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## **New Jewish Museum Milwaukee Exhibit Explores Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II**

***Then They Came for Me* opens Feb. 18; Free admission thanks to The Yabuki Family Foundation**

**MILWAUKEE, WI – Feb. 8, 2022** – Jewish Museum Milwaukee (JMM) presents a major traveling exhibit, *Then They Came for Me: Incarceration of Japanese Americans During WW II and the Demise of Civil Liberties*, Feb. 18 – May 29, 2022. The exhibit examines a terrifying period in U.S. history when the government scapegoated and imprisoned thousands of people of Japanese ancestry. Through a variety of media, *Then They Came for Me* illustrates the impacts and lasting effects these events had on those who experienced them. At the same time, it reflects on the discrimination and intolerance surrounding current immigration and refugee crises in America and around the world. Free admission to the Museum through the run of the exhibit is provided by the presenting sponsor, The Yabuki Family Foundation.

The narrative of *Then They Came for Me* surrounds the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent removal of 120,000 Japanese American citizens and legal residents from their homes during World War II. The exhibit examines a painful piece of history where people were uprooted from their homes and lives while often being separated from their families to be incarcerated based solely on their ancestry.

“At JMM we are committed to examining topics of social justice, civil rights and equality because learning from our shared history is critical in working to assure we don’t repeat it,” said Molly Dubin, JMM curator. “This exhibit incorporates authentic voices, many from the Midwest, that allow us to explore important parts of our past as a springboard for discussing current events.”

*Then They Came for Me* originated at the Alphawood Gallery, Chicago in 2017 and traveled to New York and San Francisco. The Milwaukee run is customized for the JMM space. The focal point of the exhibit is large-scale images by prominent American photographers who documented the incarceration, including Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams and Clem Albers,

alongside works by incarcerated Japanese American photographer Toyo Miyatake. A selection of contemporary works by Milwaukee-based artist and photographer Kevin Miyazaki are also incorporated.

A range of artifacts loaned by the Chicago-based Japanese American Service Committee will be displayed including suitcases, ID cards and tags, anti-Japanese propaganda, hand-crafted art, high school yearbooks and newsletters produced by camp internees. JMM partnered directly with the Japanese American Citizen League - Wisconsin Chapter to include local content through additional artifacts and oral histories. Video footage of individuals and families sharing their personal experiences highlight the impact this pivotal event had on their lives.

A variety of programs supplement this exhibit. Highlights include:

- **Japanese American Activism, Civil Rights and Broader Immigration Issues**

*Thursday, May 12, 7 p.m.*

Portraying Japanese American incarceration as a historical occurrence is wrongly all too common. In placing that dark period within the longer history of civil rights and civil liberties in the U.S., a greater understanding of where we are today, and the challenges we face moving forward become apparent. Lisa Doi, scholar activist and organizer with Tsuru for Solidarity, a grassroots collective of Japanese Americans organized against state violence, places Japanese American wartime incarceration into conversation with contemporary policies and practices of mass incarceration and immigrant detention.

- **Intergenerational Trauma Stemming from Incarceration with Dr. Donna Nagata**

*Thursday, May 19, 7 p.m.*

Donna Nagata, Professor of Psychology in the Clinical Science program at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), will discuss how WWII Japanese American incarceration resulted in a range of multigenerational consequences for those who were imprisoned and their offspring such as economic losses, impacts on cultural identities, self-esteem and family dynamics. Co-sponsored by the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center.

More information about the exhibit along with ticket information and a full list of programming is available at <https://jewishmuseummilwaukee.org>. The exhibit is presented by The Yabuki Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Argosy Foundation, and the Green Bay Packers Foundation will provide free tours to school groups. Connect with Jewish Museum Milwaukee on Facebook and Instagram @JewishMuseumMilwaukee and on Twitter @JewishMuseumMKE.

### **About the Jewish Museum Milwaukee**

The Jewish Museum Milwaukee is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of the Jewish people in southeastern Wisconsin and celebrating the continuum of Jewish heritage and culture. The history of American Jews is rooted in thousands of years of searching for freedom

and equality. The museum builds bridges between diverse groups of people through shared histories and uses historical events and art to explore contemporary topics.

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