

WING LUKE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, October 4th, 2022

From: Wing Luke Museum

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Wing Luke Museum to Open New Exhibit Highlighting a Legacy of Resistance Movements Born from the Japanese American Incarceration

Seattle, WA: Wing Luke Museum is thrilled to announce a major exhibit opening on October 14th titled *Resisters: A Legacy of Movement from the Japanese American Incarceration*. The exhibit incorporates art, first-person accounts, historical material, and artifacts to draw connections from Japanese American resistance movements during the WWII era to modern Asian American justice movements and activism today.

The signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin Roosevelt and the resulting mass incarceration of Japanese American families living on the West Coast is among the single most traumatic events in the history of Asian America, but many history books present an incomplete view of the story. The truth is that the response to the evacuation orders was complicated and contested. There was resentment, conflict, and violence in the camps. Even those who “went quietly to prove their loyalty” found ways to push back in small ways, collectively and alone.

Joël Barraquiel Tan, Executive Director of the Wing Luke Museum, stresses that this conversation is more relevant than ever, even eight decades later. “In this time when our Chinatown-International District is battling disaster gentrification and our families are targeted with hate crimes, the *Resisters* exhibition reminds us that ‘never again is now.’” he says.

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The exhibit grew out of the publication of *We Hereby Refuse*, a graphic novel that highlights three Japanese Americans who resisted the wartime incarceration. The exhibit leads visitors through a historical narrative beginning with stories of Japanese American incarceratedees in the 1940s and the complicated feelings of shame, anger, fear, and varied faces of resistance from within the community. Through the following decades, the story illustrates the generational trauma and cultural aftershocks of the incarceration, while highlighting the lingering sense of injustice and awakening to justice movements at home and abroad. Fast forward to 2001 and beyond, the exhibit draws parallels between the stigmatization of Japanese Americans and modern day anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and anti-Immigrant policies. Visitors leave with a final prompt to consider: In the pursuit of justice, how will you show solidarity for movements today and into the future?

"The Japanese American community continues to heal from the ways that our mass incarceration divided and harmed us," writes exhibit artist Erin Shigaki. "We have created an exhibit that radically expands and explores the narrative of resistance. Through its offerings, we hope that visitors come away with visions of our future collective wholeness."

For Tamiko Nimura, writer of the exhibit's main text, a direct connection from past to present is clear. "For me, the Resisters exhibit is about response. How did persons of Japanese descent respond to the pressures of xenophobia, wartime hysteria, and imprisonment?—that is, beyond the more celebrated, visible forms of service or compliance? How have Japanese American descendants responded to the lingering trauma of incarceration? How have they honored their ancestors' capacity for resilience and resistance? And how do we meaningfully connect the story of Japanese American wartime incarceration to the stories of other communities that have endured (and continue to endure) similar forms of oppression?"

Through artwork, artifacts, and text, the full exhibit challenges viewers to consider how they would resist, how they have resisted, and how they will respond to ongoing injustice.

The exhibit was created through the Wing's community-based exhibit process, with a committee of community advisors shaping the show's messages and themes, storyline, and content. Artists were selected by invitation through an open Call for Art, and includes works from Na Omi Shintani, Erin Shigaki, Inye Wokoma, Anida Yeou Ali and others. Woven into the exhibit are also historical works by Issei and Nisei artists as well as installations created in collaboration with local immigration activists and indigenous communities.

A special opening reception for Wing Luke Museum members and special guests will take place on Saturday, October 15th from 1 to 5PM PST that will officially kick off the new exhibit's 1-year run. The reception will include a formal speaking program featuring a performance of excerpts from Paul Kikuchi's new work *In Shadows*, written in collaboration with The Omoide Project, by Seattle Symphony Musicians, Taiko player Stan Shikuma, and Sanshin player Mako Willet. Guest speakers will include Na Omi Shintani, whose art installation titled *Dream Refuge* is featured in the exhibit, and remarks from exhibit text writer Tamiko Nimura. The speaking program will be followed by an artist panel featuring exhibit artists Anida Yeou Ali, Bella Kubo,

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Ellen Bepp, and Erin Shigaki. The afternoon's program will close out with a poetry performance by traci kato-kiryama, author and transdisciplinary artist, and a dance performance of *From Issei to Rokusei*, performed by Gabrielle Kazuko Nomura Gainor and dancers Sarah Baker, Aya Bisbee, Hailey Bortel, Fumi Murakami, Megan Felise Garcia, and Mariko Smithashima.

The full title of the exhibit is ***Resisters: A Legacy of Movement from the Japanese American Incarceration***, opening Friday, October 14, 2022 and will be on display through September 17, 2023.

For more information about the exhibit and opening reception, visit <https://www.wingluke.org/resisters>

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The **Wing Luke Museum's** mission is to connect everyone to the rich history, dynamic cultures and art of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders through vivid storytelling and inspiring experiences to advance racial and social equity. As a Smithsonian Affiliate, National Park Service Affiliated Area, and the only pan-Asian American museum in the nation, The Wing Luke Museum is a national treasure, preserving and sharing the personal stories of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. www.wingluke.org

Please contact pr@wingluke.org to request press images pertaining to this exhibit