



The Japanese American Legacy Project

PRESS RELEASE

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**DENSHŌ: THE JAPANESE AMERICAN LEGACY PROJECT
LAUNCHES *SITES OF SHAME* WEBSITE**

SEATTLE, July 29, 2005—A comprehensive survey of 69 detention facilities that held more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II is the focus of a new multimedia website *Sites of Shame: An Overview of Japanese American Detention Facilities*. Created by Denshō: The Japanese American Legacy Project, the website *Sites of Shame* (www.densho.org/sitesofshame) examines the extensive national incarceration network that supported two waves of removal and imprisonment. The first wave was the 5,500 Japanese immigrant men arrested by the FBI and held in Department of Justice and U.S. Army internment camps. The second was comprised of the 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry – two thirds U.S. citizens – who were removed to temporary “assembly centers” and then held in War Relocation Authority incarceration camps.

An interactive map of the United States highlights the 69 detention facilities and allows for quick access to basic detention site information such as dates of operation, location, climate and geography of the surrounding area, as well as key facts about the people imprisoned at the site. Complementing this basic information is additional multimedia content about each individual site including video clip memories from people who lived the camp experience, historic and current day photographs, and web links to additional resources.

In the *One Family's Story* section, website visitors can learn more about the personal impact of camp through the voices of Toshio, Mitsuye and Joe Yasutake who were incarcerated during World War II. The Yasutake siblings recount their family's long and often painful journey through the wartime detention system from the FBI arrest of their father in Seattle immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, to the incarceration of the rest of the family at the Puyallup, Washington, temporary “Assembly Center” and the Minidoka, Idaho, incarceration camp, to the eventual release of the family from the Crystal City, Texas, internment camp.

“When we got to Crystal City and we were going through the gates, the whole camp looked much more foreboding. Somehow it seems like the fences were heavier or higher. There were more guards, it seems like, around. And, and I can remember the, my feeling that, “Gee, you know, I feel like I'm goin' to a prison.””

--An excerpt from *Sites of Shame* of Joe Yasutake describing his impressions as he and his mother entered the Crystal City internment camp to join his father.

The website *Sites of Shame* was designed and developed with assistance from the website creators at The Lux Group, Seattle Washington. This project was funded in part by the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program and the Washington Civil Liberties Public Education Program.

Denshō Archive and Website

Sites of Shame is the latest addition to Denshō's principal website (www.densho.org), designed to showcase the organization's content-rich digital archive of video life history interviews, photos and documents focusing on the unjust incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Denshō's collection of more than 230 indexed and transcribed visual life histories and 6,000 captioned photographs and documents grows larger every year. The Denshō website is exceptional in offering a wealth of primary sources supported by historical contextual material and curriculum for elementary through college levels. Students, teachers, and the general public may use the resources free of charge for purposes of research and education.

Among those interviewed are U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, World War II veteran and recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor; Walt Woodward, editor of *The Bainbridge Review* and model for the main character in the bestseller *Snow Falling on Cedars*; and Gordon Hirabayashi, one of the Supreme Court challengers of the exclusion orders. Denshō preserves these irreplaceable testimonies and images not only to preserve the legacy of one ethnic group, but to caution against violating the civil liberties of any people in the name of national security.

While the archive covers Japanese American history from immigration in the 1800s to the present, most visitors use it to research the causes of the World War II incarceration. Video excerpts from the archive enhance a section on the true motivations behind the incarceration as stated in 1982 by a congressional commission: the mass removal was not justified by military necessity, but was rooted in racism, war hysteria, and failure of leadership.

Visitors listen to the memories of those who lived through this traumatic episode in American history. Their personal, often emotional recollections bring to life dramatic events that standard textbooks barely mention. The supplementary primary sources -- newspaper articles and photos, propaganda posters, government memos -- help people understand what these Japanese immigrants and their citizen children endured and eventually overcame.

About Denshō

The Japanese word *denshō* means "to pass on to the next generation," or to leave a legacy. The legacy Denshō offers is a story of crucial relevance to post- 9/11 America. The Seattle-based nonprofit organization was founded in 1996. Its mission is to educate, preserve, collaborate, and inspire action for equity.