



Monterey, Calif. to Host "Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American WWII Experience"

National GFBNEC Exhibition Unveils Little-Known Chapter of Monterey History

LOS ANGELES and MONTEREY, Calif. (Sept. 10, 2018)--The Japanese American Citizens League of the Monterey Peninsula (JACL) will host "Courage and Compassion: Our Shared Story of the Japanese American World War II Experience" at the historic Casa Gutierrez at [590 Calle Principal](#) in Monterey from September 22 to October 27, 2018. The national exhibit, sponsored by Go For Broke National Education Center in Los Angeles, reveals little-known stories of bravery and conscience among local Monterey residents during and after the turbulent days of World War II.

Funded in part by a grant from the National Park Service, "Courage and Compassion" covers events from the attack on Pearl Harbor to the fateful decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans in wartime camps to the postwar fight for redress. Visitors will learn about the Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) WWII experience and its legacy, engage with questions about what courage looks like during a time of crisis and consider the relevance to today's society.

Before WWII, Monterey was a thriving community with large numbers of Sicilian and Japanese American fishermen and farmers who worked side by side as neighbors and friends. Young Japanese residents learned Sicilian and Sicilians learned Japanese, often while playing baseball together at the diamond located across the street from the local JACL hall. When Japanese American families were forced to leave in 1942 during the mass incarceration of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans, some locals reached out to their friends, helping to protect their homes, businesses or belongings for the duration of the war.

After the incarceration, many California communities vehemently rejected the Japanese American families and fought the return of their former Issei and Nisei neighbors to their towns. In that atmosphere of hatred and bigotry, more than 440 Monterey residents signed a public petition urging kindness and civility towards returning Japanese Americans. Among the signers of that petition were some remarkable names-Nobel laureate John Steinbeck, famed photographer Edward Weston, biologist Ed Ricketts. This extraordinary petition was rediscovered recently by local historian Tim Thomas; the history of this unusual act of conscience has been largely forgotten in Monterey.

The exhibit will be shown at Casa Gutierrez, an historic 1842 adobe located in Monterey State Historical Park, [590 Calle Principal, Monterey, Calif.](#) and open Thursday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, please visit www.jaclmonterey.org.

Mitchell T. Maki, Ph.D., president and chief executive officer of GFBNEC, noted that Monterey's overall response to its Japanese American residents was a rare exception during the hysteria and suspicion of WWII. "In Monterey, local families have handed down stories of kindness, generosity and support from teachers and clergymen, lawyers and business leaders, shopkeepers and housewives," Maki said. "These courageous everyday people did not tolerate discrimination against individuals based on the color of their skin, the God whom they worship, or their country of origin. Today, they exemplify the best that America has to offer."

Larry Oda, past JACL national president and Monterey JACL Chapter member, said that the Monterey

community was unique in its welcome of the returning Japanese Americans, who in turn were grateful for the community's activism and support. He attributed Monterey's community spirit to the bonds that its immigrant residents built around the shared experience of making a new life in the new world.

"We were fortunate in that there were those in the community who understood the greed and prejudice that motivated those opposed to our return, who understood the political process to counter the opposition, and rallied the community to welcome us home," Oda said. "We are eternally grateful for their support and it gives us incentive to pay it forward. We celebrate their friendship and proudly display the efforts of their labor."

From July 2017 through summer 2019, the exhibit is visiting 10 U.S. communities where citizens extended a helping hand to Japanese Americans during and after the end of WWII. Other community partners include: Willamette Heritage Center, Salem, Ore.; Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i, Honolulu; the Kingsburg Historical Society, Kingsburg, Calif.; Oberlin College and Conservatory, Oberlin, Ohio; Historic Ft. Snelling, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.; History Center of Olmsted County, Rochester, Minn.; History Department, Bradley University, Peoria, Ill.; Chicago Japanese American Historical Society and Japanese American Service Committee, Chicago; and New Mexico Japanese American Citizens League, Albuquerque, New Mexico. For more information and upcoming dates, please visit www.goforbroke.org/visit/traveling_exhibit/index.php.

About Go For Broke National Education Center

Go For Broke National Education Center (GFBNEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that educates the public on the valor of Japanese American veterans of World War II and their contributions to democracy. Our goal is to inspire new generations to embody the Japanese American veterans' core values of courage, sacrifice, equality, humility and patriotism. Founded in 1989, GFBNEC maintains the Go For Broke Monument and the interactive "GFBNEC's Defining Courage Exhibition" in downtown Los Angeles, as well as extensive oral histories and archives, education and training programs, and other initiatives. For more information, please visit www.goforbroke.org.

About the NPS JACS Program

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Media Contact:

Pauline Yoshihashi
Strategic Communications
For GFBNEC
323/683-8191 Direct
pyoshihashi@earthlink.net