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VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Discovering Japan in Harlem

Adam Lobel

I was moved to write about the Japanese expatriate community in Harlem after reading Yuri Kochiyama's obituary in The



New York Times this week. Mrs. Kochiyama, the child of Japanese immigrants, was born in southern California, and moved to New York with her husband in 1948. In the early 1960s the couple moved to Harlem, where they regularly hosted civil rights activists who needed a place to sleep. In 1963, Mrs. Kochiyama befriended human rights leader Malcolm X, and ran to comfort him when he was shot by assassins at the Audubon Ballroom in 1965.

Today, people of Japanese descent are still integral to the diversity of Harlem. Founded in 2009, Kokokara Kids teaches Japanese language and culture to children. Activities include a fun Saturday morning session at the Police Athletic League on 119th Street. Mountain Bird on 145th Street, whose décor evokes the Harlem Renaissance, features French-inspired faire created by Chef Kenichi Tajima. Nearby on St. Nicholas Avenue, Keiko serves up home-style soups, salads and desserts at the eponymous MaMa-K's. To experience true Japanese motenashi visit Trufa, located on Broadway near 140th Street.

My family also enjoys lunch and dinner parties of Okonomiyaki and Temaki Zushi at our friends' homes, where Japanese heritage is often blended with other cultures. While Harlem boasts delicious fresh fish and vegetables, we can easily purchase specialty items at Mitsuwa Marketplace, a short car ride across the George Washington Bridge in Edgewater, New Jersey. (Adam is Co-Founder & Director of Ecosystem at Sizung Inc. His email is adam@sizung.com)



Obituary: Yuri Kochiyama
Civil rights activist and assistant to Malcolm X

Yuri Kochiyama was an American activist of Japanese descent who was known for her work with African-American civil rights leader Malcolm X during the 1960s American civil rights movement. Ms. Kochiyama died of natural causes on June 1 in Berkeley, California. She was 93.

According to the Japanese American Association of New York (JAANY), Ms. Kochiyama was born in Los Angeles in 1921. In 1941, a few months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, she was sent with her family to a Japanese internment camp in Jerome, Arkansas. While at the camp, she met Bill Kochiyama, an infantryman who fought in the European theater with the 442nd regimental combat team. The two were later married, and moved to New York after the war, where they became involved in the civil rights movement. In 1963, Ms. Kochiyama met Malcolm X and began to work as his assistant. When Malcolm X was assassinated, Ms. Kochiyama was present and rushed to help him. In 1965, Life magazine published a photograph of her cradling his head as he lay dying. Ms. Kochiyama also worked during the 1980s to secure reparations for Japanese Americans who had been interned. This incredible woman left an indelible mark on the history of Japanese people in America. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Zac Heyman)

NYクール日本

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

LaGuardia Community College Receives 2014 Consul General's Commendation



Dr. Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College (left), receives a commendation from Ambassador Sumio Kusaka at the Consulate-General of Japan in New York

Ambassador Sumio Kusaka of the Consulate-General of Japan in New York presented a commendation to Dr. Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College (LAGCC), The City University of New York, on May 22. Around 100 guests gathered at the Consul General's official residence to celebrate the honor bestowed on

LAGCC for its contribution to the promotion of friendship between Japan and the U.S., as well as the outstanding developments in its Japanese program.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Kusaka awarded Dr. Gail Mellow with a certificate of commendation and a memorial lacquer box inlaid with mother of pearl. After a speech by guest of

honor, Councilman Peter Koo, Dr. Gail Mellow expressed her appreciation in Japanese and talked about LAGCC's international college environment and



Japanese language program. LAGCC established its Japanese Program in Education and Language Acquisition in 2006. Since then, 100 students have enrolled in the program every year. LAGCC established its Japanese major program in 2013 after the school set this as the President's Strategic Goal in 2012. In 2013, they arranged a youth exchange program called the "Kakehashi (Bridge) Project," where the school hosted a visit by Madame Akie Abe, wife of the prime minister of Japan, who observed a Japanese language class. The school also organized a comedy workshop by Katsura Sunshine Japanese Rakugo and a plaster workshop with Shuhei Hasado.

Professor Tomonori Nagano, who teaches Japanese at LAGCC, said at the reception, "I'm honored our efforts were rewarded." (Kaoru Komi/Translated by Masumi Haruyama)



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Japanese Fashion Designers

Junichiro Arai: Textile Design Royalty

by Vanessa Marsh

Junichiro Arai is a textile designer whose fabrics are some of the most important components of Japanese avant-garde fashion designs. Japanese designers from Rei Kawakubo to Issey Miyake have utilized Junichiro Arai's fabrics to enhance the uniqueness and futuristic sensibility of their pieces.

Born in the Kiryu, Japan, in 1932, Junichiro Arai's family came from a long line of textile artisans.

In the spring of 2013, an exhibit celebrating 60 years of Junichi Arai's works were held at the Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery. His fabrics are often created combining traditional techniques of dyeing and weaving, but utilize many advanced materials. Ruching, puckering and tie-dyeing with innovative techniques that

Junichiro Arai himself invented had him holding over 30 patents in fabrics in the 1960's. Unique textiles crafted from metallic and celluloids, as well as the more common silks and polyester are the cornerstone of his designs.

His works have been on display at the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt Design Museum in the U.S. as well as the Victoria and Albert Museum (the world's largest art and design museum) in London. In 1987, he received the prestigious "Royal Designer for Industry" distinction by the British Royal Society of Arts.

As a design innovator, Junichiro Arai is a luminary in the international fashion industry. His fabrics continue to set the pace for the future of textiles and materials of fashion, using state of the art computer technology and often harking back to beautiful and traditional Japanese textile design.