

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

**Kenji Taguma – President of the Nichi Bei Foundation and
Editor-in-Chief of the *Nichi Bei Weekly***



“Although I probably stumbled into Wayne Maeda's Asian American Studies class by accident, it served as an epiphany that led to a lifelong commitment to Japanese American history, Asian American empowerment, social justice and community service. I was transformed from a painfully shy student to what I was told by the Student Services Department as the most active student on campus, as I went on to organize several forums and film series related to Asian American and Ethnic Studies, a couple of Asian Pacific Heritage Weeks and published my own Asian American newspaper while on campus. My sudden awakening through Asian American Studies at CSUS laid the groundwork for my past two and-a-half decades of community

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

organizing, including groundbreaking community educational programs and launching the first nonprofit ethnic community newspaper of its kind in the country. I was proud to have received the Distinguished Alumni Honors Award, a mere three years after graduating from CSUS.”



Award-winning journalist Kenji G. Taguma, a native of Sacramento, CA, is the founding president and board chair of the Nichi Bei Foundation.

As the *Nichi Bei Times* was closing in the summer of 2009, he led the movement to create the Nichi Bei Foundation, an educational and charitable nonprofit organization which launched the first nonprofit ethnic newspaper of its kind in the country, the *Nichi Bei Weekly*. In 2011, he helped launch the Northern California Soy and Tofu Festival, an annual fundraiser for the Nichi Bei Foundation that helps to educate the public on the benefits of soy and tofu with an eye on community-building and leadership development.

Currently, Kenji serves as the President of the Nichi Bei Foundation, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Nichi Bei Weekly*, and the Chair of the Northern California Soy and Tofu Festival. He also is the Executive Producer of the Foundation’s Films of Remembrance, an annual showcase of films related to the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.

He previously served as the English section editor of the *Nichi Bei Times* — Northern California’s oldest Japanese American newspaper at the time — from September of 1995 to September of 2009, when that publication folded. In June of 2004, he was named vice president of the *Nichi Bei Times*.

Prior to his work at the *Nichi Bei Times*, Kenji was the Community Information Officer at the Human Rights/Fair Housing Commission of the City and County of Sacramento.

While at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), Kenji also published his

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

own Asian American newspaper, the *AsiAmerican Journal*. He also organized numerous forums dealing with issues such as hate crimes, affirmative action, an anti-immigrant ballot initiative and ethnic studies. In October of 1998, Kenji received the distinguished Alumni Honors Award from CSUS.

While working to renovate the English section of the *Nichi Bei Times*, the newspaper was presented the first-ever Pioneer Award from New California Media, a coalition of now more than 2,000 ethnic news organizations and supporters throughout the country.

In 1999 Kenji received the Community Service Award from New California Media for an article that documented the struggle for redress by Japanese American railroad and mine worker families, whose family heads were fired from their jobs during World War II at the hands of the U.S. government. Less than two months after the story ran, the victims were granted redress from the U.S. government.

Kenji was also recognized with an award at the 2004 annual dinner of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California for his work as a community journalist.

In 2004, Kenji helped to lead a team of *Nichi Bei Times* staff members who put together a joint Japanese-English series dealing with the issue of whether or not Japanese Americans had a responsibility to serve as a bridge between U.S.-Japan relations, as well as dealing with the issue of cross-cultural communications between English-speaking and Japanese-speaking members of the community. That series won the 2005 Grand Prize Award from the Overseas Japanese Press Association in Tokyo, Japan.

In May of 2013, he was awarded a Consul General Award from Consul General of Japan in San Francisco Hiroshi Inomata, for his “distinguished achievements in contributing to mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and California.”

Current Titles:

President / Nichi Bei Foundation / www.nichibeifoundation.org

Editor-in-Chief / Nichi Bei Weekly / www.nichibei.org

Executive Producer / Films of Remembrance / www.filmsofremembrance.org

Executive Producer / "Nichi Bei Café" / www.nichibei.org/cafe

Past Titles:

English Section Editor and Vice President, Nichi Bei Times

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Community Information Office, Sacramento Human Rights and Fair Housing Commission