

ARTS & CULTURE



The Quilting of America CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY OF GOD'S CHILDREN

Did You Know?

This year's Anti-racism Task Force Series is focusing on the art, history, and culture of various ethnic communities. Our first event in April focused on Black culture. Attendees enjoyed a "soul food" dinner, and then performances by Take 6 and the all-Black Gateways Festival Orchestra at Orchestra Hall in Chicago.

Our second event will be the Japanese Summer Festival at Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Illinois on July 27. Attendees will be immersed in Japanese art and culture, possibly including a drumming show, sword show, calligraphy and origami demonstrations, and more.

In advance of our second event, we remember the experiences of Japanese Americans just before World War II and beyond:

The Nisei

By 1930, half of the Japanese in the United States were Nisei—members of the U.S.-born second generation. Nisei were the children of two worlds: the traditional Japanese world maintained at home by their parents—the Issei—and the multi ethnic U.S. culture that they were immersed in at school and at work. The Nisei were born U.S. citizens, and were more likely to speak English than Japanese, more likely to practice Christianity than Buddhism, and more likely to prefer "American" food, sports, music, and social mores than those of Japanese tradition. Many Nisei struggled to reconcile the conflicting demands of their complex cultural heritage. However, they overwhelmingly identified themselves as Japanese Americans, not as Japanese in America.

The Japanese American Citizens League, an organization of Nisei professionals, declared in its creed:

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation... I pledge myself... to defend her against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

These words were published in 1940. Before the next year was out, the Japanese American community would find its resolve, its resilience, and its faith in the nation put to a severe test.

From: Library of Congress Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History Japanese The U.S. Mainland: Growth and Resistance

On February 19, 1942, little more than two months after Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 brought the United States into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. Most Americans of Japanese ancestry lived on the Pacific Coast or in Hawaii, then a U.S. territory, where less than two weeks after Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were already being arrested and held in local jails. They lived inside barbed-wire fences and beneath looming guard towers. They stood in line to get food, to use restrooms and to launder their clothes. They lost their freedom and most of their belongings, and their sole alleged crime was a simple one: Their ancestors were Japanese.

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Families “were stripped of their identity,” says Noriko Sanefuji, a curator at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. The incarcerated names were no longer important. Instead, each family received a five-digit number to be worn on a tag around their necks. “That becomes who you are,” she says. “Even the offspring who never experienced the camp—the third generation, the fourth generation—it’s an ongoing trauma.” This loss of identity, she believes, is almost like a part of their DNA, passed from generation to generation.

From: *At the Smithsonian* | February 11, 2022

Japanese American Names

Japanese names are an important part of Japanese culture, reflecting the country’s rich history, traditions, and values. In Japan, names are chosen carefully and carry great significance, often reflecting parents’ hopes and dreams for their children.

Many male Japanese names have meanings that relate to nature, virtues, or cultural ideals. Some common examples include: **Akira** – “Bright” or “clear”, **Hiro** – “Generous” or “tolerant”, **Yori** – “Trustworthy”

Female Japanese names, in particular, often reflect beauty, grace, and strength and can be inspired by nature, mythology, and literature. Some common female Japanese names include: **Asuka** – “Fragrant” or “tomorrow’s fragrance.”, **Mika** – “New moon.”, **Kiyoko** – “Child of purity.”

From: <https://americannewsreport.com/japanese-american-names/>

Japanese Americans Of Note:

George Takei – Is a Japanese American actor, author, and activist best known for playing the character of Hikaru Sulu in the original Star Trek series.

Tamlyn Tomita – Was born in Okinawa, Japan, in 1966 and grew up in Los Angeles, California. Tomita has had a successful career in both film and television and has been praised for her performances in both dramatic and comedic roles. She has also been a prominent advocate for Asian American representation in the entertainment industry.

Rinko Kikuchi – Pushing for equality, Kikuchi has been a vocal advocate for women’s rights and has spoken out about the importance of representation and diversity in the entertainment industry. She was born in Hadano, Japan, in 1981 and began her career as a model before transitioning to acting.

Yoko Ono – She is a Japanese multimedia artist, singer, and peace activist. She is known for her work as an avant-garde artist and marriage to John Lennon of The Beatles. Ono has released numerous albums and has been involved in various artistic projects throughout her career.

Maya Lin – Maya Lin is a world-renowned artist and designer whose work has left an indelible mark on the contemporary art and architecture landscape. She rose to fame in the early 1980s when she won a design competition to create the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Her design, a simple but powerful V-shaped wall etched with the names of the fallen soldiers, was controversial at the time but has since become an iconic symbol of remembrance and healing.

Akira Yoshizawa – Born in Japan in 1911, he is widely considered the father of modern origami. Throughout his life, he developed many new origami techniques and created thousands of new designs, many of which are still popular today. In 2012, Google honored Yoshizawa with a Google Doodle on what would have been his 101st birthday, recognizing his contributions to the world of origami and his lasting impact on the art form.

Pat Morita – was a Japanese American actor best known for his iconic role as Mr. Miyagi in the “Karate Kid” film franchise. Before he became an actor, he had a challenging childhood that included being placed in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. Despite these obstacles, he became a successful comedian and actor, earning an Academy Award nomination for his role in “The Karate Kid.”

From: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/japanese-americans>