

**Doctoral Thesis submitted to
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Tokyo**

東京大学大学院総合文化研究科博士学位論文

**Little Tokyo in Multicultural America:
The Arts of Community Building by Japanese Americans
in Los Angeles**

(多文化主義のアメリカにおけるリトルトーキョー：
ロサンゼルスの日系アメリカ人のコミュニティづくり)

2014年9月

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Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Hideo Kimura and Professor Yasushi Yamamoto of the University Tokyo, who, with patience beyond expectations, provided academic guidance and ideas that guided and enlightened my research. Through the countless discussions with them, I became energized and fascinated by the complexities of anthropological and sociological studies.

I am greatly indebted to Professor Noritaka Yagasaki, Professor of Geography at Nihon University, for his ideas, which enlightened me. I heavily relied on his book, *Imin Nogyo* (Immigrant Agriculture) (1993), and the research he did for his Ph.D. thesis at the University of California, Berkeley when I formulated my hypothesis that Little Tokyo is an example of the spatially dispersed community model. Also, I am deeply grateful to Professor Toru Nakanishi, Professor of Economics, and Professor Yujin Yaguchi, Professor of American/Asian American Studies of University of Tokyo, for their generosity with their time and insightful analysis that helped me see new ways to approach my research.

I want to acknowledge that this dissertation would have had no genesis if I had not been allowed to observe the Board Retreat meeting of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) in July 2007 at the behest of my then fiancé, then a LTSC board member, as part of the “introduction” to my new life in Los Angeles and as an “introduction” of being a part of Japanese American community in Southern California.

I was inspired by two key Little Tokyo community activists at the Board Retreat meeting: Bill Watanabe, then an executive director of the LTSC, and Alan Nishio, a board president of the LTSC. Both are *sansei*, or the third generation Japanese Americans. These two leaders opened the window to my interest in the history of the Little Tokyo community and gave me an overview and personal observations into how Little Tokyo has survived as an ethnic enclave and why it is so important as a heritage, that it persisted in the face of isolation and hardships as its community faced dislocation, reconstruction, confrontation and survival. I also thank these community leaders for becoming my local mentors.

My Little Tokyo research decimated my theories about community building which I held based on my ten years as a development specialist for foreign aid services for underprivileged people in Asian countries, work that took place in rural and urban areas and at the grassroots, governmental and international levels. I ultimately concluded that Little Tokyo is a unique community even in America, a product both of its past and the social evolution of multicultural America. My career involved community building with Human Security perspectives in the Third World, the perspective which best explained by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s 1994 Human Development Report as insuring "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" so that all persons are enabled to tackle the insecurity that abounds in living. I was able to observe a unique Little Tokyo directing and guiding its own future with its community of diverse people of Japanese heritage at the helm, never but always dynamic.

I would like to send my applause and acknowledgement to all the people who have committed themselves with countless efforts and uncountable hours to preserve the heritage and history of Little Tokyo and its continued existence as an ethnic enclave: the activists, the professionals, the volunteers, the visitors and the community members. Some remember the internment camps, some protected the heritage and space of Little Tokyo, some fought for civil rights and equality, others created the redress movement, some continue to fight against injustice and for future of the community, all are part of the power and the continuity of Little Tokyo and a motivation to continue for the future.

In particular, I thank the Little Tokyo community members who shared their remembrances, experiences and thoughts, as well as time, with me. These generous people include, but are not limited to: Mike Murase, Yukio Kawaratani, Charles Igawa, Yuko Kaifu, Toshio Handa, Everyn Yoshimura, Hongson Kim, Bruce and Jonathan Kaji, Diane Tanaka, and Jeff Murakami. Numerous other business and non-profit representatives also freely contributed their time and observations.

I thank Tritia Toyota, Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of California at Los Angeles, for spending the time to read one of my drafts and provide insights and analysis as well as resources for my thesis from an Asian American Studies perspective.

I need to thank those nameless many who shared their particular journey with me. There was a very old remaining *nisei*, or the second generation Japanese American, couple shared their life stories with me, telling me their Japanese American story was not only for Japanese Americans but also for the people in Japan where they

came from. The couple gave me very old dictionary-thick books, the collection of data written in old Japanese and published by Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, an accumulation of the information gathered mostly by *issei*, or the first generation of the Japanese immigrant, from the time of their arrival. The books held surprisingly detailed information about where they found a place to live, cultivate, and grow crops as well as the information of the associations they formed, including some associations still viable and engaged in community building more than one hundred years later. These experiences must not be forgotten.

Another person I would like to give a special recognition is our dear family friend Barbara Noble, who shared the last part of the journey with me. As a former deputy attorney general and colleague of my husband at the California Office of the Attorney General two or three blocks from Little Tokyo, she read the drafts of my research with a different prism. She gave me detailed honest feedback that facilitated my ability to write with an objective view as well as adjust and fine tune my thesis.

Finally, I thank my husband, Al Muratsuchi, who encouraged me with limitless patience and love, in the good and bad and stalled times of my research and continued through those times to honestly discuss, sometimes criticize and always help to accomplish this work. My five-year-old daughter, who was not born when I began my research, has also contributed to this endeavor by recognizing its importance to me and teaching me, by her example, patience and confidence through perseverance.

My research about the history of Little Tokyo and its dynamic existence as an ethnic enclave merely opens a door to an awareness of its complexities and potential.

As Little Tokyo and its dispersed community continue to regenerate so are the possibilities for research.

PART I Introduction

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Thesis Purpose

1.1.1. Thesis Purpose

The three-city block area near downtown Los Angeles, which is home to Japanese businesses, museums, and tight-knit Japanese community, has long been called and is now officially designated by the City as Little Tokyo. It has been a Japanese¹ ethnic enclave for one hundred and thirty years. Little Tokyo has no official governing body and is not a political entity. It acts through its community and its community members – and the community acts through voluntary associations and organizations.

This ethnic enclave is situated in the heart of inner city Los Angeles, one of the largest multicultural cities in the United States. The heritage and history of the community Little Tokyo represents, allow visitors to gain an understanding of an important thread of the multicultural American tapestry. This space allows for ethnic

¹ The references to the “Japanese,” “those of Japanese heritage” and “those of Japanese ancestry” include all persons of Japanese descent. “Japanese American” is narrower and is used to reference persons of Japanese heritage who were born in the U.S., including the second and following generations born in the United States, as well as those Japanese who acquired citizenship after arrival. Since its inception as an independent nation, all persons born in the U.S. have birthright citizenship.

consciousness, awareness of Japanese immigrant history, and recognition of wartime internments of West Coast Japanese Americans. It sheds light on the struggles of Japanese Americans who aim to honor their cultural heritage while assimilating into mainstream society, and also provides insight into the inherent conflicts within the multi-ethnic, multi-generational and economically diverse people who reside in Little Tokyo.

Today, Little Tokyo is an almost textbook example of urban renewal and gentrification due to the resurgence of local shops and restaurants, and the diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic representations of its residents. Small businesses with Japanese themes are now neighbors with American chain and franchise businesses such as Starbucks.

Just past the Central Avenue Starbucks toward the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station, which opened in 2009,² sit the prestigious Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and the Little Tokyo Mural, painted by hundreds of community volunteers. Thirteen buildings sit East of the JANM on First Street, under the purview of the National Historic Preservation Program. These buildings include the century-old Old Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple, the Union Church building, the Fast East Café and the San Pedro Firm Building which were renovated and repurposed by volunteer efforts, affordable lodgings for visitors, a new ramen restaurant and sushi bar.

² This station is currently being developed as a light-rail Regional Connector and is expected to open in 2020. It is expected to become one of the busiest transit stations in Los Angeles County. It will be part of a light rail subway corridor through Downtown Los Angeles, connecting the Blue and Expo Lines to the Little Tokyo/Art District (Gold Line) and Union Station. The construction contract was signed on July 9, 2014. The current Little Tokyo/Art District station (Gold Line) will be moved underground.

Weller's Court Mall and the former New Otani Hotel (currently Double Tree) stand tall on East First Street, where Japanese capital members and members of the grassroots community movement had their confrontations in the late 1980s. Nearby is the Japanese Plaza, across the street from the 13 National Preservation buildings. The Plaza has small business shops and was originally relocated when New Otani and Weller's Court were constructed. In this same area, on East Third Street, the century old Rafu Shimo community newspaper still publishes despite the passage of time and its relocation when the former New Otani was built.

In the heart of Little Tokyo, behind the shops on East Second Street, is the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC). The center is the largest Asian American cultural center of its kind in the U.S. The building houses the Japanese American Theater and a number of community organizations. It is fronted by the Noguchi Plaza, designed by world-famous sculptor Isamu Noguchi as a tribute to the *issei*, the first generation of Japanese who immigrated to America. Facing San Pedro Street across from the JACCC, is the National Japanese American Veterans Memorial Court, the only place where all Japanese Americans who died in service during American wars are honored individually.³ The area around the JACCC is surrounded by affordable housing units, Buddhist temples and Christian churches.

On the Third Street, just one block from JACCC, there is an affordable housing building called Casa Heiwa, a combination of Spanish and Japanese words, which mean House of Peace. The first floor of Casa Heiwa houses the Little Tokyo Service

³ These veterans served in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Center (LTSC), one of the most successful social welfare and community development organizations in the City of Los Angeles.

Little Tokyo is a center of learning, innovation, and the source of information about Japanese immigrants and their progeny. It is the place where the Japanese and Japanese Americans confronted each other, and the corporations from Japan who invested in Little Tokyo regarding the future of the residents and Little Tokyo itself. Little Tokyo is also a spiritual place where there are many places of worship, including Buddhist temples and Christian churches.

A revival in the downtown residential lifestyle immediately west of Little Tokyo has led to a boom in market-rate condominium construction in the ethnic enclave, attracting many young Asian, white and multi-ethnic residents, who then intermingle with the multi-ethnic seniors living in affordable housing. Government employees from nearby Los Angeles City Hall and other local, state, and federal government offices frequent the shops and restaurants, as do employees of law firms and financial institutions who work on Bunker Hill. Within a few blocks is a thriving Arts District where artists live and sell their art. Also nearby is Skid Row, a concentrated area where the majority of the city's diverse homeless population lives, in marked contrast to the upscale businesses, restaurants and residences and their upscale customers and residents.

The major purpose of this thesis is to provide a window into how Japanese immigrants and their Japanese American progeny were able to build and maintain the existence of this Japanese American ethnic enclave for one hundred and thirty

years. This window will illuminate how and why Japanese Americans identify with the space and stay connected with Little Tokyo through associations and social and political networks as they increasingly assimilate into mainstream society. Looking through this window will help to understand how Little Tokyo is different from other Japanese American communities and why it persists as a hub of many social and political communication networks among pre-war immigrants, the subsequent American born generations, intermarried couples and their progeny, post-war immigrants from Japan and short term residents. This thesis also explores Little Tokyo's relationships with government, other ethnicities and the relations with the adjacent mainstream American society.

The focus of this study is community building by associations in Little Tokyo. Unlike European ethnic enclaves in America, which dissipated as its community assimilated into the receiving society (Jenks 2008; Fujita & O'Brien 1991), Little Tokyo has remained an ethnic enclave even as its immigrant base and their progeny have dispersed and assimilated into mainstream society.

The community building by associations tracked by this thesis is unique not only because the community building involved an ethnic enclave but also because it has remained consistent throughout the one hundred and thirty years of the enclave's existence. Associations have evolved and new organizations have formed to meet the needs of the ethnic enclave and the needs of its dispersed and local community members.

This thesis illuminates the long term implications of community building by associations in a closed ethnic enclave, first where assimilation into the mainstream society was socially and legally prohibited, and then, post-prohibition, when assimilation was allowed and encouraged by the receiving society. Little Tokyo continues as an ethnic enclave even as most of its community members are dispersed outside its locus. It continues as an ethnic enclave despite the three-year internment of all West Coast Japanese immigrants during WWII, gentrification, changing demographics, racial assimilation, and the emergent need to address multi-ethnic and multicultural pressures.

This thesis posits that Little Tokyo remains a viable ethnic enclave because the pillars of the ethnic community of Japanese Americans and its associations continue to connect the dispersed members of the community to one another and the hub where the associations intersect, Little Tokyo.

The history of Little Tokyo also illustrates a model of community building in a constantly changing multicultural society. Japanese immigrants adapted to American society while still preserving a cultural identity. The people of Little Tokyo continue maintain this identity while welcoming all forms of diversity.

1.1.2. Background

“Ethnic enclave” is used to mean a physical space with a high ethnic concentration culturally distinct from the larger receiving society. It is usually located

in the inner city and is considered a transitional space and an entry point to America (Abrahamson).

As Little Tokyo regenerated itself in the late 20th and early 21st Century, it adapted to being part of the multicultural city of Los Angeles. Little Tokyo began as a traditional ethnic enclave in the late 19th Century but has become an alternative model of an ethnic enclave: It maintained its physical space in the inner-city as its culturally distinct Japanese ethnic population dispersed throughout the region, and remained the hub for its ethnic population's formal and informal ties and communications.⁴ These ethnic ties facilitate action to protect its space and continued existence as well as political action through both Japanese and multicultural associations.

⁴This thesis uses the term "ethnic enclave" in a sense similar to one used by Hilary Jenks (2008) in her research study of Little Tokyo, but is more emphatic that the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave includes those of Japanese heritage who reside outside its confines but have connection to it as part of its "dispersed community". In sociology, the general definition of an ethnic enclave is a geographically defined space with characteristic cultural identity and economic activity (Abrahamson). In contemporary America, where multiculturalism is popularized and where communications between distant places and people distant from each other are virtually instantaneous, the conventional concept of an "ethnic enclave" as a space or place where an ethnic group is highly concentrated in a residential or workspace area and is "isolated" from the larger receiving society is too limited. This thesis seeks to reveal the over one-hundred year process of community building by associations that transformed the Little Tokyo from a 19th Century Japanese immigrant ethnic enclave into a 21st Century ethnic enclave that includes a dispersed community of those with a Japanese heritage, including pre-war and post war immigrants and Japanese Americans, who use it as a place to connect with each other and the multiple of associations that meet their cultural, spiritual and political needs. This thesis focuses on the evolution of Little Tokyo associations from communal support systems protecting members and the enclave to associations addressing civil rights issues related to the Japanese and other ethnic minorities and social welfare and community development issues which also open to other ethnic groups.

The primary reason Little Tokyo persists as an ethnic enclave is not only a response to racial exclusion or discrimination, but also because its voluntary associations evolved or were created anew in order to ensure Little Tokyo's space, heritage and connections with the community.

The persistence of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave into the 21st Century reflects an identification of the dispersed Japanese community with Little Tokyo and each other generated in part as a response to threats to the community's physical and social integrity, including urban renewal as encroachment, overseas investment and gentrification. These threats increased involvement with Little Tokyo as a place of heritage and resulted in the formation of Japanese American community associations to fight civic center expansion, urban redevelopment and foreign investment in the 1960s, 70s, and 90s and gentrification in the 2000s as they increasingly migrated to the suburbs.

Specifically, Little Tokyo's voluntary associations evolved not only to address the threats to Little Tokyo's space and heritage but also to increase its role as the communication hub of the ethnic enclave.

Somewhat ironically, the biggest threat to the cohesion of the Japanese community and Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave was the relocation and internment of all West Coast Japanese immigrants during WWII, which in turn generated the major momentum for its survival, cross-generational unity and an intense awareness of being a person of Japanese heritage. The collective memory of the internment imbued

generations of the dispersed Japanese American community with a reverence for the history and heritage of Little Tokyo.

Little Tokyo's space and heritage has become, as a result of the associations' protective and proactive preservation, the spiritual home of Japanese Americans in Southern California. Its preservation has become a literal and visual metaphor for the Japanese immigrant and Japanese American journey, a journey of isolation, dislocation and survival in America. Additionally, it is a physical space where Japanese Americans are currently negotiating for its identity as well as their own as they strategically position themselves in a broader American society.

The formation and evolutions of associations were galvanized by the needs of the community and Little Tokyo to survive. Prior to WWII, associations provided necessary social and financial services not otherwise available to the isolated and shunned Japanese immigrants. After the return of the *issei*, or first generation of Japanese immigrants, and *nisei*, second generation American-born Japanese, from WWII's dislocation to internment camps, associations were created or evolved to preserve the survival of Little Tokyo's physical space and heritage and to connect the dispersed community members to those endeavors.

Thereafter, as civil rights and Asian-American movements awakened in the progeny of the immigrants and the *sansei*, third generation Japanese Americans, a consciousness of a Japanese American identity began to grow and with it, the need for the Redress Movement to right the wrong of the internment camps. Fueled by ethnic pride and the awareness of Little Tokyo's history and the impact of the internments,

associations evolved to create a lasting heritage in Little Tokyo, including a world class museum, a cultural center, and bridging programs.

The heritage and community building process created more connections between associational and personal networks that made Little Tokyo even more of a hub of the dispersed ethnic community. New associations were created not only to address the impact of redevelopment on the poor, and to reach out to diverse ethnic groups to facilitate multicultural cooperation but also, to reach out to advocate to younger generations with a multicultural background to help them accept the “proud” identity of being different.

As Little Tokyo regenerated itself as an ethnic enclave, it became a major symbol of Japanese American history and heritage and continued to be the hub for its dispersed Japanese American community’s formal and informal ties and communications. These ties were facilitated as Little Tokyo negotiated political action and its own protection through associations, some solely Japanese, others multicultural.

The generations of evolving associations not only protected the physical existence of the ethnic enclave, but they also preserved communication networks that strengthened the sense of community among those with a Japanese heritage and the enclave as its members dispersed into the suburbs. The resulting personal, cultural, social and political connections have created a sense of belonging—to Little Tokyo and Little Tokyo to them.

1.2. The Significance of Little Tokyo As a Unique Ethnic Enclave in a 21st Century

Multicultural City

1.2.1. Demographics of the Japanese in the U.S. and L.A. County

Demographically, people of Japanese ancestry are a numerically insignificant minority in the United States. The 2010 Census shows the Japanese constituted 0.2 percent of the total U.S. population while all those of Asian heritage constituted 5.6 percent. The Japanese ranked sixth numerically out of the top ten Asian ethnic groups. The largest represented Asian population was the Chinese ethnic group (3.79 million) followed by Filipino (3.41 million), Indian (3.18 million), Vietnamese (1.73 million), Korean (1.7 million), and Japanese (1.3 million).⁵

The relatively small Japanese population in 2010 is a significant contrast to the years prior to World War II when those of Japanese heritage were the largest of Asian ethnic groups. The primary reason for the decline in proportional numbers is that in the post-war years relatively few Japanese immigrated to the U.S. while members of other ethnic groups increasingly immigrated. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 further spurred immigration from Asia and South America because it changed the limiting quotas based on national origins and quotas, which had favored

⁵ The U.S. Census does not distinguish its ethnic numbers based on immigration or citizenship status, although there are comprehensive statistics on these two factors from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

immigration from European countries, and also allowed family reunification as a factor.⁶

The focus of this thesis is the Japanese population in Southern California, Los Angeles County in particular, where the overall population in 2010 was 8.3 million. Los Angeles is broadly multi-ethnic. Its residents include those with origins from each continent.

Of those with Asian heritage, the highest ten ethnic subsets rank in numbers as follows (the Japanese ranking fourth): The Chinese not including Taiwanese (403,730), Filipino (374,285), Korean (230,876), Japanese (138,983), Vietnamese (104,024), Indian (92,179), Taiwanese (45,808), Cambodian (37,450), Thai (29,792), Samoan (16,535).

Although the relative numbers of Japanese in the United States and in California are low, from the early 1900s to the present, Los Angeles County has been home to the largest Japanese population in the United States. The Japanese population in California is 428,014 persons. Thirty-two percent of California's Japanese residents, or 138,983 residents, live in Los Angeles County and constitute 1.3 percent of the County's population.

Because many Japanese living in other Southern California counties⁷, particularly Orange County (48,225), maintain ties with Little Tokyo and are served by its organizations and associations, its ethnic community has a broader base than just the Japanese who reside in Los Angeles County.

⁶ There was also the institution of professional categories, which many educated or entrepreneurial Asians had sought.

⁷ Fifty-eight percent of California's Japanese residents, or 251,527 residents live in Southern California, which comprises Los Angeles, Orange, Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties (US Census 2010).

Furthermore, despite of the relative few postwar immigrants from Japan, the 2010 Census also shows that postwar immigration now accounts for more than 43 percent of the total Japanese American population (Toyota).⁸ The number has grown steadily from 32 percent in 1980, to 34 percent in 1990, and then 44 percent in 2000, and the presence of postwar Japanese immigrants is evident within Little Tokyo and the Japanese American communities in Southern California (Toyota). At the same time, Japanese Americans have the highest rate of interracial marriage with about 27 percent in 2010 describing themselves as multiracial or multiethnic (Asian Americans Advancing Justice). There are also a growing number of contemporary transnational mobile “non-immigrants” (Tsukuda 152- 181).

This statistical data shows the current diversity of Japanese Americans as well as the growing multi-identities among them and poses questions: how to redefine the Japanese American, and what is “Japanese Americanness” in this context?

1.2.2. Looking at Little Tokyo through a “Different Mirror”

The small Japanese ethnic enclave called “Little Tokyo” has existed with its locus in the center of downtown Los Angeles and as the hub of the Japanese community in Southern California since at least 1885 (Murase), when Japanese sailor Charles Hama opened the first known Japanese business, the Kame Restaurant. Throughout its ensuing history, Little Tokyo has experienced social conflicts “over citizenship, ethnic identity, urban redevelopment, corporate power, housing, and homelessness” (Jenks 35).

⁸ This is the number who checked off “Japanese only”.

Now, while Little Tokyo is a bustling example of urban redevelopment and gentrification, it remains as the largest and most vibrant historical Japanese ethnic enclave in the United States. Prior to the focus on Japanese American ethnic studies as a result of the Asian American movement⁹ in the 1970s and multiculturalism in the 1980s, research related to Little Tokyo was limited (Ichioka 1988; Takaki 1993). Even after the studies in American sociology made a paradigm shift to multiculturalism in 1990s, Little Tokyo has not been recognized nor appreciated as a subject worthy of in depth research.

Until historian Ronald Takaki (1989, 2008) attempted to reconstruct American history using a “different mirror”, the history of Japanese immigrants and their

⁹ Jenks (2008) argues that the Asian American movement had its beginnings in the 1968 student strike at the then California State College at San Francisco, now California State University at San Francisco and that the Asian-American movement was Third World in its ideological outlook (245). However, the internet home page of the Asian American Studies Department at SFSU provides a different tone to its explanation: "Asian American Studies (AAS) Department, the largest of five departments/unit in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, was created as a result of the 1968 Black Student Union/Third World Liberation Front Student Strike. A settlement was signed on March 20, 1969 to establish the country's first and still only School (now College) of Ethnic Studies at SF State with the following four units: American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, Black (now African) Studies, and La Raza (now Latin) Studies."

The basis of Yellow Power Movement was rooted in Black Liberation movement. A contemporaneous comment when the Asian movement began is revealing: "The 'black power' movement caused many Asian Americans to question themselves," wrote Amy Uyematsu in "The Emergence of Yellow Power," a 1969 editorial. Uyematsu continued, "'[Y]ellow power' is just now at the stage of an articulated mood rather than a program—disillusionment and alienation from white America and independence, race pride and self-respect."

Black activism played a fundamental part in the launch of the Asian American Civil Rights Movement, but Asians and Asian Americans, including Japanese, played a key role in radical black circles as well. A founding member of the Black Panther Party—Richard Aoki—was Japanese American. Aoki was a military veteran who spent his early years in an internment camp. Aoki donated weapons to the Black Panthers and trained them in their use (Pulido). Like Aoki, a number of Japanese civil rights activists were Japanese internees or the children of internees. Aoki died in 2013 amid more controversy about his role in the Movement (FBI informant).

progeny was not integrated into the tapestry of American history. Despite of the fact that the tapestry of scholarly research about Japanese immigrants has roots from the 1930s (Ichihashi 1932; Okada 1957; Kitano 1969; Conroy & Miyakawa 1972; Montero 1980), studies about Japanese immigrants were treated as being outside of the scope of the American mainstream history even in cultural pluralism in 1960s.

Endo (1999) explains that the difference between cultural pluralism in 1960s and multiculturalism in 1990s is the diversification of racial relations from the simple context of whites versus blacks in the 1960s to a broader concept including Asians and Hispanics in the 1990s (36). Endo (1999) suggests that from St. John de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmers* (1782), to Israel Zangwill's play *Melting Pot* (1908), to Horace Kallen who gave birth to the term cultural pluralism in 1915, the discussion surrounding multicultural America focused on white Americans and white immigrants (25-35). Even cultural pluralist Horace Kallen (1915), who argued that ethnic and racial diversity strengthen America, excluded the Japanese from his argument (Endo 1999; Schlesinger 1998).

Little Tokyo has been overlooked both in academia and in the image of American mainstream society. At its beginning, Little Tokyo was perceived with hostility by a mainstream American society since, as Ichioka (1998) pointed out, Japanese immigrants in the United States were for a long time "alien ineligible to citizenship" (1) who were prohibited to become a part of America. The legal bar to

citizenship was eliminated in 1952, when federal law precluding immigrant Asians from citizenship was changed.¹⁰

Even in the contemporary image of American mainstream society, Little Tokyo is perceived as an exception, or a unique place, which does not fit the conventional immigration study. American urban sociologists, including Robert E. Park, generally project that urban ethnic enclaves gradually dissolve as immigrants and their descendents assimilate and climb up society's social and economic ladder (Jenks). Another prominent historian, Oscar Handlin (1979), depicted the immigrant experience of Americanization as a bitter process of discarding their own ethnicity and its Old World customs. As Fujita and O'Brien (1991) explained, most traditional approaches to the study of ethnicity in the United States are based on the European immigrant experience. They conclude that community identity weakens as immigrants assimilate.

Fujita and O'Brien have offered that the Japanese American experience does not fit this pattern. New York Chinatown expert Kwong (1996) argues that because the conventional study of immigrants focused on the process of assimilation, it led to a serious lack of research into the internal dynamics and transformation of ethnic enclaves.

Although the history and genealogy of Japanese and Japanese Americans has been researched widely since the 1980s (Ichioka 1988; Fujita & O'Brien 1991; Takaki

¹⁰ Since citizenship had always been automatically conferred on anyone born in the United States, the children of Japanese immigrants born in the United States were full citizens although many held dual citizenship as well.

1993; Kurashige 2002; Azuma 2005; Robinson 2001, 2009), most scholars focused on Japanese American history, society and ethnicity (Ichioka 1988; Takaki 1989, 2008), not the Japanese ethnic enclaves from which they came.

Even now, there has been little research on Little Tokyo's internal dynamics and community building even though it has not dissolved as its immigrants and their progeny assimilated and even though it has had a vital role as an ethnic hub for the dispersed and assimilated Japanese community.¹¹ The lack of academic interest may be attributed to the lack of awareness that Little Tokyo has continued its role as an ethnic enclave despite the assimilation of its immigrants and that it therefore constitutes a different model of an ethnic enclave.

Fujita and O'Brien's (1991) empirical study of postwar Japanese communities in the United States concluded that assimilated Japanese people had shifted to the suburbs and the suburban lifestyle, and the Japanese and Japanese American communities had become more network based, rather than a space based ethnic enclave.¹² In this conventional sociological approach, Little Tokyo did not attract academic attention because it was assumed that Little Tokyo was an ethnic enclave in the past tense so had no present day relevance.

However, Little Tokyo continues to exist as an ethnic enclave and its existence is vital to the dispersed Japanese community as a formal and informal communications hub. It remains the "ethnic symbol" for those of Japanese

¹¹ See Dean Toji and Karen Umemoto, "The Paradox of Dispersal: Ethnic Continuity & Community Development among Japanese Americans in Little Tokyo", *aapi nexus*, Vol.1, No.1, 2003, 21-45.

¹² See also Tsukuda (147) for San Francisco Japantown. Fujita and O'Brien (2000) established empirically that Japanese Americans maintain their ties with their Japanese communities even though they are highly assimilated in American society.

heritage (Jenks 2008a; Sugiura 1998, 2011), and it is a central locus for ethnic activity and communication, although most are not actual residents.

On August 10, 2014, Little Tokyo celebrated the 74th Nisei Week Festival's Grand Parade, an annual weeklong festival that began in 1934. There were 66 entries and approximately 1,130 people participated in the Parade as dancers or marching units of various organizations.¹³ There were almost 100 volunteers husbanding the activities as the Parade meandered slowly along on the First, Second and Third Streets of Little Tokyo surrounded by thousands of onlookers. This is a major Japanese cultural event that gathers members of the dispersed community to the heart of the Little Tokyo space that so much time and effort has been expended to protect.

Little Tokyo's century-old temples and churches are reminders of its longevity and continue to provide culturally sensitive religious and social services. Local businesses like family owned Japanese confectionery shops such as Fugetsudo, which opened in 1903 and Mikawaya, which followed in 1910, are also infused with the past.

Little Tokyo exists as an ethnic enclave for both pre-WWII and post-war immigrants and their descendents, even as some have assimilated and moved into middle class suburbs and others have attained education and income levels higher

¹³ According to Mark Nishinaka, a long time volunteer who coordinated the Nisei Week's Grand Parade, the Nisei Week Foundation keeps the number of Parade entries relatively low to conform to the time constraints imposed by broadcast limits because the Parade has been televised for three years. Before it was televised, the parades were three or four hours long and 80 to 90 entries were common. This year's parade was by comparison quite short at 2 hours and 45 minutes long (email reply by Nishinaka on August 19th, 2014).

than the average American (Suga). Little Tokyo remains an ethnic enclave in the 21st Century because it is not a space based community but is a hub where the dispersed Japanese community communicates both distantly and in person in order to preserve and maintain their Japanese heritage and identity and their ties to each other. It has also become a place for continuing dialogue, where contemporary Japanese Americans question and negotiate “what is Japanese American” and “what it means to be an American.”

1.2.3. Little Tokyo as a Template for Community Building in Multicultural America

While there had been a significant lack of research about postwar Little Tokyo, Hilary Jenks in 2008 wrote the first in-depth study of Little Tokyo’s history for her doctoral thesis at the University of Southern California.¹⁴ Her research shed light on Little Tokyo from the long perspective of its “birth” to the present.

There have also been substantial researches, which revealed the historical, cultural, sociological and political aspects of Little Tokyo by scholars such as architect Dolores Hayden (1997), geographer Tadashi Sugiura (1998, 2011), historian Lon Kurashige (2002), and sociologists Miya Suga (2004) and Fuminori Minamikawa (2007,2009, 2010). These prior studies focused on specific periods and stages of Little Tokyo and were limited to the “space-based” Little Tokyo.

¹⁴ Jenks referenced Ichiro M. Murase’s “Prologue” to his “Little Tokyo One Hundred Years in Pictures” (1983), and it is referenced herein because although it is brief it is well researched and rich in detail.

Jenks's study was primarily focused on space-based Little Tokyo as well. Moreover, the focus of Jenks's research about post-war Little Tokyo was the *sansei* created movement that marginalized both the ongoing community building efforts of the *issei* and *nisei* and the role of the post-war immigrants who were culturally and linguistically "Japanese dominant".¹⁵ Because of this focus, her post-war conflict analysis is limited to the obvious conflicts between the Little Tokyo community galvanized by *sansei* activists and city government or investments in the enclave, supported by the large infusion of Japanese capital. This approach neglected the complex realities and interactions of the diverse subgroups of the post-war Japanese American community as well as the significant roles and interactions of other diverse groups such as Japanese capital, the Japanese government, business groups and other activists which maintained relationships with Little Tokyo.

Through the author's research, she found it essential to capture a picture of Little Tokyo with the dispersed community outside the confines of its immediate space. Little Tokyo is not an explicitly space based community nor a goal-oriented network based community. Therefore the history of Little Tokyo should not be limited to the study of its space itself. The context of its wider spatial structure where its dispersed community resides and connects with it must be explored. And the historical aspects of Little Tokyo must also be viewed in the wider perspective of American history, democracy and nationalism.

¹⁵ The term is used by Charles Igawa. Interview with Charles Igawa on October 15, 2013.

Jenks (2008a) acknowledged that Little Tokyo survived and developed as an ethnic enclave. She concluded Little Tokyo had not followed expectations of urban sociologists that ethnic enclaves disappear or significantly dissipate after their immigrant population is assimilated, pointing out that multiple generations of Japanese and Japanese Americans continued to maintain formal and informal networks of contacts with Little Tokyo even after they have dispersed into middle class suburbs.

The continued existence of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave stands unique among the histories of other ethnic enclaves in the American urban landscape (Jenks). Jenks' findings have left the questions of how and why Little Tokyo continues to have significant ties to the broader dispersed Japanese community in the Los Angeles area open.

This existence as an ethnic enclave persists despite the passage of over one hundred years since its beginning, despite the overall assimilation of Japanese immigrants into distant suburbs and despite the lack of significant numbers of postwar Japanese immigrants.¹⁶

Little Tokyo's community building is a model of a community working together. In the process, it has managed to preserve its history and share its pride in its Japanese heritage. It has found a way to evolve while honoring traditions and the ethnic identity of its community and reflecting awareness and conciliation with the multicultural

¹⁶ 2010 Census.

world around it. Little Tokyo provides an alternative model both for community building and ethnic coexistence in a major multicultural American city.

1.3. Evolution of Little Tokyo

1.3.1. Overview

The evolution of Little Tokyo and its ultimate regeneration in the 21st Century into a modern ethnic enclave can be attributed to the Japanese cultural imprint on those with a Japanese heritage, but also in part to the distinctive history of urban development in the City of Los Angeles.¹⁷

The City of Los Angeles was a rapidly urbanizing its metropolitan area throughout the 20th Century. Los Angeles was founded by Spain as part of its colonization of California in 1781 as a pueblo, a civil as opposed to military or Catholic mission settlement (Bustanmonte & Castillo 25). The initial settlement consisted of forty-four people (32-33). Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821. At the conclusion of the 1846-1848 Mexican-American War, Mexico ceded California to the United States in February 1848 (92). California officially applied for admission to

¹⁷ The City of Los Angeles is contained within the borders of a geographically larger political entity, the County of Los Angeles. L.A. County contains many legally incorporated cities as well as L.A. and unincorporated areas. The County of Los Angeles has many cities within its 450 square miles including the City of Los Angeles, Pasadena and Long Beach. It extends north to the County of Ventura, north and east to the County of Kern, east to the County of San Bernardino and south to the County of Orange.

the Union as a free state in 1849 and was admitted as the 31st state on September 5, 1850.¹⁸

The most obvious major impediment to population and business growth in 19th and early 20th Century Los Angeles was the lack of sufficient water source. However, after both a 250 mile aqueduct from the Owens Valley was opened in 1913 (Caughey 230-231), and the Boulder (now Hoover) Dam on the Colorado River was completed in 1936 (233-235), there was sufficient water and power to support the development, new industries, and the population growth that occurred during World War II and after.

The positive connection between the advent of two new water sources, the aqueduct and the Colorado River, and population and development growth in Los Angeles is best demonstrated with a comparison of population growth in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco using U.S. Census numbers from 1900 to 2010. There was a massive increase in population in the City of Los Angeles from 1900 to 2010 (4,000 percent) compared to about 235 percent for New York and San Francisco. Comparing percentage increases of the population from 1930 to 2010 in the three cities is the most telling. The population of Los Angeles increased more than 300 percent, while the New York increase was 116 percent and San Francisco 126 percent. There is no explanation for the disparity and the enormity of a three hundred percent increase in population growth other than the new availability of water for development.¹⁹

¹⁸ It applied as a free state not because California leaders were anti-slavery but because at that time, slave holding was not necessary for California agriculture and its crops (Note from Tritia Toyota, Adjunct Professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at UCLA).

¹⁹ The population increased in the City of Los Angeles from 1900 (102,479) to 2010 (almost 3.8 million). During this same time period, the population of the port cities of San Francisco and New York increased approximately 235 percent, San Francisco from 342,782 to 805,235, New York from

WWII also spurred population growth in Los Angeles. Thousands migrated to Los Angeles from all over the country to work in the many war industries and factories located near the city and then stayed on after the war because of the good climate and job possibilities. As the population grew during and after WWII, the population moved into the suburbs and the valleys outside the Los Angeles basin (Laslett).

Also, after WWII, Los Angeles became a center of the global economy on the West Coast and the home of the largest Asian population in the United States (Ong, Bonacich & Cheng). Today, Los Angeles is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States, with a 48 percent Latino population, 29 percent white, 11 percent Asian, and 10 percent African American.²⁰ This diversity has led to complex socioeconomic polarization and sometimes conflict between communities (Ong, Bonacich & Cheng 1994, Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996), races and ethnicities. In particular, Los Angeles inner-city neighborhoods are places with complex and often bitter histories of ethnic conflict (Hayden).

Having multicultural residents is not a new thing for Little Tokyo. People of many different ethnicities have been residents of Little Tokyo since the 19th Century, often at the same time as one another (Jenks 2008; Minamikawa 2007). Located in the center of downtown Los Angeles for almost 130 years, Little Tokyo has a unique

3,437,202 to 8,175,133. Moreover, San Francisco is also a Pacific Coast port city though it is constrained by a lesser land area. More significantly, is a comparison of population growth in the three cities from 1930 to 2010—reflecting the impact of the availability of water after the 1939 opening of Hoover Dam. The population increase in Los Angeles from 1930 (1,238,048) to 2010 (3.8 million) was slightly more than 300 percent. In comparison, San Francisco's population growth from 1930 (634,394) to 2010 (805,000) was about 126 percent, and New York's growth from 1930 (6,930,466) to 2010 (8.1 million) was about 116 percent (US Census).

²⁰ 2010 U.S. Census. Note: The Census is supposed to be a count of all persons irrespective of citizenship status.

history of generations of newcomers building their lives and businesses in this small area.

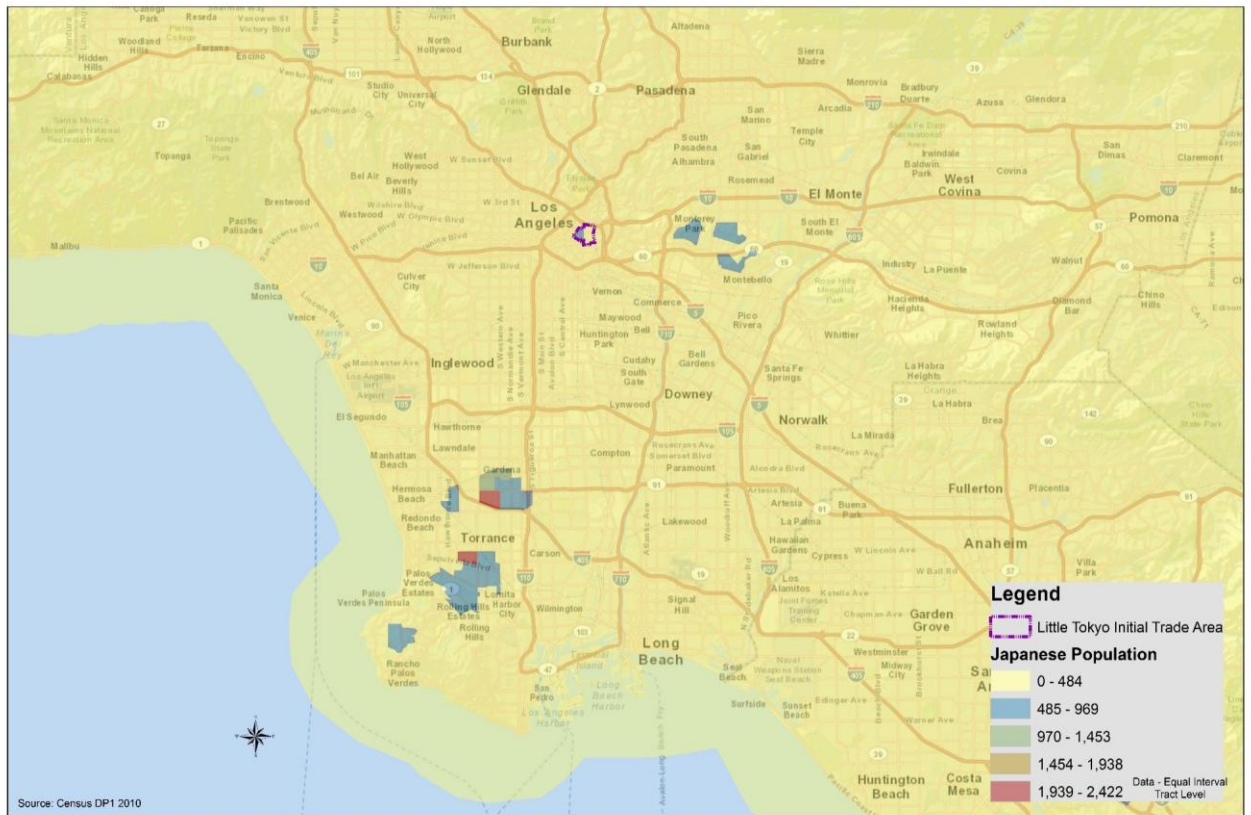
Today, Little Tokyo is one of the three remaining historical Japanese enclaves in the State of California, with the other two being located in San Francisco and San Jose.²¹ Among the three, Little Tokyo is now the largest and the most vibrant. However, its future as the hub of Japanese culture and social networks for Southern California remains uncertain.

The map below, based on the 2010 Census, reflects the areas where persons of Japanese heritage live in the greater Los Angeles area. It demonstrates the dispersal of the Japanese into the suburbs where many live in ethnic clusters. It is a depiction demonstrating the locus of Little Tokyo as the hub of the Japanese community.

As Japanese Americans become more and more assimilated and as their numbers in the identifiable residential areas become more attenuated, it remains to be seen whether the history of Little Tokyo's people and its survival as a unique ethnic enclave will be its map for its future.

²¹ California State Bill 307, September 2001. See also www.californiajapantowns.org

Figure 1.1 Map of Japanese American/Japanese clusters in Los Angeles area (2010)



Source: Little Tokyo Service Center

1.3.2. The Genesis of Little Tokyo

The genesis of Little Tokyo was as a central hub for the Japanese economics, culture and society for its dispersed constituents in farmland and other areas beyond its confines (Gomyo 2008; Jenks 2008a; Murase 1983; Minamikawa 2007).

“Little Tokyo” traces its roots to 1885 as a historic Japanese community, the year when Hamanosuke Shigeta, a Japanese sailor later known as “Charles Hama,” opened the Hama Restaurant (Murase). This restaurant, located on East First Street

near South San Pedro Street, was the first known Japanese business in the area.²² Less than two blocks away, the First African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church was built near South San Pedro Street and East Second Street in 1888.²³ The historic First A.M.E. Church was built with the support of former African American slave and pioneer businesswoman Bridget “Biddy” Mason. The African American population later moved to other areas, primarily the area south and central to the core of Los Angeles.

In the Hama Restaurant neighborhood, the Amelia Street School, the area’s second public elementary school, opened in 1885 near Jackson Street and North Vignes Street.²⁴ Attendance of the children of Japanese, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants further highlights Little Tokyo’s history as a gateway for diverse immigrant communities.²⁵

In later years, immigrants congregated in the Little Tokyo area because it was near the core of Los Angeles which had trains, bus stations and streetcars, and because immigrants were otherwise inhibited, economically, legally (covenants on land deeds) and socially (ostracism), from living in other areas of Los Angeles.

The historical dispersion of immigrant Japanese to farming areas is demonstrated by population numbers. As early as 1905, when the total Japanese population in Los Angeles County was 5,957, nearly 3,400 lived in the City of Los

²² According to the 1890 census, there were only 26 Japanese in Los Angeles. The 1900 Census counted only 152 Japanese.

²³ This is now the location of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

²⁴ Welcome Little Tokyo, the brochure produced by Little Tokyo Service Center funded by Historical Cultural Neighborhood Council. This Historical Marker Project was funded by Proposition 40, State of California Department of Parks and Recreation.

²⁵ Ibid.

Angeles and 2,570 lived in the county's farming communities (Murase). At least forty-one percent of the Japanese were living in farming communities.

As the Japanese immigrant population grew, Little Tokyo became the social, cultural, religious and economic center of Japanese immigrants in Southern California (Gomyo 2008; Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1883). By 1940, approximately 37,000 Japanese, or 40 percent of the total Japanese population in California, lived in Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles (Murase). However, even when it was flourishing in the 1930s, those of Japanese ancestry constituted only 28 percent of the population of Little Tokyo, an indication that Little Tokyo area was ethnically diverse (Minamikawa 2007; Jenks 2008a). Moreover, during the 1930s, a significant number of Japanese immigrants and their families had dispersed to satellite farming communities throughout Southern California, with Little Tokyo continuing to serve as the central hub for Japanese politics, economics, culture and social contacts (Minamikawa 2007; Jenks 2008a).

Japanese immigrant farmers, who played a major role in the development of Southern California's agricultural industry, also opened and operated the Produce Market on South Central Avenue near East Third Street as well as the City Market of Los Angeles on San Pedro Street and Ninth Street (Yagasaki). These Japanese markets were operated alongside Chinese, Greek, Italian, and Jewish vendors as well as people of other ethnic origins (Yagasaki).

Yamato Hall, located near East First Street and South Central Avenue, became the physical center of Japanese cultural, educational, and social activities in pre-WWII

Little Tokyo (Murase). Churches of diverse faiths such as the Centenary United Methodist Church, the Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple, and the Maryknoll Japanese Catholic Church served the Japanese community (Murase). Media such as the Rafu Shimpo daily newspaper provided informational news in Japanese to meet the cultural needs of Japanese immigrants (Murase).

Little Tokyo was also the headquarters of the Japanese Associations of Southern California and *Kenjinkai*, or Japanese prefectural-based associations, which provided revolving credit and other forms of mutual assistance, as well as cultural entertainment (Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983).

1.3.3. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066

The physical, social and cultural landscape of Little Tokyo changed dramatically almost immediately after the declaration of war against Japan on December 8, 1941. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which required the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the entirety of the West Coast of the United States. Over 120,000 Japanese, including American citizens of Japanese ancestry, were relocated and confined in ten internment camps located in the states of California, Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Arkansas.²⁶ This order for the removal and internment of virtually all persons of Japanese ancestry was unprecedented. It was based solely on a person's Japanese ancestry and provided no hearing or any other form of due process before or after the

²⁶ Two-thirds were American born nisei. One-third was issei, considered aliens ineligible for citizenship.

internees were sent to the camps. The order did not provide justification or evidence that acts of espionage or treason had been committed by persons of Japanese ancestry.²⁷

This dislocation was the single most traumatic and defining experience of the Japanese and Japanese American community in America, and it affected generations of Japanese. Its impact cannot be overstated. The unfairness and the trauma of the relocation resonate to this day, not only with the generation that experienced it, but generations of Japanese born in the United States who have come afterwards.

Little Tokyo's demographics changed dramatically while Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans were interned during WWII. Not only were the Japanese residents entirely missing but also there was an influx of migrants from other states and other areas of California seeking work in the shipyards and other war industries. This migration included many African Americans (Minamikawa 2009; 2010, Murase 1983; Jenks 2008a). The new residents settled in the now vacated Little Tokyo, largely because it was located just a few blocks from the downtown railroad and bus stations (Murase). During the war, the area became known as "Bronzeville," and it featured black-owned cafés, restaurants and businesses. The Cobra Club, at the corner of East First Street and South San Pedro Street, featured famous jazz musicians including Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (Murase 1983; Jenks 2008a). The Japanese Union Church became the community center for Bronzeville (Jenks).

Following WWII, many Japanese returned to Little Tokyo and navigated the shared space with African Americans. Within several years after the end of WWII,

²⁷ Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (1983)

Little Tokyo began to be recognized once again as the center of the Japanese community (Jenks 2008; Murase 1883). Ultimately, African Americans moved to affordable neighborhoods in south and south central Los Angeles. According to War Relocation Authority, out of 20,000 Japanese American internees returning to Los Angeles, 4,725 (24 percent) returned to the Little Tokyo area in 1946; 3,187 (16 percent) returned to nearby Boyle Heights (a Japanese residential cluster without a central community meeting place); 2,293 (12 percent) returned or went to an area southwest of downtown Los Angeles on Crenshaw Boulevard, known as the Seinan area (Minamikawa). Other Japanese internees followed the post-war migration to suburban cities such as Gardena, which is about fifteen miles south of Little Tokyo (Murase).²⁸

1.3.4. Post the 1960s Civil Rights Movements

The 1960s and 1970s civil rights movements inspired Japanese Americans to preserve and protect Little Tokyo, cementing the standing of Little Tokyo as the

²⁸ Gardena is in an area approximately 15 miles south of Little Tokyo, which, together with other cities including Torrance and Palo Verdes, is referred to as the South Bay. Prior to WWII, Gardena was home to mainly Japanese berry and vegetable producing farmers (Gardena Heritage Committee 2006). After WWII, there was a new wave of post-war migration to Gardena where the Japanese and Japanese American community continued to grow with both the coming of descendants of pre-war immigrants and new post-war immigrants and expatriates from Japan. These Japanese increasingly relocated to the South Bay area and reinforced the strength and presence of a growing Japanese and Japanese American community there. Census records show that the Japanese population grew from 1950 to 1980: from 741 (1950), 4,371 (1960), 8,412 (1970), and to its peak of 9,489 in 1980. During these years, Gardena was called the “capital of Japanese American.” Since the 1990s, the Japanese population in Gardena decreased Japanese and Japanese Americans migrated to the upper middle class neighborhood of the South Bay cities of Torrance and Palos Verdes.

symbolic home of the Japanese in Southern California, an unofficial standing which continues to the present day.

Beginning in the late 1950s but more particularly in the 1960s, various civil rights movements caused tremendous social upheaval throughout the nation. While the struggle for racial equality was largely led by African Americans, the social impact of the struggles crossed racial and ethnic lines and sensitized the Japanese to infringements of their rights beyond the issue of the relocations to WWII internment camps.

Inspired by the civil rights movements, the *sansei*, or third-generation Americans of Japanese ancestry, created associations, which provided services for the community, and preserved the historical and cultural heritage of Little Tokyo. The *sansei* also used their grassroots mobilization and organizational skills to oppose or support political action impacting Little Tokyo and make cross-racial/ethnic coalitions. The ethnic coalitions reflect a guiding belief and ideal of the *sansei* in the Little Tokyo community, with respect for ethnic and racial differences.

The lasting legacy of the WWII internment became the heightened sensitivity of first, second, third and post-third generation Japanese Americans to the need for ethnic community building (Hayden). Another legacy was the understanding of the necessity of fostering multicultural coexistence and reaching out to other ethnic groups both to protect against racial and ethnic divisions as well as any infringement of civil rights based on race or ethnicity.

To further these ends, Japanese Americans established voluntary associations to preserve the heritage of Little Tokyo and to protect Little Tokyo from multiple threats to its existence and to the space it occupied. Gentrification was an ongoing threat. Developers were hungry for the land close to the city center and the government was hungry for space close to its city and state offices.

While there is no published research about the *sansei* and *yonsei* associations furthering ethnic and cultural cooperation, the author observed outreach efforts by the associations at the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) and Kizuna: at LTSC, there were projects that specifically articulated purposed ethnic outreach and targeted multi-ethnic beneficiaries such as the low income family; at Kizuna, there is a program targeted Arab youth. As *issei* and *nisei* associations focused on Japanese cultural and history preservation and building the community networks to support these endeavors, the *sansei* and then *yonsei* created associations whose memberships, staff, and projects are open to the involvement of other races and ethnic groups in order to build a foundation for multicultural cooperation.

Several post-war associations and organizations created by the Japanese Americans are key to the success and survival of Little Tokyo as well as a key to its future. These include the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) and Kizuna. These organizations have become the foundation for the creation of additional community organizations, which collectively added to the area's stock of social and political capital accumulated since

the 1880s. These organizations are an important reason why Little Tokyo was able to regenerate itself. Their role and accomplishments will be detailed in Chapter Five.

1.4. Thesis Hypotheses and Study Focus

This thesis sets forth three hypotheses. First, Little Tokyo is an ethnic enclave that has occupied the same urban space (with some retraction because of predatory encroachment by the City and developers) for over 100 years. It remains an ethnic enclave even as most of its Japanese American community has dispersed beyond its confines because it continues as the hub of social, cultural and political associations and their networks that connect community members with each other and Little Tokyo. Second, the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave dispersed community is a direct result of community building by associations, both the original associations (derivative of communal prefectural associations of 19th Century Japan that provided the immigrant Japanese with jobs, housing, food and financial support) that evolved and the purpose-oriented associations created after WWII worked to protect the heritage and space of Little Tokyo. Third, Little Tokyo remains a 21st Century ethnic enclave because its associations have created meaningful connections with its dispersed constituents, both as a formal and informal communication hub and as a social and cultural hub of the extended Japanese community.

The history of Little Tokyo and the activities of those of Japanese heritage now actively involved in its past and future building is an exemplar of a particular kind of

community building, forming with one eye on the past and the other on the future, not just through the activities of associations, but also the use of associations as a long term response to social conflicts, and external and internal threats to the community. Its history tells the story of one ethnic enclave during the dynamic transformation of American society after WWII. Little Tokyo is an example of how one racial minority pursued economic, social and cultural survival in multicultural America.

The thesis also examines the importance of the role of Little Tokyo as a communication and networking hub as it is used by its ethnic community to maintain and build communications as well as the sense of community and ethnic pride. This discussion takes a look at the critical role of associations in being part of the hub and providing the area with necessary communication, support and outreach as well as being repositories for historical documents and artifacts.

1.5. The Sources and Methodology of the Research

The primary sources for this thesis were extensive interviews and field surveys that have been undertaken since 2007 in Little Tokyo, the suburbs of Los Angeles, and the South Bay (including Gardena and Torrance), where many Japanese Americans and Japanese congregate and reside.

This thesis builds upon prior histories of Little Tokyo told and compiled primarily by Japanese Americans and other American historians and scholars. The author contributes her perspective as a Japanese national with a professional

background in community building in foreign aid service²⁹ to focus also on Japanese language interviews and sources and to highlight both pre- and post-WWII Japanese immigrant contributions, as well as the importance of post-war Japanese foreign investment in Little Tokyo.³⁰

To highlight the uniqueness of Little Tokyo, the author also visited and conducted interviews and field surveys in the remaining Japantowns in San Francisco and San Jose, the former Seattle Japantown, which is now a transformed Asian-American-town, and the former Sacramento Japantown, which ultimately disappeared in post-war urban redevelopment.

The literature review as well as interview survey was conducted both in English and Japanese. In this way, views, ideas, and thoughts of formerly marginalized culturally and linguistically Japanese dominant groups are reflected in the history. The interview survey and observations include representatives of virtually all the sub-groups representing Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants. It was an effort to be comprehensive and reflect voices and views from all groups which constitute present day “Little Tokyo”: prewar immigrants and their progeny, postwar immigrants and their progeny, returning immigrants (*kibei*), non-immigrants (Japanese corporate

²⁹ The author was involved in various foreign aid services as a development specialist at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), International Non Government Organization (NGO) called World Vision for total 10 years between 1997 and 2007. Total eleven field operations include in Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka), Latin America (Brazil) and East Europe (Bosnia Herzegovina).

³⁰ Previously, the author was professionally involved in community development in developing countries including the terms of formation, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation as part of the implementation of Human Security ideas in community development work.

representatives and their families), activists, academia, businesses, the Japanese government and others.

1.6. The Multidisciplinary Approach of the Research

The research takes a multidisciplinary approach in order to analyze the extensive field survey material. One of the origins of this research lies in the findings and a question that was raised during the author's first field observation in July 2007, at the board retreat meeting of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), a community development and social welfare organization in Little Tokyo. With the generosity of the Board President Alan Nishio as well as then the Executive Director Bill Watanabe, the author attended the meeting as an observer. The findings and a question from the board retreat became the beginning of the research about Little Tokyo.

At the board retreat, the author was impressed with Little Tokyo's high level of community autonomy, including the planning, directing and engineering of Little Tokyo's future community by the representatives of the Japanese American community. The author also learned that Little Tokyo and the Southern California Japanese American community was facing a new challenge: "Where and what is the future of the Japanese American community and Little Tokyo," in the face of gentrification, diversification, the dispersal of future generations, and business development in Little Tokyo.

Some of the promising signs were that the new leaders for the immediate future generation were born and raised within the community, and that there are a

few major pipeline projects such as the construction of a multipurpose gymnasium called Budokan and a multipurpose business center called Nikkei Center.

The author's conclusion, based on 10 years of extensive community development work in Asian countries, is that the community of Little Tokyo is healthy and sustainable despite of the challenges. Yet, the author is left wanting an answer to a simple fundamental question that was raised at the retreat and has not been answered: Why is it that none of the attendees of the board retreat who volunteer their time to plan its future, live in Little Tokyo? All maintain their contacts and relationships with Little Tokyo from the distance of the dispersed suburbs. The author had observed and been involved in various community development works but had never seen a community where people who have volunteered to protect the community are all from the outside. Little Tokyo was not a simple *Gemeinschaft*, and the Little Tokyo Service Center was not a simple *Gesellschaft*.

In order to understand the Japanese Americans who are dispersed but persist in maintaining their communications and ties with Little Tokyo, the first step was a review of the history of Little Tokyo. The review resulted in expanding the thesis scope to include the issues that prior Asian American Studies had not covered nor had skimmed. Based on the additional Japanese literature and interview surveys, the thesis mainstreamed some missing history and delved into aspects that needed more attention or simply had been ignored or marginalized in Little Tokyo's history. These areas include transnational character of pre-and post-war Little Tokyo, the spatially dispersed Japanese community model that the *issei* and *nisei* created in Southern

California, the role of surviving *issei* and *nisei* in the reconstruction of Little Tokyo after WWII, and the role of the solely Japanese speaking segment of the community.

In order to reinterpret the events and happenings in recent and current Little Tokyo, a sociological and anthropological analysis was utilized in conjunction with the result of the detailed fieldwork. This led to the thesis elaborating on the duality of community and new ethnicity in contemporary multicultural America.

1.7. Structure and Overview of the Thesis Chapters

This thesis is composed of three parts. Part I, an Introduction, includes chapters One, Two and Three. Part I presents basic information and theoretical framework of this paper. Chapter Two, the theoretical framework, critically reviews the view on American community building as espoused by the neo-Tocquevillean, Robert Putnam. Putnam focuses on the voluntary formation of associations by free and equal individuals as the essence of civic community building. However, the history of the Japanese in Little Tokyo highlights limitations in the neo-Tocquevillean analytical framework. Chapter Three provides an overview of Little Tokyo today. Demographics and other data reveal the diverse nature of this urban space.

Part II presents historical reinterpretation of Little Tokyo and is composed of chapters Four, Five, and Six. Part II reviews the historical evolution of Little Tokyo, its voluntary associations and the Japanese immigrants and their progeny. Part II aims to provide some information missing from the history of Little Tokyo that previous studies or papers ignored or did not explain. This thesis posits that this missing

information is important to the analysis of the institutional nature of Little Tokyo associations.

Chapter Four sets forth the evolution of associational life in Little Tokyo from the early Japanese immigrants in the late 1880s to the years before WWII. In particular, this chapter discusses the development of the ***dispersed community*** model, socially and economically interdependent but spatially dispersed ethnic communities, with Little Tokyo as the central hub of economic, social, legal, and cultural activities for the satellite agricultural outposts that the early Japanese immigrants formed. The contribution of this chapter is that it reframes Little Tokyo from the conventional space-based analysis to a much broader spatial community distribution.

Early on, because Japanese immigrants were working in the agricultural areas and elsewhere, it was not physical residence that made Little Tokyo an ethnic enclave. Even before WWII and the modern internet, it was an ethnic enclave because it constituted a hub for formal and informal communications of its dispersed constituents. This chapter also discusses the destructive impact of the WWII mass internment of all West Coast Japanese on the ***dispersed community*** model.

Chapter Five discusses associational life in Little Tokyo from post WWII resettlement to the present. Japanese corporations, postwar Japanese immigrants and non-immigrants (e.g. tourist, student) and multicultural residents and business groups became the new, growing constituents of Little Tokyo. Despite the fact that people of Japanese ancestry were increasingly migrating to the suburbs and assimilating into mainstream American society, many Japanese returned to reclaim, rebuild, and

preserve Little Tokyo as the historic and symbolic center of the dispersed Japanese community in Southern California. Key voluntary organizations were formed to foster these preservation efforts. Many were formed to oppose or to counter external and internal threats to Little Tokyo such as civic center expansion, overseas investment, gentrification, growing multiethnic community members, and growing diversification of Japanese American demography.

This chapter sheds light on the role of surviving *issei* and *nisei* during the resettlement after WWII and the early stage of redevelopment of Little Tokyo, whose contributions have been marginalized or neglected in prior studies of post-war Little Tokyo and its larger regeneration. The conventional Asian American Studies focused on the role of third generation, *sansei*. Although *sansei* took the lead in much of the post-war community building, the current harmonious coexistence of diversity in Little Tokyo would probably not exist without the community infrastructure that *issei* and *nisei* created and preserved in their efforts to bring Japanese capital to Little Tokyo. Few were documented about this period and much of the documentation and analysis was conducted in Japanese.

Also, this chapter was designed to deconstruct the conventional conflict analysis based on the simple dichotomy between Japanese Americans and overseas capital. It acknowledges the complicated relationships between and among various Japanese subgroups, which have generational, cultural, and linguistic differences with different historical roots and thereby reveals the diverse nature of contemporary

Japanese Americans. This chapter also deepens the discussion of the centrality of Little Tokyo by analyzing the role of associations in the dispersed community.

Chapter Six summarizes the historical evolution of Little Tokyo and provides an alternative view on its history from the perspectives of continuity and discontinuity of Little Tokyo community from pre-war to post-war. By doing so, this paper examines the root history and heritage of Little Tokyo. This chapter posits that the existence of Little Tokyo as a highly communal ***dispersed community*** connected through social, cultural, political and economic activities since the 1880s and has been a template that has facilitated the 21st Century dispersed community. The use of modern communications as well as community associations to stay engaged with other community members and Little Tokyo's various revitalization projects is not a large conceptual leap from early 20th Century communal associations.

Part III, analysis, includes chapter Seven and Eight, which examine the institutional principles that make the continuous regeneration of Little Tokyo possible.

Chapter Seven summarizes the evolution of Little Tokyo and analyzes why and how Little Tokyo has continued to exist as an ethnic enclave for 130 years. This thesis posits two generating causes. First, the duality of the community's existence, being both space based and dispersed, with Little Tokyo providing the hub for communication networks, promoting the social, cultural, financial and political survival of the community and its members as it perpetuated Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave. Second, first generation Japanese, second generation Japanese Americans and their progeny became empowered by the collective memory of the unfairness of

the WWII internments and used associations to preserve Little Tokyo's space and heritage with its history of the immigrant struggles and the internments. The Little Tokyo community is now addressing the need to re-identify "Japanese Americanness" in the midst of shifting demographics, where fewer have any connection to the internments and more are the progeny of racially mixed marriages and post-war immigrants, reflecting the shifting nature of American nationalism as it accommodates growing multiculturalism.

Chapter Eight concludes the paper with implications and sociological contributions of this study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Overview

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a theoretical framework to analyze the community building of an ethnic enclave by a single ethnic group in a multicultural American city, where diverse races and ethnicities come, leave, or coexist.

Robert Putnam and other Neo-Tocquevilleans have analyzed community building in America by focusing on free and equal individuals who form associations, which then become the building blocks of a community. However, the Putnam analysis fails to address community building by ethnic and racial minorities who have been overtly and covertly excluded from broader society. Thus, his analysis on community building is based in a relatively homogenous context, not a multicultural context.

Putnam's analysis does not only fail to include the idea of an ethnic enclave, but it also does not incorporate or address the experiences of ethnic and racial minorities who have had to deal with issues of racism in America. The Putnam analysis also ignores the idea that racial and ethnic pride can be positive motivating forces in community building. Community building by the Japanese in the 130-year-old Little Tokyo differs from the Putnam template of free and equal individuals voluntarily forming associations.

Little Tokyo also displays the multicultural aspect of the ethnic enclave, a place where diverse groups who were marginalized for racial and ethnic reasons originally gathered and existed (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007). The Japanese

performed daily “symbolic practices” (Minamikawa 106) in order to claim the space as theirs within Los Angeles and within broader American society (105-114, 130-132).

From the earliest Japanese immigrants who were barred from owning land and were considered to be “aliens ineligible for citizenship”, to the Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans who were involuntarily interned during World War II as “enemy aliens”, to the *sansei* who fought for civil rights and social justice from the 1960s to the present, community building has largely been based on the formation of associations which provide mutual support and protection of the Japanese heritage, culture, and continued identification of the ethnicity. The history of Little Tokyo therefore also includes Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans who worked tirelessly to preserve its history and culture by making it a hub for the dispersed Japanese community. This on-going and trans-generational work demonstrates how racial and ethnic identity and pride can be utilized as powerful, positive, and motivating forces for community building in multicultural America.

2.2 Can Robert Putnam’s Community Building Theory be Applied to Little Tokyo As an Ethnic Enclave?

2.2.1. Robert Putnam’s Debt to de Tocqueville

American sociologist Robert Putnam acknowledged his intellectual debt to Alexis de Tocqueville (Fried 2002; Ehrenberg 2002; Schultz 2002), a French nobleman, politician and historian who wrote *American Democracy*, the classic work that defined the specific nature of American community building. Tocqueville’s work highlights the

importance of associations – individuals voluntarily banding together to pursue a common goal – as being in the American tradition of community building (Tocqueville).

During his trip to the United States in 1831, Tocqueville observed that Americans had a strong sense of autonomy with the ability to solve their own problems by forming associations. Tocqueville called these associations “intermediary groups” which mediate and provide linkages “between the individual and his primary relations, on the one hand, and the state and other national relations, on the other hand” (Kaunhauser 74).

Tocqueville (2010) observed:

[W]herever, at the head of some new undertaking, you see the government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association... Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations...associations of a thousand other kinds -- religious, moral, serious, futile, general, or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; they found in this manner hospitals, prisons, or schools (230).

Tocqueville attributes this uniquely American tradition of community building in large to the Puritan influence in the founding of America. The Puritans came to America on an arduous and difficult passage, seeking religious and political freedom. Puritans formed associations as free and equal individuals to pursue the common good

once they were liberated from the class and social constraints that pervaded European society. Thus, Tocqueville saw Puritanism as the root of American community building. The Puritan avowal of religious and political freedom is a fundamental starting point for Putnam's theories as well.

As a neo-Tocquevillean, Putnam asserts that associations with the voluntary commitment of free and equal individuals are key to a vital civic community (Delanty 115). In *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), Putnam observes that during the first 60 years of the twentieth century, Americans became increasingly interconnected with one another and with community affairs. In support of his view, Putnam highlights the unprecedented number of national voluntary associations founded in the period from 1870 to 1920 and a "civic inventiveness [reaching] crescendo unmatched in American history, not merely in terms of numbers of clubs, but in the range and durability of the newly founded organizations" (384).

2.2.2. Putnam's analysis of the reversal of civic involvement since the 1960s

The trend of American civic involvement reversed during second half of the 20th century. According to Putnam's research (2000), beginning in the early 1960s, "massive numbers of Americans began measurably to join less, trust less, give less, and vote less" (Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 4). Involvement in civic associations, participation in public affairs, membership in churches, social clubs, and unions, time

spent with families and neighbors, philanthropic giving, and overall trust in others, fell by 25 to 50 percent (ibid). Putnam uses bowling leagues as a symbolic example. Although the number of people who bowl has increased, the number of people who bowl in leagues has declined steeply since 1980. According to Putnam (2000), this trend demonstrates a decline in social interaction and engagement that would otherwise occur in associations such as bowling leagues.

Putnam emphasizes the importance of social capital in community building. He defines social capital as social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness (Putnam, 2000). He argues that a variety of technological, economic and social changes such as television, two-career families, and suburban sprawl have diminished America's social capital, leading to the decline and disengagement of individual Americans in community life and activities since the 1960s.

Before writing about American civic life, Putnam focused on Italy in *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993). In this study of modern Italy, Putnam explored how social context and history profoundly condition the effectiveness of civic institutions for community building. He concluded where there is a fertile civic community, there are good civic institutions. According to Putnam, history and social patterns are "decisive in explaining why . . . some communities are better able than others to manage collective life and sustain effective institutions" (121).

2.2.3. Can Putnam's theories be applied to community building in Little Tokyo?

The question that calls out is whether Putnam's theories apply to Little Tokyo, which persists as an ethnic enclave in a racially and ethnically diverse Los Angeles or whether Little Tokyo offers a different model of community building because retention of ethnic identity has been its essential engine of involvement.

In his article, "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century" (2007), Putnam argues that the more diverse the community, the less its members trust each other or the government, and the less they participate in collective life or believe in their own power to change their community and politics. Tellingly consistent with his theory, Putnam's survey ranks Los Angeles, one of the most racially and ethnically diverse cities in the United States, among the lowest of forty-one American cities in participation in collective community life.

Putnam's implicit suggestion that finding a common identity among diverse ethnic and racial groups would encourage community building is dispelled by the Little Tokyo model. According to Putnam (2007), one remedy for the higher level of social isolation among diversity is to build and strengthen community based on a common identity among the diverse many (159-165). This common identity proposal is familiar and in line with cultural pluralists such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1998) who calls for the societal goal of *e pluribus unum*, or "one out of many," with the principles of individual freedom, political democracy, and equality as common values binding all

Americans together (17). To illustrate his point, Putnam quotes President Barack Obama's vision of America:

[A]n America where race is understood in the same way that the ethnic diversity of the white population is understood. People take pride in being Irish-American and Italian-American... [Race] is not something that determines people's life chances and there is no sense of superiority or inferiority... [I]f we can expand that attitude to embrace African-American and Latino-American and Asian-American... all our kids can feel comfortable with the worlds they are coming out of knowing they are part of something larger (Putnam 165).

The question devolves to whether the Little Tokyo model of community building which was and is inspired by pride in the Japanese American culture and heritage is consistent with Schlesinger' societal goal of "one out of many" and the principles of individual freedom, political democracy, and equality as common values which will bind all Americans together. Out of this question, perhaps, is the ultimate question, whether community building based on ethnic pride is an expression of the common values of individual freedom as well as political democracy and equality.

2.3 Little Tokyo as an Alternative Model for Community Building in Multicultural America

Putnam is a neo-Tocquevillean whose academic discourse lies in an intermediary group theory based on voluntary associations. This paper provides an

alternative view of community building using the Japanese experience and history in Little Tokyo as a model.

In an American history, non-whites were not considered equal. Instead, non-whites, that is, those who were not Caucasian, were categorized by their race and ethnicity, often perceived as “adherents of a group”, and considered collectively as inferior and unassimilable by white America (Schlesinger 118). Schlesinger (1998) states, “America has been a racist nation” (18) for most of its history. According to Schlesinger (1998), the history of America is the history of the response to the constant fear that the Puritan settlers confronted, to exclude the perceived threats and to maintain the Anglo-Puritan foundations of the nation. Thus, although “[n]oble ideals had been pronounced as if for all Americans” (Schlesinger 44), and although America was multiethnic from its beginning, the core essential value of community building as described by Tocqueville was in practice only by white Americans until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

California and Los Angeles were multiethnic from their beginnings. Los Angeles was founded as a civil settlement by Spain in 1781. When Tocqueville was traveling the East Coast in 1831 and praising the Puritan foundation of a democratic society, California had been a Mexican territory for only twelve years, since the 1821 when it defeated Spain. Mexico gave up California and other large territories to the United States in 1848 at the end of the 1846-1848 Mexican-American war. California became a state in 1849. Historian Kevin Starr (2005) summarizes the beginning of multiethnic California:

If there is such a thing as DNA codes for states . . . crucial to the sociogenetic heritage of California, it would be ethnic diversity. It began in the Native American era . . . and it continued through the Spanish and Mexican eras. Were one to see the first settlers of Los Angeles assembling in the plaza-to-be in September 1781 and examine them from the perspective of their genetic heritage, one would encounter European, Native American, and African bloodlines mixed in every possible combination. Ask these settlers what they were, and they would reply "Spaniards," possibly even "Mexicans," for . . . to be a subject of the Spanish crown was not a matter of bloodline but of Hispanic culture, Roman Catholicism, and loyalty to viceroy and king. The brief Mexican era only intensified this diversity with the arrival of English, American, French, and Russians settlers. During the Gold Rush, diversity exfoliated into brilliant hues as nearly every portion of the planet sent its people to California . . . No one claims that everyone was treated fairly in any of these periods. Far from it. (305)

Tocqueville did not write about multiethnic California in *Democracy in America*. Had Tocqueville traveled to California, he would have seen a very different society and different racial and ethnic groups composing its people than he saw the East Coast. The people of early California were heterogeneous, unequal, and hierarchical (Starr).

Later in the nineteenth century, the West Coast was far more multiracial with more Asians and fewer Anglo Puritans than the East Coast. Chinese laborers made up 60 percent of the total workforce in California in the nineteenth century due to the

scarcity of white laborers (Takaki 1989 1993; McWilliams 1944). Japanese immigrants came to California and would fill in workforce needs following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

In sum, Tocqueville's assumption of free and equal individuals engaged in community building with associations was based on a relatively homogeneous nineteenth century society in the eastern half of the United States, not the twentieth and twenty-first century realities that encompass many ethnic and racial groups vying for position and power. The assumption of freedom and equality simply did not take community building among marginalized racial and ethnic groups into consideration. This theory cannot be applied to a multiethnic society because it is not homogeneous; rather, it is distinctly heterogeneous with unequal relations and competition among racial and ethnic groups.

So then, if Tocqueville's assumptions cannot be applied to racial and ethnic minorities, is there a feasible community-building model for ethnic and racial groups? Little Tokyo offers a model.

2.3.1. Community Building for Mutual Aid and Survival

Putnam and neo-Tocquevilleans consider voluntary formation of associations by free and equal individuals to be the essence of American community building. However, the Japanese who lived in America when its laws and social mores were openly discriminatory clearly did not live as free and equal individuals. As they were excluded from white associations and communities, Japanese and Japanese Americans

as well as other racial and ethnic groups were forced to create and institutionalize parallel communities (Fujita, O'Brien 30).

Early Japanese enclaves were rich in social capital with highly organized social networks based on trust, reciprocity and mutual aid (Fujita, O'Brien 1991; McWilliams 1944, Takaki 1993). Living in a country that classified them as aliens ineligible for citizenship and land ownership, early Japanese immigrants formed a wide range of institutions such as schools, hospitals, churches, temples, sport teams, and rotating credit associations. In Los Angeles, there were 350 associations formed by Japanese and Japanese Americans before the World War II (McWilliams 85). Many of these Japanese organizations such as rotating credit systems and cooperatives were based on traditional forms of mutual aid common in Japanese villages. According to Putnam (1993), these traditional Japanese practices of mutual aid and communal solidarity are "fed by the same underlying stock of social capital", including exchange labor patterns, reciprocal gift giving, and assistance in death, illness, and other personal crises (169).

Yet, these voluntarily formed Japanese associations created strong and well-organized networks for mutual aid and survival in a racially hostile environment. This community building was fundamentally different from that envisioned by Putnam. This type of community building was motivated in large part to meet the financial and physical as well as the social needs of the community excluded from commerce and prevented from participating in regular society by racial and ethnic discrimination. This need to form associations to protect against and counter the effects of racial discrimination starkly contrasts Putnam's vision of the voluntarily formation of

associations to advance goals by free and equal individuals. The reality facing racially excluded groups was not parallel to the world of voluntary associations. Racially marginalized groups could not participate in the associations that Tocqueville observed and admired. This reality is one that Putnam fails to give adequate acknowledgment.

It is important to note that the period that Putnam highlights as the height of the association formation coincides with a period of heightened nationalism as well as heightened racial discrimination and exclusion (Huntington). According to Huntington, the period from the 1860s to the 1960s, or the end of the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement, was the century of American nationalism, with the peak of nationalism happening roughly between the 1880s to the 1920s. During this latter time period, national identity was strongest in American history and “Americans of all classes, regions, and ethnic groups competed in expressing their nationalism and demonstrating their patriotism” (120). Anti-Asian sentiments grew strong during this period, leading to the passage of racist laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Alien Land Law, and the total prohibition of Asian immigration through the Immigration Act of 1924.

To protect against this racial hostility, Japanese communities built their networks of mutual aid and social capital. Some have observed that Putnam demonstrates nostalgia for a bygone period when American communities, primarily white communities, were at their strongest (Delandy 116). This may be the reason, though he does not offer a response, for his failure to address community building among racial and ethnic minorities.

2.3.2. Community Building Based on Ethnic Identity

Putnam ignores the conspicuous growth of many forms of social participation and civic activity since the 1960s by ethnic and racial minorities. Among the various movements of that era, the Civil Rights and Multicultural Movements are the most significant since the dramatic paradigm change in both mainstream white and marginalized nonwhite societies occurred. The 1964 Civil Rights Act barred, at least in theory, discrimination based on race as well as sex. This implicitly acknowledged all people were equal as individual “Americans.”

Multiculturalism³¹ is a social movement designed to shed equal light on cultures, identities, and viewpoints of the various racial and ethnic groups and stresses that groups need to be treated equally and analyzed with a different “mirror” than that of the mainstream (Takaki). Cultural pluralists criticize multiculturalism as a radical form that “opposes the idea of a common culture, rejects the goals of assimilation and integration, and celebrates the immutability of diverse and separate ethnic and racial communities” (Schlesinger 150).

Despite the multiple, from modest to radical, interpretations of the multiculturalism, the significant achievement of this social movement is that nonwhite ethnicity and identity has been recognized and valued in every aspect of the society daily, political, and academic life.

Except for Tocqueville, who made an exception in “factoring persons of color into the American equation” and identified racism as the flaw in American democracy

³¹ Multiculturalism has multiple definitions but this paper refers to it as one of the social movements and takes Ronald Takaki’s thought on the subject.

(Schlesinger 44), and others like St. John de Crevecoeur, *Melting Pot* author Israel Zangwill, and Hoorace Kallen, who coined the term “cultural pluralism” in 1915, the interpretation of the culturally plural aspect of American society was only for white Americans until the 1960s (Endo 1999; Schlesinger 1998). Thus, it was only after the civil rights and multiculturalism movements that the light of study was directed to race and nonwhite ethnicity.

Because of civil rights and multiculturalism movements, ethnic groups are no longer presented as an “inferior” or “unassimilable” into the mainstream culture; rather, there is an attempt to give each an equal and positive interpretation, including the aspects of “differences” and “multiplicity” natural consequences of the movements. American academia has become increasingly fractionalized (Takaki 1998; Schlesinger 1998; Huntington 2004; Gestle 2001). American public nature became increasingly diversified as formerly marginalized people became integral features of American civil society (Boggs 187-188).

As for community building, various derivative movements such as the Asian American Movement and radical Third World Left activism³² redefined their old ethnic enclaves, which had been based on survival and mutual aid, to recognition of their ethnic identity. Little Tokyo for example, became highly politicized and its community moved to preserve the Japanese culture and heritage as well as the history of Little Tokyo, which is community building based on ethnic group identity.

The paradigm and principle of this community building is different from that discussed by Putnam. This new style of community building has a coherent character

³²³² Laura Pulido (2006), *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left*.

different from that of the era of rampant racial discrimination. Although the Japanese are an “ethnic minority” and no longer the “marginalized colored” of times gone by, Japanese community building is still partially based on being a countermeasure to the perceived threat of injustice for just being a minority and the threat of rapidly expanding globalization.

Inspired by 1970s and 1980s global imperialism and the dependency theory in the developing countries, the ethnic minority, especially in urban metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, related their experience to global phenomena (Pulido). It was argued that industrialization wipes out the traditional, social and cultural elements of the society including the ethnic enclave, and transforms the urban landscape into a “functionally homogenous” place, as Bellah also points out (44). According to Bellah (1996), even Tocqueville predicted that industrialization would destroy civic society more than a hundred years ago (41-42).

Unfortunately, Putnam saw the decline of “American community” when these social movements started. Boggs (2002) argues that Putnam’s choice of indicators to measure declining social capital in American communities in *Bowling Alone* was biased on the “mostly safe, conformist, traditional community activities favored by the older generations and, within those generations, by largely middle-class or upper middle-class strata” (186). Thus, old voluntary organizations declined as their goals became outdated, “mostly reflective of a small-town America, which itself was in the process of vanishing” (ibid).

In sum, community building in Little Tokyo based on racial and ethnic identity was a result of the civil rights movements and the multicultural movement's decisions to fight for the unfulfilled right of the American Creed with collective action. Community building by association was also against the more globally embedded phenomenon of global capitalism. This kind of community building sought to buy the space occupied by Little Tokyo, in order to preserve their community with its history and memory, all of which is based on different principles and different commitments to the community than set out in the Putnam paradigm.

2.4 Theoretical Postulates of the Study

America is in a state of continuing transformation, in ideology, society and nationhood, with constant modification (Schlesinger): “[I]f practice betrayed theory in the short run, in the longer run theory has modified practice. The movement from exclusion to inclusion, uneven but persevering, is one of the grand themes of American history” (151). Like a swinging pendulum, America is constantly searching, modifying and creating their own society, both on an individual level and group level. In so doing, marginalized groups are also transforming. Currently, one-third of the American people do not trace their ancestries to Europe, and in California, minorities became the majority (Takaki). This expanding multicultural reality of American society is also challenging the traditional notion of America as a white nation. Thus the relation between racial and ethnic minorities and the mainstream is more dynamic than static.

Because of this dynamic relationship, this paper will not address whether the Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans continue to see themselves primarily as individuals or part of a group or the contrary, as debated by multiculturalists and cultural-pluralists. Rather, the paper will attempt to shed light on the Japanese community that struggles in the search for identity in this transforming nation and will argue that this struggle for identity is reflected in the continuous process of community building of Little Tokyo.

Equally, this thesis does not intend to reflect a bias towards the dichotomy between the parallel civic and racial worlds that existed in America during a large part of its history. Rather, the thesis focuses on the distinctively complicated and overlapping relations between a “marginalized colored minority” and mainstream American society in the times of exclusion and inclusion. As Fujita and O’Brien (1991) explain, the creation of a parallel, racialized community does not mean that the Japanese were completely isolated from white American society. With the exception of a few segregated elementary schools, most of the Japanese were educated in integrated schools. Moreover, students often took an active part in the athletic and organization life of their schools (30). These schools indoctrinated all students, including the Japanese, with the American Creed, “but virtually all of their significant social interactions outside of school were with other Japanese Americans. It is most accurate to say, then, that the *nisei* grew up in two worlds, one white and one Japanese” (30). This paper will focus on the duality and the blurred distinction of

contradictory ideals the world the immigrant and the children of immigrants who were people of color were living.

One example of the blurred distinctions is the Japanese American Creed, written by the second-generation Masaoka in 1940 for the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) national convention. JACL, the largest *nisei* led civic association, is considered to symbolize all the JACL stood for, “patriotism, pride and trust in America” (JANM 184). However, it also symbolizes sorrow and painful struggle for the Japanese and Japanese Americans who were searching for their identity prior to the Civil Rights Movement. Their reality was bifurcated between Japanese ethnic and American groups and between the racialized group and the individual. As the Japanese American Creed (1940) goes:

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future ... Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way: above board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by providing myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on

the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics. Because I believe in America, I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her Constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without reservations whatsoever, in the hope I may become a better American in a greater America (JANM 184-185).

Why did the American born *nisei* make this declaration to the American society? In part because they well knew that acquiring citizenship, learning the English language, and obtaining American education would not completely protect against the racial discrimination that their immigrant parents faced (Takaki). Two years after this affirmation was made public, these same Japanese Americans were treated as “enemy aliens” and collectively sent to the internment camps with their parents. Notwithstanding this betrayal of trust, during the internment, many *nisei* continued to prove their loyalty towards America by joining the armed services and by displaying bravery on the battlefield and while in the internment camps.³³

The painful traumatic struggle to be perceived as an individual, loyal American included attempts to extinguish the “imposed” racialized group perception. It was a

³³ 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Japanese American *nisei* military unit during the WWII, suffered the highest casualty rate and was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in American military history. The achievement of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team helped to prove that “Japanese Americans were as Americans” as President Truman stated, “You fought not only the enemy but you fought prejudice-and you have won” (JANM 2000, p. 138).

“habit of the heart”³⁴ embedded in this racialized group before the Civil Rights Movement. The memory and history of the Japanese immigrant community before WWII, during the internment and after, is part of the legacy passed on to the second, third and fourth generations. A reflection of this group memory and identity is that the third generation’s ethnic identity played a significant role in Civil Rights Movement and the postwar community building of Little Tokyo.

³⁴ Tocqueville defines mores as “habit of the heart”; notions, opinions and ideas that “shape mental habits”; and “the sum of moral and intellectual dispositions of men in society” (Bellah 1996, p.37).

Chapter 3 Overview of Little Tokyo in 2014

This chapter provides an overview of Little Tokyo today.

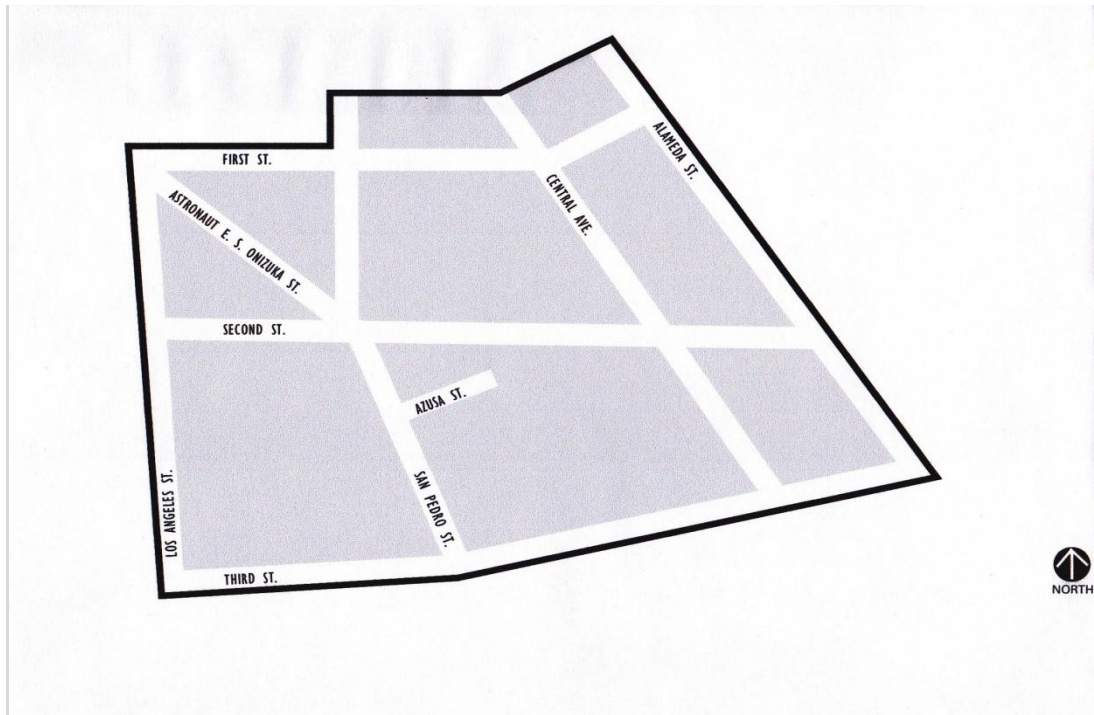
3.1. Boundaries of Little Tokyo

The boundaries of what is considered to be Little Tokyo have changed over the decades. The general location has always been in downtown Los Angeles, near City Hall and later Union Station, the largest railroad passenger terminal in the western United States. At its peak before World War II, Little Tokyo, its businesses and Japanese residences, occupied three times more space than it does today. Since the 1960s, the redevelopment and expansion of the downtown Civic Center, and the incursion of government office space into the central city displaced many Japanese-owned businesses.

The Little Tokyo District, as defined by the City's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and adopted by the City Council on February 24, 1970, is a roughly three block by three block area bound by First Street to the north, Alameda Street to the east, Third Street to the south and Los Angeles Street to the west. City Hall and other government buildings occupy the space to the immediate north and west of Little Tokyo. The Arts District, an industrial area with many artist lofts, is on the east border. Skid Row, which is "home" to the region's largest concentration of homeless and mentally ill persons, is located immediately south. This area also includes marginal

discount businesses and “missions,” charities that offer food and overnight lodging to some of the region’s homeless population.

Figure 3.1 Map of Little Tokyo (CRA Boundary)

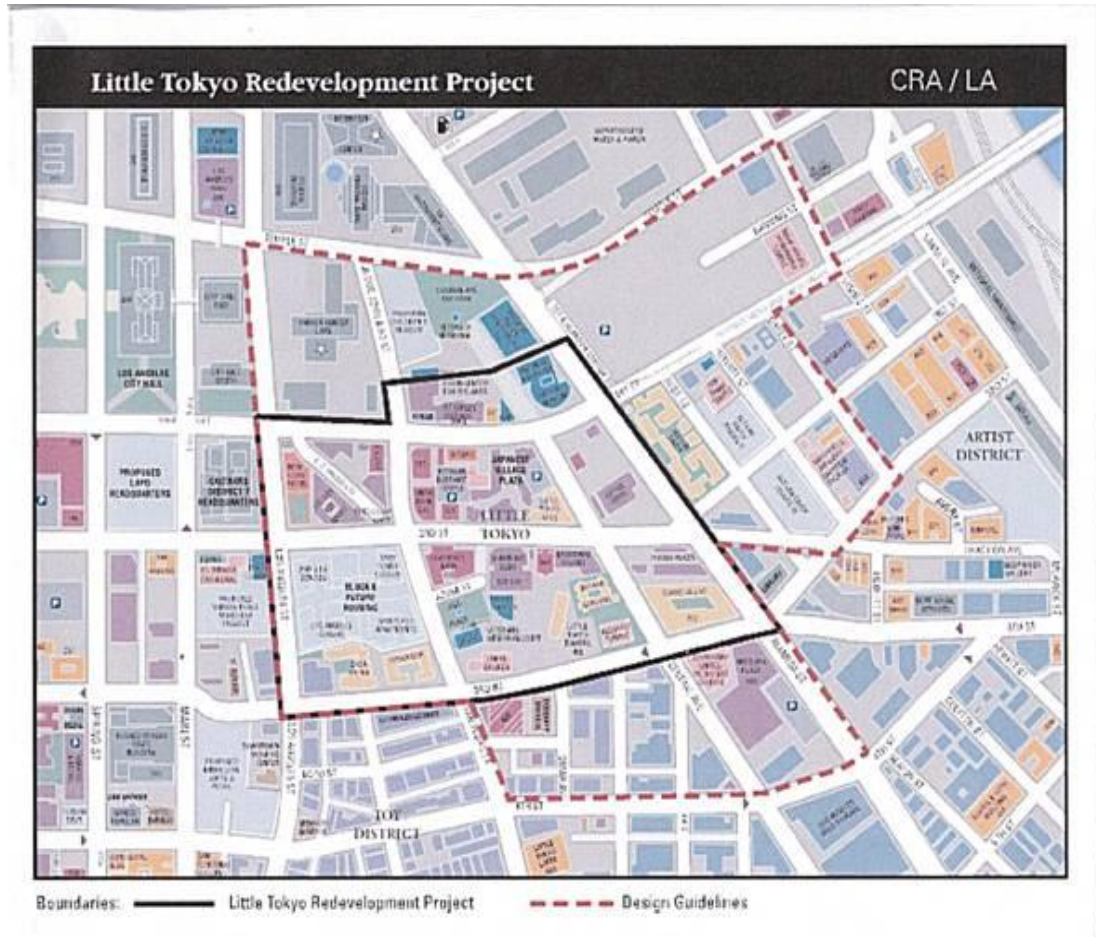


Source: Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

It is important to note that the CRA boundaries exclude much of historic Little Tokyo. Important historical Japanese community institutions including Buddhist temples, Christian churches and a library are located outside of the CRA boundaries. In November of 2005, the Mayor’s Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) designated a slightly larger area.³⁵

³⁵ The Mayor’s Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) designated the following boundaries for Little Tokyo: Temple Street from Los Angeles Street to Vignes Street, eastern border are Vignes Street from Temple to 1st Street; Garey Street from 1st Street to 3rd

Figure 3.2 Little Tokyo as designated by the Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) in 2005



Source: Little Tokyo Planning & Design Guidelines (2005)
 Note: Red dotted line is the proposed expanded boundary.

Street; Alameda Street from 2nd Street to 4th Street, for the southern border 1st Street from Vignes Street to Garey Street; 3rd Street from Garey Street to Traction Avenue; Traction to Alameda Street; 4th Street from Alameda Street to San Pedro Street; 3rd Street from San Pedro Street to Los Angeles, and western border from Los Angeles Street from 3rd Street to Temple Street including the west side of Los Angeles Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets; San Pedro Street from 4th street to 3rd Street for Western Border (LTCC and Mayor's LTCDAC 2005).

By 2014, the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) advocated for expanding the official boundary lines recognized by the City of Los Angeles for historical preservation activities.³⁶ At the February 4, 2014 hearing of the Los Angeles City Planning Department's hearing, the city proposed expanding the northern boundary of the Little Tokyo District to Temple Street, but refused to expand other boundary lines because of opposition from neighboring districts such as the Arts District and Skid Row, where many social service providers are concentrated.³⁷ As a compromise, the city proposed to designate historic Japanese American buildings outside of the Little Tokyo District for preservation purposes, including the Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple, the Jodoshu Buddhist Temple, the Centenary United Methodist Church, the Little Tokyo Library and the Budokan (the Multipurpose Gymnasium project currently prepared by the Little Tokyo Service Center).

3.2. Little Tokyo's Residential Population

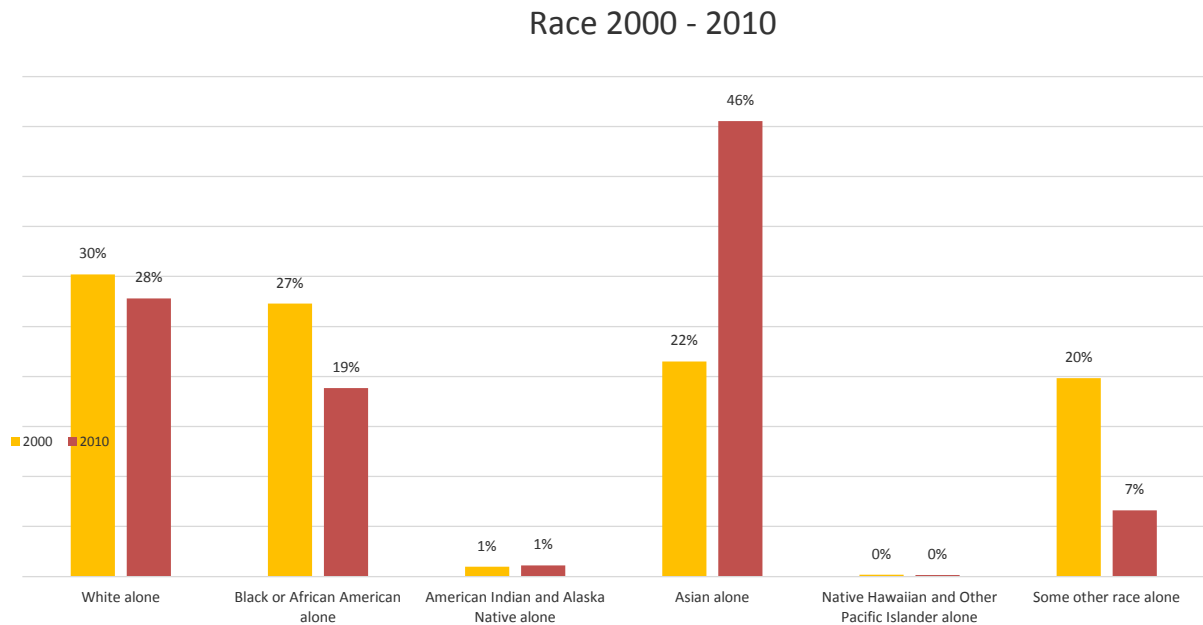
The 2010 Census provides demographic data for the Little Tokyo residential population. Unfortunately for the purposes of this paper, the relevant Census tracts encompass not only the CRA and LTSDC boundary areas for Little Tokyo, but also parts of Skid Row and the Arts District, populations outside of Little Tokyo.

³⁶ The City of Los Angeles is currently finalizing its Community Design Overlays, which are official designations for the boundaries of neighborhoods in the City of L.A. The Little Tokyo community proposed the wider boundaries on August 8, 2013.

³⁷ Other buildings with a history related to historical Little Tokyo were also excluded from the boundaries including St. Francis Xavier Japanese Catholic Church, Zenshuji Temple, Hiroshima Kenjinkai of Southern California and Rafu Shimpō.

The 2010 Census data, however imperfect, is nonetheless a window into the demographics of the current Little Tokyo population of approximately 3,300. Of these residents, 42 percent were Asian, 27 percent African American, 20 percent Latino, and 12 percent white (Caucasian). This data likely includes more African Americans and Latinos than those who actually reside in Little Tokyo.³⁸ The data from the 2000 and 2010 censuses shows that the Korean population increased the most within that ten-year period (130 percent), while the Chinese population increased (47 percent), and the Japanese population decreased by 3 percent. During this same period, the African American population decreased 23 percent and the Latino population decreased 22 percent.³⁹

Table 3.1 Racial Profile of Little Tokyo



Source: Little Tokyo Basic Demographic & Market Profile conducted by LISC (2013)

³⁸³⁸ Census data includes portions of 3rd and 4th Streets that are part of Skid Row.

³⁹³⁹ Daniel Ichinose, "Japanese Americans: 2010 Census and American Community Survey Data" Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2012 (presentation sheet).

The unique character of Little Tokyo is highlighted by the significant variation in demographic characteristics between the two census tracts that cover the Little Tokyo area. Asians are the largest racial group in the Little Tokyo/Skid Row area and the Little Tokyo/Arts District census tracts, while African Americans are the largest population in the adjacent Skid Row tract. While the median income for the entire City of Los Angeles \$50,028, the median income for the Little Tokyo/Arts District is \$59,375. The median income in Little Tokyo/Skid Row is \$17,219, while it is only \$3,727 in Skid Row itself. Thus, the gentrifying neighborhood in the Little Tokyo/Arts District is just blocks away from one of the poorest neighborhoods in the entire city.

Table 3.2 Race by Sub Blocks

2010	Block Group Skid Row	Block Group Little Tokyo/Skid Row	Block Group Little Tokyo/Arts District
White	325	755	386
African American	493	107	394
American Indian	34	5	19
Asian	27	1,050	1,324
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	2	4
Other	120	74	154
2 or more races	28	95	77

Source: Little Tokyo Basic Demographic & Market Profile conducted by Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) (2013)

Table 3.3 Income by Sub Blocks

2010	Block Group Skid Row	Block Group Little Tokyo/Skid Row	Block Group Little Tokyo/Arts District
Less than \$25,000	424	1,958	88
\$25,000 – 34,999	0	46	70
\$35,000 – 49,999	26	76	95
\$50,000 – 74,999	0	61	120
\$75,000 – 99,999	0	46	118
\$100,000 – 149,999	0	88	125
Greater than \$150,000	0	109	70
Median Income	\$3,727	\$17,219	\$59,375

Source: Little Tokyo Basic Demographic & Market Profile conducted by LISC (2013)

Even though Little Tokyo is immediately adjacent to Skid Row, which is home to the largest homeless population in the region, there are relatively few homeless people in Little Tokyo. There is no official explanation, but it may be due to the strong police presence in the area and that Little Tokyo is adjacent to the Los Angeles Police Department headquarters. Little Tokyo merchants also lobbied to have a *koban*, or a police substation, located near the intersection of First and San Pedro Streets, and formed a volunteer public safety patrol team to increase security but also to discourage the homeless from living in Little Tokyo.

Until 2005, most residents who lived within the Little Tokyo boundaries as defined by the CRA resided in one of five affordable housing developments and one

market rate condominium complex. Japanese seniors form the largest group of residents in affordable housing, with a significant number of them being post-World War II Japanese immigrants. Little Tokyo had been home for mostly Japanese seniors and other low-income residents until around 2005, when the neighborhood became gentrified with the influx of higher income and younger, mostly non-Japanese residents.

Koreans constitute the second largest group of residents in Little Tokyo, and are approximately one third of the Little Tokyo's Asian population. Many Korean residents in Little Tokyo are seniors who speak Japanese because they lived in Korea during the period of Japanese occupation. There are also other non-Japanese speaking Koreans who moved to Little Tokyo, some from L.A.'s Koreatown, because they thought the neighborhood was safe, quiet and clean⁴⁰.

Currently there are five affordable housing developments within the CRA Little Tokyo boundaries: The Little Tokyo Towers, Casa Heiwa, the San Pedro Firm Building, the Far East Building, and the Miyako Gardens. Three of the five housing units are owned by LT Service Center: Casa Heiwa, the San Pedro Firm Building, and the Far East Building.

The Little Tokyo Towers are the oldest and the largest of these with 300 units. The residence was built with federal funding in the mid-1970s to primarily serve the low-income Japanese seniors who had lived in the residential hotels that were demolished as part of the city's redevelopment program to build the New Otani Hotel

⁴⁰ Interview with Honsun Kim, social service staff of LTSC, on November 26, 2008

and the Weller Court. Both the hotel and Weller Court involved large infusions of offshore Japanese capital.

According to a 2012 household survey of the Little Tokyo Towers' residents, 54 percent were Japanese, 43 percent were Korean (an increase from 39.7 percent in 2008), and 3 percent were Chinese. Most residents were between 70 to 80 years old. The survey also indicated that almost all residents were immigrants, with 53 percent speaking Japanese, 41 percent speaking Korean, and 4 percent speaking Chinese.

The San Pedro Firm Building and the Far East Building are mixed use, affordable housing buildings that are more than eighty years old. These buildings were developed by the Little Tokyo Service Center and contain forty-two affordable housing studios and sixteen units respectively. These two buildings were among thirteen buildings on the north side of First Street between San Pedro Street and Central Street that were preserved in the National Register of Historic Places as a result of community cultural heritage preservation efforts. According to a 2008 survey of the San Pedro Firm building residents, 68 percent of residents were Japanese, with other residents self-identified as Korean, Chinese, African American, Latino, White and Filipino. There are 16 single room units Far East Building. In 2014, five residents were Japanese, six were Hispanic, two were Caucasian, two were African American, and one was Thai. Former homeless or low-income tenants and handicapped residents also live in this building.

Casa Heiwa, or House of Peace in Spanish and Japanese, was constructed in 1996 by LTSC. It is a mixed-use, low-income housing development with 100 family units. According to a 2008 household resident survey, 38 percent of tenants were

Latino, 20 percent were Korean, 18 percent were Japanese, 11 percent were African American, and 7.3 were percent Chinese. The primary languages were Spanish (34%), English (23%), Korean (17%), Japanese (13%), Chinese (8%) and Vietnamese (2%).

Miyako Gardens, constructed in 1980 with Federal government subsidies⁴¹, provides housing of 100 units (most are single unit) where a growing number of Koreans reside.

There had been one market-rate condominium in Little Tokyo until 2005. Tokyo Villa provides 167 rooms. Eighty-six percent of Tokyo Villa residents are Japanese with the average age being 59 years old.

Since 2005, there has been a significant increase market-rate condominium construction, which has brought a dramatic influx of younger and higher income and Koreans, Whites, and Latinos⁴². In 2006, the Savoy development brought 303 new units to the border of Little Tokyo and the Arts District. Savoy put the units up for sale in December 2005 and quickly sold out with prices ranging from \$281,000 for a 504 square-foot studio to \$820,000 for a 1,226 square foot three bedroom unit⁴³. Other new developments include the Mura (190 units) in 2007 at the border of Little Tokyo and the Arts District and the Teramachi (127 units) in 2006 next to Casa Heiwa on Third Street near San Pedro Street. More recently, new market-rate condominium developments include the Artisan (118 units), Hikari, Sakura Crossings, and Block 8 condo (750 units). These new condominium and apartment projects have been built

⁴¹ Housing and Urban Development Government Agency

⁴² "The face of Little Tokyo is changing" Los Angeles Times, September 3, 2006

⁴³ Los Angeles Times, Sunday September 3, 2006

since 2000 and are expected to more than double the Little Tokyo population, bringing in a younger generation with a new vitality and money to spend in Little Tokyo⁴⁴.

3.3. Little Tokyo's Business Community

Little Tokyo's business community was diverse in 2013 and appeared to be doing well. Small local businesses were mixed in with Japanese multinational corporations. A growing number of businesses in the area were unrelated to the Japanese or Japanese culture, but they added to the eclectic vitality of the neighborhood economy.

According to a 2010 business survey conducted by the Little Tokyo Service Center,⁴⁵ there were 492 businesses in Little Tokyo that year. Of the 280 businesses that participated in the survey, 80 percent were storefront and 20 percent office businesses. Ninety-four percent of survey responses were on behalf of family-owned businesses and 6 percent were on behalf of either large (more than 10 stores) or small (less than 10 stores) chains. Sixty-six percent of the businesses were Japanese-owned and 14 percent were Korean-owned. Intermingled among these Asian businesses were two Starbucks stores and a Johnny Rockets hamburger restaurant.

According to Bill Watanabe, former executive director of the Little Tokyo Service Center, the Little Tokyo neighborhood contains a good balance of social

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Little Tokyo Business Inventory Project, Spring 2010.

gathering places like coffee shops and restaurants, which make the area particularly attractive for young people.⁴⁶

Additionally, there are two large hotels within the CRA boundaries of Little Tokyo. Kintetsu, the Japanese railway company, owns the Miyako Hotel Los Angeles, built in 1989. The other is the Hilton Double Tree, which was originally built as the New Otani Hotel by a Japanese hotel company.

Approximately 30 percent of the hotel guests at the Miyako Hotel are visitors from Japan, 50 to 60 percent are from within the United States, and 10 to 20 percent are from Europe and Latin America. During the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese tourists and business travelers constituted up to 70 percent of the Miyako Hotel's guests. According to Yuichi Yamakawa, President of Kintetsu Enterprises Company of America, the Miyako Hotel was doing well thanks to its convenient downtown location with its proximity to the Little Tokyo Metro Station, Union Station, Los Angeles Civic Center, Disney Concert Hall and other cultural amenities. He observed that Little Tokyo and the areas around it have become much safer and cleaner than when he was assigned to work in Los Angeles in the 1980s.⁴⁷

Furthermore, there are a few remaining small hotels with single room occupancy and shared bathrooms, providing affordable lodgings for backpackers but also for low-income inner-city singles. They are Daimaru Hotel, Little Tokyo Hotel and Oregon Hotel. They provide daily and monthly cheap rates with negotiations. Three of

⁴⁶ Email conversation on November 15, 2012.

⁴⁷ Interview took place on August 30, 2013.

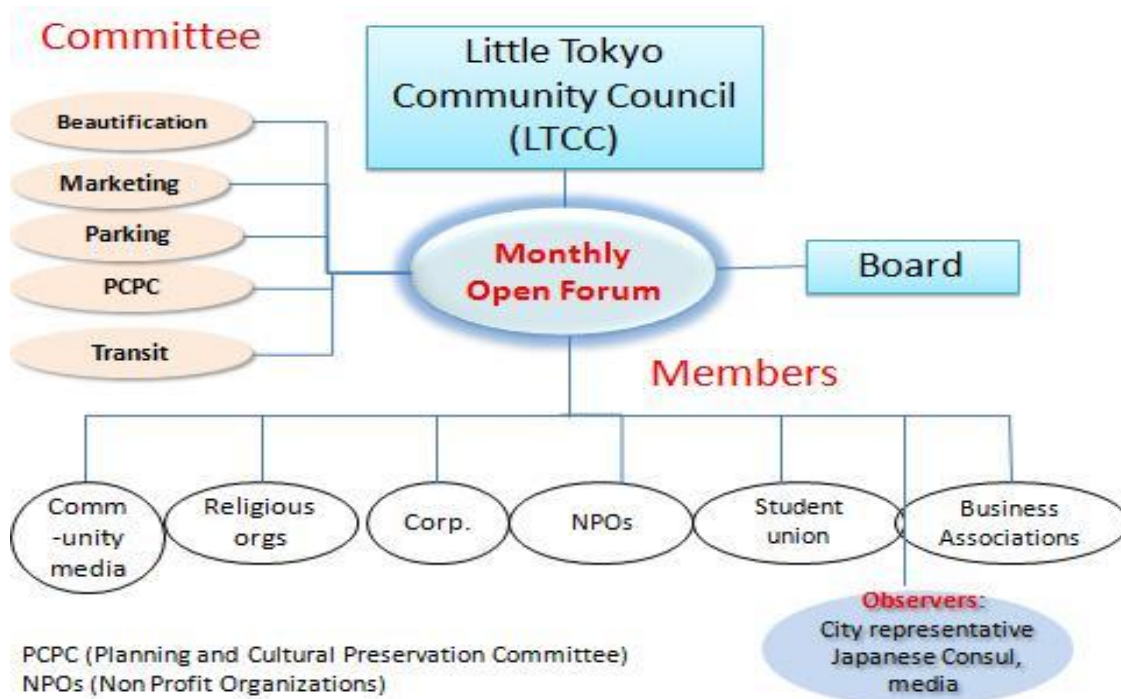
them are located on the First Street and two, Daimaru and Little Tokyo hotels, are in the buildings under the National Historic Preservation.

3.4. Community Organizations

Little Tokyo is a well-organized community with a wealth of various kinds of voluntary associations including nonprofit organizations (NPO), churches, temples, and community associations. Since 1999, the Little Tokyo community has been coordinated through the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), a community forum. The community leadership and the social capital provided by NPOs such as the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), Japanese American National Museum (JANM), and the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) provide a strong foundation upon which to base community building and preservation activities. The California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CJACLC) was established by community leaders to proactively and collectively address challenges and issues by strategically coordinating with community leaders of the other remaining Japan towns in California.

In 2014, more than ninety member organizations and individuals participated in the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC). NPOs covered a wide range of organizations -- social service, community development, cultural and community activities, museum, historical preservation, public safety, resident associations, business and commercial associations, and *Kenjinkai*, or Japanese prefectural associations.

Figure 3.3 Autonomous Structure of Little Tokyo



Source: Author created

Table 3.4 Little Tokyo Community Council Members FY 2013-2014

Community Media	Rafu Shimpo
Religious Organization	Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple Los Angeles Buddhist Church Federation Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple Union Church Zenshuji Soto Mission
Corporation/Shop	Aihara & Associates Bunkado California Bank and Trust J. Morey Co. Kaji and Associates Kumamoto and Associates Pacific Commerce Bank Wolf & Crane

	Yamato Travel
Non-Profit Organization	California Japanese American Community Leadership Council Friends of Little Tokyo Library Go For Broke Japanese American Cultural and Community Center Japanese American National Museum Japanese American Citizens League/PSW Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California Japanese Community Pioneer Center Japanese Women's Society of Southern California Kizuna LA Artcore Little Tokyo Historical Society Little Tokyo Lion's Club Little Tokyo Teramachi Homeowners Assoc. Little Tokyo Towers Residents Little Tokyo Roots Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Nanka Kenjin Kyogikai Nikkei Civil Rights Redress Nikkei Women Legacy Association Nisei Week Foundation Visual Communications
Business Association	Asian American Architects and Engineers Association Restaurant Academy
Others	Individuals including community activists, shop owners, etc.

Source: Little Tokyo Community Council (www.littletokyo.org)

Little Tokyo has two Japanese newspapers, the Rafu Shimpo and the All Japan News. The neighborhood has eight places of worship with roots in the Japanese American community, temples and churches: the Centenary United Methodist Church, Higashi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, Jodoshu Buddhist Temple, Koyasan Buddhist Temple, Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, St. Francis Xavier Japanese Catholic Center,

Union Church, and Zenshuji Temple. These temples and churches are not only anchors for the community's spiritual needs, but they are deeply involved in organizing and preserving many historical Japanese cultural festivities. In this important way, they help connect the dispersed Japanese to the space of Little Tokyo. Most dispersed suburban Japanese come to visit Little Tokyo during festivals. The demography of Little Tokyo literally changes during cultural festivals and the traditional face of Little Tokyo emerges.

On New Year's Day, Koyasan is crowded with people who come for *hatsu-mode*, or the first visit to a Shinto Shrine, a Buddhist temple, during the New Year's holiday. According to Bill Watanabe, a long-time leader in the Little Tokyo community, Little Tokyo's New Year's Day festival, which is centered in Weller's Court, grows larger each year. The celebration in 2014 drew about 5,000 people.⁴⁸ There were food booths, kimono exhibition, singing on stage, and *Mochitsuki*, or rice-cake pounding.

In March and May of each year, the Children's Day observances at JACCC celebrate both *Hinamatsuri*, Doll Festival for girls, and Kodonomoni, Children's Day for boys. In April, a Buddhist group celebrates Hana-Matsuri, or Flower Festival, a celebration of Buddha's Birthday at Noguchi Plaza at JACCC. There is usually a wave of festivals during the summer, which begin with a series of obon festivals throughout temples in Little Tokyo at Nishihongwanji, Higashihonganji and Zenshuji. The culmination of all the summer festivals is a weeklong Nisei Week Festival in mid-August, which was first held seventy-four years ago. Since 2009, the opening week of Nisei

⁴⁸ Email reply by Bill Watanabe, former Executive Director of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) on August 17, 2014.

Week Festival has held a *Tanabata* Festival, or Star Festival, at Geffin Contemporary at MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art), next to Japanese American National Museum. As a smaller event, Koyasan holds an annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki memorial event in early August.

Table 3.5 List of Festivals in Little Tokyo

	Name of Festival	Place
January	Hatsumode	Koyasan
	New Year's Day Festival	Weller's Court
March	Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival)	JACCC
April	Flower Festival (Buddha's Birthday)	Noguchi Plaza
May	Kodomonohi (Children's Day)	JACCC
July	Obon Festival	Nishihongwanji Higashihongwanji Zenshuji
August	Tanabata	Geffen MOCA pavilion area (Takes place in the opening week of Nisei Week)
	Nisei Week	JACCC

Source: Author created based on the information provided by Bill Watanabe on August 17, 2014

There are also many community associations in Little Tokyo that help bridge the language and cultural gap between post-war Japanese immigrants⁴⁹ and the more

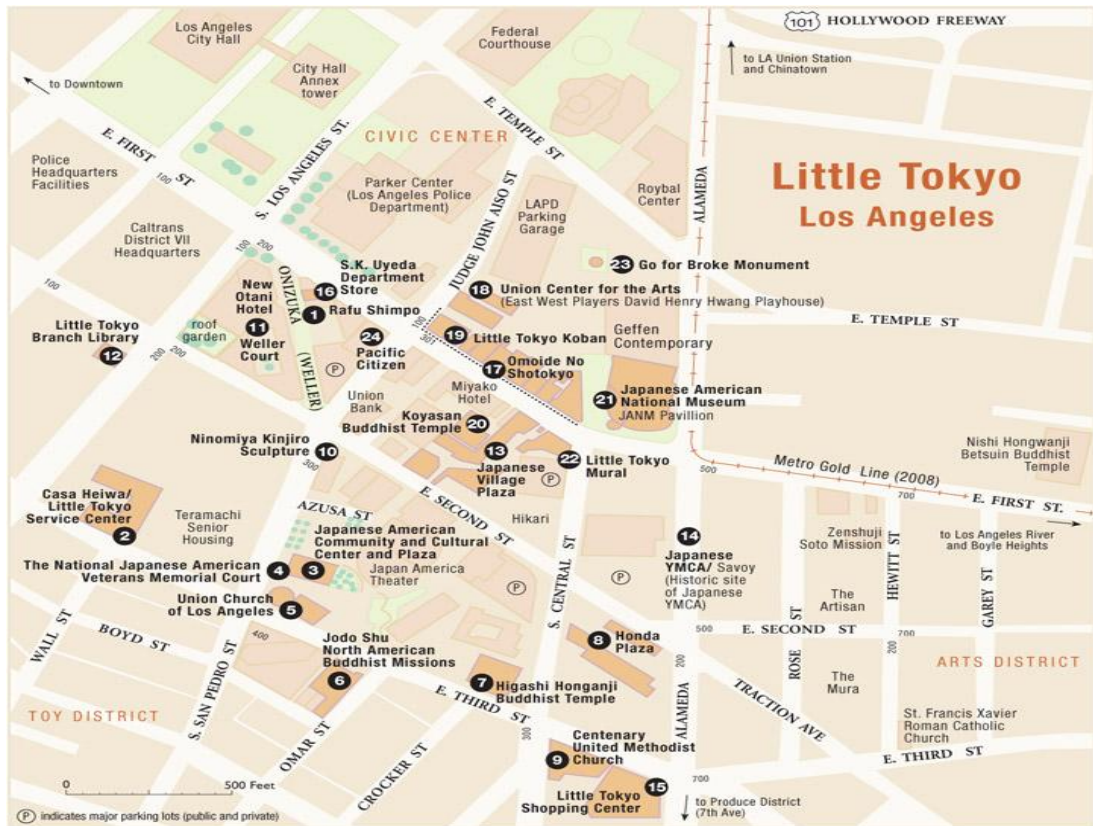
⁴⁹ In contrast with prewar immigrants, postwar immigrants are diverse in class, educational background, and immigration status (Tsukuda). According to Dr. Charles Igawa, they are culturally and linguistically "Japanese dominant". The postwar Japanese immigrants have long been outside of the scholarly attention. Historically these groups had different language and cultural gaps than the descendents of prewar immigrants. Now that the postwar immigrants constitute thirty percent

assimilated Japanese Americans. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC) has a history dating back to the early 1900s of not just representing the interests of Little Tokyo businesses, but also of providing services and assistance to Japanese immigrants.

Finally, there are Japanese American civil rights and community advocacy organizations that continue to be based in Little Tokyo. Among them are the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCRR), and Go for Broke. These groups, along with JACCC, JANM, and LTSC, continue to advocate for Little Tokyo, other Japanese American communities throughout Southern California and those of Japanese heritage.

of the Japanese community in Southern California, the role and impact of these subgroups cannot be neglected.

Figure 3.4 Little Tokyo Map with Key Buildings and Institutions



Source: Preservation of California Japantown website (<http://www.californiajapantowns.org>)

3.5. Conclusion

Little Tokyo in the 21st Century is a vibrant and diverse community with a strong Japanese character that reflects its cultural heritage. While the neighborhood is gentrifying as many newcomers of different ethnic backgrounds and of a wide range of ages move into the neighborhood, there are the number of Japanese American community organizations to protect and preserve Little Tokyo’s unique character and heritage. Little Tokyo endures and is enduring as an ethnic enclave because its community organizations have protected it and maintained it as the hub of the Japanese dispersed community.

As one Japanese American community activist succinctly stated, “We welcome newcomers to Little Tokyo, but we ask that they respect our cultural and historical heritage by taking their shoes off at the door.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Alan Nishio, Board President of LTSC, board member of JACCC, and a founder/ chairperson of California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CAJACLCL).

Part II A History of Little Tokyo through a “Different Mirror”

Chapter 4 Pre World War II Associational Life of Little Tokyo

“They were unassimilable. They worked for low wages and thereby undermined the existing labor standards of American workmen. Their standards of living were much lower than those of American workmen. They lacked a proper political feeling for American democratic institutions.”

*Dr. Edward Alsworth Ross
Stanford University
May 7, 1900⁵¹*

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1 Background

This chapter focuses on the community building contributions of Little Tokyo’s associations from the late nineteenth century to the World War II internments. Author Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1986) identifies three factors in the formation of Japanese ethnic enclaves in the United States: the hostility displayed by the dominant white society, the protection and mutual support provided by the enclave, and the maintenance of a sense of cultural identity (Glenn).

Community building by early Japanese immigrants in America was largely driven by the need for mutual social, economic and structural support in a society that was openly hostile and discriminatory towards Japanese people as well as other racial and ethnic minorities. Because the Japanese were for all intents and purposes “ineligible” to participate in any community outside of the enclave, the need for

⁵¹ McWilliams 1944, p. 17. On May 7, 1900, the San Francisco Labor Council in San Francisco sponsored the first massive anti-Japanese convention. Stanford University sociology professor Dr. Edward Alsworth Ross was a keynote speaker.

mutual support could only be met within the enclave. This need based community building stands in contrast to the Neo-Tocquevillean template, as described by Robert Putnam and others, of community building by people freely choosing to create voluntary associations.

When Japanese immigrants arrived in Southern California in the 1880s and 1990s, they congregated in the downtown area later known as Little Tokyo because they were legally and socially precluded from living in other areas of Los Angeles. These early Japanese immigrants also developed a network of mutual aid and support for those who dispersed throughout Southern California farming settlements. The immigrants who remained in Little Tokyo provided the network hub for everyone's social, cultural and economic associations.

This paper will use a descriptive conceptual term, "**dispersed community**," in reference to the far-flung and dispersed community members within the reach of the Little Tokyo community-building model. Little Tokyo represents the central hub of social, cultural, political and economic associations that are in communication with and involved with its local and dispersed members in the Little Tokyo model.

The Japanese **dispersed community** in Southern California resulted from the efforts to meet social and economic necessities in response to exclusion and discrimination by the broader host society. It grew to become a necessary and important contributor to the Japanese community's highly successful agriculture based economy. The dispersed community's continuing communications, interactions and identification with Little Tokyo itself is an important factor for the impetus that

preserved and maintained the Japanese cultural heritage in Little Tokyo and its satellite areas.

Community building in Little Tokyo does not fit the Robert Putnam Neo-Tocquevillean template of voluntary associations by free individuals because it was not “voluntary” in the Tocquevillean sense of community building. The Japanese immigrants and their progeny involved themselves in their Little Tokyo based associations because the associations were necessary for social, cultural, political and economic survival. Prior to WWII, the **dispersed community** formed associations that existed in order to meet basic sociopolitical and economic needs in a hostile society that refused to allow it to participate in the mainstream.

4.1.2 Glenn’s period classifications: frontier, settlement, stabilization and WWII internment

This chapter briefly reviews the evolution of Little Tokyo associations, which were first formed to address the immediate needs of newly arriving Japanese immigrants and ultimately formed as part of a hub of associations addressing the social and economic needs of the dispersed community. The Evelyn Nakano Glenn period classification system for pre-war Japanese ethnic enclaves is also used: the frontier period, settlement and stabilization periods, and World War II internment period (1986).

The “frontier period,” from 1890 to 1910, was characterized by the immigration of the *issei*, or first generation Japanese. The *issei* were predominantly male and generally mobile, both geographically and occupationally. The *issei*

experienced the rise of hostility towards the Japanese, a hostility that ultimately led to the Gentlemen's Agreement between the governments of Japan and the United States in 1908. This agreement strictly limited further immigration from Japan to the wives and children of the *issei* already present.

The "settlement period," from 1910 to 1924, was characterized by the immigration of *issei* wives into the U.S. and with it, a significant growth in the number of Japanese immigrant women and family building. The immigration of wives resulted in family based Japanese settlements with community institutions such as churches, schools, community centers, and women's and youth associations. As these institutions grew in number, anti-Japanese and anti-Asian hostilities also continued to grow. The hostility culminated in the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which barred all further Asian immigration into the United States.

The rising number of *nisei*, or second-generation American-born children of Japanese immigrants characterized the "stabilization period," from 1924 to 1940. Many *nisei* strived to assimilate into American society and pursued educational and career opportunities that were not available to their *issei* parents.

The "WWII internment period," from 1942 to 1945, speaks for itself. The internments physically wrenched both the *issei* and *nisei* from the associational networks that constituted the community life of Little Tokyo including its dispersed community. The removal emphasized the understanding that for them, associations were the key to survival and the ability to rebuild community.

4.2. Early Japanese Immigration to California

4.2.1. San Francisco as a major point of entry

San Francisco was the first major point of entry when Japanese immigration began in earnest in 1890. By 1890, San Francisco had become a major metropolis and was a commercial, financial and trade center with a population of 342,782 (1890 census) (Kido). San Francisco's growth had been fueled by the gold rush that began in 1848 and the 1869 completion of the Transcontinental Railway (ibid).⁵²

Initially, Japanese immigration was encouraged as a way to supplement and replace Chinese immigrant labor, which had been excluded by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as a result of serious anti-Chinese sentiment that had been brewing for years.⁵³ By 1852, the Chinese were the largest "foreign" group in California. By the 1870s, the Chinese were considered an economic threat to the livelihood of white laborers (Kido).

Anti-Japanese sentiment and hostility also grew once the Japanese had immigrated in significant numbers. The first massive anti-Japanese convention was held by the San Francisco Labor Council in 1900, within ten years after the Japanese were welcomed to fill the labor need. By 1906, the San Francisco School Board made the decision to segregate and place Japanese children in all-Asian schools (McWilliams).

⁵² The 1852 state census reported a population of 35,154, eighty-five percent of which were male laborers. By 1860, the population was 56,802, a third of which were immigrants from various ethnic and racial groups (Kido 71-74).

⁵³ According to Kido (2012), by 1865, one of three people in San Francisco was Irish, German, Chinese or Italian. Between 1870 and 1890, those of Chinese heritage constituted almost ten percent of the total city population.

Laguerre (2000) concluded, “Anglo-Californians developed their prejudices against Asian Americans based on the early model of their interaction with nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants” (28). There were various forms of racism: manipulation of the legal system to create and maintain a space of difference, outright racial discrimination, housing segregation, covenant clauses to prevent integration, legal prohibition of interracial marriage, and spatial ghettoization. Much of it was the result of a social mainstream system which first marginalized Chinese laborers and then marginalized the Japanese immigrants who came after (Laguerre).

4.2.2 Demographics of the early Japanese Immigrants

The first Japanese arrived in the United States in the late 1860s. Japan established diplomatic and trade relations with the U.S. in 1860. The few Japanese immigrants who came to America between the late 1860s to the 1880s were mostly elite students seeking to learn about the [then] modern industry and its techniques as well as business and governance, all seen as necessary to build a modern Japanese nation (Iino).

In the frontier period of the late 1800s, there was ample land and opportunities for laborers in California, even those without specific skills. After the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, there was a surge in demand for Japanese laborers to fill the need for workers previously met by the influx of Chinese. The work was hard and the pay was low, but a Japanese laborer could earn four or five times more than what he could earn in Japan (Iino).

The Japanese government was quite aware of anti-Chinese hostilities in California and elsewhere and was originally reluctant to allow large numbers of Japanese to immigrate to the United States. However, the 1885 economic depression in Japan swayed against the Japanese government's reluctance, and it permitted more Japanese to emigrate to the U.S. (Iino).

Japanese immigration peaked between 1890 and 1923, prior to WWII. Only 27,440 Japanese people immigrated to the United States from 1891 to 1900, while 51,694 Japanese people immigrated to the U.S. between 1901 and 1908 (Glenn).

Early Japanese immigrants had distinctive but similar backgrounds. Most were male and a majority were farmers (Iino 2000, JCCSC 1960, McWilliams 1944). Many had the equivalent of an eighth-grade education, which at the time was a relatively high achievement in Japan (McWilliams). These immigrants generally came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, but not the lowest. They had to have enough money to be able to pay their own passage -- which would have been more than ten times of the average monthly income of low skilled laborers at that time (Iino).

The vast majority of immigrants came from small-town entrepreneurial or rural farming families from the southern Japanese prefectures such as Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Kumamoto, and Fukuoka (Glenn).

One telling difference distinguishing the Japanese from other immigrants is that the Japanese primarily came to America to work as temporary laborers for economic reasons and not as permanent refugees in quest of religious or political freedom. Most planned to return to Japan as soon as they had accumulated sufficient

money to meet their goals. The numbers tell the story well. Between April 1910 and June 1914, 49,999 Japanese immigrants entered the United States, but more than 35,415 returned to Japan. Between 1910 and 1929, more returned to Japan than those who entered (Glenn).

Table 4.1 Japanese Immigration to Mainland United States

Decade	New Immigrants Admitted	Resident Population at End of Decade		
		All	Male	Female
1861-1870	218	55		
1871-1880	149	148		
1881-1890	1,637	2,039		
1891-1900	27,440	24,326	23,341	985
1901-1910	54,839	72,157	63,070	9,087
1911-1920	51,956	111,010	72,707	38,303
1921-1923	3,996	138,834	81,775	57,059

Source: Ichihashi (1932) in Glenn (1986)

4.2.3 Japanese immigrants categorized as “oriental” and/or “non-white”

Japanese immigrants, along with the Chinese immigrants who came to the United States in the 1860s and before, were categorized as “Orientals” (Ichioka 192) by American society and were in a non-white classification (1-2).⁵⁴

. It necessarily follows that the Chinese and Japanese immigrants had a different experience than that of new immigrants from European countries in the nineteenth

⁵⁴ See also McWilliams (1944) 16-20, and Glenn (1986) 24-26.

century.⁵⁵ Being neither white nor black, oriental groups were classified both as non-white and as “aliens ineligible for citizenship” (Ichioka 1). Much of the discrimination Japanese immigrants encountered was based on their “ineligible status” (2). This palpable exclusion from American society was the fundamental motivation for the Japanese to restrict themselves to their own ethnic group, sometimes even more precisely, to those within their village and prefectural ties, and form associations in the community for daily survival. This immigrant adaptation strategy in America as a “state of powerlessness” is a central theme in early Japanese associations (2).

4.2.4 The Community as a “Service Center” to provide for survival

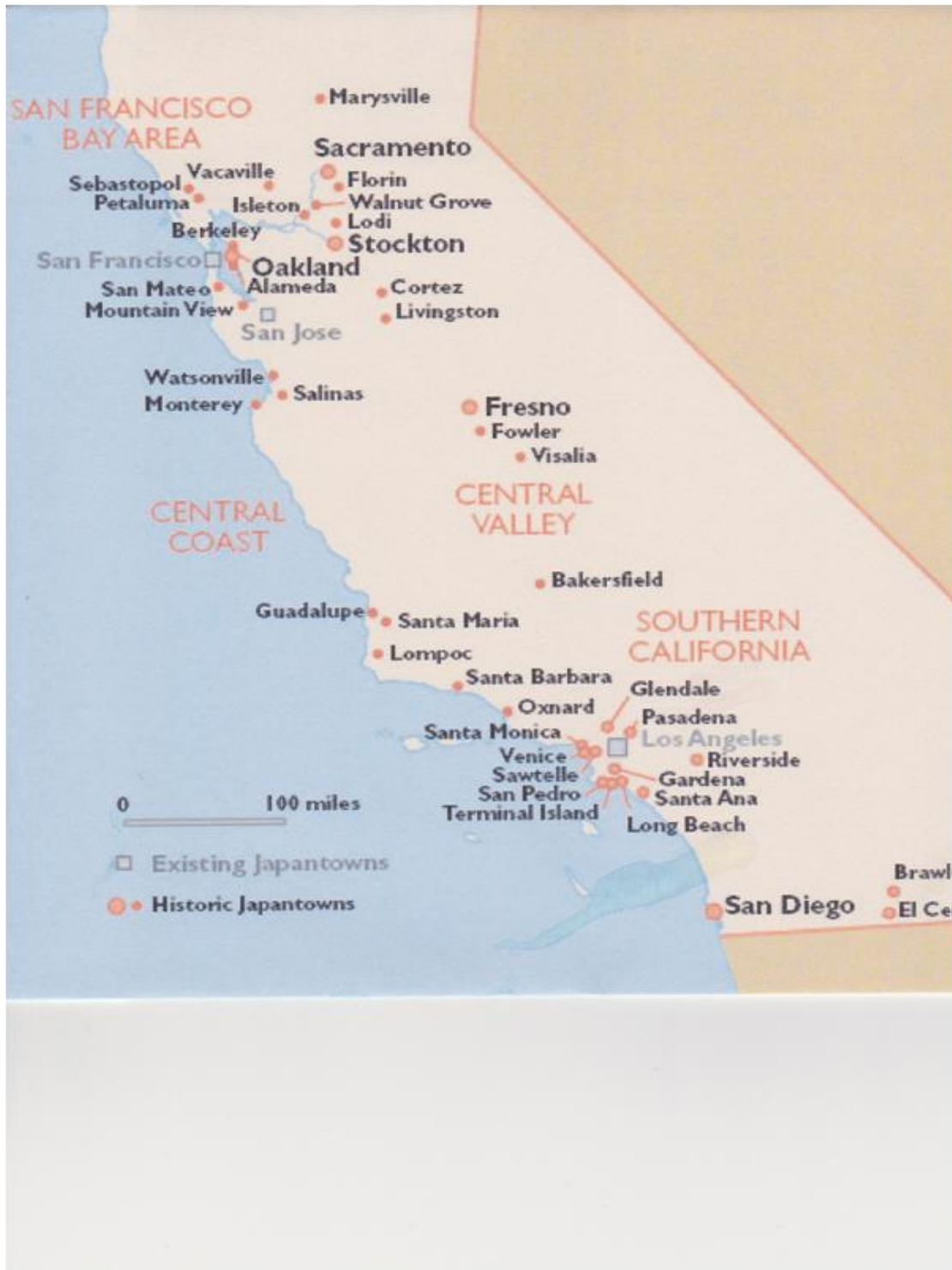
As the numbers of immigrants increased, and with them their Japanese American progeny, the communities became early Japanese “service centers” in ports of entry such as San Francisco (McWilliams 76). The service centers had a package of services and resources available to meet necessities including boardinghouses, an early type of employment agency, restaurants, bathhouses and places of entertainment such as ball houses (Ichioka 1988, Mc Williams 1966). These early service centers for Japanese laborers in ports of entry later became known as Japantowns (McWilliams). Japantowns were usually located “near an already existing Chinatown, which, in turn, was located in the ‘skid row’ section” –that is, a poor and undesirable part of the city (McWilliams 77).

⁵⁵ In 1790, Congress restricted the right of naturalization to an alien who was a “free white person,” adding African descendants and aliens of African nativity as a second racial category in 1870. Unlike European immigrants, this non-white classification kept Japanese immigrants outside of the American body politic until 1952 when the revised new immigration law allowed the first generation immigrants to be naturalized (Ichioka 1).

After the first Japantown appeared in San Francisco in the 1880s, similar Japantown community centers emerged in Seattle, Los Angeles, Stockton, Sacramento, and Fresno. By World War II, there were forty-three different Japantowns throughout California, both in urban and rural settings.⁵⁶ Among them in Los Angeles was Little Tokyo, which later became the largest Japanese social, cultural and economic center in California (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983).

⁵⁶ See California Japantown (www.californiajapantowns.org). The project builds upon California State Senate Bill 307, which provides funding for the historic and cultural preservation of three remaining Japantowns in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Jose. The construction of pre-war Japantown maps (Japantown Atlas Project) is partially funded by the California State Library in 2006-2007.

Figure 4.1 Map of Pre-World War II Japantowns in California



Source: California Japantowns (www.californiajapantowns.org)

4.2.5 Migration from Northern to Southern California

In the late 19th Century, most of the early Japanese immigrant population was concentrated in Northern California, more particularly, in the San Francisco area. Later, especially after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, large numbers of Japanese migrated to Southern California. By 1930, 40,000 Japanese people lived in Southern California, and only about 6,000 remained in the San Francisco area (JCCSC).

Table 4.2 Number of Japanese in Major Counties in California

	1900	1910	1920	1930
North				
Alameda	1,149	3,266	5,221	5,715
San Francisco	1,781	4,518	5,358	6,250
Sacramento	1,209	3,874	5,800	8,114
Santa Clara			2,981	4,320
Central				
Fresno	598	2,233	5,732	5,280
South				
Los Angeles	204	8,461	19,911	35,390
Riverside			626	478
Santa Barbara	144	863	930	1,889
San Diego	25	520	1,431	1,722
Orange	NA	NA	1,491	1,613
Ventura	NA	NA	675	597

Source: Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (1960)

Since most early Japanese immigrants entered the United States through the port of San Francisco,⁵⁷ they lived in three main locales prior to the 1906 earthquake: San Francisco Bay area, the Sacramento Delta area and the upper San Joaquin Valley.

Although early Japanese immigrants attempted to become involved in the San Francisco area's agricultural activities, the attempts were unsuccessful because its

⁵⁷ Other ports were Seattle (State of Washington) and Portland (State of Oregon).

agriculture was dominated by earlier arriving Italian immigrants. Chinese⁵⁸ and Portuguese immigrants had taken most of the remaining smaller agricultural opportunities, leaving very few opportunities in agriculture near San Francisco (JCCSC).

Unable to compete in the by the then highly competitive agricultural market dominated by earlier arriving immigrants and keenly aware of the increasing anti-Japanese hostility in San Francisco, Japanese immigrants looked to engage in agricultural activities elsewhere and began to migrate to the Sacramento Valley and San Joaquin Valley (JCCSC). Also, after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake destroyed the original Japantown, a large number of Japanese migrated to Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California where there was still ample land and business opportunities for the newcomers (JCCSC).

⁵⁸ According to Kido (2012), the first wave of Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. between 1848 and 1851 during the Gold Rush and the second wave arrived in the latter half of 1860s for the construction of Central Pacific Railway. In 1860, 86% of Chinese immigrants lived in mining areas and 7.8% lived in San Francisco. In 1869, 90% of 10,000 construction laborers were Chinese. From the 1870s and thereafter, the Chinese migrated to urban areas, especially San Francisco, and their greater presence became a trigger for the anti-Chinese movement. By the 1880s, almost 30% of all Chinese were living in San Francisco.

4.2.6 The settlement period after the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement

In 1908, in response to growing discriminatory sentiments among the public, the governments of the United States and Japan agreed to the terms of the [informally called] Gentlemen's Agreement that banned the future entry of Japanese immigrants with the exception of wives, children or parents of then present immigrants. Following the Gentlemen's Agreement, the population of Japanese women increased substantially between 1909 and 1923, thus began the settlement period characterized by families and children (Glenn). Women soon accounted for nearly two-fifths of all the Japanese persons admitted into the United States. This all changed in 1924, when Congress passed a law barring all further immigration from Asian countries (Glenn).

As these changes in immigration and the settlement period were occurring, most long term immigrants who wanted to settle and farm migrated to Southern California, which was then full of open space and rural. It's geographic features worked well for small agricultural businesses and were more suitable for the Japanese farmers than Northern California (Iino 23).

4.3. The Birth of "Little Tokyo" as an Ethnic Enclave

4.3.1. Myth

When Little Tokyo actually began to be a Japanese ethnic enclave is hidden in myth. According to Little Tokyo Historical Society, there are no accurate reference

materials that can prove the birthdate of Little Tokyo.⁵⁹ Prior to the 1880s, no person of Japanese heritage lived in Los Angeles. According to Mike Murase (1983), by 1885, there were about twenty-five Japanese men in what is now Little Tokyo in search of jobs, and by 1888, the number of Japanese increased to seventy.

In the latter part of the 1880s, the Little Tokyo area included brick commercial buildings, a variety of small industrial sites, some modest frame residences, stable yards, and the remnants of citrus orchards and a vineyard (Jenks). Different racial and ethnic groups coexisted in the area, both living there as well as conducting business. The area did not legally restrict occupancy or ownership (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983).⁶⁰

Some assert that the year the very first business was opened marked the beginning of Little Tokyo as a Japanese ethnic enclave, since it would provide evidence that other Japanese people were settling and residing in the area⁶¹. The first documented business was a small restaurant named “Kame Restaurant” on East First Street. It was opened by a former Japanese sailor, Hamanosuke Shigeta (Murase 1983; Jenks 2008; Gomyo 2008).

Although researchers say the Kame Restaurant opened at some point between 1884 and 1888, it is generally agreed that the restaurant opened in 1885 and that it was Little Tokyo’s beginning as an ethnic enclave. Gomyo (2008) states that the Kame Restaurant was closed in the year of 1888, basing his conclusion on the fact the

⁵⁹ Michael Okamura “130th Anniversary of Little Tokyo: Let’s Celebrate Together,” J-Town Guide Little Tokyo, February 2014

⁶⁰ See Jenks 2008a p.31-53 for a detailed description how different races “spatially overlapping, but politically and socially distinct” (p.31) in the area.

⁶¹ Ibid.

name was no longer listed in the city of Los Angeles' 1889 address book. The first Japanese boardinghouse opened on Alameda Street between First and Second Streets by 1888, other evidence that Little Tokyo was an ensconced ethnic enclave by the late 1880s, as Jenks (2008a) reports.

4.3.2 The Multicultural and Layered History of the Little Tokyo Area

There is no specific record of when the area was identified as "Little Tokyo," a name that suggests a significant number of Japanese lived there. Dates vary as to when the people in Los Angeles began to generally refer to the area as "Little Tokyo"⁶² from around 1903 (Murase 1983), 1905 (Jenks 2008a) and 1910 (Minamikawa 2007). Before it was generally called Little Tokyo, various ethnic groups overlapped as they occupied some of the space (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007). There are layers of histories of a number of other ethnic groups using the space, but gradually the area became the home space of a politically and socially distinct Japanese immigrant society (Minamikawa).

The initial "service center" for the community for Japanese immigrants, later called Little Tokyo, began in a multiethnic context. There were African Americans,

⁶² Laguerre (2000) contends that the naming of the enclave reflects a spatial hierarchical order projected by the mainstream onto the urban landscape. Since ethnic enclaves have so regularly taken on the designation of the countries or nation capitols throughout the history of the American urban landscape, generally, "enclaves were named by the mainstream population seeking to meet its own hegemonic agenda" originating "as informal ways of referring to the communities of others" The mainstream population historically had not named its own ethnic or culturally specific area, city or state with the "little" adjective, instead preferred "new" as in "New" England, "New" York, " and "New" Hampshire. The outsider use of the diminutive "little" as a reference to the immigrant homeland could be interpreted as belittling, intentional or not, "or to underline the area's inferior status" (p.5).

Jews, Mexicans, Chinese, Italians, Germans, Russians and others in the unrestricted area, people unwanted and marginalized by the mainstream white population (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007). One specific example is that between 1903 and 1910, a group of Japanese immigrants shared the area near Azusa Street with the Chinese, Russians, Germans, Jews, Italians, Irish and others (Laslett 1996; Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007).

4.3.2(A) Description and use before the area was known as Little Tokyo

Sloping towards the Los Angeles river, the entire land for future Little Tokyo was “often flooded during spring rains, with the water sometimes getting as far west as Main Street” (Jenks 35). It was south of the old Plaza established by Spain early in the Spanish colonial period and adjacent to the Chinese enclave of Chinatown and east of the emerging civic and financial center of Los Angeles.⁶³

Reportedly, the area was first a cornfield and then a vineyard planted by French immigrants to produce wine for the Spanish missionaries (Yagasaki). After vineyards and wine making declined as a use of the land, German immigrants grew oranges and brewed beer. By 1870, the area had groves of citrus as well as several German breweries (Gomyo). For some years, Germans constituted the largest nationality in the district (Laslett 1996; Jenks 2008a).

4.3.2(B) Many groups co-existed and some had a significant presence

⁶³ See Jenks (2008a) p.35-38 for a detailed description of the area from around 1880s to early 20th century.

At one time, according to Laslett (1996), many ethnic groups lived side by side along the edge of the Los Angeles River including the city's largest Russian settlement (41). Ethnic Mexicans dispersed themselves among the small clusters of Europeans, Asians and African Americans (Jenks 2008a; Laslett 1996).

An African American community also lived in the area (Hayden 1995; Jenks 2008a). Early in the area's history, an African American operated a corral and stables on San Pedro Street near Second Street in the 1850s and 1860s (Hayden).

One of the most significant of the persons and contributors to the area was Bidley Maison, a former slave. Maison was a midwife and nurse as well as a successful businesswoman who was also a founder of the First American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Maison both lived in and operated her clinic in the same block as the church. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, her clinic and its surrounding area were of central importance to the emerging African American community. Until her death in 1891, people of many different ethnic groups would wait in line outside of her clinic for her help (Hayden 139-167).

After Maison's death, the First AME Church fell into disrepair and the congregation later located elsewhere. In 1906, William Seymour, a son of slaves, took over the structure, and it became the Apostolic Faith Mission. Seymour's practices were evangelical and ultimately became the beginning of Pentecostalism. Under his guidance, the Apostolic Faith Mission became a site for worship by men, women and children of different ethnicities and different races.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Just months after the founding of Azusa Street Mission, a December 23, 1906 Los Angeles Times article headlined, "Little Brown Men Crowding Other Races...Make New Oriental Quarter in City's

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than 2,000 African Americans in the city of Los Angeles (Jenks 53). As both the African American and Japanese populations increased, African Americans moved away from Little Tokyo to the south and east along Central Avenue. By 1920, the African American population had increased to more than 15,000 and the center of the community had shifted to Central between Eighth and Twelfth Street (Jenks 36, 53).

Nearby Boyle Heights was the center of a large, flourishing Jewish community. Boyle Heights included Italian groceries, African American blacksmith shops, Irish saloons, and German gymnastics clubs (Laslett 1996; Jenks 2008a). Japanese immigrants also lived there (Murase 1983; Jenks 2008a).

After the Santa Fe Railway had reached Los Angeles in 1882 and then the Southern Pacific Railway reached Los Angeles in 1883, the population in Los Angeles increased dramatically. The train station for both railways was only two to a few blocks from the Little Tokyo area (Murase). It added an urban character as more people from different backgrounds came to live and visit the neighborhood.

Later, especially after the 1906 earthquake destroyed the San Francisco Japantown and anti-Japanese sentiment increased, early Japanese immigrants began moving to Southern California. By 1930, the number of Japanese in Los Angeles County increased to 35,000 while only 6,000 Japanese remained in San Francisco (JCCSC).

Heart." (Yosuke Kitazawa, "Azuna Street to Bronzeville: The Black History of Little Tokyo", Departures Columns of KCET, February 29, 2012)

4.4. Little Tokyo's Frontier Period

4.4.1. The Frontier Period: 1885-1908

The frontier period for Little Tokyo is settled to be from 1885 when the sailor Shigeta opened his Kama Restaurant to the signing of the 1908 Gentleman's Agreement between Japan and the United States which precluded all but the wives and family of then present immigrants to immigrate into the U.S. (Murase). The Frontier Period is characterized by the numerical dominance of male migrant agricultural laborers (Glenn). By the end of 1905, the 3,387 person Japanese population in Los Angeles was mostly in the Little Tokyo area with another 2,570 living in Los Angeles County farming settlements (Murase).

4.4.2. *Kenjinkai* as a daily communal life

Due to the considerable geographic and occupational mobility of the early immigrants, initial Japanese communal life in the U.S. was not based on family or a defined space such as Little Tokyo, but on prefectural and village ties of their sending community called ***Kenjinkai*** (prefecture-based associations) (Minamikawa). *Kenjinkai* has drawn scholarly attention due to its success in building institutions, solidarity and a mutual support system that effectively created the foundation for the early Japanese immigrant economy (Ichioka 1988; Minamikawa 2007; Takaki 1989; Yagasaki 1982; 1993). The *Kenjinaki*-based network was highly dispersed with its central function (headquarters) in Little Tokyo.

Minamikawa (2007) analyzes *kenjinkai* as the social capital created in the early Japanese immigrant society in America. *Kenjinkai* was based on the “collective unit” of human networks, which included people of varying class and backgrounds and Japanese of the same origin (61). It had a comprehensive role guide for newcomers to help them to adapt themselves in the host society, integrate into wider social networks, arrange employment, lend money, and entertain themselves (JCCSC). With its small membership fee, it created a strong sense of responsibility, mutual-aid and reciprocity and loyalty to the group (JCCSC).

Kenjinaki often existed in conjunction with credit rotating associations, cooperatives and other forms of mutual aid, which were common in Japanese traditional villages (Takaki). Robert Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work* (1993) refers to various mutual support forms that existed in traditional Japanese villages and explains that they are all “ fed by the same underlying of social capital” (169).

In *Strangers from a Different Shore* (1989) Ronald Takaki explains *kenjinakai* as representing the core and essence of the success of the early Japanese immigrant economy, as it drew on the effectiveness of Japanese solidarity and the mutual support system that they brought and developed in America. He explains:

Japanese farmers belonged to *kenjinkai* ... A *kenjinkai* brought its members or people...together for social activities such as annual picnics; more importantly, it provided a network of social relations buttressing economic cooperation and assistance for employment, housing, and credit. Frequently *Issei* farmers from the same *kenjinkai* formed a credit-rotating association, or *tanomoshi*, to

pool resources and make capital available to individuals for initial investments on equipment and land. Farmers organized cooperatives- *kobai kumiai* for purchasing bulk foods and *sango kumiai* for marketing their crops. Farmers' associations, or *nogyo kumiai*, assisted members in renting and purchasing lands, settling disputes between tenants and landlords, obtaining supplies, disseminating information about agricultural techniques and produce prices, and selling crops in the city markets...*Tanomu* denoted "dependable" and conveyed the sense of trust and honor that buttressed the cooperative credit system. A *kumi* in Japan was a hamlet or neighborhood, signifying community and cohesiveness (193).

The size, leadership, financial and human resources of *kenjinaki* varied (Minamikawa 62). Those from Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Wakayama, Nagasaki and Okayama *Kenjinkai* were the largest in Los Angeles (Murase). There was a certain competition and struggle for leadership among the various *kenjinkai* along with growing disparities among *kenjinakai* (Minamikawa 62). The disparities included unequal access to the usable resources qualitatively and quantitatively, disparities which created unequal allocations of resources and opportunities in Japanese immigrant society (ibid).

According to the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California (1960), the following *kenjinkai* were formed during the frontier period: Kagoshima *Kenjinkai* (1904); Koushyu and Wakayama *Kenjinkai* (1905); Saga and Yamaguchi *Kenjinkai* (1906); Hiroshima, Tokyo, Chiba, Nagano *Kenjinkai* (1907); Ehime, Kumamoto, Miyagi

Kenjinaki (1908); Tottori, Okinawa, Fukuoka, Aichi *Kenjinkai* (1909). Smaller village level associations were also formed during the frontier period.

4.4.3. Little Tokyo as a Hub of the *Kenjinkai* Networks and a Service Center for the *Kenjin*

Early Little Tokyo was the service center for these “*kenjin*” (prefecture based people) and where they would occasionally meet, eat, exchange information and spend some fun time together with their prefectural people, or where they would stay at a boardinghouses and stay around until the next job opportunity came along (Minamikawa 2007, Murase 1983). It was in this way that the Japanese immigrants built strong ties with people who came from their same villages and prefectures as well as maintained strong ties with their sending towns and villages in Japan (Minamikawa).

The Japanese boardinghouses in Little Tokyo were where various *kenjinaki* networks gathered and intersected. Boardinghouse keepers played an important role as middlemen to dispatch the immigrants to various locations (Glenn 26). Newly arrived Japanese men first made their way to Japanese boardinghouses located in Little Tokyo, and from there, most secured their first employment, either as agricultural laborers in fields and orchards or as domestic servants and housecleaners in the city (ibid). Many of these employment opportunities were from *Kenjikai*-based connection.

Many laborers worked in rural farmland during the spring and summer and returned to Little Tokyo in other seasons to stay at boardinghouses. They would then go to work in domestic service for the wealthy, usually on daily bases, engaged in such activities as gardening and cleaning (Minamikawa 47). Some people from the same prefectures lived and worked together both in Little Tokyo and in mobile dispersed settings (Minamikawa 61-63).

The “*kenjin*” in Little Tokyo coexisted and shared the space with people of other races and ethnicities; “others” who were at the bottom or close to the bottom of the racial hierarchy where white was at the proverbial top. Japanese restaurants in Little Tokyo offered various American dishes and affordable foods (Minamikawa 2007, 2010). Gambling places were usually adjacent to boardinghouses, hotels, or restaurants. Brothels were places where multi-ethnic laborers frequented (Kido).

The *kenjin* constructed a “transnational yet local identity” as they lived and worked with others from the same prefectural and village origin, at least until the settlement period began in 1908 (Minamikawa 58). Since they were working away from home for long periods of time, the immigrants focused on working hard and sent the money earned to their families in Japan. They only socialized with their *kenjinkai* community in America. The amount of money sent to family members in Japan by Japanese laborers was significant and provided a boost to the economies of the source village and prefectures (JANM).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ According to a report by the Finance Ministry of Japan, Japanese overseas laborers sent back 12.2 million yen between 1885 and 1902, over 80% of which was sent from the United States and Canada. Given that the amount of money came from fewer than 100,000 workers who’s average wages was about \$1.00 per day, the amount of money is significant (JANM 1993).

In sum, *kenjinaki* was a network-based daily community of *issei* in the frontier period. Central organizations of various *kenjinaki* networks gathered in Little Tokyo, which became an almost institutional service center for spatially mobile immigrants to meet their fellow villagers, exchange information, search for employment, socialize and send money home. At the same time, reciprocity ties were based on Japanese traditional farmers' values, principles and culture. As Minamikawa (2007) points out these "*kenjin*" had not constructed their own collective "Japanese" solidarity and identity in this period of time. Their sense of belonging was based on their source village or more widely a source prefecture, which was reconstructed in America as a transnational yet local identity (60-63, 71).

Notwithstanding the fact that the *kenjinaki* that operated in Southern California out of Little Tokyo were associational, they cannot be called "voluntary associations" in neo-Tocquevillean terms. Instead, the *kenjinaki* provided a necessary resource for the *issei* to be financially, emotionally and socially integrated with people from home in the face of the exclusion and discrimination after arriving in America.

4.5. The Settlement (1909-1923) and Stabilization (1924-1942) Periods

4.5.1. Background

The arrival of women was a result of the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement, which barred all immigration except the wives and families of the *issei*, and so it marks the beginning of settlement and stabilization period. Between 1909 and 1923, 45,706

Japanese women were admitted to the mainland United States and by 1920 the female to male ratio was 1:2 (Glenn).

Honda (1991) states that this period saw the strategic change in *issei* goals. *Issei* goals became to become long-term immigrants or permanent residents, to pursue renting or owning farmland, to become farmers, or to be small scale businessmen, or to target work as gardeners, in hotels, restaurants or barbershops. The leading association in the settlement period was the “Japanese Association,” an *issei* led quasi-governmental mutual aid association consolidated the various *kenjin*-based identities and communities (Ichioka 157).

The stabilization period with family building and American born children followed after 1924 until the internment began in 1942 and with it and WWII and anti Japanese sentiment reaching its peak after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and war was declared against Japan on December 8, 1941.

During this narrow period of thirty years from 1909 to 1942, the highly integrated mutual aid the Japanese family based community developed and flourished in Southern California (Gomyo 2008; Jenks 2008; Murase 1983; Minamikawa 2007). Ygasaki’s (1993) research found the development of vertically integrated agriculture system by Japanese immigrants in Southern California. With the solid and sustainable ethnic economic system based on the intensive agriculture, the dispersed community, as termed so by this thesis, was formulated, and Little Tokyo became the hub of the dispersed community. Little Tokyo reached its heyday in the 1930s as anti Japanese sentiment increased outside the community and it became increasingly necessary for

mutual support, financial resources and cultural life in the dispersed community (Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983).

With the supportive social, political and economic organizational base in the ethnic community, the Japanese gradually entered into the small business or petit bourgeois niche. This in turn resulted in both the structural assimilation and retention of ethnic community life among Japanese immigrants and their Japanese American progeny (Fujita and O'Brien 47).⁶⁶

Various *kenjinaki*-based associations continued to flourish as the foundation for community life of Japanese immigrants. This period also saw the growth of a collective identity and solidarity of the immigrants and their Japanese American progeny as Japanese as anti-Japanese sentiment increased (Minamikawa 115-132, 141-142). Little Tokyo was transformed into a symbolic center for the dispersed Japanese community (Minamikawa 113).

The stabilization period also brought economic and educational polarization of the *nisei* including the rise of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), civil rights organization led by elite *nisei* on one hand, and the rise of unions led by *nisei* laborers and entrepreneurs on the other (JCCSC).

4.5.2. Institutional Completeness of Little Tokyo

⁶⁶ Historically, the Jews and Chinese have been represented in this type of economy since the choice of this kind of economic accommodation was made in part because of being excluded from other types of economic activity such as industrial sector. This economic option, as Fujita & O'Brien (1991) stress, would not have been possible without a supportive ethnic community, which also resulted in the retention of the ethnic community and ethnic identity.

During the settlement period, Little Tokyo developed extensive community infrastructures. According to Minamikawa (2007), by 1910, there was an “institutional completeness” (112) in the space of Little Tokyo where Japanese immigrants could fulfill most of their social, cultural, educational and material wants such as ethnic churches, both Buddhist and Christian, ethnic news papers, Japanese language schools, hospitals, law offices, financial institutions, various mutual aid associations such as *Kenjinaki*, and professional groups and associations such as doctors, dentists, and business.

“Institutional completeness” was in no small part the result of the rejection and exclusion of the Japanese from being able to avail themselves of the benefits of the society’s mainstream health and financial institutions. It was also a product of Japanese solidarity and the collective work for common purposes. This completeness was born out of the necessity of to make financial and work contributions to the group because the help of mainstream American society was refused.

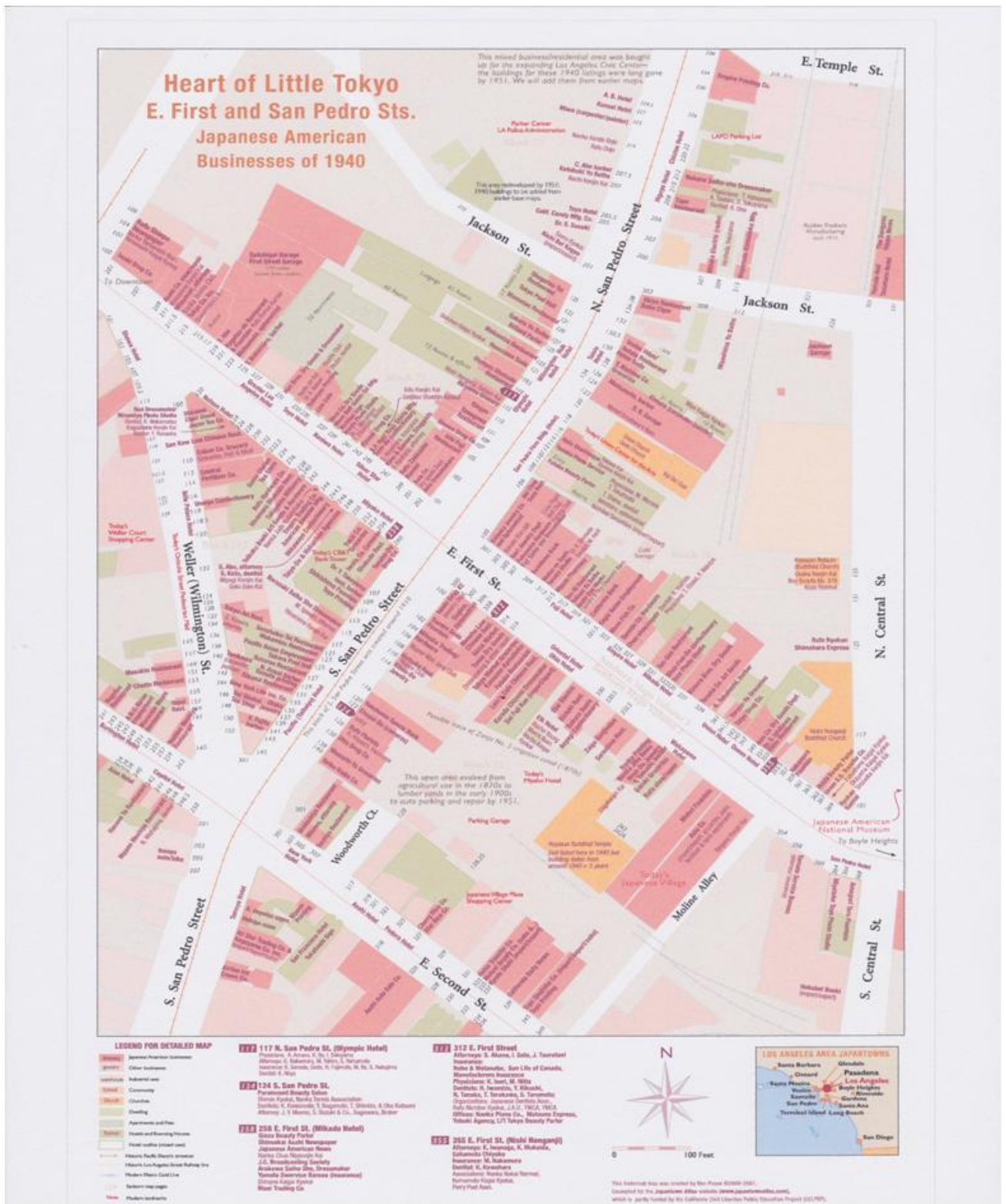
The first Japanese hospital was built in 1915 at the corner of Turner and Alameda streets (Kaji).⁶⁷ The first Japanese school, called Dai-Ichi Gakuen, was established on Hewitt Street, which also became a meeting place for a boys’ club. In 1917, the Nishi Hongwanjii Buddhist Temple was established by merging the former Rafu Bukkyokai, Chuo Bukkyokai and Nanka Bukkyokai (Murase). In 1918, the Union Church of Los Angeles was founded with the merging of three smaller Christian churches (ibid).

⁶⁷ Japanese were not admitted to white hospitals (Kaji 2010).

By 1920, there were total about 330 Japanese institutions located along East 1st Street, such as the *Knejinaki*, professional cooperatives, financial institutions, hospital, law firms, boarding houses, restaurants, and groceries (Minamikawa 112).

A recently reproduced map of Little Tokyo by the Little Tokyo Historical Society, shown below, demonstrates a vibrant 1940 Little Tokyo with Japanese groceries, restaurants, churches/temples, banks, hardware shops, a bathhouse, hotels and boardinghouses.

Figure 4.2 Map of Little Tokyo in 1940



Source: California Japantowns (www.californiajapantowns.org)

4.5.3. Little Tokyo becomes the Hub of the Dispersed Japanese Community

Little Tokyo's Japanese cultural, economic and social institutions coexisted with non-Japanese business and warehouses. Moreover, despite the large number of the Japanese businesses, organizations and institutions in Little Tokyo, Japanese immigrants and their progeny were not the largest ethnic group in Little Tokyo even in its 1930s heydays (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007). According to the 1940 census records, only about 30 percent of the population of Little Tokyo were Japanese (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007).

However, the number of Little Tokyo's dispersed community members was much larger than the number of its actual Japanese residents. There was no count in the census for dispersed members of ethnic enclaves. The majority of Japanese community members had spatially dispersed to other Southern California locations by 1940, but continued to visit Little Tokyo for its cultural, spiritual and social offerings and continued to use its association developed financial and social community services (JCCSC 1960; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983).

During settlement and stabilization period, Little Tokyo flourished as a socio-economic and political center for all Japanese individuals who had located in or dispersed to other communities in Southern California (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase1983; Gomyo 2008).

This thesis builds upon previous studies based on "place based" Little Tokyo, which did not sufficiently acknowledge Little Tokyo's wider impact on the dispersed Japanese community, nor the importance of the fact that it offered integrated services

and connected dispersed Japanese immigrants and settlements with Little Tokyo. This thesis identifies the factors that establish Little Tokyo was the actual and symbolic center of much of the daily Japanese communal life even though most community members were outside the literal space of Little Tokyo.

Japanese farming settlements also developed major local community infrastructures. Gardena is an example of one of the largest farm communities developed by Japanese and it included an established community center, a language school, and many churches (Gardena Heritage Committee).⁶⁸ Notwithstanding the existence of infrastructure elsewhere, the headquarters of most of the *kenjinkai* related associations remained in Little Tokyo which made Little Tokyo a place central to the activities of Southern California Japanese community and also the symbolic center and hub of Japanese cultural, economic and socio-political life.

This thesis calls this community model, that is community members who are at a physical distance from physical hub of the community but self-identify with the community hub and use its services, the **dispersed community**. The essence of this community model is an institutional integrity existing between the spatially dispersed community and Little Tokyo that allows the spatially dispersed individuals to be part or remain part of the hub community.

Various associations played a significant role in engineering the development of the dispersed Japanese community in Little Tokyo. "Associations," as it is used here,

⁶⁸ Japanese farmers changed the use of the soil of Gardena farms to berry fields (mostly strawberries, raspberries and blackberries grown year-round) and farms for the raising of tomatoes, alfalfa, and barley.

includes not only organized and physically identifiable associations but also the immeasurable associated practices, customs and values agreed upon by the Japanese immigrants and their children.

There has been institutional integrity among the various Little Tokyo associations. Although immigrants and their families were spatially dispersed throughout Southern California, they were socially, culturally, economically, and politically integrated into Little Tokyo as it was the “centripetal” hub of their community life. The integration includes both vertical and horizontal formal and informal networks and ties.

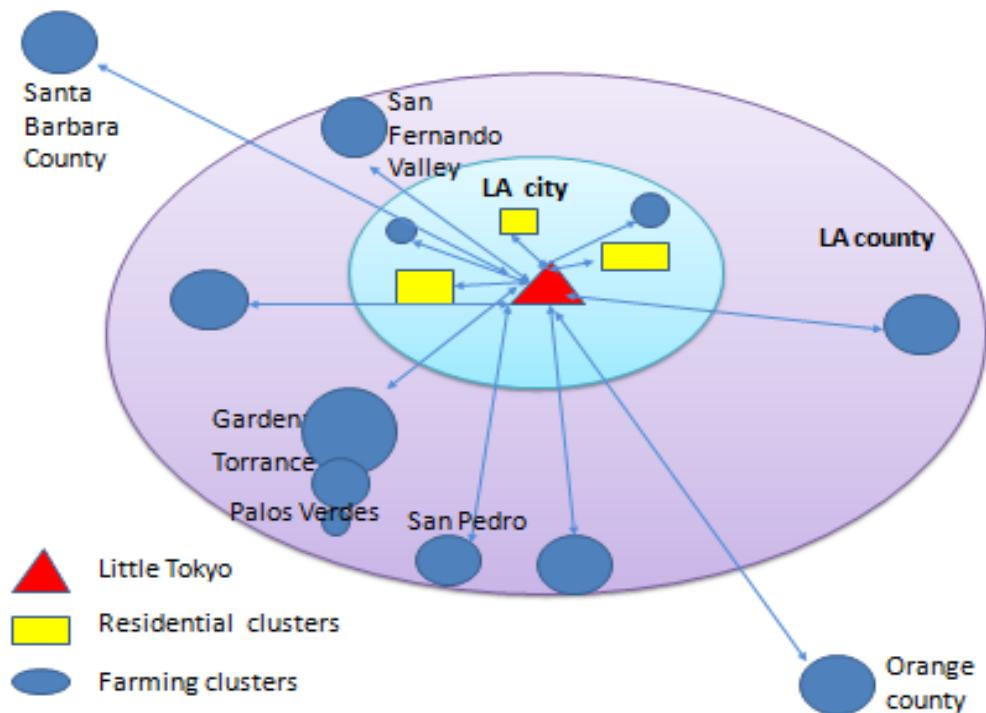
Yagasaki’s (1993) research findings about the development of vertically integrated agriculture systems by Japanese immigrants in Southern California provides an important insight for the analysis of Little Tokyo’s role within the **dispersed community** model. Vertically controlled, agriculture-based, ethnic economies included production, wholesaling, distribution and retailing. The intensive agriculture activities provided economic stability for the dispersed community (Murase 1983; Yagasaki 1993).

Little Tokyo’s involvement as a service center made it a symbolic economic center because of the presence of produce markets and because it was the headquarters of the various agricultural related cooperatives. McWilliams (1996) describes that Little Tokyo became the “primary service center for people who were engaged in, directly or indirectly, or were dependent upon” the agriculture industry (88). One example of this is a record of a farmer’s supply store called Shigaki Seed

Company, which was located on South San Pedro Street. It sold seeds, fertilizer, and plants to farmers from such distant and far-flung places as Imperial Valley, Oxnard, Orange County, and the San Fernando Valley (Little Tokyo Historical Society 11).

Yagasaki's template focused on agricultural production, market and distribution by analyzing spatial distribution and the institutions. Using Yagasaki's template and research, this thesis examined the locations of the Little Tokyo dispersed community and community linkage of Little Tokyo. This resulted in recapturing the Little Tokyo community in its wider spatial distribution, and far beyond the confines of the space occupied by the place called Little Tokyo. The **dispersed community** stresses include both vertically and horizontal collaborations and ties.

Figure 4.3 Image of the Japanese Dispersed Community in Southern California



Jenks (2008a) explains that since Little Tokyo was the only space in Southern California over which Japanese immigrants had anything like a recognized claim, Little Tokyo was a “nexus” point where Japanese “encountered communities with shared challenges, experimented with responses to the restrictions imposed upon them, and negotiated conflicts within” the Japanese ethnic community as well as “with the other immigrant and racialized communities in Southern California” (33).

Periodically, Japanese families from the dispersed Southern California settlements visited Little Tokyo for shopping, meetings, socialization and political activities (Minamikawa). These periodic “pilgrimages” (113) to Little Tokyo by dispersed Japanese, including the American born progeny, were part of the transformation of the space into a prominent symbolic hub for the dispersed Japanese communities in Southern California (Minamikawa).

4.5.4. Other research and concepts

There is research about other commercially, culturally and spatially dispersed interrelated communities, which widely existed in African and Asia including the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Philip Curtin (1984) called them a trading diaspora. The **dispersed community**, which is the subject of this paper, emphasizes the “centripetal” integrity in Little Tokyo. Jenks (2008a) also points out this integrity by quoting David Holley, “the San Fernando Valley farmer did not relate to the San Pedro fisherman, but they did both relate to Little Tokyo” (224) .

Similarly, geographer D.W. Meinig (1965) defined the term “core,” “domain” and “sphere” in the context of the Mormon culture in America. Mormons have a

definite, cohesive, readily distinguishable cultural pattern within the broader American life, and also have a spatial and spiritual core in the Wasatch Oasis, a domain that includes much of Utah and southeastern Idaho. The sphere of influence extends from eastern Oregon to Mexico and to the Pacific Coast cities such as Los Angeles.

In contrast, Little Tokyo is the “core” of the wider Japanese community but demographically its trend is opposite from the sphere of the Mormon cultural region where 40% of the total Mormon population is concentrated in its core, 28% in its domain, and 13% in its sphere. Although Little Tokyo is also a cultural and spiritual core, the Japanese have not been demographically concentrated in Little Tokyo.

Although previous researchers have noted the central aspect of Little Tokyo, the dynamic institutional nature of Little Tokyo in the context of its dispersed community has not yet been explored.

Japanese sociologist Kazuko Tsurumi (2001) introduced the concept of “*suiten*” or intersection or a gathering point. Minakata Kumagusu, one of the founders of Japanese folklore and also a microbiologist, originally introduced the term. Tsurumi stresses *suiten* is different from the simple concept of center because the condition of *suiten* changes constantly by causality or coincidence. It is a place where various causalities, coincidences, and diverse people meet, or sometimes collide, and influence each other. Thus *suiten* can be seen to as a place controlled by external forces to become the center of the community in need, like the emperor system of Japan (Tsurumi 127, 165). It can be argued that Little Tokyo appears to embody the concept

of *suiten*. However, further research is needed before for this concept is applied to Little Tokyo.

The paper observes that the existence of the **dispersed community** is a proof of rich social capital of pre-war Japanese communities in Southern California since the solidarity, cooperation, reciprocity and ties in the **dispersed community** are fed by the same underlying stock of social capital created by various associations.

More importantly, the Little Tokyo **dispersed community** does not fall under the neo-Tocquevillean analytical framework since mutual aid forms were not developed voluntarily by people free to choose, but were developed, albeit with a paradigm taken from the Japanese homeland, to address necessities as a result of the exclusion from participation and discrimination by the dominant society.

4.5.5. **Japanese Associations are vehicles of solidarity for the dispersed community and Little Tokyo is the symbolic hub**

This section explains the different ways Little Tokyo associations, intended as vehicles for Japanese solidarity, were a moving force in the development of the **dispersed community** and Little Tokyo as its hub.

The leading social and political association during the settlement period was “Japanese Associations” (Ichioka 1988; Kinoshita 2010; Minamikawa 2007). As anti-Japanese sentiment grew with the immigrant shift to permanent settlements taking place, Japanese Associations took the lead in uniting Japanese immigrants. Their lead

was strengthened because with the sense of belonging to a prefecture provided by their origin (Minamikawa 2007; JCCSC 1960).⁶⁹

Wherever a significant number of Japanese people settled, Japanese Associations were established. Wherever there was a Japanese Association, Women's and Youth Associations, Cooperatives and credit rotating systems were also created (JCCSC).

In 1905, the Japanese Association in Southern California, later renamed as the Japanese Association in Los Angeles, was established in Little Tokyo (Murase). It had 21 affiliated local associations (Ichioka 157). In its golden period, between 1910s and 1920s, the Japanese Associations in Los Angeles included 4,500 members (JCCSC).

Japanese Associations became involved in the community by coordinating community associations through community building activities, including education, agriculture and social welfare (JCCSC). Necessary staff was dispatched from the central Japanese Associations to local affiliates when they needed technical assistance (JCCSC). Japanese Associations also played leading roles in providing instruction for industrial education and intervening and mediating various disputes between the Japanese and Americans. The Associations also had a role in monitoring and directing the

⁶⁹ According to Minamikawa (2007), the Japanese Association in San Francisco was feeling the need to unify Japanese immigrants to fight the growing exclusion movement in the late nineteenth century. The Japanese Association was originally formed in Little Tokyo in 1897, before the Japanese Consulate of Los Angeles was established in 1915. Immigrants in Los Angeles did not have an urgent need to unite the diverse kenjin-based Japanese because there was relatively little anti-Japanese sentiment in Los Angeles at that time. However, a significant change in Japanese Associations occurred as a result of the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement because it demonstrated the power of the Japanese exclusion movement throughout in California.

agriculture-based ethnic economy from the macro to the micro level and through targeted policies (JCCSC).

Together with the other three central bodies in San Francisco, Seattle and Oregon, there were four central bodies of Japanese Associations. These combined with higher tiers of associations in the Japanese Associations of America. All associations operated within the framework of a three-tiered hierarchy. The local Japanese consulate was the upper tier. Local associations represented the third tier. The central bodies were the link between the local consulates and local associations as the middle tier (Ichioka 157). The central Japanese Associations had close ties with Japan and often worked as Japan's main American contact point (Kinoshita).

Due to its quasi-governmental administrative role, the Japanese Associations had special features such as its highly centralized tiered system as well as its transnational activities.⁷⁰ It was as a result of the special relationship with the Japanese government that Japanese Associations worked to cope with growing anti-Japanese movement. At the same time, they worked to unite and strengthen the social and political integrity of the spatially dispersed Japanese communities and raise the collective sense of belonging as "Japanese" (Ichioka 1988, Kinoshita 2010, Minamikawa 2007).

⁷⁰ According to the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California (1960), Japanese Associations also raised money and sent donations to Japan in time of disaster such as the Kanto Earthquake. They received in kind book donations for their libraries from Japan. The Japanese Emperor and Empress financially supported Japanese Associations' social welfare programs such as senior homes.

According to Ichioka (1988), the Japanese government addressed the severe administrative need to register the widely dispersed Japanese laborers in order to implement the Gentlemen's Agreement by using the network of existing Japanese Associations in California (161).

As the American government insisted, the Japanese government formulated a system of compulsory registration of all Japanese in the United States and issued certificates of registration. These certificates were considered to be the only valid document to establish who was a "bona fide resident", the status that would permit Japanese laborers to continue to reside in the United States. The Japanese government delegated certain bureaucratic authority such as the "endorsement right" to the Japanese Associations, which allowed affiliated associations to have the benefits of affiliation by sharing the fee collected for issuing the certificates (Ichioka 161).

The authority to issue certificates delegated to these Japanese Associations were of two types, one was related to the Gentlemen's Agreement, and the other was tied to Japanese laws (Ichioka 161).

In the first category were the certificates permitting "bearers to journey to Japan and return to America alone or accompanied by spouses, children, and/or parents; to take a trip to other countries and return to the United States; or to summon spouses, children, and/or parents without going to Japan. These certificates attested to the fact that the bearers were residents of the United States" (Ichioka 161).

The second category of certificates was an annual draft deferment of the obligation for Japanese military service due to residence in a foreign country. Other

certificates included those connected with family registries such as birth, death, marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance (Ichioka 161-162).

These certificates required Japanese immigrants to apply to the associations within the jurisdiction he or she lived. The associations shared the fees with Japan, and their portion became the solid economic foundation of the associations (Ichioka 162). Thus, the system delegated authority enabled local affiliated associations to be integrated into wider institutional autonomy and to exercise control over Japanese immigrants. The associations became de facto semi-government offices with their own officers imbued with the status of quasi-government bureaucrats.

As a result, the central office in Little Tokyo was hierarchically the top of the affiliated associations in Southern California. It had become an administrative and quasi-governmental center of Japanese immigrant society in Southern California (Ichioka 163). The hierarchical yet quasi-governmental institutional character helped to create the “collectiveness” among the spatially dispersed Japanese farming settlements and Little Tokyo.

Japanese Associations also had a significant role in the Japanese community because it united the formerly regionally diverse, prefectural-based ties and identities, a unification, which reinforced the immigrants’ collective identity as Japanese. At the same time, the associations also tried to motivate the Japanese community to culturally assimilate into America, a strategy guided by the Japanese government to minimize the friction between Japanese immigrants and mainstream Americans.

Minamikawa (2007) argues that the Americanization campaign led by the Japanese Associations paradoxically created a sense of collective Japanese solidarity (125-132).

The Japanese government involved itself in the orchestration of associations to directly influence immigrant conduct. For example, under the guidance from the Japanese government, Japanese Associations encouraged the Japanese immigrant to acquire permanent residency to prove their loyalty to America. Also, periodic moral reform campaigns took place in 1910s Little Tokyo led by the Japanese Associations with the help of religious institutions in an attempt to eliminate the unsavory aspects of Japanese immigrant life such as gambling and prostitution (Minamiakwa).

Not only did the moral campaigns produce a strong political message to mainstream American society, but they also had a significant impact on Japanese immigrant communities. Since these campaigns were implemented at every level of a community with various community associations involved, it helped create both vertical and horizontal institutional integrity, and the formation of ethnic solidarity and collective identity in the dispersed Japanese communities (Minamikawa).

As a result of this involvement and process, Little Tokyo was widely acknowledged both inside and outside of the dispersed community as a symbolic center of the Japanese community in Southern California (Minamikawa).

4.5.6. *Kenjinaki* Based Associations Remain the Core of Dispersed Japanese

Community Life

In spatially dispersed Japanese farming settlements, Japanese farmers formed cooperatives, used rotating credit systems, established community centers and operated language schools, temples and churches. Between 1907 and 1918, there were at least 33 farmers' associations with their members highly connected with *kenjinaki* in Southern California (Yagasaki 66). These included the farmer's centralized agricultural association, called *Nanka Chuo Nokai* in Japanese. There were two farmer's associations associated with the produce markets on the Seventh and Ninth Streets, named Japanese Farmers Association of Southern California (*Nanka Nogyo Kumiai* in Japanese) and Nippon-California Farmers Association (*Nikka Nogyo Kumiai*), and established in 1907 and 1909 respectively (Yagasaki 1993; JCCSC 1960).⁷¹

The agricultural industry was thoroughly organized and integrated from the production fields to the wholesale markets and retail outlets and worked out the timing and planning of year-round production to meet the needs of these markets (McWilliams 87-88).⁷²

The *kenjinaki* had a continuing and significant role in farmers' associations and other social associations since membership was usually based on a member's prefecture in Japan. Also, many key social and economic associations such as *Kenjinkai*,

⁷¹ According to Yagasaki (1982), the cooperatives at the produce markets were more like trade associations than agricultural cooperatives.

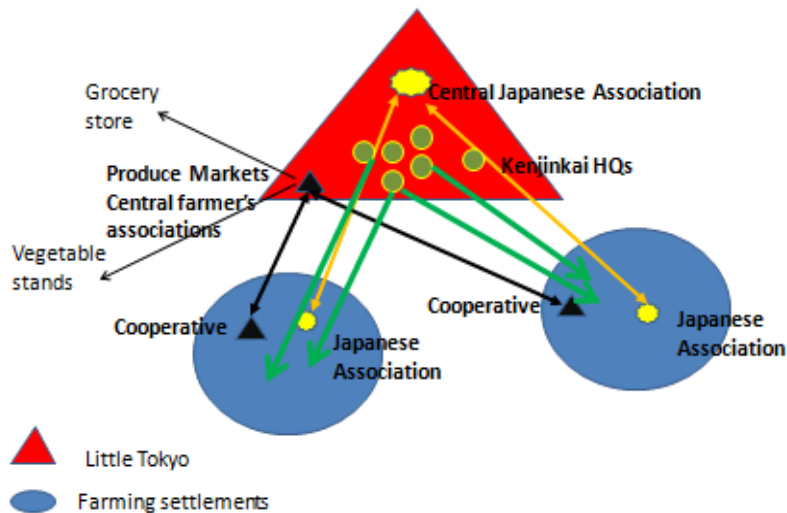
⁷² It should be noted that in San Francisco, Japanese farmers had not been able to undertake farming activities because by the time they arrived almost all the farming opportunities had been taken by earlier arriving immigrants. The only places that the Japanese immigrants were able to open and operate produce markets were in Los Angeles (Southern California), Sacramento (Northern California) and Fresno (Central California) (JCCSC).

women's, farmers' and youth associations were under the umbrella of Japanese Associations that had agriculture, social welfare, and education components.

Kenjinkai, now confederated along with the institutional development of Japanese Associations, also continued to play an important role within the Japanese Associations (JCCSC). Representatives of *kenjinakai* were the board members of the Japanese Associations. They could vote for the representatives of the Japanese Associations every year. Farmer's associations were also important partners in association endeavors. By 1931, Japanese Associations had been encouraged to set up an agricultural section at the local Japanese Associations which was coordinated with the two central farmer's associations in Southern California in order to improve the efficiencies of farm management (JCCSC).

Although the guidance from Japanese Associations did not have any technical legal force, it played a crucial role in the monitoring and directing of Japanese famers, entrepreneurs, and families through targeted policies at every level of their lives from macro to micro-level. Targeting policies covered not only regulating farm business such as farm products, the operating hours of markets, measures for disputes with Mexican farm laborers, but also children's education, construction of language schools and libraries, the social welfare of senior homes and moral campaigns to address cultural and social behaviors (JCCCSC). Japanese cooperatives, women's and youth associations, religious institutions were all symbiotically linked which resulted in an overall integrity in the local and dispersed Japanese community.

Figure 4.4 Image of Institutional Integrity of Little Tokyo with Dispersed Farming settlements



The 1924 immigration law that precluded further Japanese immigration had a significant impact on Japanese Associations because it caused the gradual loss of financial viability, as there was no more need for the issuance of certificates to newcomers. Even so, the **dispersed community** continued to flourish even after the end of Japanese immigration and Little Tokyo reached its pre-war heydays in the 1930s. Research suggests that the **dispersed community** continued to flourish because it was fed by the same underlying stock of social capital that the Japanese *issei* farmers created for mutual aid such as *kenjinkai*, cooperatives, credit rotating systems, women's and youth associations, temples and churches.

Kenjinkai also continued to flourish and to play an important role in social and cultural life. By 1940, 46 Japanese prefectures had *kenjinkai* in Little Tokyo (Murase

1983). It should be noted, however, there was a significant difference between the *kenjinkai* of the frontier period and that of 1940. The 1940s *kenjinkai* had more of a collective identity and an ethnic solidarity as Japanese because of the activities of the Japanese Associations resulting in the preservation of the pluralistic sub-identity of the prefectures of their origins (Minamikawa).

4.5.7. The Rise of *Nisei*-led Organizations

By 1930, the American-born *nisei*, or second generation Japanese Americans, constituted 44 percent of the Japanese population in the City of Los Angeles. In 1940, the *nisei* constituted sixty-three percent of the Japanese population in Los Angeles, the undeniable majority of the Japanese community.⁷³ However, because two-thirds of the *nisei* in Los Angeles in 1940 were still minors, the pre-war Japanese community continued to be largely led by the *issei* (Minamikawa 167).

However, the *nisei* were growing in influence within the pre-war Japanese community. They had the advantages of being born in the United States and possessing U.S. citizenship and the benefits of citizenship. Unlike many of their parents, they spoke English fluently, so many *nisei* not only were interpreters for their parents, but they served as intermediaries between the immigrant *issei* and the rest of America. The *issei* stressed the importance of education as the key to climbing the social ladder in America. As a result, the average education of the *nisei* was two years of college, which was well above the national average at the time (Takaki 212-218).

⁷³ Throughout the mainland of the United States in 1930, the *nisei* constituted 52 percent of the Japanese population (Takaki).

Soon, however, even the well-educated *nisei* realized that their U.S. citizenship and education did not make them immune from experiencing racial discrimination (Takaki 217). Like their parents, the *nisei* were regarded as foreigners or second-class citizens.⁷⁴ Moreover, the *nisei* did not have employment opportunities commensurate with their education (Takaki 1989; Minamikawa 2007). In 1940, only 5 percent of *nisei* worked for a non-Japanese business. The majority worked on the farms and businesses operated by their parents (Minamikawa 2007, JCCSC 1960). According to Minamikawa (2007), thirty percent of *nisei* men and forty percent of *nisei* women worked on their parents' farm or business without pay (167).

In 1929, the *nisei* who experienced racial discrimination formed the Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL) to show their loyalty to the United States and to advocate for their own civil rights. Largely made up of attorneys, physicians, and other highly educated professionals, the JACL represented the elite among the *nisei* (Minamikawa 168-169).⁷⁵ They advocated the virtues of American patriotism and assimilation into the American mainstream. They even distanced themselves from the immigrant-based Japanese Associations (Minamikawa). The Southern California JACL Chapter is headquartered in Little Tokyo to this day.

⁷⁴ For example, some were forced to sit in segregated sections in theaters and others refused service by white barbers. Although the *nisei* were legally allowed to own land and homes, widespread housing discrimination continued with deeds containing racially restrictive covenants that prevented the Japanese from purchasing and living in most of Los Angeles (Takaki).

⁷⁵ According to Minamikawa (2007), 26 percent of JACL members were professionals. This ratio is much higher than the 8 percent of professionals among all *nisei*.

4.5.8. Nisei Labor Unions

Along with the rise of organizations made up primarily of *nisei* professionals, *nisei* laborers in Little Tokyo organized and formed unions to protect their interests. In Little Tokyo, organizations such as the Nisei Restaurant Employee's Union and the Employees of Fruits and Vegetable Business in Southern California were formed and played an important role in dealing with both Japanese and non-Japanese employers (Minamikawa 2007; JCCSC 1960). At one point during the 1930s, the Nisei Restaurant Employee's Union had approximately 3,000 members (JCCSC).

There is little documentation about the unionization of Japanese immigrants but what there is demonstrates an economic class division in the **dispersed community** in Southern California.

4.5.9. Challenges Remained

In sum, discrimination and exclusion created an institutionally and highly integrated but spatially dispersed Japanese community in Southern California. This community's economic stability was provided by vertically integrated intensive agriculture that the Japanese farmers monopolized in Southern California. The **dispersed community** was richly involved in associational life. The *issei* brought with them the ideas of the mutual aid forms common in Japanese villages, and these provided horizontal collaboration and ties. Due to ongoing marginalization by the white majority, the *nisei* formed their own associations and continued to live and work in the **dispersed community** and in the economy built by the *issei*.

The significant difference between *issei* and *nisei* was that *nisei* identity also included being “American” rather than the “transnational-local identity” of their parents. This difference, with the conflict of generations, brought further richness in the associational life of **dispersed community** as *nisei* began to see that the rights identified in their American Creed were unfulfilled when they, too, faced racial discrimination.

This further emphasizes that the formation of the Little Tokyo **dispersed community**, even though it was primarily built as a result of associational activity, does not fall under neo-Tocquevillean analytical framework because this distinct ethnic community was formed and strengthened by *issei* and *nisei* largely in response to their exclusion from participating in the larger mainstream of society and protection from an increasing anti-Japanese sentiment.

4.6. Internment: 1942-1945

4.6.1. Disappearance and Dissolution of the Dispersed Community

The landscape of Little Tokyo with its **dispersed community** was dramatically changed after the bombing of Pearl Harbor Naval Station in Hawaii by the Japanese military on December 7, 1941. Within hours of bombing, the FBI came to Little Tokyo and detained *issei* leaders of Japanese Associations due to their alien status and the transnational activities of their associations. Because of the fear of being physically

attacked as a response to the bombing, buttons proclaiming their citizenship status were given out to all *nisei* as a means of protection (Jenks).

The Treasury Department closed all the Japanese-owned wholesale produce markets. The *nisei* made up ninety percent of the workers at the thriving Seventh and Ninth Street Markets (Jenks 126). This, in effect, severed the economic lifeblood of **dispersed community** economy. Boycotting and harassment severely affected the Japanese merchants in Little Tokyo and the heart, as it were, of **dispersed community** became completely dysfunctional.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 to place the West Coast under military authority which was authorized to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry, totaling over 120,000, into ten internment camp sites located in the interior of California, Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Arkansas.

All persons of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast were required to wear white tags with family identification numbers. They were ordered to assemble for transportation to the internment camps but were only allowed limited baggage (Hayden 147). They had at the most two weeks, and in some cases only a few days, before they were required to leave (Jenks 127). The Union Church, the Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple and Maryknoll Catholic School in Little Tokyo were some of the sites where local *issei* and their Japanese American progeny were assembled for the mandatory evacuations when they began on April 1st (Little Tokyo Historical Society 78).

The removal of Japanese persons and the internments were solely based on being of Japanese heritage without the offer of any evidence of individual involvement in espionage or treason. Nor was the internment order justified by any public claim of military necessity. Rather, as declared in 1983 Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, it was based on race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.⁷⁶

Out of the 120,000 internees, sixty percent were second generation and U.S. citizens. Both the *issei* who were ineligible for citizenship and the *nisei* born in the U.S. were subjected to the internments solely based on their Japanese heritage. As McWilliams (1944) put it, anti-Japanese sentiment became “imbedded in the mores of the West Coast,” especially in Los Angeles where the largest number of Japanese were concentrated (15).

Jenks (2008a) quotes the interesting text of the February 2, 1942 KECA radio broadcast which speaks for itself, and most telling, it acknowledges that whether motivated by the then recent attack on Pearl Harbor or an underlying racism, there was a belief that there was no way to determine who was loyal so “[a]ll must go, good and bad alike”:

All of them must go, good and bad alike, for the safety of the nation, because

there is no way to determine those loyal to this country and those loyal to

⁷⁶ *Personal Justice Denied* (1983) was written by the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. It is an official governmental study on Executive Order 9066, related wartime orders and the impact on Japanese and Japanese Americans. The commission confirmed that there was no military necessity for the incarceration of Japanese. The commission recommended legislative remedies consisting of an official government apology; redress payments to each of the survivors, and a public education fund to help ensure that it would not happen again.

Japan. A declaration of allegiance to the United States would not be sufficient. The cunning, deceptive minds of those who perpetrated the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor would willingly, and with a show of patriotism, pledge their allegiance to this Government in order to remain where they could be most useful, and then stab the American people in the back (129).

The wartime internment effectively eliminated and thus destroyed all the Japanese networks and infrastructure including the numerous associations that constituted the building blocks of the community. Within two weeks of the assembly order, Little Tokyo, its residents and the members of its **dispersed community** completely disappeared from Southern California.

4.6.2. Bronzeville Period

Little Tokyo, emptied of its Japanese residents and businesses, was occupied again with increasing numbers of African American laborers during World War II (Minamikawa 2010; Murase 1983; Jenks 2008a). They came to Los Angeles to find work in the shipyards and other wartime industries. Also, new immigrants of other ethnicities settled in the vacated Little Tokyo. As it was in the past and pre-war days, Little Tokyo was a convenient stopping place for newcomers because it was just a few blocks from the railway station (Murase).

Many African Americans began to live and work in Little Tokyo. This period represented a new phase in the complex racial geography of the area (Jenks). Known as “Bronzeville,” the area featured black-owned cafés, restaurants and businesses.

There was the Cobra Club, at the corner of East First Street and South San Pedro Street, where musicians like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie performed regularly. The Japanese' Union Church became the community center of Bronzeville (Jenks 2008a; Murase 1983).⁷⁷

4.7 Conclusion

Because pre-war Japanese immigrants were excluded from mainstream society and precluded from meeting their social, survival, economic and cultural needs by discrimination and laws precluding their involvement in land ownership and other activities, they created associations that provided a mutual support system that met their survival and social needs.

With a stable agro-economy meeting financial needs as a result of the success of their intensive farming in Southern California, Japanese immigrants created a unique **dispersed community** with Little Tokyo as a political, economic and social hub. The **dispersed community** not only achieved socioeconomic and political integration of the Japanese who came from many different prefectures, but also its members also obtained a collective ethnic identity and pride in their Japanese heritage.

However, as is seen in the *nisei*'s struggle to reconcile Japanese identity and assimilation into the mainstream, American born Japanese people continued to struggle and search for their identities in American society even as they were confronted with racial discrimination and segregation.

⁷⁷ See Jenks (2008a p. 138-198) for a detailed discussion of Bronzeville Period.

Despite their citizenship and educational achievement, many *nisei* in Southern California continued to work for and live in the **dispersed community** because it provided stable and predictable economic opportunities until it, and they, disappeared with the internment of all West Coast Japanese in April of 1942.

Chapter5 Associational Life in Little Tokyo from Post-World War II

Resettlement to the Present

“Community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community is not quickly formed. It almost always has a history and so is also a community of memory, defined in part by its past and its memory of its past.”

Bellah, et al., 1996, p.333

5.1 Overview

5.1.1. Evolution of Associations in Little Tokyo

This chapter reviews the evolution of community building in Little Tokyo after World War II. This includes the resettlement of the Japanese community after the internment camps and serving in the U.S. armed forces. Then, the redevelopment years where the focus was on obtaining investment from Japanese corporations in order to protect the community from seizure of its land and threatened razing of its historic buildings by the City of Los Angeles’ Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), to the present day Little Tokyo. Community building in the present day is focused on preservation of Little Tokyo’s history and Japanese culture, maintaining Little Tokyo’s position as the central hub of the dispersed Japanese community and consolidating the interests among the multi-ethnic, multi-generational and diverse socio-economic groups.

Community associations born out of pre-war necessity and Japanese prefectural patterns disappeared with the 1942 internment of the Japanese living on the West Coast. Following, there was a rebirth as new associations made up of *issei* and *nisei* in the 1950s and 1960s. The associations organized in order to protect Little Tokyo and its heritage, its land space and historical buildings.

These associations voiced objection to the City and its redevelopment agency's early plans to take most of Little Tokyo's land and raze its historical buildings. Since the association members did not have access to bank financing by U.S. financial institutions, or sufficient capital, the associations reached out to the Japanese corporations that agreed to invest in Little Tokyo's redevelopment projects. These investments protected Little Tokyo from the city's plans in the 1960s and beyond, allowing Little Tokyo to preserve its historical buildings as well as its heritage and position as the central hub of the dispersed community.

Today, Little Tokyo associations continue to protect the community and address concerns of the multi-ethnic, multi-generational and differing socio-economic groups who reside or have interests in the neighborhood.

5.1.2. Conflicts in Little Tokyo

This chapter discusses the conflicts that arose among individuals, associations, public agencies and private entities as they sought to control or influence community and economic development in Little Tokyo. Precedence was given to the Japanese associations, particularly the *issei* and *nisei* members, who obtained funding for much

of Little Tokyo's redevelopment from Japanese corporations when U.S. financing was not available. In addition, they negotiated the community's future and the preservation of its history and culture both with the City of Los Angeles and with Japanese multinational corporate investors.

Special attention is given to the role of the third generation, the *sansei* and their role in Little Tokyo's community development. Many *sansei* influenced by the 1960s and 1970s civil rights movement became activists in the 1970s and 1980s. They gave a voice to the residents and small business tenants who were being evicted due to redevelopment in Little Tokyo. In the 1990s and 2000s, the *sansei*, with *issei* and *nisei*, worked with Japanese corporations and the Japanese American business people to form associations and address their united concerns and goals.

Most historic viewpoints of the development of Little Tokyo's land space are limited to the obvious conflicts between city government and the community or between Japanese multinational corporations and the community. This chapter explores the less obvious, but more complex interactions among individuals and groups within the Japanese community as they interfaced with the City of Los Angeles, its agencies and Japanese corporations, as most sought to control and influence the community and the economic development of Little Tokyo.

5.1.3. Key roles of the *issei* and *nisei* associations in obtaining redevelopment funds from Japanese corporations

This chapter highlights the key role of the *issei* and *nisei* in the postwar regeneration, development and preservation of Little Tokyo. These key players formed associations to strengthen ties and obtain financial support from major Japanese corporations for Little Tokyo's redevelopment.⁷⁸ The associations' requests for Japanese investment in Little Tokyo's redevelopment and the resulting investment saved Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave along with its history and role as the central hub of the dispersed Japanese community.

The requests to Japanese corporations for investment in the redevelopment of Little Tokyo were made out of necessity. Unless the Japanese could come up with money for redevelopment, they would have little or no choice about how redevelopment would proceed. Japanese corporations were the only financial resource open to a request for funding. Individuals and businesses had little or no capital after the war. Savings and business accounts had been frozen after the internment order, and very little was ever recovered from the deposits. Significantly, U.S. banks were hesitant to loan to Japanese businesses because they were considered to be in the high-risk category of "start ups," even those businesses that had existed before the war. Making a loan even less likely, redevelopment monies were considered to be high-risk investments because they targeted areas that were considered blighted by design.

⁷⁸ See Natsuki Kinoshita, "The Post-War Issei: A History of Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, 1949-1990s," *Economic Journal of Hokkaido University*, Vol. 39, 2010, p. 51-67.

5.1.4. Associational life is still evolving in Little Tokyo

Presently, with most of the Japanese corporate investment money gone due to the collapse of Japan's domestic bubble economy during the 1990s, Japanese corporate executives continue their involvement in Little Tokyo by remaining on boards such as the Japanese American National Museum and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, and by supporting fundraising events such as dinners and golf tournaments. Little Tokyo's associations not only continue to represent the residents and the dispersed Japanese community but also have facilitated discussions among the economically disparate, multi-ethnic and multi-generational residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the constantly evolving communal life of Little Tokyo.

5.1.5. Division of the chapter

The discussion is divided into five stages of postwar development:

1. **First stage, 1940s and 1950s**: Postwar resettlement of Japanese in Little Tokyo and Southern California;
2. **Second stage, 1960s**: Early Years of Redevelopment in Little Tokyo;
3. **Third stage, 1970s and 1980s**: Community conflicts and collaborations arising out of redevelopment in Little Tokyo;

4. **Fourth stage, 1980s and 1990s:** Little Tokyo's renewed development as the hub and symbolic center of the dispersed Southern California Japanese community;
5. **Fifth stage, 2000s and beyond:** Coexistence of people diverse in ethnicity, age, and economic backgrounds in a rapidly changing Little Tokyo.

5.2. 1940s-1950s Postwar Resettlement in Little Tokyo and Southern California

5.2.1. Revival of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave after the war

When the U.S. government lifted its West Coast exclusion order on January 2nd, 1945, the Japanese were allowed to leave the internment camps and many returned to Little Tokyo (Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983). Kiichi Uyeda's Five and Ten Cent Store was the first Japanese owned business to reopen on March 30, 1945 (Jenks). By April 1945, the mostly *nisei*-led Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) reopened its office in Little Tokyo to assist internees and to help them cope with the hostility and discrimination they faced when they returned to Little Tokyo (JCCSC).

After the World War II surrender of the Japanese on August 15, 1945, more camp internees returned. By the end of 1945, over 30 restaurants and dozens of shops reopened in operation in Little Tokyo (Murase). Churches, temples, hotels and apartments in Little Tokyo were converted into temporary hostels for the returning internees (Murase 1983; Kaji 2010). Soon, many professionals including physicians,

dentists, engineers, accountants, as well as insurance agencies, opened offices in Little Tokyo.

By 1946, twenty-four percent, or 4,725 out of 20,000, of the Japanese internees returning to Los Angeles came back to the Little Tokyo area. Sixteen percent, or 3,187, returned to nearby Boyle Heights, the area immediately east of Little Tokyo (Minamikawa 187).⁷⁹ The War Relocation Authority, which was in charge of the resettlement program, urged the returning internees to stay away from large groups of Japanese and to avoid the use of the Japanese language except when necessary (Murase).

During the war, many African Americans had moved to the Little Tokyo area, which became known as Bronzeville. In order to return to those parts of Little Tokyo, returning Japanese used the wages and savings of entire extended families to buy out leases from African American merchants. This meant they had to pay 50 to 200 percent more than what they paid when they left for the camps (Jenks 173-174). The landlords favored the returning Japanese Americans as they considered them to be more responsible tenants who are more willing to pay higher rent (Jenks 175-176). As a result of these lease buyouts, many African American residents moving to more affordable neighborhoods in south Los Angeles (Murase 1983; Jenks 2008a).

⁷⁹ The remainder (2,293 or twelve percent) returned to an area later known as the Seinan area on Crenshaw Boulevard, southwest of downtown Los Angeles.

5.2.2. Revival of associational life as the building blocks of the Japanese community

On September 5, 1947, forty-eight community leaders, many of them affiliated with the prewar Japanese Associations and *kenjinkai*, gathered in Little Tokyo to form a centralized organization to support returning internees (New Japanese American News 676). They adopted the name, “Japanese Council in Los Angeles,” instead of the prewar “Japanese Association.” Five were selected to be council members: Katsuma Mukaeda, an *issei* attorney; Kenji Ito, a *nisei* attorney; Choyei Kondo, an *issei* who held a master’s degree from an American university; Meijiro Sato, a successful *issei* hotel businessman; and Reverend Misao Yamazaki of the St. Mary Anglican Church, an *issei* with a Doctorate of Divinity from the University of California, Berkeley (ibid).⁸⁰

By 1949, the Japanese community had a strong foothold and was re-establishing a meaningful presence in Little Tokyo. 1949 was the year organizers resumed Nisei Week, the largest Japanese festival in Southern California. It had been an annual event from 1934 until the 1942 internment order (Jenks). In 1949, *issei* leaders of the Japanese Council in Los Angeles renamed themselves the “Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Southern California.” Also in 1949, the Japanese regained the use of the Union Church building by obtaining it from the African American community-based Pilgrim’s House, which had been using it as a social welfare community center since 1942 (Jenks).

⁸⁰ Both Mukaeda and Ito received their educations both in Japan and the U.S. Pre-war *issei* in the U.S. not only had identities that wavered between the two nations but also had a transnational lifestyle.

Many *kenjinkai*, or Japanese prefectural associations, and their affiliated women's clubs resumed their activities and assisted returning internees. The *kenjinkai*'s support activities included financial aid for returning internees, arrangement for *issei* funerals, aid for those struggling in their ancestral prefectures in Japan, and support services for the *kibei-nisei* and their families, new immigrants, and visitors from Japan. In order to sound less foreign, many *kenjinkai* such as those from Hiroshima, Ehime, Fukui, Fukuoka renamed their associations and resumed their activities as "clubs." By the end of the 1950s, there were twenty active *kenjinkai* (JCCSC 426). Thus, the *issei*-led *kenjinkai*, along with the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce, had again become service providers for Japanese communities.

By 1950, the number of Japanese businesses and residents in Little Tokyo was still dramatically lower than in the prewar years, but by then Little Tokyo had reconstituted itself as a regional center with a wide range of services for its Japanese residents and those in the dispersed Southern California Japanese communities (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1983). The *kenjinkai* and other associations were also providing critical and important social support networks in Little Tokyo and the dispersed Japanese community (JCCSC).

By 1950, Little Tokyo and its buildings were showing signs of major deterioration. Many of the buildings had been built at the turn of the century, and some were in substandard condition.⁸¹ Many Little Tokyo residents were single,

⁸¹ According to the 1969 Little Tokyo Building Survey of Tom Kamei, a *kibei-nisei* engineer, out of a total 138 buildings in Little Tokyo, only 16.7% were in "standard" condition, 43.5% were in "substandard," 32.6 % "rehabilitation questionable" and 7.2 % were "rehabilitation feasible."

elderly, low-income and of different ethnic backgrounds, and many lived in residential hotels.⁸² Eventually, the neighborhood was declared to be a blighted zone within the downtown area.

5.2.3. The 1952 “Second Eviction” of Japanese from Little Tokyo

In 1952, the so-called Second Eviction of the Japanese community from Little Tokyo occurred (Jenks 2008a; Murase 1983). In March 1950, the City of Los Angeles announced its plan to demolish and clear the entire northwestern block of Little Tokyo to make way for a new police headquarters. The area slated for demolition was one fourth of the area of postwar Little Tokyo. Ultimately, over 1,000 business tenants were displaced, including the community’s center on First Street and San Pedro Street where Japanese businesses, along with residential hotels and apartments, had been concentrated. The Japanese community, which was politically powerless at this point and had no voice to speak for it, offered little, if any, objection or political resistance to the demolition (Jenks 191).

The demolition was devastating for the Japanese in Little Tokyo, and it was even more so for African Americans. The demolition put an end to Bronzeville. Out of an estimated 3,000 residents who were evicted, ninety percent were African

⁸² According to the 1969 Little Tokyo baseline survey conducted just before entering into the L.A. City led redevelopment phase in 1970, there were 513 residents in Little Tokyo, mostly single persons living in structurally “substandard” small hotels and apartments without heat or private bathroom facilities (CRA-1 1970). Out of 513 residents, approximately 60% (327) were Japanese, and 40% were non-Japanese, including Latinos (12%), Africans (7%), Caucasians (7%), Filipinos, Chinese and others.

Americans (ibid). This fact highlights that there was racial diversity in Little Tokyo at the time but also that all the minorities were politically disenfranchised.

5.2.4. Adjustment to the realities of postwar and post internment life

By 1950, 37,809 Japanese had returned to the greater Los Angeles area, almost reaching the same numbers as the prewar population. Around two-thirds, or 25,000, of returning Japanese resettled in the City of Los Angeles. Of those returning to the City of Los Angeles, approximately 25 percent were *issei*, 58 percent *nisei* and 12 percent *sansei* (New Japanese American News 526-527)⁸³.

While some *issei* and *nisei* established or reestablished their businesses and professions in Little Tokyo, others who had been in the agricultural and wholesale produce industries were not able to regain what was once the foundation of the Southern California Japanese pre-war economy. The pre-war Southern California vertically integrated agricultural system established by Japanese farmers disappeared when they were sent to the internment camps (Yagasaki). Nearly three-fourths of pre-war Japanese farm holdings were converted to industrial or residential use (Murase). Most pre-war Japanese-owned property was lost or sold for a fraction of its market value.

Because the pre-war Japanese agriculture-based industry and economy had disappeared, many Japanese transitioned to work as gardeners or into hotel and

⁸³ JCCSC assumed in their estimates that people under the age of 15 were *sansei*, ages between 16-44 were *nisei*, and above 45 were *issei*.

apartment service-workers.⁸⁴ Gardening, which requires relatively little capital investment, became by far the largest occupation for the Japanese. In 1950, 3,302, or 69 percent of 4,806 Japanese workers in the Los Angeles area were gardeners, while 179 or 3.7 percent called themselves farmers and wholesale produce distributors. These occupational trends continued for years, with gardeners constituting over 70 percent of the Japanese workforce in 1955 and 1960, while farmers and wholesale distributors decreased to 2.8 percent of the workforce in 1955, and 2 percent in 1960. The second largest occupation was hotel and apartment service, a field, which constituted 6.5 percent of the Japanese workforce in 1950, 7 percent in 1955, and 7.1 percent in 1960 (New Japanese American News 527-528).

Pre-war Japanese residential neighborhoods like Boyle Heights dramatically changed in racial and ethnic composition during the war years. After the war many Japanese moved to suburban communities such as Gardena and Monterey Park rather than stay in the central Los Angeles neighborhoods of Little Tokyo and Boyle Heights (Jenks 2008a; Murase 1983).

5.2.5. Postwar Japanese immigration and naturalization trends

The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act eliminated race as a barrier for naturalization, making the Japan born *issei* eligible to become American citizens for the first time. The *nisei*-led Japanese American

⁸⁴ According to Kurashige (2002), more than half of the workers in the ethnic community were employed by Japanese Americans before WWII but the figure dropped to less than thirty percent in 1948. The loss of ethnic agricultural economy forced most of the resettlers into the mainstream labor market (126).

Citizens League (JACL) lobbied strenuously for its passage, as did Little Tokyo *issei* leaders like Katsuma Mukaeda and Gongoro Nakamura (Murase).

In 1950, of the 20,224 Japanese who returned to the City of Los Angeles, forty-two percent were without American citizenship.⁸⁵ By the end of the 1950s, after the McCarran-Walter Act passed, 28,021 *issei* became American citizens (JCCSC 1960).

The McCarran-Walter Act was also historic in eliminating the preclusion of Asian immigrants, thereby allowing the Japanese to legally immigrate to the United States for the first time since 1924. This change allowed the return of the *kibei-nisei*, or Americans of Japanese ancestry born in the United States before World War II who went to Japan for family and other reasons before the war. The McCarran-Walter Act also permitted an influx of post-war Japanese immigrants, such as Japanese women who married U.S. military servicemen. These new immigrants added to the diversity of backgrounds within the Little Tokyo and Southern California Japanese communities.

The *kenjinkai* became a significant provider of support for these new and returning Japanese.⁸⁶ By the end of the 1950s, 39,279 Japanese immigrated into the U.S. (New Japanese American News 383), many of them *kibei-nisei* and their families and wives of U.S. soldiers.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ According to JCCSC (1960), out of 20,224 returnees to Los Angeles area in 1950, 10,112 were U.S. citizens, 480 were naturalized citizens, 8,497 non-citizens; 1,135 did not report their status.

⁸⁶ Interview with Dr. Charles Igawa on October 15, 2013.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

5.3 The 1960s: Japanese corporate investment in Little Tokyo Redevelopment

5.3.1. Overview

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association reached out to Japan based corporations to obtain financial and political support for redevelopment projects in Little Tokyo (Kaji). Reaching out was based on necessity. Japanese corporations were the only potential sources of funding. The returning internees had little or no resources, business loans were unlikely because Japanese businesses were considered risky ventures and redevelopment loans were considered high risk because redevelopment areas were by definition damaged. According to *nisei* businessman Bruce Kaji, presidents of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA)⁸⁸ and Merit Saving & Loan Association, whether because of lingering animus against the Japanese because of the war or other reasons, Japanese associations in Little Tokyo had little or no access to financing by U.S. banks or corporations for redevelopment.⁸⁹

Nor did Japanese individuals and businesses have the capital to make meaningful contributions towards redevelopment. They had little or no access to capital and they had limited capital after the war. The Japanese had recovered only a small percentage of their frozen pre-war bank accounts. It was not until the early 1960s that some limited capital was made available to the Japanese. American banks

⁸⁸ See p. 173-178 for the details of LTRA.

⁸⁹ Interview with Bruce Kaji on February 4, 2014.

had been reluctant to lend money to Japanese associations or businesses because they deemed their businesses new and therefore high risk.⁹⁰

In the 1960s, because Japanese associations in Little Tokyo had little or no access to personal financing or financing by U.S. banks for redevelopment, the Redevelopment Association reached out to Japan-based corporations to obtain their financial and political support (Kaji). As a result of the Redevelopment Association's growing influence, Sumitomo Bank executives met with the head of the Kajima Company, a leading Japanese construction and real estate company (113). Kajima would eventually become a major developer in Little Tokyo.

5.3.2. The growth of corporate Japanese investments in Little Tokyo

With the resumption of trade between the U.S. and Japan in 1952 after the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force on April 28, 1952, Little Tokyo became an important focus for growing Japanese investments in the U.S.⁹¹ In 1967, the Kajima

⁹⁰ Comparison between the use of Japanese corporate funding in L.A. and San Francisco demonstrates the power as well as the community building effect of Little Tokyo's Japanese associations. The corporate history brochure of Kintetsu Enterprises Co. of America, the largest investor to San Francisco Japantown and currently the owner of Little Tokyo Miyako Hotel, explains Kintetsu USA was established in 1961 at the request of the City of San Francisco for the construction of Japan Trade and Culture Center in the San Francisco Japantown (12). Initially, Kintetsu corporate headquarters was approached through the Osaka sister city connection to the City of San Francisco and the president of Kintetsu was the vice chairman of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce. It was Japanese businessmen in Hawaii who directly approached Kintetsu and asked for financial support. (The Japanese in Hawaii had not been interned during WWII so were not as economically devastated as California Japanese, but did not have enough capital to invest in the cultural center.) Kintetsu accepted the request and invested \$10 million in the Japan Trade and Culture Center with U.S. federal matching funds of \$2 million. This is an example of the way Japan-based corporations were financially contributing to the redevelopment of Japanese ethnic enclaves.

⁹¹ In 1952, the major Japanese financial institutions such as Bank of Tokyo and Bank of Sumitomo, established and or reestablished their local subsidiary in Little Tokyo (JCCSC).

Construction Company constructed a fifteen-story office building at the historic intersection of First Street and San Pedro Street in Little Tokyo. At the time, the building was the tallest constructed by a Japanese firm in the United States. The Kajima building became known as the Sumitomo Bank Building when the bank became the major tenant. Before the Sumitomo Bank Building, Kajima had built in 1964 and 1966, respectively, both a four-story Merit Savings & Loan office building and an eight-story medical building in Little Tokyo (Kaji).

Japanese and Japanese Americans used their cultural and language skills to facilitate Japanese investment in the area. More particularly, the *issei* and *nisei* leadership with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California (JCCSC) served as important connections for the Japanese government and Japanese corporations in Little Tokyo (Kinoshita).⁹² *Issei* and *nisei* leadership were critical to the success in obtaining many early Japanese investments in Little Tokyo while at the same time working to establish important relationships with decision makers in the City of Los Angeles in order to secure City funds to revitalize the neighborhood.

Significantly, the number of visitors from Japan also grew, and they included people employed by Japanese companies. In the 1950s, a total of 59,851 people came to the U.S. from Japan with non-immigrant visas. This number exceeds the 54,839

⁹² According to Kinoshita (2010), the surviving *issei* were numerically small but continued to play a leadership role in JCCSC. Out of the twenty members who served as a leader of the JCCSC from 1949 to 1984, fifteen were *issei* whose average birth year was 1894 and the most common year of entrance into the U.S. was 1911. Three of twenty leaders were *nisei* whose average birth year was 1913; two were *shin-issei*, postwar immigrants. In 1968, the membership of the JCCSC was at its largest; approximately 600, 221 of whom were born in Japan. Kinoshita concluded that *issei* and *nisei* had different attitudes and different cultural values resulting in a generational friction.

Japanese immigrants who entered in the U.S. from 1901 to 1910. In 1959, there were 26,031 Japanese non-immigrant visitors (JCCSC).

5.3.3. The Early Years of Little Tokyo Redevelopment

In 1963, Reverend Howard Toriumi, the *nisei* minister of Little Tokyo's Union Church, initiated Little Tokyo's community involvement in the city's redevelopment decisions (Jenks 2008a; Kaji 2010; Murase 1983).

It began when Reverend Toriumi went to the Los Angeles Planning Commission and asked if he could enlarge his church building to accommodate his growing congregation. As part of his quest, Reverend Toriumi incidentally learned from city planner Ruben Lovret that the City's Civic Center General Plan was designed to demolish the entire block on the north side of First Street, including the Union Church, for the further expansion of the Civic Center (Jenks 2008a; Kaji 2010; Murase 1883).

The portion of Little Tokyo, which was in the City's plan for demolition, contained two important community religious organizations, the Union Church and the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Both religious organizations served as important regional centers for the increasingly dispersed Japanese who were coming back to Little Tokyo for worship and social activities (Kaji). An estimated fifty percent of Japanese living throughout Southern California came to Little Tokyo a minimum of two or three times a month and another forty-six percent visited once or less per month (Murase).

City Planner Lovret advised Reverend Toriumi that if the Little Tokyo community did not organize, prepare, and submit their own alternative plan to the City, there was

the risk of another quarter of Little Tokyo being lost, similar to the events of Second Eviction of 1952, when the City demolished a quarter of Little Tokyo in order to construct Parker Center.⁹³

Alerted to the impending demolition and the need for community action, Reverend Toriumi immediately set up a meeting in Little Tokyo with Katsuma Mukaeda and Frank Hirata, presidents of the *issei*-led Japanese Chamber of Commerce, and other community leaders (Kaji). They all agreed that the survival of Little Tokyo was at stake and it was urgently necessary to organize the community in order to preserve and revitalize Little Tokyo.

5.3.4. The formation of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association

In 1963, Reverend Toriumi and 26 Japanese *issei* and *nisei* business, religious, and other community leaders formed the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA). Most association members were college educated *issei* and *nisei*, including businessmen, property owners, and investors. *Nisei* businessman Bruce Kaji, president of Merit Saving & Loan Association, became president. Being elected as a Treasurer in the city of Gardena, he was the only Japanese American elected officer in Los Angeles County at that time (Kaji). More than a third of the Redevelopment Association's members were *issei*. Most were affiliated with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC) (Jenks).

Issei leaders had established the Chamber of Commerce in 1949 as the

⁹³ Interview with Yukio Kawaratani on December 15, 2013

successor to the prewar Japanese Association (Kinoshita).⁹⁴ The Japanese Association had served as a quasi-governmental organization for the Japanese government, even performing some consular services, especially for the *issei* who were considered to be *zaigaihoujin*, or overseas Japanese residents (*issei* being ineligible for American citizenship until the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act). In fact, the Japanese government for a long time generalized and considered Americans of Japanese ancestry as an extension of *zaigaihoujin*.⁹⁵ It was through organizations, such as the Japanese Chamber of Commerce that the Japanese community was able to build relationships with the Japanese government and major Japanese corporations to obtain economic support for Little Tokyo's redevelopment.

One *issei* leader was Katsuma Mukaeda, a bilingual attorney appointed as the Vice-President of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association. He served as the president of the Central Japanese Association from 1933 and 1935 and as the head of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in 1950-1951 and 1963-1964. Mukaeda was an important advisor and intermediary between the Japanese government and businesses

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Kinoshita (2010) otherwise refers to it as "the Central Japanese Association," which was the central body of Japanese Associations in Southern California (and located in Little Tokyo). Japanese small business owners in Little Tokyo formed the pre-war Japanese Chamber of Commerce in 1916. In 1931, the Chamber was integrated into the Japanese Association of Los Angeles (Little Tokyo), a local branch of the Central Japanese Association. Because of the 1924 Immigration Act, both the Chamber and the Japanese Associations could no longer increase their membership with new immigrants because none were arriving so the leadership of both consisted of the same people.

⁹⁵ According to Yuko Kaifu, former Japanese consul in Los Angeles, it was around 2000 that Americans of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. started to be recognized as "Japanese American" by the Japanese government (conversation note with Yuko Kaifu on May 9, 2014)

(Kinoshita).⁹⁶ He later received the *Jokun* award, an official medal conferred by the Japanese government, in 1960 and in the 1990s (New Japanese American News)⁹⁷.

5.3.5. The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association as the community's voice for redevelopment planning with the City of Los Angeles

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) became the voice of the community for redevelopment issues with the City of Los Angeles. LTRA prepared a Little Tokyo General Plan and submitted it to the City. Although LTRA's General Plan did not have official legal power, it became the focus of the Little Tokyo community's push to prevent the demolition of the north side of First Street by bringing in new investment monies from Japan (Kaji 115).

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) also developed political influence and contacts within the City. In particular, the association established a working relationship with Los Angeles City Councilman Gilbert Lindsey, whose council district included Little Tokyo and who held tremendous influence over any

⁹⁶ After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, U.S. authorities arrested Mukaeda because he was believed to have strong connections with the Japanese government. After the war, he was one of the leaders who launched the rebuilding of Little Tokyo when he helped establish the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California, which became anew bedrock of the community. Mukaeda retained leadership of JCCSC and continued to maintain strong ties with Japanese political and business magnates until his death in the late 1990s(Kinoshita).

⁹⁷ Sachiko Fukusawa, a Southern California *issei*, was the first *issei* to receive the Jokun Medal in 1958. Later, there were more Jokun Medals awarded between 1965 and 1984 to surviving *issei*, for those who made a "significant contribution in the realms of political, economic and cultural life," most were and leaders and members of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (Kinoshita 64).

redevelopment activity in his district.⁹⁸ Lindsey was the first African American councilman in the history of Los Angeles, and he was sympathetic to Japanese and Japanese Americans and their experiences with racial discrimination.⁹⁹

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association also developed a working relationship with the City's planners. City Planner Reuben Lovret and his assistant, Jim Yoshinaga, a Japanese American, met every Friday during their lunch breaks with LTRA representatives who advised them of community concerns regarding the General Plan (Kaji 112).

In the end, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) succeeded in saving the buildings on the north side of First Street, including the Union Church and the Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple. The continued existence of the buildings housing these religious organizations not only allowed the residents of Little Tokyo and the dispersed Japanese community to continue to worship and socialize in Little Tokyo, but it cemented their cultural and spiritual ties with Little Tokyo.

Finally, the Redevelopment Association became not only a voice for the community in City Hall, but it also became a bridge to the Japanese government and the major Japanese corporations that facilitated considerable financial, political and cultural support for Little Tokyo's redevelopment and preservation.

5.3.6. Challenges for the Redevelopment Association continued

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) continued to exercise

⁹⁸ Councilman Lindsay was a L.A. City councilman from 1962 until 1990.

⁹⁹ Interview with Bruce Kaji on February 4th, 2014.

community leadership as it worked with City Hall and served as a facilitator to bring in investments from Japan. Association leaders shared their view and convinced more than a few that Little Tokyo's investment potential was increasing because of its central location adjacent to the Los Angeles Civic Center and because it was a commercial and tourist destination for a growing number of Japanese visiting the West Coast.¹⁰⁰

The Association's design for the General Plan emphasized Little Tokyo's commercial and investment opportunities, and it included a twenty-story office building, a high-end Japanese department store and a 250-room hotel. Some members envisioned Little Tokyo becoming an upscale shopping destination for Japanese tourist similar to Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills (Kurashige).

This focus on major commercial and investment opportunities appeared to come at the expense of the residents and small business owners in Little Tokyo. Increasingly, the vision for Little Tokyo's future was becoming less like the pre-war Japanese ethnic enclave and more a commercial and tourist destination center driven by Japanese foreign capital and other investors.

The Little Tokyo General Plan was approved by the City Planning Commission and the City Council in 1964. However, the City still planned to widen First Street into a major thoroughfare, a widening that would demolish the historic buildings on the

¹⁰⁰ In the 1960s, on a normal day in Los Angeles, there were from 300 to 400 tourists from Japan who stayed an average three days in Little Tokyo. "Many of these visitors like to make Little Tokyo their headquarters while on the West Coast. As has been indicated, there are practically no hotel facilities in Little Tokyo at present which can accommodate tourists" (General Plan 1963). The General Plan estimated that by 1980 there would be a total of 35,000 public employees and 65,000 daily visitors in the Civic Center, for a daily concentration of 100,000 people.

north side of the street.¹⁰¹ The pressure the Community and LTRA faced to prevent the planned demolition continued until 1986 when preservation leaders succeeded by having the entire First Street block designated as a National Historic District. This preservation effort saved the historic buildings on the north side of the street.

5.3.7. The Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) also looked to the City's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for revitalization and reconstruction funds (Kaji). Under the new federal Neighborhood Development Program (NDP), the City could apply for grant funding for redevelopment planning and administration. The Redevelopment Association agreed that they wanted CRA to proceed with the preparation of a NDP application to prepare a redevelopment plan for Little Tokyo.

In 1969, Mayor Sam Yorty appointed forty-three members to form a task force called the Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC). This committee met monthly to discuss plans and to advise the CRA on the planning and implementation of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan. Since most Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association members had in effect shifted their membership to Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) was disbanded in 1969 (Jenks).

The Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association was able to wield more influence on behalf of the community when it transitioned into becoming the Advisory Committee to the Mayor. The Advisory Committee had executive subcommittees on

¹⁰¹ Interview with Yukio Kawaratani on December 15, 2013.

planning, a cultural and community center, housing, public information, and finance. The committee represented the interests of the people in the community who had interests in the redevelopment of Little Tokyo including business owners, attorneys, financial and real estate investors, religious representatives, and representatives of Japanese corporations such as Kajima International and the Bank of Tokyo of California (CRA).

Reverend Toriumi of the Union Church served the first chairman of the Advisory Committee. The co-chairmen of the Cultural and Community Center Subcommittee continued to be the former president of Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Katsuma Mukaeda, and Alfred Hatate, a vice president of Merit Savings & Loan Association in Little Tokyo.

In this way, the *issei* and *nisei*-led Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA), with its pro-Japan stance and Japanese social capital, was transferred to the Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) as it was appointed by Mayor Yorty in 1969. The founding members of the Advisory Committee were Japanese and Japanese American large and medium-sized businessmen, “with no mom and pop small shop owners, workers, and few actual residents,” rather only “upper class businessmen who have direct investment interests in the redevelopment of Little Tokyo” (Kurashige 207).

Yukio Kawaratani, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) planner who prepared and set up the Little Tokyo redevelopment plans for the City, was aware of the dominance of the interests of large and medium-sized businesses on the Advisory

Committee. His choice of project manager reflects how he chose to address this concern. Kawaratani chose Kango Kunitsugu, a community activist with an engineering background, to be the first project manager for the CRA Little Tokyo Project. Kawaratani intended Kunitsugu be a voice for Little Tokyo community to balance the interests of the business represented on the Mayor's Advisory Committee. Kunitsugu was "one of the most vocal, feisty, and knowledgeable Little Tokyo leader who was a skeptical watch dog of CRA".¹⁰² Kango Kunitsugu had not lobbied for the position, and "was stunned and had to think it over, but accepted a few days later".¹⁰³ Kunitsugu hired five staff members for the project, all Japanese Americans, and placed their office in the Merit Savings Building in Little Tokyo.

The CRA conducted a one-year base line survey in 1969 and developed a Redevelopment Plan for Little Tokyo that included construction of a community center, theater and a hotel. On February 24, 1970, the L.A. City Council approved the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan and created the Little Tokyo Redevelopment area as a separate district for thirty years.¹⁰⁴ Thus began the official beginning of the City-led Little Tokyo Redevelopment program.

¹⁰² Interview with Yukio Kawaratani was conducted on December 15, 2013.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ A 10-year extension was added in 2000. Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) and Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC), *Little Tokyo Planning & Design Guidelines*, November 2005.

5.4. Conflicts and Collaborations Arising out of Redevelopment Activity in the 1970s to the early 1980s

5.4.1. Background

By 1970, Japanese corporations were the City of Los Angeles' top investor. In the 1970s, of the ten redevelopment projects in Little Tokyo that were completed, most were completed with capital from Japan (Sugiura). The financial power of Japanese corporations heavily influenced Little Tokyo redevelopment decisions, and the corporations "became an official player in Little Tokyo redevelopment" (Kurashige 191).

As a result of all the Japanese corporate investments, Los Angeles became a gateway for the rapid influx of Japanese businessmen, tourists and students to Southern California and other areas of the United States. Japanese tourism rose sharply from the 1960s onward. In 1982, Japan sent more than 1.2 million tourists to the U.S., more than any other nation. There were also more Japanese students than from any other foreign country at American schools (Kurashige). Japanese businessmen, tourists and students were perceived to provide a critical market for Little Tokyo businesses that complemented their Japanese American clientele. The reinvigorated Little Tokyo attracted Japanese nationals, including businessmen, tourists and students, for its restaurants, services and products.

5.4.2. The 1960s Civil Rights Movement

On the other hand, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had a tremendous

impact on community work and in organizing Little Tokyo in the 1970s and 1980s (Pulido). In Los Angeles, both the ethnic communities and the universities became sites for civil rights activism. College campuses were crucial to the development of Asian American activism, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement (Pulido).¹⁰⁵

Many *sansei*, or third-generation Americans of Japanese ancestry, who reached adulthood in the 1960s and 1970s became a significant presence as new stakeholders in the redevelopment of Little Tokyo. Ideologically, many *sansei* activists galvanized by Asian American Movement were considered radical leftists who were inspired by Marxist-Leninist-Maoists (Pulido). They founded or joined East Wind¹⁰⁶, Third World Student Collectives, and other activist movement institutions such as the newspaper *Gidra*, which was started by UCLA students and “later went off campus” (Pulido 108). The concept of a “Third World identity” offered some advantages to Japanese American leftists. It solidified their minority position with African Americans and Latinos who had previously failed to acknowledge them as nonwhite minorities. The concept also provided a connection to a colonized worldview and global inequality (Pulido 136-137).

¹⁰⁵ According to Pulido (2006), the first step for many was articulating an alternative racial consciousness and identity which was processed in three steps: 1) rejection of the label of Oriental because of its colonial connections; 2) adoption of Asian American because it was more accurate geographically and emphasized a shared U.S. experience; and 3) the addition of a pan-Asian dimension to their already existing national identity rooted in Third World ideology (107).

¹⁰⁶ According to Pulido (2006), East Wind is a part of Third World Left in Los Angeles from 1968-1978 and is a Japanese American collective, which began in Los Angeles in 1972. “Initially composed of revolutionary nationalists it later became Marists-Leninist-Maoist. Activists focused on politicizing the larger Japanese American population by doing community work and organizing. Although its roots were in study groups, community service, numerous collectives, East Wind was significantly influenced by BPP (Black Panther Party)” (7).

The Asian American Movement was inspired by the 1960s and 1970s anti-Vietnam War, Civil Rights, and women's rights movements. They organized to focus attention on political causes in the Japanese American community and to delve into their own history and identity as Asian Americans. They also began to focus their efforts on building community and preserving Little Tokyo as the historical and symbolic home of the Southern California Japanese American community.

In the beginning, *sansei* community leaders and activists returned to Little Tokyo in the 1970s and onward for community service purposes. They organized social service, political and cultural organizations to rebuild Little Tokyo as a community that not only respects and preserves the Japanese American heritage and character of the neighborhood, but that also preserves and promotes the coexistence of ethnically diverse people.

Asian American activists empowered the slogans of "Power to the People" and "Serve the People." Among these activists was Warren Furutani, former California State Assemblyman as well as a *sansei* activist, explains that "power to the people" is a political statement with the goal of empowering people to demand social justice and to fight for their democratic rights. "Serve the people," a saying coined by Mao Zedong and adopted by the Black Panther Party, speaks to the same goals of these social justice movements. In sum, the goal of the Asian American Movement was to address the basic needs and to organize community service programs to help the disenfranchised, forgotten and oppressed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Warren Furutani, "The Warren Report: Serve the People Institute," *Rafu Shimpo*, March 27, 2014.

For the *sansei* activists, the series of the massive investments by the Japanese corporations were perceived as a capitalistic invasion and exploitation of Little Tokyo resources by Japanese capital (Jenks 2008a; Kurashige 2002; Pulido 2006). The *sansei* activists' view of Japan and its corporations was clearly different from the *issei* led Japanese Chamber of Commerce or *nisei* businessmen in Little Tokyo. Jenks (2008a) points out "it was not based on essentialist notion of racial, national, or cultural affinities but on the anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolutions that swept Asia, Africa, Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s" (275).

Sansei activists were particularly sensitized to the impacts of imperialist expansion both at home and abroad. They considered the wartime record of the Kajima founder who began his construction business building railroads for the Japanese army in Manchuria and Southeast Asia during World War II as particularly appalling (Jenks 251).

Murase (1983) points out the more nuanced, complicated and mixed reactions by the Little Tokyo community towards the massive investment by the Japanese corporations. Many local businesses "pinned their hopes" on a hotel to bring additional foot traffic to Little Tokyo and contribute to its economic growth. Other *nisei* businesses expected to be part of the investment and obtain some profitable construction contracts. Others, such as small senior business owners, were more skeptical of promises that the big Japanese corporations would improve Little Tokyo's business and social environment. There were those who raised questions about the direction and purpose of redevelopment that involved construction of upscale, world-

class hotels and buildings, which would also replace the older, traditional heritage of Little Tokyo.

With the arrival of the new and vocal *sansei* activists in Little Tokyo, the redevelopment goals diverged into two: one based on the reconstruction and preservation of the historic ethnic enclave for the dispersed Japanese Americans and the other based on the promotion of trade (*Kurashige*).

Additionally, the investment by Japanese corporations involved the construction of tourist-oriented luxury hotels and shopping malls that triggered land acquisitions and the consequent eviction of residents and tenants who were single and low-income seniors. The majority of those evicted were *issei* and some *nisei*, but there were other ethnicities represented as well. These people were socially and economically vulnerable, they were not consulted, and their voices were not heard in the large-scale urban redevelopment set into motion in Little Tokyo.

5.4.3. Formation of the Anti-Eviction Task Force

In 1973, Kajima Corporation created a consortium called the East-West Development Corporation to construct the Hotel New Otani and an adjacent upscale shopping mall called Weller's Court. The consortium was made up of thirty Japanese construction companies, fifteen banks, and seven trading corporations. Japanese corporations owned 97 percent of East-West Development Corporation, with only 3 percent owned by California corporations (Jenks).

This event shook the Little Tokyo community. The construction of the hotel

and shopping mall required the Sun Hotel and the Sun Building to be demolished. The Sun Hotel provided 62 apartment units for low-income residents. The Sun Building provided office space for many important Japanese American community organizations including the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, and the *issei* and *nisei* senior social welfare organization called Pioneer Center. Many saw the demolition of the Sun Building to be symbolically destroying the core of the Japanese American community.¹⁰⁸ This proposal led to claims that the East-West Development Corporation, dominated by Japanese corporations, was not acting in the interest of the local Japanese American community but looking only to profit Japanese corporations.

In 1973, mobilized by young *sansei* activists and students, the Little Tokyo Anti-Eviction Taskforce was formed. Activists and students spoke out for the low-income residents and small business tenants who felt that their voice was not being heard in redevelopment decisions. They also protested for local *nisei* businesses who had sought construction contracts but whose proposals were not even being considered.

At the groundbreaking of the New Otani Hotel, the task force mobilized over one hundred people to “picket the ceremony” in front of East-West executives and CRA administrators (Jenks 251). The protesters were mostly *sansei* but there were *issei* holding signs of “Housing Now-Hotel Later,” and *nisei* who protested the CRA’s failure to live up its promises of granting construction contracts to local *nisei* businesses (ibid).

The Little Tokyo Anti-Eviction Taskforce was seen to be a turning point for the young *sansei* and other Japanese Americans to become more vocal in Little Tokyo

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

community efforts. Prior to 1973, the activism taking place in Little Tokyo largely focused on anti-Vietnam War protests in the Nisei Week parade. From 1973 on, their activism addressed local issues in Little Tokyo.¹⁰⁹ This was the moment that the Little Tokyo community, “which was noted in the past for its reticence and silence,” transformed into a vocal community (Murase 23). The movement by the young Asian Americans triggered more people to participate in the redevelopment of Little Tokyo. This new grassroots activism brought new energy to the Little Tokyo community and at the same time hastened the decline of the existing social and political power structure in the Little Tokyo community led by the *issei* and *nisei*.

5.4.4. Formation of the Little Tokyo People’s Rights Organization

In 1976, the informal anti-eviction task force group evolved into the Little Tokyo People’s Right Organization (LTPRO) “not just to oppose the eviction but to focus a bigger picture of replacement of low income residents, small tenants, and cultural and community organizations, and develop a sense of identity.”¹¹⁰ The organization was initially constituted of hundreds of activists, students, low income and multi-ethnic residents as well as small business tenants, all of whom were vulnerable to the downside of urban renewal. The purpose was to defend Little Tokyo from the City of Los Angeles and its Redevelopment Agency’s sponsored plans to seize and demolish

¹⁰⁹ Email response from Mike Murase on February 25, 2014

¹¹⁰ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

portions of Little Tokyo for corporate interests and investment in the area.¹¹¹

The LTPRO included multi-generational Japanese, Japanese-speaking *issei*, American-born *nisei* and *sansei* as well as others who were multi-ethnic, but the leaders were Japanese American *sansei* who had been inspired by Third World Collectives.¹¹² Alan Nishio, *sansei* activist, served as the first and the only president of the organization.¹¹³ The organization was active for about 5 years.

The LTPRO welcomed the redevelopment but opposed the massive infusion of investment money from Japanese corporations into Little Tokyo mainly because there were no plans to house or replace housing for those who were being displaced.¹¹⁴ LTPRO had the tools and skills to organize the community and campaign to protect their interests.

The Ideological core of the current regeneration of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave and a continuing proponent of multi-ethnic diversity is rooted in LTPRO's view on the Little Tokyo, which is summarized in the following quote from a 1977 LTPRO Newsletter:

Little Tokyo should serve the needs of all nationalities. For Japanese

¹¹¹ Originally, Kozo Itabashi, *issei* cultural art instructor in the Sun Building, named the organization in Japanese as *Shotokyo no Jyumin no Kenriwo Mamorukai*. This name was translated into English as Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization.

¹¹² Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

¹¹³ Alan Nishio began his involvement in the Asian American Movement when he was an undergraduate at the University of California at Berkeley after he, like many other Japanese American *sansei*, learned about the WWII internment camps. "When I learned more about the camps, many aspects of my life and identity as a Nikkei person began to fit into place- the family pressure to 'blend' into the society and not rock the boat; the pressure to act the right way and the stress upon education as a means to overcome racial hostility" (Pulido 109).

¹¹⁴ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

Americans, Little Tokyo has a particular significance. It is a historic center; it is a place to practice one's own language and culture. If Little Tokyo were to lose its character as a Japanese community, everyone would lose. In a similar way, the dispersal of historic Black or Chicano communities would deny everyone an opportunity to appreciate the culture and life of those communities. Moreover, we are fighting for the right of Japanese, Blacks and Latinos to live in the community of their choice (Jenks 275).

In 1976, members of the LTPRO dramatically occupied and protested in front of the Sun Building on Weller Street to prevent the eviction of Sun Hotel residents. Court-Ordered Los Angeles County Marshals were forced to evict the Sun Hotel and Sun Building tenants by May of 1977 (Jenks 274). Also in 1977, the New Otani Hotel was completed as planned and the adjacent shopping mall called Weller's court was completed in 1980. However, the demonstration of LTPRO did not go unnoticed, because it forced the CRA to expedite the construction of affordable housing. They were also obliged to build a place for the ousted residents to be relocated, to expedite the construction of the culture and community center, as well as the shopping center for the ousted community organizations and small business tenants to be relocated.¹¹⁵

By 1980, the original mission of LTPRO was accomplished by the construction of first affordable 300-unit senior housing (Little Tokyo Tower)¹¹⁶ in 1975, by the construction of a small business shopping center called Japanese Village Plaza in 1978, and finally, by the construction of the Japanese American Cultural Community Center

¹¹⁵ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

¹¹⁶ The Little Tokyo Towers were co-sponsored by the Southern California Gardeners Federation, the Japanese American Citizens League and the Southern California Christian Church Federation.

in 1980. The Cultural Center ultimately housed all the displaced the community and cultural organizations in Little Tokyo. ¹¹⁷

Figure 5.1 A Protest against Eviction by Little Tokyo People’s Right Organization in 1976



Source: Courtesy of Mike Murase

5.4.5. Formation of the Little Tokyo Service Center

The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) was formed as the LTPRO and other more radical groups such as the Japanese Welfare Rights Organization (JWRO) were dissolving. Since 1980, according to Alan Nishio, many of the LTPRO activists gradually pursued other involvements and passions. This led to the evolution of the organization into different offshoot organizations. Some activists focused on the Redress Movement, which in the 1980s was becoming a nation-wide movement. Others continued with

¹¹⁷ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

community service in Little Tokyo.

Also, in the year 1980, various new organizations and associations were being formed in Little Tokyo: The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) in 1979 and the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations now called Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCRR) in 1980. Both organizations adopted and incorporated some of the ideologies and purposes of the LTPRO.

The LTSC, which was formed to be housed in the new Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, took on the work of providing the linguistically and culturally sensitive multi-service social services for low income residents and continued to be a voice for the poor, neglected and vulnerable in Little Tokyo and the wider Japanese American community in Southern California. Yet, significantly, the LTSC's origin is not just LTPRO and social services, rather it began as a more inclusive organization which provided a united front for many of the generationally, ideologically, and culturally diverse organizations in Little Tokyo.

The LTSC was originally incorporated as a coalition of five then existing organizations in Little Tokyo: The Little Tokyo People's Right Organization (LTPRO), the Japanese Welfare Rights Organization (JWRO), the Japanese American Community Service (JACS), the Union Church, and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC). Each organization contributed board members to the coalition. Mike Murase, former LTPRO activist, became the first Board President.¹¹⁸ Soon the board

¹¹⁸ Mike Murase became involved in Little Tokyo activities when he was a student at UCLA. He also started the Asian American newspaper called GIDRA when he was a student at UCLA. According to Murase, since there were no books and no professors to teach about Japanese American history or their communities, UCLA students involved in GIDRA went off campus and interacted with Asian

members increased when the coalition included representatives from a new total of fourteen community organizations. The added organizations include the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL), the Pioneer Center (Japanese speaking *issei* senior project), Japanese Social Services, Maryknoll Catholic Church, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California (Social Service Division), the Southern California Society of Japanese Blind, the Asian American Volunteer Action Center, the Japanese American Bar Association and the Counseling Services for Asian Americans.¹¹⁹

The first executive director of the LTSC, *sansei* Bill Watanabe, served for 33 years, from 1979 until his retirement in 2012.¹²⁰ Watanabe's background included being a former social worker for the Pioneer Center (once the social welfare department of Japanese Chamber of Commerce) as well as religious collectives. During the 33 years of his tenure, the LTSC grew and developed into one of the most successful non-profit social service organizations in Los Angeles. The LTSC was not only culturally sensitive and provided multi-ethnic social services but facilitated organizations and community development corporations so that there are service providers who speak not only English, but also Japanese, Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin, Cambodian and Spanish. Currently, the LTSC owns and operates eight affordable

people and their organizations. As part of this process, they learned that Little Tokyo residents, particularly *issei* seniors, needed social services and support, all of which led them to become involved in community service in Little Tokyo. As a side note, Murase later served as the campaign manager for Jesse Jackson's 1987 Presidential election campaign.

¹¹⁹ Information gathered from Mike Murase, LTSC.

¹²⁰ Bill Watanabe was a member of an Asian American Christian Commune called Agape Fellowship in Echo Park and Silverlake in the 1970s. "Being on a fringe of the Anti-Eviction Task Force and Little Tokyo People's Right Organization," Watanabe participated in Little Tokyo Community activities, but he was not a member of Little Tokyo People's Right Organization.

housing complexes, operates two childcare centers and several computer learning centers.

The LTSC filled the void of affordable housing for seniors and low-income residents. It formed a housing committee to take up housing issues and it began advocating for the housing rights of low-income residents who were being evicted to make way for private redevelopment. To counter such evictions and provide affordable housing, it established the Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation (LTSC-CDC) in 1994 as a subsidiary of LTSC.¹²¹ This allowed the LTSC-CDC to focus on community redevelopment, affordable housing, and revitalization of Little Tokyo. In this manner, the LTSC took on the role the LTPRO would have occupied in the contemporary era. The LTSC engaged the community in community planning and worked to serve a population that was disproportionately elderly and on fixed incomes and in an area where much of the housing was substandard.

Yet, the significance of LTSC is far more than the inherited LTPRO goals of “serving for the poor” and “multiculturalism” but it incorporated the involvement of multi-generational Japanese Americans in Little Tokyo. Mike Murase explains that while social service and other community support systems existed in previous generations, it was with the LTSC that for the first time that many different voices united and were heard: older community leaders, mostly the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California driven by *issei* and *nisei*, other community-minded

¹²¹ The two organizations merged in 2004 as LTSC, a Community Development Corporation, in order to streamline administration and governance and to holistically serve the Little Tokyo community through social service and community development service.

adults (*nisei*, *sansei*, JACL-types, church goers), younger people and *sansei* activists. For the first time these people were “united” in one group to discuss the formation of a long-lasting service organization. As Murase puts it, LTSC became a “united front” of various political forces in Japanese American and Japanese national communities despite the fact that some of the same people were at odds with each other on other community issues such as the infusion of Japanese corporation monies into Little Tokyo and support for non-Japanese low income residents in Little Tokyo.¹²² In this way, the LTSC became a new front that connected the diverse inter-generational and multi-cultural networks of the various groups that were a part of and existed in Little Tokyo.

The formation of a Community Development Corporation enabled LTSC to directly participate in preservation and rehabilitation of its ethnic enclave. Because of the activities of the LTSC, Little Tokyo gained power, autonomy and the skill to have its own redevelopment projects in Little Tokyo, not just dependent on the interests of private corporations.

The LTSC projects included converting the old San Pedro Firm Building, the Far East Building and Union Church (buildings under the preservation auspices of the National Historical Preservation Act) on the First Street into affordable housing and an Asian American arts complex. Because the LTSC was involved in building conversions into affordable housings, when evictions occurred in Little Tokyo due to new private investment, seniors and low-income residents could secure the housing.¹²³ Because of

¹²² Email answer by Mike Murase on January 27, 2014.

¹²³ The San Pedro Firm Building was rehabilitated for affordable housing purposes in 1991 after Alan Hotel and Masago Hotel on Second and Los Angeles Streets, which housed senior citizens and

the LTSC, the community gained ownership and control of Little Tokyo land and property.

5.5. The Rise of Little Tokyo as a Center of Japanese American Culture, History, and Identity in the 1980s and 1990s

5.5.1. Overview

The first stages of Little Tokyo redevelopment focused on replacing old and deteriorating buildings. Starting in the 1980s, the focus shifted to cultural and historical preservation, more particularly, community efforts to create the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), both of which received large financial support from Japanese corporations.

This section discusses how Little Tokyo became a symbolic cultural and historical hub of increasingly dispersed Japanese Americans in communities spread throughout Southern California. The key to this process was the formation and evolution of community associations that brought generations of Japanese Americans together with the common goal of preserving a unique “Japanese American” cultural identity and history.

5.5.2. The Japanese American Redress and Reparations Movement

The World War II relocation and internment of over 120,000 West Coast

other low-income people, were demolished in 1982. Out of 42 units of the building, approximately 75% of the residents are senior citizens.

Japanese and Japanese Americans in 1942 until 1945, was the most significant experience coloring the attitudes of Japanese American communities to this day. The collective trauma to those who were wrenched from their homes and sent to guarded camps is difficult if not impossible to measure.

The Redress Movement of the 1970s and 1980s was a community-wide effort of Japanese Americans across the nation to address this trauma and achieve a measure of social justice. Japanese Americans organized this movement to obtain an official apology and compensation from the United States government for this massive violation of civil and human rights during World War II.

The movement began in 1970, when *nisei* leader Edison Uno and others with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) introduced a resolution for the JACL to seek compensation through legislation for their loss of freedom and property when West Coast Japanese were assembled and sent to internment camps for the duration of the war. This resolution began a dialogue among Japanese Americans across the country as to whether and how to reopen this painful experience and seek reparations (JANM).

As many *nisei* leaders debated redress through organizations such as the JACL, the younger *sansei* began their own advocacy efforts in the 1980s. Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War protests, many *sansei* took on a more grassroots mobilization approach to organize Little Tokyo and other Japanese American communities. Many of these *sansei* were not only too young to have experienced the wartime relocation, but they were unaware of the experience of their parents and

family because many *issei* and *nisei* had not shared this wartime trauma with the *sansei* (Hayden 1999; Takezawa 1994).

Some leaders from the Little Tokyo People's Right Organization (LTPRO) transitioned from protesting redevelopment to forming the Los Angeles Community Coalition for Redress and Reparations. This Los Angeles coalition eventually joined forces with similar grassroots efforts in San Francisco, San Jose, and New York City to form the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR) in 1980 (JANM). The existence of the NCRR allowed the *issei* and *nisei* to feel empowered to speak of their own experience for the first time.

JACL, NCRR, and others worked across the country with Japanese American members of Congress and lawyers to advance their cause through the legislative and legal process. Finally, on August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This provided an official apology and \$20,000 compensation to every Japanese then alive who lost their freedom due to the wartime relocation.

The whole process of obtaining redress had the unintended consequence of inculcating the history of the interned Japanese to their Japanese American progeny and postwar new immigrants, becoming a lasting narrative for Japanese Americans. Little Tokyo has become a place where this narrative and the other narratives of the Japanese immigrant and Japanese Americans, including the heroism and sacrifice of Japanese Americans who volunteered to join the U.S. military during the same war, some from the internment camps, are shared and preserved for future generations and mainstream American society.

5.5.3. Creation of the Japanese American Culture and Community Center

The Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) was constructed in 1980 as a permanent center for the community where Japanese arts and culture could come alive and flourish for future generations. Its owned-and-operated facilities include the Center Building, the 880-seat Aratani/Japan America Theater, the Plaza, and the award winning Japanese Garden. The Center Building was opened in the 1980, followed by the Japan America Theatre and Plaza in 1983.

The idea of constructing a culture and community center originated within the Japanese American community in the 1960s, and it was a special concern of the *issei* and *nisei* leaders (Kinoshita). It had been on the agenda for the Mayor's Citizen Advisory Committee as a Little Tokyo redevelopment project since the 1970s. There was a conflict of views between the community and Japanese corporations that supported its construction financially (Kinoshita 2010; Kurashige 2002). The community viewed a culture and community center as becoming "a place to showcase the ethnic community" while the Japanese corporations viewed it as "a site for negotiations of U.S.-Japan cultural and commercial trade" (Kurashige 193).

Kinoshitae (2010) examined more complicated relationships within the Japanese American community. According to Kinoshita (2010), *Issei* leader Mukaeda (then a chairman of the Culture and Community Center Committee of the Mayor's Advisory Committee as well as a key contact at Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Southern California) and another *issei* leader, George Doizaki, had a confidential meeting with then Japanese Prime Minister, Miki Takeo in 1975. At that time, the

Japanese government had a plan to give the Center as a present to the United States to celebrate the 1976 Bicentennial Anniversary. The *issei* leaders and the Prime Minister of Japan, without consulting local community members, changed the name of center to “The Bicentennial Anniversary’ Japanese American Cultural Center” by removing the word “community” (63). Mukaeda’s view on cultural center was “whereby Japanese immigrants were obliged to contribute to American culture by implanting aspects of Japanese culture” like other Japanese immigrant community centers in Latin America (ibid). Since the Japanese government and *issei* leaders also planned the national fundraising campaign for the Center in Japan, *issei* leaders “attributed the change of the name as a means to facilitate of fund-raising in Japan”, which was protested and rejected by local Japanese Americans, especially by *nisei* leaders (64).

There were three key figures who arranged large scale fundraising campaigns in Japan, including the pre-war Japanese Ambassador Ushijima, the pre-war Los Angeles Japanese Consul Shintaro Fukushima, and Executive Director Zinhachiro Hanamura of *Keidanren* (the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations). Both former Ambassador Ushijima and former Consul Fukushima, then President of “The Japan Times,” voluntarily supported the campaign because of their close relations with *issei* leaders in Southern California, including Mukaeda from pre-war (Kinoshita).

The Japanese campaign for funds raised approximately five million dollars, one third of the approximately fifteen million dollars necessary for the construction of the Center’s Community Building, Theater and the Plaza was raised. Two hundred and forty-five Japanese corporations, including forty-three Japanese corporations in

Southern California, as well as Japanese local and central governments made contributions. The Japanese contributions were more than twice the two million dollar contribution of the U.S. government through the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) (Kinoshita).

The dream of building a cultural center in Little Tokyo spanned generations, each contributing its own perspective and assets. The *issei* immigrants secured financial support from the Japanese government and corporations. The American-born *nisei* leaders wanted to emphasize that this was going to be a Japanese American institution built by and for the Japanese American community, and not just a cultural center as envisioned by the Japanese government and *issei* leaders. The *sansei* activists with groups like LTPRO expedited construction by exerting grassroots pressure on the City of Los Angeles and the CRA.

5.5.4. Associations galvanized opposition to the demolition of historical sites

By the 1980s, there was an emerging consensus in the Little Tokyo community that the commercial strip along the First Street between the Nishihonganji Temple and Union Church must be preserved.¹²⁴ There was also a consensus that the Nishihonganji Buddhist Temple (since 1905) would become a Japanese American museum while the neoclassical style Union Church (built in 1923) would be preserved for community use, and possibly as a new home for the East West Players, one of the leading Asian

¹²⁴ David Holley, "Old Temple, Church Symbolize Efforts to Preserve Little Tokyo," Los Angeles Times, September 4, 1985.

American theater groups in the United States.

The Union Church and the Nishihongwanji Temple served as social and community centers. Each had been an assembly center for the gathering of the Japanese sent to the internment camps. Afterwards, during the Bronzeville period, they were, respectively, the (African American's) Pilgrim's House and a Baptist Church. At the opposite end of First Street stands the former NishiHongwanji Buddhist Temple, which also served as an assembly center in 1942, and now houses the Japanese American National Museum (JANM).

Between the two symbolic religious buildings are the San Pedro Firm Building, constructed in 1924 by the Southern California Flower Market; the Fugetsudo Japanese confectionery store (opened in 1903); and, the Daimaru Hotel, which was once the Tokyo Baths. There is also a Chinese Far East Café (opened in 1935) and a German black smith's building (Hayden 1995). In sum, the First Street block was a space that contained the remnants of proof of Little Tokyo's layered past, a past space occupied not only by the Japanese early immigrants but also other ethnic groups including African Americans, Chinese, Germans and others, as well as the only remaining pre-war landmarks that contained some history of Little Tokyo (Jenks). The importance of this city block of buildings to the Japanese Americans and their collective memories cannot be overstated. Consequently, it had been in the front line of conflict with the city since the 1950s when the city of L.A. decided to expand its Civic Center.

Initially, the first of the series of preservation movement efforts was triggered by a 1985 "quicksilver series of political turns" about the First Street block when CRA

staff released a report that developer J.H. Snyder “was making the rounds at City Hall, talking about taking over the block in which the district sits.” This shocked the community into action.¹²⁵ The developer J.H. Snyder influenced councilman Lindsay, who represented the council district that included Little Tokyo. Snyder, who made contributions to Lindsay’s city council campaigns, had started talking about widening First Street and razing most of the historic buildings, both buildings owned by the City and privately owned storefronts, in order to convert the area into a street of high-rise buildings.¹²⁶

This so-called “Snyder Proposal” was preferred by city officials and the CRA because it would generate lease revenue to the city of roughly four million dollars a year, four times larger than the Little Tokyo community’s plan. Most of First Street was owned by the City of Los Angeles (Sakaguchi). The CRA held a community meeting on Snyder’s proposal and all one hundred community-members who attended the meeting opposed the plan. This overwhelming consensus was a result of a long history and the growing realization of shared interests among the various groups within Little Tokyo, and it was this consensus that gained power for the community (Doi et al.).

In response to the opposition to the Snyder Plan voiced at the community meeting, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley wrote a letter to the Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, stating that he supported restoration of the historic site of entire block of the First Street. The letter stated “[t]he building along San Pedro

¹²⁵ Cathleen Decker, “Development Plans Refuel Old Political Fires in Little Tokyo,” Los Angeles Times, April 14, 1986.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Street and the north side of 1st Street . . . have a special cultural and historic significance, not only to the Little Tokyo Community and to Japanese –American nationwide, but also to the city of Los Angeles.”¹²⁷

To counter Councilman Lindsey and developer Snyder’s plan to raze the First Street buildings, Little Tokyo’s defenders came up with the plan to protect them by registering the structures as historical buildings. Both the Mayor’s Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee and the Los Angeles Conservancy proceeded and submitted the proposal. In 1986, thirteen First Street buildings were registered with the National Register of Historic Places, eliminating the threat to raze them.

The victory of the opposition to the developer’s plans, which was supported by the Councilman in charge of Little Tokyo, happened because the community organized itself and used its collective power to lobby for preservation (Sakaguchi). It was the result of the cooperation between the pro business Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) and the *sansei* activist groups, which united for the common goal of preservation. They fought and won the battle to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of Little Tokyo against a Councilman and an outside developer who wanted Little Tokyo’s space seized and its historical buildings demolished.

¹²⁷ *ibid*

5.5.5. Creation of the Japanese American National Museum

This section focuses on the contribution of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) to preserve Japanese American history and also to reinforce Little Tokyo as a hub of the larger Japanese American community.

The Museum was founded by committed individuals who understood the importance of preserving the history and experiences of the Japanese immigrants in America. The project cost for the renovation of the historic Nishihongwanji Buddhist building¹²⁸ for an adaptive use was thirteen million dollars. This was completed in 1992. The construction of the new pavilion building next to the temple building was forty-five million dollars, which was completed in 1999 (Kaji 2010; Sakaguchi 2000).¹²⁹ By early 1992, the Museum raised thirteen million dollars, an unbelievable amount for a relatively small community whose community financial assets were largely lost during the World War II.

To achieve the ambitious goal of a world-class museum, a massive fundraising campaign was conducted not only at a grassroots level, but also across the United States and in Japan. Japanese and Japanese Americans were united in this effort to preserve the experience of Japanese Americans in the United States. The various levels of campaigns and fund raising events mobilized both virtually every resource possible and that connected various Japanese and Japanese American groups to the museum located in Little Tokyo (Skaguchi 2000).

¹²⁸ The land site was obtained in 1987 from the City of Los Angeles for an adaptive use of the old Nishihongwanji Temple Building.

¹²⁹ The JANM opened its 85,000 square-foot Pavilion to the public in January 1999. The City of Los Angeles contributed the one-acre site for the Pavilion at \$1 per year for a 50-year lease.

Initially, two grassroots groups separately started exploring the possibility of building a Japanese American museum: Little Tokyo Japanese American businessmen and Japanese American World War II veterans. Both groups were founded by *nisei* in search of their permanent place in Little Tokyo (Kaji). Bruce Kaji (2010), *nisei* businessman as well as a WWII veteran who was a president of Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) became the founding President and a lifetime trustee of the museum. Kaji stated, “I was particularly concerned that our story would be forgotten if we didn’t act to make sure it was preserved and displayed permanently, so everyone could visit and learn about it” (121).

More than 33,000 *nisei* volunteers served in the U.S. army during the WW II, most notably, in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Infantry Battalion and the Military Intelligence Service. They volunteered from internment camps as well as from Hawaii and other states where the Japanese population had not been subject to the internment order. The number of volunteers was more than one-fourth of the total number of interned Japanese. Most were motivated by an intense desire to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation as Americans. The 442nd was the most highly decorated unit in WWII. Twenty-one *nisei* were awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest military honor;¹³⁰ Fifty-two *nisei* received the distinguished service cross, the second highest award for valor. Thousands of *nisei* were injured or lost their lives as they fought with distinction in the European theater of war.¹³¹

In March 1985, the JANM was officially incorporated as a private nonprofit

¹³⁰ Only 3,449 recipients have been awarded the Medal since it was created in 1861 to the present, more than half for valor during the 1861-1862 U.S. Civil War.

¹³¹ JANM (138, 230-231, 276-277)

organization. The City of Los Angeles in 1986 obtained the permanent site for the museum on the First Street, the heart of Little Tokyo. The site was formerly the home of the Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple. The temple building had been owned by the City of Los Angeles after the Nishihongwanji sold the property in 1969 due to its serious disrepair. The City Council approved to lease the temple building to the museum for one dollar per year for fifty years.

The museum is the only national institution in the United States dedicated to sharing the Japanese American experience and “to promote understanding and appreciation of America’s ethnic and cultural diversity.”¹³²

As the Museum began its fundraising, its supporters lobbied the state legislature and received 750 thousand dollars on the condition that the city of Los Angeles provide matching funds, a condition which was met when CRA approved a one million dollars in matching funds the next year (Sakaguchi). State and city support for the museum demonstrated “Japanese Americans’ growing political, social, and economic power within American society” (Jenks 294).

Little Tokyo received the support of Japanese American politicians such as late Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a decorated WWII veteran, and Senator Spark Matsunaga as an Honorary Trustee. The Museum also had the support of the politically and economically influential Japanese *Keidanren* (the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) and “an increasingly affluent domestic population, to publicize and finance the museum” as vehicles for a fundraising campaign (ibid).

¹³² www.janm.org/about/history

With both public and private funding from the U.S. and Japan, the Museum project began by renovating the old temple building and funding the museum's initial programs and operations. This initial development period was important for the Museum. They hired key *sansei* professional staff to operate the Museum who added much to the endeavor. These key staff members included Irene Hirano,¹³³ a fifteen year community activist; Dr. Akemi Kikumura, a curator; as a full time curator and researcher, Dr. James Hirabayashi, and former San Francisco State University Dean of Undergraduate Students and Dean of the School of Ethnic Studies as a Chief Curator (Sakaguchi).

Irene Hirano expanded the fundraising network with the Japanese American community not only in California but also throughout the nation. She built networks of businesspersons, social workers and community leaders by asking them to choose regional volunteer leaders who were in charge of fundraising in their areas. Numerous fundraising events were conducted in major cities in the United States such as New York, Washington D.C., Fort Worth, Portland and San Jose (Sakaguchi).

Japanese corporations were also extensively involved in the fund raising campaign. The late Akio Morita, founder of Sony and former Vice President of *Keidanren* (vice president between 1986-1992), became a chairman of a fundraising committee in Japan and collected donations from member corporations of *Keidanren*.

Much is owed to Akio Morita for obtaining contributions from Japanese corporations (Kaji). Morita's involvement and interest began because of his personal

¹³³ Irene Hirano had more than 15 years of experience in nonprofit administration and community service. She married the late US Senator Daniel Inoue in 2008.

relationship with *sansei* Shig Fred Kagawa, an insurance broker originally from Hawaii who was also involved in the founding of the Museum.¹³⁴ Morita's commitment and vision were steadfast and partially based on his own personal experience with Japanese Americans who supported him when Sony expanded into the American market in 1960. He encouraged Japanese corporations to donate to the Museum. Morita also believed the Museum was important because it would inform Japanese tourists and the Japanese people about the history of the Japanese in America, their hardships as well as their accomplishments and valor.¹³⁵

The government of Japan also recognized the importance of the Museum and sent former Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu to the 1992 opening ceremony.¹³⁶ Again, Morita had intervened, and this appearance at the ceremony was a result of Morita approaching the then Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa.¹³⁷

In order to renovate the old Nishihongwanji Building, the Japanese American National Museum reached out as part of the fundraising effort to Japanese Americans throughout the nation (Sakaguchi). The fundraising process helped connect and reconnect the dispersed Japanese Americans to Little Tokyo not only financially, but also emotionally as it built a sense of community with Little Tokyo. More than one thousand individuals, families and companies throughout in the United States

¹³⁴ Interview with Dr. Charles Igawa on October 15, 2013.

¹³⁵ Interview with Bruce Kaji on February 4, 2014.

¹³⁶ One the eve of the grand opening of the JANM, scheduled for April 30, 1992, riots erupted in nearby parts of Los Angeles, the aftermath of the infamous Rodney King verdict. JANM held a smaller event indoors and was not able to hold the event on the outdoor stage. The public opening was rescheduled for May 15, 1992 (Kaji).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

financially contributed three thousand dollars or more, and about four thousand contributed amounts up to three thousand dollars each.¹³⁸

For the next phase of fundraising, JANM expanded its network not only in the United States but also in Japan. The Museum gained support from more than 44,000 members, one third of whom were from Southern California, two thirds from outside of California and some from foreign countries (Sakaguchi). Of the forty-five million dollars the Museum raised, the Japanese corporations donated nine million and five hundred thousand dollars and domestic companies and foundations donated seven million dollars (Sakaguchi).

Preserving the pre-war heritage of Little Tokyo and the collective memory of those Japanese and Japanese Americans who lived throughout World War II and thereafter was the driving force behind the Museum. The Japanese American community was strengthened as a result of this process. The sense of community with Little Tokyo and the bond between individuals expanded transnationally with the Museum as a symbol. The events and experience of the wartime internment camps became a vehicle for a common narrative of the Japanese American community. It helped forge the building of a community of diverse subgroups in Little Tokyo and a profound understanding of the dangers of discrimination. As Irene Hirano said, “the war affected the Nikkei (Japanese and Japanese Americans) community negatively, but it also affected the Nikkei community positively in strengthening the community bond” (Sakaguchi 45).

¹³⁸ *History of the Japanese American National Museum* (in Japanese), website www.janm.org

The JANM served to unify the Redress activists, Japanese American veterans and establishments, Japanese corporations, and the *issei* and *nisei* who were wrenched from their ordinary lives and relocated to internment camps during the war. In addition, the *sansei* and following generations came to understand their suffering due to the JANM. Some *issei* and *nisei* even donated their twenty thousand dollar compensation received from the U.S. government to construct the Museum.

The Museum's network of interested partners, members and contributors is enormous and varied, from world class corporations and politicians to grassroots activists and senior citizens, the internees and their progeny, and those of Japanese heritage in the United States. Their fundraising networks and supporters are within California and America and are transnational. Through the establishment of this network, Little Tokyo became a symbol of ethnic enclave for a much broader Japanese American community throughout the United States.

5.6. Co-existence of Diversity in the 2000s and Beyond

5.6.1. The diversity of Japanese Americans

In demographic trends, Japanese Americans are increasingly intermarrying, moving to suburbs and loosening their ethnic affiliations and ties to the Japanese community. Aware of this trend, associations in Little Tokyo are scrambling to figure out how to recapture the interest of these dispersing and intermarrying Japanese and how to lure them back to engaging with the community's historic heart.

In the 2000 Census, among the Japanese Americans living in Los Angeles County, about twenty percent described themselves as multiracial or multiethnic. By the 2010 Census, this description increased to about twenty-seven percent, the highest rate among major Asian American groups.¹³⁹

Additionally, the postwar Japanese immigrants together with non-immigrants collectively constitute a significant presence as a Japanese-speaking segment within the Japanese American community in Southern California. The process of their integration with prewar immigrants and their posterity remains largely unexplored.¹⁴⁰

Although the number of postwar immigrants from Japan is relatively small compared with other Asian immigrants and Southern American immigrants, the number is significant among the Japanese. The total postwar immigration amounted to a little more than half the number of the prewar Japanese immigrants who had entered the United States in the narrow peak period of Japanese immigration between 1900 and 1924 (Kurashige). More than 270,000 came prior to the war but in the intervening 68 years, an additional 390,000 postwar immigrant arrived (Toyota).

Toyota (2012) states that since the mid-1980s, Japanese immigration in increasingly large numbers during the 1980s and 1990s represents a “significant new chapter in the continuum of Japanese settlement in the United States that began in the mid-1800s” (4). The 2010 Census shows that *shin-issei* accounted for more than 43

¹³⁹ Daniel Ichinose, “Japanese Americans: 2010 Census and American Community Survey Data,” Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Dr. Charles Igawa on October 15, 2013.

percent of “Japanese only” (6).¹⁴¹ The proportional numbers grew steadily from 31.6 percent in 1980, to 34 percent in 1990 and 43.6 percent in 2000 (ibid). Toyota (2012) concludes the *shin-issei* presence impacts the traditional Japanese ethnic enclaves in the practices of everyday life, and argues that *shin-issei* will have a transformative effect on the ever-changing social meaning of belonging, the same material of which Japanese American identity is reconstructed.

Although *shin-issei* share the Japanese cultural background and language of the prewar immigrants and their descendants, they do not share the defining experience of the internment camps which haunt prewar immigrants and their progeny still, and this disconnect continues to separate the pre and post immigrants.¹⁴² One of the challenges Little Tokyo faces now and in the future is finding a way to bridge the gap between these communities in efforts to work harmoniously.

Despite having a fewer number of immigrants compared with other Asian groups, there has been a large number of non-immigrant Japanese coming to the United States since the 1970s (Tsukuda). They have come to America, some to live for extended times, as business people, tourists, temporary workers, students, investors, and intra-company transferees and accompanying families (Tsukuda).¹⁴³

The Japanese short-term resident non-immigrants comprise the third largest

¹⁴¹ This is the number who checked off “Japanese only” (meaning not multiracial) and also checked “foreign-born Japanese.” Among multiracial Japanese, 25% are foreign born.

¹⁴² See Connie Kwang, “A Clash Within a Culture,” Los Angeles Times, April 9, 1999 and Tritia Toyota “The New Nikkei,” Amerasia Journal 38:3 (2012).

¹⁴³ Among those non-immigrant Japanese, over 90% were tourists and business people who stay in the US for less than three months and 10% are “short-term resident non-immigrants” such as temporary workers, students, investors, and intra-company transferees (Tsukuda 158).

numbers of all countries in 2008, following India and Mexico (Tsukuda 159). Japan topped the world in citizens entering the United States on tourist visas, doubling their numbers from the 1980s to 1990 with more than 2.5 million entering (Toyota 12). Japan also topped the world in all categories of non-immigrant admissions in the 1990s, and, including business employees, more than 3.3 million Japanese came the United States (ibid).

Despite these numbers, Japanese immigrants to the United States have one of the lowest rates of naturalization (obtaining citizenship) among all newcomers from Asia (Toyota). The rate of naturalization was about 33 percent in 1980s and about 14 percent in 1990s, whereas 88 percent of Chinese immigrants became citizens in the 1980s and 58 percent of Chinese did so in the 1990s (Toyota 14).¹⁴⁴ This relatively low rate of naturalization has not been the subject of academic attention in either Japanese American or Asian American studies programs although this group adds another aspect of diversity to Little Tokyo and the dispersed Japanese American community in Southern California. Tsukuda (2011) argues that the status of these non-immigrants is debatable since the permanence of immigrants is no longer absolute.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ According to Toyota (2012), the increase in the numbers of those who became citizens in the 1990s is due to the attitudinal changes among some shin-issei because of their American-born children.

¹⁴⁵ Tsukuda (2011) points out that recent studies often put contemporary Japanese American communities within the American national context and keep postwar Japanese immigrants and non-immigrants marginal from the mainstream Japanese American communities. Tsukuda empirically studied postwar Japanese long-term non-immigrants in the South Bay of Los Angeles County and critically argues that the nationalistic discourse of immigrant America forces certain groups who frequently move across national borders to choose either to become Americans or to remain aliens, although the distinction between permanence and temporariness of immigrants is becoming more blurred given the contemporary transnational mobile reality of many people.

There has been no study regarding how postwar immigrants and non-immigrants are connected with Little Tokyo. Since their socio-economic status and their transnational lifestyle is different than that of the pre-war immigrants and they live in suburban middle class neighborhoods. Yet, the indicators establish the involvement. There are a growing number of postwar immigrants or non-immigrants doing business in Little Tokyo, receiving Japanese religious, cultural and social services, and being actively involved in pre-war *issei* led *Kenjinkai*, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and pioneer center, all of which still operate within the Japanese speaking organizational culture. These Japanese speakers now constitute a significant and established segment of the Little Tokyo community. The number of staff for the LTSC, social service and community development corporation since 1979, is most telling: as of March 2014, out of sixty-seven staff, twenty-two are postwar Japanese immigrants (either *shin-issei* or *shin-nisei*) and they outnumber the current fourteen in the organization who are the progeny of pre-war Japanese immigrants.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ This number excludes maintenance and childcare center staff.

5.6.2. Change continues and Little Tokyo still needs the community to protect it, its space and its heritage

In 2003, the construction of the 303-unit Alexan Savoy Condominiums began at the site where the first Japanese boarding house opened in 1888. This signaled the arrival of market rate condominiums in Little Tokyo and further gentrification followed. By the end of 2009, the Little Tokyo/Arts District Metro Gold Line Station opened across the street from the JANM. The Metro Gold connected Union Station, Chinatown and Pasadena.

Developer's interest spiked when Little Tokyo became connected with the area's major lines of public transportation. This interest was intensified because it was coupled with City's 1999 Adaptive Reuse Ordinance incentive to adapt an existing economically obsolete building for a new more productive purpose. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was effectively dissolved in 2012 as a result of decisions made at the state level.

Little Tokyo also gathers developer attention because it is considered a safe walk-able transit village.¹⁴⁷ Adding even more development interest is the construction of the Regional Connector, slated for completion in 2020, which began in 2014. Once completed, Little Tokyo will be the busiest rail traffic hub in Los Angeles next to Union Station. Also, since about 2012, Little Tokyo has been envisioned as becoming the nation's first Cultural Eco-district, becoming more than an ethnic symbol for Japanese Americans, becoming part of the multicultural world already around it.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

In the meantime, Little Tokyo's tourist oriented businesses were devastated when the spending of Japanese corporations, Japanese tourists and other visitors dramatically dropped because of the 1990s collapse of Japan's bubble economy. Connie Kang, Los Angeles Times staff writer, observed that

[g]one are the days when sleepy-eyed honeymooners just off the plane arrived in Little Tokyo on tour buses, and in the course of 40 minutes at Weller Court gleefully bought \$ 2,000 worth of Ferragamo and Bally handbags and shoes--- and even found time for a bowl of noodles or curry rice before returning to the bus.¹⁴⁸

Although Japanese tourists are still the frequent visitors of Little Tokyo, they look for "a backpack under \$100 . . . stop at a market to pick up a box lunch."¹⁴⁹

Withdrawal of Japanese investment from Little Tokyo after its domestic economic crisis together with the 1992 Los Angeles Riot after the Rodney King verdict caused Little Tokyo to focus on public safety. There had been a perception of Little Tokyo as being dangerous, especially as there were often a number of obviously homeless people from nearby Skid Row sitting and walking around, making visitors uncomfortable.

There is a great diversity in Little Tokyo residents in the 21st Century: age, ethnicity, language and socio-economic status. The downtown housing boom brought upscale condominiums, which attracted affluent professionals and artists. By then,

¹⁴⁸ Connie Kang, "Little Tokyo Feeling Pinch of Japan's Economic Woes," Los Angeles Times, August 20, 1998.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

most of the earlier Little Tokyo residents were seniors and had a low income. Now, most of the new residents, those who can afford high-rentals and high-end condos are economically affluent: Whites, Latinos and a large number of Koreans.¹⁵⁰ New residents of affordable housing were more multiethnic than before. Even at the affordable housing units, tensions started growing, as more Koreans started moving into the previously predominately Japanese senior housing.¹⁵¹

5.6.3. Creation of the Little Tokyo Community Council

According to Bill Watanabe, then the executive Director of LTSC, approached Irene Hirano, then a President of JANM, because he was sensing there was a potentially big challenge coming to Little Tokyo. Seeing the changes in Downtown Los Angeles as well as the diversifying Japanese American and Little Tokyo demography, Watanabe suggested to Hirano that Little Tokyo needed a broad-based planning council, which would advocate as one body for the needs of Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo did not have a coordinated planning and advocacy association to act as a collective voice. Watanabe and Hirano immediately agreed to call for a meeting of potentially interested people to start a group or association.¹⁵²

Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) was formed in 1999 with JANM as the fiscal sponsor and Irene Hirano, then a President of JANM as the first chair. JANM

¹⁵⁰ Valentina Cardenas and Gayle Pollard-Terry, "The face of Little Tokyo is changing," Los Angeles Times, September 3, 2006.

¹⁵¹ Teresa Watanabe, "Japanese and Koreans learn to live together in harmony in L.A.'s Little Tokyo," Los Angeles Times, February 23, 2009.

¹⁵² Email answer by Bill Watanabe on February 25, 2014.

provided meeting spaces and administrative support. The main and ultimate purpose of the council was simple: to plan for things the community thought was needed in Little Tokyo and not just react to outside forces, and to advocate against those things that the community opposed, explained Bill Watanabe. The council was made up of religious institutions, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, *Kenjinaki* that *issei* created, the *nisei* led civil rights and veterans' organizations, business groups both Japanese American and Japanese owned, social services, community developers, redress, museum, and cultural centers members.

What is most significant about the council is that this was the first community forum where every segment of the Little Tokyo community and its subgroups are members and they are loosely organized under the council. This community forum is even more inclusive in that it incorporates all the disbursed constituents of each member association. There were approximately more than ninety members in 2014. LTCC can represent the voice of all the disbursed constituents when the community perceives encroachment or some other threat.

The inclusive membership and its participatory forum provides that anyone in the community, whether or not a member of the council, can have their say and present any issue at the monthly meeting. The monthly meetings are held at the JANM and are open to the public and conducted in both in Japanese and English.

The officers, chair, first vice chair, second vice chair, secretary, and the treasurer are elected annually from the member organizations/persons. The chair may only serve two consecutive years and the other officers may be re-elected indefinitely.

There is a nominating committee that presents a slate of nominees. Any member may submit names to the Nominating Committee for consideration for the officers or for the Board of Directors. Officers and board members of 2013-2014 represent diverse groups from *sansei* and *yonsei* led organizations, *shin-issei* representatives, religious representative, media and festival related, professionals, and business people which include both traditional small and medium sized to large sized.

Table 5.1 Officers and Board Members of Little Tokyo Community Council

FY 2013-2014

Title	Name	Affiliation
Chair	Craig Ishii	Executive Director of Kizuna
First Chair	Dean Matsubayashi	Executive Director of Little Tokyo Service Center
Second Chair	Irene Simonian	Owner of Bunkado
Treasure	Toshio Handa	Former JCCSC president
Secretary	Yuriko Shikai	Attorney
Other Board members	George Campos	St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church
	Kei Nagano	Attorney
	Chris Aihara	Former JACCC president
	Paul Abe	Union Bank
	Alan Kumamoto	Kumamoto Associates
	Brian Kito	Owner of Fugetsudo, Little Tokyo Public Safety Association
	Leslie Ito	JACCC executive director
	Howard Nishimura	Tokyo Towers Home Owners Association
	Jeff Liu	Little Tokyo Business Association
	Mike Okamoto	Okamoto & Associates, Nisei Week President

	Gwen Muranaka	Rafu Shimpo
	Evelyn Yoshimura	Little Tokyo Service Center
	James Okazaki	Nisei Week
	Helen Ota	Japanese American National Museum (JANM)
	Chris Komai	Former JANM and Rafu Shimpo. Little Tokyo Public Safety Association
	Doug Aihara	Aihara Insurance Agency

Source: Officers and Board members are from Little Tokyo Community Council (www.littletokyola.org). Author added affiliation of each member.

This inclusive, participatory, transparent organization became a forum where diverse associations with their own networks and groups can work under the umbrella of the LTCC, which, by consensus, oversees and plans for the overall community strategy.

5.6.4. The Little Tokyo Community Council as diverse Little Tokyo’s primary organizational umbrella

The Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) began as a “moderate” association, but strengthened its central role in Little Tokyo and with the City of Los Angeles in 2003 when the City announced the plan to move the L.A. Police Department headquarters and a maximum security jail with more than five hundred beds to the vacant lot between JANM and new Nishihongwanji Temple.¹⁵³ The new temple was built in 1969 on 800 block of East 1st Street at North Vignes Street. The temple had become a gathering place of the spatially dispersed Japanese and Japanese Americans, holding an average of 30 weddings, 150 funerals and 1,200 family memorial services

¹⁵³ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

each year.¹⁵⁴ It accommodated a day-care center for children, martial arts and cultural classes, Boy and Girls Scout meetings and an annual “obon” festival in summer. Nishihongwanji was preparing to celebrate its centennial commemoration of service in Little Tokyo in 2005. There was also concern the City would seize a parking lot behind the building and east of the site owned by Nishihongwanji Temple, particularly then the Reverend George Matsubayashi of the temple. The city offered to buy it, but the temple needed and relied on it for its parishioner parking.

The city’s plans for an L.A.P.D. headquarters and five hundred bed jail also caused Little Tokyo residents and merchants to fear that developers who were planning to construct five hundred housing units across from the location, would pull out of the area entirely.

More than 150 people gathered at a Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) Meeting to oppose and the opposition had an impact. “There was a strong reaction, so we took it into account and looked for some other alternatives,” Chief Legislative Analyst Ron Deaton said.¹⁵⁵ This proposed seizure galvanized all of Little Tokyo and the Japanese American community. Responding to community concerns, Mayor James K. Hahn and Councilman Jan Perry, who was then representing the area, announced opposition to the First Street site for the jail.¹⁵⁶ The city chose to put the new jail in the Parker Center area instead, which, as a side note, was part of Little Tokyo until

¹⁵⁴ Julie Tamaki, “Proposal for LAPD offices, Jail in Little Tokyo Criticized”, Los Angeles Times, May 17, 2003

¹⁵⁵ Julie Tamaki, “Activists Persuade City to Drop Plan for Jail in Little Tokyo,” Los Angeles Times, August 1, 2003.

¹⁵⁶ Julie Tamaki, “Activists Persuade City to Drop Plan for Jail in Little Tokyo,” Los Angeles Times, August 1, 2003

1952 when the land was seized to build a police headquarters, later named the Parker Center.

Another potential encroachment was being planned for Little Tokyo land space as soon as 2005, a plan to construct a Regional Connector route through the middle of the Little Tokyo. The LTCC's mobilization of objections to the jail site had established its role as its negotiator for any plan to impact the land space or future of Little Tokyo.¹⁵⁷ The Little Tokyo community rejected the City's plan because it divided the space and the community into two parts. The Japanese Americans had learned the hard lesson that such a physical division can devastate the viability of an ethnic enclave when a highway was constructed through the middle of San Francisco Japantown.¹⁵⁸ As a result of the strong opposition from the Little Tokyo community through the Little Tokyo Community Council, the city revised its plans and the revised underground plan spared Little Tokyo. The LTCC became the "primary organizational umbrella leading the campaign."¹⁵⁹

5.6.5. Creation of Kizuna

In 2011 Little Tokyo, addressing a concern that in the future fewer Japanese American generations would be involved in community affairs in Little Tokyo, active Japanese American community members under the age of thirty formed Kizuna. Kizuna means ties or bond in Japanese. This striking name tells both the organization's goal and its message to connect with future generations to create the sense of

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Email answer by Alan Nishio on December 10, 2012.

community, to create an empowering culture and environment, and to engage and advocate for the community. Its aim is to ignite the passion and build the collective identity of young Japanese Americans of each coming generation. Its challenge is that each generation is becoming more dispersed to more affluent suburbs as their *sansei* and *yonsei* parents climbed the social and economic ladders, and as they become dispersed and more assimilated, knowledge of their Japanese heritage and culture becomes dissipated and the warning of the mass internments forgotten.¹⁶⁰

Founding members of the Kizuna are the Japanese American prewar and postwar youth, who are *yonsei* or postwar *shin-nisei* and who don't have cultural and language barriers with each other. They all experienced the Nikkei Community Internship during their college years at LTSC, JANM, JACCC and worked for a few years after graduating from college variously with three of the influential and old time Little Tokyo associations including the Japanese American Citizen's League (JAACL), the LTSC, the JACCC.¹⁶¹ The advisory council consists of *sansei* leaders in Little Tokyo, many of whom are former LTPRO members.

Kizuna's Pipeline program aims to build engagement from an entire generation, ages seven to young adults of twenty-two years, as a journey to become future community leaders and by creating a collective memory, ties and bonds in and with Little Tokyo.¹⁶² Participants live in suburban cities in the South Bay (Gardena, Torrance, Palos Verdes) or Orange County where the Japanese American youth are

¹⁶⁰ Mikie Okamoto, "KIZUNA: Reflecting on the Year of the Next Generation," December 14th, 2011.

¹⁶¹ Kizuna, "Uniting Nikkei for the Future," 2011.

¹⁶² Mikie Okamoto, "KIZUNA: Reflecting on the Year of the Next Generation," December 14th, 2011.

concentrated.¹⁶³ Kizuna works with local community centers in Gardena and Anaheim for those ages seven to twelve. From ages thirteen and up, the programs will be conducted in Little Tokyo so that the youth will have a collective memory of participation and in Little Tokyo fulfill the aim of connecting dispersed youth to Little Tokyo when they are young.¹⁶⁴

Table 5.2 Kizuna’s Pipeline Program

Age group	Program	Place
Elementary/Middle school	Nikkei Discovery Camp	Gardena
	Tanoshii Fun Camp	Gardena
	Camp Musubi	Little Tokyo (Church)
High school	Youth CAN	Little Tokyo (JACCC)
	Rising Stars Youth Leadership Program	Little Tokyo (JACCC)
	Katarou Histories	San Fernando Valley
	Yonsei Basketball	
	Community Mentor Program	
College	Nikkei Community Internship	Little Tokyo (LTSC, JANM, JACCC etc)
	Campus to Community	

Source: Kizuna, *Nikkei Youth Program 2013 Edition*

Mickie Okamoto, founding member and Board President who herself is *shin-nisei*, states that the next generation of future Little Tokyo leaders are dispersed into suburban communities, that many students and young professionals are eager to

¹⁶³ US Census 2010 shows that 30.5 percent of the Japanese American population in Torrance is under age 25, 36 percent is Palos Verdes, 35 percent is Orange County.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

participate but have not been provided the tools and information to maximize the existing opportunities. Kizuna, as a new network for the future generation of the Little Tokyo community, “is a manifestation of a movement to educate, prepare and provide these youth with opportunities within the organization along with providing networking opportunities to various community organizations looking for youth energy.”¹⁶⁵

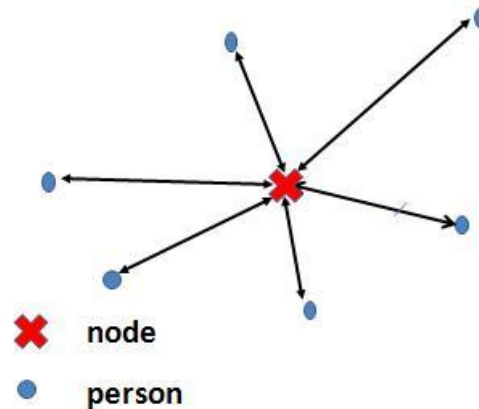
5.7. Conclusion

This chapter’s review of the evolution of postwar associations in Little Tokyo demonstrates that Little Tokyo cannot be simply referenced as a “center” for its dispersed constituents because it is also an “intersection” of different sub groups, each of which has their own “node” in Little Tokyo.

Because there is no term of art in sociology to express a point of linkage among people that does not entail direct contact, this thesis extrapolates the term “node” from the discipline of geography where the concepts of node and nodal region have been used in analyzing the system of cities and transportation network (Abler, Adams, and Gould). This thesis uses the term of node, a "point of linkages," to mean a connecting point for persons where each person is not necessarily linked with each other but through the point, the “node,” various linkages are connected. A node may be and often is an organization or group of people.

¹⁶⁵ Mikie Okamoto, “KIZUNA: Reflecting on the Year of the Next Generation,” December 14th, 2011.

Figure 5.2 Node as a Point of Linkages



A “node” is not a “center” because the word “center” necessarily includes a “periphery.” “Node” is a better word because it more accurately describes what is happening within the interpersonal and inter-group dynamics of Little Tokyo’s dispersed community in the 21st Century where communication involves networks of people and does not require or involve a physical center.

For example, some could argue that the “center of Japanese American community” has shifted to the suburbs and is no longer in Little Tokyo. Whether or not it is true, this statement misses the point because it does not accurately describe the interactions of the Japanese American in relationship to Little Tokyo. If the suburbs are now the “center,” then Little Tokyo would be part of a suburb’s “periphery.” This is not true because Little Tokyo is not a “periphery” but remains as a “hub” of the Japanese American community because various nodes have been accumulated in this place. Since the accumulation of nodes, Little Tokyo has emerged as a symbolic center for the Japanese American ethnic enclave.

Also, node is not a “focus” as used by geographer David Kaplan (1998) to reference a spatial concentration of ethnic business clustering. He used “focus” to explain that a concentration of ethnic economy provides “an economic and cultural focus for the ethnic population as a whole, buttressing ethnic cohesion by augmenting existing social and cultural ties with economic relations” (495).

The “node” concept is not only a better description of the linkage point occurring between groups and ultimately its members, but the term is flexible because the referenced linkage may have a different degree of strength and the strength changes over the time. Thus, node is a point where various dynamic linkages and networks are connected.

Therefore, the LTSC is a node of people with low income, with some seniors, some Japanese, others of multicultural backgrounds. The Japanese constituency includes pre-war and post-war immigrants and their descendants as well as non-immigrants. JANM is a node that includes wartime internees, veterans, their descendants, politicians, businesspeople, professionals, and Japanese corporations. Its activities abound throughout America. Kizuna is a node of youth from toddlers to young adults who are the progeny of pre-war and post-war immigrants who mostly live in suburbs. Kizuna’s new program, Bridging Community, involves not only younger generations of dispersed Japanese Americans but also Arab American youth. It has the potential to grow as a new node for multi-racial coalition building.

Chapter 6 Little Tokyo through a “Different Mirror”

6.1. Introduction

This, the concluding chapter for Part II (History of Little Tokyo through a “Different Mirror”), interprets the history of Little Tokyo from the conjoined but separate perspectives of continuity and discontinuity.

Little Tokyo’s 21st Century dispersed community includes those who are committed to Little Tokyo as part of their heritage, whether they be Japanese, Japanese American or of mixed heritage, and wherever they are located. Some live in Southern California suburbs and cities, some live throughout other parts of California and the United States and some are transnational. Little Tokyo has grown and evolved into being a destination where people of many different races, socio-economic levels and interests influence each other, and whether by meeting or colliding, interaction almost always results in creating the dynamic energy necessary for regeneration and new thinking.

Chapter 4 and 5 discussed the Little Tokyo story as a process of community building by associations and the adaptive effect of associations choosing new purposes to address the community’s need to survive and its members’ needs to connect with each other and the community. The associational building process has not only preserved the space and heritage of Little Tokyo, but has resulted in an increased ethnic identity and ethnic pride, the forging of personal and social connections and has preserved the bond of a Japanese heritage.

From the 1880s until America's entry into WWII, Little Tokyo associations were based on Japan's prefectural ties and provided immigrants with basic social and economic necessities. After WWII and through the 1980s, *issei* and *nisei* formed associations to prevent Little Tokyo's land space and historical buildings from being seized or purchased by the city of Los Angeles or from being purchased by developers.

Inspired by civil rights movements and ethnic pride, *sansei*, *yonse*i (fourth generation) and, *gosei* (fifth generation) formed associations in the 1970s to the present to preserve Little Tokyo's culture and heritage. This preservation together with the ongoing efforts of *issei* and *nisei*, led to the creation of a world class museum, the largest Asian American cultural center of its kind in the U.S. and one of the leading social service and community development organizations in Los Angeles that reaches out to the dispersed Japanese community, as well as the multicultural and multigenerational residents of Little Tokyo. Certainly, technology has also helped eliminate the need for geographical proximity to make a personal connection.

To reframe Little Tokyo's history with a "different mirror," this chapter first summarizes the layering of events, including the associations created and regenerated throughout the history of Little Tokyo. It then highlights Little Tokyo's continuing role as the hub of the dispersed Japanese community. The dispersed community includes a number of separately located communities in Southern California. As a hub, it provides ongoing communication and social connections between Little Tokyo and the various groups and individuals that constitute its community. Little Tokyo's historical and continued role as the dispersed community's hub serves as a continuity of the

Japanese root identity. The essence of this identity allowed it to stand as a Japanese American ethnic enclave even in the face of growing diversity within the Japanese community itself.

6.2. Overview of Little Tokyo’s past in the context of historical events

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, historical events directly affected people of Japanese heritage in Southern California, their associations provided the means to address the threats to the integrity and existence of Little Tokyo as well as economic and social issues. Some associations, such as the pre-war produce markets, cooperatives and revolving fund organizations, dissolved when the West Coast Japanese were taken to internment camps and the outlying agriculture-based dispersed community disappeared. After the war, some associations reconstituted themselves, others were reconstructed and evolved after the war into viable and meaningful associations. Still other associations were created to meet new needs and new purposes. To the present day, there remain associations in Little Tokyo which were founded in the early 20th Centuries and are part of its continuity and the ethos of serving the unmet needs of the Japanese American community.

Table 6.1 Chronological Table of Major Events in Little Tokyo

Year	Background	Events in Little Tokyo and major associations created
1880s-1890s	Discrimination, social exclusion	Formation of service center for Japanese migrant workers

1900-1910s	Discrimination, social exclusion 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement	Formation of Kenjinkai, Japanese Association Institutional completeness as a service center (religious organizations, media etc)
1920-1930s	Discrimination, social exclusion 1924 Immigration Act	Hub of agri-based dispersed community Formation of JAACL
1940s	WWII Internment (1942-1945)	Bronzeville period Bronzeville related associations
1950-1960s	Civic Center expansion, Slum clearance, 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952 Resumption of US-Japan Trade	Resettlement, Reconstruction of hub (temples, churches, kenjinaki , JCCSC), Private driven redevelopment Formation of Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association
1970-1980s	Civil Rights Movement, Asian American Movement, Redress Movement, Increase of Japanese investment	City led redevelopment, Conflicts, Formation of Anti-Eviction Task Force, LTPRO, LTSC, NCRR
1990-2000s	Multiculturalism Collapse of bubble economy in Japan	Withdrawal of Japanese investment, Gentrification Formation of JANM, JACCC, LTCC, Little Tokyo Public Safety Association (Koban), Little Tokyo Historical Society
2010-present	Multiculturalism	Transit-oriented community Formation of Kizuna

Various new stakeholders became involved in Little Tokyo after WWII, some based on members having a Japanese heritage, others not. Throughout the post war era to the present time, there have been ongoing potential and actual space based encroachments by the city, county, state government, land developers and the process of gentrification.

Stakeholder involvement and the complex stew of post WWII events and civil rights activism resulted in a layered history: the collision of activism and foreign capital (Jenks), the symbolization of the Japanese ethnic identity (Sugiura 1998, 2011b) and

Japanese Americans reaching out to connect with diverse ethnic groups. New associations and opposition movements were also created to respond to other kinds of threats from outside groups and political pressures to Little Tokyo's existence as an ethnic enclave.

The continuity of the continued existence of various kinds of associations in the Little Tokyo community is the critical factor that has enabled the Japanese American community to maintain Little Tokyo's space and heritage. Their existence and activism has preserved the dispersed community's sense of ethnic identity and its continued existence as part of the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave.

Continuity of key elements of the existence of pre-war Little Tokyo provides the key strand of the ethno of the Little Tokyo community. One "continuity" is the continued existence of the associations formed in the pre-war dispersed community, though evolved, beginning with the 1880s prefecture based communal associations of the first immigrants to those active in the present day, which include the post-war immigrants called *shin-issei*. The present day associations include the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC), *Kenjinaki* and religious institutions such as temples and churches. Festivals such as Nisei Week and Obon, community media (Rafu Shimpo) and small traditional businesses (Japanese confectionery) are another important component of the ethnos of the Little Tokyo community. Due to the evolving nature of the present day associations, the JCCSC and *Kenjinaki* continue to have a core of Japanese speaking people such as *shin-issei*. Rafu

Shimpo and religious institutions now provide both Japanese and English services.¹⁶⁶

Table 6.2 Continuity and Discontinuity of Little Tokyo from Pre-War to the Present

Continuity	Discontinuity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hub ◆ Religious institutions ◆ Kenjinkai ◆ Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC) ◆ Japanese small business (eg. Fugetsudo, Mikawaya) ◆ Festivals (eg. Nisei Week) ◆ Community media (Rafu Shimpo) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Collapse of the vertically integrated agriculture system ◆ Dissolution of agri-related organizations (cooperatives, financial organizations, produce market, etc) <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Start of mass movement since 1970s ◆ Symbolization of ethnicity since 1990s ◆ Community autonomy since 2000s

Additionally, small businesses are also a key element of the ethno of Little Tokyo, and their spirit of commitment to the enclave is evidenced by their current and past involvement in community activities. For example, in 1996, the Little Tokyo Public Safety Association (LTPSA) was instrumental in opening a *koban*, a neighbourhood voluntary patrol station in Little Tokyo. It was opened as a result of a grassroots safety effort that began in the early 1980s but amplified in 1993 when three owners of old businesses in Little Tokyo, Brian Kito (Fugetsudo), Satoru Uyeda (S.K. Uyeda Department Store) and Kenji Suzuki (Suehiro Restaurant) organized and involved residents to undertake night time volunteer patrols of Little Tokyo streets that

¹⁶⁶ A recent trend is that the *shin-issei* are growing as a group within the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) and Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC).

continued through the 1990s. This safety effort was necessary in the 1990s, because Little Tokyo's economy declined and the safety of the area had fallen.¹⁶⁷

Through these difficult times, the local small shop owners maintained and strengthened the sense of community in Little Tokyo by initiating and organizing people to respond to safety concerns to make the area safe for visitors. The Little Tokyo Public Safety Association (LTPSA), an association formed by small business owners, had as many as fifty volunteers (local business owners and residents) at one point, patrolling in groups of three and four. In 1996, the LTPSA found a location for the Little Tokyo *Koban* and convinced the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to send a nightly patrol car to bolster the area's safety. The *Koban* also functioned as Little Tokyo's information center for tourist and visitors, and the local contact place where residents and shop owners continue to stop by, chat, exchange daily information and meet their neighbors.¹⁶⁸

The article (January 27, 2014) by Akiko Horiyama, Los Angeles Chief Correspondent of the Mainichi Newspapers, Japan's major newspaper, best explains the impact and role of the Little Tokyo *Koban* and the story of the voluntary efforts of local shops to keep Little Tokyo safe.

Horiyama based her article on her own experience of finding her lost business briefcase in a Little Tokyo shopping mall through the help of the Little Tokyo

¹⁶⁷ There was a marked decline in the number of high spending Japanese and other tourists in 1990s. The 1992 L.A. riots had made people afraid of downtown and Japanese corporate investment had withdrawn because of bad economic times in Japan. The growing perception that the area was not safe increased because some of the homeless from Skid Row and other vagrants began to occupy the streets and corners of Little Tokyo both at night and during the day.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Brian Kito, a representative of Little Tokyo Public Safety Association on November 20, 2008.

Koban and interviewed Brian Kito, the third generation owner of Fugetsudo, Japanese confectionery since 1903, as a representative of the association. Kito told her that he started the volunteer patrols in part to revitalize the local neighborhood network because so many local mom-and-pop shops left the area during the height of the 1980s Japanese corporate investments in redevelopment. Horiyama wrote she even felt the spirit of Japanese “omotenashi”¹⁶⁹ in the neighborhood and the *Koban*. She was delighted and astonished because her lost briefcase was found immediately in the middle of Little Tokyo, in the center of one of the largest metropolitan cities in the U.S.

The Little Tokyo *Koban* played a major role in bringing back a sense of neighborhood safety to Little Tokyo. Now, the *Koban* stands next to Fugetsudo, Kito’s shop, which is in the same place on First Street as it has been since 1903. Brian Kito is almost always in his shop or the *Koban*, meeting with neighbors, taking care of tourists and visitors’ problems and questions and watching the street. It is almost a reconstruction of the way of neighbors in pre-war times. His way, and the ways of others like him, created a sense of community and of connectedness between the local small shops, the residents, the visitors and those who work in Little Tokyo.

What is unique about Little Tokyo is that there are layers of “continuity” in the different segments of the Little Tokyo community. In addition to the key strand of the

¹⁶⁹ The direct translation of Japanese “omotenashi” is hospitality. Yet, *omotenashi* has a more specific nuance. Merrill Shindler of the Daily Breeze explains, “[o]motenashi is a traditional Japanese way of hospitality with the most dedicated and exquisite manners. It creates an ambiance of tranquility and relaxation where guests will experience unforgettable moments at ease” (Daily Breeze, December 15, 2009).

ethno of the pre-war Little Tokyo community, the post-war years have their own layers of continuity.

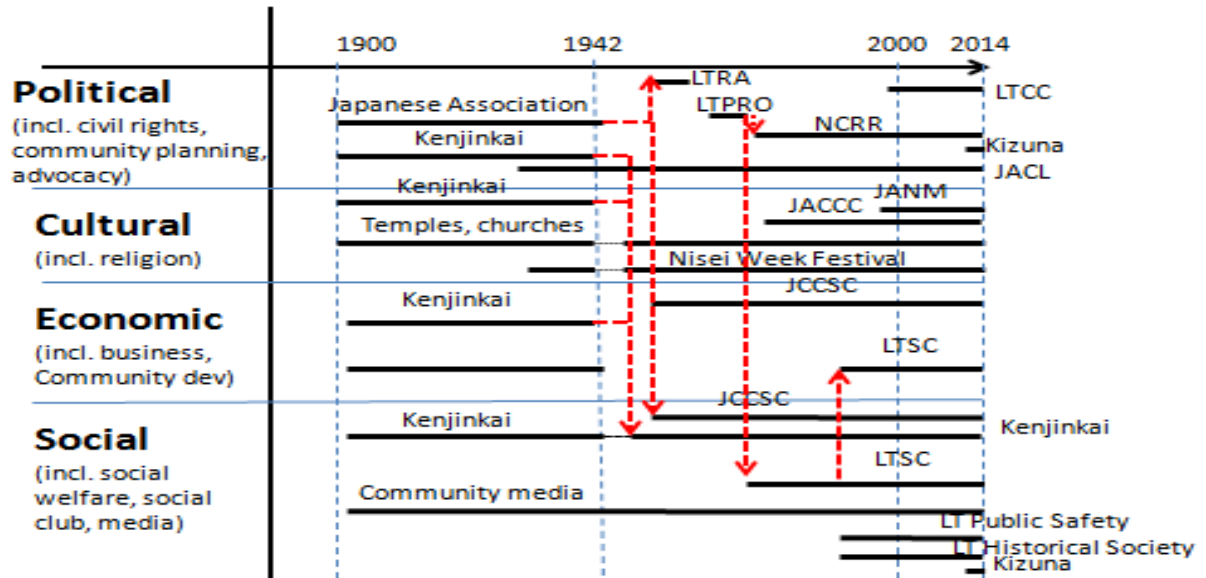
Mike Murase of Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) emphasizes the “continuity” of community activism from the beginnings with the Anti-Eviction Task Force in 1973 to the present, including the Little Tokyo People’s Right Organization (LTPRO), the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Reparation (NCRR), and others “beyond the years of the redress movement in the 1980s.”¹⁷⁰ As he observes, “while it took on different forms, many of the core of activists and the perspectives remained the same” from the time the Little Tokyo Anti-Eviction Task Force formed and began its activism.¹⁷¹

The continuity of Little Tokyo’s core perspectives, born in its history of demise, rise and activism, exists as a regenerating energy to this day. On May 3rd, 2014, a new community organization, the Serve the People Institute’s inaugural event was held at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM). The Serve the People Institute has plans to document and share the stories of the individuals and groups involved in Asian American Movement in Los Angeles between late the 1960s and the 1980s. These stories will be placed in a repository and made accessible to the community and interested persons. This repository will not only enhance the meaningfulness of each individual’s involvement in time and place, but will elaborate the community’s history, and will be shared with future generations and future scholars.

¹⁷⁰ Email reply from Mike Murase on February 26, 2014.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Figure 6.1 Formation and Evolution of Major Associations in Little Tokyo



Source: Author created

Medium-sized business groups have also provided an important “continuity” in their on going involvement in the community and commitment to its future. Also, their active involvement and commitment adds to the market value of the enclave.

There is also a continuity contained within one of the larger business related projects in the pipeline of development, provisionally named the Nikkei Center, a plan with retail, office and residential units. A sansei businessman Jonathan Kaji, son of Bruce Kaji, heads it. Bruce Kaji was the founding president of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association (LTRA) in 1960s, JANM in the 1990s and was also a key player in the 1960s that connected Japanese corporation investors with Little Tokyo associations concerned about the impact of the city redevelopment plans.

The Nikkei Center project is not proceeding as quickly as planned due to the

continuing impact of the 2007 recession and delay caused by the on going negotiations with the city and its agencies over land use issues. Jonathan Kaji is patient and willing to wait, pointing out, “it has been more than 60 years since the city shrunk Little Tokyo by condemning the land used to build Parker Center. If we have to wait another ten years to get control of the new city-owned site we will do that.” There are now negotiations to transform city-owned properties near the JANM and the former LAPD Headquarters building into becoming, ironically enough, once again, a part of Little Tokyo. The new Little Tokyo community "Eco-District" plans will include these infrastructures as green and sustainable properties and are also being designed to reflect the heritage of the Japanese and Los Angeles multi-cultural communities.¹⁷²

As a symbolic gesture, and a recognition of the continued vitality of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave, Junichi Ihara, then Japan’s Consul General in Los Angeles, announced at the JANM November 18, 2008 community event that the Japanese Consulate would relocate to the Nikkei Center once it was completed, saying “my dream is to see the Japanese Consul General offices coming back to Little Tokyo as well as all the Japanese government related offices.”¹⁷³

Little Tokyo’s layering with the continuity of various segments of the community, through the loosely coordinated and participatory community forum called the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), allows a multitude of interests, people and associations orchestrate their futures and remain constituents of the ethnic enclave, husbanding its ability to rise from setbacks and challenges in the present day.

¹⁷² Interview with Jonathan Kaji on May 9, 2014.

¹⁷³ *Rafu Shimpō*, on November 21, 2008. The Japanese Consulate was relocated from Little Tokyo (Kajima Building) to a different part of downtown Los Angeles in 1992.

6.3. Continuity of Little Tokyo as a hub of the dispersed community

6.3.1. Little Tokyo's roots as a hub of the dispersed agrarian community

Robert Putnam's research (1993) placed a high value on tracing the roots of the community. He theorized that the history of a particular society provides decisive information that is necessary to explain its current performance (121-162).

Little Tokyo's roots serve as a social, political and economic hub of an agriculture-based dispersed community of Japanese immigrants in Southern California (Jenks 2008a; Minamikawa 2007; Murase 1885; Yagasaki 1993). The hub's function was critical for a community that dispersed to find work, usually agricultural to the greater Los Angeles area and beyond, as far north as Santa Barbara County and as far south as San Diego County (Yagasaki). Little Tokyo thereby became connected to numerous networks of economic, political, social and cultural associations and groups that included formal and informal contacts and communication, which became far more complex as technology advanced.

Ordinarily, an agricultural society involves cooperation and reciprocity as ties and obligations within the family and the community. Cooperation is needed over the water usage, land use, labor, purchase of seeds and equipment, timing of the sowing, cultivation, reaping, distribution and pricing. As a result, patterns appear when living in closer quarters, cooperatives are formed, and revolving funding is worked out within the group (Oguni).

In Little Tokyo, associations, mutual aid and ties were part of daily life in the dispersed community. Since Japanese immigrants were socially isolated and restricted from participating in mainstream society, they depended more and more on their associations and each other for life's necessities as well as social existence. Where a significant number of Japanese farming families lived in the same area, they started their own schools, religious institutions and community centers.

This thesis has found that despite the disappearance of the Japanese agricultural life and its economy during the WWII internments, various communal networks of the dispersed community remained viable after the war and to the present day. *Kenjinkai*, for example, remained as a social club or a mutual aid organization while religious organizations and community centers continued and continue to provide culturally sensitive religious services, language, art, and martial art classes. Various Japanese American sports leagues such as basketball, volleyball and baseball are three of the distinctive networks that continued to flourish and have become a foundation for intergenerational communal life in the 21st Century.

6.3.2. Little Tokyo compared with the San Francisco Japantown

Due to its geographic constraints as well as a lack of impetus or association building connections, San Francisco's Japantown was not historically rooted as a hub of a dispersed community and has very few satellite communities. Also, there is no broad regional community with which Japantown associations are able to connect, there

remains a limited mechanism to motivate Japanese Americans to visit or return to its Japantown.

The comparison of the pre-WWII demographic growth of the Japanese population in San Francisco and Los Angeles further supports the idea that Little Tokyo acts as the hub of the West Coast Japanese community. Census records show that from 1900 to 1930, the Japanese population in Los Angeles County increased from 204 to 35,390 (a 17348% increase) while in San Francisco it only increased from 1781 to 6250, a 341% increase (JCCSC). Furthermore, in 1930 Los Angeles, the Japanese were by far the largest group among the Asian population, followed by the Filipino (4,519), the Chinese (3,572), Koreans (420), and Indians (106) (JCCSC). As of 1930, both San Francisco Japantown and Little Tokyo flourished as “ethnic enclaves” with congregations of Japanese merchants, newspapers, Japanese Associations, religious temples and churches. An examination of the Japanese employment picture in both cities shows stark differences.

As was discussed in Chapter 4, the Japanese in San Francisco were not able to develop or engage in agricultural activities and so were not creating an agricultural social structure or society. By far the most employment for Japanese immigrants in San Francisco in 1930 was housekeeping (1,062), followed by cook (136) and cleaning (119) (New Japanese American News 1961 411-412). In Los Angeles, agriculture related business were the dominant employment, such as farmers (600), grocery (800), agriculture brokers (28), and peddlers (22). Other occupations included Fishermen (900), nursery (190) and flower shops (70) followed (522). Moreover, Japanese

immigrants in Southern California clearly developed their own businesses while Japanese immigrants in San Francisco were low wage subcontracted employees.

6.3.3. Remnants of Little Tokyo's root history and heritage

Remnants of Little Tokyo's root history as the dispersed community are the *Kenjinkai*, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC), religious institutions and community media (*Rafu Shimpo*). Also, there is infrastructural evidence of the rich heritage of pre-war Japanese dispersed community life in those remaining Japanese community centers and religious temples and churches in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The dispersed Japanese Americans continue to be connected each other and share "a sense of community" locally through suburban festivals, sport leagues, and social gatherings. Among the suburban remnants of the pre-war dispersed community, some, such as religious institutions, still maintain their ties with Little Tokyo while some, such as sports leagues, disconnected and evolved in their own way.

Currently there are fourteen Buddhist temples in Southern California. Although many temples are located in the Los Angeles area, some are located as far north as Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties and south to San Diego County. Originally, all the Buddhist temples in the dispersed communities were branches of Nishihongawaji Buddhist Temple in Little Tokyo.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Rev. Nobuo Miyaji, Gardena Buddhist Church, on August 7, 2014.

Table 6.3 Buddhist Temples in Southern California Area

Name	Location
Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple	Little Tokyo, Los Angeles
Gardena Buddhist Church	Gardena, Los Angeles County
Pasadena Buddhist Temple	Pasadena, Los Angeles County
Senshin Buddhist Temple	City of Los Angeles
West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple	West Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles
Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple	Culver City, City of Los Angeles
San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple	Pacoima, Los Angeles County
Oxnard Buddhist Church	Oxnard, Ventura County
Guadalupe Buddhist Temple	Guadalupe, Santa Barbara County
Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County
San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church	San Luis Obispo County
Orange County Buddhist Church	Anaheim, Orange County
Buddhist Temple of San Diego	San Diego, San Diego County
Vista Buddhist Temple	Visa, San Diego County

Source: Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) website (<http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org>)

For example, the Gardena Buddhist Church, which was established in 1926, became independent of Little Tokyo’s Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple in August 1930 and was incorporated separately in May of 1931. Since separating, the Gardena Buddhist Church has offered services at various homes in the neighboring cities of Torrance and Redondo Beach. It also has provided various services such as women’s

clubs, Sunday school, language school and youth associations (Gardena Buddhist Church 2001). The Gardena Buddhist Church evolved independently in the suburban dispersed community.

Yet, according to Reverend Nobuo Miyaji of the Gardena temple, notwithstanding independently developed and delivered services, all ministers of the fourteen Buddhist temples still have monthly meetings in Little Tokyo's Nishihongwanji Temple to discuss current issues and exchange information. Although the ministers from San Diego, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo are invited for the monthly meetings held in Little Tokyo, some are only able to attend every two months due to the distance and travel time away from their temples. These meetings reflect that even the dispersed temples, some formally separated so as to be independent places of worship, remain connected to Little Tokyo. Reverend Miyaji observes that "even if the membership of temple in Anaheim (Orange County) is growing fast and they have as many members as Little Tokyo's Nishihongwanji, the place all the ministers get together remains in Nishihongwanji, not in Anaheim, and it will continue to be so."¹⁷⁵

Another example of the involvement and cooperation of all fourteen temples is Obon Festival time. These temples help and support each other's festivals by sending their own members as obon dancers. About 20 dancers were sent from Garden Buddhist Church this year to various festivals. Each year, the timing of the Obon Festival (in July-August) of each temple is coordinated so that groups of obon

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Rev. Nobuo Miyaji, Gardena Buddhist Church, on August 7, 2014.

dancers from each temple in the dispersed communities can rotate to other temples and assist with the other temples' festivals.¹⁷⁶

While it happens that an Obon Festival might be held on the same day as another temple's festival due to the limited weekend days for obon festivals, it is planned for and does not dispel the usual reciprocity and personal exchanges among spatially highly dispersed temples. "For example, if temples in Oxnard, Guadalupe, and San Fernando Valley hold Obon Festivals on the same day, Gardena obon dancers will go to help all of them by breaking into groups. They choose the temple based on the location where they have relatives or friends to help," explained Reverend Miyaji.¹⁷⁷

This year, 2014, dancers from each temple danced in the Nisei Week Festival on August 17 in Little Tokyo, a symbolic end of the series of the month-long Obon festivals celebrated at each temple. The Buddhist temple network is another, though smaller, expression of the dispersed community model that existed in the pre-war era and continues to this day.

Another example is suburban community centers. Outstanding examples of the dedication and work of the community centers are those in Gardena and Venice, both of which are about 100 years old. Not only do they serve as a community center for those interested in Japanese culture and language and as a social club, but also they provide a means for communication between Little Tokyo's associations and the dispersed members of the Japanese communities. These centers are actual and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. The Obon Festival is now the year's largest fundraising opportunity for each temple.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

potential resources for Little Tokyo’s further outreaches to suburban Japanese American communities.

The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) does do its own outreach to suburban Japanese communities and provides social services while new organizations like Kizuna have plans to reconnect these centers with Little Tokyo through their future leader pipeline project. In this way, these suburban Japanese communities are also becoming the vehicle to renew and reconstruct the pre-war dispersed community model and maintain the continuity of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave.

Table 6.4 List of Japanese American Community Centers in Los Angeles Area

Name	Location	
Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute	Gardena	LA County
San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center	Pacoima	LA County
East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center	West Covina	LA County
Venice Japanese Community Center	Venice	City of LA
Southeast Japanese School and Community Center	Norwalk	LA County
Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute	Pasadena	City of LA
Hollywood Japanese Cultural Institute	Hollywood	City of LA
West Los Angeles Japanese American Community Center	West Los Angles	City of LA
Long Beach Japanese Community	Long Beach	LA County
Orange County Japanese American Association	Anaheim	Orange County

Source: Nikkei Federation website (www.nikkeifederation.org)

There are currently Japanese American communities located in 10 different suburban areas outside Little Tokyo. Most are areas where the Japanese cultivated

farmlands before the WWII internments and there are strong Japanese historical ties (Shin Nichi Bei 1961; Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California 1956; 1960; Yagasaki 1982, 1993; Yagasaki & Fukase 2010).

The oldest outlying community center is the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute, which dates to 1912 as its predecessor institution, the Moneta Gakuen, or Moneta Language School. The Gardena and Torrance area was the largest Japanese farming settlement before WWII (Yagasaki & Fukase). The Venice Japanese community center was founded in 1921 to aid and support the growing farming community there. After WWII, the Venice center served as a relocation center for the Japanese and Japanese Americans returning from internment camps. It is now a central place with multiple functions to serve neighborhood Japanese Americans including the preservation, the sharing and promotion of culture, sports, and senior programs.

Many suburban Japanese communities that survive today provided Japanese language schools prior to WWII. After the war, the language schools were repurposed and began to function as a community center for a variety of activities, including sports, cultural and language classes, clubs and social groups for seniors and youth, and historical educational classes.¹⁷⁸ These programs have a formal and informal relationship with cultural and social service and youth networking institutions in Little Tokyo. These include the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the Japanese American National Museum

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Jeff Murakami, Board Member of Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI), on August 4, 2014.

(JANM), Kizuna, and Buddhist temples either through directly funded programs, activities, festivals (e.g. Obon festival) or personal relationships.

Cultural centers in suburban communities can be called suburban “nodes,” places of connection, where various local Japanese and Japanese American networks connect although each network may not interact with all others. The challenge remains for associations in Little Tokyo to reach out to each segment of the diverse groups of Japanese Americans in suburban communities. Fortunately, there are many outreach opportunities in suburban cultural and community centers.

For example, at the Gardena Valley Japan Community Institute (GVJCI), there are some art, English and recreational classes which comprise of mostly one segment of the community, the *shin-issei*, that are, post-war Japanese immigrants who are mostly Japanese speaking. This is not to imply that Japanese-speaking groups interact with any regularity with other groups of Japanese Americans. Currently, there are no *shin-issei* in a GVJCI leadership position, and only pre-war immigrants and their progeny manage the GVJCI and the board.¹⁷⁹ Post-war immigrants have come to have their own separate group in the community, a separation most seemingly from linguistic and cultural differences.¹⁸⁰ As an example, there are two separate and independent organizations that use the GVJCI’s facilities for Kendo classes. The GVJCI has no governing authority over either group. Non-English speaking post-war immigrants, their families and non-immigrant residents are participants in one Kendo class while English speaking pre-war immigrants and their progeny participate in the

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Jeff Murakami, Board Member of Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI), on August 4, 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Charles Igawa, on October 15, 2013.

other.¹⁸¹ Jeff Murakami, a GVJCI board member, recognizes the GVJCI's eagerness and challenge to reach out to the Japanese speaking community, observing that "post-war immigrants now constitute half of the Japanese American population."

On the other hand, local Buddhist temples serve as another node that also provides services and connections to the post-war Japanese-speaking immigrants. Almost all the suburban Japanese American communities have Buddhist temples, some located next to the community center or some with distinctive buildings, such as in Gardena.

According to Reverend Nobuo Miyaji of Gardena Buddhist Church, among the fourteen temples in Southern part of California, the Gardena Buddhist Church is the third largest in total membership, just behind the Nishihongwanji Temple in Little Tokyo and the Buddhist Temple in Orange County. The Gardena Buddhist Church currently holds a membership of 500 family members and it has the largest number of Japanese American members without a racially mixed heritage.¹⁸² According to Reverend Miyaji, one fifth of the Gardena Buddhist Church members are Japanese speaking post-war immigrants. Post-war immigrants do not yet constitute majority of those with a Japanese heritage, however, the number of solely Japanese-speaking people who attend their Obon Festival in August is growing. Reverend Miyaji has observed that the number of the people who attend Obon Festival in Gardena has also been steadily growing in the past five years. Buddhist temples are another revitalized,

¹⁸¹ Interview with Jeff Murakami, Board Member of Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI), on August 4, 2014.

¹⁸² Interview with Rev. Nobuo Miyaji, Gardena Buddhist Church, on August 7, 2014.

growing node where suburban people and both pre-war and post-war immigrants connect.

Remnants of the pre-war dispersed community, including the local community centers and religious associations, continue to serve as a community building block for Japanese Americans in suburban communities in the post-war era. Outreach efforts by associations in Little Tokyo such as Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) and Kizuna can be viewed as a renewal of the pre-war dispersed community model with modern communication systems for facilitation. This outreach effort is a critically important way to maintain Little Tokyo as a 21st Century ethnic enclave.

6.3.4. “Basketball Together”

In contrast to Robert Putnam’s “Bowling Alone” which he used as the metaphor for American society, the best metaphor for Little Tokyo community, for now and the foreseeable future is “Basketball Together.” The Japanese American Basketball League is an example of the endurance and continuance of the Japanese American dispersed communal life, a communal ethos that has existed for over 100 years.¹⁸³ The Japanese American basketball league flourished in the pre-war Japanese dispersed community. Japanese Americans even played basketball while at internment camps during WWII (Komai).

¹⁸³ Willms (2010) wrote the in-depth study of Japanese American basketball league for her doctoral thesis at the University of Southern California and concluded that the Japanese basketball league united the community, stood as a buffer to racism, and provided a physical space where they can become the norm. In other words, basketball is an example of a Japanese American community activity that has been taking place in California for 100 years.

The current numbers of youth involved in basketball tell the story. According to Bill Watanabe, there are hundreds of Japanese American basketball teams in Los Angeles with thousands of kids and hundreds of families.¹⁸⁴ According to Scott Ito, Project Director of Budokan, it is now generally estimated that there are more than 10,000 Japanese American youth playing basketball year-round in leagues in Los Angeles.¹⁸⁵ The Community Youth Council (CYC), just one of the dozen Japanese American basketball associations in the Los Angeles area since 1950s that runs the league, has now 10,000 members in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties (Willms 2010).

Faced with new threat of gentrification and transit-oriented development, Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)'s multipurpose gym project called Budokan finally secured the land of a city-owned parking lot at Los Angeles and Second Street from the City on May 17, 2011.¹⁸⁶ The aim is to bring basketball teams and tournaments to Little Tokyo, and with them, more of the Japanese American basketball communities back to Little Tokyo. Although at the moment, the Japanese Americans in the basketball league do not have constant and direct contact with Little Tokyo since they practice and play game in suburban schools, it is estimated that there will be 100,000 visits to Little Tokyo per year once the Budokan is constructed (Nakaoka). It will also bring parents and family of thousands of young and future generations of Japanese

¹⁸⁴ Email answer by Bill Watanabe on October 22, 2012.

¹⁸⁵ Email answer by Scott Ito on October 31, 2012.

¹⁸⁶ Teresa Watanabe, "A leg up for gym in Little Tokyo," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2011.

Americans into the space of Little Tokyo for weekly practices, matches and seasonal tournament.¹⁸⁷

Susan Nakaoka (2012) observes that the Budokan project symbolizes “the creation of a neo-Japanese American identity, one that is tied to cultural values and history while embracing the arts, sports, pan-ethnic restaurants and entertainment, and racial diversity that occupies the space of Little Tokyo” (32).

Bill Watanabe observes that with basketball it is not just the games themselves that are important, but also the social interaction during and after games, snack times, and tournament trips, “people subconsciously reinforce subtle cultural norms, traditions with each other.”¹⁸⁸ Watanabe also notes that families of Japanese American basketball leagues drive many miles each weekend for basketball games and practices. Putting together basketball teams, leagues and tournaments requires mutual engagement and an enormous amount of volunteer hours.

Thus, the Japanese American community, in contrast with Putnam’s observations on American society and bowling, willingly puts in the time and energy to play together not only because of the meaning connected to it, but also because at a basic level, they understand the importance of the social networks they draw from it (Willms).

Due to these strong Japanese American basketball communities outside of Little Tokyo, this multi-purpose gymnasium project will offer a new connection with Little Tokyo. Once Budokan is constructed, thousands of multi-generational Japanese

¹⁸⁷ Email reply from Bill Watanabe on October 22, 2012.

¹⁸⁸ Email reply from Bill Watanabe on October 22, 2012.

groups are expected to visit and return to Little Tokyo, which surely, metaphorically and literally, will then be the place to play basketball together.

Also, by bringing back the young and very physically active Japanese American basketball community to Little Tokyo, the Little Tokyo community is creating a new node which will in its own way, reface and reconstruct part of the pre-war dispersed community model. Budokan reflects an articulated strategy of the community to keep Little Tokyo an authentic ethnic community. This perhaps, is a way for the Little Tokyo community to gesture its acknowledgement that Little Tokyo remains an ethnic enclave as it melds the past and builds a heritage for the future.

6.4. Conclusion

Little Tokyo has survived for over 100 years despite the assimilation of Japanese in America through the generations. The historical evolution of this ethnic commune provides a unique model of ethnic enclave. This model is based on Little Tokyo serving as a hub of a dispersed community. In the years before World War II, Little Tokyo served as the social, economic, and cultural center of a larger, dispersed agricultural community. This enclave was shut down during the wartime incarceration of all Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast. After the war, the Japanese returned, and like the rest of America, moved to the suburbs. However, Little Tokyo has persisted as the historical, social, and cultural hub of the increasingly suburban Japanese American community in Southern California. In this way, Little

Tokyo has evolved and survived as a hub of the dispersed community for over 100 years.

One of the main reasons Little Tokyo has survived is because of the evolving nature of community associations that formed the building blocks of the community. The associations evolved or created over the years to meet the dynamic needs of the community, from the *issei* immigrant-oriented Japanese associations based on prefectural associations and a regional agricultural economy to the assimilation-oriented *nisei* organizations like the Japanese American Citizens League to nonprofit institutions like the Japanese American National Museum, the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, and the Little Tokyo Service Center led by *nisei*, *sansei*, and now *yonsei* generations, which provide programs for an increasingly suburban Japanese American population. Other community associations have survived more than one hundred years, from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce (former Japanese Association) to Buddhist and Christian churches to ethnic media such as the *Rafu Shimpo* daily newspaper. This rich social capital that Little Tokyo provides from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a major reason why the ethnic enclave remains authentic and has survived decades of changing economic and demographic changes.

As Los Angeles and greater Southern California region continues to witness major socioeconomic shifts, the challenge for Little Tokyo will continue to be how it adapts to these changes while continuing to serve and remaining relevant to the social, cultural, and economic needs of an increasingly assimilated Japanese American community.

The outreach activities by the Little Tokyo Service Center and Kizuna to the suburban community centers which are the remnant of the pre-war dispersed community, as well as the Budokan (multi purpose gym) project can be interpreted as an effort to preserve hub of the dispersed community by reconstructing a linkage between suburban community and Little Tokyo, or Little Tokyo Budokan and suburban basketball communities. The future success of Budokan and Kizuna's youth program will certainly bring back more Japanese and Japanese American in to the space of Little Tokyo.

This thesis suggests that in many ways, the important face of Little Tokyo is an ethos with resonances similar to the one it had in the early 20th century, and that Little Tokyo today is a result of the constant and conscious action by Japanese space and heritage keepers to maintain and acknowledge the space as part of themselves.

Part III Analysis

Chapter 7 The Arts of Community Building by Japanese Americans in Multicultural America

"We are no longer ~~the~~ quiet American, we have a voice that is distinctly and uniquely Japanese American."

*Declaration for the Nikkei Community¹⁸⁹
Ties That Bind Conference
Little Tokyo
June 24, 1998*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the institutional principles that make regeneration a possibility. In other words, this chapter explores why and how the continuity and discontinuity, which were elaborated upon in Chapter 6, created a virtual circle around and intertwining the Little Tokyo proximal and dispersed Japanese American community. This, therefore, ultimately answers the question of why Little Tokyo survives as an ethnic enclave in this, the 21st Century.

The broad answer is that the associations that were established to meet the survival needs of new immigrants adapted to new threats to the integrity of the community and Little Tokyo's space and heritage by evolving and adopting new purposes. These new purposes have both preserved its space and heritage, and

¹⁸⁹ From the "Ties That Bind" conference held on April 3rd, 4th and 5th of 1998 in Little Tokyo.

created a heritage of remembrance that celebrates and perpetuates its role as an ethnic enclave while reaching out to address the multicultural world around it.

The significance of associations to Little Tokyo's survival as an ethnic enclave cannot be overstated. Little Tokyo being the node of various networks, associations have been the bridging networks of the community. Even as the membership and purposes of Little Tokyo associations evolved beyond solely providing social and financial necessities, the associations were engaged in community building, connecting and bonding the members of the dispersed Japanese community to each other and to Little Tokyo as the associations rallied the community to support their causes.

The WWII internment of all West Coast Japanese people resulted in the total absence of the Japanese community in Little Tokyo for three years. Paradoxically, the separation trauma of the internments helped develop a strong community identity, stronger inter-generational ties, ethnic pride and group bonding. It became a master narrative of the history of Japanese Americans. By strategically nationalizing the narrative as an American discourse, third and fourth generation Japanese Americans fostered Little Tokyo associations that generated multicultural outreach.

Japanese Americans view Little Tokyo as a place of heritage, which has helped make it the community hub and the central point of Japanese associations in Southern California. This identification is a bond that has tied the Japanese American community together and to Little Tokyo, even as individuals have dispersed to the suburbs and assimilated into mainstream society. The enclave is the place where Japanese

Americans continue dialogue and reconstruct their identities as they discuss what it means to be a Japanese American.

Little Tokyo continues to evolve and serve as a social, cultural and political hub for the Japanese American community, even as it and much of downtown Los Angeles becomes gentrified and more racially and culturally diverse. Little Tokyo has responded by welcoming the diversity. With a nod to the Japanese cultural theme of welcoming visitors and newcomers to their homes as long as “they take their shoes off,” that welcome includes a demand that it be respected as a place for Japanese American culture,¹⁹⁰ history and traditions in Little Tokyo. This is also a demand for a respect of its differences and an example in multicultural America of demanding respect with equal treatment.

This chapter explores two of the major reasons as to why Little Tokyo continues to survive as an ethnic enclave. First, there is the dual aspect of Little Tokyo community. In other words, the Little Tokyo community consists of both those who reside and work there and its dispersed community that lives elsewhere. With the exception of the internment years (1942-1945), there has been a significant and continuing presence of Japanese in Little Tokyo, including residents, business owners and various association members from 1880s to the present. The persistent presence of the Japanese community, as well as the preservation efforts of its associations have

¹⁹⁰ The Japanese American culture is not the same as “Japanese culture.” According to the Declaration for the Nikkei Community (1998), “the Japanese American culture includes cultural forms brought from Japan, historically and today, and equally important, is a distinct and unlimited culture born of the experience of Japanese in America. Other ethnic cultures in the United States have influenced this unique cultural form. This makes Japanese American culture harder to define, however, the definition is not static but a dynamic one which is a work in progress.”

resulted in the recognition of Little Tokyo's importance as a place imbued with Japanese heritage and history by the Los Angeles government. It is also recognized as a hub of the dispersed community.

Second, the WWII internments resulted in a stronger ethnic identity among the Japanese American community, and a sense of a shared history that has spanned across generations, and a bond with Little Tokyo as a place of remembrance. The Japanese American Redress Movement cemented the outrage over the internments into the collective memory of the dispersed community. The Redress Movement also fueled the motivation to preserve Little Tokyo's Japanese heritage and strengthen ties among the dispersed Japanese community and their *sansei* and post-*sansei* progeny.

7.2. Duality of Little Tokyo Community

7.2.1. Associations formed by *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei* and *yonsei* have been the vehicles for the continued presence of Japanese in Little Tokyo

From the 1880s to the present, the Japanese *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei* and *yonsei*, made the space their ethnic enclave by taking actions to protect it, to preserve its history, to connect with it, and to create associations that perpetuated its existence and its role as a hub of their community. Some were residents, but most were physically dispersed beyond the confines of the area called "Little Tokyo,"

From the 1980s when Japanese immigrants arrived in significant numbers, to the present, the Japanese community formed associations based on the communal

prefectural associations in Japan. Little Tokyo has hosted these associations, even as the majority of their members and the communities dispersed to other places. Then and now, each association functions as a node of its dispersed Japanese community and Japanese American members. Together with the residents of Japanese heritage, the dispersed community and associations constitute the ethnic enclave community of Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo associations have two primary functions: One is to connect with dispersed members and meet their needs as a node, the other is to be an anchor in the Little Tokyo space in order to preserve and protect the space.

Each association is highly networked beyond the physical confines of the place it occupies. These networks connect the dispersed community members to Little Tokyo. Over time, some associations have disappeared; some nodes and networks have become stronger or weaker depending on the varying needs and circumstances of Little Tokyo and the dispersed community. Because new associations are born of new circumstances and some older associations evolve to meet new needs or circumstances, the hub and space based Little Tokyo community evolves through the changes to remain an ethnic enclave.

As reviewed in Chapter 4, the Japanese arrived with a long tradition of involvement in associational life. Extensive networks of voluntary associations existed in the farming villages of Japan in the nineteenth century. This tradition served as a template for the *issei*, who created a large number of self-help groups in the Japanese enclaves (Fujita & O'Brien 2000). This template of associational life as the building blocks of the community continued after the WWII internments. Associations

protected the Little Tokyo space and heritage from the expansion and encroachment of the civic center from the 1950s to the present, redevelopment by the City, investment by Japanese corporations from the 1960s through the 1980s, withdrawal of Japanese investment in the 1990s, and gentrification since the 2000s. Little Tokyo has remained an ethnic enclave because its associations both protect the space and connect the members of the dispersed community to Little Tokyo and each other.

The theory in the Neo-Toquevillean approach to community building, where goal-oriented associations have built the community, is that the community created by the association dissolves when the association's goal is achieved. The association becomes inactive after the goal is achieved and eventually dissolves. In contrast, the Little Tokyo community has continued to thrive because its associations rarely dissolve. Instead, after the original goals are achieved, associations evolve to meet new goals or other associations are created in their stead to meet the new goals.

Another significant factor has played out in recent years; the same people who are active in the associations as they evolve are the same people who participate in the new associations when they form. The people who constitute the continuity are not just community activists but they are also business people and others committed to the ethos of Little Tokyo.

The Japanese community has never solely inhabited little Tokyo. Different races and cultures have always lived in this space. At the beginning of the 20th Century and prior to WWII, the space was a way station where people would come and go in the search for a better life, a better place to live, or a better job. Little Tokyo continues

to be an ethnic enclave even as it evolves, reconstructs, and adapts to being part of the inner city of multicultural Los Angeles.

The coexistence of the diverse ethnic, generational and socioeconomic residents in Little Tokyo is not simply a natural result of living in the same space. It was engineered by the constant and conscious action by the *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei* and *yonsei* place keepers who reached out to both Japanese and non-Japanese as they worked to reclaim, preserve and control the space.

The association management template has remained consistent since the era of *issei*, who were aliens ineligible for citizenship to current Japanese American *sansei* and *yonsei* who became citizens by birth. The template has remained the same even as the associations' and their purposes evolved and changed. Pre-war *Kenjinkai* and the Japanese Association were regional and kinship-based organizations whose purposes were to assure the social and economic survival of its members. In contrast, the post-war and post-1980s associations or organizations such as the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) are more goal-oriented. Membership and participation is based on individual choice rather than regional ties. Yet, even in the anchor organizations, which have been formed since 1980s, "quasi-kin"¹⁹¹ ties penetrate as the grounding ethos.

¹⁹¹ Fujita & O'Brien (1991) posits that a distinguished feature of social relationships in Japanese American communities is that "individuals perceive all members of their ethnic group-not just those in family, kin, or region-as "quasi kin" (p. 5). According to them, this is related to the group orientation of the original immigrants as it was reinforced by historical circumstances and has produced extensive networks of voluntary organizations.

7.2.2. Each association's central mission is to support the persistence of place

Although there are generational, ideological and cultural differences that constitute separate sub-communities within Little Tokyo community, the dispersed community uses the associations to support political and social unity that protects both the ethnic enclave and the broader community. The associations are also particularly vigilant about potential threats to the survival of Little Tokyo as the ethnic enclave.

Each association has an unwritten and mostly unsaid critical master mission; Little Tokyo will sustain itself, through time and change, as a place where the Japanese ethnicity (quasi-kin) resounds. This sub textual mission generates an intention of its associations to evolve so that when one goal is achieved, the association generates and creates new objectives that will persist in the space and ultimately allow Little Tokyo to endure as ethnic symbol. As a result of its associations evolving and new associations being created as new needs arise, Little Tokyo is both protected and changes to meet new community needs and thus survives as an ethnic enclave.

One example of the unwritten commitment to Little Tokyo's survival is the choosing of board members for the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC). LTSC has no hard and fast rules for the selection of board members. Generally, the board is composed of people who represent the various organizations in Little Tokyo (see Chapter 5). Board members are comprised of people with varying professions and ideologies. The professions include accountants, attorneys and activists. Ideological

backgrounds range from conservative to liberal and progressive.¹⁹² Yet, beneath the surface, people are screened in or out based on their commitment to Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave, although this particular criterion is not specifically articulated.

Bill Watanabe expressly acknowledges this need for a commitment: “I see each person’s character and see whether they are committed to Little Tokyo, whether they like Little Tokyo Service Center and want to help beyond their ego, and whether I can trust them.”¹⁹³ The importance of Watanabe’s assessment cannot be overstated. Not only because Watanabe is influential and probably pivotal in the selection process but because his mindset reflects the same ethos as the others committed to perpetuating Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave.

Watanabe’s own commitment is stellar. He is a founder and former executive director of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) from 1979 to 2012. He not only led LTSC into becoming the single largest organization in the enclave, but he also led it to becoming one of the most successful Asian American community development organizations in the City of Los Angeles.

Watanabe’s stress on the importance of “heart,” “commitment beyond ego,” “character” and “trust” is not only an emphasis on intangibles but intangibles that are the components of an ability to make a commitment to Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave. Board members do not have term limits so the importance of Watanabe’s criteria and choices can resonate for years.

¹⁹² Interview with Bill Watanabe on December 2, 2008.

¹⁹³ Interview with Bill Watanabe on December 2, 2008.

The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)'s management style is described as loosely coordinated with a shared higher mission, which also reflects a commitment to Little Tokyo continuing to be a heritage-based center for Japanese Americans. The LTSC stands in contrast to a similar service center in L.A.'s Chinatown, which has a term limit for board members, a rigid rule structure and a strategy based board management.¹⁹⁴

7.2.3. Relationships among associations and persons in the Little Tokyo community

The social structure of the Little Tokyo community is not easy for outsiders to grasp because the social ties and personal and professional relationships are usually long term and invariably complex. Almost all relationships, work, business, social and associational, are interconnected and have a history.¹⁹⁵ This creates a web type of social structure. This interconnectedness, though a key to the persistence of the space and community, cannot be avoided because, as set out in Chapters 5 and 6, many of the same people are engaged in the process who have been in different organizations and involved with Little Tokyo in different ways.

One illuminating example is that many of the core activists in Little Tokyo People's Right Organization (LTPRO) continued to work not only in the National Coalition of Redress and Reparation (NCRP), but also in the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Gwen Muranaka, "Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void" *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

¹⁹⁶ Email answer by Mike Murase on August 20, 2013.

Alan Nishio, as an individual, illustrates the connectedness between the organizations. Nishio is currently the board president of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) and a board member of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC). Previously, he was the president of the Little Tokyo People's Right Organization (LTPRO) and a founder and co-chair of the National Coalition of Redress/Reparations (NCRR). The NCRR later became the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCR), an association that evolved with a new name to continue to address civil rights and redress issues in today's context after the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 became law and provided compensation for interned Japanese and Japanese Americans. He is also a founding member and a chair of the California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CJALC), a statewide coalition formed in 1995 that seeks for preservation and protection of California Japantowns. In addition, Nishio serves as an advisor for Kizuna and mentors leaders of the organization.

Gwen Muranaka, an editor in chief of *Rafu Shimpo*, a century old Japanese American ethnic newspaper in Little Tokyo, observes that history made people in Little Tokyo "guarded and protective." She explains: "We want to know first, what are your intentions? Are you coming in to help, do you understand what makes Little Tokyo a great neighborhood? Will you help us make it even better?"¹⁹⁷

Muranaka wrote an opinion article on August 18, 2012 when the anchor institutions of Little Tokyo, the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), and the Japanese American Cultural and

¹⁹⁷ Gwen Muranaka, "Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void" *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

Community Center (JACCC) changed leadership in 2012 within a few months of each other. The article explains the concept that management of Little Tokyo anchor organizations cannot be performed with only professional and rational thought processes; rather it is necessary to understand that the association has “a broader community constituency, which they must work and communicate with beyond their boards and major donors”¹⁹⁸. In sum, this article expresses the way decision making should be approached in Little Tokyo, that is, decisions should not be made based on the opinion of any one person without an understanding of how the decision impacts the Little Tokyo neighborhood and, in turn, the larger Japanese American community. It also posits that the same decision making process applies as well to the evaluation of associations in Little Tokyo. It is not about what any one association does, but rather how each association and its activities impact Little Tokyo and the larger Japanese American community.¹⁹⁹

Leadership decisions are made in this context. The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) selected a next generation leader from within, *yonseï*, or fourth generation Japanese American Dean Matsubayashi. Harvard educated, Matsubayashi is a son of the former chief priest of Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple and worked side by side with now retired executive director Bill Watanabe for five years after he had worked as a staff member of LTSC for ten years.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Gwen Muranaka, “Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void” *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ “Dean Matsubayashi to Lead LTSC” *Rafu Shimpo*, January 31, 2012.

On the other hand, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and Japanese American Cultural and the Community Center (JACCC) brought in leadership from outside the Little Tokyo community. JANM chose academic Greg Kimura, another Harvard educated *yonsei* who was from Alaska. Kimura's selection initially raised concerns because of his lack of ties with Little Tokyo and the Southern California Japanese American community.²⁰¹

The Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) went outside the Little Tokyo community and chose a non-Japanese, Greg Wills. Wills is a former Toyota USA executive who had no connections with the Little Tokyo community. There had been hopes that Wills would bring business management experience to an organization facing a growing financial deficit. Wills' appointment was announced in January 2012 but his resignation was announced just seven months later.

The importance and ramifications of long-term relationships in Little Tokyo is found in the events leading up to the Wills' resignation from JACCC. According to Bill Watanabe who served as an interim CEO after Wills' resignation, Wills apparently made some changes in staffing including reassignments and pushed some people out of the organization.²⁰² Several staff, including the entire three person fiscal staff, quit the same day to protest Wills' administration and his management style, others took leaves of absence or reported they were out ill. Some staff members who voluntarily quit were friends of NCCR staff. After the individuals who were forced out complained to NCCR staff, the NCCR staff became "alarmed" at what was happening and asked for

²⁰¹ Gwen Muranaka, "Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void" *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

²⁰² Email answer by Bill Watanabe on May 1, 2014.

an explanation. Not too long afterward, Wills' management style was again questioned and there were community rumblings of employee mistreatment, a capricious management style, a hostile work environment and plummeting staff morale.²⁰³

JACCC appointed Bill Watanabe as an interim CEO, and on March 4, 2013, Leslie Ito became the new CEO. The community welcomed *yonsei* as a person with "deep ties with the community and the JACCC, and brings that perspective along with strong leadership."²⁰⁴ Sandy Sakamoto, chair of the Board of Directors, stated, "in addition to these skills, Leslie has grown up in our community and has participated in many of our JACCC programs in her youth."²⁰⁵ Muranaka described the qualities necessary in a person to work for a Little Tokyo anchor nonprofit organization as "someone who needs to be able to talk to one another, to trust one another, to rely on one another for each other to succeed."²⁰⁶

Bill Watanabe states that leadership "is more the working together for the goal than the goal itself that the perspective required to be a part of Little Tokyo community. Friendships and shared values are the matter, not victories and defeats."²⁰⁷

Although more peripheral, another example of the importance of the complex ties and personal relationships in the Little Tokyo community is the association formerly known as the National Coalition of Redress and Reparation (NCRR). The

²⁰³ Gwen Muranaka, "Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void" *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

²⁰⁴ "JACCC announces appointment of Leslie Ito as President/CEO," *Rafu Shimpo*, January 31, 2013.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Gwen Muranaka, "Opinion: Changing of the Guard: Little Tokyo institutions have new leadership -and a communication void" *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 2012.

²⁰⁷ Email communication with Bill Watanabe on May 1, 2014.

organization changed its name to Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCRR) after reparations were ordered and continues to serve as a watchdog for the entire community. Some people who had worked for NCRR moved to the JACCC but stayed in touch with those who had worked for NCRR.

Muranaka, Murase and Watanabe all agree that the deeply interrelated ties that cross through and over the various Little Tokyo associations need to be understood in order for a person to be successfully involved in the community. There is an underlying stock of shared social capital in Little Tokyo, which spreads beyond the confines of its space and connects with other networks and ties. Even if the associations have new names or are new associations, the people involved with them have connections to other associations and each other.

A different example of the highly interconnected social structure in the Little Tokyo community and the impact of long term ties is also illustrated by Kango Kunitsugu, the first Little Tokyo project manager of the City of Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Kunitsugu was the husband of Katsumi Kunitsugu, who was the first executive secretary of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) as well as active on the Nisei Week Committee. Somewhat similarly, Yukio Kawaratani, a City of Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) planner who was involved in the early stage of Little Tokyo redevelopment, became the father-in-law of Dean Matsubayashi, the current executive director of Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) as well as a son of late head priest of Nishihongwanji Buddhist Temple.

The social capital of the Little Tokyo community has been accumulating since the 1880s and consists of regional ties, professional ties, family ties and work ties. Persons working the government side of redevelopment also have had personal, professional and social ties to Little Tokyo associations and the community.

Although Little Tokyo is located near the government center of one of the largest global metropolitan areas in the United States, the highly mobile population of Los Angeles and quickly changing landscape do not influence Little Tokyo. Instead, Little Tokyo is a place of stability where there is a high degree of “*mura-shakai*,” or a village society because the community is committed to maintaining the space and its heritage.

Despite the tight social structure and interrelated social and professional ties, there is no single leader who can speak for the Little Tokyo community and none attempt to dictate. It is not because they lack leadership but it is more a matter of respect. There have been some leaders who have served as charismatic catalysts with activists, business groups, and the dispersed community. A few of these leaders have served as executive directors of associations or on association boards and now mentor the next generation of leaders.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ These leaders include Bill Watanabe, the former executive director of Little Tokyo Service Center, and Alan Nishio, the board president of LTSC and former LTPRO president. Watanabe is not from a progressive group but he established and directed the Little Tokyo Service Center, the largest of the community development and social work organizations; he managed by being physically present in Little Tokyo every day. In contrast, Nishio, who came from progressive roots, worked outside of Little Tokyo but was involved in Little Tokyo activities and created social movement and progress by forming and managing various associations. Over the last 30 years, each has grown into a leading figure in the Little Tokyo community, but neither has attempted to control other associations in Little Tokyo. Both created connections between diverse groups in Little Tokyo and created a united front so that many groups worked

7.2.4. The open and flexible approach for the Little Tokyo dispersed community

In contrast with the closed interconnected community of the Little Tokyo core, there is a growing openness and flexibility within the dispersed community to which each node at the Little Tokyo hub connects. The implications are so strong that this openness is a reflection of a flexible interpretation and reinterpretation of Japanese Americanness, a response, in part to the growing diversity in Japanese American demography. One out of every three Japanese Americans is of mixed heritage; there is more intermarriage with other races; sixty percent of *sansei* are married to a non-Japanese spouse; post-war immigrants comprised forty-three percent of the dispersed Japanese American community in 2010.

The growing diversity of the heritage of Japanese Americans requires the reinterpretation of conventional identification of Japanese American, an identification mainly used by *issei*, *nisei* and *sansei* based on kinship based ancestry and the specific experience they had prior to and during WWII.

The Little Tokyo community specifically redefined its dispersed community to include post-war immigrants and those with a mixed ancestry as part of its community.

The Declaration for the Nikkei Community in 1998 redefined “Japanese American” as one of the outcomes of a community conference entitled, “Ties That Bind” at the

together to build organizations for the following generations, such as the Little Tokyo Service Center and the Little Tokyo Community Council. Having reached retirement age, they pass the proverbial baton to the new leaders, many of whom they have mentored within the community, as successors and association leaders. These new leaders are part of the continuum of predecessors but with their own vision of today’s context and the future.

The author also identified some other catalysts in *kibei* group, *shin-issei* group, younger generation group that includes *yonsei* and *shin-nisei* as well small and medium sized business groups.

Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) in Little Tokyo. The chair was Bill Watanabe, then executive director of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC). The three-day event involved over 400 participants and tackled new definitions, directions and priorities for the remaining Japantowns in California and other states.

The new definitions explained:

The paradigm of Issei, Nisei, Kibei, Sansei, Yonsei have served the community well, but is no longer adequate. We must embrace this diversity which includes anyone with any Japanese ancestry or who wishes to identify with the ***Nikkei community***. We are of mixed heritage . . . All of us have an equal place of dignity in our Japanese American community and in the broader community at large. We must maintain the positive nature of this diversity, and break down the barriers and boundaries that keep us from embracing our differences and from redefining our community²⁰⁹ (Emphasis added)

The declaration is a bold statement from the broader Japanese community, which includes the Little Tokyo space-based community where the symbolic meaning of Japanese Americanness has been questioned, negotiated and expressed over time. The statement from the broader Japanese community reflects the rapidly changing demographic trends of Japanese Americans who are assimilating, inter-marrying and also accepts new immigrants from Japan as part of their own. Moreover, the growing numbers of post-war immigrants have no relatives who share the Japanese experience in America, either the exclusion from the naturalization process or the internments.

²⁰⁹ Declaration for the Nikkei Community (from the Ties That Bind Conference)

The declaration uses the term “Nikkei” instead of “Japanese American.” “Nikkei” is a more inclusive term and description because it not only includes “Japanese American” but also any person of Japanese descent regardless of immigration status, when they arrived in the community, or where they reside, as long as they wish to identify themselves as Nikkei. This inclusive term also increases the community’s size and reach, “with each out marriage and birth expanding the number of people connected to the community through affinity rather than ancestry alone” (JANM 10).

The increasing use of “Nikkei” instead of “Japanese Americans” by the Little Tokyo community and its associations can be seen as an effort to be more inclusive, and it is a clear welcoming message that Little Tokyo is open as a place of heritage and home to all: post-war Japanese immigrants, those with some Japanese heritage, post-war Japanese non-immigrants, including short term business expatriates as well as those without a Japanese heritage but with ties to Little Tokyo, long term residents, students and tourists.

Alan Nishio, former president of Little Tokyo People’s Right Organization (LTPRO) and current board president of Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), takes an even more proactive and flexible approach to who is included in the Little Tokyo community. He observes that now twenty-five percent of the Nikkei Student Union at University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) claim to be Caucasian and do not claim Japanese ancestry, yet they are potential Little Tokyo community members who appreciate Japanese American tradition and culture. By acknowledging that Caucasians

with interest in Japanese culture should be welcomed to consider Little Tokyo as a spiritual home, activists such as Nishio tells the Little Tokyo community that they should be included as “members” of the community.²¹⁰ His stated view is also a reflection of his awareness that there have been a growing number of non-Japanese visitors to the Little Tokyo community. For example, the ethnic identity of the visitors to the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in the past ten years exemplifies this trend.

Table 7.1 Ethnic Identity of Visitors of Japanese American National Museum

Ethnic Identity	1999	2007
Japanese/Japanese American	65%	41%
Non-Japanese Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	9%
White/European American	24%	34%
Hispanic/Latino	3%	9%
Black/African American	1%	3%
Unspecified	3%	4%

Source: JANM (2009)

On the other hand, the Little Tokyo community emphasizes the theme, repeated as a mantra to anyone interested in being a member, that Little Tokyo is a very important place for “Japanese American culture and history.”²¹¹ This is not

²¹⁰ Interview with Alan Nishio on October 29, 2013.

²¹¹ Declaration for the Nikkei Community, Ties That Bind, 1998.

merely a semantic exercise. The use of “Japanese American culture and history” highlights that Japanese Americans consider themselves to have a distinct history and culture that should not be equated with the “Japanese culture” of Japanese nationals and Japanese immigrants who came after the war.

The descriptive “Japanese American” rather than the singular “Japanese” in “Japanese American culture and history,” is also another way of telling Japanese and non-Japanese visitors and residents to “take off your shoes when you enter Little Tokyo,” that is, to respect the Japanese American culture and history preserved in Little Tokyo. Perhaps too subtle for some, but the enclave’s place and flame keepers strive and negotiate in this way to keep their preservation efforts authentic as well as sustain consciousness of the importance of the past and future of the enclave.

7.2.5. Highly networked Little Tokyo associations

Anchor associations in Little Tokyo are highly networked far beyond the city, county, state and national levels. These networks are based on Japanese American community networks, Asian and Pacific Islander networks, as well as networks based on professions and special fields such as housing, social welfare and preservation. These anchor associations are highly connected in order to serve the community through political advocacy and fundraising.

The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), for example, is connected with various advocacy, preservation, and community development and fundraising groups at community, city, state and federal levels. According to Bill Watanabe, LTSC is involved

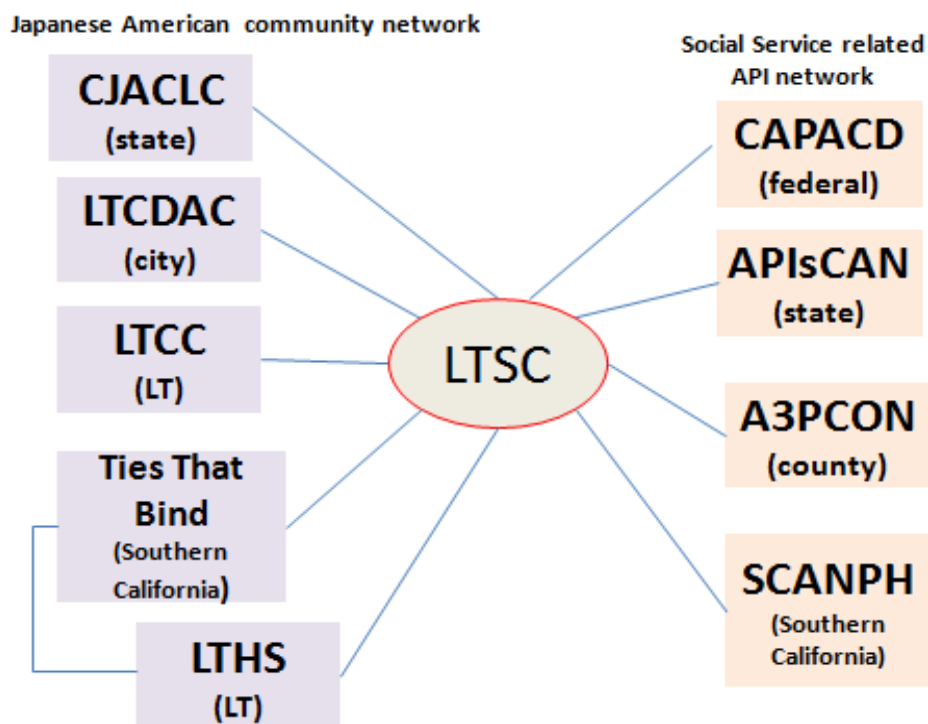
financially and as a member of Little Tokyo community activities. It is also involved with the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) and the Little Tokyo Historical Society (LTSC). LTSC is a member of the Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) at the Los Angeles City level. LTSC also supports and is involved with a statewide coalition of Japanese American communities, primarily through the California Japanese American Leadership Council (CJALC). It is also actively involved as a member and as a financial sponsor of Ties That Bind, a network involved in discussing the future Japanese American communities in Southern California.²¹²

LTSC has also developed and supported various Asian American networks for advocacy and for access to fundraising. At the federal level, LTSC is involved in the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (CAPACD), formed to access federal funds and other nationwide funding sources such as the Ford Foundation. At the state level, LTSC is an advisory committee member of the Asian and Pacific Islander California Action Network (APIsCAN), a statewide body of advocates who promote social and economic equity for the Asian and Pacific Islander communities through organizing, collaboration, leadership development and education. At the Los Angeles County level, LTSC is a member of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), a coalition of community-based organizations that advocates for the rights and needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander American community in the greater Los Angeles area with a focus on low income and other

²¹² Interview with Bill Watanabe on December 2nd, 2008.

disadvantaged communities. LTSC is a co-chair of the Housing & Economic Development Committee of A3PCON in 2014. LTSC is also a member of a Southern California coalition of nonprofits engaged in affordable housing issues called the Southern California Association for Non-profit Housing (SCANPH).

Figure 7.1 Functional Network Created by Little Tokyo Service Center



Source: Author created based on the interview with Bill Watanabe in 2008

7.2.6. Duality of Community

Little Tokyo is a multifaceted ethnic enclave. On the one hand, it is a village society, a place-based community rich in Japanese and Japanese American heritage, a repository of the Japanese American history and culture. On the other hand, it is a network society, a hub of communications between and among the dispersed

Japanese communities in Southern California. Because Little Tokyo has these two important functions, it continues to survive as an ethnic enclave.

In Part II (Chapter 4, 5, and 6), this thesis observed that Little Tokyo is a gathering place of various associations and nodes, which are the intersection of different networks. This chapter discussed the closeness of Little Tokyo networks based on space and kinship but at the same time that there is an openness of networks based on their function and purpose.

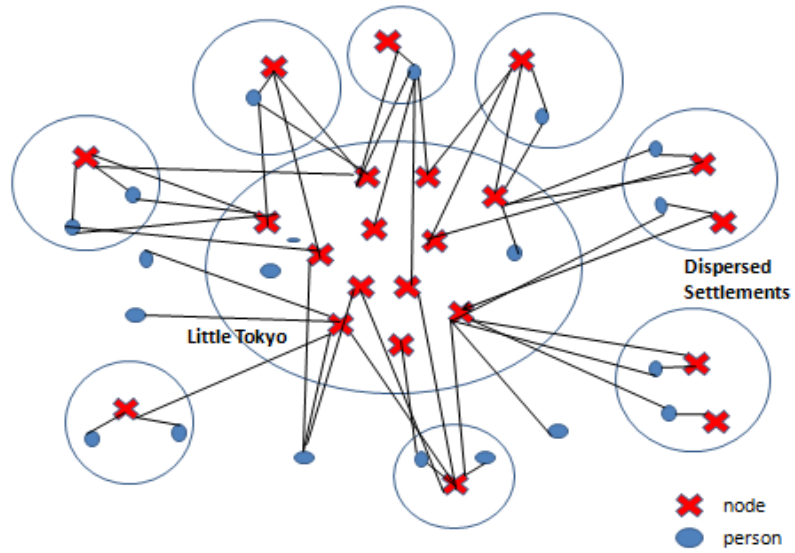
Because of the need to increase the size of the community and its reach, the community takes a flexible approach. The openness of each network increases by strategically widening the definition of Japanese Americanness and who is a Little Tokyo community member. At the same time, when perceiving a threat of encroachment, the space based community reacts in a stronger way and demands control over boundaries and ethnicity over the space. In other words, closure, which occurs when Little Tokyo is threatened, increases the quasi-kinship and space based identity, but when the space-based existence of Little Tokyo is not threatened, the community welcomes multiracial and multiethnic visitors and new members.

Little Tokyo maintains a balance between the space-based highly intimate community and the network-based highly dispersed open community. The relationship of the two types of communities is dynamic, symbiotic and supplemental. The Little Tokyo community is highly political and can mobilize the dispersed Japanese community to protect and preserve it.

The dynamic and dual nature of the Little Tokyo community is a reflection of dynamic nature of the networks connected to each node. On one hand, a specific network may become stronger as others get weaker; on the other hand, a network may become increasingly weaker while the other, perhaps new networks connected to a new node, become stronger. An example is when the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) became a new and emerging node connecting a number of wide networks in the 1990s. Now in 2014, Kizuna is emerging as a new node to connect younger generations to the hub. Once Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) completes the Budokan project, it is anticipated that it will become a strong node connecting the large multi-generational Japanese American basketball community to Little Tokyo. While JANM's networks might appear to become weaker, as it is in a different stage of regeneration, other and newer nodes will likely emerge and become stronger.

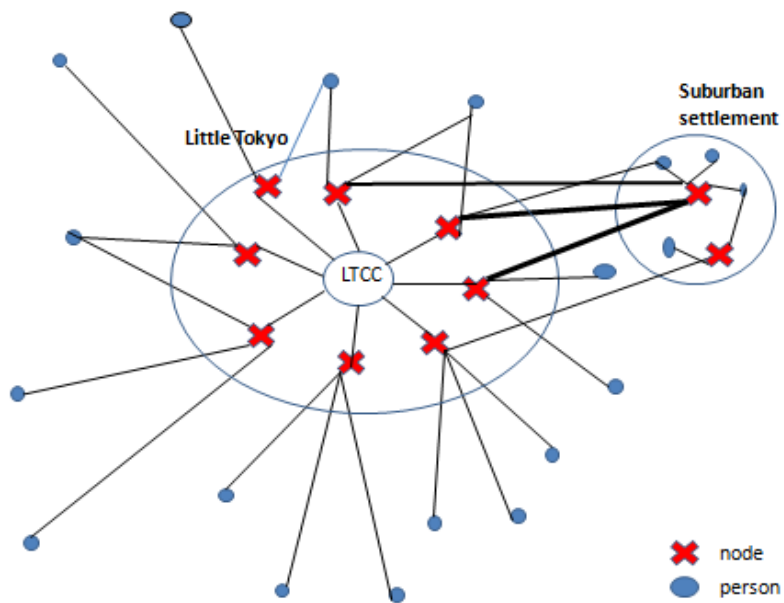
Below are the diagrams that depict the duality of community and dynamic nodes in Little Tokyo before WWII (Figure 7.2) and the present (Figure 7.3). As the time passes, the strength and weakness of networks change but Little Tokyo continues to function as a “place of accumulated nodes” and the hub of networks and community from pre-war to the present day. In pre-war times, there were more scattered Japanese agriculture-based settlements in Southern California (Figure 7.2) than there are now. Today, more people of Japanese heritage have congregated in specific suburban areas (Figure 7.3). Yet, as the both pre-war and post-war conceptual diagrams of community duality show, the role of Little Tokyo as a “place of accumulation of nodes” has continued as a constant factor.

Figure 7.2 Conceptual Diagram of Community Duality: Pre-war



Source: Author created

Figure 7.3 Conceptual Diagram of Community Duality: Present



Source: Author created

7.3. From the Collective Memory to Proud Americans

7.3.1. The collective memory of WWII internment camps

Dolores Hayden (1997) argues that cultural claims to space are often tied to the memory of marginalized and displaced communities (Nakaoka). Hayden (1999) further posits that in times of anxiety and fluctuation, place-bound identities often become more important. Homeland, neighborhood, and hearth become more precious when groups are forced to leave them behind. Memory and remembrance also become more important when losses of housing, businesses, gardens, farmland and community accumulate (Hayden 144). For example, an internee's experience of being confined to camps surrounded by the barbed wire might be juxtaposed with memories of the neighborhood the internee had to leave, a loss that would amplify the pain of being interned (ibid).

Both the *issei* and *nisei*, had been silent about the wartime internment experience until the Redress Movement stirred the individual and the collective memory of Japanese and Japanese American internees. A collective Japanese American identity was created in the process. The awareness process created by the actions of the Redress Movement not only renewed the memories of the internees, but also added to the collective identity of Japanese Americans and the dispersed community. It also connected Little Tokyo and incorporated the space into the collective history and memory of the entire Japanese and Japanese American community.

Contemporaneous with the Redress Movement, Little Tokyo became a symbol of Japanese and Japanese American history. Japanese Americans have been preserving the collective memory of the internment and the story of the Japanese in Little Tokyo since the 1980s by creating a national museum, Little Tokyo Historical Society (LTHS), a mural of remembrance and public art. These heritage building social activities strategically positioned Little Tokyo as a Japanese American urban space in multicultural Los Angeles, where “memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present” (Hayden 144).

As a result, Little Tokyo was transformed into a place which allowed “people who have lived . . . to re-experience their pasts while simultaneously experiencing the place in the present. They may stimulate individual memory while mirroring current circumstances” (Ibid).

7.3.2. Little Tokyo as a visual metaphor of Japanese American history

Yasushi Watanabe (2000) examined various American communities and posits that the creation of metaphoric discourse or master narrative works to unite a society with diverse backgrounds (227). Little Tokyo illustrates this process. Through the Asian American and Redress Movements, Japanese Americans created a master narrative to be passed on to future generations as well as to newcomers. With its museum and preserved space and buildings, this process transformed Little Tokyo into a visual representation of the Japanese experience for the dispersed Japanese American

community and everyone who would look and listen. Members visit Little Tokyo in part so they can revisit its history, share the history with their progeny, and build and preserve their collective identity for the future.

The Little Tokyo mural is an artist's rendering of Little Tokyo's history. It is titled "Home is Little Tokyo" in English and "*Los Angeles no Sho Tokyo wa Wareware no Kokoro no Furusato desu*" in Japanese. It is 16 feet high by 40 feet in length, painted on four wooden panels and attached to the wall of a parking building. The mural was installed in 2005 at the corner facing the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and the Gold Line rail station, which opened in 2009. It is the culmination of three years of work by almost 500 individuals, groups and organizations. Ideas for the mural came directly from community members who later painted alongside muralists Tony Osumi, Sergio Diaz and Jorge Diaz.²¹³ The mural not only tells the story of Little Tokyo, but its creation is a demonstration of the communal spirit of Little Tokyo, a celebration of teamwork and determination.

Financially supported by various groups of the Little Tokyo community and the City of Los Angeles, the mural stands like a gate with the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) at the symbolic entrance to Little Tokyo. It faces the Gold Line station and can be seen by anyone who leaves the station to enter into Little Tokyo.

The mural title reads "Little Tokyo is a Gathering Place and Destination for Japanese American community and culture. Little Tokyo is a Spiritual Place. Little

²¹³ Major contributors included the following: Jan Perry, Councilmember, 9th District; City of Los Angeles, Office of Community Beautification; Community Redevelopment Agency; State of California Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Proposition 40; Little Tokyo Service Center; Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council; JVP Investment, Inc.; Little Tokyo Community Council; Fugetsudo Confectionary.

Tokyo is a complete living and thriving 100-year-old community. Little Tokyo is a Bridge to downtown communities.”

Because it stands immediately next to the museum, the mural seems to be part of the museum as well as a visualization of the proud history of Japanese Americans. Its pictures show a linear history from its nineteenth century immigrants, wartime camps, and the redress, anti-eviction, and anti-redevelopment movements. The mural is a patchwork of perspectives and visions of various stakeholders.

The center of the mural features an image of an elderly woman lighting candles with two children, a portrayal of remembering the Japanese internments. A guard tower symbolizes the World War II camps. A drawing of Charlie Parker playing the saxophone acknowledges Bronzeville and the African Americans who lived and worked in Little Tokyo. The mural has images of *taiko* drummers, Nisei Week Festival, the anti-eviction and anti-jail construction movements, a Fruit Stand, Latinos, basketball, martial arts, *obon* festival, a girl of mixed race holding a banner of bridging generations, as well as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms symbolizing post-war immigrants.

Figure 7.4 Little Tokyo Mural



Source: Little Tokyo Community Council

This mural is part of the master narrative of the Japanese in Little Tokyo. Although the mural recognizes the multicultural history of this neighborhood, the central theme is the history of the Japanese and Japanese Americans who have been members of the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave for over 100 years. Placing this mural at one of the gateway entrances is also a statement that Little Tokyo has been and is home, symbolically as well as historically, for an increasingly dispersed Japanese and Japanese American community throughout Southern California.

At the same time, this mural does not just picture an isolated ethnic enclave, it pictures the Japanese experience as part of the larger American experience. The evolving narrative of the Japanese in America, as with many other immigrant stories in America, portrays the subtle tension and friction between assimilation and the

preservation of culture and identity in the context of larger American social and cultural developments. Other examples of this include World War II, African American culture and the civil rights movement, urban redevelopment, and Japanese American basketball. Therefore, the mural's narrative is not just a Japanese American narrative, but an illustration of it as part of the American experience, and the history of Little Tokyo is not a local history, but a part of the wider American history.

7.3.3. From "Collective Memory" to "Proud Narrative"

Jenks (2008a) concludes the collective memory and memory practices create a sense of community that connects dispersed and assimilated Japanese Americans. This thesis expands upon Jenks' position to explain the sense of community among the diverse communities of contemporary Japanese Americans.

This thesis suggests that the dramatic shifts in the demographics of the Little Tokyo community members both in the dispersed community and Little Tokyo, particularly since the early 2000s, signals that Japanese Americans have reached another stage and are redefining "who we are." Review of Little Tokyo's history shows the journey of Japanese Americans becoming a part of multicultural America, a journey that began with "alien in ineligible to be citizen," stopped briefly at "enemy aliens" and arrived at point they insisted on being called "Japanese Americans" and not Japanese.

The "collective memory" as the primary nexus between Japanese Americans in the dispersed community needs to be re-addressed. As Little Tokyo diversifies, and as demographics show that a large number of its members have no family history of internment or pre-war ineligibility for citizenship, inculcating a sense of community

based on “collective memory” will not provide the connecting bond needed for community building. By definition, it restricts the reach of the community bond to those who will not be a majority very far in the future. Its use would ignore the need to have a connection between most, if not all community members. Moreover, it also needs to be re-addressed because one out of every three Japanese Americans is now multiracial and increasingly unlikely to have a mainstay ethnic or racial identification as most Japanese Americans had done in the recent past (JANM).

The impact of these demographic and changes in racial identity on Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave has not yet manifested. The JANM report (2009) stresses that “[a]t a time when self-identity is playing a significant role not only in how people see themselves but also in how they view their relationship” with associations in Little Tokyo such as museums, cultural centers, “there are no simple solutions for how organizations . . . can ensure the relevancy of their programming and their long-term sustainability” (5).²¹⁴

The new community leaders will be younger, given that the third generation of Japanese Americans who constructed a “collective memory” created a “sense of community” through redress and various memorial practices, are reaching a retirement age. Some may not even possess generational knowledge of Little Tokyo’s past.

²¹⁴ The Japanese American community has seen an accelerated shift in its demographics over the last 60 years that has far outpaced other ethnic groups in America. Out marriage rates among Japanese Americans based on generations since immigrations are as follows: *issei* 2%, *nisei* 12% and *sansei* 60% (JANM 2009).

If the younger generations no longer identify themselves solely as Japanese Americans or perhaps not Japanese at all, what is the future of both the dispersed and Little Tokyo communities?

A year 2000 community assessment by the Japanese American Consortium of Community Related Organizations revealed there is a shifting attitude within the Japanese American community toward being more inclusive of multiracial and multiethnic issues. It pointed out that the people with multiple heritage still feel isolated and agreed that, “if the Japanese American community does not embrace the multiracial constituency, they will look elsewhere” (JANM 10).

Yaguchi (2014) argues that daily and constant action and approach are necessary for people with multiple identities to maintain a strong identity as a Japanese American (132). California State Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi is firm that the Japanese American experience must be remembered, and emphasizes at each Day of Remembrance of Japanese American WWII Internment that, “we must keep on telling the experience of Japanese Americans not only to American people, but also to Japanese Americans.”²¹⁵

Yaguchi (2014) also observes that the collective memory issue may entail a risk of creating dual senses of alienation of being “a marginalized Japanese American” and being a “marginalized minority in America” among a younger generation since this reminder may result in the collective feeling of victimhood (133).

²¹⁵ The Day of Remembrance (Japanese Americans) is a day commemorating the [Japanese American internment](#) during World War II. Events in California are held on or near February 19, the date in 1942 that [Executive Order 9066](#) was signed, requiring internment of all U.S. residents of Japanese ancestry.

Instead, the current activities of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) offer a different thought by offering a different message, suggesting the Japanese American is an example of an ethnic group standing “for American democracy and American nationalism.”²¹⁶ By strategically nationalizing the Japanese American experience into the American discourse and tapestry, the collective memory is no longer the discourse of marginalized ethnic group but the discourse of “proud Americans” who successfully achieved the American dream through American democracy and justice.

Kizuna’s Bridging Community program exemplifies this approach. It is a proactive response to a number of incidents of intolerance towards the Muslim American community in the long aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Kizuna created the Bridging Community program to offer support and to build a relationship between Japanese Americans and Muslim Americans, identifying similarities between their experiences and the anti-Japanese hostilities that California Japanese faced after Japan attacked and bombed Pearl Harbor.

Japanese civil rights organizations including the Japanese American Citizen’s League (JACL), NCRR (Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations financially sponsor the Bridging program. The program is intended to develop sensitivity for civil rights among the future leaders of the Japanese community.

This Bridging program is not simply an attempt to form a coalition with a marginalized minority. It offers a strong signal that Japanese Americans have a unique role to offer as leaders in multicultural America because of their sensitivity to the

²¹⁶ Interview with Professor Yujin Yaguchi, University of Tokyo on July 2, 2014.

danger of allowing any racial group to be treated differently for no reason other than what others of that race have done. The program is designed to foster inclusivity and multicultural cooperation.

As *nisei* politician Norman Mineta, then a U.S. Secretary of Transportation at the time of 9/11 and a driving force behind the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988,²¹⁷ stated in front of both Arab and Japanese American youth who participated in the pilgrimage to Manzanar camp as a part of Kizuna's Bridging Community program:

I want all to be proud about yourselves as individuals and share that with others . . . I want to be proud of your ancestry, about your religion, about your language, and about your art, whatever your forbearers brought from the native countries from which they have come. More importantly, I want you to share with everybody else because it is very, very important that we get to know each other. . . fear gets driven by the unknown, so the more you get to know about something or somebody, those fears are erased.²¹⁸

The message here is very clear to Japanese Americans that they are no longer victims or marginalized and oppressed minority. Instead, they are "proud Americans" who treasure their heritage as well as the value of American democracy and a respect for differences among diverse people. The new narrative, proud instead of the previous identification with the collective memory of Japanese Americans as victims, as Yaguchi (2014) also emphasizes, may well become the new narrative that creates a sense of

²¹⁷ This act officially apologized for and redressed the injustices endured by Japanese during WWII.

²¹⁸ Ken Watanabe, *Amerika wo iku* (TV documentary)

community that redefines contemporary Japanese Americanness in a way more appealing to all Japanese Americans, including those with a diverse Japanese heritage (133-134).

This thesis suggests that this strategic re-negotiation of Japanese Americans about Japanese Americanness is only possible in a post-1990s multicultural America where differences are respected.

The semantic negotiation over the space by Little Tokyo frame keepers can be viewed as a “new ethnicity” which has become a phenomenon since 1990s. That is, ethnicity can become a positive identity that people need to embrace rather than discard as well share their group pride. A new finding in conventional discussions on ethnicity is that ethnicity can be a powerful resource and instrument for economically and socially assimilated Japanese Americans.²¹⁹

7.4. Conclusion

Little Tokyo is a manifestation of the art of *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei*, and post-*sansei* to survive, adapt, protect, persist, control their livelihood and identity to live in multicultural America. The duality of the Little Tokyo associational networking with the dispersed community and Little Tokyo as a place of the strategic nationalization of collective memory energized the regeneration of Little Tokyo after WWII.

²¹⁹ Yamamoto (1993) analyzes how the characteristics of racial and ethnic group relations in the contemporary American society are rooted in the macro structure, which is best characterized in liberal pluralist system with a large degree of inequality. Based on his field study in the Samoan community in San Francisco between 1990 and 1992, Yamamoto posits that while the lower class seeks security by organizing into ethnic groups, the middle class does not depend on group affiliation.

Little Tokyo is a mirror of the struggle, achievement and evolution of Japanese Americans who have had a distinct and unique experience different than any other racial group. Little Tokyo is also a mirror of the increasingly multicultural Los Angeles. Japanese Americans are a tiny but key ethnic group in multicultural America who use the ties of ethnicity and the heritage Little Tokyo embodies as a source of strength even though they are highly assimilated.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis reviewed the history of Little Tokyo with a “different mirror,” looking at the *dispersed community* model. This thesis revealed the history of Little Tokyo in the context of wider transnational relations, wider social and civil rights movements, the redress movement, Japan’s overseas investments in Little Tokyo, the rapid transformation of Little Tokyo’s surrounding inner multicultural urban city, the shifting nature of Japanese American demography, and the shifting nature of American nationalism as it accommodates growing multiculturalism.

The thesis also analyzed the history with the perspectives of continuity and discontinuity. Continuity is the hallmark of Little Tokyo’s history, an ethos permeating the actions of its associations and keepers to preserve its space as an ethnic enclave. This thesis concluded Little Tokyo is an example of the dynamic community model, a community that circulates continuity and discontinuity in a positive way, and that Little Tokyo has demonstrated positive continuity and discontinuity by its generation and regeneration for over one hundred years.

Little Tokyo survived as an ethnic enclave although there were no Japanese in Little Tokyo during WWII. It survives even though the Japanese and Japanese Americans who comprise its community are dispersed into mainstream suburbs. It survives as an ethnic enclave although its community no longer consists of isolated and shunned immigrants but instead consists of the progeny of immigrants, their offspring, post war immigrants from Japan and the progeny of those who have intermarried. It remains an ethnic enclave because it continues to be a space of heritage protected by

its dispersed community and its associations and because it functions as a hub, connecting the associations and the dispersed members to each other and to Little Tokyo.

Little Tokyo's continuing existence as an ethnic enclave runs counter to sociological theory that an ethnic enclave usually disappears when its ethnic population assimilates into the receiving society. Its ethnic community is widely dispersed but connected to each other and Little Tokyo through associations and communication networks, another anomaly counter to the conventional theory that an ethnic enclave is a physical space with a high ethnic concentration distinct from the receiving society.

Little Tokyo is an alternative model of a non-space based ethnic enclave. Japanese and Japanese Americans, the ethnic community that comprises the ethnic enclave of Little Tokyo, are not even demographically dominant in the space called Little Tokyo. Instead, they are spatially dispersed among miles outside of its confines. Yet Little Tokyo remains an ethnic enclave because it anchors and socially, culturally and physically connects the dispersed ethnic community to it and to each other, and it has been the "place" for these connections for one hundred and thirty years.

Little Tokyo's current Japanese American community members include both the residents of its historic area and those who are dispersed throughout Southern California, those who were born of immigrants, those who have immigrated from Japan since the war, those who are the children of assimilation and intermarriage, and

those who are socially, culturally and spiritually connected to Little Tokyo through its associations.

This thesis explored the role of community building by associations that assured and continue to assure Little Tokyo's survival as an ethnic enclave. The community building by associations, both by the early associations derived from communal Japanese prefectural associations that provided the immigrant community with survival basics such as housing and jobs, and after WWII purpose-oriented associations, including a few of the early associations that evolved which protect the heritage and space of Little Tokyo and its role as an ethnic enclave.

The associations have built the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave, first by providing the necessities of living to the Japanese immigrants, then by protecting Little Tokyo's space and maintaining social and cultural ties to Little Tokyo among the dispersed community. Some of the earlier associations did not dissolve when their initial purposes were met, when they were not the main source of jobs, housing and financial commerce, but instead evolved by adopting new purposes, those protective and supportive of the community.

Like the survival of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave, the survival of its associations after their initial purposes were met is unusual. This failure to dissolve, yet continue to evolve to protect the space and ethnic tie, or "quasi-kin" tie, runs counter to the assumption of the community building model by Neo-Tocquevillean Robert Putnam. Putnam believes the basis of the formation of associations is by individuals who share a single purpose, which implies that associations dissolve when

their purposes are met. Their continued existence also runs counter to Robert Putnam's assumption that the more diverse the community, the less its members participate in collective community life through associations and the community eventually dissolves.

This thesis observed that although the space of Little Tokyo has become more diverse and although the Japanese American community has become more diverse with more post-war immigrants and more people of a mixed Japanese heritage, the impetus to keep Little Tokyo as a Japanese space centering the ethnic enclave with its connective hub of associations, that is, a sense of community and need for connection with it, continues unabated because of its associations.

Little Tokyo history shows that the continuity and discontinuity of an evolving community, including its internal disputes and negotiations, creates and is ultimately an expression of a sense of community. The confrontation of civil rights and social engineering minded groups with the Japanese capital, the construction of the community and cultural center as well as the national ethnic museum, the formation of Little Tokyo *Koban* and the participatory community forum, the in-process Budokan (sport gymnasium) project and Kizuna (bridging program for youths), all are part of the ongoing continuity and discontinuity that has created and is creating a sense of community over the space and throughout the dispersed community. .

Certainly this thesis has limitations inherent in its scope. Not all questions were answered and there are investigations that could be done. For example, it might be illuminating to have further detailed field work about the associations still connected

with the Little Tokyo centered associations, whose activities take place in the dispersed suburban communities, such as community centers and Buddhist temples. Suburban associations are the potential infrastructure (vehicle) for the continued regeneration of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave in the future and further research and analysis is required to support this argument.

This thesis addressed the underlying reasons why Japanese Americans identify with the space and stay connected with Little Tokyo through associations and social and political networks as they increasingly assimilate into mainstream society. The research demonstrated that Japanese Americans still demonstrate a social, cultural and political need to be connected to its space. The evolving concept of a Japanese American identity has been and continues to be explained and constructed in the context of this physical space because the Japanese American dispersed community has repeatedly demonstrated a connection and loyalty to it as a place of heritage.

This thesis has found that Little Tokyo has dual functions: one as a space based community and the other as a network and hub for the social connections with its root history found in the pre-war dispersed community. Its associations have created and perpetuated these dual functions throughout its history. As part and parcel of the duality of being a space based community and a hub of social connections, Little Tokyo simultaneously functions as a village society (closeness) and a network based society (openness). These dualities have been its history, the reason it could regenerate after its entire community was taken to internment camps, and the reason it has evolved to preserve its heritage and continues to be an ethnic enclave to this day.

The WWII internment created an awareness of the dangers of race-based discrimination among those who had been interned and their progeny. It has been a motivation for Japanese Americans, particularly the generations that followed the internees, to be more inclusive and understanding of people with different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This has been evident in associations whose membership is pointedly inclusive, in social services that serve the needs of all ethnic groups and the effort to reach out to Arab youths.

This thesis also elaborated on the “centrality” of Little Tokyo in the dispersed community model because it could be argued that the “center” of the Japanese American community has shifted to the suburbs. However, Little Tokyo remains as a central place for various associations, some existing since the early 20th Century, and as a “hub” of the associations’ communication networks.

This thesis extrapolates the term “node” from the discipline of geography to mean a point where dynamic linkages of people and networks of people are connected. An association can then be called a node because it is a dynamic linkage of people. In an example of this use, *kenjinaki* is a node. Hiroshima *Kenjinaki* is the only *kenjinaki* that continues to be located in Little Tokyo and is one of the largest *kenjinkai* in Southern California. It is a node connected to the Hiroshima prefectural immigrants with a continued existence since the early 1900s.

Little Tokyo remains as the community’s hub because it is where the various nodes have accumulated, where it can be said that different dynamic nodes have

gathered and accumulated over time. Because of the accumulation of nodes, Little Tokyo has emerged as a symbolic center for the Japanese American ethnic enclave.

Little Tokyo remains an experiment in guiding and preserving an ethnic enclave, including its sense of community, in a rapidly shifting multicultural society. The future of Little Tokyo is still uncertain due to the rapidly shifting nature of the inner city of multicultural America, as well as the shifting demography of Japanese Americans. Yet this is still the place where various associations continue to foster and build community, a few who have evolved since the 19th Century. New associations have been created and will be created but all have the unwritten purpose of connecting the growing multigenerational, multicultural, and spatially dispersed community members to Little Tokyo.

Little Tokyo provides valuable lessons and an example of the importance of both a permanent space embodying heritage, a symbolic space, and the building of a communication and social hub to provide a meaningful connection with its dispersed members. As the dissolution of other ethnic enclaves appear to indicate that assimilation makes dissolution inevitable, Little Tokyo is building its future on its past as an ethnic enclave.

Yet, the thesis is not a claim that the Little Tokyo experiment can be extrapolated to the entire U.S. Japanese American community. As Fujita and O'Brian (1991) state, the manifestation of Japanese American structural assimilation and ethnic community involvement differs in different social contexts, giving the example of the behavior of small-town Japanese Americans in contrast to urban Japanese

Americans in areas with high Japanese concentration (113-116). Thus, how Japanese Americans identify may differ depending on their own social and geographical contexts and how much those differ from the Little Tokyo model and their own involvement with the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave.

Little Tokyo exemplifies and provides social implications for the politics of “differences” between minorities in multicultural America.²²⁰ Instead of conscious assimilation and disregard of ethnic roots, Little Tokyo reflects a consciousness and a firm grasp of ethnic roots, a prideful recognition and experience that respects the differences between it and other ethnic groups.²²¹

It has taken constant and conscious action by Japanese Americans in the various arts of community building both to control and direct the preservation of the Little Tokyo space and to maintain strong ethnic ties while accommodating the interests of other groups.

The survival of Little Tokyo as an ethnic enclave is important. Its survival demonstrates that community building by associations can be a powerful tool to preserve an ethnic heritage and bond the dispersed members to the group. Its survival

²²⁰ The use of the word “differences” as opposed to the word “diversity” is deliberate. “Diversity” carries with it a connotation of conscious assimilation into the ruling culture. According to Aruga (1999), each of the words, “differences” and “diversity,” has a different nuance and implication in multiculturalism. The use of “diversity” in multiculturalism has as an ideal that diverse cultures coexist harmoniously without substantially jeopardizing the values and culture of the ruling and dominant group. On the other hand, the use of “differences” in multiculturalism stresses that differences based on race, ethnicity, and gender entail confrontation among various groups, the groups do not exist harmoniously in the society rather challenge the ruling culture to continue to maintain the culture (120-121).

²²¹ See Kimura (1999) as a comparative analysis of multiculturalism in the U.S. with Latin American countries where liberal egalitarianism is not established, stating the “integration without equality” occasionally occurs with violence in Latin America. In this context, a demand of rights by minorities in Latin America ends in “recovery and acquire of rights” not multiculturalism while in the U.S., there is a basis established to admit and respect the “differences” (270-271).

as a dispersed ethnic enclave also demonstrates that an ethnic group can assimilate into American society without giving up its ethnic identity. It demonstrates that the Japanese American ethnic identity continues to play an instrumental role in negotiating their presence in multicultural America. Little Tokyo's evolution from a "symbol" of ethnic identity to a "vehicle" to nationalize Japanese American discourse is a strong indication that it will survive in the future as new associations and projects are formulated to reconstruct new notions of Japanese American identity, inclusive of the prideful concept that Japanese Americans are indispensable elements of American democracy and nationalism.

Finally, Little Tokyo provides a model for urban community building from the perspective of Human Security. It has long been a tenet among development professionals that community building in a highly mobile inner city is difficult and that it rarely occurs, if ever. The Little Tokyo experience decries that tenet. Little Tokyo is part of a highly mobile inner city and community building in Little Tokyo has been strikingly successful. Community building has occurred with people who have used their autonomy and ethnic history of exclusion, discrimination and injustice to learn, participate, decide and direct the future of their own ethnic community in multicultural America.

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