



D E N S H Ō

The Japanese American Legacy Project

Press Release

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Denshō to Collect "Alternative Voices" Interviews with National Park Service

MARCH 2004, SEATTLE-- With the aid of a \$30,000 grant from the Washington Civil Liberties Public Education Program (WCLPEP), Denshō has begun conducting eight visual histories, or video interviews, documenting the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans at Minidoka, Idaho. Interview subjects for the project "Alternative Voices: Other Perspectives of the Japanese American Incarceration" include non-Japanese Americans who witnessed or participated in the mass removal and detention, such as sympathetic supporters, guards or other government employees, and local residents near the incarceration camp. To relate the past abuses of civil liberties to the present, Denshō will also interview people who can recount the discrimination that followed the 9-11 terrorist attacks, such as South Asians and Muslim Americans. All the video interviews will be offered on Denshō's public educational website (www.densho.org) later this year.

In producing the visual histories, the Seattle-based nonprofit organization will collaborate with the National Park Service, which is developing interpretive programs for the Minidoka Internment National Monument. The Minidoka "Relocation Center" (the government's innocuous name for the barbed-wire surrounded barracks) held 13,000 citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry from Washington, Oregon, and Alaska between 1942 and 1945. Thousands of Japanese Americans living in the Seattle area were sent to Minidoka.

The "Alternative Voices" visual histories will broaden the focus of Denshō's digital archive of life stories, historical photos, and curriculum on civil rights. Denshō's educational website provides all these resources free of charge to K-12 teachers and students, scholars, and the general public. Every visual history Denshō produces is fully researched, digitized, indexed, and transcribed for the convenience of researchers. Denshō preserves these first-hand accounts of history not only as the legacy of one ethnic group, but as a reminder for all people who cherish democratic principles.

Alice Ito, Denshō's Interview Programs Manager states, "The support from the WCLPEP is especially meaningful because it reaffirms the significance of the unjust incarceration for all people in Washington State and beyond. Japanese Americans were the ones who suffered from the suspension of their constitutional rights during World War II, but others were involved in carrying out the government's orders or witnessed the consequences. The WCLPEP funds enable us to document the valuable perspectives of some of these individuals. The grant also recognizes that, regardless of ethnicity, everyone can benefit from learning about this crisis in our democracy."

Preserving the past, inspiring the future