



SALT LAKE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

211 West First South
Salt Lake City

Welcome to Salt Lake City's Annual Nihon Matsuri. I would like to thank the Festival committee for all their hard work in bringing our Utah Japanese American community together for this wonderful celebration. The stories we share with others are valuable contributions to the cultural diversity that bring richness, depth, and integrity – now more critically important than ever for the future of our country.

The United States of America is going through a very difficult Presidential election, where we once again hear the voices of hate and division that put our Japanese American first generation (*Issei*) and second generation (*Nisei*) behind the barbed wires of World War II concentration camps. The voices then of hatred and bigotry that we thought were silenced in 1988, when then-President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties act as an apology to the Japanese Americans on behalf of the American people, have returned into our country's political forum. History seems to have repeated itself and once again we see the ugly face of racial and religious discrimination rise amidst the din of caucuses and debates that poison the democratic process in our American political landscape.

Our Japanese American community has come a long way since the camps. Who would have anticipated that within three generations, our third generation *Sanseis* now include State Congressman Curtis Oda, State Senators Jani Iwamoto and Brian Shiozaki? We Japanese Americans must stand up with our political backbones to cry out, "There is no place for religious and racial discrimination in our United States of America!" It is up to each of us to realize this responsibility, and opportunity, that we now have to be worthy of the legacy we have received from previous generations, whether from Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East; whether 200 years ago or yesterday. By sharing the light of our diversity and cultural heritage we can help dispel the dark ignorance of prejudice that dishonors the dream of being one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Once again thank you and congratulations to the Nihon Matsuri planning committee for all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Rev. Jerry K. Hirano
Salt Lake, Ogden and Honeyville Buddhist Temples