

2020 Public Symposium: Opening Session Recap

November 17, 2:00 – 3:00 pm ET: Opening Session featuring “Japanese Americans & Japan: Legacies” – Interview with Tom Iino

Speakers:

- Welcome Remarks: Suzanne Basalla, President & CEO, U.S.-Japan Council
- Special Remarks: Shinsuke J. Sugiyama, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States of America
- Moderator: Dianne Fukami, President, Bridge Media, Inc.
- Moderator: Debra Nakatomi, President, Nakatomi & Associates, Inc.
- Distinguished Panelist: Thomas Iino, Board Member, First Choice Bank; & USJC Legacy Council Chair

Description: The USJC Public Symposium will kick off with the first installment of the “Japanese Americans & Japan: Legacies” series. This video series highlights the careers and life journeys of prominent Japanese American leaders who are pioneers in developing the U.S.-Japan relationship. Through their stories, we will learn about the role of Japanese Americans in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations, and the ways Japan has contributed to Japanese American identity and community. This first dialogue in the series will feature USJC’s Founding Board Chair, Thomas Iino.

Summary: On November 17, the U.S.-Japan Council kicked off the 2020 Public Symposium with a 60-minute opening webinar. USJC President and CEO Suzanne Basalla set the stage for the three-day, seven-session symposium with introductory remarks that emphasized the importance of the people-to-people relations between the United States and Japan and expressed optimism for the continued development of these relations in 2020. Following Ms. Basalla’s remarks, Hon. Shinsuke J. Sugiyama (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States of America) expanded on these notions of cooperation and friendship across the Pacific by speaking to the continued strength of the alliance in multiple arenas including the economy, cultural and educational exchanges, and security partnerships. Amb. Sugiyama also recognized Irene Hirano Inouye, USJC’s Founding President, as a leading figure in the development of U.S.-Japan relations and highlighted the posthumous conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon from the Government of Japan to her as a symbol of her unwavering commitment to promoting friendly relations.

After these opening segments, Dianne Fukami (President, Bridge Media, Inc.) and Debra Nakatomi (President, Nakatomi & Associates, Inc.) moderated an in-depth interview with Thomas Iino (Board Member, First Choice Bank; & USJC Legacy Council Chair) in the first edition of the “Japanese Americans & Japan: Legacies” series. Mr. Iino began by recounting his

individual and family history as a sansei Japanese American and his diverse upbringing in Los Angeles before expanding on his long track record of work to bridge the gap between the United States and Japan. Mr. Iino worked tirelessly to increase awareness of Japanese American history and to achieve greater integration of the Japanese and American communities in both his personal and professional capacities, and lent his leadership to a number of prominent Japanese American organizations including the Japanese American National Museum and the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center. Mr. Iino is also the Founding Chair of the U.S.-Japan Council and has helped guide USJC since its inception. Recounting his experience with USJC, he said, "I'm most proud in identifying and engaging prominent Japanese Americans throughout our country nationally to participate in this bridging process between the U.S. and Japan." When asked about the USJC's greatest accomplishments, he said, "Every quarter, top people in business, top people in the service industry, top people in academics, top people with the not-for-profit world are being identified and are all contributing to the process of bonding with counterparts in Japan."