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And so, when I reached out to JACL National Director Priscilla Ouchida to see if the organization might have an interest in supporting this kind of work, in collaboration with PFLAG, Priscilla was definitely interested. She put me in contact with Bill Tashima, former Seattle JACL president. In my first telephone conversation with Bill, his warm and thoughtful mannerisms put me at ease. As we talked, I could tell that supporting LGBT families in Seattle touched his heart. And then he said something unexpected to me. He said, "I wish I had something like this when I was growing up . . . a place to get support." I then understood. Bill is a gay man.

At our first meeting, Seattle JACL had five representatives from their board: Bill Tashima, Toshiko Hasegawa, Umeko Motoyoshi, Paul Tashima and Cara Peterson. Also present were Bif Brigman, the interim executive director of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington and Dale H. Watanabe, an international student adviser at Seattle University. Rounding out the group was Victor Loo of the Asian Counseling and Referral Services, who graciously hosted the meeting at the ACRS building. Each individual

brought a passion to support API LGBT families with an openness and willingness to share their thoughts, their skills and their time on already full plates of responsibility. Since our

initial meeting, PFLAG Bellevue has agreed to help spearhead this project. Now seems like the right time, with the right people, to get this idea off the ground.

I am not sure where this journey will lead this group and how soon we will be able to bring support to the Seattle area, but what I do know is there is a group of committed individuals who believe that this is a worthy goal.

I walked away from this meeting so inspired by both their eagerness to travel down this unknown road and their compassion to help these families. Seattle, you are very lucky to



Marsha Aizumi (center), the mother of transgender son Aiden, traveled to Seattle on March 7 for an LGBT support group.

have API and LGBT leaders who care so deeply and are dedicated to creating a better world for all.

Marsha Aizumi is an advocate in the LGBT community and the author of the book "Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance."

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JACL joined the AAJC, NQAPIA and OCA National at the marriage equality rally.

Said Ouchida: "The 10,000-plus members of the Japanese American Citizens League are proud to be here to celebrate the right to love. Japanese Americans felt the sting of what it means to be treated differently — 120,000 men, women and children were imprisoned during World War II. That was wrong. There was a time when this nation outlawed the right of a Japanese immigrant to marry an American. That law was wrong.

Today, many states prohibit same-sex couples from marrying. That law is wrong, too."

Ouchida called for a Greater America, "a country where every person has the same rights — no matter your skin color, no matter your gender, no matter sexual orientation."

The Court is expected to make a decision on both cases in June. ■

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topic until this year. Following the hourlong presentation, one student stated, "You are 'living history,' and your first-hand account made what we read in the book come to life."

Minnesota played a unique role when the U.S. Army relocated the MIS Language School, first to Camp Savage and later to Fort Snelling.

Observed Sudo, "Although those living on the West Coast may be familiar with the experiences of the Japanese Americans in WWII, it is gratifying to know that many in the Midwest are learning for the first time about this chapter in history through a popular book."

For more information about the TC JACL, contact Sally Sudo, education chair, at twincitiesjacl@gmail.com.



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