

The following is a provisional English translation of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remarks delivered in Japanese. The provisional translation, prepared by the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, is supplied as a courtesy and may differ from the language interpretation at the meeting.

**Japanese American National Museum VIP Reception (Preceding Annual Gala Dinner) - May 1, 2015**

My visit to Los Angeles is the first by a (Japanese) prime minister in 16 years. I am truly honored to be able to visit Los Angeles, which is home to the largest Japanese American community in the United States and has a longstanding history of friendship with Japan, as the final stop in my itinerary.

This year marks 70 years since the end of World War II. Despite facing many challenges, Japanese Americans have overcome difficulties with self-awareness and pride, excelling in different fields and contributing to the United States as well as Japan-U.S. relations. I express my heartfelt appreciation for the fortitude and indefatigable efforts of Japanese Americans.

Earlier, I laid a wreath at the Go for Broke monument. I also toured the Japanese American National Museum, learning about the history and culture of Japanese Americans. I saw pictures of a younger Secretary (Norman) Mineta. Japanese Americans are proud of their homeland Japan and also proud as Americans who have made significant achievements serving as a bridge between Japan and the United States. I am sincerely grateful to the Japanese American community for its many contributions that have helped restore trust in Japan.

Seeing the museum's exhibits, I feel it very important to pass on the history of Japanese Americans to younger generations. I have been told that with the passage of time, a growing number of Japanese Americans do not feel a direct connection to Japan. I have also heard from Japanese Americans -- raised as Americans and not particularly conscious of their Japanese heritage -- who upon their first visit to Japan, came to realize that the country is a part of who they are. Often, they tell me it is a life-changing experience.

I urge younger Japanese Americans to experience Japan for themselves and to learn about your roots. To encourage more Japanese American students to see Japan for themselves, the Japanese government is doubling its invitation program this year. We want these students to have a life-changing experience. By passing on to the next generation the longstanding bond that exists between the Japanese and Japanese Americans, we can work to develop Japan-U.S. relations even further.

I believe the deep connection between Japanese Americans and Japanese to be eternal. After the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, Japanese Americans across the United States graciously supported Japan, a reminder to us about that profound bond. We will never forget the gratitude we felt then.

During my address to the joint meeting of Congress, I described the Japan-America Alliance as being the "Alliance of Hope". The Japanese American community indeed represents the hope of Japan-U.S. relations. I hope we can work together to nurture widespread understanding and support for the Japan-U.S. alliance, and continue to strengthen our bilateral ties.

