In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)

Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
1830 Sutter. One address in the big city. Nihonmachi Little Friends is there today - a fun, caring place for kids. Affordable and multicultural. 1830 is a proud building, maybe a bit old. The kind of place that stands out if you pause and notice. Older than the buildings nearby, distinctly Japanese. You might not be surprised to find out it was designed by a famous architect. That it's listed in the National Register of Historic Places.	Modern images: 1830 Sutter - today. Hold Cathy Inamasu, smiling, doing something Kids at play. Multi-cultural. Kids playing taiko Julia Morgan, architect
Look closer. A place like this has roots. Almost like a human being, the place you see today is an accumulation of effort, luck, conflict and intention. If not for the dedication of a few amazing people, it wouldn't even be here. This building survived the turbulence of immigration, war, racial tension and the brutality of big city politics. It's like a lens to understand the present through the past. Once you know what it's been through, you realize this place is rare, like a gem in the riverbed of time. Look back…	*Dancers blend into photos disrupt and entangled with each other* Historic images: 1830 Sutter, historic photo YWCA - old photo Japanese internment camp Martin Luther King Bayard Rustin Lens: see the building, zoom in on the plaque Japantown redevelopment Japanese kids today

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
…to a child in another time. Yonako Tsuda. Today we remember her as Yonako Tsuda Abiko, or just Yona, to her friends. Like the building itself, her life gets more and more interesting the closer you look. In a time when women - especially Japanese women - struggled to find their voice and their standing in society, Yona blazed a trail for women and built bridges across cultures. Her life connects to us across generations. Yona's time was not like ours.	Yona as a child. (is there a picture? I see one of Umeko) Adult Yona Japanese women in traditional roles
The mid-1800s. The Edo Era had lasted over 250 years. Japan was closed and feudal, reluctant to engage with the West. In 1853, Admiral Perry arrived in cannon boats, opening trade with the West, like it or not. Thus began a relationship between Japan and America that would be profitable and enduring, yet also tense and filled with discomfort. 1865 brought the end of the American Civil War. Slavery was abolished, a welcome signpost in the road of America's troubled relationship with race. That same year, a girl was born in Japan. Umeko Tsuda, Yona's sister, older by 16 years. Despite the gap, the sisters would stay close, supporting each other, their lives intertwined by their accomplishments and the historic upheavals of their time. Japan went through its own upheaval. The Edo Era came to an abrupt and violent end in 1868. The Meiji Era began, starting Japan's transition from a feudal society to modernization and industrialization. For the first time, women could officially be educated. The intent was to create "good wives, good	*Performance - Kojo no tsuki* Edo Era Culture Religion / Missionaries? Samurai Admiral Perry / Boat with cannons Lincoln Umeko Women in Japan in school Women in politics in Japan? Signs for women's suffrage

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
mothers"… but from this foothold, women would find a path to empowerment.	
Yona and Umeko's father, Tsuda Sen, descended from samurai, foresaw how important the relationship between Japan and America would become and moved quickly to position himself. He learned English and became a translator. He prepared his family and his children for the changes to come. Japan lowered barriers to emigration and Japanese came to America in large numbers, mainly California, helping to build the new American west. In 1871, Yona's sister Umeko came to the United States. She was the first ever female exchange student from Japan. She was six years old.	*Transition to dancers miming umi no megami drumming, new kind of movement* Japanese laborers in the US. Miners, railroad, farms. Tsuda Family portrait Exchange program pictures of Umeko and the contingent
	Taiko - Miyake - immigration
Yona was born in 1880, into a world changing at incredible speed. At 18, Umeko returned to Japan after 12 years in the US and met her two-year-old sister for the first time. Umeko had almost forgotten English, and was unhappily reminded of the cultural inferiority of women in her native home. When she was ten years old, Yona was sent away from her family to be raised by relatives. We don't know why. As forward-thinking as her father was, he was a product of his time. Girls were less important back then. Tradition demanded a woman walk three steps behind a man. Imagine the confusion of a young girl, displaced from her home, trying to understand why. What was her place in the world? Her father was a strategic man. Likely there was some advantage in the arrangement. Yona watched as Umeko travelled to America again. Umeko attended school at Bryn Mawr in Pennsylvania, a liberal arts college with Quaker roots, and made strong connections with members of	Yona Japan in the 1880s Young girls Traditional Japanese girl walking behind a man

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
the Quaker community. On her return, Umeko founded Joshi Eigaku Juku, a liberal arts school for women, with financial support from the Quakers. Yona attended the school and learned English, and soon became a teacher as well.	Set the stage for Genny's poem
	Genny Lim poem
In the States, tensions rose as Americans responded poorly to their new neighbors. In San Francisco, Japanese were excluded from public schools, pushing them into a racially separate "Oriental School" along with Chinese and Koreans. The quote-unquote Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, intended to reduce tensions between the US and Japan, restricted new immigration and led to the era of Picture Brides. Lonely Japanese men in the US married women they had only seen in pictures.	Asian racism in 1900 US Japanese children excluded from US schools Picture brides
Yona joined Umeko on a world tour from 1907 to 1908. Yona was 26, ready to embrace her future.	Yona as a young woman
With their education, command of English, and prominent connections, Yona and Umeko embodied the promise of a new kind of Japanese woman - highly educated, socially prominent, speaking aloud with their own voices. Yona toured the United States with Umeko, speaking and creating cultural connections through high society. They even met with President Theodore Roosevelt. During their stay in San Francisco, Yonako made the acquaintance of Kyutaro Abiko, publisher of the Nichibei Times. Kyutaro was also an entrepreneur, helping Japanese come to work in the US, acquiring farmland for resale, and encouraging Japanese to settle permanently in the US. Kyutaro was enchanted. In 1909, Kyutaro went to Japan. Yona had returned to Tsuda University and was again teaching English. In April 1909 they were married, and in 1910 they returned to San Francisco and Yona's new home.	*Francis - Jazz version of Moon Over the Ruined Castle* Yona Umeko Pres. Theodore Roosevelt Kyutaro Nichibei Shinbun / Times

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
Kyutaro treated Yona as an equal, refreshing and unusual in the day.	Picture of them together
Through her travel and experiences, Yona saw a need. Japanese women were arriving in the US through the 1910s in increasing numbers, many as Picture Brides. The new arrivals were called the **Issei Women**, the Japanese word for “first generation”. Yona saw the Issei Women struggling with the huge differences between Japan and the US. They needed a place - a place of their own, where they could learn the language and customs and skills of their new home.	Japanese in early 1900 US city life. More discrimination. Strangers in a strange land Issei Women
Yona had the skills and social standing to do something about it. She rose to her moment. In 1912, Yona and her friends established the Joshi Seinen Kai, a boarding house for recently-arrived Japanese women. The location is lost in time, but it wasn’t at 1830 Sutter. To help the Issei Women learn American culture, they offered classes in English language and American-style sewing and cooking. Joshi Seinen Kai soon became the independent Japanese YWCA, affiliated but separate due to racial limitations in the main YWCA. The main YWCA was led by white women from high society, and financial decisions were made by men. Fortunately, Yona knew this world well enough to navigate it.	Issei Women YWCA - old sign
The Japanese YWCA grew and the original location became too small. They needed more space to accommodate more people and more activities. In March 1921, Yona and her Issei Women friends raised funds, and money was contributed through the Japantown community through the Community Chest system. Yona acquired a building at 1830 Sutter Street. Acquired is a tricky word here, because Yona wasn’t allowed to own the building.	*Francis - 20’s jazz* Picture at 1830 over fireplace showing girls holding signs to raise funds

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
The California Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land in California. The law was implicitly aimed at the Japanese, who had been increasing their ownership of farmland. Because Yona was unable to own land, she worked with the YWCA. They arranged for the land to be held by the YWCA, *in trust* for the Japanese community, a tactic also used by her husband, Kyutaro. As it turned out later, it's a good thing Yona took notes.	Text of the law "In Trust" Show the written notes
As time passed, the building acquired a second purpose. Not only was it a haven for the Issei Women, it became a place for Nisei women. The Nisei were second generation Japanese, but they were the first generation born and raised in America. As a byproduct of assimilation and their exposure to anti-Asian sentiment in the US, Nisei were losing their cultural identity. To reinvigorate the connection to Japanese traditions, classes were held at 1830 Sutter in language, cooking, flower arrangement, and more. The US Immigration Act of 1924 banned immigration of Japanese on the grounds of their being "ineligible to be naturalized." The press wrote inflammatory articles propagating disinformation about Japanese migrants in the Western United States. In response to widespread discrimination and the anti-Japanese climate, Yona and Kyutaro started the Nisei Kengakudan tours, sponsored by the Nichibei Times, sending Nisei to visit Japan to learn and experience the culture of their ancestors. In a 1925 speech about the tour, Yona said: "We are not mere sightseers; we have come with the serious purpose of studying the country of our ancestors. Probably for the first time a group of Japanese students, American born of Japanese descent, is visiting Japan for the express purpose of building themselves into a bridge between the two countries."	*Hachijo Dance* Nisei Women Culture classes at 1830 Nisei Kengakudan tour US contrasting with Japan

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
Despite being in a place that at times could feel pretty unwelcoming, Japantown grew and thrived, its 30 to 40 square blocks home to over 5,000 Japanese residents and almost 350 Japanese-owned businesses.	Old Japantown
	Hachijo - taiko Cultural exchange Teaching classes
Again, the need outgrew the building. Yona raised more funds, and again, the Community Chest system came through. 1830 Sutter was rebuilt in 1932. Through her connections, Yona got someone special to design the new structure - master architect Julia Morgan, who donated her services. Morgan was a successful woman in a profession dominated by men. The first woman architect licensed in California, she designed over 700 buildings and was the architect of Hearst Castle. Morgan's design was very much Japanese. A solid, proud building, with heavy, dark beams, decorative inserts, a moon window, and a Noh-like theater stage, the only one on the West Coast. A special alcove adjoining the stage, called a tokonoma, provided an artistic space that could be used for tea ceremonies. Decorative wooden transom panels, called ranma, were designed by the artist Chiura Obata. It is a beautiful place, even more so when you know what to look for. Imagine the joy of the Issei as they experienced the new building. Bigger, filled with welcoming faces, in a place that reminded them of home.	Old picture of 1830 Julia Morgan Many buildings she designed were built. Hearst Castle Shots of the building today - the moon window, tokonoma, ranma panels, Noh stage
Yona found her place in history. She built cultural bridges and strengthened a community. In a time of need, she became a leader. She rose to her moment, changing the face of a city and blazing a trail for women.	Yona

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
Yona's sister, Umeko, became even more prominent. After her travels, Umeko wanted more from women's education than "good wife, good mother". Her school became Tsuda University, one of the most respected schools for higher education for women. Umeko was honored in 2024 with her picture on the 5,000 Yen note. Yona traveled the US and raised funds for Umeko's dream school. She raised even more to rebuild after the school was destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. Yona continued to work with Kyutaro at the Nichibei Times. When Kyutaro passed away in 1936, Yona took over as publisher, guiding the paper to continued success, even rising from the ashes after the Nichibei Building burned down. Yona and Umeko. They shaped their times, making the most of their moment at a turning point for women and Japanese.	Tsuda University through the years Umeko on 5000 yen Yona's granddaughter? Nichibei times *Music* High point for Yona
The good times wouldn't last. Japan and America were on a collision course. Soon the world was engulfed in a second world war, with the two countries on opposite sides.	Ships with Japanese and US flags Soldiers
After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the United States decided to incarcerate much of its Japanese population, including US citizens, mainly on the West Coast, through Executive Order 9066. The government created internment camps and Yona was taken, along with so many others. Lives disrupted and forever changed. As they were being taken away, Japanese families were given enough time to gather two suitcases of belongings per person. A temporary camp was set up on a converted horse racing track in San Bruno, south of San Francisco. 8,000 Japanese were detained and processed here between April and October 1942, penned in hastily converted horse stables behind barbed wire, before being sent to other more permanent camps. Perhaps you know the name.	World War. American forces Japanese forces Lines Losing property and businesses Two suitcases Tanforan Racetrack - aka Tanforan Assembly Center.

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
Tanforan Racetrack - which then became Tanforan Assembly Center. It looks different today. About 120,000 Japanese were put in the internment camps, and roughly two-thirds of them were US citizens. Yona was taken to Tanforan in 1942. She was sick with cancer.	Stables converted to barracks Barbed wire Tanforan Racetrack Internment camp fade to Tanforan mall The plaque at Tanforan Japanese in the camp
The Quakers, a denomination of Protestant Christians, learned of Yona's illness and decided to help. They got her out of Tanforan and moved her to Philadelphia for treatment. She never saw the return of peace after the war. Yonako Tsuda Abiko died of cancer on March 4, 1944.	Quakers Yona
	Song Internment War Sickness
As the Japanese were swept into internment, their belongings, houses and businesses were sold at great loss or left in the hands of others. Who knew when they would return? *If* they would return? And what of 1830 Sutter? It stood silent and empty, filled only with the shadows and echoes of the ones who were taken away.	Japanese in lines, stores closing, possessions sold. 1830 Sutter - old pic Japantown, empty, 1942.
The YWCA found a new tenant. The American Friends Service Committee. A Quaker organization	American Friends Service

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
and an activist organization. The Quakers were the same group that helped Yona get out of the internment camp. Now known as the Friends Center, 1830 Sutter soon hummed with the energy of people at the forefront of the fight for racial equality and gay rights.	Committee in 1830? Their causes and initiatives
With the forced departure of so many Japanese, a new group found room to grow in what had been America's largest Japantown. Before the war, the African American community of San Francisco was less than 5,000. With the onset of World War II, African Americans migrated to San Francisco to work in shipyards and other industries to support the war effort. They moved where the housing was - the vacant spaces where the Japanese had lived, in Japantown and the Western Addition.	Empty houses Black workers in the war effort. Shipyards
Bayard Rustin came to San Francisco in 1942. Rustin led a fascinating life. He trained as an activist with the American Friends Service Committee and was strongly influenced by the pacifist beliefs of the Quakers. He was raised by his grandmother, who was a Quaker. Rustin also studied the techniques of nonviolent resistance Mahatma Gandhi used to bring an end to the British rule of India. Bayard Rustin. A black man. A gay man. A man who dedicated his life to making good trouble. He would be found at the heart of the biggest social movements and civil confrontations of his times.	Rustin Quakers American Friends Service Committee Gandhi
Rustin fought for equal rights for the downtrodden and the underdog. His fight against racial segregation led him to sympathize with the plight of the interned Japanese. He came to San Francisco to defend the property rights of the Japanese and he visited the Manzanar Internment Camp, just outside Death Valley. While little more is known about Rustin's effort and what came of it, his involvement would have been most welcome.	Manzanar

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
The same year, 1942, Rustin was involved in the founding of the Congress of Racial Equality, also known as CORE. Its stated mission was “to bring about equality for all people regardless of race, creed, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or ethnic background.” While in San Francisco, Rustin met with black shipyard workers who were angry about job discrimination. Many African Americans came to the West Coast thinking they would face less discrimination than in the South and the Northeast, but they were wrong. Rustin persuaded the shipyard workers to use nonviolent techniques to protest their working conditions and lack of opportunity. Like Yona Abiko, in the face of injustice and great need, Rustin was compelled to act. Far from being defeated, they rose up and acted with purpose, taking inspiration from the rightness of the cause and the support of their communities.	CORE Images of founders and leaders
	Freedom song/1973 old spiritual “Scandalize My Name” sung by Bayard Rustin
Rustin’s activism was put on pause. Along with other pacifists and conscientious objectors from CORE and the civil rights movement, Rustin was jailed from 1944 to 1946 for violating the Selective Service Act. Would Rustin have done more to help the Japanese if he hadn’t been incarcerated, like the Japanese themselves? Perhaps. There was common cause between Rustin and the descendants of Yona Abiko, seeking justice and a fair shake in a country that constantly struggled to live up to the high principles upon which it was founded.	Rustin Jail
With Japan taking heavy losses in the war, Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in December of 1944. The camps were to be closed by the end of 1945.	
The war ended in September, 1945. Even as America celebrated, San Francisco wasted no time	War over

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
laying the groundwork for more social upheaval. The economy was running hot after the war. Babies were booming and housing was running short. The California Community Redevelopment Act was passed in 1945, soon followed by the Federal Housing Act of 1949 which authorized San Francisco to form redevelopment agencies. The original goal was to create affordable housing for GIs returning from World War II, and the Act allowed cities to use eminent domain to evict residents and take over properties. They called it Urban Renewal. A grand reimagination of housing and public space in America's big cities replacing what they called the slums - blighted, high-crime, unsalvageable. It had every appearance of a worthy undertaking. It would be worse than a failure. Urban Renewal in San Francisco was a debacle - a cautionary tale of racism, avarice and the misuse of power. In 1945, the lessons were yet to be learned.	California Community Redevelopment Act newspaper article Slums Police Health records Picture of plans
Internment was officially no more, but even after the war ended, many Japanese stayed in the camps. Having lost everything, what was there to return to? It wasn't just lack of housing. Discrimination prevented many from returning to good jobs or re-opening businesses. They found menial jobs working for others - gardening, laundry. Many who returned to San Francisco found temporary housing in community centers, schools and churches, or crammed into overcrowded Victorians. The camps weren't all officially closed until 1946.	Japanese still in the camps Closed businesses Menial jobs
The Japanese found themselves in an uneasy coexistence with the African Americans who now	Japanese

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
occupied much of Japantown and the Western Addition. Some in the African American community welcomed the returning Japanese. Several black churches opened their doors to Japanese. There were many acts of kindness that created bonds and lasting goodwill.	Black churches
	Genny Lim poem, connecting the communities *Dance - Returning Japanese interacting with African American community*
After the war ended, 1830 continued to be a gathering place for African Americans and, to a much lesser extent, Japanese. Due to the YWCA's new rules of integration, no site could be used for a single racial group. Smaller in number and tentative to ask for much, Japanese women were welcomed at the Buchanan YMCA, which became for a time the country's only combined YMCA and YWCA. The YWCA, once an ardent partner of the Japanese community, now kept its distance.	Buchanan Y
1950 Japantown was a shadow of its former self. Fewer than 150 Japanese owned businesses. Less than half the Japanese population had returned. Meanwhile the African American population in San Francisco boomed. Japantown and the Western Addition became a vibrant center of culture, the "Harlem of the West", filled with music and nightlife.	Black culture in Japantown. Bop City night club, Billie Holiday and John Coltrane
	Musical interlude / dance
It wasn't until 1952 that the California Alien Land Laws were struck down as a violation of the equal protection of the 14th Amendment. The laws were found to be discriminatory against Asians, and	

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
specifically the Japanese.	
1830 Sutter continued to be a center of civic activism. In 1954, it hosted the first annual convention of the Mattachine Society, a group that aimed to create community for isolated homosexuals and fight the criminalization of gayness. Bayard Rustin was openly gay, but he wasn't affiliated with the Mattachine Society. He had served 60 days in jail in Pasadena for what they called "sexual perversion." His homosexuality was weaponized against him and his work in the civil rights movement. It wasn't until the 1980s that Rustin became more engaged with LGBTQ rights. Even a man as motivated as Rustin had to choose his battles.	Mattachine Society Gays arrested at a bar raid? Rustin Picture of his arrest record? Speech in 1980s
Urban Renewal raised its ugly head in earnest in the 50s and 60s. Picture the Western Addition. The Fillmore. Bustling, diverse and integrated, filled with character and nightlife. The 6 story, 125 room Booker T Washington hotel, with live music and standing room-only crowds. One night a sold-out performance, the next day, the wrecking ball. The location was planned as a relocation center for people whose homes were being destroyed. Black residents were mainly tenants, not owners. This was largely due to racism. Starting in the 1920s, in a practice called Redlining, banks were guided by federal housing agencies not to write loans in certain neighborhoods with a "threat of infiltration of foreign-born, negro or lower grade population". Here's the Fillmore, outlined in red. Loans - denied. Ability to own property and create generational wealth - denied. It's hard to grasp the scale of destruction. Over 10,000 residents were forcibly displaced. Vibrant neighborhoods filled with Victorians - the so-called slums - were entirely demolished.	*Modern dance* Legislation Pre-urban renewal Fillmore and Western Addition. Booker T Washington hotel Wreckage: Find the photos taken of the wrecking ball on bldgs. In Western addition Redlining. The Fillmore Original plans for urban renewal. Destroyed buildings

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
It would have been one thing if any good had come of Urban Renewal, if any grand visions had risen from the wreckage. But they didn't. Instead of the Booker T Washington hotel, a huge vacant lot sat for 17 long years, a testament to the shame of a city. In 1983, instead of a planned community, it became a Safeway. Not grand but still important, now even the Safeway is closing, threatening to leave a food desert in the Western Addition. The hammer of Urban Renewal fell on the poor and on disenfranchised minorities, an exercise of power against the powerless and empty promises to those who were displaced. African Americans and Japanese. Filipinos, Koreans, Hispanics and Chinese. Because the destruction in the Western Addition and the Fillmore was so vast and so cruel, fierce opposition rose against the political machinery of Urban Renewal, kicking out its leaders before they had a chance to move against the next communities on their list. Chinatown and the Mission were spared.	Vibrant community replaced by empty lots Booker T Washington hotel Empty lot Safeway Diverse people Protestors? Chinatown Mission / Hispanics
Even as San Francisco indulged its worst instincts of economic and racial injustice, Bayard Rustin continued his fight for civil rights. He found his biggest success as the organizer of the March on Washington in August, 1963. With the support of Martin Luther King and A. Phillip Randolph, Rustin delivered an event that changed America. A quarter of a million people marched in DC, gathering at the Lincoln Memorial. Martin Luther King delivered his historic speech, "I have a dream". The march's success helped America's leaders find the resolve to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.	Rustin organizing A. Phillip Randolph, head of the march Huge crowds King delivering the speech Civil Rights Act Voting Rights Act
	Gospel Song

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
Bayard Rustin was unafraid. He was authentically himself even as he navigated treacherous politics and faced down vicious resistance, both societal and physical. He saw a need and became the person who could address it. Like Yona Abiko, Rustin drew his energy from a community in the cause of justice. They made ambitious goals and gathered people together with purpose. Then they did the work. Driven by his commitment to equality and a motor that just wouldn't quit, he reached across cultures and changed a country.	Rustin
The American Friends Service Committee left 1830 Sutter in 1960. The YWCA stepped back from programming events at 1830. Instead, they sought renters whose goals were aligned with the YWCA's values. It sounds similar enough, but it continued the YWCA's separation from the community. They became like a landlord - more corporation, less heart. It offers some window of understanding how the YWCA would soon land in bitter conflict with the Japanese community. Through the 70s, the building was also home to Christ United Presbyterian Church, one of the member churches of Soko Bukai. Soko Bukai roughly translates to San Francisco Church Organizations. They would later be instrumental in the lawsuit against the YWCA that would decide the future of 1830 Sutter.	*Quaker song jazz variation reprise*
Redevelopment continued to ravage Japantown. The city kept up its attacks, using eminent domain to force shops to close and turn over lots to developers through the 60s and 70s. Japantown had finally recovered after the war, growing back to 25 square blocks. But by 1973, only 6 blocks remained. The walls were closing in. In 1973, a new group formed. The Committee Against Nihonmachi Evictions, also known as CANE.	

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
CANE would present a new, stronger form of resistance to redevelopment.	
Against the backdrop of the city's project to tear down Japanese culture, a new place for child care was born. Nihonmachi Little Friends started in 1975, located in a Buddhist temple. NLF was founded by a group of parents and community activists committed to offering bilingual, multicultural childcare for young children in San Francisco. The first preschool was started with 15 children and staffed with 3 paid teachers, Executive Director Sandy Sugie, Isako Kajita and Jay Wang, plus a few volunteers.	Picture of the original NLF group with Cathy and Jay, circled
One of the first volunteers at NLF was an idealistic young woman, Cathy Inamasu. Cathy's parents met during the war in the Rohwer Japanese internment camp in Arkansas. Curiously, Cathy was the second youngest of four girls, and Yona Abiko was the youngest of five girls. Cathy grew up in Stockton and moved to San Francisco for school. She was studying psychology with an emphasis on children and eager to put her learning into practice. Nihonmachi Little Friends was exactly what she was looking for. The NLF community was involved in the battle against redevelopment, and Cathy soon joined CANE, too.	Cathy
Confronting the city, CANE announced in 1977 that residents of Japantown would resist any more evictions. 2,000 Japanese had been displaced. There wasn't enough affordable housing for people who lost their homes. The Japanese community made their stand. Following in the footsteps of Bayard Rustin, CANE used the tactics of nonviolent resistance. They organized sit-ins and street protests. They chained themselves to buildings where eviction notices had been served. They filed lawsuits. They jammed a stick in the gears of redevelopment and made it	CANE Japanese moving out Resistance, eviction notices

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
Narration	**Projected image / Performance**
clear to the predatory developers: you're in for a fight. We will not give up. We will not give in.	
	Genny Lim poem *Dance - fighting redevelopment*
In 1977, NLF rented a location on Bush Street from Kinmon Gakuen, a big open space that had once been a Japanese movie theater. Staff and parents cleaned and sanded the floors, getting the place ready for children. City funding for child care flowed and ebbed. Giving the kids an early exposure to activism, NLF staff took them to City Hall to protest funding cuts for child care. Jay and Cathy married in 1979. When Sandy Sugie left NLF in 1980, Jay became the Executive Director. In 1985, thanks to local and private grants and its fundraising events, NLF was ready to grow. They expanded to a second site, and happily moved in at 1830 Sutter, renting from the YWCA. Two years later, Jay left NLF to work for the San Francisco Unified School District. Recognizing her years of work and dedication, Cathy was appointed executive director of NLF. No one, not even Cathy herself, could have predicted this was the start of a 36 year run, as Cathy helped build NLF into a neighborhood institution. Cathy had been splitting the work with Jay. With her new role, she acquired organizational survival skills - looking outward, collaborating with other child cares, getting resources from the city and applying for grants. When you look at childcare, you might focus on the teachers, the space, the food, the play area. But behind the scenes you'll find a leader with a dizzying array of interpersonal skills and financial savvy, and hopefully a board of directors that supports and helps them along.	Bush Site Any pics from the cleanup? **Photos of protest with the kids and/or with Cathy** Picture of Jay Marriage Picture of the 1st day at 1830 Cathy as Executive Director

In Their Footsteps: The Legacy of Issei Women and the Japanese YWCA (Dec, 2025)	
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By the mid 80's, CANE had fought redevelopment in Japantown almost to a standstill. It seemed like the occupants of 1830 Sutter would be able to focus on the mission of serving kids and the community. But the story doesn't go like that. The San Francisco YWCA was running into money problems. In 1996, they announced the sale of 1830 Sutter. In October they announced their intention to get NLF to leave in November, right before the holidays. NLF did not leave. Ramping up the pressure, in December the YWCA moved its administrative function into the building. The situation was tense. How could this be? Hadn't Yona Abiko and her friends bought the building in the 1920s? Yes, but over time the memory had faded. On paper, the YWCA owned the building. They were in control. The YWCA's insensitive actions inflamed the passion of the community and united Japantown against them. Cathy, along with staff and parents, led the students outside, teaching them the ways of nonviolent protest. They held up signs and marched as Melody Takata's children's taiko group played the drums. The kids at NLF let the YWCA know they weren't giving up without a fight.	Kids at NLF, life goes on *Music - hard times* YWCA sale notice Face off in hallway Picture of kids outside 1830 holding signs
Initially, the Kimochi senior home thought about buying 1830 Sutter. This was incredibly good fortune. As word of the idea spread, elders living at Kimochi remembered fundraising, the Community Chest and how the Japanese community had come together to acquire the building. Kimochi assigned an intern to research the history, and evidence began to surface.	Kimochi home Someone doing research

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The YWCA had *not* bought the building themselves, and it wasn't right that they should sell it. 1830 Sutter belonged to the Japanese community. Soko Bukai, along with activists in the Japanese community, filed a lawsuit against the YWCA to stop the sale. Reverend Gary Barbaree of Soko Bukai came up with a novel idea to establish their standing to take part. In the 1920s, Soko Bukai had raised money to send women to Kyoto to raise money for a San Francisco YWCA location on Gough. Lawyer Bob Rusky formed the legal argument. It was a Hail Mary… and it worked. Despite protests from the YWCA, the suit went ahead. The YWCA fought the lawsuit tooth and nail and refused to meet with Soko Bukai. They denied that 1830 Sutter had been held in trust for the Japanese community. They attacked the law firms and the individual lawyers. They refused mediation. They played the hardest of hardball. Months became years. The fight went on.	Soko Bukai Three umbrellas Perhaps photo of serving the papers to YWCA with Erika Tamura
On NLF's 25th anniversary in 2000, Cathy and the board launched the Capital Campaign. Karen Kai and Bob Rusky provided support. With the lawsuit hanging over them, the Capital Campaign aimed to raise money for repairs and renovation at 1830 Sutter, or in the worst case, as a downpayment for another location. But NLF needed to be in Japantown and no other location was affordable. If NLF was going to survive, it would be in 1830 Sutter.	Capital Campaign logo
The lawsuit dragged on for six years. Six years of uncertainty about the future of 1830 Sutter - the legacy of Yona Abiko, the African American community, the fight for gay rights and civil rights. Then, a breakthrough. Yona's diary from 1920 was rediscovered. She had taken notes from a meeting between herself and a prominent local lawyer known for helping immigrants work around the Alien Land Laws.	Lawsuit headlines fading one into the next Yona's diary.

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Yona's diary and minutes of YWCA board meetings confirmed the building was purchased by, and "held in trust" on behalf of, the Japanese community. It looked like Soko Bukai was going to win the case.	Notes from YWCA meeting "Held in trust" from the notes
Suddenly, it was over. The two sides agreed to a settlement in 2002 at the last moment, the day before the trial was to begin. A face-saving agreement was made. NLF would pay the YWCA, recognizing their years of investment and maintenance of the property. From there, it was a negotiation. Nihonmachi Little Friends bought the building from the SF YWCA for much less than market value, and the adjacent lot was included thanks to the forward thinking of Bob Rusky. The money came from the Capital Campaign, a bank loan, and city funds arranged by mayor Willie Brown. It restored some faith, seeing the city support its Japanese community. Thanks to the work of Soko Bukai, NLF, the pro bono work of Karen Kai, Donald Tamaki, Bob Rusky, Ben Reilly and Tracie Brown, Lloyd Wake (wahkay) and the effort of so many others, 1830 Sutter was preserved for the community. Japantown celebrated.	Settlement notice! 1830 and adjacent lot Real estate Title doc of 1830 Karen, Donald, Bob, Gary, Tracie, Lloyd
What happened to the YWCA? Once upon a time, they were the good guys. How did they become these hard-hearted landlords, so disconnected from the community? They lost their way. Their culture drifted and changed. They couldn't rise above their financial problems to find a just and collaborative solution. It is up to the YWCA to decide what lessons to take from their disheartening fight to evict child care providers from the heart of a community. One can only hope they use this history to become better people and a better organization.	
Nihonmachi Little Friends became the new, proud owner of 1830 Sutter. Immediately, the boiler failed. Ah, the joys of real estate.	An old boiler.

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Maintaining a building built in 1932 isn't cheap. Time is unkind. Building codes change. And in addition to social upheaval, there is real upheaval in San Francisco, the danger of the moving earth itself. The Capital Campaign raised $2.2 million for mortgage, renovations, and seismic and accessibility upgrades. The building will last for generations. The work was completed in 2010, and many people took a well-deserved rest.	Earthquake damaged building - not 1830 Fundraising thermometer Construction Celebration photo!
The success of the Capital Campaign assured the future of 1830 Sutter, but NLF's worries weren't over. The Bush site was an ongoing concern, with uncertainty about the space and the intentions of the landlord. Cathy and the board needed one more push to control their own destiny. They needed another building. And they knew exactly where it would go - the lot next to 1830 Sutter, smartly included in the settlement with the YWCA. They would make a new building from the ground up. Cathy and the board introduced the Plant A Seed campaign in 2012 with a goal to raise $2.8 million dollars. The final price tag was even more. And then it was done. In May of 2017, over a single weekend, NLF staff and a crew of parents moved everything from the Bush Site and the following Monday, the kids moved in. 1830 Sutter now permanently houses NLF preschool programs and its administration. The work was done… at least for today.	Bush Site The playground, overlaid with blueprints for the new building Plant a Seed. The fundraising wall, the plaques Ribbon cutting of new building The roof playground The Japanese garden.
Cathy retired from NLF in 2023. She went from unpaid volunteer to executive director. She took part in battles against redevelopment and the YWCA, and won. She helped raise over $5 million dollars, buying a building and constructing another, securing a future of childcare for this generation and the next. The work of a lifetime. Cathy leaves NLF in the good hands of Dawn Mokuau, a long-time educator and NLF board member.	Cathy

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She stays close to NLF, providing guidance and the voice of experience. Like Yona Abiko, Cathy had a mission and the bravery to go in front of people and ask for what she wanted. She rose to her moment. She built bridges across cultures. Like Bayard Rustin, she confronted injustice, motivated by a commitment to equality. She walked the walk and fought for what's right. Cathy didn't do it alone - no one does. But she acquired the skills and when the time arrived, she was ready. Each person has within them the power and the spirit to do great things, supported on the shoulders of their community.	Yona Rustin Cathy with the board
	Taiko - Bon Daiko
1830 Sutter rode the waves of turbulent times. Not just a building but a living artifact, a journey in time through which we can see both the troubled past and the promise of the future. Thanks to the work of a few determined people, supported by so many more, against the odds it is still here, filled with laughter, hope, and the voices of children.	1830 Sutter