



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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PRESS RELEASE

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ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES SCHOLARS PASS AWAY

San Francisco, CA --The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization in the nation, joins with others in mourning the loss of two scholars who were instrumental in developing Asian American Studies programs, Ronald Takaki and Him Mark Lai. They were pioneers in paving the way for Asian Pacific American inclusion and recognition in college curriculums.

Professor Takaki, born in Hawaii in 1939, was an accomplished scholar, author, academician and advocate. His teachings, articles, and books were invaluable in documenting the Asian Pacific American experience in the United States and in teaching of the Asian American immigrant history and contributions to American society. Professor Takaki possessed a gentleman's demeanor but was not one to be under-estimated. He was a skilled warrior who spoke out eloquently and tirelessly for affirmative action. He did not feel that institutions of higher learning should be available only to the few, but rather should be accessible to all. He was an expert on race relations.

Him Mark Lai was born in 1925 in San Francisco's Chinatown. He co-taught the first college course offered on Chinese American History at San Francisco State University in 1969. He has written ten books on Chinese American life. In 1991, Him Mark Lai with Albert Cheng created the In Search of Roots program to teach Chinese American youth how to research their family history through National Archives and Records Administration documents. The Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley in 2003 announced the "Him Mark Lai Collection," which contains Lai's private research material which he donated to the library.

S. Floyd Mori, National Executive Director of the JACL, stated: "Ronald Takaki and Him Mark Lai did much for the Asian American community with their efforts to have the Asian American stories told in colleges throughout the nation. They leave a wonderful legacy of knowledge. Their teachings and leadership will live on through the lives of the student advocates whom they taught and mentored as they carry forth the work and vision of an inclusive society."

National JACL President Larry Oda, commented: "These two scholars, Ronald Takaki and Him Mark Lai, are heroes in our community as they have blazed the way for the study of Asian American history in universities throughout the country. We are truly indebted to them."

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The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization. Established in 1929, the JACL works to ensure the civil liberties of Japanese Americans and others. For more information on the JACL or to join, please visit the website at www.jacl.org.