

Board Member Spotlight: Michio Murakishi



Michio joined the JACL Chicago Chapter board in October as the new Membership Chair. He is currently earning his MBA at DePaul University.

Q: What drew you to the JACL, and why did you want to join as the membership chair?

A: I wanted to get more involved in the Japanese American (JA) community, and felt that JACL would be a good fit for me since I have always been interested in civil rights. I decided to get involved with the Membership Committee because I already had some experience working on membership at a couple of professional organizations. But the main draw was the idea that I could help grow the membership base with youth and young professionals—two groups that seem to be underrepresented at this time.

Q: Have you been active in the JA community previously?

A: I have always tried to attend major events in the JA community like “Day of Remembrance.” Over the past few

years, with the encouragement of my grandmother, I have been going to more of these types of events. Attending these events reminded me of how important it is for me to stay connected to the local Japanese American community. Joining and becoming active in JACL has allowed me to achieve and even stronger connection to the local Japanese American community.

Q: How would you characterize the Chicago JA community?

A: I am always pleasantly surprised at the great turnout at events like “Day of Remembrance” and “All Camps Reunion.” I think that this reflects how vibrant the local JA community is, and demonstrates that there is a real desire to keep the bonds of community alive, and that efforts to in-

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crease JACL programming would prove to be very fruitful.

Q: How has being biracial affected your identification with the JA community?

A: I don't look at myself as being biracial. I just see myself as just being my own unique person. That being said, our society views me as being an Asian American more than a biracial individual, just as most Americans look at President Barack Obama as being African American as opposed to biracial.

Given demographics trends, biracial members probably represent one of the fastest growing segments of the JA community. Recruiting and welcoming these potential members to JACL is therefore extremely important to the organization's growth.

Q: What are some issues you see yourself tackling as the membership chair and how do you see yourself dealing with them?

A: Membership retention is obviously a very big issue given the advanced age of a big portion of the membership base. Because of this, I think that the recruitment of youth and young professionals is more important than ever. To attract youth and young professionals, we need to aggressively target this group. This can be accomplished through increased programming such as Project: Community!, and a greater web presence, including the use of social and professional networking platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Q: How can a Chicago chapter member help with your efforts as Membership chair?

A: The best way for a chapter member to help with membership efforts is to become involved with the Membership Committee. The committee currently consists of two members—me and my brother. The more people that we have involved in the membership committee, the more we can accomplish. Any chapter member can get involved with the membership committee, even if it is only for a few hours a month.

I think that is also extremely important for current members make an effort to keep their family and friends active in the organization and current with their membership status. I believe that this type of grassroots effort can prove to be very effective in terms of both member retention and new member recruitment.