



Okaeri
- A NIKKEI LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY -

***Empowering Through Love:
Japanese American Fathers
& Their Gay Sons***

Okaeri is fiscally sponsored by LTSC



Little Tokyo
Service Center



Okaeri
- A NIKKEI LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY -

Introduction

In June, 2022, Okaeri held a virtual event called Japanese American Fathers and Gay Sons: Empowering Through Love. This event was specifically presented in June, which is Father's Day month, to honor fathers who stand by and support their gay sons. Eric Arimoto, the facilitator and visionary for this event, opened up by explaining: "Moms do a lot of the emotional work in this community and a lot of the heavy lifting. Dads even when they are supporting are just kind of sitting back and being very respectable and stoic, nodding and being agreeable but you don't really hear too much from dads, so we are really interested in hearing from the dads. Also when an LGBTQ person comes out to their parents or family, a father's silence can be read in many different ways. It could be actually a chilling rebuke again sexual orientation or identity. I thought it would be great to focus on this issue and give voice to families and supportive dads." We thank Al Nakatani, Glenn Murakami, Bob Arimoto, for showing that dads can show up in many different ways. We thank Eric Arimoto and Kyle Murakami for sharing their stories as gay men and perhaps future fathers.

Our hope is that you bring your organization together to watch this video which is about 35 minutes long and then you have a conversation. We have provided questions for you to use, or you can organically allow the conversation to flow and use the questions to supplement your discussion.

Thank you for lifting up the voices of these fathers and future fathers in your organization and your community. You are helping Okaeri create compassionate spaces and transformation for LGBTQ+ Nikkei and their families

Here are the two links to this program:

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/740906035>

Password: Kyle

Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/738775138>

Password: Eric

Video Participants



Eric Arimoto: Facilitator

Eric Arimoto is a fourth generation Japanese American gay man who grew up in the Crenshaw District of Los Angeles. Eric currently lives in Long Beach, CA with his partner Paul and is a marriage and family therapist specializing in working with LGBTQ individuals, couples and adolescents. Eric came out to his family and extended family when he was 19, after being kicked out of the Army for being gay. After 10 years of being affiliated with Okaeri, Eric noticed that moms do a lot of advocacy when their LGBTQ child comes out while the dads play more of a support role (with notable exceptions).

To highlight the experiences of fathers of LGBTQ children and honor fathers on Father's Day, Eric proposed the presentation a panel. It is his hope that this public dialogue will empower fathers and their gay sons to break silence, deconstruct limiting notions of masculinity and set the stage for even deeper sharing and healing.

Video Participants



Glenn Murakami: Speaker

Glenn is a Third-generation Japanese-American, resident of Torrance, CA and proud father of two gay sons, Derek and Kyle.

Glenn is a retired bank credit administrator who enjoys road cycling, pickleball and fly fishing. He currently serves on Okaeri Steering Committee and supports Christian faith-based and family acceptance programs.



Kyle Murakami: Speaker

Kyle is an event producer for a tech company called Twilio, and lives in NYC with his husband Zach.

He enjoys dining his way through places he gets to travel through, and running... to keep eating.

Video Participants



Alexander D. Nakatani: Speaker

Al is the Co/Founder, Administrator and Educator of the non-profit corporation "Honor Thy Children, Inc." The mission of HTC, Inc. is to provide and be involved in primarily educational activities that "Promote The Acceptance of Human Diversity, Through The Understanding and Management of Human and Self-Denigration". Al and his wife Jane Nakatani deliver keynote addresses and conduct workshops that keep with the stated mission of HTC, Inc. The thrust of HTC, Inc.'s educational efforts come from the life experiences of Al and Jane, who in the span of 8 years watched their three sons, Glen, Greg and Guy Nakatani die from what they describe as "premature and preventative" causes. All three sons died while still in their 20's.

The story of the Nakatani family is chronicled in the book, "Honor Thy Children" by Molly Fumia, the educational video, "Honor Thy Children" and the full-feature documentary of the same name, produced by Francisco Leon. Wherever they have appeared, the message is always the same; that they as parents, the culture to which they belong and identify with, the institutions that have influenced and "educated" them and their sons, and the nature of our "American" society had systematically contributed to the deaths of their sons; and that the systemic process of human and self-denigration continues unabated with continued horrific consequences to our most vulnerable of citizens, our children and youth.

Discussion Questions



1. What are your initial impressions/thoughts/feelings that you experienced as a result of viewing the workshop?
2. In what ways did the fathers (Al and Glenn) experience their own “coming out” process after their sons came out to them as gay?
3. Do you believe or imagine the coming out process for Nikkei fathers and sons as having characteristics and challenges unique to the Nikkei community? If so, what cultural/religious/social/familial influences may inform those differences?
4. Kyle described a situation of isolation and denial as he wrestled with reconciling his sexual orientation with his -and his family’s- religious convictions. How would you describe his journey and what might you do as a family member, friend, church member and/or community member to signal support and ease the process?
5. Al Nakatani speaks of the “myth” of assimilation that led post WWII Japanese Americans to shake off shame/stigma/prejudice and achieve relatively high levels of social acceptance and economic status. In what way(s) might assimilation have kept JA families and the Nikkei community from acknowledging LGBTQIA+ folk within our community?
6. It is often pointed out that the Nikkei community deals with family issues in a private manner, perhaps as a form of “saving face.” Considering the very public ways that Al, Glenn and Kyle shared their stories, do you find yourself leaning into this type of interaction or a little uncomfortable with it? However you feel, can you name a couple of suggestions for making talking about difficult things easier for you?
7. If you identify as LGBTQIA+, what thoughts/feelings/realizations did you experience from viewing this workshop?
8. Putting on your advocate hat, what actions (however great or small) are you willing to commit to today to promote greater awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues in our community?
9. The respect for the father and the privilege of all things male are so deeply rooted in Nikkei culture. While not politically correct, it would be foolish to deny the prevalence of such attitudes even today. How might this deference to the father and maleness hinder and complicate the coming out process for a gay son in particular?