

## **Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago receives National Park Service Japanese American Confinement Sites Program Grant Award**

Chicago -- The Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago (JASC) received a National Park Service grant of \$74,620 for *Winning the Peace*, an exhibit on the role of Japanese American soldiers in the U.S. Military Intelligence Service (MIS) in World War II. The multimedia exhibit, which will include filmed interviews with Chicago-area Japanese American MIS veterans, will be shown at multiple locations, beginning with JASC's facility in Uptown Chicago in the spring of 2010. The JASC grant is one of 19 totaling \$960,000 given by the National Park Service to help preserve and interpret many of the historic locations where Japanese Americans were confined during World War II. Their confinement followed the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, after which President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal of more than 110,000 men, women and children, most of them American citizens of Japanese ancestry.

The JASC's MIS exhibit will add a Chicago-specific component that supplements a national traveling exhibition created by the National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS), which is also building a museum and learning center at the site of the first MIS training school in San Francisco's Presidio. The NJAHS exhibit will travel from San Francisco to Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington DC, and Seattle.

The MIS was a secret corps of Japanese American servicemen from Hawaii and the mainland whose work as translators, interrogators, and fighters was critical to the US victory over Japan. After the war, these soldiers served as cultural and linguistic ambassadors for the peaceful occupation of Japan. The exhibit brings to light the irony of the Japanese American MIS soldiers' heroism on behalf of a country that rounded up their families and friends and confined them in isolated camps surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. The overwhelming majority of those confined were United States citizens of Japanese heritage. Largely as a result of military confidentiality agreements, the stories of MIS soldiers have remained untold for decades.

Following World War II, more than 20,000 people left Japanese American internment camps to resettle in Chicago, a city that offered employment and educational opportunities, as well as a relatively tolerant atmosphere. Among those who relocated in Chicago were former MIS soldiers and their families.

The JASC, first known as the Chicago Resettlers Committee, was formed in 1946 to help Chicago's new citizens find jobs and homes. As resettlers became permanent residents of the city, the organization changed its name to the Japanese American Service Committee. Today, the JASC has 22 employees and a budget of \$1.4 million. Its mission is to preserve and raise awareness of Japanese American culture and heritage, and promote the physical and spiritual well-being of Japanese Americans and the greater multi-cultural community in the Midwest.

The JASC worked with several other Chicago-area Japanese American organizations to pool resources, including seed money, to plan the exhibit and to reach out to MIS veterans and their families to encourage them to share their stories and artifacts. Those involved include the Chicago Japanese American Historical Society, the Japanese American Citizens League, the Japanese Mutual Aid Society, and the American Legion Nisei Post No. 1183.

The JASC grant is among a cohort of first-ever Japanese American Confinement Sites Grants, which will help fund a wide variety of projects in a dozen states. Congress established the Japanese American Confinement Sites grant program in 2006 (under Public Law 109-441, 16 USC 461) to preserve and interpret the places where Japanese Americans were sequestered after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The law authorizes up to \$38 million for the life of the grant program to identify, research, evaluate, interpret, protect, restore, repair, and acquire historic confinement sites. The program aims to teach and inspire present and future generations about the injustice of the wartime program and demonstrate the nation's commitment since then to equal justice under the law.