

The moment when a gateway between Japan and America opened up

The seed of this grassroots exchange, which continues to grow to this day, was the meeting between John Manjiro and Captain Whitfield.

John Manjiro of “Tosa” journeys to America

A boat that set out in 1841 carrying five fishermen, including the then 14 year-old Manjiro, was wrecked in a storm and washed-up on the uninhabited island of Torishima. They would be rescued four months later by an American whaling ship, the captain of which was William H. Whitfield. Manjiro, proved popular with the American crew who named him “John Mung.” He sailed with them to Fairhaven, Massachusetts, on the east coast of America. Here he was taken in by Captain Whitfield and his family and looked after whilst he attended school, studying English, science and seamanship. Reportedly, he was always top of the class and graduated with excellent scores. Through his education and via day-to-day life, he absorbed American democracy, its spirit of tolerance, its culture and values.



John Manjiro Nakahama



Captain Whitfield



With his mind made up, he returned to Japan and was active in the last days of the feudal era

With the passage of time, Manjiro came to realize that he wanted to let Japan know of American civilization and its spirit of freedom. In Japan, at that time in the era of the Tokugawa regime, there was a closed-door policy which shut the country off from the world. In returning to Japan he had to know he was risking execution. However, his intention to return grew stronger and he decided to go. So it was that he bid farewell to his ten years of life in America. Shortly after his return to Japan, Commodore Perry arrived and called for the opening of the country. Manjiro, with his considerable knowledge of America, was assigned to an important post by the shogunate. This was an age of great upheaval which would see the end of the Tokugawa government. Manjiro played a crucial role in the opening of Japan, the introduction of maritime navigation skills and of western culture.

Their friendship would reach into the future

That accidental meeting between Manjiro and Captain Whitfield was like a single drop falling into the ocean, which, with the passage of time, sent out a great ripple that spread across the Pacific and now brings the two countries together. The exchange between the two families that came about thanks to the friendship of these men has never lapsed and continues from generation to generation. Now, in a world situation which sees a trend for isolationism and putting the profit of one's own country above all else, the very existence of the Whitfield and the Nakahama families teaches us the significance and possibilities of grassroots exchange between the U.S. and Japan, and between the countries of the world. The “Grassroots Summit”, which CIE stages, acts as a conduit to spread this spirit to the next generation.

Securing world peace, through grassroots exchange

Our aims here at CIE

The links that were forged on the day Captain Whitfield rescued John Manjiro still connect these families together today, through their descendants, over 175 years later.

CIE commemorates the historic meeting of these two men, and with the aim of fostering friendships that transcend nationality, race, culture and religion, has held the “Japan-America Grassroots Summit” every year since 1991. International relations may fluctuate, governments may change, but CIE unwaveringly carries-out exchanges between ordinary people, encouraging friendships at a grassroots level and this, we consider to be our mission.

Inheriting the spirit of friendship that Manjiro and the captain shared, CIE aims to nurture friendships which allow people to relate to each other, overcoming any differences of language, customs or culture that may exist.

We provide an opportunity for people to freely exchange opinions from their own standpoints; to recognize their differences, see each other as equal human beings and to strengthen friendships.

We aspire to support the development of friendly relations and mutual understanding with not only America but between the countries of the world.

Recently with many countries becoming progressively inward looking, these types of activities are increasingly vital and we believe that they underpin the foundations for peace in the world.

Greeting

Over seventy-five years have passed since the end of the last World War, and despite great advances in science and technology, the world is still facing many difficult challenges. In addition to conflicts between nations, civil unrest, rampant terrorism, and global issues such as environmental problems, the recent global spread of the COVID-19 virus has claimed many precious lives. Humanity is called upon to face these challenges with courage and to pool our wisdom in order to build a society where our children can have hope for the future.

In these times, it is vitally important for people living in different societies to interact with each other and deepen mutual understanding. In particular, I refer to the trust and friendship between Japanese and Americans, which has been built up over many years of exchange, is an irreplaceable asset for both Japan and the U.S. This relationship is also of great value to the international community as a whole.

The Center for International Exchange (CIE) was established to commemorate the historical encounter between John Manjiro and

Captain Whitfield in 1841. At that time, Japanese and Americans were “strangers” who hardly ever met. Over the next 180 years, Japan and the U.S. overcame various challenges to build a strong relationship of trust, sharing values such as freedom, democracy, and basic human rights.

During my time at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was involved in various aspects of Japan-U.S. relations, and from my experience, I am convinced that there is nothing more important in bilateral relations than trust that is rooted in mutual understanding between peoples.

As CIE Chairman, I will do my utmost to continue to develop the activities of the Center with your support, keeping in mind the irreplaceable value of grassroots exchange and aspiring to further deepen mutual understanding between the people of Japan and The United States.



**Kazuhide Ishikawa,
Chairman**



1827

January
Born in Nakanohama,
Hata District, Tosa Province (Kochi)

1841

January
Sailed in a fishing boat from Usa (Kochi)
Shipwrecked, life on a deserted island began

June
Rescued by the whaling ship “John Howland”

November
Arrived in Honolulu

1842

Taken on as a member of the whaling crew of the
“John Howland” and started whaling in the Pacific

1843

May
Arrived in Fairhaven, Massachusetts,
where his life on the American mainland began

1846

May
Set sail aboard the whaler
“Franklin”

A circle spreading out across a range of sectors

With CIE at the center, we organize the “Japan-America Grassroots Summit” in close cooperation with diverse sectors both in Japan and in the U.S.

CIE’s “Japan-America Grassroots Summit” is administered with the cooperation of a selection of Japanese and American organizations and with support of a great many volunteers. For each Summit, CIE works with local governments, NPOs, or an executive committee which is set up for the Summit. CIE also links-up with Japanese and U.S. middle schools, high schools and universities and includes educational programs in the Summit. There is a range of activities integrated into every summit, including homestay programs, but all of these are held in place by the enthusiasm of host families and volunteers. The goal of CIE is, through this expanding circle and the participation of the large number of people it brings, to spread the roots of citizen exchange still wider.

Japan America Societies

Various Japan America Societies in Japan and in the U.S., and its national associations in both countries

Middle & High Schools in Japan and the U.S.

Participation in the Grassroots Summits as guest and host students.

Local Governments in Japan and in the U.S.

American states, cities, etc., and Japanese municipalities

Universities in Japan and the U.S.

Program of University of Texas & Kochi University, etc.



Local Non-Profit Organizations

International exchange organizations across Japan and groups involved in local re-vitalization projects etc.

TOMODACHI Initiative

Grants and assistance from influential American NPO

Embassies and General Consulates in Japan and the U.S.

Network for the Japan-America Grassroots Summit

1850

May
Entered goldmines of California

October
Arrived in Honolulu

December
Set sail from Honolulu aboard the “Sarah Boyd”

1851

February
Lands in “Ryu-Kyu” (Okinawa)

1852

November
Manjiro returned to his home village, Nakanohama, Kochi

1853

July
Commodore Perry arrived in Japan

1854

March
Convention of Kanagawa, between the U.S. and Japan, is entered into

1858

June
Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and America signed

1859

Under orders from the Tokugawa government, compiled an English conversation book, whilst whaling in the waters off Ogasawara

Let's spread smiles that overcome all barriers

We organize the “Japan-America Grassroots Summit” every year, alternating between Japan and the U.S.

Since the first Japan-America Grassroots Summit was held in Kyoto, back in 1991, it has been held every year, switching between the two countries each year. Going beyond nationality and with no relation to age, career or language ability, every year between 100 and 200 people from different backgrounds participate. Up until now, including host-families, volunteers and those who have joined the events at the summits, more than 45,000 people have taken part in the summits.

1

Promoting mutual understanding through homestays

In a four day and three night stay at a host-family's home, participants get to experience the everyday life of the place they visit, get a sense of the host country's culture and come to know the real America or the real Japan.



2

Local volunteers play an active role

Thanks to the kind cooperation of volunteers who have detailed local knowledge, we provide meaningful exchange programs that relate to the area, so that participants have very real, profound experiences.

3

Sharing the chance to learn about different cultures and to respect diversity

Grassroots Summit gives the opportunity to learn about the social background, culture and history that respects the diversity of both the hosts and the participants.

4

Reinvigorating communities through “Local Sessions”

The community in the host location is brought together as one, as they prepare to take in the participants of the summit. In doing so, community bonds are strengthened and the area re-energized.



5

Supported from every walk of life

Summits receive cooperation from the top people in sectors right across the board: local leaders, government, the economic field, ambassadors and consuls.

6

Directly experiencing the “John Manjiro Spirit” and getting in contact with history

Direct descendants of John Manjiro and Captain Whitfield, along with descendants of Commodore Perry, attend every summit and interact with the grassroots participants.



1860

February

Taken on as advisor aboard the “Kanrinmaru” and sailed from Uraga (The Sakuradamon Incident occurred)

March

“Kanrinmaru” arrived in San Francisco

June

“Kanrinmaru” returned to Shinagawa

1870

September

Sailed from Yokohama, for Europe via USA

October

Visited the home of Captain Whitfield

1871

February

Returned from Europe

1886

February

William H. Whitfield passed away

1898

November

Manjiro passed away



...and so, to maintain hopes and dreams into the future

To ensure the friendship between Japan and the U.S. and with other countries.

We would like to ask for your support for the ideal of connecting the world through grassroots exchange. With that in mind, we ask for donations and sponsorship for CIE.

It is through the support of corporate sponsorship, individual donations and private patronage that CIE makes the "Japan-America Grassroots summit" a reality. At this time, our activities are supported by over 30 corporations, from individual donations, and membership. If we can increase support in the form of sponsorship and donations it will mean that we can further develop grassroots exchange across borders.

For more details : <http://www.manjiro.or.jp> or contact us on: 03-3511-7171 e-mail: manjiro@manjiro.or.jp

CIE History

1990 John Manjiro Society founded

1991 The First Japan-America Grassroots Summit held in Kyoto

1992 John Manjiro - Whitfield Commemorative Center for International Exchange (CIE) established under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Home Affairs

2000 Granted special tax-exemption status
(officially recognized as an institution contributing to the public good)

2013 Transitioned to a "Public Interest Incorporated Foundation"
under a new law authorized by the Cabinet Office



John Manjiro - Whitfield Commemorative Center for International Exchange

GRAND AXE 602 2-12-18 Koujimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-0083 Japan

TEL : +81-3-3511-7171 FAX : +81-3-3511-7175

Email : manjiro@manjiro.or.jp URL : <http://www.manjiro.or.jp>



In praise of CIE

Fumio Kishida, The 100th & The 101st Prime Minister of Japan

It has been 76 years since the end of World War II and 62 years since the signing of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The Japan-U.S. Alliance remains the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security, as well as the foundation of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the world.

Grassroots exchanges that have continued steadily between Japan and the U.S. are the bedrock of mutual trust and understanding between our citizens. They have played a significant role in building the robust bilateral ties enjoyed by both countries today. Even at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting with President Biden, held in May, we underscored the importance of mutual exchange and collaboration.

Even amidst this current pandemic, the John Manjiro-Whitfield Commemorative Center for International Exchange have continued various Japan-U.S. exchanges programs in online formats which is very encouraging. I would like to commend the Center for its contribution over the years, as well as to express my best wishes for the further success and growth of the center.



岸田文雄

Rahm Emanuel, The 31st United States Ambassador to Japan

Congratulations to the John Manjiro-Whitfield Commemorative Center for International Exchange for your outstanding work to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the American and Japanese people.

The annual America-Japan Grassroots Summit serves as a valuable bridge between our two nations. While security and economic cooperation capture the media headlines, bringing our two people together underlies and makes possible every U.S.-Japan partnership. In these challenging times, when some nations seek to challenge the international system that protects our shared values and principles, programs like the Summit are more important than ever before.

As a former mayor I appreciate that the Grassroots Summit creates and strengthens connections between cities and regions in Japan and the United States. Such subnational diplomacy is essential if we are to solve the increasingly complex challenges of the 21st century.

The Center for International Exchange has my best wishes for many more years of continued success.

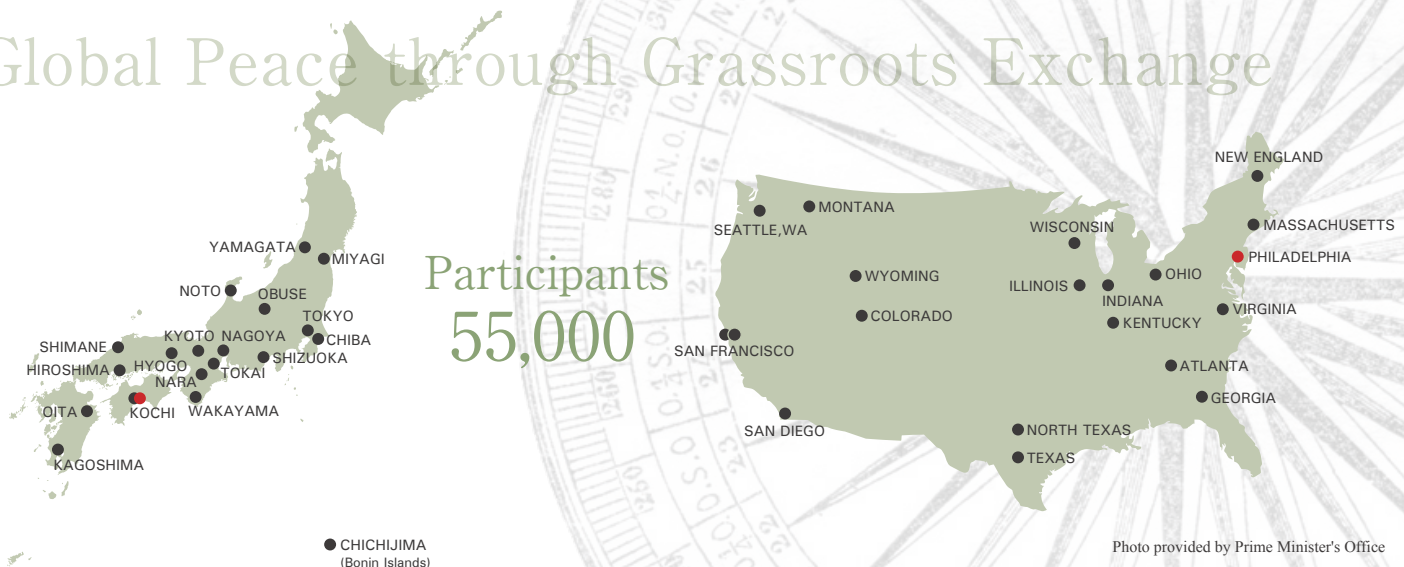


Sincerely,

Rahm Emanuel

Global Peace through Grassroots Exchange

Participants
55,000



Directors, Auditor and Trustees (FY 2026)

Chairman	Kazuhide Ishikawa	Former Special Representative of the Government of Japan / Ambassador in charge of Kansai Former Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of the Philippines
Executive Director	Chika Aoki	Secretary General, CIE
Director	Hiroaki Dan	President, Tsushinbunka Association
	Juichi Hirasawa	Vice President ANA HOLDINGS INC.
	Masaharu Kohno	Former Special Representative of the Government of Japan Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East Peace (Former Ambassador of Japan to Russia and Italy)
	Tetsuo Ogawa	President and Chief Executive Officer Toyota Motor North America
	Ichiro Ozawa	Former Member of the House of Representatives
Auditor	Manzo Kanai	Counselor, Architects, Regional Planners & Associates, Kyoto
Trustee	Kiyoshi Hirata	Former Secretary General of John Manjiro International Inc.
	Sadao Hirano	Former member of the House of Councilors
	Norihiko Ishiguro	Chairman, Japan External Trade Organization(JETRO)
	Kyo Nakahama	Fifth Generation of Manjiro Nakahama
	Nobutaka Odake	Former professor, Nagoya Institute of Technology
President	Ichiro Ozawa	Former Member of the House of Representatives
Advisor	Yoshie Nakayama / Kumi Sato / Hajime Takamizawa / Hiroko Todoroki / Shinobu Uogishi	

Past Summits

1991	The 1st Summit in Tokyo & Kyoto
1992	The 2nd Summit in Massachusetts, Montana & Wyoming
1993	The 3rd Summit in Nagoya & Tokyo
1994	The 4th Summit in Virginia
1995	The 5th Summit in Kagoshima & Tokyo
1996	The 6th Summit in Colorado
1997	The 7th Summit in Yamagata & Tokyo
1998	The 8th Summit in Georgia
1999	The 9th Summit in Shizuoka
2000	The 10th Summit in Illinois, Indiana & Wisconsin
2001	The 11th Summit in Hiroshima (postponed)
2002	The 11th Summit in Hiroshima
2002	The 12th Summit in Texas
2003	The 13th Summit in Chiba
2004	The 14th Summit in New England
2005	The 15th Summit in Tokai
2006	The 16th Summit in Colorado
2007	The 17th Summit in Noto
2008	The 18th Summit in Kentucky
2009	The 19th Summit in Miyagi
2010	The 20th Summit in San Francisco Bay Area
2011	The 21st Summit in Kochi
2012	The 22nd Summit in North Texas
2013	The 23rd Summit in Shimane
2014	The 24th Summit in San Diego
2015	The 25th Summit in Oita
2016	The 26th Summit in Greater Atlanta
2017	The 27th Summit in Nara
2018	The 28th Summit in Washington State
2019	The 29th Summit in Hyogo & Himeji
2020	Summit in Philadelphia (postponed)
2021	Summit in Wakayama (postponed)
2022	Summit in Wakayama (postponed)
2022	Summit in Obuse & forum in chichijima
2023	The 30th Summit in Ohio
2024	The 31st Summit in Wakayama
2025	The 32nd Summit in San Francisco & Bay area
2026	The 33rd Summit in Philadelphia (Planned)
2027	The 34th Summit in Kochi (Planned)

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T.S



公益財団法人ジョン万次郎ホイットフィールド記念
国際草の根交流センター
John Manjiro Whitfield Commemorative
Center for International Exchange