



NYK CONNECTION

Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai

JAN 2026

President's Message

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my warmest New Year's greetings to all members and friends of the Yamaguchi Prefecture Association of Southern California. Thank you for your continued support this past year—through your participation in our annual events and generous contributions, you enable our nonprofit mission to preserve our Japanese culture and community.

We are especially grateful to Mike and Aki Fukuhara-Vaughn for their many years of dedicated service and leadership on the board. Their impact on our organization will be long remembered, and we wish them well as they enter their next chapter.

This year, we are introducing our new "NYK Connection" newsletter and exploring new member activities. Your suggestions and feedback will help us strengthen fellowship and create meaningful experiences.

With your continued involvement, we look forward to a year of growth, unity, and renewed community spirit. Wishing you and your families health, happiness, and prosperity in the new year!

Sincerely,

Bruce Kimura

President, Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai



New Year's Luncheon

February 22, 2026

Join us as we bring in the Year of the Horse at our New Year Luncheon! We will have a short general meeting before lunch to install the 2026 officers and enjoy a video recap of 2025. Come ready for some rounds of bingo, music, prizes, and more!

Sunday, February 22, 2026

11am-3pm (registration begins at 10:30am)

Quiet Cannon Banquet Facilities

77 Bella Verde Drive
Montebello, CA 90640
Skyview Room (2nd floor)

Keynote Speaker

Jeffrey Gee Chin
Film Director, Film Producer, Screenwriter,
Cinematographer, Independent Publisher

Meal Selection

Your choice of Chicken Marsala, Baked Salmon, or
Pasta Primavera (Vegan)
\$60 per person (please pay at event)

Pre-order your copy of "A Rebel's Outcry" for \$60

Please RSVP (call/text) your attendance and meal selection

Michi Ota (日本語) | 323.974.5162
Lorraine Kimura (English) | 626.660.7021

RSVP DEADLINE: Thursday 2/12/26

Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai members 80 years
and older will be our special guests.

Free Table

Please bring any new or gently used items that
you'd like to donate to the "Free Table" at the
luncheon. In previous years, members donated
items like paper fans, books, DVDs, puzzles, toys,
etc. Every donation is appreciated!



"The Amazing Avatars"
Steven and Jaclyn Almaraz
Jennifer and Robert Caballero



"The Amazing Avatars"
rockin' their cool custom team shirts.
A+ for styling!

2025 NKK Bowling Tournament

The **Nanka Kenjinkai Kyogikai** (an organization composed of all of the SoCal Kenjinkai past and current presidents and directors) held its annual bowling tournament on November 2nd at Linbrook Lanes in Anaheim. Ten teams from various Kenjinkais participated in the tournament and the NYK was represented by the return of **"The Amazing Avatars!"** The members of this subara-mazing (Japanglish) team were **Steven and Jaclyn Almaraz and Jennifer and Robert Caballero**.

"The NKK Bowling Tournament is an event that we look forward to every year," Jennifer explained. "You would think that since we had a year of practice, that we would have finished higher...but as usual, the competition was keen and very challenging, with such a talented group of some outstanding bowlers."

She also commented that they will keep competing, in hopes that maybe next year they may walk away with the top prizes.

After the pizza and wings lunch, the winning scores were announced and the prizes were awarded. The Amazing Avatars finished just a little shy of the top contenders, in 5th place overall. Out of a total of 18 women bowlers, Jennifer placed 5th and Jaclyn placed 6th. While in the men's category of 21 bowlers, Steven placed 8th. There was plenty of fun, fist bumps, and laughs to go around and the Amazing Avatars are still looking forward to next year. Personally...I think they should have won First Prize for the coolest custom coordinated team shirts!

-Submitted by Jennifer Caballero and Bruce Kimura

NKK Ikuei Scholarship Winners

On October 19th, **Shinsuke Yamamoto III** (11th grade) and his sister, **Amy Yamamoto** (10th grade), both standout students at Whittier Christian High School, were both selected as two of the five scholarship recipients at the Nanka Kenjinkai Kyogikai's 43rd Annual Scholarship and Charity Show, held at the Aratani Theatre in Little Tokyo. In addition to excelling academically and athletically, the siblings have dedicated the past nine years to the study of Kendo, where they not only train with discipline but also mentor younger students in the art. Their commitment to leadership, cultural heritage, and community engagements has made them remarkable ambassadors of Japanese culture, and their accomplishments reflect the spirit and values

celebrated by the NYK. Their parents, **Shinsuke Yamamoto II** and **Kaori Juichiya** are valued members of the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai.



Bruce Kimura, Shinsuke Yamamoto III, and Amy Yamamoto

In Memoriam



Special Guest, **Yoshio Nakamura** was honored for his service as a member of the renowned and highly decorated 'Go For Broke' 442nd RCT during WWII. (with Past President **Arturo Yoshimoto**)

Yoshio Nakamura

Yoshio "Yosh" Nakamura, a native of Rosemead, CA and long-time resident of Whittier, decorated WWII veteran, a beloved art educator, and community leader, sadly passed away on November 22, 2025. Mr. Nakamura was a member of the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai and attended many of our functions. He was recognized and honored at our 2023 NYK New Year's Shinnenkai (see photo) and also present at our 2025 NYK 120th Anniversary Celebration this past February. Nakamura was a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II while his family was incarcerated at the Gila River camp in Arizona. He was awarded the Bronze Star and was made a member of the French Legion of Honor for his part in breaking the Gothic Line. After the war, he taught fine arts at Whittier High School and was instrumental in establishing the Art Department at Rio Hondo College in Whittier. In 2024, Whittier High School named their fine arts building in his honor. Yoshio celebrated his 100th birthday in June of 2025. He is survived by his children Linda, Daniel, Joel, and other family members. His presence will be profoundly missed at our Kenjinkai's social events.

-Submitted by Naomi Suenaka

Carol Umeno Ford

Carol Umeno Ford, a beloved longtime member of the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai, passed away peacefully at age 93 on October 5, 2025. A resident of Torrance, California, she was a dedicated supporter for many years.



Reira Tanaka, Aki Fukuhara-Vaughn, and Mike Vaughn.

Reira Tanaka

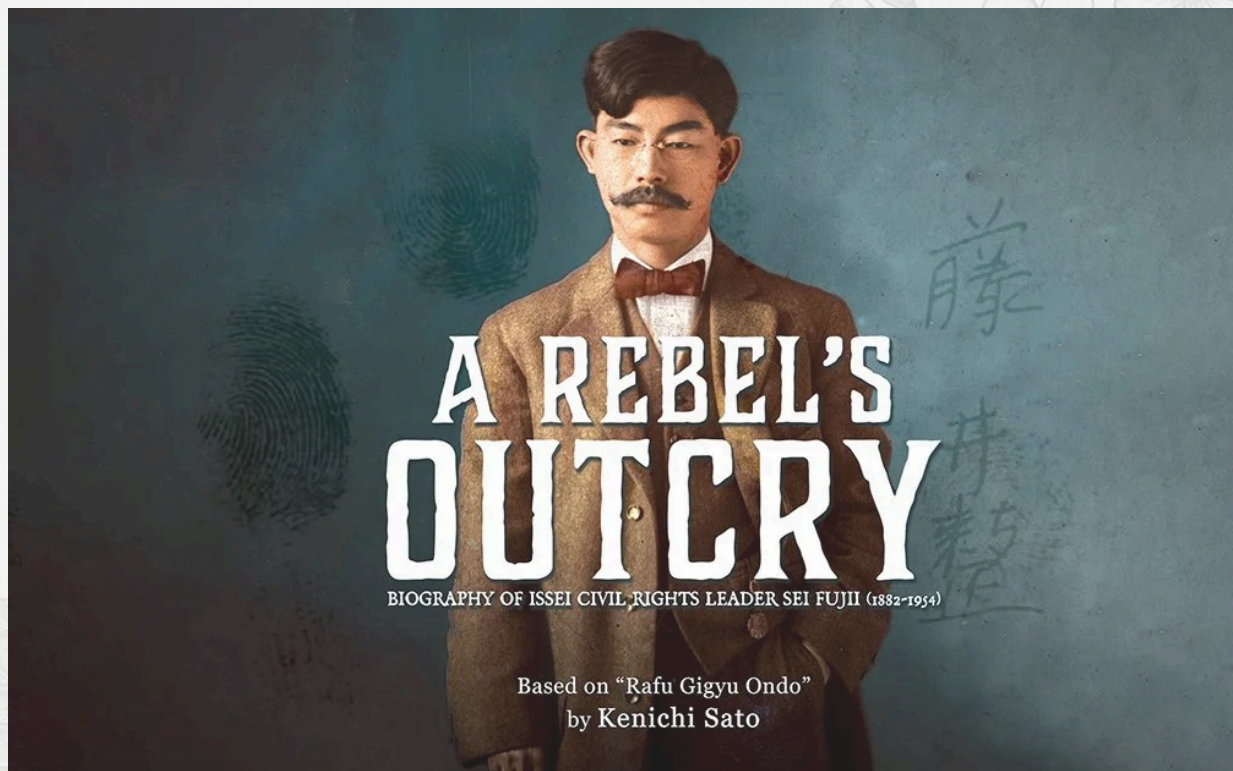
Reira Tanaka, who passed away on October 17, 2025, was our past president Arturo Yoshimoto's partner for 4 years. Reira generously volunteered countless hours as the photographer for many of our events, including the Summer Picnics and New Years Luncheons. Her dedication and talents helped preserved cherished memories for our community and her warm presence will be deeply missed.



Yoshie Ishigame

Yoshie Ishigame, long time resident of Monterey Park passed away on December 18, 2025 at the age of 85. Born in Los Angeles, she moved to Saga, Hirao-cho, a small town in Yamaguchi-Ken Japan after WWII. After high school, she returned to the US, got married and started her family, and worked at the Garvey School District until she retired in 2007. She was active at the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and enjoyed attending many of the NYK annual events. She will be remembered for her kindness and generosity.

-Submitted by Alice Ishigame-Tao



A REBEL'S OUTCRY

Biography of Issei Civil Rights Leader Sei Fujii (1882-1954)

Published by **Jeffrey Gee Chin** and **Fumiko Carole Fujita**, "A Rebel's Outcry" details Yamaguchi's own, **Sei Fujii**, who had immigrated from Iwakuni in 1903 and graduated USC Law School in 1911. Fujii is best known for founding the Kashi Mainichi Newspaper and winning two major Supreme Court cases, including overturning the California Alien Land Law and establishing the Japanese Hospital. "A Rebel's Outcry" won a gold medal from California's Book Awards in 2022.

Jeffrey will discuss his continued work from historic designations, monuments, publications, and films that highlight his lesser known efforts as a civil rights advocate in the years leading up to WWII. A feature-length movie is also in development to help share his influential story.

Pre-order today for \$60

All purchased copies picked up on 2/22/26 at the luncheon

Features

Unique Japanese double-stab binding, corner overs, premium print quality, and metal awards sticker

Proceeds to Benefit



LITTLE TOKYO
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2026 NYK Scholarship

Scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors, who are descendants of *current members* of the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai, **will be available soon**. The application forms can be downloaded from our website at: www.yamaguchisocal.com. For any questions, please contact our Scholarship Chairperson **Manami Hayashi** at namihayashi@gmail.com.

APPLICATIONS AND ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 27, 2026.

Selected recipient(s) **MUST** be present at our annual 2026 picnic to receive his/her award.

Finding Your Roots

This program is designed for beginners interested in learning how to trace their Japanese family history and build their own family tree, or *koseki*. Also, those who already have a *koseki* and are just trying to fill in missing pieces, or have reached a dead end and don't know where to turn, will find helpful tips at our seminar. Together, we will review important records, key facts, and cultural considerations that help guide your research. By sharing knowledge and experiences, we hope these seminars inspire curiosity, deepen your connection to your ancestors, our shared prefectural roots, and to one another as a community.

Please contact our 'FYR Seminar' Chairperson, **Florence Ochi** at florenceochi19@gmail.com with any questions. Please watch for our emails, FaceBook, Instagram, and our website for announcements of our next seminar.



Donations

\$1-\$100

Karen Umemoto
The Ishigame Family

\$501-\$1000

Michi Otake
Lisa Hernandez

We appreciate your generosity and allowing us to continue providing these events for all our members!

NYK

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