Exemplifying the breadth and depth of today’s Japanese American community, the 2014 Japanese American Leadership Delegation brings together 10 individuals from diverse professional and personal backgrounds

- Generationally, we represent every group from shin-issei to yonsei.
- Geographically, we are spread out over 5,078 miles in the United States, from Honolulu to Boston.
- Though we were born in cities throughout the U.S. and Japan, more than half of us have relatives in Hawaii.
- Our Japanese roots can be mapped over 2,000 miles, from Hokkaido to Okinawa.
- Professionally, we represent a wide range of U.S. public and private interests, including banking, communications, military, non-profits, law enforcement, the legal profession, city administration, and our ranks include city- and state-elected officials and a criminal court judge.
- For four of us, this is the first trip to Japan.

For all of us, being named to the 2014 delegation represents a great honor, and we thank the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S.-Japan Council for this extraordinary opportunity to build stronger ties between the United States and Japan in the years to come.

ELIZA DOZONO, Portland, Oregon
LEONA HIRAOKA, Washington, DC
YORIKO KISHIMOTO, Palo Alto, California
BRAD MIYAKE, Bellevue, Washington
CARRIE OKINAGA, Honolulu, Hawaii

DEREK OKUBO, Denver, Colorado
KEIKO MATSUHO ORRALL, Boston, Massachusetts
TOKO SERITA, Queens, New York
KEITH WALTERS, Santa Monica, California
Gary Yamashiro, Chicago, Illinois
2014

JAPANESE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DELEGATION

SPONSORED BY JAPAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN COORDINATION WITH U.S.-JAPAN COUNCIL
福岡

FUKUOKA
CONNECTIONS GO SWIMMINGLY

MARCH 9: JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY OF FUKUOKA DINNER, NISHITETSU GRAND HOTEL

**THIS FIRST OFFICIAL DINNER** combined gracious hospitality with memorable cuisine, as delegates and Japan-America Society members — journalists, political leaders, a teacher, and members of the business community — shared an evening of conversation.

Derek Okubo embraced the role of introducing the delegation for the first time to those gathered. Etsuko Ebii, Vice Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture, welcomed the delegates, and through the evening issued an invitation to enjoy both the formal aspects of Fukuoka as well as the informal aspects such as the *yatai*. The evening’s ebullient host, Hiroo Kanahori, Secretary-General of the Japan-America Society of Fukuoka, got the connections going.

Amid lively conversation, as courses were continually served, small shrieks began emanating around the room as people opened the covered teacups on their plates. There they discovered thin, small fish swimming around two pebbles. Some gamely removed the pebbles, toasted, and promptly swallowed the live fish; other veterans of this regional dish adeptly snagged them with *hashi* and consumed them. *Shirauo*, was traditionally consumed by Kyushu men so they would become more powerful than their opponents, delegates were informed. With that new information, a few more were inspired to take part.

This marked the opening entry of the memorable culinary log that would develop throughout our trip.
The First Public Forum of the trip found the delegates greeted by a full house of more than 140 attendees — academics, students, organizational leaders, and area residents looking to engage in a dialogue around government, leadership, and civic involvement.

Eiji Taguchi, Executive Vice President of the Japan Foundation, opened the session by thanking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), U.S.-Japan Council (USJC), the Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD), and other global partners for bringing the program to Fukuoka — the first time since 2008.

The session’s tone was set by Margaret MacLeod, U.S. Consul for Public Affairs and Director of the Fukuoka American Center, when she remarked that this was an important seminar for Japan to learn from the multicultural experience that is a significant part of the U.S. history. Citizens of the United States are a mosaic and have roots from all over the globe, she noted, and the JALD’s participants are “direct descendants of those very first Japanese immigrants to the United States.”

Irene Hirano Inouye informed the audience that she and her late husband, Senator Daniel Inouye, both had family origins in the region. She added that the senator frequently talked about his father and grandparents who were from Fukuoka. She then provided a brief overview of the JALD, the Tomodachi Initiative and the U.S.-Japan Council, closing by inviting everyone to Hawaii for the USJC annual conference in October.

Some delegates with government leadership experience gave brief presentations. Carrie Okinaga, general counsel for First Hawaiian Bank and former chief legal counsel for the City and County of Honolulu, offered warm greetings on behalf of the delegation and spoke of the intertwined history of Japan and Hawaii, with descendants of Japanese immigrants now influential in politics, sports, business, and space exploration. She shared the business profile of her home state and the significant impact tourism from Japan has on the local economy. The Fukuoka Prefecture, she noted, was the Sister “State” of Hawaii.

Keiko Orrall, the first Japanese American woman elected to the Massachusetts
House of Representatives, made special note of Junichi Tazawa and Koji Uehara, two Japanese pitchers who played big roles for her 2013 World Series champion Boston Red Sox. She offered charismatic insights on her own experience in running for state office and succeeding, despite being a Republican in a predominantly Democratic state, and the importance of the female perspective in government.

Brad Miyake, city manager of Bellevue, Washington, talked with pride about his personal family history with Japan and the professional path he took in civil service. He provided a historical background of Bellevue, which has experienced significant growth over the past 10 years, particularly in areas such as technology. Bellevue, he said, continues to have strong ties with Japan and in particular with its Sister City, Yao, Japan.

The session closed with lively questions from the audience, with people of all ages asking for delegation members’ thoughts on topics such as: What it would take to enhance cultural understanding between Japan and the U.S.; what it was like to grow up Japanese in American society; and what it means to be a leader in the U.S. Delegates encouraged continued exchange programs; emphasized the strengths of diversity; and encouraged risk-taking as ways of making great leaders.

A question emerged about the current disputes that exist among Japan, Korea and China. Who was more important from the delegates’ perspective, Korea or China? Delegate Keith Walters, in model statesman-like fashion, stated that all the countries must be bigger than the dispute and none of the countries should ruin the progress made across the years. All the countries are important and everyone, including the U.S., would be stronger with a solid tri-lateral relationship among Japan, Korea and China.
BUILDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN JAPAN and the U.S. — with a focus on Fukuoka and Hawaii — took center stage at the March 10 meeting of the delegates and the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League of Fukuoka Prefecture.

Irene Hirano Inouye noted that both she and her late husband, Senator Daniel Inouye, had ancestors who came from Fukuoka. And with dozens of members of the Fukuoka Prefectural Assembly in attendance, as well as Yuriy Fedkiw, U.S. Consulate of Fukuoka, Ms. Inouye presented the latest news from the U.S.-Japan Council to the assembled leaders and set the stage for the day’s work of developing connections and networks.

Carrie Okinaga brought an aloha spirit to the business of building connections as she offered an in-depth presentation on the longstanding cultural and business ties between Fukuoka and Hawaii. She showcased Hawaii’s proud heritage of Japanese American leaders whose roots are traced to Fukuoka, such as Senator Inouye, the highest ranking Asian American politician in U.S. history, and Governor George Ariyoshi, the first Asian American Governor in the United States.

Ms. Okinaga, one of four JALD delegates who trace their ancestral roots to Fukuoka, discussed multiple examples of how the people-to-people, State-to-Prefecture connections have withstood the tests of time. Hawaii’s first official “Sister State/Prefecture” relationship was with Fukuoka, established in 1981. In 2009, in the midst of global recession and unlike other “sister” relationships, the State of Hawaii declared its relationship with Fukuoka to be a “sister success story” because of the strong commitment on both sides. In addition, Hawaii is home to four of the 21 Fukuoka Kenjinkai spread through nine countries.

Eiji Mutou, chairman of the League for Fukuoka Prefecture, presented two telling statistics. Among Japan’s 47 prefectures, only 23 have a sister city in the U.S. And among the 50 states in the U.S., only 20 have sister cities in Japan. He cited these statistics as illustrating the need for greater focus on building connections, and told delegates he may be calling on their expertise and newfound friendship in the future.

Following the formal presentations, a lovely reception hosted by the League gave their members and the delegates the opportunity to share thoughts on a broad range of political and cultural topics. Delegates welcomed the time to learn more about the accomplishments that Fukuoka would like to share with the world, and hope to play a part in making that happen. 🌟
Delegates were honored to meet with Fukuoka Governor Hiroshi Ogawa. The charismatic governor spoke of regional innovations in business and the environment, and of his wish to have his prefecture achieve top ranking on a “happiness index.”
Fukuoka provided a welcoming first stop for the 2014 Delegation. Amid high-level meetings and conferences, delegates experienced the arts and culture of the Hakata region — a showcase for this area that historically has served as a gateway between Japan and the world.

ARRIVING ON MARCH 9 on a brief flight from Tokyo, we enjoyed the sun and warmth that greeted us in Fukuoka as we made our way through the winding, narrow streets of Dazaifu City, admiring the emerging plum blossoms and the skills of our tour bus driver, who adeptly transported us to the Hotel Grantia Dazaifu for lunch.

The hotel, situated on a hillside, provided spectacular views of the Kyushu National Museum, which lies in striking blue contrast to the green hillside opposite the hotel. The lunch was amazing in both taste and presentation, course after course. Many of us began the peculiar practice of taking pictures of our meals, which lasted throughout the trip. And we were provided a valued lesson on the proper protocol for removing and donning our shoes the Japanese way, something many of us thought we knew how to do. We were wrong.

As a refreshing drizzle descended, we made our way to the Kyushu National Museum. Featuring a soaring atrium at the entrance, the museum is thoughtfully laid out with Japanese artifacts highlighting the culture and art of Kyushu, as well as a cultural exchange exhibition between Japan and other Asian countries. Among the artifacts are historical weapons, jewelry, burial urns, and musical instruments such as drums with signs that say, “Try to touch me!” Unsure if this was a dare or invitation, we asked and found it to be the latter.

We then rode “travelators” — moving walkways — through a long underground tunnel that ended at the Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine, the head shrine of Japan’s Tenmangu shrines. The Dazaifu Tenmangu enshrines a god of wisdom, and we were told that many students make a pilgrimage there to pray for success in their academic entrance examinations. As the main gate into the shrine’s
Getting to know Fukuoka.

In the courtyard, we were met by a traditional Shinto wedding party, a beautiful contrast of red, blue and white flowing past us on their way for a photo shoot. For some of us, this was our first opportunity to pray at a Shinto shrine and make a wish.

We then traversed beautiful arched bridges to get to Tenjinsama Street, where we were instructed to meet at the mochi store by the last torii gate. Each of us gravitated to the many small shops lining the streets, filled with enticements including umegaemochi, a Dazaifu specialty, and karashi mentaiko, another Fukuoka favorite. We sampled several of these delights, and the freshness of the strawberry mochi made quite an impression.

Back on the bus, the day’s journey took us to the Inoue Hakata Doll Studio. We were graciously shuttled from the main street to the studio by the brother of National Traditional Craft Artist Akiko Inoue. We were privileged to receive a personal tour of the studio, including the second floor display of the most precious dolls in the Inoue collection. These dolls were meticulously crafted, with each minute brush stroke simulating each thread of an article of clothing. After viewing this exquisite collection, it was evident to all why the prefecture had designated Inoue-san an intangible cultural property holder and artist.

Following our dinner with the Japan-America Society of Fukuoka, Secretary General Hiroo Kanahori volunteered to be our ramen tour guide in the bustling downtown area of Tenjin. Given the size of our group, half of us were hosted at a yatai (a small, mobile food stand) and enjoyed street fare in an intimate atmosphere crowded around boiling pots of exceptional ramen. The others trekked to Ichiran, a Hakata ramen shop known not only for the quality of its ramen, but also for the manner in which it is served. Upon entering, you order and pay for your ramen at a vending machine, and can also supplement with extra ingredients or opt for kaedama, extra noodles provided later in the meal so they don’t lose their texture. You are then seated in a booth with side walls and a curtain, through which your ramen is served. It’s designed so you can enjoy the ramen experience without distraction. Both groups found the Hakata ramen rich and flavorful, exuding the essence of the pork bones that was the base for the broth.

On March 10, we visited the Kushida Shinto Shrine. This shrine was founded in the 8th century and is also the center of the Hakata Gion Yamakasa, a July
festival that features a race through the streets where competitors carry a Yamakasa Float, a towering and ornate one-ton float, at full speed. We continued on to the Hakata Traditional Craft Center and the Hakata Machiya Folk Museum, which presented Hakata culture during the Meiji and Taisho periods and craft products such as Hakata-ori, ornate and colorful woven textiles used to make obi sashes, dresses, bags, and other products. Hakata Ningyo Dolls were displayed there as well.

After an especially eventful afternoon filled with presentations and meetings, and a lovely reception hosted by the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League of Fukuoka, it was decided that we would once again enjoy Fukuoka’s culinary treasures with a visit to a traditional yakitori restaurant. There we learned a Fukuoka customary toast known as Hakata Te-Ippon, which involved rhythmic clapping. Kampai!
Delegates returned to Tokyo to meet first with business leaders at corporate giant Mitsubishi. They were honored to be welcomed by Chairman of the Board Yorihiko Kojima and other company leaders, while taking in skyline views of the city high atop the headquarters building.

Mr. Kojima addressed the importance of building people-to-people relations, both in the realm of corporate competition and in the area of corporate social responsibility. Amid ever-changing geopolitical situations, Mitsubishi’s wide-ranging businesses would benefit from the strength of these relationships to meet with continued success. And the company has used its success to serve others in times of need. After the March 11, 2011 disaster, Mitsubishi embraced its core principle around corporate social responsibility and dedicated tremendous human and physical resources to repairing the Sendai region, which continue to this day.

Ryozo Kato, former Ambassador to the United States and now member of the Mitsubishi board, also offered welcoming remarks during the program moderated by Takeo Akiba, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Attending also were other corporate board members and key staff who keep abreast of the rapidly changing geo-politics of the region and world.

After the reception, delegates were invited to tour the Mitsubishi exhibit on the Sendai recovery efforts, which is open to the public. Given that this was the anniversary date of the disaster, many other visitors were touring the exhibit, and all were taken aback by the level of destruction and the incredible spirit of rebirth and collaboration still ongoing in the region.

Delegates join Tokyo residents viewing Mitsubishi’s exhibit on Sendai recovery efforts.
Discussion on international affairs took place in formal and informal settings.

KENKO SONE, DIRECTOR OF the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, First North America Division, hosted the delegation for an afternoon session where the strategic environment in Northeast Asia and the western Pacific set the tone for much of the discussion.

Mr. Sone was forthright in addressing escalating tensions in the western Pacific Ocean among Northeast Asia’s great powers. He and his staff were in the midst of preparation for President Barack Obama’s April 2014 summit with Prime Minister Abe. The delegation was fortunate to hear of some of the key issues that MOFA would raise during the summit.

Mr. Sone highlighted the strength of the alliance as he discussed the publication of Japan’s most recent National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Program Guidelines. He praised continued security cooperation with the United States and noted that the updated strategy document and defense guidelines were timely given increasing military capabilities of other East Asian powers. Although the new guidelines address traditional air, maritime, and ballistic missile threats from those neighbors, Mr. Sone mentioned cyber and space as specific areas of concern for future revisions to security policy.

The NSS introduced the Japanese policy theme of “Proactive Contribution to Peace.” Mr. Sone outlined the foreign policy initiatives that MOFA was spearheading for Japan, most of which represent an increased role for Japan in global affairs. Japan had made positive contributions, for example, to the establishment of rules and guidelines for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and was looking ahead to measures of implementation now that prospective members had adopted most coordinating guidelines.

The TPP isn’t the only initiative in which Japan is demonstrating increased global leadership. Mr. Sone highlighted Japan’s far-reaching strategic interests in the Middle East and Africa and its continued leadership in addressing global climate change. He also mentioned Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s March 7 phone conversation with President Obama to coordinate the G8’s initial response to the Russian invasion of Crimea. The
very fact that the leaders of Japan and the U.S. were coordinating diplomatic measures in the immediate aftermath was a tangible indicator of the vitality of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

In each of these areas, Mr. Sone was confident in the continued strength of the U.S.-Japan relationship. However, he also mentioned recent efforts by Korean-American advocacy groups to rebrand the Sea of Japan as the “East Sea.” He was firm in outlining historical, international recognition of the Sea of Japan as the formal name of the body of water and suggested that increased dialogue between the USJC and other Asian American organizations would be the ideal way to address such issues. The delegation agreed to research ways to engage the broader Asian American community in discussion of such issues.

Mr. Sone noted the vitality of the U.S.-Japan relationship, praising the U.S.-Japan Council for its contributions to strengthening bilateral ties. He specifically recognized the role that past and present members of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation play in expanding those ties.

That evening, Director General Koji Tomita, North American Affairs Bureau, joined Mr. Sone and other MOFA staff in hosting a dinner for delegates. As people switched seats through the evening, the course of conversations ranged from Senkaku and security issues to sports and raising children.

The U.S.-Japan relationship is, indeed, strong. It is arguably the most important bilateral relationship in the world today and will be for decades. The delegation was extremely fortunate to meet with such critical leaders in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Mr. Sone and Mr. Tomita, to hear firsthand about the tremendous potential for even greater cooperation between our two countries, and to gain an understanding of how the JALD can help strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship. 😊
MORE THAN A DOZEN legislators, from both upper and lower houses, took time before a busy morning agenda to participate in the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League meeting at the House of Councillors, the upper house of the National Diet.

In a large roundtable setting, chaired by Hirofumi Nakasone, House of Councillors and son of former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, the legislators were very interested in the topic of how to get more women into leadership positions. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s announced goal is to have 30 percent of leadership positions held by women by 2020. Today, a little more than 9 percent of Japan’s upper and lower houses are women - compared with more than 18 percent in United States and more than 40 percent in Finland and Sweden.

Representative Satsuki Katayama was perhaps the most plainspoken. “Japan is a place nice to weak women, but very challenging to strong women,” she said. She went on to say that things were changing slowly in Japan, and soon there would be more competition between women and not just women trying to help one another get into power.

Delegate Gary Yamashiroya spoke up as a representative of a profession (police and public safety) that is still predominantly male in the United States. Noting that his own mentor was a woman, he said mentorship is key, and gender neutral.

As elected officials, Keiko Orrall and Yoriko Kishimoto spoke of the importance of healthy grassroots and civic society to cultivate a diverse pipeline for emerging leadership. Grass tops can be only as healthy as grass roots. Women also have to promote themselves and create their own networks.

When asked how Prime Minister Abe was viewed in the West, Keith Walters spoke from his experience in the U.S.
Army, saying that the Japan’s restructuring and “normalization” efforts were broadly supported. Carrie Okinaga added that the Prime Minister’s aggressive reform efforts and economic initiatives were admired and respected in general, but the media tended to focus on the more controversial political issues.

Yuriko Koike, who has held Legislature leadership positions for more than 20 years, spoke about Japan’s efforts to improve its comprehensive security. Key to this are Abenomics and a healthy economy, better multilateral relations with the U.S., Korea and China, and Japan doing a better job in telling its story to the world. “We must strengthen Japan-U.S. relationships in the legislative and other fields,” she noted. “We would like to continue to work with Irene Hirano Inouye and the U.S.-Japan Council.”
OPTIMISM WITH A HEALTHY dose of introspection and reality — that was the hallmark of the delegate luncheon with the Keidanren.

Haruo Murase, Co-Chairman of the Committee on U.S. Affairs for the Keidanren and Chairman of Canon Marketing Japan, Inc., served as moderator for the lunch meeting, with Kazuyuki Kinbara, Director of the Keidanren’s International Affairs Bureau, as the gracious host.

Mr. Murase opened the lunch stating that Japan is on its way to full economic recovery, and recognized the policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The first and second “arrows” of the Abenomics program have resulted in rising stock prices and real gross domestic product growth for four consecutive quarters. With respect to the third “arrow,” he spoke of the Keidanren’s role in calling on government and business to bring the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations to a successful conclusion as soon as possible, as well as negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) within Asia and with Australia.* Mr. Murase requested understanding and support for Japan in these efforts, and called for a frank exchange of opinions. He was not to be disappointed.

After Irene Hirano Inouye thanked the Keidanren for its support of the JALD, Derek Okubo introduced the 14th Delegation, relaying how honored and humbled all were to be meeting such a well-respected group of Japanese business leaders.

The Keidanren representatives and members then introduced themselves and described their experiences living abroad, causing Mr. Murase to joke that he could not really tell the difference between the Japanese Americans in the Delegation and the Japanese in the room. Global companies with U.S. operations, including Mitsubishi Corporation, Honda Motor Co., Nomura Holdings, Panasonic Corporation, Toshiba Corporation, and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, were well represented.
And in fact, Mr. Murase’s three children live abroad, two in the United States. The Keidanren members represent globalization of Japanese business, but also personally understand that we all live in a very flat world.

Delegates who had never been to Japan (Brad Miyake, Gary Yamashiroya, Keiko Orrall, and Leona Hiraoka) were asked for their first impressions, and the delegates gave positive — and accurate — replies. The lively discussion that ensued included a Keidanren member stating that while it was good to hear of the favorable reactions, “chaos is not comfortable,” and part of the current Japanese economic malaise stems from people being too comfortable. The frankness of that discussion demonstrated Keidanren members’ trust, having the Delegation see honest dialogue ongoing at the highest levels in Japan about the difficult changes that have been and need to be occurring.

The Keidanren leadership’s introspective responses continued during discussions regarding the organization itself, including efforts being made to reach out to smaller and emerging companies, and the role the Keidanren plays in guiding government policies. The makeup of the Keidanren representatives at the lunch alone demonstrated their consciousness of the importance of having a critical mass of women “at the table.” In addition, Managing Director Nobuko Sanui reported that the organization established a working committee last year tasked with identifying ways for women to “shine” in the business community. Acknowledging the positive effects of the Abe Administration’s Womenomics policies, anecdotal evidence was also shared about the limited pipeline of qualified women at the executive level in member companies.

Delegates hone their meishi skills.

Honest dialogue about the difficulties facing Japan as a society and the business community therein, and a willingness of Keidanren members to face these issues head-on, marked a high point for delegates in understanding how the country may tackle the challenges to future growth in the oncoming decades.

* Editor’s note: Within a month of this luncheon, but after seven years of negotiations, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Tony Abbott of Australia would reach agreement on a landmark bilateral FTA.
ROYAL TEA
MARCH 12, TEA WITH HER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS TAKAMADO

ON THIS BEAUTIFUL SPRING morning, the Delegation was privileged to be granted an audience with Her Imperial Highness The Princess Takamado. At her residence, over tea, she entranced all those present with her warmth and charisma.

The Princess brings a cosmopolitan background to her current work with charitable organizations involving education, sports, and cultural exchanges, some of which were inspired by her late husband, Prince Takamado, who was the first cousin of Emperor Akihito. She discussed the issues surrounding that work and, as a mother of three daughters, also engaged in conversation around parenting and gender equity.

The Princess enjoys a tremendous popularity with the Japanese public, so delegates asked about the demands of celebrity. She explained that Japanese expect a more modest approach to publicity and exposure from the royal family, and she strives to meet those expectations.

Princess Takamado has been a friend of the JALD for several years, and the delegates came away grateful to have received cultural insights from a gracious and continual supporter.
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM REFORM and women’s issues dominated roundtable discussions with Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives), chaired by Ken Shibusawa, CEO of Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) and Vice Chair for the Commission on Americas-Japan Relations.

As overcentralization of power and people in Tokyo causes depopulation of towns and rural areas outside of Tokyo, the smaller towns are increasingly burdened with an aging population, overdependence on central government for subsidies, and lack of economic vitality. Tokyo, on the other hand, suffers from high costs, poor housing, and lack of affordable services such as childcare. Together, this is leading to declining population as young people find it difficult to marry, raise families, and earn enough to pay for housing and services. The central government is being asked to lay out huge subsidies for deficits in regional towns and cities — an unsustainable fiscal situation. Abenomics seeks to decentralize the government, and create growth in cities other than Tokyo.

Gary Yamashiroya pointed to the competitive grant system in the U.S., where the federal government sends money to state and local governments. Keizai Doyukai members noted that in Japan there is no project-based subsidy system, only a budget subsidy system.

Yoriko Kishimoto raised the urban village concept for the shrinking Japanese population. Carrie Okinaga discussed community development block grants, and Brad Miyake noted that governments frequently turn to non-profits to deliver services more efficiently. Toko Serita, who coordinated the background planning for the discussion, pointed out that the U.S. has a strong history of social welfare services, and that as young people become disenchanted with cities, it is possible they will return to rural areas even without incentives.

When asked how Japanese Americans differ from “overseas Chinese,” Irene Hirano Inouye noted that migration of Japanese after World War II was fairly small compared with the Chinese, and that the biggest difference is the World War II experience. After the war, sansei were taught to be ultra-American. Most third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans are separated from Japan and see themselves as “Americans,” not “overseas Japanese.” That is a major reason the JALD is critical in helping reconnect Japanese Americans to Japan.

When it comes to making progress on women in the workforce, Yukako Uchinaga said Keizai Doyukai asks members to develop plans and include policies on advancing women in their companies. Although there has been general improvement, including improved access to day care, a big gap remains to reach the 2020 of having 30 percent of leadership positions held by women.
DUSK WAS SETTING IN as our bus wound its way through security to the Kantei, the official office and residence of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. As we pulled up to the front, we were informed that the media were inside and lined up against the wall in the lobby. We were to keep moving as we entered (“no posing”), turn left past the media, and then right down the grand staircase and into the meeting room.

Sure enough, as we entered 20-30 media studied us as we walked briskly past them single-file to the staircase. They followed us down the stairs into the grand meeting room and lined up to our left behind a red rope as we settled in on one side of the long table. The Prime Minister and his key staff were to sit on the other side. Seiko Watanabe from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reviewed the protocol with us, covering every detail of the meeting from start to finish.

The Prime Minister’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato and Deputy Cabinet Secretary Hiroshige Seko entered first and sat down across from us. They engaged us in conversation about our trip and where we were from in the United States. Their friendly and engaging nature put us all at ease.

When Prime Minister Abe entered, the room filled with multiple flashes and whirring clicks from the cameras. He sat

‘I AM COUNTING ON YOUR CONTINUED COOPERATION’

MARCH 12, MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE
—By Derek Okubo
and welcomed us warmly, saying, “I would like to renew my appreciation for the Japanese American Leadership Delegation. For Japanese Americans, JALD provides a better understanding of Japan. I am counting on your continued cooperation to build bridges across our two nations in the future. I also would like to express my sincere appreciation for the late Senator Daniel K. Inouye’s great contributions to the strengthening of Japan-U.S. relations.”

After his welcome, Irene Hirano Inouye thanked the Prime Minister for meeting with this year’s delegation. She introduced Brad Miyake and Carrie Okinaga, who provided the background of the delegation and updated the Prime Minister on our trip thus far. After a few minutes, the press was ushered out of the room just as Carrie was noting that the majority of the 2014 delegation was women. Upon hearing this, Prime Minister Abe, in half embarrassment, noted that on his side of the table there were no women, but that he looked forward to that changing in the future. The topic of women playing a larger role in the workplace and politics was a major theme of the conversation that followed.

“If we do not utilize women in the workplace in Japan, then we will not be able to revitalize the Japanese economy,” he said. He noted that in the year since his administration took office, he has appointed two women to his Cabinet.* By the 2020 Olympics, he would like to see 30 percent of the Cabinet filled by women.

Other topics in the meeting included his appreciation for all the support from the U.S. after the 3/11 tragedy, and President Obama’s visit in April. The Prime Minister also called out delegates Gary Yamashiroya and Leona Hiraoka because their family origins are from Yamaguchi, as are his own. Pictures with the Prime Minister and Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato came next and were followed by a personal thank you to each of the delegates. As delegates, we left the Kantei in a state of wonderment. How often does a person get to actually meet the Prime Minister of Japan?

* Editor’s note: In September 2014, Prime Minister Abe added five women to his Cabinet.
THE BEST WAY TO SHARE DIFFERING VIEWS

MARCH 12, PARLIAMENTARIANS DINNER

THE HONORABLE TARO KONO and other members of the Japanese Diet maintained a heralded tradition for the JALD delegation, hosting an informal dinner with Diet members from multiple parties for a free-flow of conversation, followed by an evening of karaoke that demonstrated that friendships can form across aisles.

Kono, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party serving in the House of Representatives, has hosted the JALD delegation since the program began in 2000. He and his father, the Honorable Yohei Kono, former Speaker of the House, continue to show their commitment to deep and lasting friendships with the U.S. and the USJC.

Diet members of several political parties joined this year’s delegation for a delicious family-style Chinese dinner. Mr. Kono organized members of the upper and lower houses of the Diet to join in, including: the Honorable Jun Matsumoto, Hon. Kiyoshi Odawara, Hon. Keisue Suzuki, Hon. Hedehiro Mitani, Hon. Kono Minshuto, Hon. Shinichi Isa, Hon. Kaname Tajima, Hon. Kuniko Inoguchi, Hon. Kazuya Marayuma, and the Hon. Masako Muri. There were members of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, Your Party, and the Komeito Party. Instant friendships were made as delegates found common topics of interest with their dinner companions. The conversations introduced delegates to varied opinions on Abenomics and other current affairs, from American politics to security issues to the future of nuclear power.

The participation of women in all areas of society was a recurring topic. The delegation urged the parliamentarians to continue to participate in leadership exchanges by continuing to broaden travels. Many had visited Washington, DC, and invitations were extended to visit other delegates’ major cities and hometowns — Bellevue, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, Palo Alto, and Honolulu.

After dinner, the delegation was treated to a JALD tradition of “Karaoke with Kono-san.” Renowned in Japanese-American circles for his uninhibited rendition of the Beatles favorite “Hey Jude,” Kono-san helped the delegates feel at home. Diet members and delegates alike belted out favorite tunes in Japanese and English, and laughter reigned as people enjoyed each other’s company and differences of political opinion were set aside. By the end of the evening, everyone was reminded of a shared humanity and the need for more kindness and respect in politics.

Following this memorable night, Delegate Keiko Orrall opined on the need for a “Karaoke Summit,” and more social interaction to bring world leaders and sparring political parties to common ground.
Participants convene in Meiji Memorial Hall.

**IN THE HISTORIC SETTING** of the Meiji Memorial Hall, surrounded by beautiful gardens, the JALD Delegation learned more about the efforts of the Japan Foundation and the Center for Global Partnership (CGP). The CGP’s Takeishi Yoshida introduced Japan Foundation and CGP members and honored guests Dr. Katsuichi Uchida, Keiko Chino, and Harry Hill.

Eiji Taguchi, Executive Vice President of the Japan Foundation, fresh off a flight from Russia, offered remarks and commended the delegation for the successful seminar and effort in Fukuoka. Irene Hirano Inouye offered a toast and thanks to the Japan Foundation and the CGP for all of their work in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations.

The three guest speakers then provided perspectives from academia, media, and business. Dr. Uchida, Vice President and law professor at Waseda University, explained the mission of the U.S.-Japan Research Institute. His focus for years has been on improving Japan’s presence in the U.S. and internationally. With the changing nature of the international community, it is important for businesses and universities to collaborate and form an intellectual community that influences the decision-making of the top leaders in the U.S. and Japan.

Keiko Chino, contributing editor for Sankei Shimbun, talked about her pleasant memories of life in Davis, California, and as a journalist in New York. She reminded the audience of the story of the Wakamatsu Silk Farm Colony in California; Okei, the first Japanese woman to be buried in America; and the beginning of Japanese Americans in the U.S. Noting the interest in karaoke in the Pan Asian community, she seconded delegate Keiko Orrall’s idea for a “Karaoke Summit” to encourage more humanity in politics.

Harry Hill, Chair of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission, explained his efforts with Shop Japan as well as his role as Co-Chair of the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON). This advisory panel serves to elevate and strengthen the cultural and educational foundations of the U.S.-Japan relationship and works to improve connections between leadership in those fields. It takes the best of new ideas for cultural, educational, and intellectual activity and emphasizes the benefits of sustained friendship through people-to-people relationships. He noted the need for more Japanese students to participate in study abroad, and the need for global and Pan Asian participation in moving forward for future business leaders of Japan.
TRADING INSIGHTS WITH FORUM 21
MARCH 13, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

When Shoichi Umezu founded Forum 21 in 1987, he sought to repay society for the great success he had gained by creating this leadership development program for government and business executive candidates. His vision included developing diverse networks of people from around the world, and making research-based proposals and recommendations on national policies and issues.

At age 90, Mr. Umezu continues to lead FORUM 21 robustly into its 17th year. That included leading the discussion between the JALD delegates and the 40 members from this year’s leadership class, along with senior business and government leaders and guests in attendance.

Mr. Umezu opened up the meeting recognizing Irene Hirano Inouye for her continued support and leadership, and welcoming the delegates. He expressed the increasing importance of strengthening the Japan-U.S. ties given the strained relationships with China and Korea, and given the internal problems Japan currently faces: a rising deficit; aging society; national disasters; and a faltering economy.

Then, with the delegates seated in a panel at the front of the auditorium, a lively discussion ensued around three major topics of discussion, which were decided in advance of the event:

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Every delegate and many FORUM 21 members, especially women, participated during this segment. Much of the discussion focused on the status of women in the workplace both in Japan and the United States. JALD members discussed their experience with developing policies and practices that supported women advancing in the workplace, including mentoring, flexible working conditions such as telecommunicating, and affordable daycare.

FORUM 21 members discussed the current status and challenges Japan faces with women in management roles as well as corresponding strategies. Key issues included the need for greater access to affordable daycare; the corporate culture of men working late and the impact on women who must maintain normal business hours due to family obligations; and the low number of women in management positions.
ABENOMICS AND JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS

When delegates asked about the strategies and effectiveness of Abenomics and how to improve Japan-U.S. relations, FORUM 21 members discussed overall strategies that included greater U.S. investment in Japan; opening up of the agriculture sector via the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); greater innovation; joint leadership in protection of the environment; continued U.S. military protection of Japan; and more foreign workers. On Abenomics, the FORUM 21 leaders noted that although there is broad international support for the economic policy, a more aggressive campaign and cohesive message explaining Japan’s position on policy and social issues would be helpful in garnering greater support in the U.S.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS

There were a large number of local government members representing JALD and FORUM 21. There was general consensus that robust “Sister Cities” programs, the Japan English Teaching (JET) program, staff exchanges, tourism, and ongoing dialogues between local governments and the Japan Consulates in the U.S. contribute tremendously to U.S.-Japan relations.

JALD delegate Yoriko Kishimoto coordinated this session with Mitsuru Iida of Dai Nippon Printing, Katsushige Kojima of NTT, and Hisanori Hayashi of Fuji Xerox.

Seiko Watanabe and Makoto Hayashi with of Ministry of Foreign Affairs moderated the discussion effectively, giving the delegates a robust opportunity to interact with a broad range of younger executives and as well as senior business and government leaders such as Shinya Higuchi, Executive Vice President of Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal; Yuji Fukasawa, EVP of East Japan Railway Company; Toshiyuki Ito, Vice Admiral, Joint Maritime Self-Defense Force; and Atsuko Muraki, Vice Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Following the formal meeting, delegates were honored to have time to spend in informal conversation with Mr. Umezu and other FORUM 21 attendees, with the hopes for both parties to make the day’s meeting the start of ongoing conversations.
AS THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF the MOFA Asian-Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Junichi Ihara leads the organization that formulates and implements Japanese policy in Asia and Oceania, a particularly important position given the current state of affairs among the great powers of the region. Nonetheless, he and his senior staff were gracious with their time and candid in their discussions of the key issues facing Japan and its neighbors in Asia and the western Pacific.

Director-General Ihara welcomed the delegation by highlighting the current security environment facing Japan. He spoke enthusiastically of his tenure as the Consul General in Los Angeles (2008-10). He and the delegation share a love for baseball, and although the discussion of Japanese ballplayers in the Major Leagues could have gone on for hours, Mr. Ihara and his staff turned to more substantive issues facing his directorate of the MOFA.

Discussions on the relationship between Japan and other East Asian states noted recent tensions in the East China Sea, specifically the Senkaku Islands. Mr. Ihara also discussed the Japanese perspective of the current debate in the U.S. regarding the formal name of the Sea of Japan. The delegation noted that this initiative in the United States appeared to be a proxy debate of the growing tensions between Japan and South Korea. In the course of discussions of Japan-Korea relations, the Director-General answered a question from the delegation regarding the Japanese position on the Kono Statement regarding “comfort women” in World War II. He was sensitive to the role that perceptions of this specific historical issue plays in Japan’s ability to manage its current relationships with both Koreas and China. He stressed the need for all parties to look at the all aspects of the issue, to take a measured look at history, and consider the social and political contexts of the era, but ultimately noted that the issue was a serious obstacle to current Japanese relations with East Asia. Mr. Ihara noted how important resolution of such historical debates is to the future of great power relations in Asia.

Amid the setting of an incredible traditional Japanese dinner, the candid conversation among Director-General Ihara, his staff, and the delegation made this yet another memorable night with enduring lessons for every member of the JALD.
Making a Statement
March 14, Meeting with Yohei Kono

The delegation was honored to be invited to a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Yohei Kono, the influential Liberal Democratic Party leader and a former Speaker of the House and Cabinet Secretary.

During the meeting with this renowned statesman, Mr. Kono discussed a range of issues, including the recent economic changes taking place under Abenomics, the 2020 Olympics and its possible impact on reconstruction in the Tohoku region, security issues of concern to Japan, as well as the challenges facing the Abe administration in its diplomatic relations with China and the Republic of South Korea.

Ironically, Mr. Kono’s name was in the international news during the delegation trip because of the Abe administration’s decision to review what has become known as the “Kono Statement.” This document is the most comprehensive apology, issued by then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono in 1993, for Japan’s role in forcing thousands of mostly Korean “comfort women” to work as prostitutes in military brothels during WWII. The statement acknowledged that the Japanese military was “directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management” of these brothels, which caused these women “immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds.” The Abe administration’s controversial decision to revisit the Kono Statement and its underpinnings created international controversy and angered many in Japan and abroad. The government thereafter reversed its position while the delegation was still in Japan, though Mr. Kono himself declined to speak publicly about this controversy during our meeting with him.

Mr. Kono has met with each of the previous 13 JALD delegations, and this continued graciousness was greatly appreciated.
THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

MARCH 14, U.S. EMBASSY BRIEFING

THE DELEGATION ARRIVED AT the U.S. Embassy for a meeting that kicked off with Embassy staff presenting a summary of current issues facing Japan and the U.S. position on each matter. Delegate Keith Walters then laid the groundwork for discussions from the delegation’s perspective.

Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs Mark Davidson stressed that the bilateral U.S.-Japan relationship is a priority. First Secretary Political Section Gary Schaefer reviewed the volatile history of Japanese politics since 2009 and projected to the 2015 LDP elections and the 2016 general election, where there is hope for stability.

Economic Counselor Frank Stanley then spoke of Abenomics, joint international assistance programs with Japan, energy, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. He pointed out that all matters overlap with Abenomics relying on the TPP as a major component for Japan’s economic well-being.

FBI Legal Attaché Shelagh Sayers then discussed the challenges facing the Japanese criminal justice system and the efforts by the U.S. Embassy to provide guidance.

Education and Exchanges Officer Sara Harriger reviewed the programs administered by the U.S. State Department including the Fulbright program, professional exchanges, bilateral student exchanges, and Education USA, which is a network of hundreds of advising centers around the world providing international students with information about how to apply to universities and colleges in the U.S.

Deputy Chief of Mission Kurt Tong later joined the group for a frank discussion on problematic issues such as the Sea of Japan/East Sea; the topic of comfort women, which was prevalent in the media during the delegation visit; and trade imbalances.

As delegates signed the Embassy guest book, they found the names of the 2013 delegation. They hope future delegates — and all visitors — will have a chance to see the 2014 names, their stamp as they move forward on the U.S.-Japan work.
BRIDGE BUILDERS IN ACTION

MARCH 14, LUNCH WITH JAPANESE AMERICAN BUSINESS LEADERS

THE DELEGATION WAS HONORED to have the opportunity to meet with Japanese American business leaders who have succeeded in bridging cultures. Their message: Notwithstanding language and cultural differences and limitations, Japanese Americans could be just as successful in Japan as they have been in the United States.

Paul Yonemine is General Manager and EVP of IBM Japan, Ltd., is a member of the Keizai Doyukai and the World Presidents’ Organization, and serves on the Board of Directors of the U.S.-Japan Council. Born and raised in Japan to Japanese American parents originally from Hawaii, he is fluent in both Japanese and English. Upon returning to Tokyo in 1999 after attending college and starting his career in the U.S., Paul held an initial fear that his Japanese language skills were inadequate. But he then realized that his language limitations aside, there were many things he had to share with the Japanese that they wanted to learn about, such as Y2K preparedness, corporate governance principles, and qualified retirement plans. He soon found acceptance and built a 3,000-person consulting firm.

Bill Ireton is the President and Representative Director of Warner Entertainment Japan, Inc. Bill was born in Japan to a New Yorker and his Japanese wife. He spoke of being between cultures, especially because his wife was from the Philippines, and his five children who had grown up in Japan felt “Japanese.” He offered insider observations on the entertainment business in Asia – how and why, for example, the market for music CDs had actually grown in Japan last year.

Eriko Talley, head of Human Resources for Amazon Japan, was raised in Tokyo to a Japanese mother and American father. She attended international schools in Tokyo, and attended college and started her career in the U.S. She moved back to Japan to care for family, with limited language skills. Quickly she realized that there was high demand for bicultural, bilingual people, and notes that after figuring out how to navigate various bureaucracies, there are lots of opportunities for Japanese Americans. Amazon Japan is very “American” in that they provide full flex time, and have instilled a pay-for-performance culture. When asked about women in the workplace, Eriko explained that only 8 percent of women speak business English, and applicant pools funnel down to a very few in number, with many companies are competing for the same employees.

Ernie Higa is Chairman and CEO of Higa Industries Co., Ltd., Wendy’s Japan LLC, among others, and is the quintessential entrepreneur. He earned his B.S. Degree from the Wharton School of Business, and his M.B.A. from Columbia University. Upon returning to Japan in 1976, he found that the best students worked for government, the next brightest worked for the big companies like Mitsubishi, and the “rest” became small business owners and entrepreneurs. He then added that now perhaps one upside to government and big company cutbacks is that more people are becoming entrepreneurial. A member of Keizai Doyukai, he said that CEOs of companies are more optimistic because of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s policies. He believes that the strengths of Japan include great human capital, and solid companies flush with cash, but the main challenge is globalization.

Each speaker raised the role Japanese Americans can play in serving as a bridge between Japan and the United States. In general, all four seemed very optimistic about the direction in which Japan is moving, and the opportunities for success for Japanese Americans in Japanese business. The delegation very much appreciated their invaluable insight and unique, uplifting perspectives.
THE EVER-SO-SMooth RIDE FROM Tokyo to Yokohama on the shinkansen (bullet train) was a mere 18 minutes, and delegates were impressed by the considerateness of the passengers and the speed and precision of embarkation and disembarkation. But in the end, the ever-vigilant guide Eiko Sato was the reason no one was left behind!

Eiko also was the fount of so much background information that shaped the delegates’ experience throughout. Here, she conveyed that the Japan Overseas Migration Museum is dedicated to Japanese who migrated overseas, and is intended to educate Japanese about the lives the migrants encountered overseas, and what they have accomplished in their respective countries in the last century. It was created in consultation with, among others, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California.

Delegates were honored to meet the Director General of the Museum, Makoto Kitanaka, and his staff, who introduced exhibits featuring the experiences of Japanese who migrated to Central and South America, as well as North America and Hawaii. Of course, the exhibits that especially held the attention of Delegation members were the “Vegetable Float” made for the Rose Festival in Portland Oregon (home of Eliza Dozono), the Hawaii plantation exhibit (where several Delegation members live and/or have family), and the 3-D map that showed the total number of overseas Japanese migrants from each prefecture in Japan.

The Museum, working with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, tells a very important story in terms of understanding Japanese of different nationalities. Some of that becomes clear through the numbers the Museum presents: Over a century has passed since the Japanese first emigrated overseas, and the number of emigrants and descendants exceed 2.5 million. In addition, “Over the past decade, approximately 300,000 of these descendants and their families have come to Japan to work or to study.”

Last year, 30,000 Japanese students visited the Museum. Upon departing, delegates left omiyage and some donations – and noticed dollar bills already in the donation box. Clearly, they were not the first nor will they be the last Americans through the Museum.
For a special tour of the famed Tsukiji Fish Market, delegates rallied at 4:30 a.m. The tuna auction and a behind-the-scenes glimpse at vast buildings filled with fresh catches made the pre-dawn call time more than worthwhile.
OUR REFLECTIONS

THE MEMBERS OF THE 2014 JAPANESE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DELEGATION (JALD), PICTURED HERE AT THEIR JANUARY ORIENTATION IN LOS ANGELES, OFFER THESE PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THEIR MARCH TRIP TO FUKUOKA AND TOKYO.
ELISA DOZONO
Portland, Oregon

Elisa Dozono is a Partner at Miller Nash LLP, where she specializes in business litigation and government law. She is the Chair of the Oregon State Lottery Commission, member of the Metro Exposition Recreation Commission and a member of the Governor’s Judicial Screening Committee. She has over 11 years’ experience in communications management and government relations, including as corporate media manager for the Port of Portland, communications director for former Portland Mayor Vera Katz, and media relations director for Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber’s transition. In 1996, she led the Clinton/Gore campaign in Oklahoma. She has also worked as a news producer for Portland’s KATU television. Before joining Miller Nash, she externed for Judge Ann Aiken of the U.S. District Court of Oregon. Ms. Dozono holds a B.S. in journalism from Boston University and a J.D. from Lewis & Clark Law School (formerly Northwestern School of Law).

As my first political boss, Governor John Kitzhaber, proved in Oregon, political comebacks can come with renewed energy, inspiration, and clarity. So too apparently does Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s second administration, whose Abenomics focus appears to have brought renewed optimism about the country’s future.

As an outspoken, independent American feminist, I never had much interest in living or working in Japan because I thought the culture was too patronizing toward women. I cast a skeptical eye at the idea of a Minister on Empowerment of Women and Childrearing, assuming that it proved that the Japanese patriarchy still expected women to do it all.

So I honestly didn’t expect that much more than lip service would be paid to women’s issues at meetings with tradition business leader groups such as Keidanren, or with government leaders. But I was pleasantly surprised, and gained a better understanding of the real challenges that a country that has always relied on stay-at-home moms faces in transitioning to a dual-income “equal” family culture.

Whether it was learning more about Prime Minister Abe’s efforts on “womenomics” or the fact that the JALD delegation for the first time comprised a majority of women, I was inspired by what I experienced. A number of women leaders attended several key meetings, including about 10 women legislators who joined us at the Diet for a roundtable, acknowledging that a culture shift needed to occur to fully allow “womenomics” to succeed.
Although there is no shortage of talent, with women continuing to score higher than men on education exams, and the Prime Minister is openly encouraging promotion of women into senior leadership positions, Japan faces challenges around womenomics, including a dearth of childcare options. But the need for women in career positions is clear to me. I couldn’t help but wonder whether a woman’s perspective might have helped avoid the controversies that erupted over the “reinvestigation” of the basis for former Minister of Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono’s apology to “comfort women,” who were essentially forced into sex slavery during Japan’s military rise.

Another key takeaway was that for the Japanese, there appears to be some truth in the saying that we are our own worst enemies. With humility in our nature, Japanese prefer to be recognized for our skills and accomplishments without boasting. But, our delegation noted, that may have resulted in Japan being overshadowed by its bolder Asian neighbors. For instance, rather than expressing indignation at the U.S. failure to quash efforts by Asian neighbors to gain control over the Senkaku Islands or rename the Sea of Japan, would it be more effective to remind the U.S. not only of the history of the region, but of Japan’s importance as a true economic partner?

In the U.S., it has taken three or four generations of Japanese Americans to finally come out of our shells. The fact that Japan is focused on bold moves, however, may mean that the sun is finally rising there again. With renewed optimism and faith in my ancestral homeland, I look forward to watching what happens in this new dawn.

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LEONA HIRAOKA
Washington, DC

Leona Hiraoka is a senior communications executive, enterprise-level strategist, and media entrepreneur, with an extensive background with NGOs and associations. She is the Vice President for Communications at Points of Light, the world’s largest organization dedicated to volunteerism, founded in 1990 as a nonpartisan nonprofit to encourage and empower the spirit of service. Ms. Hiraoka’s role is to direct the communications and public relations strategies, building greater engagement around volunteer service and corporate partnership. From 2002–12, she served on the executive staff of the National Education Association, heading the media division. Ms. Hiraoka is also currently CEO of Integrated Media, a communications and marketing firm based in Washington, DC. Ms. Hiraoka is Vice President of the Washington, DC chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and a member of the Asian American Journalists Association. She holds a B.A. in Biology from Pomona College.

The beauty and grace, the industry and artistry, and the politics and business of Japan wove tightly together in our March Delegation trip.

How to tell Japan’s story — that’s one discussion I was drawn into frequently, including with Shoichi Umezu at FORUM 21, as we worked our way through a packed itinerary. There are great stories to be told, and I was struck by how many I found on this trip that would resonate with American audiences. To be effective, however, I believe Japan would benefit from moving away from the fact-sheet based approach to communications, and more toward the art of persuasion. American media translate stories through a filter of emotional content, and understanding that approach is key to bonding with U.S. audiences.

The topic of career advancement for Japanese women was covered at almost every meeting, and these weren’t idle conversations. Right now, the numbers in Japan are stark. On the Global Gender Gap Index, Japan ranked 105th out of 136 countries in 2013 (the U.S. ranked 23rd). In Japan, only 12 percent of the management ranks are women, as opposed to 43 percent in the U.S. Both countries would benefit from improving their numbers. And a key to that is not making women choose between having a career and having children.

I’ve come away from our trip encouraged by the young people seeking to effect change through everything from travel abroad to social media; by the wizened, legendary business leaders who are advancing the calls for changes in the workplace; and of course by the women themselves whom we met, from Her Imperial Highness...
Princess Takamado to Diet members to businesswomen from Amazon, IBM, and Shiseido.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was gracious in his remarks — while reinforcing his commitment to building stronger U.S.-Japan ties, he also managed to note that he, Gary, and I shared ancestry from Yamaguchi prefecture! I also had the opportunity to talk to legislators in Fukuoka about that prefecture’s innovative environmental program; Diet members on everything from prison reform to the peace movement; and a young man who was building a volunteer network of fellow medical students who could help in times of crisis.

Business cards — we each exchanged hundreds of them. Sleep — we didn’t get very much! In addition to business meetings, our team visited the Dazaifu Tenmangu shrine in Fukuoka, the workshop of the Hakata doll master artisan (where apprenticeships last five years), the Tsukiji Fish Market well before sunrise and ramen stands well past sunset. We grew close as we ate strawberry mochi on the run, grabbed countless cups of coffee, and learned the value of selecting karaoke songs wisely.

My older daughter, who has already been to Japan three times, is planning her future around studying and working there. Two days into our delegation trip, as I saw what she’s seen, I texted her, “I get it!” I have to say that in Fukuoka, when delegates had the opportunity to say a brief prayer at a temple, my hope was that she successfully pursue her love of Japan — and then come home to me.

It has been a continuing honor to connect with the Japanese officials, business leaders, artisans, and people from all sectors of society, and to be part of such a strong delegation. My thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S.-Japan Council for this opportunity, and I look forward to continued partnership moving forward.
YORIKO KISHIMOTO
Palo Alto, California

Yoriko Kishimoto is a political leader, international business consultant, and author. She has worked with technology executives across the Pacific negotiating partnerships and technology transfers. Prior to joining the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District as a Director, she was a member of the Palo Alto City Council, where she promoted walkable communities, open government, high environmental standards and fiscal responsibility. She became Mayor in 2007 with a call to action to “build a green economy through innovation.” In addition to her work in the City of Palo Alto, Ms. Kishimoto also served on the boards of Hidden Villa, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Valley Transportation Authority. She holds a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Wesleyan University and an MBA from Stanford University.

Twenty-five years ago, as a young U.S.-Japan business consultant and new mother, I co-authored the book *The Third Century: America’s Resurgence in the Asian Era*. America was facing a crisis of confidence as it faced a seemingly unstoppable surge of competition from Japan in key strategic industries such as semiconductors and automobiles. We predicted that United States, despite — or rather because of — its “messy” democracy and open economic and social systems, would prevail over countries that were not willing to trust the power of diversity and competition in their politics and economies. Indeed, it has thrived as an ethnically diverse, entrepreneurial economy and society.

Today, Japan is finally beginning to climb out of two lost decades of stagnation and deflation. Most tragically, this has been a tremendous loss of underutilized human potential for an economy that is unusually dependent on imports for energy, food, and raw materials and equally dependent on how well it motivates and organizes its people.

This visit with the Japanese American Leadership Delegation was, for me, an outstanding opportunity to reconnect with Japan at the policy level for the first time since I ran for public office and became Mayor of Palo Alto, with the call to action to “build a green economy through innovation.”

The biggest takeaway for me, from our meetings with top business and political leaders, is a ringing confirmation that Japan indeed is at an exciting but perilous turning point. It faces formidable demographic, economic, fiscal, geopolitical, and social challenges. It is burdened by the triple Fukushima disaster of March 11, 2011, from...
Japan has so much know-how and technology to contribute to the world in the energy, transportation, and other critical infrastructure challenges. It would be wonderful to see Japan take stronger policy leadership in "building a green economy through innovation" worldwide.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has created an ambitious agenda for change, ranging from empowering women to introducing real competition and restructuring in more industries, including the beleaguered energy industry and even the sacred agricultural sector. With Princess Takamado’s support in securing the Olympics bid for 2020, all of Japan is excited to host the games in Tokyo. This gives Japan a clear target year by which it needs to re-invent itself and showcase its clear values to the world.

As ten Japanese American leaders visiting Japan, we represented ten successful versions of “wa-yo sechuu,” or East-West fusion. We represent the American open system but retain our pride in our Japanese ancestry and Japanese-American culture.

I ended my trip with a renewed wish to help Japan to succeed in finding its “place in the sun,” and for the U.S.-Japan relationship to serve as a bedrock for a stable Asian economy and democracy and world peace. 🌏
BRAD MIYAKE
Bellevue, Washington

*Brad Miyake is the City Manager of the City of Bellevue. He had previously served as Deputy City Manager from 2006-2013. Mr. Miyake has played key roles in developing the city’s budget process, obtaining the Utilities Department’s first professional accreditation and spearheading efforts to improve city management processes. He oversees a biennial budget of approximately $1.3 billion, over 1,200 positions, and all City operations including Police, Fire, Public Works, Economic Development, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Transportation and Utilities. Mr. Miyake holds a B.A. in Business Administration from the University of Washington.*

**THE 2014 JAPANESE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DELEGATION** trip was truly a journey and milestone in my life. This was my first visit to Japan, and it was remarkable! I was honored and humbled to have been selected for the 2014 JALD. My fellow delegates are from different areas of the United States with impressive backgrounds in government, non-profit, and private industry. At the orientation in Los Angeles, where we met for the first time, it became clear that we all got along well together. The trip to Japan would strengthen these relations even more so.

Japan was a place like no other I had visited, yet I felt a sense of belonging. Starting at the airport and throughout the remainder of the trip, there was a sense of familiarity — the people, food, and customs. Upon arriving, I was impressed on how clean Japan is. There was no trash on either the streets or sidewalks. This was especially surprising given the country’s dense population. I was also surprised to see how efficient and how precisely operated the various transportation systems were. I soon came to understand why the cardinal rule of the JALD trip was: BE ON TIME! I remember not only how quickly you had to board the Shinkansen, but also how quickly you had to exit…kind of like organized chaos!

While in Fukuoka, I presented at a CGP seminar at the American Center of Fukuoka, on Japanese Americans in Government. I had an opportunity to share my family history, leadership experiences in government and economic development opportunities in Bellevue, Washington. Another highlight was accompanying Hiroo Kanehori, from the Japan America Society, who guided us through downtown Fukuoka so we could experience eating tonkotsu ramen, a specialty. This was preceded by a delicious dinner hosted by the Japan America Society, which featured stimulating conversation — and what I remember most vividly was eating the live fish served as part of the meal. There were many dares going around the table, and I estimate only half the dinner guests stepped up to the challenge!
The JALD meeting schedule was extremely busy while in Tokyo. Memorable was meeting and/or sharing a meal with business leaders at the Keidanren, Mitsubishi Corporation, Keizai Doyukai, the FORUM 21 leaders and class, as well as parliamentary members, and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was impressed with how each leader was dedicated to improving the U.S.-Japan relationship to further the well-being of Japan.

Highlights while in Tokyo included meeting with Japan’s royalty, Princess Takamado and Prime Minister Abe. Princess Takamado was the consummate hostess and made us all feel at ease. Her English was impeccable as well! I was also impressed with the Prime Minister’s commitment to promoting women in the workforce (Womenomics) and improving relationships with the United States.

While in Fukuoka and Tokyo, I was pleasantly surprised to meet a number of people who attended the same college I did, the University of Washington — Go Dawgs! I was also surprised at how interested both the Japanese business and government officials were in the JALD impressions and perspectives about Japan.

Equally memorable to me were the experiences shared with the delegation members. Getting to know one another, sharing our stories, karaoke, bantering with one another (especially Carrie and Derek), and encouraging and supporting each other brought us closer together, which in the end, I speculate, will result in life-long relationships.

A big debt of gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sponsoring this trip and to the Consulate Generals of Japan for selecting me to represent the Japanese Americans as part of the 2014 delegation. In the end, I am more committed to improving the relationship between Japan and the United States — especially in Bellevue, Washington. A big thank you to Irene Hirano Inouye and the rest of the USJC board and staff for supporting this incredible program. Arigato Gozaimasu!
CARRIE OKINAGA
Honolulu, Hawaii

Carrie Okinaga is General Counsel and Corporate Secretary for First Hawaiian Bank, the oldest and largest financial institution in Hawaii. She is a member of senior management and oversees legal matters as well as corporate secretary functions of the bank and its subsidiaries. As the Corporation Counsel of the City and County of Honolulu from 2005-2011, Ms. Okinaga served as the chief legal counsel and officer through three different mayoral administrations, overseeing a department of over 80 people and a budget in excess of $9 million. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART), Honolulu’s semi-autonomous governmental entity responsible for the planning, operation, maintenance and expansion of Honolulu’s first elevated fixed guideway mass transit system. Ms. Okinaga earned a B.A. in Government/Public Policy from Pomona College and a J.D. from Stanford Law School.

The 2014 Japanese American Leadership Delegation was an extraordinary gift and opportunity, and I am eternally indebted to the Japanese Government and the U.S.-Japan Council for sponsoring the JALD Program.

Twenty-three years ago, I lived in Tokyo for three months, working as an intern in a Japanese law firm. That experience was extraordinary, but this one-week delegation trip — because of the briefings, the opportunities for frank discussions with high-level officials, and the breadth of backgrounds of the folks with whom we met — gave me a deeper understanding of contemporary Japan than I could possibly obtain through any other means. Upon reflection, the three major personal takeaways are: (1) re-establishment of emotional ties to Japan; (2) an understanding of the current economic, social and military issues facing Japan, and the political system and the politicians the public has entrusted to tackle these issues; and (3) a commitment to making a difference for U.S.-Japan relations.

When it comes to reestablishing emotional ties to Japan, visiting Fukuoka for the first time was a “chicken skin” experience, knowing that any members of the audience at the U.S. Consulate, or people we met at the Prefectural Assembly Friendship League could have been a relative. The people were friendly, the food absolutely delicious (with the one possible exception being the shirouo pictured on page 5 — yes, I still feel them swimming down my throat). It may very well be that Governor Hiroshi Ogawa’s wish for Fukuoka Prefecture to be #1 on the happiness index is already coming true.

Historically more open to international trade than other parts of Japan, Fukuoka has experienced success in welcoming guests and investments from abroad, and is one
notable and successful example of regionalization, in the sense of diversification of the Japanese economy and decentralization of political power and control over public resources. My presentations on Hawaii-Fukuoka connections and the comments by Chair Eiji Mutou before the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League only covered the tip of the iceberg in terms of the economic and personal ties existing between Fukuoka and Hawaii in particular — much to build upon going forward.

The wealth of insight and knowledge we obtained from government and business officials is found nowhere in any book or online. From the Senkaku Islands to the three arrows of Abenomics, we were treated to life lessons in history, economics, and political savvy. A highlight was our visit with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was engaging and surprisingly (to me) humorous. With respect to Womenomics, he believes that if “Lehman Brothers” had been “Lehman Brothers and Sisters,” it would not have gone bankrupt! And however one views his foreign policies and their as-yet-to-be-seen consequences, I understand better about the nationalistic sentiment he is stirring. From our Keidanren, Forum 21, and Keizai Doyukai meetings to our meetings with local and central government officials, there is no question about the national optimism surrounding his policies that have led to rebound in consumer confidence and the political ability to commence with internal restructuring necessary for economic revitalization. After all, with a popularity rating at home of well over 50 percent, notwithstanding looming tax increases and hawkish-leaning policies, the Japanese voters gave him and his party the (second) chance to take bold steps needed for economic and societal reform.

In meeting after meeting, with government and business folks alike, we heard about the difficult issues that face Japan today, economically, militarily, and socially, and we committed ourselves as Japanese Americans to doing what we can in our respective communities to increase general understanding of these issues and to be of assistance. As a group, the 2014 Delegation bonded immediately, and because of the special YGs (Young Girls) and OBs (Old Boys) (pictured, in defiance of all Asian stereotypes), synergies are already occurring, and delegates are working on U.S.-Japan Council projects, and building person-to-person relationships. I feel very fortunate to have been part of such a talented and devoted group, and very much look forward to working with them in the future. Mahalo to the U.S.-Japan Council and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to the 2014 Delegation!
DEREK OKUBO  
Denver, Colorado

Derek Okubo is the Executive Director for the Agency for Human Rights & Community Partnerships for the City and County of Denver. An appointee of Mayor Michael Hancock, Mr. Okubo oversees eight offices and ten community commissions that serve as a bridge between the Mayor’s Office, local government’s departments/agencies, and the community. In 1990, he was appointed to the staff of Colorado Governor Roy Romer as a community liaison to northeast Colorado. He worked with communities on developing collaborative partnerships on issues such as substance abuse prevention and intervention, youth violence, and community health. Previously, he served as Senior Vice President for the National Civic League. A main focus was his work with neighborhoods, communities, counties, and regions with strategic planning and community problem-solving on a variety of issues such as race and inclusion, economic development, sustainability, education, public safety, civic engagement, immigrant integration, health and wellness, and government structure. Mr. Okubo is a Colorado native and was raised in Littleton, Colorado. He earned a degree in Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado with minors in Communications and Sociology.

I WAS PRIVILEGED TO BE ONE OF TEN DELEGATES of the 2014 Japanese American Leadership Delegation program. To be included as a peer of this incredible group of leaders was truly humbling. This adventure was best described by one of my colleagues, former Palo Alto Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto, when she said, “The trip was similar to our 18-minute Shinkansen ride to Yokohama from Tokyo. It began a little leisurely and steady, but rapidly accelerated, reached high speed, and suddenly it was over.”

As a yonsei, the connection to my ancestral homeland came late in my life. This was my sixth trip to Japan since 1994. The first four were tourist related. The fifth was a part of Denver’s inaugural direct flight to Tokyo. This trip was like no other I have taken before or will again in the future. How often do you get to visit with the Prime Minister, a member of the Imperial Family, members of Parliament, prefecture elected officials and corporate leadership of globally influential companies … all in one trip?

In Fukuoka, Consul Margaret MacLeod remarked in her introductory comments at our opening forum that the JALD presenters and delegates present that day “are the direct descendants of those first Japanese immigrants to the U.S.” While I knew that was my own and my colleagues’ experience, being described as “direct descendants
of the first Japanese immigrants’ sounded and felt so much more profound. That same ancestral connection and pride in our history were themes that resonated in every Nihon-jin forum we participated in throughout the week.

Despite the blurring pace, some instances stand out. In Fukuoka, our first session of the trip was welcomed by a full house of interested residents who wanted to hear about our Japanese American experience and perspective. We were asked how to build cultural understanding across Japanese and Japanese Americans; what it was like to grow up Japanese American in the U.S.; and what qualities we felt were needed to be an effective leader.

With corporate leadership, common themes evolved around women in the workplace and childcare issues; the movement in the U.S. of the Korean and Chinese communities trying to create local legislation on international issues as third parties in regards to East Asian relations also arose as a particular area of interest. And how could we overlook the dinner and evening of karaoke hosted by Parliament leaders!

Without question, however, the biggest success was the seamless, synergetic effort put forth by our ten-person delegation with MOFA’s Izuru Shimmura and led by the incomparable Irene Hirano Inouye. While we had previously spent only two days together during the LA orientation, we talked, worked, joked and laughed together as though we had known each other our entire lives. Everyone knew that we had each other’s backs and would help out without hesitation whenever the need arose. For our meetings, success was not by accident but by preparation — whether it was our “elevator speech,” having and knowing clear assignments and roles, logistics such as room set up, or knowing our audience — our teamwork truly defined us. We became a family. We are proudly, the JALD class of 2014.
KEIKO MATSUDO ORRALL
Boston, Massachusetts

Keiko Orrall currently represents the 12th Bristol District in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. She was elected as a state legislator in October 2011. She is the Ranking Minority Member of the Joint Committees on Labor and Workforce Development as well as State Administration and Regulatory Oversight. She also serves on the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and the Joint Committee on Public Health. Representative Orrall is the first Japanese American to serve as a member of the Massachusetts Legislature. She has worked to encourage economic development with the cranberry industry and is focused on business expansion in Massachusetts. Prior to office, she taught public school, was involved in politics on a local level, and led several successful grassroots campaigns. Representative Orrall earned a B.A. from Smith College.

The words respect, teamwork, and kindness stand out as I reflect on my first trip to Japan.

As I traveled with the 2014 Japanese American Leadership Delegation, my eyes were opened to a whole new world of hard work, precision, and perfection. Respect was shown in so many ways, from the removal of shoes, to the beautiful presentation of food, to the understanding of the value of time. Everything ran like clockwork in Japan, with events starting and ending on time. The respect that was shown through language, etiquette, and every bow has left an indelible mark on me.

Guided by the incredible leadership of Irene Hirano Inouye, our ten-member delegation was able to see Japan through the lens of experience and commitment to U.S.-Japan relations. We were fortunate to meet with leaders in Fukuoka as well as members of the Diet, Keidanren, Keizai Doyukai, Mitsubishi, Forum 21 and the U.S. Embassy. Our formal and informal discussions focused on important issues such as national security, economic viability, and the role of women.

The power of teamwork was clearly evident with this delegation, and we worked together to form a strong representation from the United States. The personality conflicts that could have been present with such a high-performing group of successful Americans were not evident as each one unselfishly looked out for the betterment of the whole group. The concept of a team versus an individualized approach was evident as each one stepped up, showed kindness, and helped carry the ball. We focused on the success of the group as a whole.
I will always treasure this experience as the week when I realized that while I am proud of my Japanese heritage, I am clearly American. From the loud laughter in the elevators, to the need for large amounts of coffee, to the truly frank discussions — our group was American. And yet our Japanese heritage came through as the team talked about favorite foods from childhood and traits from parents who have long since passed. There was a level of comfort as certain Japanese mannerisms made us feel at home.

Growing up and living in a primarily Caucasian community, I have never experienced working professionally with Japanese Americans. For the first time in my life, I was with others who looked like me. My experience brought me to a place where I realized that as a “hafu” — not completely Japanese and not completely Caucasian — I can contribute in a unique way to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations while appreciating my Japanese heritage.

I am ever grateful for this opportunity from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the U.S.-Japan Council. I will use this experience as a springboard to help increase opportunities for Japanese here in Massachusetts and the United States. As we learn from each other through people to people exchanges, we will not only strengthen each country but experience the joy of new and lasting friendships. 😊
TOKO SERITA
Queens, New York

Toko Serita was born in Sapporo, Japan and raised in New York City. She was recently appointed as an Acting Supreme Court Justice in Queens County, New York and has been on the bench since 2005. She is the first Japanese American judge in New York State. She is a leading judicial expert on human trafficking and currently presides over the Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC), in Queens County, which deals with domestic and foreign victims of sex trafficking. She also presides over the drug treatment and mental health courts in Queens. Judge Serita is a member of numerous professional associations, including the Asian American Bar Association of New York, the National Association of Women Judges, and New York State Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts. She holds a B.A. from Vassar College and a J.D. from CUNY Law School at Queens College.

At the same time I received the wonderful news in late 2013 of my selection to this year’s JALD, I was also diagnosed with early stage breast cancer. Once I got over the shock of this diagnosis, I was concerned about whether this would impede my ability to go to Japan. However, following a successful lumpectomy in February, I was given the green light by my doctors to go in March. Coming this close to a lost opportunity made me appreciate the special nature of this experience all the more.

I was born in Sapporo and grew up in New York City, straddling two cultures throughout my life and deeply rooted to Japan, where I visit regularly to see my parents, who returned to Hokkaido after several decades of living in the U.S. Despite this connection, I got to see a very different side of Japan on this trip, which only served to deepen my appreciation of my Japanese American identity.

This year six women comprised the majority of delegates in our group and, along with our four equally formidable male counterparts, we bonded immediately as a team. I was honored to be part of a group of dynamic, smart, and talented people, along with Consul Izuru Shimmura, as well as the indefatigable leadership of Irene Hirano Inouye.

Amidst a cascade of memorable experiences, two things stand out. First was the rare access to a select group of Japanese who were responsible for shaping some of the most important social, political, and economic policies of the day. Abenomics was at the forefront of the government’s agenda, and there was also much attention being paid to Japan’s heightened diplomatic tensions with China and South Korea.
Second was the recurring topic of women’s empowerment, which was raised in different forums — from meetings with the political leaders in Fukuoka and Tokyo, to large group discussions with economic organizations such as Keidanren and Forum 21, as well as during a private meeting with Prime Minister Abe. Much of this was attributable to the Prime Minister’s emphasis on the role of women in Japan’s economic recovery, in which he has pledged to increase the representation of women in government and business by 30 percent by 2020.

As someone who has long been involved with Asian American women’s issues, it was great to make connections with Japanese women and to be in Japan at a time when there was a palpable energy and excitement in the air, even while there was a recognition that real change would not occur overnight. It was also a privilege to meet former Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, whose 1993 Kono Statement, apologizing for Japan’s role in the sex trafficking of mostly Korean women during WW II (known as the “comfort women” issue), was the subject of controversy during our trip.

I will always be grateful to the USJC and the Japanese Foreign Ministry for this eye-opening and rewarding experience. And it was an extremely humbling experience to be treated by our Japanese hosts with such courtesy and consideration. Following the delegation trip, I participated in the Women in Business Summit in Tokyo in May 2014, co-sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan and the USJC. I also gave a talk in Sapporo about women’s issues from a Japanese American woman’s perspective, co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Sapporo and a newly formed professional women’s group. Being part of the JALD has thus given me the opportunity to serve as a bridge between Japan and the U.S. on women’s issues that are important on both sides of the Pacific.
KEITH WALTERS  
Santa Monica, California  

Lieutenant Colonel Keith Walters is currently serving as an Army Research Fellow at the RAND Corporation’s Arroyo Center. Lt. Col. Walters was selected for this highly competitive program from among dozens of other applicants. As an Army Fellow, he contributes to RAND studies on U.S. strategy and policy in East Asia and on the development of future Army concepts and force structure. From 2010-13, he served as Chief Operating Officer of a task force of 1,200 soldiers during combat operations in Kandahar, Afghanistan and during the unit’s reconfiguration into a heavy reconnaissance organization. Lt. Col. Walters graduated with a B.A. in International Strategic History from the United States Military Academy at West Point and holds an M.A. in U.S. History from Stanford University.

There is consistency in the reports of 150 JALD alumni. They reflect upon a whirlwind schedule, social, cultural and political lessons, and great friendships. In that light, my personal JALD experience wasn’t unique, but I hope that my observations can add to the larger, collective body of work that the JALD has compiled in support of the core mission of the U.S.-Japan Council.

I grew up a proud American in a bicultural family. My siblings and I are also very proud of our mother’s country of birth, respectful of its history, and inspired by many aspects of its cultural ethos. For me, it was only natural that I would aspire to make some sort of contribution to U.S.-Japan relations. The JALD gave me that first opportunity. My JALD experience was about being a part of a team with diverse personal, intellectual, and professional backgrounds committed to a common goal of strengthening the U.S.-Japan relationship.

I reflect on our trip to Japan and see such great potential in the future of U.S.-Japan relations. I think of forgiveness at the personal and international levels. I observe forgiveness in my study of the relationship through history, but also in the story of my mother. As a child, she lost her home during the March 9-10 Tokyo raids. Yet after the war, she studied English, married my father, a career U.S. Air Force airman, and became a proud American. On the international stage, the two countries found common strategic interests only years after waging war against one another. It is hard to find similar examples of forgiveness between two countries and cultures. On so many levels, it is a unique aspect of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

As we listened to the ideas of Japanese leaders in many sectors, I saw so much potential in the relationship. Both the United States and Japan face difficult decisions.
in the years ahead regarding their individual and alliance roles on the international stage. Yet the “Rebalance” of American foreign policy to Asia and Japan’s initiation of its foreign policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” represent complementary visions of a stable Asia-Pacific. Both face challenges in matching the physical resources and political will with lofty geopolitical ambitions. As in any relationship, there are tactical differences and policy disagreements, but fortunately, the two countries share broader interests. Regional tensions and the changing role of Japan in the world were common subtexts to many of our conversations with Japanese political and business leaders. For me, a student of Japanese and American diplomatic history, it was the opportunity of a lifetime to interact with Japanese leaders who recognized the opportunities and dangers that exist in today’s geostrategic environment.

With the JALD, I gained a new appreciation of Japan by hearing firsthand from Japanese leaders of the interplay of domestic business and political interests and Japan’s role in international affairs. I hope to remain professionally engaged in U.S.-Japan relations, and this visit reinforced to me the need for both countries to pursue their interests while paying due respect to the other’s strategic cultures.

In short, from a professional perspective, I learned that our cultural differences reach far beyond the culinary: our strategic cultures take differing approaches to linking ends, ways, and means. In meetings with our distinguished hosts from government, business, and non-profit organizations, it became clear to me how important the USJC and the JALD program were in bridging the personal, strategic and political, and cultural gaps. I am proud to have been a part of this year’s efforts and I move forward as part of the team with lasting lessons and fond memories of my JALD experience.
GARY YAMASHIROYA
Chicago, Illinois

Gary Yamashiroya has spent the past 27 years with the Chicago Police Department, where he is now Detective Commander. He has also served as Commander of the Chicago Police Academy; Coordinator — Local Law Enforcement Training Resources for the U.S. State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; and Professor of Criminal Justice at Truman College. He has worked closely with Japanese officials, assisting them in the field of Criminal Justice and Law. He has hosted meetings and panels to provide information and guidance to the Japanese government and their police agencies. Detective Commander Yamashiroya earned a B.S. from the University of Illinois College of Business and a J.D. at the DePaul University College of Law. He attended the Timothy J. O’Connor Training Academy in Chicago.

ANY THOUGHTS RACED THROUGH MY MIND when I was notified by the Japanese Consulate in Chicago that I would be a part of the 2014 Japanese American Leadership Delegation: Wow, what a great first trip to Japan! Who am I going with? Will we work well together? At first I was overwhelmed, being part of such a noteworthy group, but personally meeting everyone at orientation in Los Angeles immediately put me at ease. It was amazing how the group, including orientation speakers and staff, hit it off, and it is with this foundation that we continued down our road together.

Soon after orientation the updates, emails, alerts, and news clippings arrived at dizzying rates. We shared thoughts, concerns, and ideas in preparation for the meetings. I will forever be awestruck by the tireless efforts and inspiring talents of my fellow delegates, MOFA’s Izuru Shimmura, USJC staff and Irene Hirano Inouye, our intrepid leader. Throughout this trip, we shared great fellowship and frequently, bouts of laughter.

In Japan, we were welcomed at each meeting with great openness and candor. Despite the tough issues, I found a desire for earnest discussion and understanding. As in past delegations, dialogues focused on Womenomics, Abenomics, and security, and my fellow delegates did an exceptional job taking the baton and running with it to hand off to next year’s group.

However, this year, as requested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, our delegation had a sizable representation from state and local government. By design, we were
introduced to the culture and resourcefulness of Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan’s gateway to Asia. There were many moments that left indelible impressions on me. At every turn, people met us with sincerity and warmth regardless of their or our station in life.

I was frequently approached by government officials, business executives, and others who came from a “police family.” We shared our thoughts and ideas on a wide range of topics (we were extremely prepared at orientation) and everyone was genuinely interested in my impressions of Japan, since it was my first time there. My response was consistent: (1) I am amazed by the Japanese commitment to the concept of “service”; and (2) this trip made it apparent to me that I was unquestionably American and undeniably Japanese.

As far as follow-up, I must note that any continuing engagement with the U.S.-Japan Council will be out of a sense of duty and not obligation. Some may say the two are synonymous, but others, especially in law enforcement, see a clear difference. For me, an obligation comes from without, whereas a duty comes from within. I can see myself making a difference in promoting peace by using my Japanese heritage and work experience to improve relations between Japan and the U.S. and I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the U.S.-Japan Council for this opportunity to do so.

A number of women leaders attended several key meetings, including about 10 women legislators who joined us at the Diet for a roundtable, acknowledging that a culture shift needed to occur to fully allow “womenomics” to succeed.
2014 JAPANESE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DELEGATION
SPONSORED BY JAPAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN COORDINATION WITH U.S.–JAPAN COUNCIL