

# A paper son's journey to Gold Mountain



See related articles on 10.



Descendants of Chinese railroad workers.



From left: Connie Young-Yu, and Seattleites Bettie Luke, Harry Chan, and Al Young. (Al and Connie are siblings and direct descendants of a Chinese railroad worker).

Photo provided by Al Young

**By Kevin S. Lee**  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once wrote, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

My journey to Promontory Summit

in Utah to attend the Golden Spike's 150th Anniversary began with a flight from Sea-Tac airport to Salt Lake City. The Golden Spike's 150th events celebrate the contributions of the nearly 20,000 immigrant workers from different continents and cultures who helped to complete the first

Transcontinental Railroad, nearly 150 years ago. Among them, historians estimate over 15,000 Chinese worked on the railroad during construction. The conference celebrating the Golden Spike's 150th Anniversary

see GOLDEN SPIKE on 15

Promontory Point, the spot where the two railroads joined.



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## Local TV legend Lori Matsukawa announces retirement from KING 5



Lori Matsukawa

**By Staff**  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

KING 5's beloved anchor of 36 years, Lori Matsukawa, is retiring. She will sign off on June 14 and KING 5 will air a one-hour special on that day, sharing memories, photos, videos, and stories about Matsukawa.

"What a pleasure it's been to work at KING 5—a legacy station," Matsukawa said when asked to sum up her career. "I always tell people the best part of being a television journalist is being able to tell the stories of the people who call the Northwest home."

"I am so sad to see Lori leave the industry. She was one of the first people I met when I

arrived at KING 5 nearly 30 years ago," said Mona Locke, Washington's former first lady and former KING 5 reporter.

Locke called Matsukawa "an icon, a champion of Asian American causes, and a model of cool, calm, and collected when on-air and under pressure. Lori has been an amazing role model who has paved the way for so many Asian American journalists."

"Lori Matsukawa is a shining star in the Asian community," Assunta Ng, publisher of the Northwest Asian Weekly, said. "Very few mainstream Asian American journalists are as connected to our community as she is."

see MATSUKAWA on 16

## Keiro board hopes to save assisted living

**By Mahlon Meyer**  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

As he walked up the stairs to his small office, his whole body bent forward as if in pain.

"I've been crying about this goddamned closure," said Tomio Moriguchi, who founded Keiro Northwest, a nursing home for the Japanese community in Seattle, over 40 years ago, along with a group of half a dozen coevils.

It was meant to sustain the

aging Japanese Americans that had been interned in concentration camps—like his own family—and those that had fought for their new country and eventually become a home for future generations.

Now that vision may be coming to a close.

Keiro announced on May 8 that it was operating with a loss of \$300,000 per month, citing mostly Medicaid shortfalls, and that it had no other option but to shut down



A packed auditorium at Stroum Jewish Community Center listens to Keiro board on May 14.

Photo by Mahlon Meyer

**KEIRO from 1**

its skilled nursing facility and other programs.

In the news release, the board announced the decision to “wind down” the nursing home “in order to assure the continuation of select programs,” particularly the assisted living center, known as Nikkei Manor.

But at a town hall meeting on May 14, just a week later, Moriguchi and other members of the board appeared to change course. They announced a “60-day due diligence” period, during which they would explore options to keep Nikkei Manor and an adult day care service open in some form, whether through raising millions of dollars through the community, or by joining in some form with a partner.

In other words, Nikkei Manor’s future was not secure, after all.

“Any efforts currently under way to ‘Save Keiro’ are to ensure continuation of ‘Keiro Northwest’ specifically the remaining programs Nikkei Manor (Assisted Living) and Kokoro Kai (Adult Day Care),” stated a new information sheet handed out at the town hall.

Yet the signs were not immediately promising.

When asked what it would take monetarily to keep the institution open, Moriguchi stumbled for an answer, saying it was an “unknown.”

But, he added, “My personal gut feeling is that whatever we do, it will take \$5 million.”

Still, he noted that 7,000 people had donated money to Keiro over the years. He also reminded the near capacity crowd at the Stroum Jewish Community Center auditorium that he had founded Keiro when the community asked him and others to build a nursing home.

“They wanted it,” he said.

The crowd met the statements of the board with anger, sadness, and desperation.

After board members delivered preliminary remarks, moderator and state Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos gave audience members the option to deliver questions anonymously by writing them on cards, which she then read or summarized.

She also invited others to share questions by standing. Of those few who stood up and shared questions directly, it was not immediately possible to verify their names.

One man in a blazer, who appeared to be in his 40s, holding the microphone for at least a minute before he could muster his voice to speak, lambasted the board.

Saying that his mother is a current resident and that he had contacted 33 other facilities in the past week to see if they could take her, and finding they could not, he vented his frustration that Keiro knew it was in financial trouble over a decade ago and apparently failed to take action.

“What have you done? What has the past board done?” he yelled.

Another family member mentioned safety issues and a declining rating with DSHS.

Later, she said she had been served with numerous legal documents to silence her.

Another middle-aged woman stood up and began crying, wrestling her emotions into shape before she could speak.

“I’m incredibly sad that this is happening, but also grateful to the Japanese American community,” she said, weeping openly again. “My mother wouldn’t be alive if this didn’t exist so I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff and the community.”

Then, looking at the stage, where the board members sat, she asked them, in a calmer voice, to consider “leasing the building for a time and then, when you get your finances in shape, take it back.”

Yet it was not clear if the board would be able to do that, and not so much because of an unwillingness on the part of the community to help out.

In fact, the crowd was so large that cars jammed the parking lot and attendees had to park far distances and walk to the meeting.

“They didn’t expect so many people,” said a Japanese American man that identified himself as an investor in Keiro, but was reluctant to give his name. “The whole community turned out.”

Rather, the board appeared fractured, with some members even willing to publicly undermine other members.

At issue was a board retreat last year, when board members considered whether or not to become affiliated with a national nonprofit organization, Transforming Age. Such an affiliation might have kept Keiro afloat, said those members that voted for it.

Tomiguchi and some other board members that represented an earlier generation were against the affiliation. They said they worried it would have meant at best a loss of identity. They explained that allowing Transforming Age, which runs multiple facilities nationwide, to take over might have dissolved Keiro’s mission to serve the Asian Pacific Islander community in a culturally and ethnically meaningful way.

Moriguchi said he worried that “some kind of drastic change would come” or that it would simply be shut down.

“So why shouldn’t we be the ones to do it?” he said.

In response to ongoing questions from the audience, other board members began to state how they had voted on the issue of affiliation and why.

Perhaps the most fractious moment came when Treasurer J-F Mannina, the only white member of the board, appeared to flatly contradict a statement made by fellow board member Fred Kiga.

Kiga had said that the board had been faced with two options — affiliation or closing Keiro.

Mannina jumped in and said, “We didn’t have two options. The board came to the decision to decide on two options.”

Mannina also appeared to suggest that an alliance with Transforming Age had not been seriously considered at the time. And, he added, that the decision to consider it now was, if not hypocritical, then “ironic.”

“The strategic alliance was not explored,” he said.

Now that the board has announced it will consider this option during its 60-day due diligence period, Mannina appeared to express frustration.

**The devastating consequences**

If Keiro does close, it will mean the end of a community that has served as a beacon of hope for many generations of Japanese Americans and more recently APIs (the community is now only 30 percent Japanese).

Currently, there are 108 residents. All of them will need to find new places to be cared for. The roughly 300 staff members also will need to find new jobs.

Perhaps the greatest blow to the community, however, is the dashing of the hopes of all those who had seen Keiro as a potential final home in case they had no other alternative.

One man, who gave his age as 66, but preferred to remain anonymous, said that he had counted on Keiro to take care of him in his old age if all else failed.

“You want to avoid going there at all costs,” he said.

“But if I get dementia or my health gets really bad, I might not have a choice,” he said.

“All my friends think the same way,” he added.

**Perceptions of mismanagement**

Some community members shared concerns over alleged mismanagement of funds.

One family member, who preferred to remain anonymous since her grandmother has dementia and is still at Keiro, vented frustration about alleged poor judgment in financial decisions and a lack of transparency.

“To be fair, I’m not sure how many of the current board members were around when most of the money was misused or not raised,” she said in an email before the town hall meeting.

“I believe the previous director of Keiro is the one who decided to build a multi-million dollar rock garden in the front of the building. It was common knowledge that he spent millions to build it,” she wrote.

She also accused the former management of failing to fully disclose financial problems out of fear that residents would move out and potential residents seek accommodation elsewhere.

“What I really think it boils down to, is that the last director mismanaged funds and was too ashamed to ask for help.” Current board members disputed this narrative. They said that the past board, composed mostly of different members, did try various measures to bolster Keiro’s financial situation. They created a program to provide in-home health care, for instance, besides pursuing increased fund raising.

“Many of those projects, though promising, did not yield the results the board at the time was expecting,” said Kiga.

He and others attributed much of the current financial shortfall to insufficient reimbursement from Medicaid.

He said that Keiro was losing \$100 a day per Medicaid patient and that this was “clearly one of the factors” in the financial collapse.

He and other board members said that Medicaid reimbursement depends on the acuity level, or the extent of the care needs, of the resident.

Keiro, unlike other similar skilled nursing facilities, had taken in residents with lower levels of need, thus garnering less support from the government while still having to meet a high overhead, they said.

**A generational shift**

An inconsistency in style of management and governance among different generations of Japanese Americans may ultimately account for the breakdown in Keiro’s operations.

Scholars of Japanese American history insist that the first generation was successful in passing down values of reverence and respect.

“An important cultural value in Japan venerated the elderly, and perhaps especially because in the United States, the Issei generation faced tremendous issues of discrimination and suffering, yet preserved their dignity and community social cohesion,” said Tetsuden (Tetsu) Kashima, Emeritus Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington (UW). “I think the younger Nisei first learned and then

later reflected the basic Issei cultural values—among which are compassion and gratitude.” But some board members suggested that administrators representing later generations may have simply approached financial and operational challenges with different sensibilities and a different manner of problem solving.

“We have a generational shift that we have to acknowledge. I see a different energy, I see a different way of operating,” said Julie Ann Oiye, vice president of Keiro Northwest.

Intergenerational trauma from the experience of internment in concentration camps during World War II may also have complicated communication and cooperation between the founding generation of Keiro and leaders from later on.

“The camp experience is known to have affected the family dynamic, undermining the authority of the older generation,” said one survivor of internment who has studied the long-term effects of the internment and displacement. She asked that her name be withheld.

She also suggested that later generations would more likely have pursued greater assimilation into mainstream society, perhaps changing the way they approached fund raising or other revenue-gathering activities.

“It also probably contributed to the integration of third and fourth generation Japanese Americans into the greater society—a survivor of the camps,” she said.

**A harbinger of a shift in care**

Board members also alluded to policy changes that slowed the processing of Medicaid payments. They said that this represents a shift away from support for nursing homes on the state and national level.

“The Division of Aging of DSHS has stated on their website it is their intent to focus on in-home care,” said Kiga. “People are doing hospice at home.”

Keiro’s closure may be a harbinger of the closure of more skilled nursing facilities across the country, if not the end of nursing homes as an industry.

“In my opinion, unless states and the federal government commit to increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, you will continue to see an increasing number of Medicaid reliant nursing home facilities become financially insolvent and closing,” said Jerome A. Dugan, a professor in the Department of Health Services in the UW School of Public Health.

“There is a clear need for policymakers to explore the actions that can be taken to increase Medicaid reimbursement and encourage the expansion of long-term care insurance in the overall population,” he added.

**The end of a vision**

For Moriguchi, the only remaining founder, the issues are more immediate and personal.

He said, during the interview, his chief concern was with the residents.

“The staff says that if they move them, they’ll die faster,” he said.

The end of the nursing home also somehow seemed associated with endings in general. He mentioned his own “funeral” several times during the interview.

When asked about his religious beliefs, he said he was a member of a local Buddhist organization.

“My son tells me I should stay a member so I have a place to have my funeral,” he said.

Still, he expressed some hope for other trajectories, however remote.

When asked what was next for him, he stood up, rummaged through papers, and eventually pulled open a drawer of a file cabinet.

He held up a blueprint for what he described as a multi-use high-rise development that could be built in the International District, with some units for low-income occupancy.

The blueprint showed a tower surrounded by a lower level block.

“It’s just a dream,” he said. ■

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**HIROSHI ETO**  
Federal Way Public Schools Board  
Director, District 5

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## As a nursing home crumbles, Keiro is still deciding on its closing strategy

*Nikkei Manor fate unknown*

### HELP US SAVE KEIRO NORTHWEST



Kathleen Nguyen started this petition to KNW Community

TO: The Keiro NW Board

By Mahlon Meyer  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

As the Keiro Northwest nursing home nears its closing, CEO Bridgette Takeuchi confirmed to the

Northwest Asian Weekly that five people have died since the announcement of the closure. "Transition trauma is a real risk and something that weighed

[see NIKKEI MANOR on 12](#)

## Trump mimics Asian accents at fundraiser



President Donald Trump

President Trump is facing backlash for mocking South Korean and Japanese officials with faux Asian accents on Aug. 9, according to the New York Post.

At fundraising events in the Hamptons for his 2020 campaign, Trump mocked South Korean leader Moon Jae-in's accent when "describing how he caved in to Trump's tough negotiations," the New York Post wrote.

He also imitated Shinzo Abe with a fake Japanese accent when discussing their conversations over trade tariffs. According to the Rolling Stone, Trump "wasn't done being politically incorrect or offensive." He continued to

speak about his fascination with Abe's father, who was a kamikaze pilot. He asked Abe if the pilots were inebriated or drugged—Abe said no, they just love their country.

"Imagine they get in a plane with half a tank of gas and fly into steel ships just for the love of their country!" said Trump.

Trump has mimicked Asian accents before. In February, he used an Asian accent when talking about Xi Jinping, the president of China, which also provoked outrage. And in 2015, he used a similar accent talking about dealing with Asian business partners.

Neither Trump nor the White House have commented on the most recent situation. ■

## Remembering Tony Ishisaka



Photo by Jennifer Ertzity

His children and nieces surround Ishisaka at his 70th birthday/thank you party in 2014.

By Toshiye Ishisaka

Anthony (Tony) Hideki Ishisaka, the co-founder of Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS), died at home in his sleep on July 9. He was 75 years old.

Born in the Japanese American concentration camp, Amache, in Grenada, Colo., on May 5, 1944, Ishisaka suffered

from severe rheumatic fever that attacked his heart as a child, as well as rickets—both of which were common among the malnourished families in the crowded camps. After the U.S. government released Americans of Japanese descent from incarceration, the Ishisaka family returned to California.

[see ISHISAKA on 15](#)

## Andrew Yang qualifies for fall presidential debates



Photo by Assunta Ng

Hardy Li (right) with Andrew Yang

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang has qualified for the next presidential debates. The former technology executive earned 2 percent in a new Monmouth University poll of Iowa voters. That qualifies him for the September debate, which requires donations from at least 130,000 people and 2 percent support in four polls.

Hardy Li, an entrepreneur who travels back and forth between Seattle and Portland, was in Detroit for the second round of debates and said he was impressed with Yang's performance, though he said the first 56 minutes was difficult as Yang didn't get a chance to speak since the opening remarks.

[see YANG on 14](#)



CID library  
vandalism  
► 3



New owners  
of Sounders  
FC  
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Retellings and  
reimaginings  
of classic tales  
and stories  
► 8

**WOODS from 4**

fact that my kids got a chance to be with my mom in her home country was pretty special considering that that may never happen again."

Woods has won his share of tournaments in the Southeast Asian country—he won the 1998 and 2000 Johnnie Walker Classics in Phuket and Bangkok. The 1998 victory was the most memorable—he started the final round eight shots behind Ernie Els, shot 65 and beat him in a playoff. That remains his greatest final-round comeback.

And it was at the 1998 tournament in Phuket that Chua Choo Chiang, senior director of communications for the PGA Tour who has spent most of his career involved in Asian Tour golf, truly realized the impact Woods had on the region.

"As Tiger was about to win the tournament, one of the Thai players said, 'Hey, it's no problem, it's a win for Thailand as well,'" Choo Chiang said. "And this was a professional on the Asian Tour."

It was like that beyond the borders of Thailand, stretching all over the world. Woods has played in every continent except Antarctica—and returned with a trophy from each. His appeal is massive, and it is particularly strong across

Asia.

Woods has played in Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, China, Malaysia, Turkey, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. The two tournaments he hosts have title sponsors from South Korea and India. He returns to Japan in October for an exhibition and for the Zozo Championship, the first PGA Tour event in Japan.

He played in his mother's home country for the first time in 1997. According to a Sports Illustrated story, Woods landed in Bangkok after a 20-hour flight from Los Angeles. The plane's first-class cabin was bombarded by cameras and journalists from four of the five national TV stations, who began broadcasting live. This was two months before he won the Masters, which set off the first phase of "Tigermania."

Woods was exhausted from the flight and his hectic start to the season. In the delirium, one reporter asked what Woods would like to say to the Thai people.

"I'll sign everything outside," a bleary Woods said, according to the story.

To this day, Thailand's frenzy for Tiger continues. According to Choo Chiang, the excitement levels are the same—if not higher—especially since Woods won the Tour Championship at the end of last season and the Masters in

April. It was his first major in 11 years.

"You see young kids in Thailand having the same reaction as to what kids had 20 years before," Choo Chiang said. "They're emulating his swing. They're just in full awe of Tiger."

Thai's own world standing in golf is rising.

Four Thai women were among the top 50 on the LPGA Tour money list last year, led by Ariya Jutanugarn, who won the U.S. Women's Open and ended the year at No. 1 in the world ranking.

Kiradech Aphibarnrat, the first Thai PGA Tour member, is sometimes referred to as the "Asian John Daly" for his power and girth. Next on the horizon could be 23-year-old Atiwit "Jazz" Janewattananond, who played in the penultimate group at Bethpage Black in his PGA Championship debut. He is on the cusp of cracking the top 50 in the world ranking.

Aphibarnrat and Janewattananond have talked in length about the effect Woods has had on their lives. It's evident his profound impact is a part of every Thai golfer.

"I could bet you my last dollar every single one has been inspired by Tiger—110 percent," Choo Chiang said. ■

**WAYNE from 9**

I remember as if it were yesterday. I turned away from them, because I didn't want them to see me cry.

After a moment, I thought to myself—I'm 10 years old. I've never even been to China. At the time, I'd never really been out of the state.

I didn't see them during summer break. I really didn't

want to. When we came back for sixth grade, I'd see them at class and by that time, the taunting had stopped. But so had the tetherball, and any friendship at all.

Can you simply chalk it up to juvenile behavior of some kids? I don't.

All I can say is, I still remember agonizing over the thought that these two were my best friends, and for the first time in my life, I felt like an "other." It's been 45 years,

and while I love my life with friends and family that I truly cherish, that pain from my childhood has stayed with me all this time.

It's a memory I'll never forget. ■

**To connect with Wayne, email [editor@nwasianweekly.com](mailto:editor@nwasianweekly.com).**

**NIKKEI MANOR from 1**

Matt Chan

heavily on management as a part of this decision [to close]... unfortunately, five of our past residents passed away during their transition," Takeuchi said.

Most of the 115 nursing home residents have moved out of Keiro, with 11 remaining as of Aug. 9.

Meanwhile, a former board member, Matt Chan, told the Northwest Asian Weekly that Keiro

Northwest was conducting an assessment on Nikkei Manor when he left the board in June.



Bridgette Takeuchi

left because I didn't want to leave myself open to any personal liability issues," he said.

"I wanted to make sure all decisions were people centered," he added.

In response to an email, Keiro declined to comment.

"Unfortunately I am not at liberty to discuss the details of decisions being assessed at this time. These decisions will impact our two greatest stakeholders, our residents and our

employees. Because of this sensitivity we want to ensure that any decisions are communicated through appropriate channels and at appropriate times," said Takeuchi.

"What I will say is that I am incredibly proud to be a part of a team who were, top to bottom, committed to ensuring the most compassionate closure. These employees have worked tirelessly to take care of all of our residents and they will continue to do so until the last resident leaves. These incredible human beings have left an incredible mark on so many lives, including mine. I am proud to not only them my co-workers, but my family for life."

Meanwhile, a petition circulating online, which was orchestrated by Kathleen Nguyen and other members of the Keiro Northwest community, alleges that Nikkei Manor is at risk of shutting down.

"This decision [to close Keiro] also had zero planning, no pre-planning again for keeping Nikkei Manor open," said the petition. "This means that over 50 MORE elders may be displaced. Our Nikkei Manor seniors are left in the dark, overcome by worry about the unknown."

The petition, which was also supported by Chinatown International District groups, demands that Keiro Northwest affiliate with Transforming Age, a Bellevue-based nonprofit.

**A difficult decision**

It was in May that the board announced its decision to close Keiro, the skilled nursing and rehab center.

At the time, members of the community and staff members stood up at a town hall meeting and implored the board to affiliate with Transforming Age.

The board had chosen not to affiliate in a close vote.

Board members who voted against it apparently saw the closing of Keiro as inevitable. Board majority members at the time cited a skilled nursing facility on Vashon Island that had been acquired by Transforming Age in 2017. The facility, Vashon Community Care, which was in deep financial trouble when it affiliated with Transforming Age, in less than a year and a half had its skilled nursing facility shut down, according to the Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber.

At the time, Keiro was coping with the same kind of calamitous financial problems that undermined the Vashon facility.

Board members said Keiro was losing \$300,000 a month, mainly on account of the massive disparity between the costs associated with caring for over a hundred patients and low reimbursement from Medicaid. Keiro's overhead was also high due to its long tradition of providing high-quality food, programs, and staffing.

Meanwhile, cuts in Medicaid reimbursement loomed, they said, which would have further devastated Keiro.

Chan said that by the time he left the board in June, Keiro was losing \$100 a day per resident.

**A better alternative?**

Petitioners argue that the real reason board members did not want to affiliate with Transforming Age was because they would be replaced by a board chosen by the new organization.

"We are aware that this will mean that the Transforming Age Board of Directors will become our new board," wrote the petitioners. "We understand and accept that this new board will be diverse and not solely Japanese American."

The petition also reiterated a charge made during the town hall meeting that Keiro board members were not health care experts.

"We welcome this change wholeheartedly as for the first time, Keiro Northwest will have representation from professionals who are experts in Senior Living and the Senior Health Care Industry," it continued.

As of press time, 683 people had signed the petition.

The petition also claims that the Keiro board knew that a portion of residents would inevitably die as a result of the closure due to "transition trauma." During an interview with Keiro Northwest co-founder Tomio Moriguchi in May, he expressed concern over this.

Petitioners say that board members acted under a worst-case scenario in voting to close Keiro, assuming that

affiliation offered no hope for keeping Keiro going.

Still, it was not clear from the petition if the sponsors had considered that even in the worst case—an eventual shutdown—an affiliation with Transforming Age might have allowed residents of Keiro to at least stay in place a few months or years longer—as was the case in Vashon.

**Remorse**

Takeuchi, who has been CEO since last year, said that in retrospect, Keiro might have been able to adapt to changes in the industry environment by making radical changes years ago, but a culture of seeking unanimity may have worked against this.

In answering a question about whether the community could have done more to help Keiro with its financial difficulties, she said she disagreed.

"We got here because of many reasons. Probably the biggest I would say is that 10-plus years ago (or at least 5 years ago), we should have done some very innovative strategic planning."

"Reviewing the data and what I could gather during my short tenure, it appears as though there has always been a tendency to not make definitive decisions or clearly commit to a strategy," she said. "There are a lot of opinions and a lot of attempts to 'get everyone to agree.'"

"Culturally, I understand this. But that's not always possible," she said.

"And while we talked about it, the rest of the industry moved on (sold, affiliated, diversified), and we tried to expand and do new things (e.g. Home Care), but never with absolute commitment and investment."

One option, she said, might have been to establish a location on the Eastside.

"I think that coming to the inner city, for the next generation of Japanese Americans, those over 30, is not appealing," she said.

Takeuchi said she did try to further push some of the strategies that had been recently implemented, such as transitional care, but by then, it was too late. ■

**Mahlon can be reached at [editor@nwasianweekly.com](mailto:editor@nwasianweekly.com).**



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## Opposition to affirmative action bill erupts into fracas at rally

By Mahlon Meyer  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY



I-1000 rally at China Harbor restaurant on Sept. 26.

A rally in support of an affirmative action bill descended into a melee as audience members hurled shouts and a man claiming to be owed \$750,000 by the campaign berated former Gov. Gary Locke.

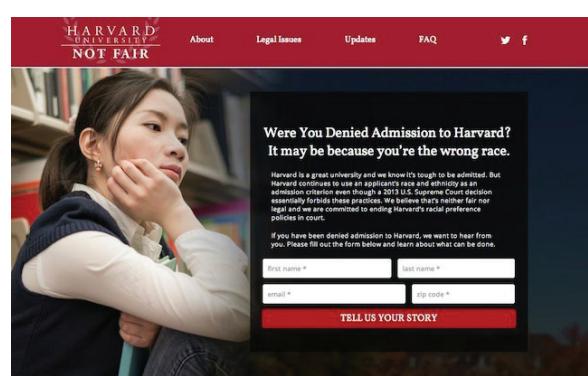
"Our test scores are higher than yours!" yelled one Chinese woman from the middle of the auditorium.

At one point, as Locke was being confronted about the alleged debt, organizers apparently turned off the microphone that was provided to participants.

**see I-1000 on 11**

## Federal judge upholds affirmative action at Harvard

By COLLIN BINKLEY



BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge cleared Harvard University on Oct. 1 of discriminating against Asian American applicants in a ruling that was seen as a major victory for supporters of affirmative action in college admissions across the U.S.

**see HARVARD on 5**

## AARP's Jim Ko on life and aging

By Ruth Bayang  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

He retired from corporate life in 2015. But Jim Ko isn't slowing down.

Ko is the AARP Washington State president. In the volunteer role, Ko directs the organization's activities on behalf of nearly 940,000 Washington state members.

"I'd like to help people as they get older to have a much higher quality of life," Ko said in a recent interview with the Northwest Asian Weekly.

Born in Taiwan, Ko moved to the United States with his parents when he was 8 years old. He spoke fondly of his few months in this country.

"Our port of entry was Seattle because we had friends and family on Mercer Island," Ko recalled.

"My first impression was how

**see KO on 4**



Jim at "AARP Block Party" at the Bite of Seattle (July 19-21, 2019)

Photo provided by AARP Washington State

## Keiro's potential deal with Transforming Age questioned



By Mahlon Meyer  
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

As concern over a possible deal between Keiro and Transforming Age roils the Japanese American community, a family member of a resident in Nikkei Manor has filed a complaint with the Attorney General about mismanagement.

Terry Yoshikawa, whose 97-year-old mother lives in Nikkei Manor, sent a complaint to the Attorney General questioning management practices at Keiro. He is concerned

**see KEIRO on 12**

## Two bodies recovered, presumed to be Nguyen and Le



James Le and Vanna Nguyen

The Mercer Island Police Marine Patrol found and recovered two bodies from Lake Washington on Sept. 30. Both bodies were recovered from 110 feet of water, approximately one mile from the Mercer Island shore, in the 7800 block area of West Mercer Way.

These bodies are presumed to be the missing boaters—James Le and Vanna Nguyen—from Sept. 2. There were no obvious signs of foul play. ■

Nguyen and Le have been missing since Labor Day, when neighbors called police to complain about loud music coming from a boat offshore in the 7700 block of West Mercer Way. Officers found the boat—a red, 20-foot ski-type boat that was still playing loud music. Police also found cell phones and IDs belonging to Nguyen and Le, but they were nowhere to be found. ■

**KEIRO from 1**

over impending changes and frustrated with what he says is a lack of transparency on the part of the Keiro board.

Uncertainty over the future of Nikkei Manor has spurred him to question the fate of the now vacant Keiro nursing home and its land, which is valued at \$12.7 million by King County.

Yoshikawa also questioned the alleged \$750,000 in taxes that Keiro had to pay on the sale of the Washington Medical Clinic, a deal that he says “never should have happened.”

“I asked Brandon why he wasn’t able to structure it so it remained part of Keiro, and he said, ‘We didn’t have time,’” said Yoshikawa. Brandon Nelson is the Senior Director of Strategic Operations at Keiro, according to his LinkedIn profile.

But the major sticking point in community concern about the land is whether or not its sale will be used to help bolster Nikkei Manor, said Yoshikawa, who has received no formal response from the Attorney General as of press time.

Accompanied by Colin Fukano, whose 101-year-old mother lives at Nikkei Manor, Yoshikawa asked Nelson about the future of the building and land as the Sept. 19 Nikkei Manor Family Forum was ending.

“We’re giving it to Transforming Age,” he said Nelson replied.

Questions seeking to confirm each of these points were put to the current Keiro board and CEO Bridgette Takeuchi.

“At this time, Keiro is not providing any comment. We will be sure to let you know when we have any news to share publicly,” said Takeuchi in an email.

Other community members worry that if Transforming Age were to take over the operation or ownership of Nikkei Manor in some way, the unique culture would change.

“I’m worried about a mainstream company coming in and taking over,” said Gordon Shoji, whose father lived at Keiro for over a decade.

“My father was a Kendo man,” he said, referring to

the traditional Japanese art of wielding bamboo swords. “After he had a heart attack and stroke, he couldn’t do Kendo and he wanted to die. But at Keiro, they had Japanese and Asian culture and food, and it kept him alive.”

“I’m not sure a mainstream retirement home would be the same,” he said. He cited Keiro’s long history of community volunteers providing an additional layer of cultural programming and identity.

Shoji had the same concerns about the current residents of Nikkei Manor. And like other members of the community, he had been counting on Keiro and Nikkei Manor as an option for his own retirement.

**Economies of scale**

Yoshikawa and others want to know the justification for pursuing any deal.

“The main question we want to know is, if Keiro was unable to run Nikkei Manor successfully, why does it think Transforming Age would be able to do it better?” he said.

Keiro has declined to publicly comment on the issue.

Still, in the notes to a Nikkei Manor Family Forum on Sept. 19, obtained by the Northwest Asian Weekly, Keiro said it was negotiating with Transforming Age to take over management of Nikkei Manor, at which time it would pay an unspecified “management fee.” It said such a deal might be reached by the end of September.

In the industry of eldercare, a main justification that has sometimes been given for selling or, in some manner, affiliating with a larger entity with multiple facilities has been economy of scale.

This means that firms merge or combine to create a larger firm, which, in theory, creates increased production and efficiency, which in turn decreases the average cost per unit, or service provided.

But one major academic study, “The Economies of Scale for Nursing Home Care,” that appeared in the journal of Medical Care Research in March 2004, showed that economy of scale does not apply to assisted living communities.

“This makes sense because custodial (personal) care is a non-skilled service or care, like helping to bathe, dress, or eat, and the delivery of these services focus on medical workers over technology,” said Jerome A. Dugan, a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Washington (UW), in an email.

“That is to say, there is not strong evidence that the cost of residents receiving care will fall if the number of residents receiving personal care increases. So even a firm like Nikkei Manor, despite the fact they are private pay, would have difficulty cutting costs or expanding their operations to generate economies of scale,” added Dugan.

**Keiro in Southern California**

For many members of the Japanese American community here, the fate of the Japanese American nursing home in Southern California, Keiro (Los Angeles) has loomed like a warning.

The first sale was stopped by then-Attorney General Kamala Harris, according to Traci Toshiyuki Imamura, a former board member of Koreisha, which oversees Keiro. Critics of the second sale say they wished that Harris, who was running for the U.S. Senate at the time, would have stopped the second sale as well since it was mired in contentious legal issues.

Keiro (L.A.) was sold off in 2016 to a for-profit company, Pacifica Companies, LLC, for \$41 million. But ongoing protests, legal action, and a state committee still overshadow the transaction. According to Imamura, the status of over \$82 million in assets is still being questioned.

Moreover, as in the Seattle area, many Japanese Americans were counting on an Asian-focused retirement community.

“Many people in our community were counting on a culturally appropriate community,” said Dick Obayashi, who grew up in Seattle but is active in the Japanese American community in Southern California and has been a donor to Keiro (L.A.).

“It was not just people like me, who are not millionaires but all the new Japanese immigrants — the Shin Isseis — who have been holding lots of protests and marches,” he said. He was referring to the Japanese Americans who had immigrated to the area after World War II.

Protests and a recent lawsuit have also encompassed the handling of funds donated to Keiro (L.A.) by community members over the years, including houses, cars, and volunteer hours.

According to Inamura, after Pacifica took over, the quality of care changed.

“On day one after the sale, when all the employees at the facility became employees of the new operator, all of those employees lost their seniority and they all became employees as if they had been there for only one year,” she said.

“They had the same salary, but benefits were drastically reduced, and a lot of the old time employees started leaving right away,” she added.

Echoing this observation, another academic study seems to be suggestive that larger nursing home chains deliver lower quality of care nationwide.

In this case, a 2011 study tracked the largest for-profit nursing home chains and those owned by private equity companies. The study found that “the 10 largest firms reported lower registered nurses and total nursing staff hours than government facilities,” said Professor Dugan.

“The 10 largest firms also reported 36 percent higher deficiencies (violations of regulations) and 41 percent higher serious deficiencies than government facilities,” he said.

“This study speaks directly to concerns about possible differences in the quality of care delivered in nursing homes that are members of a large network,” he added.

**The future of Nikkei Manor**

In the minutes leading up to the Sept. 19 forum, Keiro said that closing Nikkei Manor was also a possibility.

It was not clear if this could be part of a larger deal with Transforming Age.

On one hand, the minutes noted that “nearly all discussion [with Transforming Age] has been about Nikkei Manor.”

But they also noted a “plan B” in which Nikkei Manor would close.

In a conversation witnessed by another regular visitor to Keiro, Jim Trieste, Yoshikawa said that Nikkei Manor Administrator Lisa Waisath told him that more than half a dozen rooms were being left vacant at Nikkei Manor because of the possibility that the assisted living community might be closing and would only have 60 days to move out residents.

According to Yoshikawa’s first complaint to the Attorney General, Nikkei Manor, according to tax records for 2017, is fully capable of functioning on its own.

“Nikkei Manor is profitable as a separate business, contrary to what Keiro Northwest states. They have very competent on-duty operations staff, but questionable management, e.g. there are 191 people on the waiting list and seven or eight empty rooms. The balance sheet reflects \$1.5 million in receivables, \$11 million in publicly traded securities, \$4 million in endowment funds,” the letter states.

The only filings publicly available are for the year 2017. Keiro has said it publishes its tax returns in October, so 2018 is not yet available. The current Keiro board has repeatedly stressed the importance of keeping negotiations secret for risk of derailing them. ■

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