

# KIKUO TASHIRO, J MARION WRIGHT & THE JAPANESE HOSPITAL OF LOS ANGELES

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Troy Kaji MD

# The 1913 Alien Land Law

- Prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Korean immigrants) from owning land or property, but permitted three year leases.
- Japanese farmers circumvented the 1913 law by putting title in the name of their citizen children, with land held in trust, or by forming title-holding agricultural corporations with noncitizen farmers as shareholders.

# 1920 Alien Land Law

- ▣ In 1920 anti-Japanese activists — including the California Grange & the Hearst newspapers — placed an initiative on the ballot outlawing these loopholes.
- ▣ The voters overwhelmingly approved
- ▣ The Japanese community responded with test cases on naturalization and on the Alien Land Laws.

# Issei Lose All Legal Challenges in US Supreme Court

- ▣ *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, in 1922, US Supreme court ruled that Japanese immigrants are not “free white persons” and cannot become naturalized citizens
- ▣ In 1923, the US Supreme court confirmed the legality of the Alien Land Laws in 3 test cases
- ▣ Huge Impact: in 1918, there were 7973 farmers. By 1929, the number of farmers declined to 4591.
- ▣ Ichioka, Yuji, *The Issei: the world of the first generation Japanese immigrants, 1885-1924*, p. 235

# Japanese Consul Oyama Yujiro

- ▣ “The Land Law decisions have dealt a severe blow to Japanese immigrants, spiritually as well as materially . . . . The sense of despair it aroused is hard to imagine.”
- ▣ Ichioka, Yuji, *The Issei: the world of the first generation Japanese immigrants, 1885-1924*, p. 232-233

"An act to limit the migration of  
aliens into the United States..."  
(approved May 26, 1924).

- ▣ The US Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which strictly limited immigration from southern & eastern Europe
- ▣ Completely excluded all immigrants from Asia
- ▣ Nullified the 1908 Gentleman's Agreement
- ▣ "We have been excluded, just like the Chinese"
- ▣ *Kokujoyokubi*: July 1 = National Humiliation Day

# Matsutsuyu Ichitaro's Account

- ▣ “When the Issei faced harsh economic realities in the aftermath of anti-Japanese legislation, some visitors from Japan . . . showed much prejudice toward us as we struggled in poverty. They even ridiculed our poverty-stricken situation. Observing such behavior, Dr Tashiro would take time out to explain to them the historical background of the anti-Japanese atmosphere in California.
- ▣ He was always quick to defend our honor.”

# Nikkei in LA Need New Hospital

- ▣ Japanese population in Los Angeles grew from 15,184 to 22,732 between 1921 and 1926
- ▣ Number of physicians now 35 (50% of state #)
- ▣ In November 1926, Dr Tashiro and 4 other Japanese physicians applied for articles of incorporation to construct a new hospital.
- ▣ California denied application, saying incorporation to lease land was not permitted under the 1911 US-Japan treaty.

# 1911 Treaty of Commerce & Navigation between the U. S. & Japan

- ▣ Article I. The citizens or subjects of each of the high contracting parties shall have liberty to enter, travel and reside in the territories of the other to carry on trade, wholesale and retail, to own or lease and occupy houses, manufactories, warehouses and shops, to employ agents of their choice, to lease land for residential and commercial purposes, and generally to do anything incident to or necessary for trade upon the same terms as native citizens or subjects, submitting themselves to the laws and regulations there established. \* \* \*

# Fujii Sei and J. Marion Wright



- ▣ USC Law School  
Classmate and lifelong  
friend of Kashu  
Mainichi founder Fujii  
Sei
- ▣ Fujii Sei referred  
Tashiro to Attorney  
Wright
- ▣ In 1925 Wright had  
successfully defended  
Tagami Tojueru and  
Ramon Sepulveda

# White's Point, California v Tagami



館名スリハ

衆議ムユジラ也管経 分兄上由ルケ於ニトイホトイホ、ロドーヒン

<sup>17</sup>In the "White's Point Case," *California v. Tagami*, 195 Cal 522 (1925), for which the Central Japanese Association helped to defray costs, the California Supreme Court ruled that (contrary to the arguments of the state) the Alien Land Law did not affect the rights of ineligible aliens under the Treaty of 1911 to buy land for even such questionably "commerical" (the wording of the Treaty) purposes as a sanitarium. A later case, *Tashiro v. Jordan*, 201 Cal 236 (1927), saw white Californians defeated in their attempt to use the Alien Land Law to harass Japanese—in this case, the incorporators of a proposed Japanese Hospital of Los Angeles. The White's Point case is discussed in Central Japanese Association Minutes, Oct. 3, 18, 24, 1922, and documented in Consulate General, *Documental History*, II, 625–99.

*John Modell, The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900–1942*

# Tashiro v. Jordan, 201 Cal. 236 Calif Supreme Court May 20, 1927

- ▣ Tagami case affirmed the right of the Issei to conduct the business of running a health facility
- ▣ However, California State argued that the treaty did not give Japanese subjects the “right **to form a corporation**, if one of the purposes thereof is to lease for commercial purposes real property.”
- ▣ California Supreme Court said the Japanese physicians did have this right

# Secretary of State Frank Jordan Appeals Tashiro v. Jordan

The respondents, subjects of Japan residing in California, presented for filing in the office of the Secretary of State of California, one of the petitioners, proposed articles of incorporation of the "Japanese Hospital of Los Angeles." The articles provided for the creation of a business corporation with a share capital of \$100,000. They purported to authorize the corporation to construct and operate in Los Angeles a general hospital with a home for nurses and resident physicians, and to lease land for that purpose.

Although the articles complied with all provisions of the California statutes governing the organization of a corporation for such purposes, the petitioners refused to file them on the ground that, as the respondents were citizens of Japan, the Alien Land Law of the State did not permit an incorporation by them for the purposes named. The respondents then brought, in the Supreme Court of California, a proceeding in mandamus to compel the petitioners to file the proposed articles and to issue a certificate of incorporation to the hospital.

# Attorney Wright Pleads Case Before the U.S. Supreme Court

- ▣ In April 1928, Wright journeyed to Washington to represent the physicians, accompanied with his wife and two daughters, ages ten and eight

Before the 9 Justices, Wright argued:

1. This was the first instance in which Articles of Incorporation had been denied to a Japanese
2. The doctors' request was within the Treaty
3. The treaty should be liberally interpreted
4. Therefore the state should grant the doctor's request for Articles of Incorporation

# Jordan v Tashiro

- ▣ The justices sharply questioned California State Attorney General U.S. Webb , then stopped Webb before he finished his argument. Webb and Wright spent 15 to 20 minutes in court.
- ▣ Webb's dismissal was a sign that the justices had dismissed the State's appeal. The court issued its decision five months later in November.

*Janice Marion Wright La Moree, J. Marion Wright: Los Angeles' Patient Crusader*

# Jordan v Tashiro

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

JORDAN *v.* TASHIRO

*November 19, 1928*

Obligations of treaties should be liberally construed to effect the apparent intention of the parties to secure equality and reciprocity between them. Where a treaty admits of two constructions, one restricting the rights that may be claimed under it and the other enlarging them, the more liberal construction is to be preferred.

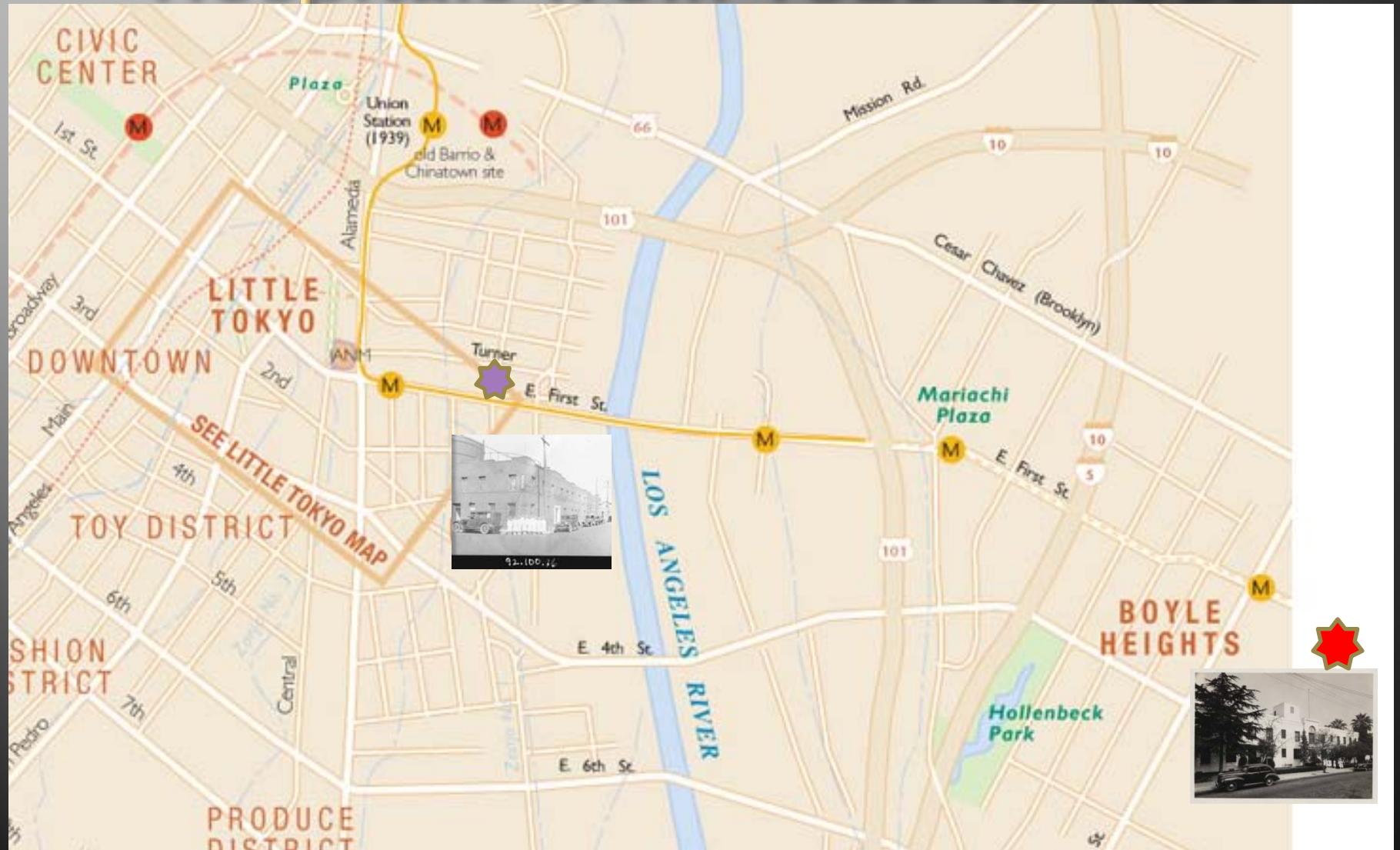
The treaty of commerce and navigation between the United States and Japan authorizes citizens of Japan to carry on trade within the United States and "to lease land for residential and commercial purposes, and generally to do anything incident to or necessary for trade upon the same terms as native citizens or subjects, submitting themselves to the laws and regulations there established."

*Held* that this includes the operation of a hospital as a business undertaking, the leasing of land for that purpose, and the exercise of these privileges through a corporate agency. 201 Cal. 236, affirmed.

# Funding the *Rafu Nihonjin Byoin*

- ▣ 3 days after the Nov 1928 court judgment, the Los Angeles Japanese Physicians Association honor Fujii Sei and J. Marion Wright at a victory party at the Biltmore Hotel
- ▣ Launch capital campaign
- ▣ Raised \$129,000
- ▣ Site purchased at intersection of First and Fickett Streets, in Boyle Heights
- ▣ The stock market crashes October 24, 1929
- ▣ Opens a year after starting capital campaign on December 1, 1929

# Los Angeles had two Japanese Hospitals from 1929 to 1935



# December 1, 1929 Opening of the Los Angeles Japanese Hospital



J. Marion Wright JD in center next to Kikuo Tashiro MD

# Opening Day Ceremony

- ▣ Company President Tashiro read an opening address
- ▣ Eight other speakers, including Consul Sato Toshito delivered congratulatory speeches
- ▣ Dr Miyata Yujiro ended the ceremony after an hour with three *banzai* cheers
- ▣ From 1-5 PM the public toured the facilities

# Attorney Wright meets Prince and Princess Kayonomi

- ▣ Fujii Sei quoted Wright in the Dec 10, 1929 *Kashu Mainichi*: “I met the Prince and Princess yesterday. The Prince and Princess went through nearly every room of the hospital and they surely made the patients and everybody very happy.
- ▣ In the sun room, reception was held for a limited number of people.
- ▣ The Prince shook hands with me. I was told that I was the only one who had the honor to shake hands with the Prince.

*Janice Marion Wright La Moree, J. Marion Wright: Los Angeles' Patient Crusader*

# Hirata Masao: On Kikuo's Work

- ▣ “He offered me a job as his chauffeur in the Fall of 1924”
- ▣ “He opened his Gardena clinic in the morning. After lunch, he used to go to his Little Tokyo clinic. From there he went to see his patients at the Japanese Hospital of Southern California”
- ▣ One day . . emergency visit from a farmer in Pomona. In the middle of the night Dr. Tashiro and I hurried to Pomona



Dr Tashiro's Zeiss microscope and black bag in the JANM collection



# Emergency Calls

- ▣ Such emergency calls were part of our daily routine.
- ▣ At times, he would hurry off upon an emergency call without even taking off his pajamas.

In Santa Maria . . . Mr. Okamoto was run over by a farming tractor. Dr Tashiro's expert operation and treatment saved his life.



# Wayfinding, Mud

- ▣ In those days, streets did not have names, even in the city of Torrance. He therefore often had to search for the patient's house by relying on a conspicuous landmark such as a large eucalyptus tree.
- ▣ I remember a night when we went to Redondo-Torrance and our car got stuck in the mud . . . Once we got stuck in the mud in Inglewood. It took a long time for the two of us to get the car out . . .



# Fees

- ▣ Most of us (residents of Terminal Island) were fishermen from Wakayama. Dr Tashiro . . . always said to us “Pay when you have some cash on hand.” (*Matsutsuya Ichitaro*)
- ▣ One night . . . he simply ignored the inquiry from the patient’s family about the fee, saying “I know you don’t have any money to pay.” (*Matsutsuya*)
- ▣ “You need to be hospitalized. It is not time to worry about money now. What you must be concerned about is your health.” (*Kuita Kameichi*)

# Tama Saito—On Dr Tashiro's Surgical Teamwork

“Dr. Tashiro's incessant pursuit for ever higher surgical technology was an inspiration to all of the nurses . . . who were expected to observe his surgical work closely and provide appropriate instruments to him without being asked. *The result of such teamwork was that minimal time was needed for surgery.* When a surgery ended successfully, he used to praise us for our efficient assistance.”



Japanese Hospital of Los  
Angeles Nurses and Doctors:  
Kuroiwa collection at JANM

# Training the Nisei

- ▣ After 1924, no more Japan-trained physicians
- ▣ Quota limited Nisei entry to medical schools
- ▣ Nisei graduates had difficulty finding internships
- ▣ Dr. Tashiro took in 4 to 5 Nisei physicians, who slept on cots in his library, shared meals with his family, and accompanied him at his clinics in Gardena & Little Tokyo and on rounds at the Japanese Hospital of Los Angeles.
- ▣ Co-authored with the Nisei physicians 2 studies published in American medical journals

# The Japanese Hospital of Los Angeles



Capacity: 42 beds  
2 stories

- ▣ Prewar: 1929 to 1942
- ▣ 1935: Merged with Japanese Hosp of So. Calif.
- ▣ 1942 to 1946: Entrusted to White Memorial Hospital - used as obstetrics ward
- ▣ Postwar: Drs Tashiro, Kuroiwa, Murase, Murakami, Sekiyama, and Niseis Ito and Kobayashi reopened the hospital 1946-60

# Epilogue: Dr Tashiro's Struggle With TB

- ▣ Since 1901, Dr Tashiro had bouts of illness from tuberculosis.
- ▣ His two sons died in childhood
- ▣ At the time of the evacuation, Dr Tashiro was confined in Maryknoll's Monrovia TB sanitarium. Sent to Denver to convalesce.
- ▣ Near fatal hospitalization in 1950.

# Last Operation in 1953

- ▣ In February of 1953, old friend Miyamoto Tsunezo, owner of the Higoya Hotel, needed surgery. Dr Tashiro performed the multi-hour surgery himself.
- ▣ Early morning the following week, Dr Tashiro suffered a heart attack, and was admitted to the Japanese Hospital of Los Angeles.
- ▣ Despite the efforts of Dr Kuroiwa and other colleagues, he had a second and third heart attack, and died later that day.

# Hori Tatsuo Poem *Yamai* (Illness; 1927)

- Boku no hone ni tomatte iru  
kotori yo kekkaku yo
- Omae ga kuchibashi de  
tsutsuku kara boku no tan ni  
wa chi ga majiru
- Omae ga hane bataku to  
boku wa seki o suru
- Omae o nemuraseru tame ni  
boku wa kyūnyūki o kakeyo
- Kutsū o gomakasu tame ni  
boku wa shi ni karakau inu  
ni de mo karakau yō ni
- Shi wa boku ni kamitsuite  
kare no inishiaru o irezumi  
shiyō to ha o boku no mae ni  
muki dasu
- The tiny bird of tuberculosis  
is perched on my bones
- Your beak pecks at me  
mixing blood in my phlegm
- When you flap your wings I  
cough
- I turn on my inhalator to  
make you slumber
- To conceal the pain I tease  
death as if teasing a dog
- Death bites into me and  
shows its teeth intending to  
tattoo its initials

Johnston, William "The Modern Epidemic: A History of Tuberculosis in Japan,"  
Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 149-150.

# Matsuishi Michie's Poem

▣ Utsukushiku sumiwataru Coachella ni

▣ Tou hito wa yuki kyomo samishi

*Today is again an empty day, now that our friend who  
came to see the beautiful blue skies of Coachella is  
long gone*

▣ Aremo uye koremo uyeyoto hanasakedo

▣ Kokoro yasashiki hito wa nemureri

*That flower, this flower, all now are in bloom but their  
kind hearted friend is asleep forever*

# Matsuishi Michie's Poem (cont)

- ▣ Hitono tame sukoyaka nare to teni kakete
- ▣ Wagami wasureshi oshiki hito

*He lived to keep others in health, though  
forgetting himself to do so.*

On Feb 11, 1953, >1000 people  
attended Dr. Tashiro's funeral  
service at Union Church.

Tsunezo Miyamoto fully recovered.

