



JAPANESE AMERICAN  
LEADERSHIP DELEGATION

# Honoring a 20-Year Legacy

## We're arguably the most closely knit Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD) to visit Japan.

**That's partly due to the pandemic.** We made three annual visits to Los Angeles for orientation sessions before we ever set foot in Japan as a delegation because our trips kept getting postponed. We quickly bonded despite the diversity of our group: careers that ranged from the capital markets to a former submarine commander, generations that spanned from Shin-Issei to Gosei, and geographies from Hawaii to Massachusetts. Those informative orientation sessions about Japan's politics, economics, and society coupled with late night ramen runs enabled us to bond as brothers and sisters.

Little did we know that we would be making history as the 20th Japanese American Leadership Delegation. We were also the last group to have been selected by the visionary co-founder of the U.S.-Japan Council, the late Irene Hirano Inouye. She created the JALD program that has provided extraordinary access to the highest levels of leadership to roughly 200 Japanese Americans.

We send our deepest gratitude to the Japanese government for giving us the opportunity to visit and understand Japan from a perspective not granted to most individuals. The JALD program provided an experience we will always treasure. It will inspire us to continue to do all we can to strengthen U.S.-Japan relations.



# JALD 20



**Frederick H. Katayama**  
New York, NY



**George Kobayashi**  
Chicago, IL



**Jeffrey Maloney**  
Alhambra, CA



**Kara Miyagishima**  
Denver, CO



**Mark Okada**  
Dallas, TX



**Christine Pilcavage**  
Cambridge, MA



**Calvin Terada**  
Seattle, WA



**Lori Teranishi**  
Honolulu, HI



**Kenta Washington**  
Great Falls, VA



**Audrey Yamamoto**  
San Francisco, CA

SUNDAY  
March

5



Shizuoka

## Tea Time

BY KARA MIYAGISHIMA

**Our trip began with a dose of culture.** On Sunday, our delegation's first full day in Japan, we departed Tokyo on the Shinkansen for the south coast city of Shizuoka. We then transferred to a bus and headed for Shimada City. We drove past tea plantations and posed for pictures at the world's longest pedestrian wooden bridge, the nearly 900-meter-long Horai Bashi overlooking the Oh-i River. Shizuoka prefecture boasts great views of Mt. Fuji, but the majestic volcano unfortunately lay hidden that day behind an overcast sky.

At the Cha-No-Miyako Museum in Shimada, we learned about the global history of tea with an emphasis on tea cultivation in Shizuoka, Japan's tea capital. Introduced to Japan from China as far back as the 8th century, tea was first used in the Imperial courts and temples and later in the Japanese tea ceremony known as Chanoyu. During the Meiji period, tea became a key export from Shizuoka.

We saw a display of more than 60 types of tea from all over the world. We could even smell the aroma and touch different tea leaves. From the museum's observation deck, we viewed a Japanese garden and tea cultivation on the fields of Makinohara plateau.

After the exhibit our delegation enjoyed a delicious lunch of matcha soba noodles where we grated our own fresh wasabi!

We then walked to the tea room. The teahouse and surrounding buildings were reconstructed to reflect the designs of tea master Kobori Enshu, who was well known for establishing the kirei-sabi style tea ceremony. In the teahouse, we learned how to swiftly whisk the matcha and enjoyed it with Japanese sweets.

Later that day, our delegation visited Sumpu Takumi Shuku, a traditional arts and crafts cultural center in Shizuoka. We each took our hand at making a delicate bamboo lattice vase with guidance from the instructors. This traditional artform involves bending thin rounded pieces of bamboo into different objects.

During our time in Shizuoka, our delegation enjoyed learning more about these cultural activities, which instilled a greater appreciation for the art of tea and Japanese traditional crafts. Not only did we return to the United States with delicious tea from Shizuoka, we even managed to make it back home with all 10 bamboo vases intact!

**During our time in Shizuoka, our delegation enjoyed learning more about these cultural activities, which instilled a greater appreciation for the art of tea and Japanese traditional crafts.**





MONDAY  
March

6



Shizuoka



## Shine and Shrine

BY KENTA  
WASHINGTON

**Fighting jet lag, we got up early Monday to witness the sunrise on the beach of Miho-no-Matsubara park.** We walked through the picturesque pine forest to get to the beach. We enjoyed the fresh sea air and scenery. While we didn't get to see Mt. Fuji due to the cloud cover, it was a great bonding experience for us. We were able to watch the local fishermen out in Suruga Bay start their day. When the sun finally poked above the horizon, the beach lit up. A black kite flew overhead, leaving us with a great final memory of the sunrise.

Later that morning, we visited the Kunozan-Toshogu Shrine, a national treasure. From the top of a mountain, we took a scenic but steep cable car ride down to the shrine. The cable car allowed us to bypass the 1000+ stairs that are normally required to reach the shrine.

We then visited the tomb of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603 who helped unify Japan. The shrine has been maintained for over 400 years. Next to the shrine was a museum that provided insight into how Ieyasu thought and lived. His armor and sword on display showcased the talent of Japan's craftsmen.



Kunozan Toshogu Shrine gave us a good glimpse into Japanese culture and history.

In the afternoon, we had probably the most fun event of the JALD trip. We toured the Haginishiki Shuzo Sakagura sake brewery. Its president and brew master informed us that the water used in their sake comes directly from a natural spring on the site. They outlined how sake is made, from the use of fermented koji, to the addition of yeast.

Probably one of the most significant signs to our JALD group that Japan's younger generations are ready for change is that the head brewmaster is a woman. She took over the family business from her mom and learned how to perfect their sake brewing process. Her husband, the president, changed his surname to hers.

Their sake was quite exceptional, and our group purchased the last of some limited edition bottles while sampling quite a few others. We will drink this sake again when we reunite at the USJC convention in Washington, D.C. in November.



## Governor Kawakatsu Heita

BY JEFF MALONEY

Later that Monday afternoon, our delegation was welcomed at the Shizuoka Prefectural Government building in advance of our meeting with Governor KAWAKATSU Heita. Prefectural officials guided us to an observation floor on the upper levels of the building where we enjoyed sweeping views of Shizuoka and the nearby coastline. We were told that on a clear day, Mt. Fuji is visible in all its glory, but on this overcast day, Fuji-san remained hidden.

We were soon escorted to a conference room where we were joined by Governor Kawakatsu and several of his closest advisors. Kawakatsu warmly welcomed our delegation and offered introductory remarks about his prefecture, which he has served as governor since 2009. Shizuoka and Yamanashi prefectures are the home of Mt. Fuji.

Kawakatsu also offered kind comments about the U.S.-Japan Council, with which he has long had a close relationship as a member and as a speaker at its Annual Conference. The delegation appreciated the Governor's condolences for the recent losses of co-founders Irene Hirano and Senator Daniel Inouye and USJC vice chair Norman Mineta.



USJC President and CEO Suzanne Basalla thanked the Governor for his hospitality and continued support. She noted that Irene herself assembled this delegation back in 2019 and decided that our trip would include Shizuoka.

Everyone was touched by the heartfelt comments of Kara Miyagishina, who spoke on behalf of the delegation and told the Governor that her ancestors emigrated to the United States from the Shizuoka area. Kara shared her feelings of connection to the area and to its hospitable residents.

The Governor, a well-respected scholar and academic, was very generous with his time and displayed a mastery of even small details about public policy in the region. Our broad discussion ranged from the local Black Ships Festival in nearby Shimoda to the Governor's efforts to incentivize medical research and the need to protect the local shoreline from the climate change-induced effects of sea level rise.

Our delegation enjoyed the beauty of this region and its warm people. The visit with Governor Kawakatsu reinforced our appreciation for Shizuoka, and it was one of the highlights of our trip.

TUESDAY  
March

7



Tokyo

# Shizenkan University

BY JEFF MALONEY

**On Tuesday, we returned to Tokyo.** We had one of our more thought-provoking sessions during our visit to Shizenkan University, a newly established graduate school in the Nihonbashi district. We were welcomed into this beautiful space by our hosts Tetsuya Shiokawa, Vice President of the Board of Trustees, Professor Patrick Newell, and Professor Hiroyuki Mitani.

Professor Newell initiated the discussion by sharing his own history: American by birth but a long-time resident of Japan. We learned about the intent behind Shizenkan's Graduate School of Leadership and Innovation. With a focus on "the whole person," this innovative program integrates multiple areas of study into the curriculum as students work towards a Master of Business Administration degree. It emphasizes one's contributions to organizations and society at large from a broad perspective. Shizenkan intends to realize its goals by incorporating unexpected courses into its MBA program such as philosophy. Students practice yoga while learning economics. They are also expected to engage in self-reflection.

Shiokawa emphasized that the ideal candidate for Shizenkan is a well-rounded student who aspires to become a socially responsible member of society. He described Shizenkan's future vision with a particular focus on globalization from an Asian perspective. The university will study the challenges of climate change and approach issues facing capitalism and humanity from innovative points of view.

Professor Mitani shared his thoughts about executing business policy. That provided a segue into a lively question-and-answer session between the delegates and our hosts. We learned how the low student-to-faculty ratio ensures that each student receives individual attention and that the emphasis on social responsibility is a core tenet of its educational approach.

Chris Pilcavage closed the session by thanking our hosts and sharing some additional information about our delegation. She summed up our feelings by saying how impressed we were to learn about Shizenkan University.



**With a focus on "the whole person," this innovative program integrates multiple areas of study into the curriculum as students work towards a Master of Business Administration degree.**





## Digital Minister Kono Taro & Rep. Makishima Karen

BY AUDREY  
YAMAMOTO

**“Be sure to have your karaoke song ready.”** More than any other directive given to us in preparation for our trip, this one from Digital Transformation Minister KONO Taro sparked the most conversation and for some of us, fear. Despite that initial concern, our evening hosted by Kono was marked by an amazing meal and enjoyable bout of karaoke.

After a short bus ride from our hotel, we arrived at the New Otani Hotel and made our way past beautiful artwork and boutiques to a private room at Kato’s Dining & Bar, where we were greeted by Kono and members of the House of Representatives, MAKISHIMA Karen and KAWASAKI Hideto. In his opening remarks, Minister Kono shared that he has met with every Japanese American Leadership Delegation and was told by his father to take care of the program. Kono also recalled Irene Hirano Inouye’s involvement and commitment to the JALD program. He said he has always enjoyed meeting with former JALD delegates, which he described as “a great reunion.” Jeff Maloney expressed our group’s gratitude to Minister Kono before having each delegate do a self-introduction.

During dinner those who sat with Kono recalled several highlights from the conversation. Mark Okada described it as his “most impactful encounter” and that his “candor and passion for Japan were inspiring.” Mark recalled that Minister Kono said that his father was the one who first understood the power of the Japanese American community and encouraged politicians to visit California instead of just Washington D.C. and New York. With Suzanne Basalla, Kono spoke about the challenges he faces as Digital Transformation Minister given the entrenched practices in Japan as well as the need to rely on seconded staffing from other ministries. In response to Fred Katayama’s question about Kono’s kidney donation to his father, the minister talked about the political process by which he was able to promote organ donor laws in Japan, overcoming divisions within the ruling party.

Before the karaoke began, Kono received an urgent call requiring him to unexpectedly leave. However, we carried on his tradition, singing several songs together with the Japanese parliamentarians, including “I’ve Got Friends in Low Places,” “We Are Family” and “Y.M.C.A.”

WEDNESDAY  
March

8



Tokyo

# Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives)

BY FRED KATAYAMA AND LORI TERANISHI

**JALD delegates had a lively, thought-provoking discussion over breakfast with members of the Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives).** The chair of Doyukai's international affairs committee, Kikkoman board director Sam Mogi, welcomed the delegation. Since the big business organization's members participate as individuals and not as corporate representatives, they freely express what's on their minds.

Mark Okada kicked off the first topic of discussion by asking if the United States was becoming the Divided States of America. He argued that although democracy looks messy, the diversity of opinions helped build the world's strongest superpower. In response, ALTEMIRA Holdings CEO Teruaki Nakatsuka bemoaned that an inward-looking United States now puts domestic interests first. Okada countered that the United States is now strengthening ties with its allies.

Fellow JALD delegates also gave a mostly optimistic outlook. Audrey Yamamoto shared her hope that social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate will lift the voices of individuals who were previously silent. Kenta Washington added that women have been successfully integrated into the U.S. submarine workforce because the Navy effectively trained the troops on inclusion and mentorship.

The second half of the meeting at the Hotel Grand Arc Hanzomon focused on "new capitalism." Sam Mogi said excessive capital spawns inequality that needs to be rectified. Okada said Japanese companies should boost wages. He added that in the United States, stakeholder capitalism is gaining momentum, and his firm is investing in human capital.

Daiwa Securities Deputy President Keiko Tashiro raised concerns about poverty and the gender gap in Japan. The progress made by Japanese companies to advance women is so slow she thinks Japan should experiment with quotas. She said access to childcare isn't the top reason for the lack of women in decision-making ranks, but rather, the lack of men participating in childcare. Mogi echoed Tashiro's sentiments, saying, "Changing the mentality of corporate Japan is most important, but change is slow."

After a presentation of gifts, delegates from both sides took a group photo, symbolizing the unity they shared amid the diversity of opinions. These fascinating conversations challenged the delegates' assumptions and sparked reflection.





## Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa

BY JEFF MALONEY

**The 2023 Delegation's visit occurred during an extremely significant period of Japan's foreign relations.** Just weeks prior to our visit, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa, among other top officials, visited Washington, D.C. for meetings with their counterparts in the Biden administration. These talks underscored the importance of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Japan. So many high-level Japanese officials visited the United States in early 2023 that many observers dubbed this period as "Japanuary" in Washington.

Within this context, we had been eagerly anticipating our meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi. Upon arrival, we were ushered into a waiting room adorned with gifts received from dignitaries from around the world.

We were soon welcomed into a meeting room with the Foreign Minister and his staff, including North American Affairs Director General KOBE Yoshihiro, Executive Assistant to the Foreign Minister ESAKI Tomosaburo, and Senior Foreign Policy Coordinator MUROTANI Masakatsu. The entire group posed for photos for several members of the press. Hayashi welcomed us and thanked the U.S.-Japan Council and the Japanese American community at-large for their support.



Suzanne Basalla spoke briefly about the JALD program and the role Irene Hirano Inouye played in the selection of our delegation prior to her passing. Lori Teranishi spoke on behalf of our group, introduced the delegates and underscored our group's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties.

After the press corps exited the room, our group engaged in a candid and enlightening discussion on a wide range of topics. As the United States' close ally and democratic bulwark in East Asia, Japan's relationship with China, North Korea, and Russia took the spotlight. We also discussed the recent news of a breakthrough agreement with South Korea regarding World War II-era labor reparations, the high hopes for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (also known as the "Quad") between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, and the future of relations with China. On a personal note, we also enjoyed hearing about Foreign Minister Hayashi's time spent at MIT, where he and his wife became friends with our own Chris Pilcavage.

Our invigorating discussion left the group with a sense of purpose and hope for the future of international relations and the relationship between Japan and the United States. Hayashi asked that we redouble our efforts to strengthen the bilateral relationship starting at an individual level.

# Ambassador Rahm Emanuel

BY CALVIN TERADA

**Next on our calendar: a visit with U.S. Ambassador Rahm Emanuel.** The U.S. Embassy is located close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so the ride was short.

We went through a variety of security checks before being escorted to a meeting room with a large oval conference table. A few minutes later, the Ambassador casually walked in, greeted everyone and welcomed us to Tokyo. George Kobayashi opened the meeting by sharing that he was also from Chicago. The quick witted Ambassador, who was formerly mayor of the Windy City, jokingly asked him whom he voted for as mayor. Everyone chuckled; the humorous note put everyone at ease.

The Ambassador quickly jumped into talking about the big diplomatic breakthrough that week: Japan and South Korea's agreement to mend ties. The Ambassador pointed out that 40 percent of the cargo goes through the Taiwan Straits. The Ambassador said the area will remain secure if the United States and Japan work together to keep Asia united.

Asked where he thought Japan was heading on diversity and inclusion and climate change, the Ambassador mentioned that Japan is slowly changing its business culture to hire more women in senior leadership positions. On climate change, he cited several promising technologies: compact nuclear reactors, hydrogen, battery storage, and ammonia. Using liquified natural gas to transition from coal use is also really important, he said, noting that Japan is the world's top importer of LNG.

After a full hour of discussion and dialogue, George thanked the Ambassador and we proceeded to exit the conference room to pose for a group photo. The next day, the Ambassador posted a tweet that said, "Welcome to the 2023 Japanese American Leadership Delegation! There are 1.5 million Japanese Americans in the United States. Today, I had the pleasure of meeting 10 of the best and the brightest."

↻ U.S.-Japan Council Retweeted



ラーム・エマニュエル駐日... · 12h ...

アメリカ合衆国の政府関係者

Welcome to the 2023 Japanese American Leadership Delegation! There are 1.5 million Japanese Americans in the 🇺🇸. Today, I had the pleasure of meeting 10 of the best and brightest. Thank you @USJC & @MOFAJapan\_en!



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## Cabinet Secretary Shikata Noriyuki

BY AUDREY  
YAMAMOTO

**After a wonderful lunch on Wednesday at Gonpachi, which served as a backdrop in the movie, *Kill Bill*, we headed to the Prime Minister’s Office to meet with SHIKATA Noriyuki, the Cabinet Secretary for Public Affairs under the Kishida Administration.**

After receiving our badges, we were escorted to the offices of Secretary Shikata. Once we were all seated, Secretary Shikata joined us and greeted us in a warm, relaxed manner. After Suzanne Basalla thanked him for hosting the meeting, Shikata distributed handouts.

He began his briefing by summarizing the priorities of the Kishida Administration. He talked about the Administration’s three key areas of focus: universal values, global issues and national defense. Shikata also talked about the importance of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and how security, stability, and prosperity ensure all countries in this region, especially Japan, can flourish. The Secretary then shared three high priority goals: diplomacy, a new form of capitalism, and overcoming the impact of COVID-19.

Calvin Terada thanked Shikata for the in-depth review and introduced the delegation before opening the floor for discussion. Fred Katayama jumped in and asked a question about the Prime Minister’s focus on his so-called “New Form of Capitalism.” Calvin also asked a question about the focus on getting more youth engaged in several priority topics, especially leading up to the G7 Summit. Calvin mentioned that this type of engagement and outreach targeting school and college students is very different from how the U.S. government engages with youth at the local level on policy and programs. After spending nearly an hour with the Cabinet Secretary, we thanked him. We were ready for our much anticipated meeting with Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio.

# Prime Minister Kishida Fumio

BY CALVIN TERADA

**Following Shikata's briefing, our delegation was ushered into the main building of the Prime Minister's Office.** We entered the spacious foyer, the site commonly seen on newscasts when the Prime Minister of Japan enters or exits the building. Our delegation was then brought into a grand meeting room that was set up with a series of chairs on two sides flanking a center podium that bore the seal of the Prime Minister. On the far side of the room hung a very large beautiful scroll written in calligraphy. On the near side, television crews and still photographers were waiting patiently for Kishida's arrival. Waiting for us on the chair closest to the podium was USJC Co-Chair Kathy Matsui. It was wonderful to see Kathy's smile as she warmly greeted each of the delegates.

As the media crews suddenly got ready and a hush enveloped the room, we quickly took our seats because we could tell something was about to happen. Kathy, Suzanne Basalla, and we JALD delegates sat on one side of the podium and a few of the Prime Minister's key staff sat on the opposite side. Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio entered the room. Cameras flashed. Kishida started by expressing his appreciation and relief to have all ten JALD delegates finally arrive in Japan after being delayed three years by the pandemic. He thanked the JALD delegates and Suzanne for coming over to engage in dialogue and share Japanese American perspectives on topics that are important to Japan. He also thanked the late Irene Hirano Inouye for her tireless efforts and leadership that made the 20th JALD trip possible.

The Prime Minister recalled his trip to the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. He said it helped him understand the hardships that Japanese Americans had endured and their achievements. The experience gave him an understanding of Japanese American history. The Prime Minister referenced the Japan-U.S. Joint Leader's Statement in which President Biden and Kishida paid tribute to the history, contributions and cultural heritage of Japanese Americans and concurred to engage next generation Japanese American leaders in U.S.-Japan relations. He thanked all Japanese Americans for their overall contribution to maintaining a strong relationship and serving as a bridge between Japan and the United States. Once the Prime Minister finished his speech, the press corps was ushered out of the room.

Kathy Matsui then got up to thank the Prime Minister for hosting our delegation. Suzanne followed by expressing her appreciation for this visit and acknowledged Irene's work. She then introduced George Kobayashi and Audrey Yamamoto to say a few words on behalf of the delegation.



George shared that he is a first generation Japanese American, or Shin-Issei, and that his parents urged him to respect and honor his Japanese heritage. George expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister for supporting the U.S.-Japan Council and the Japanese American Leadership Delegation. George thanked the Kishida Administration for recognizing the Japanese American community as a critical bridge for U.S.-Japan relations. He said Kishida has been instrumental in driving positive change in Japan, adding that the delegation hopes to continue the dialogue on key topics such as climate change and environmental, social and governance issues.

Audrey then took to the podium and echoed George's gratitude. Standing before the prime minister, she said she now understands why JALD alumni describe the trip as life-changing.

This trip, she explained, has deepened our collective understanding of critical issues facing Japan in ways that are only possible through people-to-people connections. The trip has given us a greater appreciation for the unique role we play as Japanese Americans in strengthening bilateral relations.

Finally, Audrey shared that as members of the 20th Japanese American Leadership Delegation, this trip has enabled us to feel the presence of the 200 delegates who have come before us, and that, she said, inspires us to do what we can to honor their legacy for future delegations.

The statements were followed by a group photo and individual photos with the Prime Minister.



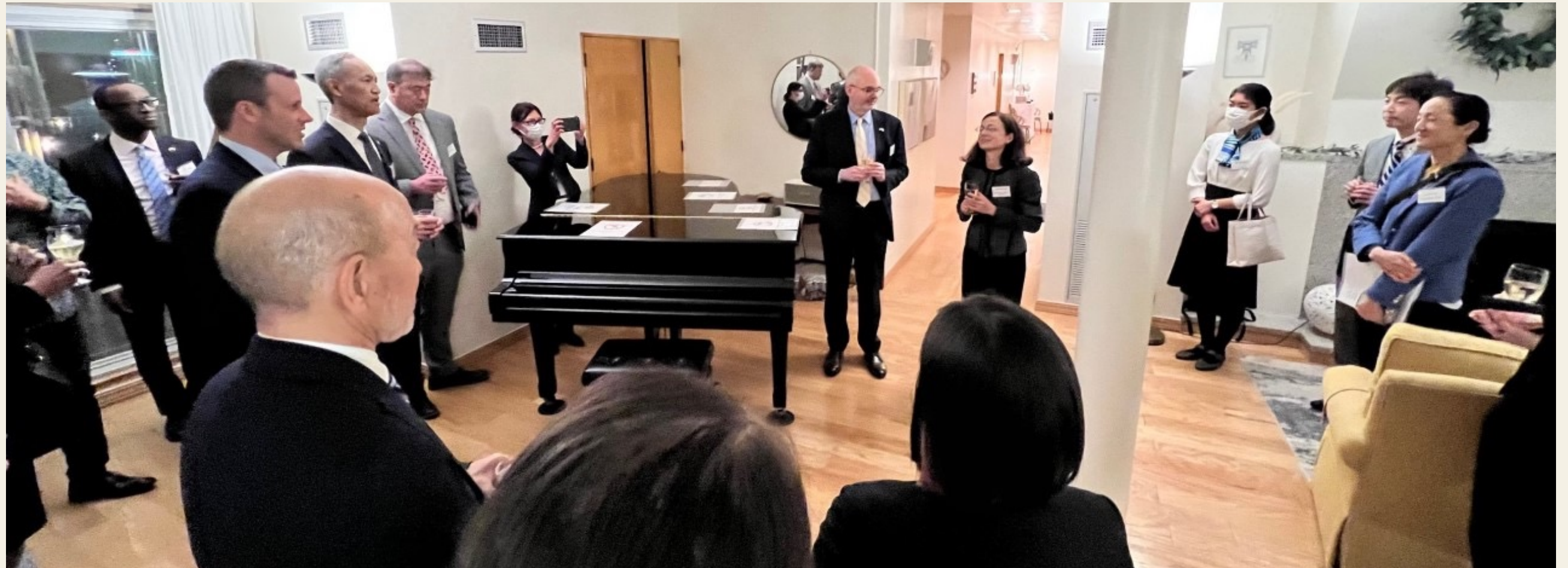
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## U.S. Embassy Staff

BY KENTA  
WASHINGTON

**The long stretch of meetings Wednesday ended with a casual meet-and-greet dinner hosted by Minister-Counselor Philip Roskamp at his residence in the U.S. Embassy compound.** Roskamp kicked off the festivities by cheerfully noting that our arrival coincided with the news of Japan and South Korea resolving their wartime conscripted labor dispute. Deputy Chief of Mission Raymond Greene then formally welcomed the delegation. Chris Pilcavage introduced our group and thanked everyone for hosting us. We then mingled with senior U.S. Embassy staff, USJC members, and some Japanese American and Japanese professionals who were invited to the event. This light dinner event was much more relaxed than many of the other high visibility events, a welcomed break on a jam-packed day of meetings.

THURSDAY  
March

9



Tokyo

## USJC Japanese American Leaders

BY MARK OKADA

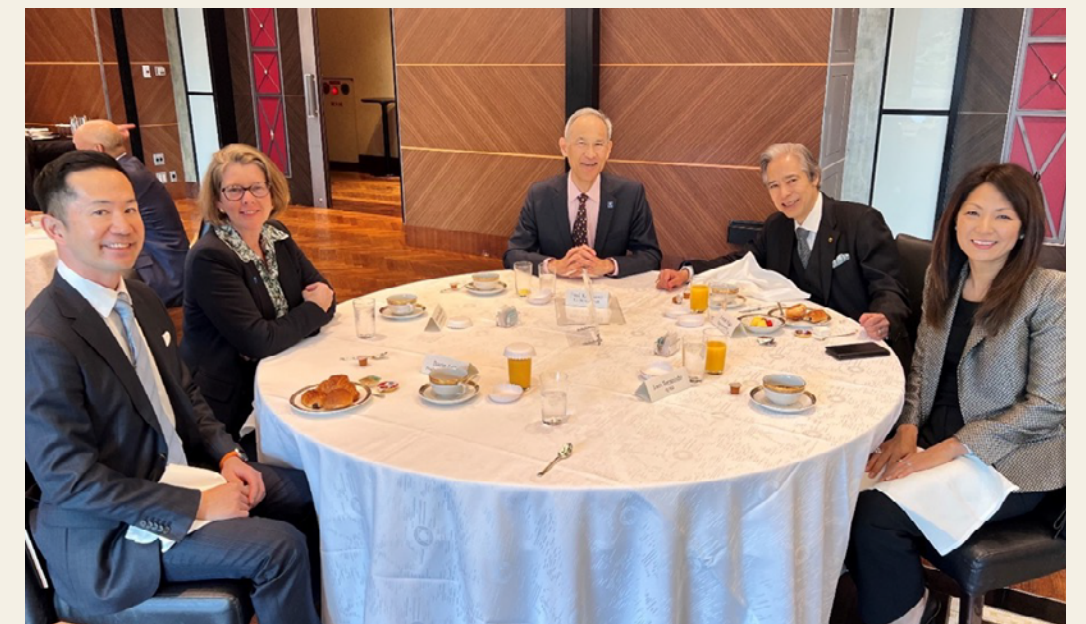
It is a great tradition that the members of the U.S.-Japan Council who reside in Japan come to visit with JALD. They represent a window into the future for our delegation, great leaders who are actively involved in building a strong relationship between our two countries. Our breakfast was hosted by Ernie Higa, Chairman-Counselors Board at New Otani Hotel. Ernie is a legend to many of us. He founded Domino's Pizza in Japan and was recognized as one of the top fifty entrepreneurs there. In his welcome remarks he helped us understand the gravity of being invited to participate in JALD, saying "One of these days I hope to be one of you!"



Other USJC members were in attendance: Dan Fujii, Henry Takata, Stan Koyanagi, Jessica Snow, Scott Sato, Royanne Doi and Darin Arita. All are shining examples of great leaders.

The director of the Foreign Ministry's North America Exchange Division who oversees all exchange programs, HARIMOTO Yukiko, gave remarks on behalf of our host country. "Friendship is the foundation of our alliance. In the Kishida-Biden summit, Japanese Americans were singled out as strategic to the alliance." Indeed, our reception and access to this trip is clear evidence that Japan is leaning in and welcoming Japanese American participation in their country. It is certainly a massive change from a time in the not too recent past where we were looked down upon as failures who had abandoned Japan.

I had the wonderful opportunity to connect with Henry Takata and it turns out that we have so much in common. In fact, during his time at Goldman Sachs, he even distributed deals of my prior company. It is indeed a small world, and Henry's deep knowledge of Japan's capital markets will be a great resource for the future.







## H.I.H. Princess Takamado

BY GEORGE  
KOBAYASHI

**On Thursday, our delegation had the honor and privilege of meeting Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado at her residence in the Akasaka Palace in Tokyo.**

Her Imperial Highness greeted the delegation wearing an elegant, turquoise-colored suit with a matching turquoise facemask. Her assistants then served green tea with yokan. Kara Miyagishima introduced the members of the 2023 delegation.

Her Imperial Highness asked about the overall welfare of the Japanese American communities in the United States. Several delegates shared their perspective, and Her Imperial Highness particularly enjoyed hearing from our resident Texan, Mark Okada.

Her Imperial Highness' body language changed as she talked about the importance and influence of sports as a means of connecting people. She shared her experiences of watching World Cup soccer games with members of the Spanish royal family and the excitement, competition and camaraderie they felt as a result of everyone's respect and passion for the game. This led to discussions on the world's recognition of the Japanese fans who cleaned the soccer stands and how this demonstrated Japan's unique and respectful culture.

Her Imperial Highness closed the conversation by conveying the care and concerns the current and past Emperors have for Japanese Americans and Japanese living outside of the United States. The delegation then took several photos. She shook hands with each of the delegates. During these farewells, Her Imperial Highness told Calvin Terada, a judo teacher, "You have such soft hands for someone who practices judo." Calvin nervously replied "You should feel my judo feet." While we had many fantastic quotes during the trip, this may have been the winner.

# Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General Miyamoto Shingo

BY FRED KATAYAMA

**After meeting with the Princess at the Palace that was built in the Meiji era, we were transported back two centuries to the Tokugawa era when we arrived at the restaurant, Tofuya Ukai.**

Walking through its tranquil Japanese garden and crossing the arched red bridge were picturesque moments, especially with Tokyo Tower standing tall in the background symbolizing the capital and the miraculous postwar rebirth of Japan.

We were greeted by our laid back host, MIYAMOTO Shingo, deputy director-general of the Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Bureau. He immediately put us all at ease, speaking in such mellow tones in his American-accented English one could almost mistake him for a Southern Californian.

Born in the United States, Miyamoto spent his elementary and middle school years bouncing back between the United States and Japan. He said he always identified himself as Japanese, so he didn't have any issue when he had to give up his American passport upon joining the Ministry.

Miyamoto reminisced with USJC CEO Suzanne Basalla about some of the challenges faced when Japan provided at-sea refueling support for U.S. naval vessels during the war in Afghanistan and about how the U.S.-Japan alliance has grown since then. He also talked about other countries in the region as they relate to the alliance.

Miyamoto shared behind-the-scenes stories of his experiences spanning the time he spent in New York at the U.N. Mission during the 9-11 attacks to his days in Washington as a trade negotiator working on the Trans Pacific Partnership and his stint in Japan serving as an interpreter for the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Emperor.

As we feasted upon the homemade tofu and various seafood dishes, we learned more about his personal life away from Kasumigaseki. Every night, he alleviates his stress by soaking at a sento, a communal bathhouse that reflects Japan's centuries-old bathing culture.

Calvin Terada thanked Miyamoto for hosting the informal luncheon and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for supporting the 20th JALD delegation. Also in attendance were Miyamoto's colleagues from the Ministry: NAKAMURA Yasunori, HARIMOTO Yukiko, SHINOHARA Fumihito and TSUBAKIMOTO Mayumi.

As the luncheon drew to a close, Terada presented Miyamoto with gifts, and the delegates and Ministry officials took a group photograph. Miyamoto agreed with Terada about the importance of friendship between Japanese and Japanese Americans and thanked him for recognizing the hard work of his staff.







## Japanese American Leadership Symposium

BY GEORGE KOBAYASHI

**The Japanese American Leadership Symposium on Thursday was one of the marquee events for the 2023 JALD trip.** The event was organized by the Japan Foundation, co-organized by the U.S.-Japan Council and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The symposium took place at the Iwasaki Koyata Memorial Hall International House of Japan in Roppongi. It reflected on today's drive for diversity and inclusion, particularly from the perspective of Japanese Americans.

The keynote speaker, Curtiss Takada Rooks, who is assistant professor of Asian Pacific American Studies at Loyola Marymount University, spoke on the solidarity between Japanese Americans and other minority communities. Professor Rooks referred to case studies of research projects on diversity, equity, and inclusion in civic engagement to illustrate the crucial role that Japanese Americans play in promoting social justice.

The second part of the symposium featured a panel discussion titled "Reflections from Japanese Americans on today's drive for diversity and inclusion." The discussion was moderated by Fred Katayama, executive



vice president of the U.S.-Japan Council. The panelists included Lori Teranishi, CEO and founder of iQ360; Jeffrey Maloney, chief counsel of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and former mayor of Alhambra, California; and Audrey Yamamoto, chief operating officer of The Asian American Foundation.

During the panel discussion, the participants discussed the current state of American society and the increasing division despite calls for diversity and inclusion. They also highlighted the experiences, contributions, and future of the Japanese American community in such a society. The discussion was engaging and insightful, with the panelists sharing their personal stories and professional experiences.

The symposium concluded with a question-and-answer session, where audience members asked questions and sought clarification from the panelists. Overall, the Japanese American Leadership Symposium was a successful event that provided a platform for reflection on the critical issues of diversity and inclusion. The symposium was a testament to the importance of engaging in conversations and collaborations that promote social justice and inclusivity.

FRIDAY  
March

10



Tokyo

## Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)

BY CHRIS PILCAVAGE

**After a 4:30 a.m. Toyosu Fish Market tour followed by a little nap on our final full day in Tokyo, our group had an engaging dialogue with Keidanren, the Japan Business Federation, over a working lunch meeting in the Keidanren Building.** A lovely bento-box lunch greeted each of us at our seats.

The session opened with welcome remarks by Yulia Toyokawa, managing executive officer of MUFG and chair of the subcommittee on U.S. Relations. She also expressed her condolences for Norman Mineta and Irene Hirano Inouye.

From the JALD '23 delegation, Fred Katayama and Lori Teranishi provided the remarks:

Fred started the session by highlighting the shrinking profile of Japan in the United States but noted the growth of *'kikokushijo,'* the bicultural students who return home to Japan. He said these former expats are a special yet underutilized talent pool in Japan. He emphasized how Japan needs to embrace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and could become better and thrive if Japan includes *kikokushijo* as part of their DEI strategy.

Lori reflected on how Irene and Senator Dan Inouye were true Japanese American leaders. She said the U.S.-Japan Council is nurturing Japanese American leaders who can be a bridge by developing relationships at a personal level. Lori stressed how young people need to be cultivated, noting that Barack Obama was 48 years

old when he became President and Shinzo Abe was 52 when he became Prime Minister. She said the partnership needs to include women and promote greater diversity.

After the opening remarks, all members introduced themselves and exchanged views. We had a lively discussion around DEI. Toyokawa stated that Japan is currently at 'equality' in the DEI spectrum and that inclusion and diversity will slowly come into play. Audrey noted that equity is the final step, but Max Oya of Mitsubishi Electric responded that in Japan DEI is synonymous with equality and not equity as in the United States. He lamented that Japan still hasn't grasped the real concept of equity. Kenta noted the increase in Japanese military spending and asked whether that will change the way of doing business. NEC's Toshiya Matsuki shared his concerns about preparedness amid the increasing security risk since Russia invaded Ukraine and how Japan needs to consider incorporating Japanese technology and the dual use of AI and quantum computing to counter these threats.

After the discussion, gifts were presented to the Keidanren group and delegates from both sides took a group photo.









## Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League

BY MARK OKADA

**Our last official meeting of this most amazing week was with the Japan – U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League (PFL).** It was formed in 1984 to strengthen relationships between our two countries. For context, this would equate to a meeting with many senior members of Congress. The PFL president, House of Councillors Member NAKASONE Hirofumi, warmly welcomed us. You may recognize his name as his father was formerly prime minister in the 80's and a close ally of Ronald Reagan. He gave his condolences for the passing of Irene Hirano Inouye and congratulated Suzanne on her success. In his remarks to the delegation, he gave us some context of the powerful people in the room.

“All the attendees are senior leaders of the Diet. Our bilateral relationship has never been more important. The defense budget doubling to 2% of GDP is a game changer. The events in Russia, Ukraine, China, and North Korea have changed Japanese citizens' perspectives and they are now supportive of escalation.” Also attending were other senior parliamentarians: OKAMOTO Mitsunari, INOBUCHI Kuniko, SANTO Akiko, TAKEMI Keizo, NAGASHIMA Akihisa, HORII Iwao, MATSUKAWA Rui, and YAMAGUCHI Natsuo, who heads the political party, Komeito.

Suzanne stated in her opening remarks that this was indeed a historic time for the U.S-Japan alliance. She mentioned that our class was the last to be hand-picked by Irene and then handed the microphone to Jeff Maloney. Jeff stated that our three-year delay in visiting Japan turned out to be a significant asset for our trip. Being in Japan today was much more meaningful for the people-to-people relationships we are working to establish, given the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and China's threat to Taiwan. He recounted the incredible access we have been given and reiterated our commitment to strengthening the close ties between our countries.

We had a lively exchange of comments and questions. The parliamentarians were genuinely engaged and wanted to understand our perspectives. Topics included DEI, baseball, judo, sister city relationships and ways they can help Japanese Americans grow their influence in Japan. The most memorable moment came at the conclusion with the remarks from the group's secretary general, Takemi. In 2007, he lost his seat in parliament and became a man without a mission. So, he moved to Boston where he met Chris Pilcavage and remarked that those two years were pivotal and some of the best of his life. He then noted that the younger American generation is coming to Japan and offered to help them just as Chris had helped him. In conclusion, he praised the Foreign Ministry for sponsoring the JALD program.

# Reflections



# Frederick H. Katayama New York, NY

**I'll be honest. I felt a tad jaded at the thought of JALD.** As a former foreign correspondent who had interviewed several prime ministers and many business leaders and visited the Akasaka Palace over two stints in Tokyo, I worried this journey to Japan would be a repeat. But I was pleasantly surprised ... from the get-go.

Hearing the sentimental classic "Okuru Kotoba" ("My Message to You") on my flight sent me back to my college days. I would hear that soundtrack as I watched a hit Japanese TV drama to supplement my Japanese studies. In the song, a father professes undying love for his child who's about to leave the nest.

Once on the ground, what really moved me on this trip was this message we - whose ancestors had left Japan - received from the various Japanese leaders we met - from the prime minister to the Princess: We Japanese are proud of the accomplishments of you Japanese American leaders, and we care about your welfare. That was in stark contrast from my experience in the 1980s when I sensed Nikkei were sometimes looked down on as the offspring of immigrants.



JALD delivered another message to me: the sense of shared history and obligation. My fellow cohorts were diverse but one thing united us: our Japanese heritage. Most of us also have Japanese middle names, signs our parents were proud of their ancestry despite what they or their parents faced as they were branded "enemy aliens" during the wartime incarceration. It then dawned on me: both Japanese Americans and Japanese had overcome wartime adversity but managed to rise like a phoenix from the ashes. Yet the two communities in the United States don't mingle much. With our cultural affinity and shared democratic and Confucian values, we Japanese Americans should work together with our Japanese counterparts to improve U.S.-Japan relations. That's what Irene Hirano Inouye and Senator Daniel Inouye had envisioned when they founded the U.S.-Japan Council. Our bilateral relationship is the key to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. I am so grateful to all who made this trip possible. Thanks to JALD, I am more than ever motivated to do my part to strengthen people-to-people ties, paying homage to my Issei grandparents and Nisei parents and ensuring a brighter future for my bilingual, bicultural son. That sense of connection, obligation and spark of inspiration, I realized, was JALD's ultimate "Okuru Kotoba" to me.



**With our cultural affinity and shared democratic and Confucian values, we Japanese Americans should work together with our Japanese counterparts to improve U.S.-Japan relations.**

# George Kobayashi Chicago, IL

**The Japanese American Leadership Delegation trip was a truly transformative experience for me and one that I will continue to draw direction and perspective from for years to come.** One of the most impactful aspects of the trip was being able to see Japan through the eyes of my fellow delegates – dynamic leaders from the highest levels of academia, business, nonprofit and government representing so many different generations of Japanese Americans. This diverse group of leaders was truly inspirational and their insights and experiences provided me a lens to see Japan in a way I’ve never experienced before.

While the trip had so many highlights, such as seeing a Shizuoka sunrise for the first time, meeting with leaders like Prime Minister Kishida, Foreign Minister Hayashi, Minister of Digital Affairs Taro Kono, Princess Takamado and members of the Keidanren and Keizai Doyukai, it was also an emotional journey. Unfortunately, my grandmother passed away during the trip, which added a layer of complexity to my experience. Despite the challenges, my JALD family provided a supportive and nurturing environment that allowed me to process my emotions, while at the same time allowing me to continue experiencing and enjoying my JALD journey. My sincere gratitude and love to my wonderful JALD family.

Overall, the JALD trip was a transformative experience that reaffirmed my commitment to the message of the U.S.-Japan Council and its mission. The trip reminded me of the importance of building bridges between our two countries and the critical role that personal connections and relationships play in this effort.

The JALD trip made me remember that every day is a new opportunity to grow, learn and make a difference. I am grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S.-Japan Council, especially Irene Hirano Inouye and Suzanne Basalla for their leadership and vision, Wendy Abe, Allison Murata, Mayumi Tsubakimoto (our wonderful JALD sister), Jennifer Usyak, Michio Akutsu (our wonderful guide) and everyone else who made this trip possible. The opportunity to participate in the JALD program was truly life changing and I am honored to have been part of this incredible experience.




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# Jeffrey Maloney Alhambra, CA

**I was deeply honored to be selected as a member of the 2023 Japanese American Leadership Delegation.** Originally, our delegation was intended to be the 2020 JALD, but the global pandemic ensured that was not meant to be. Although we were disappointed with the delay, we used the additional time to our advantage by bonding as a group and cultivating a deeper understanding of Japan and its alliance with the United States. Of course the excitement and sense of anticipation only increased over the three years, so it almost seemed surreal when I boarded the plane to Tokyo. It was finally happening!

The visit itself exceeded all expectations, and it is one of the most memorable experiences in my life. From the moment we landed, I knew we were in good hands. It was evident that the Foreign Ministry had taken great care in organizing our trip; the logistics, the cultural outings, and the food were all incredible. Of course it was our substantive meetings with our Japanese counterparts that were the most impactful. It was a true manifestation of the U.S.-Japan Council's mission to strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship by bringing together leaders from across the world.

For me, engaging with leaders like Prime Minister Kishida, Foreign Minister Hayashi, U.S. Ambassador Emmanuel, Shizuoka Governor Kawakatsu, and members of the Diet were definite highlights. It was an honor to be able to have frank and open discussions with people of their stature on topics of global importance. It was also extremely valuable to learn from individuals from the business, local government, and the educational/NGO communities. Like other delegates, a standout moment came when

Princess Takamado shared with us that she and the Imperial Family care deeply about each person of Japanese descent, no matter where we reside or when our families emigrated from Japan.

Over the course of the week, I couldn't help but internalize the importance of the U.S.-Japan Council mission and our role in it. Our trip to Japan was extremely enjoyable for sightseeing, entertainment, and food, but it also carried an importance that became more tangible as it progressed. My takeaway is that the 2023 JALD delegation and our peers do not just have a personal interest, but a personal obligation to maintain and improve the ties between the two countries. In the context of a future that is marked with geopolitical, economic, and environmental uncertainties, strengthening the U.S. and Japan alliance is more important than ever.

After seeing my fellow delegates and the USJC team in action, I know that the 2023 JALD can fulfill this obligation, especially with the leadership and support of the U.S.-Japan Council. Despite the loss of the irreplaceable Irene Hirano Inouye, I am convinced that the USJC, with its talented and dedicated staff, a committed Board of Directors, and a generation of new members ready to step up, will continue to bring our two nations closer as we work on common issues. I will always remember this trip as an important part of my life, but its real value is that it has helped to create a vision for a better future.



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# Kara Miyagishima Denver, CO

**Before leaving for Japan, our delegation received a warm farewell and reminder of the Japanese proverb, *ichigo ichie*, one chance, one meeting.** Throughout our trip, it appeared time and again, almost a gentle reminder of the importance of this moment: to cherish our time together as there would be no other like it.

As part of the 20th delegation to Japan, we often heard this would be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Even with that foresight, I am not sure we realized how impactful our time together would be.

Our time together also brought us closer as a team. We savored the sweetest bright red *ichigo* (strawberries) and ate an early morning breakfast of *maguro* at the fish market. We marveled at the beauty of the Tokyo skyline from Roppongi Hills and were comforted by the camaraderie shared over late night meals with our JALD family. These memories will always be kept close to my heart.

*Ichigo, ichie.* An interlacing thread connected us to each other, to our culture, and to the new relationships and friendships we would make during our whirlwind of a week in Japan.

The most heart warming piece of this thread was becoming part of a much larger family. As we concluded our third farewell dinner at the Consul General's residence in Los Angeles, I couldn't help but pause at the remarkable amount of support, kindness, and encouragement shown to our delegation by our USJC family. And once overseas, we were also embraced by this same level of kindness and hospitality during our time in Japan.

Participating as a delegate through the U.S.-Japan Council was truly an honor. What an extraordinary opportunity to be selected as one of 10 delegates to represent the diversity of Japanese Americans in the United States and to be entrusted with the responsibility of continuing to build upon the relationships that have been established over time since the first delegation went to Japan.

These experiences inspire me to continue strengthening the ties between our communities and nations, even if in a very small way, and to carry on the mission of what the Japanese American Leadership Delegation embodies, one that touches upon the heart of what Irene Hirano envisioned. Our 2020-2023 delegation made several meaningful connections, never to be replicated, but perhaps leaving a lasting impact for future delegations to come.



**These experiences inspire me to continue strengthening the ties between our communities and nations, even if in a very small way, and to carry on the mission of what the Japanese American Leadership Delegation embodies, one that touches upon the heart of what Irene Hirano envisioned.**



# Mark Okada Dallas, TX

**Imagine meeting President Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, Senator Chuck Schumer, Senator Mitch McConnell, Ambassador Koji Tomita, Jamie Dimon, Governor Newsom, Elon Musk and on and on and on.** Their Japanese counterparts were on our itinerary in addition to Princess Takamado of the royal family, someone who has no equal in our country. The JALD program gives unprecedented access to the most powerful leaders in government, business, education, and nonprofits. And these meetings are not ceremonial. They are genuine engagements where perspectives are shared and friendships are born. Philip Roskamp, who generously hosted us for dinner at his residence, is a public affairs officer at the U.S. State Department. In marveling at the access of the program, he stated “Honestly, we can’t get your access for members of Congress visiting Japan!”

At our celebratory karaoke night to end the week, we sang, “Friends in Low Places,” a country western classic. Friends certainly, anything but low places! The 10 delegates are a truly diverse group of amazing leaders that probably would never have met. How would a hedge fund manager ever meet a submarine commander? Yet the JALD program brought us together and gave us a common cause. Because it took three years for us to be able to go, we had already built an amazing bond even before our trip. Those friendships are now even deeper and precious given this experience. I am forever thankful to Suzanne Basalla and Tsubakimoto-san for leading us so well. Even now I am blown away by the great honor of being included in the last delegation hand-picked by Irene. The Best is Yet to Come!




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# Christine Pilcauge Cambridge, MA



**The first meal we ate together as a group from start to finish was soba in Shizuoka.** *Soba* noodles are a symbol of long life. The buckwheat plant can survive severe weather so it also represents strength and resilience. *Soba* is also a homonym for the word 'near' or 'close.' I think our trip was auspicious to begin with eating *soba*, since our group became closer as we endured three years before we could embark on our journey to Japan.

I'm a Shin-Issei, and I really didn't know that until I applied to JALD. Being born in Japan—growing up on a military base and then moving to the United States—I never really thought much about my identity. However, I always felt I never quite fit in. In Japan I was never Japanese enough and in California everyone thought I was Hispanic. Because of the USJC conferences, the JALD orientations and this trip, I connected with my roots and felt I belonged. I now accept myself as a Japanese, as an American and as a Japanese

American. Although my ancestors did not experience the harsh treatment of Japanese/Japanese Americans in the United States, I now realize that I truly am Japanese American.



The trip also connected me with my past. Who knew that the most personable Consul General in Boston would welcome our then JALD 2020 at his residence in Los Angeles. Mr. Muto welcomed our delegation again in 2022 and embraced our group at our symposium in 2023.



Who would have thought I would see my former boss in Boston - TAKEMI Keizo - during our JALD '23 trip? I was so touched by his remarks and felt more of the 'crisis urgency' to devote more of my energy into promoting U.S.-Japan relations.

I am forever grateful to Irene Hirano Inouye for her leadership and vision in creating JALD. I am also grateful to Paul Watanabe for suggesting that I apply, to JALD alumnus Ken Oye for writing a letter of recommendation (and to Michael Reich!), and to the Consulate General of Japan in Boston for nominating me. Thank you very much, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), for selecting me. I am indebted to the many people who made this trip possible, especially Suzanne Basalla, Wendy Abe, Allison Murata from USJC, MOFA's Mayumi Tsubakimoto and Jennifer Usyak from the Los Angeles Consulate. To my fellow JALD '23: my family circle just got bigger. I can't wait for our reunion and the next chapters we'll write.

**Because of the USJC conferences, the JALD orientations and this trip, I connected with my roots and felt I belonged. I now accept myself as a Japanese, as an American and as a Japanese American.**

**Wa, Kei, Sei, Jaku are the four principles for Sado or the Way of Tea.** We learned that from a tea master as we participated in a tea ceremony at the Cha-No-Miyako Museum in Shizuoka. “Wa” stands for harmony. “Kei” stands for respect. “Sei” stands for purity. “Jaku” stands for tranquility.

This journey with a group of amazing individuals reminded me about the true beauty of our ancestral heritage and culture. Our dialogue with various people made me realize why exchanges are so important in bridging Japanese Americans and Japanese. Carefully listening to the Sado sensei helped me realize that important leadership principles can be gained from the philosophies embedded in the DNA of Japanese culture.

As we spent time in Tokyo engaging with various leaders about incorporating the practices of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into our workplace, I recognized that these practices are not new to Japan at all. Rather, they have existed in the cultural fabric of Sado for more than a thousand years. If we were to simply incorporate the principles of Wa, Kei, Sei, and Jaku into our leadership style, a simple cup of tea becomes a teachable lesson on how we can help make a difference and make the world a better place.



Bending over to enter the tea room through a low door symbolizes humility and emphasizes that everyone is equal. That is a beautiful teaching. Through the JALD program, this trip to Japan served as my virtual tea room. This room inspired me to think about how we can bring out the inner beauty of our culture and bring forward ancient concepts into the present day.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and U.S.-Japan Council for giving me this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and to the Japanese American community and the organizations that supported me in Seattle, Washington. I fully realize that I walk in the footsteps of giants like Senator Daniel Inouye, Secretary Norman Mineta, Irene Hirano Inouye and countless other Japanese American leaders that paved the way so that we could make this important journey. I am going to challenge myself to use these principles so I can take bold steps to support everyone in my life, especially the Japanese American leaders of tomorrow.



**Through the JALD program, this trip to Japan served as my virtual tea room. This room inspired me to think about how we can bring out the inner beauty of our culture and bring forward ancient concepts into the present day.**

Calvin Terada  
Seattle, WA

# Lori Teranishi Honolulu, HI

When I reflect back on my week in Japan, a Japanese proverb with roots in the 16th century Japanese tea ceremony comes to mind: *ichigo ichie*. The concept was explained to us by a tea ceremony master on the first day of our trip in Shizuoka Prefecture. *Ichigo ichie* is integral to the Japanese tea ceremony, as it creates a sense of harmony and gratitude - cornerstones of Japan's culture and philosophy.

Translated, *ichigo ichie* means one time, one meeting and encourages us to treat each moment as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

As a Japanese American, I manage my life in a decidedly more western way than the tea master. I rush through life relying on checklists to get through my crowded days. While I grasped *ichigo ichie* on an intellectual level, viewing the world through an *ichigo ichie* lens does not come naturally to me.

But as each day of my trip unfolded, *ichigo ichie* revealed itself at unexpected times, and not only during what I anticipated would be the highlights of our trip meeting with government and business leaders.

It was as our group walked through a Shizuoka pine forest at sunrise and stood at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, skipping stones into the waves, that I remembered skipping stones with my grandparents on the Hawaiian shores of the Pacific Ocean over 40 years ago. I thought about how proud they would be that their sacrifices toiling on sugar plantations paved the way for their granddaughter, a yonsei, to return to Japan as part of this delegation. *Ichigo ichie*.



Another revelation occurred at Team Labs, an immersive art experience that filled us with wonder. At first, my western perspective got the best of me as I decided to skip the last display. But fellow delegate Mark Okada refused to let me sit out. It was surreal and beautiful and as Mark and I sat in amiable silence taking it in, I realized that I had a friend who cared so much that I not miss this experience that he saw it twice, for me. *Ichigo ichie*.

I expected my visit to Japan to impart important policy and business insights that I could apply to strengthen the Japan-U.S. relationship, but I learned so much more. What I viewed as an obligatory part of a tea museum tour transformed the way I look at the world and the way I spend my time. The multitude of *ichigo ichie* experiences that I had with my JALD delegation will stay with me for a lifetime, and it will make me a better leader, mother, wife and daughter.

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# Kenta Washington Great Falls, VA

**When I applied to the JALD program, I never expected to meet the best group of Japanese Americans I have ever had the pleasure of hanging out with or to be selected for this prestigious program.** As a half-Japanese American who was born in Japan, grew up on a U.S. military base in Japan for my first 12 years, then moved back to the States, I always felt growing up I didn't really fit in with either Japanese or Americans. I grew up using my Japanese middle name Kenta, switched to Glenn in college, then used Ken in the military. It wasn't until I was beginning to transition out of the military and participating in the JALD orientation in 2020 that I really started to embrace my Japanese heritage and fully committed to Kenta again. Being around these great Japanese Americans really let me feel comfortable about being a Japanese American.

I was truly impressed by the lengths the Japanese government went to in preparing this trip. Having the opportunity to meet various levels of the Japanese government from the Prime Minister to a Princess, to the Speaker of the House, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Digital Affairs, and a significant number of parliamentarians went above and beyond any expectations I had for this trip. I was impressed by Princess Takamado when she said the royal family cares about all Japanese people, including Japanese Americans.

As I reflect on the trip, the focus from our group was to promote Women's Diversity. There was such strong women representation from the Japanese side, that I found it hard to believe that Japan hasn't made progress in this area and there did appear to be an effort from Japan to increase women's representation in the decision-making



level of the workforce. With a continued “ganbatte” spirit, I’m sure Japan will be able to succeed in making the necessary changes to succeed. As was mentioned during the trip – Japan is great at following the rules, they just need to change the rules quicker!

In the Japanese drama “Quartet,” there was a statement “Once you put the lemon on the kara-age, you can’t take it off,” meaning there is no going back once certain actions have been taken. I feel that this JALD trip was such an experience for me, I have been changed and there is no going back to my previous version. This truly was a trip of a lifetime for me. Thank you!

**Having the opportunity to meet various levels of the Japanese government from the Prime Minister to a Princess, to the Speaker of the House, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Digital Affairs, and a significant number of parliamentarians went above and beyond any expectations I had for this trip.**

# Audrey Yamamoto San Francisco, CA

**Being a part of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation has been an extraordinary life-changing experience.**

While I had visited Japan nearly half a dozen times with my grandparents and in-laws, this was my first visit that led to a deeper understanding of the perspectives of prominent Japanese leaders in a way that is only possible through person-to-person connections. Our discussions with such impressive government and business leaders have given me a newfound appreciation for the unique role that Japanese Americans play in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations. It is a role that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

As the 20th Japanese American Leadership Delegation, the experience enabled me to feel the presence of the 200 delegates who have come before us and inspired me to do all I can to honor their legacy.

The legacy that was felt most acutely was that of Irene Hirano Inouye. I am the direct beneficiary of her vision to create a program that gives Japanese American leaders extraordinary access to the highest levels of leadership in Japan. While I never had the honor of meeting Irene, I will forever be grateful to her for building one of the most impactful and profound experiences for Japanese American leaders.

I am also deeply grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Japan Council for making this extraordinary program possible. It has enriched my life through both the incredible itinerary in Japan and the lifelong friendships that were formed with my fellow delegates who have become and forever will be part of my extended Japanese American family.

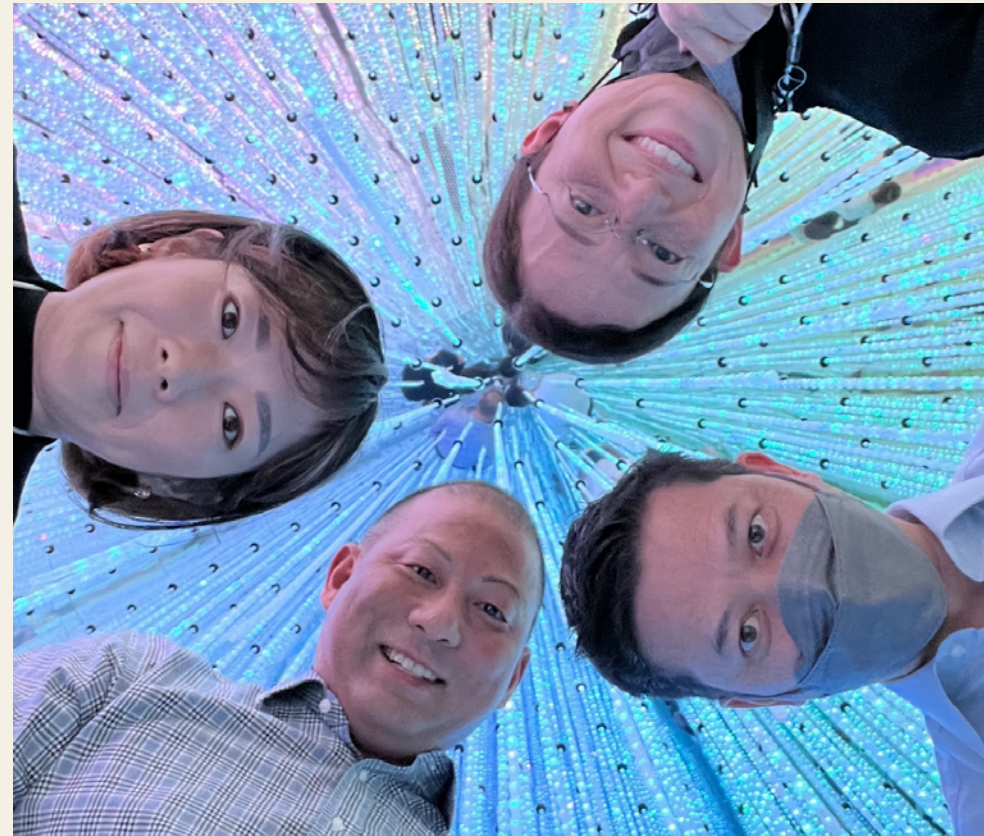
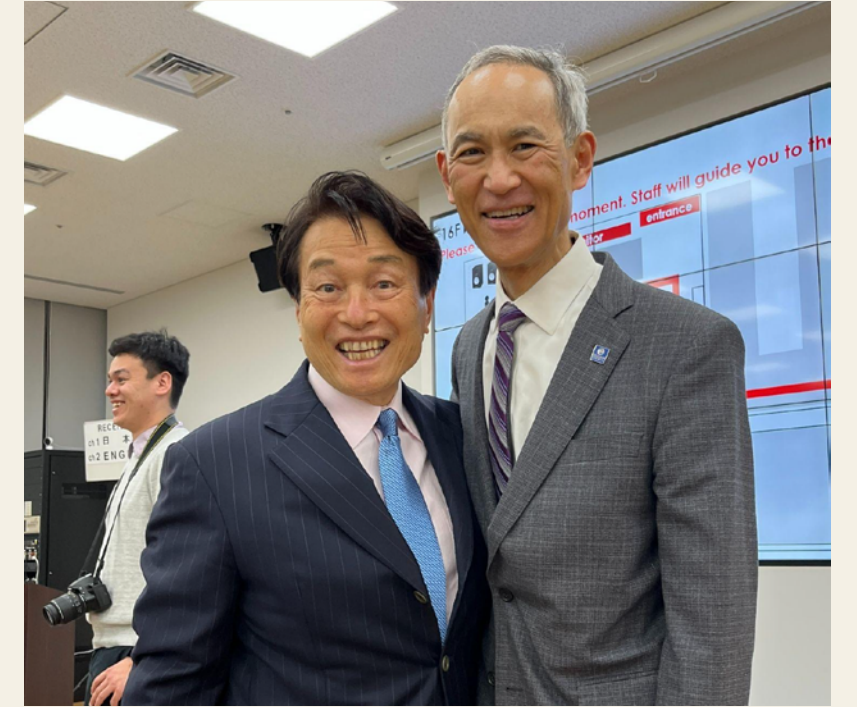



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Dedicated to the legacy of  
**IRENE HIRANO INOUYE**  
1948 - 2020