



# Friends of MINIDOKA

NEWSLETTER



WWW.MINIDOKA.ORG



FALL / WINTER 2019

DEAR FRIENDS,

*As 2019 begins to wind down, I find myself reflecting on a whirlwind year full of mission-filled work and in gratitude of the community that is Friends of Minidoka: whether you consider yourself survivors, descendants, individual members, partner organizations passionately carrying out similar work, fellow pilgrims at these confinement sites, or newcomers to this history, I'm grateful to be on this journey with you. This year brought with it an incredible milestone in the dedication of the new visitor center at Minidoka National Historic Site, which gave us cause to celebrate the years of collective effort in bringing the site to what it is today, but more importantly to reaffirm our purpose moving forward: advocating for the continued protection of the site, educating the public about this history, and preserving the legacy of Minidoka for future generations.*

*Throughout the summer and fall, we were fortunate to engage in activities to strengthen our relationships with various partners. We are grateful for opportunities to conduct outreach in other communities and to engage new audiences in the mission of Friends of Minidoka and the developments at the site. In August I attended the 90th annual Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL) convention in Salt Lake City, which jointly hosted the second Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium (JACSC) meeting of 2019. FOM staff and board members enjoyed fellowship with Consortium and JACL members from around the nation. FOM was represented throughout the weekend on panel discussions on the history of the JACSC; partnership best practices for NPS and Japanese American organizations; and the lessons of redress for community solidarity moving forward.*

*In late September, FOM joined organizations from throughout the Pacific Northwest at the the Wing Luke Museum for an NPS AAPI Theme Study convening. It was an inspiring weekend spent with old friends and new working towards a broader understanding of the role of historic sites affiliated with AAPI communities, and I was able to speak about Minidoka as part of a session titled "How to Connect Historic Preservation to Racial Healing." I was especially moved to tour the former US Immigration & Naturalization Service Building that served as Seattle's detention and processing center for immigrants, including many of our Issei who were apprehended by the FBI immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Crystal City Pilgrimage in November was also an enlightening experience, with many sessions dedicated to increasing participants' understanding of the unique history of the Japanese Latin American population, as well as the German American and Italian American populations that were incarcerated there.*

*We've continued to move forward at full steam with our efforts surrounding education, using the Minidoka documentary we are currently expanding as a tool for public engagement and building empathy among new audiences. With our partners the National Park Service and North Shore Productions, we hosted a screening of the 30-minute documentary Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp at the Western Museum Association conference held in Boise and were overwhelmed with the emotional response by much of the audience and the in-depth dialogue that followed. We look forward to screenings of the short film over the next few months in Portland, Bend, and Boise, as we continue to work on completing the extended version and educational curriculum package. We hope to see you at these events as well as the upcoming events throughout Idaho including the Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium, Day of Remembrance, Minidoka visitor center grand opening, and the Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition Righting a Wrong. Details for all of these are in this newsletter. You will also find our 2018 Donor Report included in this newsletter. As a small organization, we are so proud to be able to offer this variety of programming to support our mission of preserving the legacy of Minidoka, and we acknowledge that we could not do it alone. A resounding thank you to all of our partners and supporters — we are grateful for your support as we continue to do this important work.*

Best,



*Mia Russell*

Mia Russell, Executive Director  
Friends of Minidoka - [mia@minidoka.org](mailto:mia@minidoka.org)



**INFORMATION REQUEST:  
JOHN AND ESTHER ESSENE**

With many thanks to Hideko Takahashi of the Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Washington for bringing this to our attention, we would like to request information from any friends or relatives of John and Esther Essene. The Japanese section of the *Minidoka Interlude* as well as the April 24, 1943 issue of the *Minidoka Irrigator* include the marriage announcement for John and Esther. Esther Essene, nee Kohara, was incarcerated at Minidoka and was originally from Portland. John Essene, a white WRA administrator, served as Superintendent of Community Enterprises at Minidoka having earlier founded the Student Cooperative Housing at UCLA. Through basic research, we know that John enlisted in the army from Minidoka three days after their wedding, and he and Esther lived in Indianapolis while he served and later settled in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is a very unique story that a white WRA administrator and a Japanese American incarcerated met at camp, married, and



left together. We would love to hear more about their lives, their relationship, and to capture any photographs that might exist in order to share this story more broadly. Please send any information to [mia@minidoka.org](mailto:mia@minidoka.org), or call (208) 863-0076.



Visitor center dedication on July 7th. Courtesy Kayla Isomura.

**2019 MINIDOKA PILGRIMAGE AND DEDICATION**

During the 17th annual Minidoka Pilgrimage this July, about 325 pilgrimage participants joined nearly 100 additional guests for the dedication and soft opening of the new Minidoka National Historic Site visitor center. The visitor center, which opens to the public February 22nd, was open for the day to allow survivors

and their descendants a first look at the newly rehabilitated historic warehouse, and the exhibits and film featured inside. Nisei attendees were invited to cut the ribbon to dedicate the new visitor center

following invocations by Rev. Karen Yokota Love and Rev. Kusunoki, and remarks by Mia Russell of Friends of Minidoka; Robert Hirai, Honorary Consul General of Japan in Idaho; Wade Vagias, Superintendent of Minidoka; and Jim Azumano, community speaker. We also dedicated and unveiled our exhibit *The Issei: A Legacy of Courage*, with words by Yosh Nakagawa to honor of the Issei generation. We hope this exhibit will allow all visitors the opportunity to learn from the Issei legacy of courage, perseverance, and sacrifice.



John and Esther Essene. Photo courtesy user swalth, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

**SAVE THE DATES!  
UPCOMING FRIENDS OF  
MINIDOKA PROGRAMMING**

**DECEMBER 8, 2019**

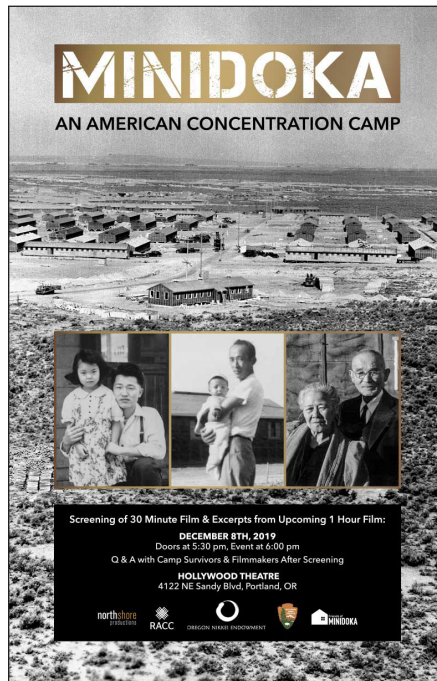
Screening of *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp* at the Hollywood Theatre, Portland, OR, 5:30-7:30pm. \$10 admission.

Join us at The Hollywood Theatre in Portland for a screening of *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp*, produced by North Shore Productions for the National Park Service. In addition to the 30-minute documentary, we will also show excerpts from the upcoming independent, long format version of the documentary. A Q & A with camp survivors and the filmmakers will follow the screening and we will be accepting donations to help complete post production of the film. Friends of Minidoka is excited to partner with North Shore Productions to make this project a reality. Thanks to Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center for being an event sponsor!



OREGON NIKKEI ENDOWMENT

*Minidoka* tells the story of Japanese Americans, most of them American citizens, who were forcibly removed from their Pacific Northwest homes during World War II. They were held in squalid conditions in temporary detention centers, and then put on trains to a concentration camp in the desert of southern Idaho. Innocent of any crime,



many of them would remain imprisoned at Minidoka for over three years. In the compelling voices of survivors of the camp, the film explores the unconstitutional suspension of the civil rights of these Americans and the long-lasting impact of the incarceration on their community. *Minidoka* examines what happens when a group of Americans are imprisoned solely on the basis of race and the relevance of this story today.

In addition to the long format documentary film for national public television, we are also producing a 7th-12th grade educational curriculum. The curriculum is based on four short companion films that bring a deeper awareness and understanding of this critical story to a new generation. Both the television documentary and the short educational films will be told primarily in the voices of survivors of the camps and their descendants.

The film trailer, additional information, and a platform for online donations can be found at [www.minidokafilm.com](http://www.minidokafilm.com). Tickets can be purchased at [www.hollywoodtheatre.org](http://www.hollywoodtheatre.org).

**DECEMBER 9, 2019**

Screening of *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp* at the High Desert Museum, Bend, OR, 6:00–7:30pm, doors at 5:00 pm. \$7 admission.

Produced for Minidoka National Historic Site, this film tells the story of a group of Americans and their incarceration by the U.S. government in the High Desert of southern Idaho, purely on the basis of race. *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp* explores the lasting impact of incarceration on Japanese-Americans, through decades of shame and silence, before the community took a stand for redress, and examines the relevance of their story for civil rights today. Explore the exhibit about World War II imprisonment Witness to *Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii* beforehand and hear from Friends of Minidoka Executive Director Mia Russell afterward about making the film. <https://highdesertmuseum.org/events/minidoka-film>.

**FEBRUARY 5, 2020**

**Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium at The Community Library, Ketchum, ID**  
6:00-7:30pm.  
Free admission.

For the first time, we are partnering with The Community Library in Ketchum, ID to bring our civil liberties programming to the Wood River Valley!

The 14th Minidoka Civil Liberties

Symposium will feature

Jessica Asai speaking about the legacy of

Minoru Yasui's

Supreme Court case

challenging the incarceration of Japanese

Americans during World War II. Jessica

Asai is *yonsei*, a fourth generation

Japanese American; who was raised in

Hood River, Oregon where her family has

farmed for four generations. Jessica is a

founding board member of the Oregon

Asian Pacific American Bar Association

and contributed to the team effort that

successfully nominated Minoru Yasui for

a 2015 Presidential Medal of Freedom,

the nation's highest civilian honor.

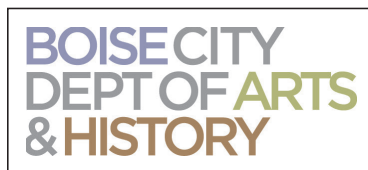


**FEBRUARY 6, 2020**

**Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium at Boise City Hall, Boise, ID**

**6:00-7:30pm. Free admission.**

We are also partnering with the Boise City Department of Arts and History for the first time to bring our civil liberties programming to the Fettuccine Forum, a series which invites the public to interact with politicians,



artists, historians, activists, advocates and professionals in an effort to promote good citizenship and responsible growth through education.

Join us in Boise for an encore presentation by Jessica Asai on the legacy of attorney, activist, and Minidoka incarcerated Minoru Yasui and his Supreme Court case challenging the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans.

This event is also in partnership with the National Park Service, Boise State University, and ACLU Idaho.



**FEBRUARY 17, 2020**

**Day of Remembrance Proclamation Signing Ceremony, Idaho Statehouse, Governor's Ceremonial Office, Boise, ID, 2:00pm.**

Join us at the annual observance of Day of Remembrance at the Idaho Statehouse. 2020 will mark the 78th anniversary of Executive Order 9066. Every year since 2002, the Idaho Governor's office has been most gracious as incarcerated, students, educators and lawmakers have observed and participated in the ceremony.

This event is organized by the Boise Valley Japanese American Citizens League. Please RSVP to Robert Hirai at [robert.hirai@gmail.com](mailto:robert.hirai@gmail.com).

**FEBRUARY 21, 2020**

**Friends of Minidoka meet and greet at Rudy's: A Cook's Paradise, Twin Falls, ID, 5:00-7:00pm**

Join our staff and board for wine and appetizer pairings at Rudy's gourmet cooking store in downtown Twin Falls as we promote and celebrate the grand opening of the Minidoka Visitor Center and provide information about Friends of Minidoka.



**FEBRUARY 22, 2020**

**Visitor Center Grand Opening, Minidoka National Historic Site, Jerome, ID. Time and details to be announced.**

Save the date and look out for additional details if you'd like to join us for the public grand opening of the new National Park Service Visitor Center. The former warehouse #5, which served as an automotive repair shop at the incarceration site during WWII, has been renovated into a state of the art facility to house the Visitor Center for Minidoka National Historic Site. The space includes a ranger information desk, bookstore and retail space, theater, and exhibition space, including the newly dedicated exhibit *The Issei: A Legacy of Courage* installed by the Friends of Minidoka.

**SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT ABOUT WWII INCARCERATION ON DISPLAY AT IDAHO STATE MUSEUM**

Friends of Minidoka is excited to announce a new partnership with the Idaho State Museum in support of the traveling version of the Smithsonian Institution exhibit entitled *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II*. *Righting a Wrong* was developed by the National Museum of American History (NMAH) and adapted for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The exhibition was on display at NMAH in advance of the February 2017 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, and closed on July 31, 2019. It will be on display in Boise from January 25 through April 5, 2020.

Through the Robert C. Sims Community Education Fund, Friends of Minidoka will be providing the museum staff and docents with training and the funding needed to secure a bus to take a guided tour of Minidoka in advance of the exhibit opening.



Smithsonian Institution



Entrance to *Righting a Wrong* exhibit at the National Museum of American History.

• **JANUARY 25, 2020**  
**Opening of *Righting a Wrong* traveling exhibition, Idaho State Museum, Boise, ID, 10:00am - 5:00pm.**

• **FEBRUARY 19, 2020**  
**Screening of *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp*, Idaho State Museum, Boise, ID. Time to be announced. Free admission.**  
 The National Park Service will be partnering with the Idaho State Museum to hold a film screening of the new NPS documentary *Minidoka: An American Concentration Camp* in observance of the Day of Remembrance, the anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066. Friends of Minidoka will offer a presentation in conjunction with the screening.

• **MARCH 30, 2020**  
**Screening of *Bearing the Unbearable*, Idaho State Museum, Boise, ID. Time to be announced. Free admission.**

The National Park Service will be partnering with the Idaho State Museum to hold a film screening of the new NPS documentary *Bearing the Unbearable*, which documents the Bainbridge Island Japanese American WWII story, in observance of the anniversary of at the forced removal of the Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island.

**CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: DOCENTS NEEDED!**  
*Special Volunteer Opportunity!*



The Idaho State Museum is in need of volunteer docents. These volunteers engage with visitors in the special exhibition *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II* from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services (SITES). They will greet visitors, answer questions regarding the exhibition, provide orientation to visitors, facilitate hands-on, object-based learning, and perform light cleaning of the exhibition areas as necessary. They will also promote safe and appropriate usage of exhibit features and interactives. January 25th, 2020 - April 5th, 2020, Monday-Sunday between 10:00am - 5:00pm. Extra shifts may be opened for special events. To volunteer, please contact Emily Chivers at (208) 780-5188 or [emily.chivers@ishs.idaho.gov](mailto:emily.chivers@ishs.idaho.gov).

## 2018 DONORS

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### THANK YOU!

To our many supporters, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and friends who made our work in 2018 possible –  
THANK YOU.

We could not accomplish our mission of preserving the legacy of Minidoka without your support. We apologize for any errors found in these records.

Please help us correct any errors by contacting us at [mia@minidoka.org](mailto:mia@minidoka.org) or (208) 863-0076.

Please note that if you donated through Facebook, for anonymity reasons we are not privy to your name or other information.

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### **ARE YOU MAXIMIZING YOUR DONATION?**

Don't forget to ask your employer about matching gifts! Employee matching gifts are donations an employer makes to match charitable contributions from their employees. Employee matching gifts often are dollar-for-dollar, but some companies will give double or even triple the original donation.

### **HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A GIFT OF STOCK?**

Make a bigger impact by donating long-term appreciated securities, including stock, bonds, and mutual funds, to Friends of Minidoka. Compared with donating cash, or selling your assets then contributing proceeds after the tax deduction, you may be able to automatically increase your gift and your tax deduction.

### **ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF MINIDOKA THROUGH PLANNED GIVING?**

Whatever your stage in life, it is a good idea to plan for how your affairs will be handled. Your estate plan can be used to protect your loved ones and leave a lasting legacy by ensuring that the Minidoka story will stay alive for generations to come.

### **CONSIDER DESIGNATING THESE GIFTS IN YOUR PLANS**

- Ask your heirs to give a gift to us in your memory. If you are leaving most of your assets to your children or grandchildren, you could arrange with them to donate a small portion of their inheritance to us in your memory. They would get an income tax deduction for the gift when they make it, reducing the cost to them.

- Name Friends of Minidoka as a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement plan. Retirement assets are among the highest taxed assets in any estate. Your heirs will be taxed on income tax and maybe state or federal estate taxes. If you leave the remainder to us, there will be no taxes due.

- Arrange for the remainder in a savings or stock account to go to our organization. It is possible to rename a bank savings account in such a way that at your death whatever remains in the account is transferred to Friends of Minidoka. These are known a TDO, or transfer on death account.

- Make Friends of Minidoka a beneficiary of a life insurance policy you already own. If you have life insurance you have probably named your spouse, children or other relative as the beneficiary. Consider including Friends of Minidoka as well.





## JOIN. RENEW. DONATE.

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS OF MINIDOKA AND THE WORK WE ARE DOING!

### OUR MISSION

*Friends of Minidoka engages in and supports education, research, and historic preservation of the WWII Japanese American incarceration experience. We strive to pass on the history, legacy, and lessons of civil liberties through transforming and inspiring experiences for the general public and those with personal and familial ties to Minidoka. We are committed to working with our partners to accomplish these goals.*  
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

**MAIL:** Friends of Minidoka, PO Box 1085, Twin Falls, ID 83303-1085

**ONLINE:** [www.minidoka.org/donate](http://www.minidoka.org/donate)

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