

Actress/Playwright Christine Toy Johnson to Receive Honor from JACL 9/16

by BWW News Desk



The "Salute to Champions" gala to be held by the

Japanese American Citizens League (JACL, the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization), on Sept. 16 in Washington, D.C. will honor outstanding women.

Awards will be presented to Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Etsu Mineta Masaoka, [Christine Toy Johnson](#), and Roxana Saberi along with corporate partner Eli Lilly.

JACL National Executive Director Floyd Mori stated, "It is a privilege for the JACL to present awards this year to some outstanding women who have had remarkable accomplishments. We are grateful to Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Etsu Mineta Masaoka, [Christine Toy Johnson](#), and Roxana Saberi for their contributions and also thank one of our greatest supporters as a corporate partner, Eli Lilly."

As California's senior senator, Feinstein has built a reputation as an independent voice, working with both Democrats and Republicans to find workable solutions to the problems facing California and the nation. Formerly mayor of San Francisco, she was elected to the Senate in 1992. She has been instrumental in working with the JACL on Japanese American and Asian American issues.

Masaoka has been a dedicated member of the JACL for many years working along with her late husband, Mike Masaoka. She is the sister of former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta and was interned with her family at the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming, where she met her husband. She continues to be one of the JACL's strongest supporters.

An award winning actress and playwright, Johnson produced and, with her husband, Bruce, co-directed the documentary feature "Transcending: The Wat Misaka Story," a profile of Wat Misaka, the first non-white player in what is now the National Basketball Association (NBA). Johnson is an avid advocate of inclusion and is a sought-after speaker and writer on diversity issues. A collection of her plays has just been selected for inclusion in the [Library of Congress](#) Asian Pacific American Performing Arts Collection.

Saberi is an American journalist of Iranian and Japanese descent who was arrested in Iran in January 2009. The Iranian government charged her with espionage, which she denied. She was subsequently sentenced to an eight-year prison term, which later was reduced to a two-year suspended sentence. She was released on May 11, 2009, and has written a book about her experiences.

JACL National President David Kawamoto stated, "The JACL is happy to honor these women who have made a difference. They have been examples of civil rights in action. We are also grateful to Eli Lilly and all our corporate partners."

The JACL invites those interested in attending or supporting the JACL Gala to visit the website at www.jacl.org for more information.

