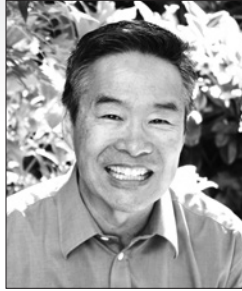


Tom Ikeda

Founders' Award



TOM IKEDA is the founding executive director of Densho, a Seattle-based organization that utilizes digital technology to preserve and make accessible primary materials from the World War II mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. Ikeda was inspired to help launch Densho (which roughly translates as “to pass on to the next generation”) after participating in a series of oral history interviews with Nisei who had lived through the war. In general, the Nisei were stoic and reluctant to discuss their experiences, which often included the loss of their homes and their family businesses and racist treatment from their government and other Americans. “What I could now see was that these hidden stories of being rejected by their frightened country were a source of deep pain and suffering,” Ikeda recalled.

A Sansei whose own parents and grandparents were imprisoned in the Minidoka, Idaho, concentration camp, Ikeda, with support from the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Washington State and others, created Densho in 1996. The organization specializes in recording and digitizing oral histories from those who lived through the World War II experience. Ikeda himself has conducted over 200 interviews. “The stories Densho has collected for the past 20 years put faces, names, and emotional responses to a part of our history that many Americans would just as soon forget,” Ikeda explained. “Densho’s mission is to share these stories so we remember the mistakes of the past, and promote equity and justice over racism and bigotry today and in the future.”

Formerly a general manager at Microsoft Corporation in the Multimedia Publishing Group, Ikeda also worked as a research engineer developing hemodialyzers (artificial kidneys) with Cordis Dow Corporation and as a financial analyst at the Weyerhaeuser Company. A graduate of the University of Washington, Ikeda earned bachelor’s degrees in chemistry and chemical engineering as well as a master’s in business administration. He is the recipient of many awards, including the Humanities Washington Award, the Microsoft Technology for Good Award, the JACL Japanese American of the Biennium for Education, Microsoft Alumni Foundation Integral Fellows Award, Japanese Foreign Minister’s Award, University of Washington Nikkei Alumni Association Award, and the Society of American Archivists Hamer Kegan Award. Ikeda formerly served on the Japanese American National Museum’s Board of Governors.

The JANM Founders’ Award

was established to recognize an individual or organization that advances the mission and vision of the museum’s founders in a meaningful way on a national or international scale. The founders’ vision includes, among other goals, presenting the Japanese American experience from a first-person perspective and as an integral part of America’s heritage, and encouraging appreciation for cultural diversity.