

MISSION

Preserve, perpetuate and share the legacy of the Nisei Soldiers to promote good citizenship.

VISION

A community in which we live by the universal values of honor, gratitude and patriotism upheld by America's Nisei Soldiers.

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* Interim

Hawaii's Unveiling of the "Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers of WWII Stamp"



For 15 years, three amazing Nisei women, all of whom were incarcerated during WWII – Fusa Takahashi, Aiko O. King, and the late Chiz Ohira – worked tirelessly with Wayne Osako, a California sansei history teacher, toward the creation of this historic U.S. stamp honoring the Nisei Soldiers. Together they launched the "Stamp Our Story" grassroots campaign which successfully garnered both national and international support for the stamp. This is the first U.S. Postal Service (USPS) stamp to feature the image of an Asian-American soldier. The stamp's image was based on a photograph of a Hawaii Island-born 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) Nisei Soldier, Shiroku "Whitey" Yamamoto.

The USPS held a virtual dedication ceremony on June 3, 2021, the First-Day-of-Issue, from Los Angeles, California, the First-City-of-Issue. Many other regions including Oregon and Texas followed by holding their own memorable local ceremonies.

Hawaii held its stamp unveiling event on June 4, 2021, at the 100th Infantry Battalion Clubhouse in Honolulu. The Hawaii Stamp Organizing Committee which was comprised of local Nisei Veteran organizations planned the event which was live streamed with no audience due to COVID restrictions. NVL president Lynn Heirakuji served as event emcee and was the co-chairperson for the event along with Mae Isonaga of the Sons & Daughters of the 442nd RCT.

Kauai and Maui also held dedication events on that same day.

The "Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers Of WWII Stamp" calls attention to the historic sacrifices and achievements of the Nisei Soldiers of WWII. It also serves as a timely reminder of the need to remain vigilant in continuing to strive for equality and justice for everyone. To view the 30-minute Hawaii unveiling event and other related videos go to: <<https://videos.nvlchawaii.org/videos>>.



GFB Stamp unveiling event participants (l to r) Rachel Radona, Lynn Heirakuji, First Lady Dawn Ige, Governor David Ige, Eileen Veach, Dr. Shinye Gima, and MG (ret) Suzanne Vares-Lum.

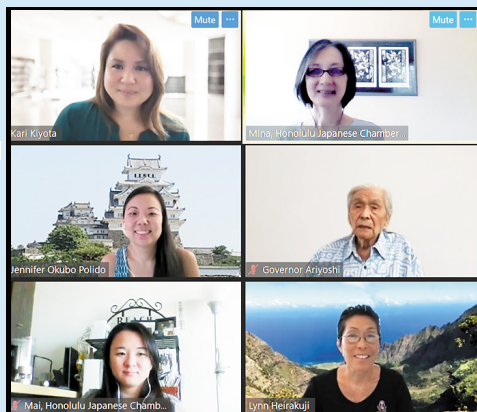
Presentations

HONOLULU JAPANESE AMERICANS CITIZENS LEAGUE (JACL)

The Honolulu JACL invited NVL's Lynn Heirakuji to attend its April 12, 2021 Board meeting and share what the NVL is doing to perpetuate the Nisei Soldier legacy and to seek ways to collaborate. In turn, the JACL leadership attended the NVL Board meeting on May 16, 2021 to discuss the mission and activities of the JACL. The JACL is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization, and opposing discrimination and intolerance remain its focus.

HONOLULU JAPANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Lynn was honored to share the virtual stage with Governor George Ariyoshi (MIS Veteran) on July 16, 2021 to discuss the war and post-war contributions of the Nisei Soldiers with members of the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce. The presentation highlighted the business accomplishments of the Nisei Soldiers, including their historic founding of Central Pacific Bank which was key to the economic recovery of the Japanese American community after the war.



Governor George Ariyoshi joined with NVL's Lynn Heirakuji to discuss the Nisei Soldier story with members of the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce

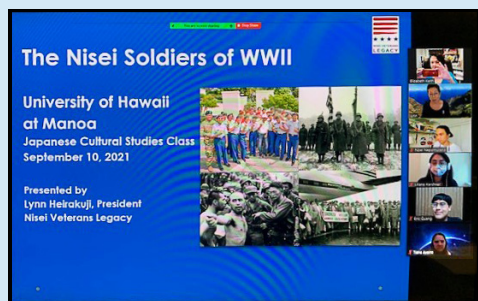
NVL's Byrnes Yamashita shared the Nisei Soldier story via Zoom with students in Japan and Mililani, Hawaii



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA (UHM) JAPANESE CULTURAL STUDIES

Lynn gave a presentation on the Nisei Soldier story via Zoom to a UHM Japanese Cultural Studies class on September 10, 2021. Dr. Elizabeth Keith invited Lynn to speak to her class of 19 undergraduate students. This was her 3rd UHM presentation at Dr. Keith's invitation.

One of the students whose ancestors had immigrated from Mexico, commented that she found the Nisei Soldier story to be moving and personally relevant.



Another student, Eric Quang, offered the following: "I wanted to thank you so much for taking the time to give us such an eye-opening and inspiring presentation about the Nisei. Growing up here in Hawaii throughout my whole life, I would always hear about the Nisei but would never fully grasp or understand their story and the impact they had and continue to have on Hawaii. It was so amazing to hear the very profound impacts they have had not only in service but also after in shaping Hawaii to what it is today."

STUDENTS FROM SIX SCHOOLS IN OITA PREFECTURE, JAPAN + STUDENTS FROM MILILANI, HAWAII

Byrnes Yamashita gave a presentation on the Nisei Soldiers to students from Usa City, Oita Prefecture on August 19, 2021 via Zoom. Students from six middle schools in Usa City participated along with some from Mililani Middle School. Pre-COVID, the Japanese students would visit Hawaii for a week of educational and cultural exchanges but due to travel restrictions, they were given a virtual tour and presentations online.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attack against our homeland is upon us. Experiencing that event is probably the closest many of us will ever come to understanding how the Nisei generation may have felt

when Japan attacked Oahu on December 7, 1941, plunging us into war.

The 1941 attack on our homeland unleashed deep-seated anti-Japanese distrust and prejudice which led to the incarceration of thousands of Japanese Americans both in Hawaii and on the mainland. Yet it was against this backdrop that many young Nisei men and women stepped forward to prove their loyalty to America by serving in the U.S. Army in Europe and the Pacific theatres during World War II. The highly decorated service of the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team compelled President Truman to salute its return to U.S. soil in July 1946, saying, "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice – and you have won." Many of the returning Veterans continued the battle by working with others to transform Hawaii's social, political, and economic landscape.



For many young adults, 9/11 – which happened a mere 20 years ago – is largely a historical event. Making a personal connection, much less an emotional connection is difficult. So, imagine how much more challenging it must be for young adults to reach back seven decades and find personal meaning in the events of World War II.

In 2020, the U.S. Postal Service announced the historic issuance of the *Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers of WWII Forever Stamp*, the first stamp to feature the image



Major General (ret) Suzanne Vares-Lum

of an Asian American soldier. At the June 4, 2021, Hawaii stamp unveiling event, Major General (ret) Suzanne Vares-Lum, said, "Our generation and generations to come should not forget what our Nisei Veterans have done. At a time when we

are engaged in national conversations about discrimination and prejudice, the Nisei Soldier story has much to teach us."

The Nisei Soldier story – as relevant today as it was powerful then.

Mahalo,
Lynn Heirakuji
President, NVL

NVL Holds Successful Virtual Educational & Fundraiser Event



Kristen Nemoto Jay



Warren Haruki



William Kaneko



Geoff Sogi



Jennifer Okubo Polido



Lory Dillon



Kristin Alm Kamakahi

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The NVL live streamed a virtual educational event on July 24, 2021 on the NVL website and YouTube. The 30-minute program, titled “Hawaii’s Nisei Soldiers: Their Legacy Continues,” provided information on the mission and educational programs of the NVL and how the war and post-war sacrifices and contributions of the Nisei Soldiers are still relevant to today’s issues.

The event also doubled as a fundraiser and was very successful, raising over \$40,000 to allow the NVL to continue its educational mission. Steve Uyehara and Liz Chun emceed the program which featured testimonies from: Lynn Heirakuji, NVL president; Jennifer Okubo Polido, estate planning attorney; and the following members of our community.

- WARREN HARUKI, CEO, Grove Farms; former president Hawaiian Tel and Verizon Hawaii; and NVL advisor
- WILLIAM KANEKO, attorney, and former president, JACL Honolulu Chapter
- GEOFF SOGI, president, JACL Honolulu Chapter
- KRISTEN NEMOTO JAY, writer
- LORY DILLON, Hawaii school teacher

During the program, Warren Haruki, son of a 442nd RCT soldier, shared a letter that he received in 1992 from Ted Tsukiyama, MIS veteran. Ted told Warren that the professional recognition he, (Warren) had earned was the “kind of vision the Nisei Soldier huddled in the battle trenches during WWII yearned for and dreamed of.”

The event was co-chaired by Jennifer Okubo Polido and Kristin Alm Kamakahi, both granddaughters of Nisei veterans. Here are their comments about their experience:

Kristin: “It was an honor to assist with the virtual event. I have always had an interest in being able to give back to an organization related to the legacy of the Nisei Veterans. My grandfather, Buzzy Okazaki, was a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and over the years he shared many stories about World War II and his life both before and after. I feel very strongly about continuing to share the stories of the Nisei Veterans so that future generations can learn from their experience and feel inspired by their bravery and courage.”

Jennifer: “As a granddaughter of a Nisei Soldier, I was honored to be interviewed for the educational video portion of our virtual event. It allowed me to share my perspective of the importance of the Nisei Soldier story, especially in today’s world.”

Both Kristin and Jennifer were recently approved by the NVL board as new directors. We enthusiastically congratulate and welcome them.

A big Mahalo to all companies and individuals who made donations or other contributions in support of the virtual event. See the NVL website for list of donors.

To view the event video go to <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz6CA4vkNxQ>>.

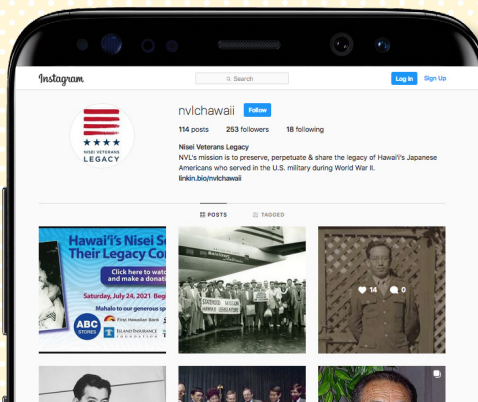
2021 Nisei Soldier Memorial Service

The team comprised of local Nisei Veteran organizations created to plan the September 26, 2021 Nisei Soldier Memorial Service at Punchbowl Cemetery had been making great progress. Unfortunately, due to the worsening COVID situation, Punchbowl Cemetery canceled all in-person events. However, to keep the annual ceremonial tradition alive, the NVL - as it did in 2020 - will produce a video commemorating the event. The video will be released in early November 2021. More to come on this.



Follow us on Instagram:

If using the Instagram mobile app, go to @nvlchawaii or visit <<https://www.instagram.com/nvlchawaii/>>



ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. 9th Mission Support Command (MSC):

On June 24, the NVL coordinated a meeting with the 9th MSC at Fort Shafter, Hawaii with several members of the local Nisei Veterans community. Besides NVL leadership, representatives from the 100th Infantry Battalion Veterans, Sons & Daughters of the 442nd RCT, MIS Education Society of Hawaii, and the 442nd RCT Veterans Club attended. The group heard the command presentation by Brigadier General Timothy Connelly and engaged in a lively discussion about the 100th Battalion 442nd Regiment that carries on the name of two of the famous Nisei Army units of World War II.

2. Senator Mazie Hirono: On July 1, NVL president Lynn Heirakuji met with U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono at the Senator's request to update her on the NVL. They had a very good discussion, and the Senator was particularly interested in and supportive of the NVL's additional focus on equity issues.

3. Nisei Soldier Experience at the National Museum of the U.S. Army (NMUSA): A special event focusing on the Nisei Soldier Experience at the new NMUSA in Ft. Belvoir, VA, was held on August 28, 2021. Over 26 wartime objects of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd RCT, and MIS are on display at the NMUSA, along with nine Nisei Soldier life stories and interactive maps depicting the European and Pacific Campaigns. Nisei Veterans Charles Moriyama (Honolulu) and Ralph Matsumoto (California) attended the event along with many other invited family members. Army Generals Eric Shinseki (ret) and Paul Nakasone spoke at the event which was coordinated by the National Veterans Network (NVN). The NVN worked with the NMUSA from 2017 to 2020 to gather the artifacts and content for the exhibit.

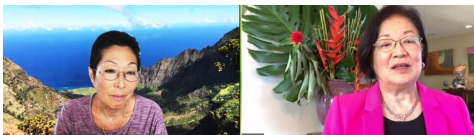
4. Podcast: Check out Lynn's August 20, 2021, 1-hour "Hanging Out With Nolan Hong" podcast at: <<https://nolanhong.com/187-lynn-heirakuji/>> in which she talks about the Nisei Soldier legacy and its impact on her life.

5. NVL Leadership Change: Wes Deguchi, NVL Founder, past president, and board director, will be transitioning from his director position to become an NVL advisor. We thank Wes for his initial vision and many years of service as a director in promoting the Hawaii Nisei Soldier story. In addition, Janice Trubitt will be ending her 4-year term as an NVL board director. We also appreciate her support of the legacy.

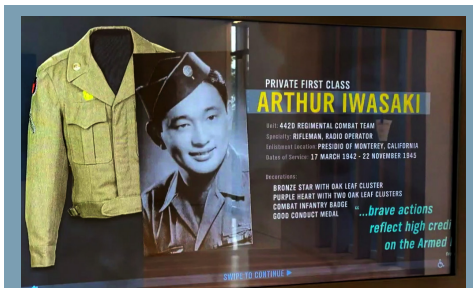
6. Foodland Give Aloha Program: It's that time of year again. The Give Aloha program is open from September 1-30. If you haven't already, please make a donation in the NVL's name (account no. 79019) at any Foodland, Sack & Save and Foodland Farms stores. The Foodland and Western Union Foundations will match a portion of the funds donated. Mahalo.



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Nisei veterans Charles Moriyama and Ralph Matsumoto at the Nisei Soldier Exhibit NMUSA

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NVL to Conduct Market Research for Educational Messaging Geared Toward Younger Generations

The NVL updated its message themes (see February 2021 NVL News) to highlight cultural values, contextual Hawaii history, Japan-Hawaii linkages, and outreach to the younger generations. We intended these themes to form the foundation for our future educational content. One of the themes included:

Understanding and perpetuating the Nisei Soldier legacy can inspire current and future generations to continue fighting for racial and social equity, and justice for all.

We recognize that in order to generate interest in the legacy among younger generations, we must awaken in them a sense of relevance.

To help us gain clearer insight into the issues and topics of high interest to younger generations in Hawaii, the NVL plans to conduct focus groups and surveys targeting that population with the assistance of Nathan Hokama who developed our NVL communications plan in 2020. The effort is intended to help us effectively demonstrate the relevance of the sacrifices and contributions of the Nisei Soldiers to modern times, including their post-war drive for social and racial equity in Hawaii. Our goals are to create impactful videos and begin formulating a unique educational/lecture series package including a leadership component geared toward college-age individuals.

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Nisei Veterans Legacy
2454 S Beretania St., Ste 302
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826
808-942-0881
inquire@nvlchawaii.org
<https://www.nvlchawaii.org>



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Battalion, 442nd Regimental
Combat Team, Military
Intelligence Service, and
1399th Engineer
Construction Battalion.