

# PRESS RELEASE

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## *EXCLUSION: THE PRESIDIO'S ROLE IN WWII JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION*

New Exhibition Opens Saturday, April 1, at the Presidio Officers' Club

Marks 75 Years Since Civilian Exclusion Orders Were Signed at the Presidio Leading to the Forced Removal and Incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans During World War II



**PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 02, 2017)** — The Presidio Trust today announced the opening of *EXCLUSION: The Presidio's Role in World War II Japanese American Incarceration* running Saturday, April 1, 2017 – March 2018 at the Presidio Officers' Club Heritage Gallery, 50 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco. As headquarters of the Western Defense Command, the Presidio was the source of 108 civilian exclusion orders and other military directives that enacted President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Together, these actions forced Japanese Americans from their homes along the West Coast and incarcerated them in concentration camps for the duration of the war. This special exhibition explores the Presidio's significance in those historic times.

"The Presidio of San Francisco played a pivotal role in the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II," explains Presidio Trust Curator Liz Melicker. "This exhibition encourages reflection and invites visitors to investigate the issues and decisions that led to this dark chapter in American history. How did leaders arrive at the decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens? How did Japanese Americans and others respond to the violation of their civil liberties? And what, as a nation, have we learned that can help us address present-day issues such as mass incarceration, immigration reform, and racial profiling?"

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The exhibition marks 75 years since Western Defense Commander Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt sat at his desk in Building 35 at the Presidio and signed 108 Civilian Exclusion Orders. These orders implemented Executive Order 9066 and led to the forced removal and mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast. The opening of *EXCLUSION* falls on the same day in 1942 that Civilian Exclusion Order No.5 was posted throughout downtown San Francisco with the infamous "Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry," directing the forced removal of all Japanese Americans.

In developing *EXCLUSION*, the Presidio Trust staff worked with collaborators from the Fred T. Korematsu Institute and the National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS), both tenants at the Presidio. The Korematsu Institute and NJAHS provided input from concept development through script review, contributed objects and images to the exhibition, and are collaborating on public programming at the Presidio Officers' Club's Moraga Hall and school program development throughout the duration of the exhibition.

"*EXCLUSION* explicitly invites visitors to contemplate what can be learned from this shocking time in our history to help us contend with present-day issues—namely racial profiling, anti-immigrant sentiment, mass incarceration, and civil rights discrimination, as well as questions regarding the Constitutionality of Executive Order 9066," said Karen Korematsu, Founder and Executive Director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute.

Two-thirds of those imprisoned were American citizens by birth; the others were non-citizens unable to obtain naturalized citizenship by federal law. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and under the pretext of "military necessity," these civilians were removed from their homes and detained without due process. Nearly 40 years later, the federal government unequivocally stated that "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" had motivated this mass incarceration during World War II—not "military necessity."

"Now more than ever, we need to teach the lessons to be learned about the injustices of Executive Order 9066 and the World War II forced removal and mass incarceration of Japanese Americans," explained Rosalyn Tonai, Executive Officer of the National Japanese American Historical Society. "This is a significant event in our collective American history and we are sure the Presidio's exhibition will be the starting point for much meaningful dialogue."

### **About the National Japanese American Historical Society**

The National Japanese American Historical Society, Inc. (NJAHS), is a 501 c (3) non-profit organization, incorporated in 1981, and dedicated to the collection, preservation, authentic interpretation, and sharing of historical information of the Japanese American experience for the diverse broader national and global community. NJAHS strives to be a catalyst for change through cross-cultural awareness by learning from the past and influencing the future. NJAHS's headquarters is based in San Francisco with its core programs conducted at two sites: one at the NJAHS Peace Gallery & Archives at 1684 Post Street at a convenient storefront location along San Francisco Japantown's commercial corridor, and the other at the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) Historic Learning Center, Building 640, 640 Old Mason Street, Crissy Field West, Presidio of San Francisco within the National Park Service's Golden Gate National Recreation Area. [www.njahs.org](http://www.njahs.org)

### **About the Fred T. Korematsu Institute**

The Korematsu Institute (KI) promotes the importance of remembering one of the most blatant forms of racial profiling in U.S. history, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, by bridging the Fred Korematsu story with various topics in history, including other civil rights heroes and movements, World War II, the Constitution, global human rights, and Asian American history. The Institute makes connections to present-day civil rights discrimination and political scapegoating, such as mass incarceration, anti-immigrant sentiment, and Islamophobia. They work toward building solidarity and partnerships with other groups and organizations to accomplish their mission. In 2009, the Fred T.

Korematsu Institute was founded to honor Fred Korematsu's legacy. It was originally a local community and education program whose vision changed in 2010 as a result of Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution being established in California on January 30 in perpetuity. They've since become a national organization that inspires others through the Fred Korematsu story. [www.korematsuinstitute.org](http://www.korematsuinstitute.org)

### **About the Presidio Officers' Club**

The Presidio Officers' Club is San Francisco's most historic building and now the Presidio's museum, with cultural events, food, and family fun. The museum features engaging exhibitions inspired by events that shaped the Presidio and influenced the nation. Special exhibitions explore the Presidio's heritage and allow for fresh perspectives and a deeper exploration of the topics and themes presented in the museum's permanent exhibition. Exhibitions explore how and why the past matters and inspire civic engagement by fostering an understanding of how the Presidio's heritage is relevant today. Weekly programs include live music, talks, films, and family activities—all free to the public. The museum is also a wonderful place to gather, featuring Arguello, a Mexican restaurant by award-winning chef Traci Des Jardins.

### **About the Presidio Trust**

The Presidio Trust is an innovative federal agency created to save the Presidio and employ a partnership approach to transform this former military base into a new kind of national park. Spanning 1,500 acres in a spectacular setting at the Golden Gate, the Presidio now operates without taxpayer support, is home to a community of residents and organizations, and offers unique recreation, hospitality, and educational programs to people throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and the world. To learn more, visit [www.presidio.gov](http://www.presidio.gov).

## ATTENTION CALENDAR EDITORS

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### ***EXCLUSION: The Presidio's Role in World War II Japanese American Incarceration***

**Date:** Saturday, April 1, 2017 to March 2018, Tuesday to Sundays, 10:00am – 6:00pm

**Place:** The Presidio Officers' Club, Heritage Gallery, 50 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco

**Phone:** (415) 561-4400

**Price:** Free

**Link:** [www.presidio.gov/exclusion](http://www.presidio.gov/exclusion)

During World War II, the Presidio of San Francisco—the Army's Western Defense Command—played a pivotal role in the unjust incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans, purportedly in the name of national security. This special exhibition invites visitors to investigate the choices—both personal and political—that led to this dark chapter in American history, and to reflect on what we have learned that helps us address present-day issues of mass incarceration, immigration reform, and racial profiling.

### ***Opening Day Event: Perspectives on World War II Japanese American Incarceration***

**Date:** Saturday, April 1, 2017

**Exhibition Open:** 10:00am – 6:00pm

**Public Program:** 2:00 – 3:30pm

**Place:** The Presidio Officers' Club, 50 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco

**Price:** Free

The military, the press, and the law were three institutions central to implementing, understanding, and challenging World War II Japanese American incarceration. Explore these perspectives with Dr. Stephen Payne, Command Historian at the Presidio of Monterey's Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center; Richard Reeves, author of *Infamy: The Shocking Story of Japanese American Internment in World War II*, journalist, and senior lecturer at University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication; and Don Tamaki, San Francisco civil rights attorney who served on the legal team that reopened the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case of Fred Korematsu, vacating his conviction

for refusing to be incarcerated during World War II. This panel dialogue marks the opening of the new special exhibition at the Presidio Officers' Club, *EXCLUSION: The Presidio's Role in World War II Japanese American Incarceration*.

## RELATED PROGRAMMING

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### **Children of the Camps, Authors Panel**

**Presented by:** National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS)

**Date & Time:** Saturday, April 1, 2017, 11:00am – Noon

**Place:** MIS Historic Learning Center, Building 640, 640 Old Mason Street, San Francisco

**Phone:** (415) 921-5007

**Price:** Free

**Link:** [www.njahs.org/events/children-camps-authors-corner/](http://www.njahs.org/events/children-camps-authors-corner/)

A panel discussion with Stan Yogi, author of the children's book *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (Heyday Books) and San Francisco native and former incarcerated George Minoru Omi, author of the book *American Yellow*, winner of 1st Place 2016 Memoir, Life Story, Writers Digest contest, NY.

### **Children of the Camps Exhibition**

**Presented by:** National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS)

**Date:** February 1 – June 30, 2017

- **Saturdays and Sundays:** Noon – 5:00pm; MIS Historic Learning Center, Building 640, 640 Old Mason Street, San Francisco

- **Monday – Friday and 1st Saturdays of the month:** Noon – 5:00pm; NJAHS Peace Gallery, 1684 Post Street, San Francisco

**Link:** [www.njahs.org/events/children-camps-exhibit-series/](http://www.njahs.org/events/children-camps-exhibit-series/)

NJAHS presents these National Archive photographic images by Dorothea Lange, Clem Albers, and others taken of the children during the exclusion, removal and incarceration, two-thirds of them American-born citizens.

### **Letters from the Camps — Voices of Dissent**

**Presented by:** The Presidio Trust, Presidio Dialogues

**Date & Time:** Thursday, April 27, 2017, 6:00 – 7:00pm

**Place:** The Presidio Officers' Club, 50 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco

**Price:** Free

**Link:** [www.presidio.gov/events/presidio-dialogues-letters-from-the-camps-voices-of-dissent](http://www.presidio.gov/events/presidio-dialogues-letters-from-the-camps-voices-of-dissent)

Using original letters from the camps, this interdisciplinary presentation focuses on Japanese Americans who spoke out during and after their incarceration, read by contemporary descendants, writers and performers.

**Additional programming to be announced.**

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