



Asian Baseball Research Committee

Newsletter | Spring 2016

Mashi Murakami Meets Fans in Ten American Cities

By Rob Fitts



Photo: Masanori Murakami and Rob Fitts at Citi Field, during their summer 2015 tour.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary Masanori Murakami becoming the first Japanese to play in the Major Leagues and the release of his English-language biography, Mashi, filmmaker Yuriko Romer, and I embarked on a three-week, ten-city tour this past summer. We visited Chicago, Boston, New York, Rhinebeck NY, Cooperstown, Los Angeles, Whittier, CA, Fresno, San Francisco, and San Jose.

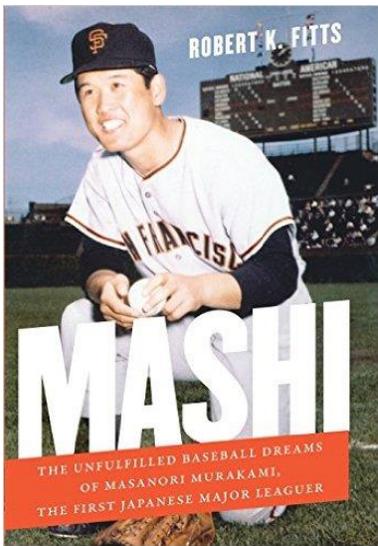
At each event, we began by showing a clip of Yuriko's upcoming documentary *Diamond Diplomacy*, I then presented a power-point slide show on Mashi's career with Murakami punctuating the narrative with his own stories. We ended with a question and answer session before Mashi signed copies of the biography.

The tour was a great success, drawing well over a thousand people with lines for the book signings snaking through the lecture rooms. Mashi was featured in numerous newspapers and radio shows including features on MLB.com, NPR's *Only a Game*, the *Marty Lurie Show* and *Time Magazine*. He was also honored on the field before games at Citi Field and AT & T Park.

SABR's Asian Baseball Research Committee and local chapters played an integral role in the tour's success. The Asian committee hosted our initial presentation at the annual convention in Chicago, which drew over a hundred people. Committee vice-chair Daigo Fujiwara helped with advertising the events and helped organize our event sponsored by the Japan Society of Boston at Fenway Park. Marlene Vogelsang of the San Francisco chapter organized our event at the San Francisco Public Library.

So many people helped with the tour that I cannot name everybody but I need to publically thank the following people for making the events possible: Hunter Arakawa, Shana Daum of the San Francisco Giants, Dick and Suzanna Hermans of Oblong Books, Rhinebeck, Douglas Erber of the Japan America Society of Southern California, Jay Goldberg of the Bergino Clubhouse, Joanne Hulbert, Satoshi Ida of Kinokuniya Books, San Francisco, Laura Jackson, Joan Jasper of the San Francisco Public Library, Jim Nagareda and Pam Yoshida of Nikkei Traditions, Kerry Yo Nakagawa, Tom O'Doul, Ralph Pearce, Joe Price and Terry Cannon of the Institute for Baseball Studies, Whittier College, Sharon Rice of the Japan Society of Boston, Jill Shiraki, Fred Tanaka, Tom Shieber and Shirley Tyler of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, and Laura Verillo of the New York Mets.

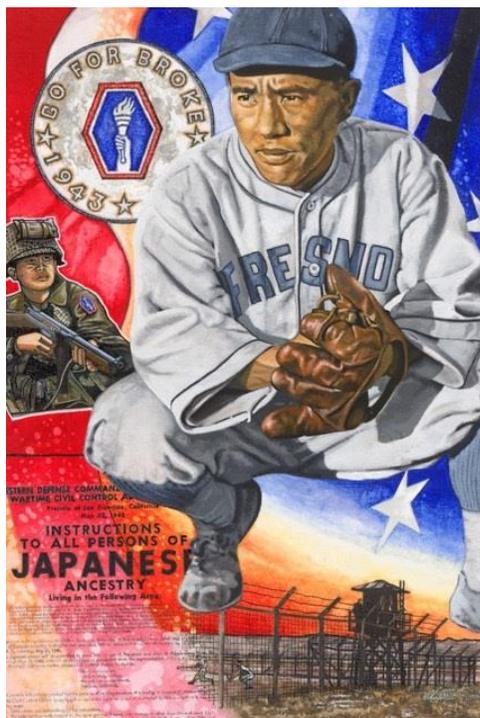
To learn more, visit: www.robffitts.com/mashi.html



By Robb Fitts – Mashi: The Unfulfilled Baseball Dreams of Masanori Murakami, the First Japanese Major Leaguer; 2015 - University of Nebraska Press

[Order Your Copy Today](#)

Autographed Mashi Items Also Available



Great Artwork for a Great Cause

In preparation for 2017 and the 75th “Diamond” anniversary of Executive Order 9066 (February 19, 1942), Roosevelt’s order that sent approximately 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps, the Nisei Baseball Research Project (NBRP) has commissioned a commemorative painting by award-winning baseball artist Chris Felix (chrisfelixfineart.com) that features Kenichi Zenimura, legendary Japanese American baseball pioneer.

Sales of the poster (gilcees: \$250; digital prints: \$75) signed by Felix and Kenso Zenimura (Kenichi’s son) will be used to support the non-profit NBRP.

For more info about the commemorative artwork, please contact: Kerry Yo Nakagawa at 1-559-824-3210 or NBRP@comcast.net. Learn more online at: <https://www.facebook.com/niseibaseball>

Baseball in Korea Goes Back Further than You Might Think

SABR member **Patrick Bourgo** was recently published in *The Korea Times*. In his article, the head of SABR's Korean Baseball Chapter shared his insight on the earliest reference to baseball being played in Korea. For years historians thought that the earliest reference was a newspaper article from 1896, but according to Bourgo, an even earlier mention was discovered in the personal diary of a Seoul resident from 1894.



Photo: A scene from the 2002 Korean film “YMCA Baseball Team” shows players wearing a uniform of the YMCA baseball team in the early 20th century.

Similar to the Doubleday myth in America, many still believe that baseball was introduced to Korea in 1905 by an American missionary with the YMCA named Philip L. Gillett. However, while Gillett did promote the game among Korean youth, there are numerous records of baseball being played in Korea far earlier than 1905.

The oldest known reference can be found in the personal diary of Elizabeth Greathouse. She was the wife of Clarence Ridgley Greathouse, a judge and foreign resident of Seoul from the early 1890s until his death in 1899. In two diary entries from 1894, Greathouse refers to a baseball game that was played on Oct. 23 near the “East Gate,” also called Dongdaemun. According to Greathouse, she was invited to a baseball game, and while she did not attend, she writes that her son did go to the game.

While relatively little is known about the origins of baseball in Korea, according to documents related to the foreign residents, it seems to have been quite a common activity in Seoul since at least the mid-1890s. And while we may never know exactly when baseball was introduced, or when the first game was played, we do have a small glimpse into baseball's earliest days in Korea.

To read the full article, visit:

http://m.koreatimes.co.kr/phone/news/view.jsp?req_newsidx=201442

The Secret History of Black Baseball Players in Japan

SABR members **Ryan Whirty**, **Ralph Pearce** and **Bill Staples** collaborated with reporter Dexter Thomas, on an NPR Code Switch special report about “The Secret History of Black Baseball Players in Japan”. Thomas is a scholar of modern culture who studies and teaches at Cornell University. He’s currently writing a book on Japanese hip-hop culture. With the assistance of these SABR researchers, Thomas did an excellent job educating readers about the early black baseball pioneers in Japan, such as Jimmy Bonner, Biz Mackey, Rap Dixon and Lon Goodwin, just to name a few.

For the full article, visit:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/07/14/412880758/the-secret-history-of-black-baseball-players-in-japan>



Photo: Manager Lonnie Goodwin (far right) took his team, the Philadelphia Royal Giants, on a tour of Asia in April 1927. Here, he's pictured with (from left) catcher O'Neal Pullen, pitcher Ajay Johnson and shortstop Biz Mackey. Source: Negro Leagues Baseball Museum

Another Hero in the Family? The WWII History of Dix Ishikawa, Grandfather of MLB Slugger Travis

By Bill Staples, Jr.



Throughout the course of history there have been two types of American heroes to defend the U.S. Constitution; those who pick up a gun and fight a foreign enemy, and those who take a stance against the U.S. government itself to shed light on an unjust law or practice. The grandfather of MLB slugger Travis Ishikawa falls into the latter group and, even though his actions were unpopular during and after WWII, I think he too is worthy of being called a hero. Let me explain why.

In 1849 Henry David Thoreau published *Civil Disobedience*, inspired by his opposition to slavery and the U.S. war in Mexico. Thoreau argued that “individuals should not permit governments to overrule or atrophy their consciences, and that they have a duty to avoid allowing such acquiescence to enable the government to make them the agents of injustice.”

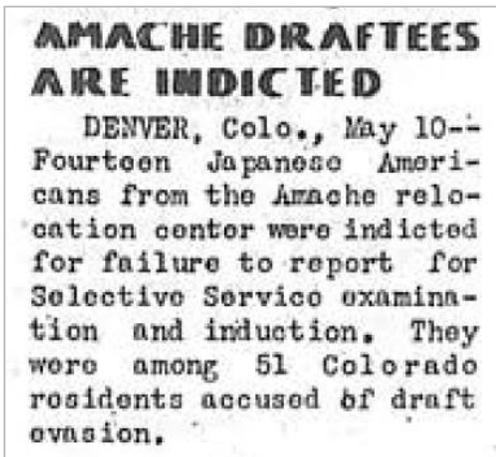
Thoreau’s ideas in *Civil Disobedience* inspired the nonviolence movement of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and had a deep impact on historical figures like writer Leo Tolstoy, President John F. Kennedy, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and boxer Muhammad Ali. We can now add men like Yoshimitsu “Dix” Ishikawa to this list as well.

“Dix” Ishikawa (1916-2009) was just one of hundreds of Nisei men imprisoned by the U.S. government for resisting the draft during WWII. They were also pardoned by President Truman in 1947. Ishikawa appears to be among the least vocal members of the resisters. He gave no interviews about, and left no trace of, his act of civil disobedience. In fact, his family says they know little to nothing about his personal WWII history.

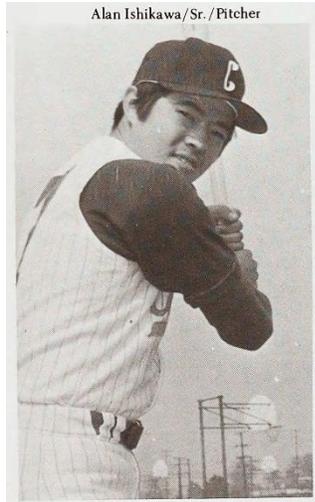
Through court records obtained from [Eric L. Muller](#), Professor of Law in Jurisprudence and Ethics at the University of North Carolina, and author of “Free to Die for their Country: The Story of the Japanese American Draft Resisters of World War II,” (University of Chicago Press, 2001), we now have insight into Ishikawa’s war-time story.

Download: [Court Records - Case 10447: The United States vs. Yoshimitsu Ishikawa, \(PDF, 402KB\)](#)

Ishikawa was born in Woodland, CA, on February 13, 1916, and after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (roughly a week after Ishikawa’s 26th birthday), he and his family were sent to the Merced Assembly Center and then to the Amache Relocation Center in Colorado. According to the camp newspaper, *The Granada Pioneer*, on May 10, 1944, Ishikawa and 13 other men from Amache were indicted for failing to report for their selective service exam and induction.



On June 5, 2009, Dix Ishikawa died at age 93. Shortly before his death, MLB slugger [Travis Ishikawa talked about his grandfather's WWII history](#). The article states, "Travis has never asked his grandparents about the internment camp." Travis explained, "They never give you an opening to talk about it ... My father has never talked about it. I think it's a cultural thing. There are some things you just don't talk about." Incidentally, Travis didn't know that his father played



baseball either. His dad, Alan Ishikawa (*photo, left*), was a pitcher and outfielder for [Compton High School in the early 1970s](#), a team that included future MLB players, Dick Davis and Reggie Walton.

We all know that Travis Ishikawa hit a walk-off home run to clinch the pennant for the San Francisco Giants, a feat that made it possible for the team to advance to win the World Series. Little did anyone know that Travis' life-changing homerun occurred on the same date (October 16) that his grandfather registered for the selective service back in 1940, an act that proved to be life-changing for him too, especially after the war-time hysteria unleashed on Japanese Americans during WWII.

Ishikawa the grandson is now immortal. His name will forever be linked with other post-season heroes like Bobby Thompson, Bill Mazeroski, and Joe Carter. But Ishikawa the grandfather and his legacy as a defender of the U.S. Constitution and war-time hero was unknowingly buried with him in 2009.

Now that the court records of Yoshimitsu "Dix" Ishikawa are public, hopefully a greater appreciation for him and this little-known chapter in U.S. history will be developed.

For example, for many years the topic of WWI incarceration camps was a point of shame for the majority of Japanese Americans. Today, it is viewed by some as a badge of honor to have survived the camp experience. Descendants of internees also speak about the WWII camp experience with a hint of awe and pride because of the resilience displayed by their ancestors during the incarceration. I think that someday the same will be true for the relatives of the WWII Nisei draft resisters of conscience.

This transformation of attitudes can already be seen in the historic site of the Tucson Federal Prison Camp itself. It's been renamed in honor of one of the most famous prisoners held there, Gordon Hirabayashi. It also includes an interpretive kiosk that tells the history of the prison. The kiosk not only covers Hirabayashi's act of civil disobedience, it also honors the other wartime resisters imprisoned in Tucson. In doing so it represents a shift in our collective views about these men as defenders of civil rights and the U.S. Constitution – and as American heroes.

In his 1963 *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King, Jr. said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Twenty years before King wrote those words in his jail cell, Ishikawa and his fellow Nisei draft resisters knew this and believed it to be true. Because of their convictions, they took a courageous stand for justice everywhere.

Recommended reading: To learn more about this topic, check out: [Prisons and Patriots: Japanese American Wartime Citizenship, Civil Disobedience, and Historical Memory](#); (Temple Press, 2015), by Cherstin M. Lyon.

Movie Review: The Vancouver Asahi

Nikkei baseball is perhaps one of the most overlooked and underappreciated chapters in baseball history. Thanks to the director Yuya Ishii and his excellent work on the award-winning film *The Vancouver Asahi*, one of the most important and celebrated Nikkei teams is introduced to a new generation of baseball fans in both Japan and North America.

The movie is based on the true story of the Vancouver Asahi, a Japanese-Canadian baseball team founded in 1914. Ishii and screenwriter Satoko Okudera collaborated to tell a story that compresses the team's 27-year history into a 134-minute script.

The Asahi played their games at the Powell Street Grounds in the heart of Vancouver's Japantown. Today their former ball field is known as Oppenheimer Park, where a commemorative plaque was unveiled in 2011. The plaque summarizes the team's significance and inspiration for the film:

Asahi Baseball Team – Between 1914 and 1941, at a time when Japanese Canadians faced racism, Vancouver's Asahi Baseball team thrilled fans by winning championships in senior amateur leagues. Its signature offensive strategy, "brain ball," emphasized bunting and speed on the bases, reflected the values of discipline and team work, and, coupled with sparkling defence, levelled the playing field with more powerful opponents. The Asahi became a symbol of the Japanese Canadian struggle for equality and respect, and despite being disbanded during the Second World War internment, left a legacy of inspiration for future generations.

For the full review, visit: <http://www.pacificaffairs.ubc.ca/book-reviews/documentary-film-reviews/forthcoming-film-reviews>



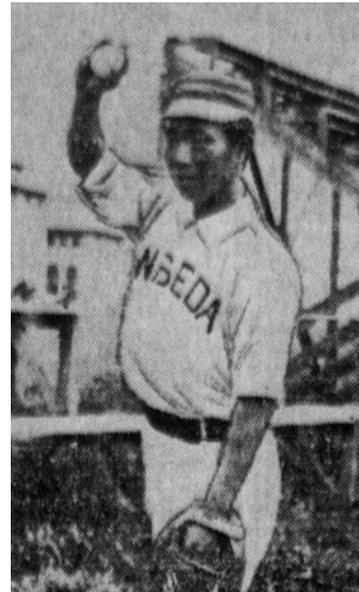
Visit <http://stores.ebay.com/Rob's-Japanese-Cards> to purchase Japanese Baseball Cards from SABR member, award-winning author, and avid Japanese card collector, Rob Fitts.

100 Years Ago: Waseda University and Japanese Baseball Hall of Famer Kono Visit the U.S.

The 2016 baseball season marks the 100th anniversary of the Waseda University's tour of the United States. The tour is significant, and not due to the on-field-play of the transpacific barnstormers, but because of the diplomatic progress it represents between the U.S. and Japan, and the leadership of the man who helped make it possible, **Atsushi Kono**.

Born March 11, 1884 in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, Kono was a life-long student of the game. He was the ace pitcher of Waseda University when the team first toured the U.S. in 1905 (*photo, right*).

During this first trip to America, he learned the windup delivery and change-up pitch, and is credited with introducing these new pitching techniques to Japanese baseball. After years of managing the Waseda baseball program, he organized a pro team in Nagoya in 1936, and was instrumental in the construction of Korakuen Stadium in 1937.



Kono died on January 13, 1946, just as a baseball was being rebuilt in post-war, occupied Japan. He was inducted into the Nippon Baseball Hall of Fame in 1960.

The centennial anniversary of the 1916 tour provides a moment to remember Kono. At the end of the tour, he shared his perspective on the importance of the tour with the *Japan Advertiser*. Below is the article in its entirety:

WASEDA MANAGER SAYS AMERICA SUPERIOR TO JAPAN

Out of Question for Japanese to Excel Americans at Baseball

(*Japan Advertiser, August 3, 1916*) – With a record of 10 games won and 19 lost, the Waseda University baseball team returned to Japan on the Nippon Maru recently from their tour of Honolulu and the United States.

“Though our trip to America was not very successful as to victorious games, all of us were greatly benefited in many ways and feel it was a most profitable trip,” said Prof. A. Kono of Waseda, who managed the boys.

The Waseda nine went to the United States in response to an invitation from Chicago University, who club visited Japan last year. The Japanese players left this country March 25. The roster of the team follows: Y. Asanuma, rf; T. Kawashima, p; I. Ichioka, c; K. Kato, ss; T. Kasashima, 2b; I. Kishi, p; J. Ito, p; M. Yokoyama, lf; T. Sahaku, 3b; S. Hanai, 1b; T. Usui, c; and Chow Shi-lin, cf.

Won Four in Honolulu (sp)

Four out of ten engagements were won in Honolulu. In the United States Waseda dropped three games to Chicago University, two to Illinois and to Wisconsin, all crack American nines. The second game with Wisconsin, all crack American nines. The second games with Wisconsin was the closest of the trip, the Japanese losing 5 to 4 in 10 innings. Oberlin University and the University of Utah were among the teams, defeated by Waseda.

The home coming ball players were met by a large crowd of classmates at Yokohama and their parents and many friends welcomed them when they arrived in Tokio.

The trip has an important bearing on international friendship, Prof. Kono said.

“We think our tour helped a lot in creating better feeling between the United States and Japan,” he said. “However, it is out of the question for the Japanese to excel the Americans at baseball. We did not make out(sp) trip merely for the purpose of trying to defeat the Americans. We conveyed greetings from the Japanese college boys to the Americans students.

“Views Were Expanded.”

“We studied American college life and other conditions there. We availed ourselves to every opportunity to visit large cities, where we saw how American commerce, industry and business carried on. Our views were much expanded.

“We were most impressed by the brisk manner in which the Americans carry on their business. In a large city like Chicago we could hardly be assured of our safety on the streets, owing to the great amount of traffic.

“The splendid physical condition of American boys made a great impression on us. Americans are taught not only to develop their minds, but also their bodies. When they finish school they are ready for public service both mentally and physically. Many of the students who finished the Japanese schools are weak in health. We think those conditions should be changed.

Prof. Kono said the Waseda boys were accorded hearty welcomes wherever they went. Many receptions were given in their honor.

Source: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, August 3, 1916, pg. 12



Photo: Led by future Nippon Baseball Hall of Famer Atsushi Kono, the Waseda University ball club toured the U.S. between March and July 1916.

SABR Asian Baseball Web Resources

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Detroit Tigers

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John Thorn, Official Historian

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SABR Asian Baseball Committee

Welcome to the Asian Baseball Committee website

Written by Staples, Jr. & Daigo Fujiwara
Saturday, 16 July 2011 00:00

Welcome to the website of SABR's Asian Baseball Committee (ABC). The goals of the committee are to:

- Research, preserve and share the long history of interaction between American and Asian baseball
- Foster a sense of community among those with a shared passion for Asian Baseball
- Introduce Asian baseball to the North American public
- Serve as a valuable resource for those seeking more information about Asian Baseball

It is our sincere hope that the information and activities offered by the Asian Baseball Committee will achieve the above goals.

<https://www.facebook.com/asianbaseball>

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Community
The Facebook community for Fans of Asian Baseball supported by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Asian Baseball Research Committee.

About Photos Likes Events



SABR Asian Baseball Committee:

The primary goal of the Asian Baseball Committee is to introduce Asian baseball to the North American public. Although there have been several notable books published on Japanese baseball, most American fans are still unfamiliar with the Japanese game. Furthermore, the lack of sources in English make details of Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese and Filipino baseball nearly unknown in the United States.

The Asian Baseball Committee hopes to increase awareness of Asian baseball by producing and distributing a committee newsletter; encouraging serious studies of Asian baseball by helping researchers network; encouraging members to publish their studies in the SABR journals and elsewhere, host research symposiums and connect with peers through SABR-sponsored events.

Committee contacts:

Bill Staples Jr., Chair (billstaplesjr@gmail.com)
Daigo Fujiwara, Vice-Chair (daigo@daigofujiwara.com)