections of ourselves. Not only where we came from, but what our lives have become and where we might effect change.

Several weeks before we were to depart for Tokyo, my father--a *nisei* from Hawaii--became seriously ill and was hospitalized. My sister read my letter to him about the upcoming trip, including the plan for me to serve as the point person for the delegation at a meeting with Prime Minister Abe. My father understood and appreciated this news. Six days later, he passed away.

And so the JALD trip became a bittersweet journey for me, taking on more meaning and significance than ever before. Exactly one month to the day that my father passed away, I found myself speaking on a panel with Rick Morimoto and Robin Yasui at the symposium in Hiroshima.

A few days after that, our delegation sat across the table from the prime minister, and I had the privilege of addressing Mr. Abe on behalf of the JALD and asking him about his upcoming visit to the United States.

I know my father would have been very proud. My hope is to honor his legacy. To do something that builds on what I learned during the trip. To invest in and become more engaged in the issues facing Japan and the larger community of Japanese Americans to help enhance the U.S.-Japan relationship. And like the city set against Fuji-san on that sublime evening in March, I will find a way to embrace tradition while moving with a sense of purpose into the future.





## Sach Takayasu

### *In my own words*

The Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD) program was energizing, inspiring and glamorous. A truly outstanding endeavor led by Ms. Irene Hirano Inouye, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S.-Japan Council, the JALD program provided a remarkably efficient and effective way to build positive relationship amongst its delegates, hosts, staff and many others who had contributed to its success.

The well-crafted agenda enabled the delegates to get to know each other, both professionally and personally. Diverse in many ways, we learned a lot from each other. For example, Doctors Robin Yasui and Rick Morimoto opened my eyes to the tough realities of aging from the perspectives of both caregiving and research. What I learned from them was shocking, made me think about how I ought to handle the eventual situation, yet hopeful to know that such smart and caring people dedicate themselves to address the issues.

I also am grateful to the many incredible leaders who welcomed us. Our hosts quickly built rapport with us with their gracious hospitality. I was impressed by the thoughtfulness, preparation and delivery of the receptions which came in many forms: tea at private residence, private meals, meetings and more.

While I cannot do justice to all the hosts and people involved, here is a snapshot of a few highlights: The lively exchanges with Forum 21 president, members and guests. Illuminating dialogue with the Keidanren, Keizai Doyukai, CGP and with the Japanese American business leaders. A hearty welcome by Mr. Makiyama and his Mitsubishi colleagues who reminisced about my late father. The exciting possibilities of cutting-edge technology at the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The exchanges with government leaders like Mr. Taro Kono and the MOFA team. Multiple disciplinary views from the staff of the U.S. Embassy. Candid dialogue with the Diet members. The personal welcome by the Prime Minister. The elegant, inspiring and cheerful hospitality of Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado.

*Continued on next page*



## Sach Takayasu Continued

The two destinations of Hiroshima and Tokyo came together in an unexpected way through some of the meetings. In Hiroshima, our hosts, including the very international Governor Yuzaki, made us aware of the chagrin that no President of the United States has ever paid a visit. Equally surprising was the revelation in Tokyo by the charismatic Former Speaker Yohei Kono that no Prime Minister of Japan had paid a visit to Pearl Harbor. Mr. Kono suggested a possible diplomatic solution in which both heads of the states agree to pay visits to the two respective cities. Confronting the horrific devastation of the war is critical in preventing future atrocities. Having expected a significant degree of *tatemae*, this type of candid comments came as a wonderful surprise and helpful in the effort to build a deeper relationship.

As Washington, D.C. heats up with the prospect of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the timing was perfect for exchanging views with so many Japanese business and government leaders. TPP could transform the business landscape for Japan, U.S. and the world, creating new opportunities for co-prosperity with a transformative model for global collaboration.

Working together, the various countries could potentially create a harmonious co-existence, much like the rocks in the private gardens of Mr. Maegaki, the president of Kamoizumi Sake Brewery. Each rock possessed distinct characters, several clustered together, yet altogether, they defined a single, peaceful universe.

Born in New York and having spent 10 total years of my childhood and teenage years in Japan, I have always identified myself as bi-cultural. The JALD experience significantly deepened my conviction to play a role in contributing to the relationship between the two countries.

I cherish the relationship that has been seeded through this extraordinary opportunity. I look forward to working with everybody to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and Japan. It has truly been an honor to be one of the 2015 Japanese American Leadership Delegates.





## Tyler Tokioka

### *In my own words*

I was honored to have been selected to be a part of the 2015 Japanese American Leadership Delegation. To be included as a peer of this incredible group of leaders was truly humbling. I am truly grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership and the U.S.-Japan Council for this extraordinary gift and opportunity and for your collective vision, leadership, and commitment to a program of this magnitude.

From our Keidanren, Forum 21, and Keizai Doyukai meetings, to our meetings with local and central government officials, we heard about the issues that face Japan today, economically, militarily and socially, as well as from corporate leaders and a member of the royal family. Sharing personal experiences and the free exchange of ideas and solutions was inspiring. From the insight and knowledge gained from the aging of Japan's population to the three arrows of Abenomics, we were treated to life lessons in history, economics and political savvy. But it was more as we were treated not as guests, but also as friends. Our hosts were genuinely interested in building relationships rather than just entertaining visitors; formalities quickly turned to personal conversations. All of the personal interaction during the trip was a constant reminder that all relations no matter at what level in government,

business or non-profit, begin people-to-people--for it is through our understanding of one another that stronger relations are built.

In the end, I felt a growing connection with Japan and our Japanese counterparts, recognizing that like ourselves, they too remained motivated and driven to preserve and strengthen ties between us, that we share a common vision and purpose with similar interests and goals. I have gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of Japan and its people's important role in the global community, and the unique and special relationship between our two countries. Additionally, we need to explore ways to educate and inform future generations in both the U.S. and Japan on the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship and to inspire, promote, and develop their interest and desire to maintain, sustain and strengthen this most important relationship in the world.

*Continued on next page*



With Her Imperial Highness  
Princess Takamado

## Tyler Tokioka

### Continued

The JALD experience presented a deeper understanding, appreciation, and respect for being born of Japanese descent. I wish to thank my fellow delegates for their friendship and support, all of whom made this experience especially meaningful and special. Although there were differences between us by region, profession, and family experiences, there were also important similarities. One of which was the shared experience of having been taught Japanese values, the importance of education, nature and hard work. Getting to know one another, sharing stories, and encouraging and supporting each other brought us closer together, which will result in life-long relationships. We, as Japanese Americans in our respective communities, are committed to doing what we can to improve the U.S.-Japan relationship to the further well-being of both nations. Mahalo to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S.-Japan Council, and to the 2015 Delegation.





## Tracy Tsuetaki

### *In my own words*

It was an honor to have been selected for the 2015 Japanese American Leadership Delegation. I will most cherish the people I have had the opportunity to meet and the “learnings” that came from those discussions in Hiroshima and Tokyo.

In particular, I will remember the talented group of delegates I met through the JALD program. These nine delegates and I were part of the 15th JALD group whose visit coincided with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II and celebrated these “firsts”:

- JALD members from Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Detroit, Michigan
- all JALD participants are also members of the U.S.-Japan Council
- all delegates had visited Japan previously
- four birthdays during the trip
- all delegates participated in the Tsukiji market tour.

The trip itself was comfortable and service exceptional on ANA. Upon arrival in Tokyo, our delegation was greeted by our translator and tour guide, Eiko Sato. She was fantastic and I am not sure our group would have been on schedule to each event without her support and prior experience with our program.

I had hoped that I could manage to eat in moderation during the trip to Japan but this was a hopeless endeavor. While I had an opportunity to get in some early morning exercise along with Sach Takayasu, I found myself consuming way too much, as the variety and flavors of Japan cuisine were too tempting.

Taking the four-hour ride on the *shinkansen* from Tokyo to Hiroshima provided an opportunity to continue to get to know fellow delegates better. I enjoyed sitting to Lynn Hashimoto who turned out to be a great guide having previously lived in Tokyo. The ride to Hiroshima was also memorable given the fact that we traveled when the sky was clear and we were able to see Mt. Fuji quite well.

Given the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII, there was special significance in visiting Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. It was humbling to learn that every year a significant number of people in Hiroshima still fall victim to the effects of radiation, which only adds to the challenges Japan faces due to the country’s declining population.

In meeting with Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki, I was impressed with his presence and desire to grow Hiroshima’s economy in manufacturing, high tech and in other sectors.



In Tokyo, Mitsubishi Corporation executives and board members also greeted us warmly at their headquarters. Their leaders were unassuming and supportive of our visit. The luncheon at their “Mitsubishi Club” level was outstanding as their curry and sushi dishes were some of the best I have had.

*Continued on next page*

With  
Ambassador  
Ryozo Kato,  
member of the  
Mitsubishi  
board



# Tracy Tsuetaki

## Continued

Meeting with the Diet, facilitated by Mr. Nakasone, was fascinating. I found the members of the House of Representatives to be quite open and interested in our perspectives on how Japanese Americans are treated in the U.S., in addition to our perspectives on “comfort women.” Likewise, meetings with the Keidanren and Keizai Doyukai were focused on many of the areas that the U.S. is engaged with, including globalization and changes in corporate governance and investments.

The meetings with Prime Minister Abe and Princess Takamado were opportunities that I imagine would only occur for us as members of the JALD. To hear from the Prime Minister was something I will always remember, especially given the current focus of his administration on economic stimulus and the negotiations with the U.S. on the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Princess Takamado was elegant, welcoming and engaging. She literally made us feel at home at her residence. I felt if she did not have another meeting to attend to that she would have stayed longer with us to engage in conversation about sports, arts, politics and those unique cultural events and items that make up “Cool Japan.”

Our CGP luncheon and meetings with guests included Dr. Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Aiko Doden and Kanae Doi. Sitting with Dr. Kurokawa, I appreciated the wealth of perspectives that he provided on public-private partnerships to fund medical research and opportunities to advance health care. Given his unique background leading efforts to evaluate the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Dr. Kurokawa provided great insights on technology advancement and policies that can better humankind. It was an enjoyable moment with plum blossoms in full bloom, while engaging in dialogue with our guests in the garden of the Meiji Kinenkan.

In summary, Japan was as immaculate as I remember from my prior trips. The grounds of the New Otani Hotel, including the waterfall and gardens, were beautiful. I was pleased to take advantage of the suggestion of former delegate Stan Koyanagi for late night “ramen runs.” The “ramen sessions” were as memorable as the “debriefing sessions” at Trader Vic’s with our delegation.

As the first JALD delegate from North Carolina, I am indebted to a number of individuals for their support including Atlanta Consul General Kazuo Sunaga and Consul Midori Yamamitsu.

The JALD 2015 program reinforced my belief that the U.S.-Japan relationship is a critical one. The JALD trip to Hiroshima and Tokyo provided an

opportunity to build on long-lasting relationships and as a member of the U.S.-Japan Council, I am committed to continuing to forge positive relations going forward.

Top: With Rick Morimoto and Yoshie Ito

Below: At Tsukiji with Linda Taira, Tyler Tokioka and Robin Yasui





## Robin Yasui

### *In my own words*

The sakura in the park drop their pink blossoms onto the pond and I think of Japan. The sushi chef lays an exquisite piece of saba onto my plate and I think of Japan. My children chorus “*Itadakimasu!*” as they dive into a bowl of steamy ramen and I think of Japan. And can I ever listen to a refrain of “Hey Jude” again in my life and not think of Japan?

After 35 years away, my return to Japan was more than I ever dreamed it would be. I had always imagined I would return with my family, to introduce them to the beauty, culture and tradition of this amazing country. But on this trip, instead, I came to know a new family, the Japanese American Leadership Delegation, and they re-introduced Japan to me. This family of new friends traveled with me not back in time to the Japan I knew, but helped me see and understand Japan as the world leader she has become.

So much has been said by past delegates about Irene’s incredible leadership and dedication and about the astounding JALD access to premier players in Japan’s industrial and governmental worlds. I share that awe and appreciation. But the JALD experience gave me something even beyond that: it gave me a new sense of who I am. As the niece of Min Yasui, living and working in the city that still reveres his name, I have taken an active role in representing his living legacy. He

was my hero and is still my muse. My father, Robert Shu Yasui, was also a legend in his own world and the template for my life, both professionally and personally. But I have always felt their presence, pushing me forward, forward, to find my own space and time. This trip to Japan did just that.

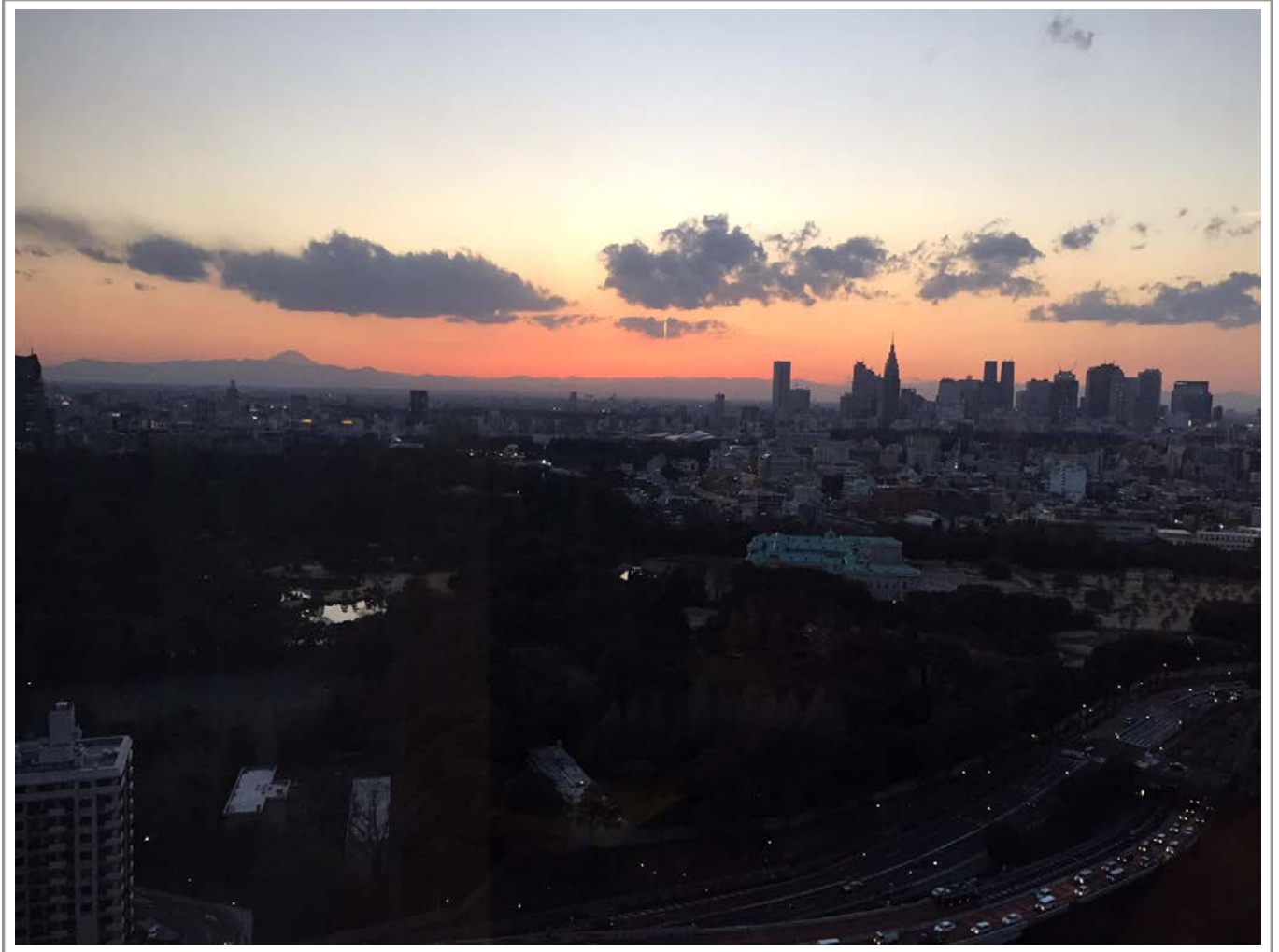
On this trip, I was not representing my father or my uncle. Rather, I was a *sansei* reaching across two cultures to tackle questions that challenge both our nations. And, as a geriatrician and a “sandwich generation” working care giver and mother, I was surprised to find that my voice was heard on issues of aging and women in the workplace. I came to see on this trip that I was not just going *back* to Japan, but I was seeing Japan through a whole new lens: the lens of the future and the possibility that I have a place in that future. The JALD

experience gave me that vision and the new ‘family’ to help me develop that new role.

I still dream about Japan. My heart is holding on so tightly to the sounds, the sights, the smells, the *kimochi* of being in Tokyo, Hiroshima, Kyoto, trying so hard not to forget. But I am trying to take that passion for Japan and pour it into projects here at home: the Min Yasui Centennial Tribute Project, the development of a teaching curriculum about the Japanese American experience for middle and high schools, advocacy work on aging services and housing for minority elders, expansion on educational exchanges between Japanese and American students.

And when I have time, I practice my karaoke.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2015 Japanese American Leadership Delegation extends its deep and sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sponsoring this trip and to Consul Izuru Shimmura of Los Angeles, who accompanied us.

We are enormously grateful to Irene Hirano Inouye and the U.S.-Japan Council, as well as to the many organizations and individuals, especially our tour guide Eiko Sato, who generously gave their time, supported our visit, and hosted us during this illuminating journey “home” to Japan.

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Editorial team: Linda Taira, chief writer and editor; Toshiki Masaki and Tyler Tokioka, editors

Many of the photos were taken by our designated JALD photographer Toshiki Masaki, along with Rick Morimoto, Consul Izuru Shimmura and Tracy Tsuetaki