



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 17, 2021

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Nihonmachi Little Friends Receives Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant

Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) has received a \$99,790 grant from the Department of Interior, National Park Service (NPS) through the Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant program. The funds will support a website project featuring the little-known story of the Issei (first generation) women of San Francisco and the Japanese YWCA building they erected at 1830 Sutter Street.

This project, “Dreams Interrupted: Uncovering Wartime Experiences of Issei Women” will be a robust multimedia website exploring how 1830 Sutter was a centerpiece in the Issei women’s efforts to overcome racism, discrimination, and hardship faced by the Japanese American community, and struggles other marginalized people fought for their rights. Through their experiences and the establishment of this community center, the project will explore pre-World War II racial discrimination; the wartime incarceration, exile, and diaspora of the Issei; and their modern-day legacy. The website is expected to launch in conjunction with the building’s 90th anniversary in 2022.

Designed by famed architect Julia Morgan, the 1830 Sutter “Issei Women’s Building” was built in 1932, offering cultural and social activities and temporary housing for young women and girls. Over six decades later, the building was entrusted to NLF, a culturally-based, non-profit childcare organization, as part of an out-of-court settlement of a community-supported lawsuit to save the building. 1830 Sutter Street was added to the National Register of Historic Places and the California Historic Register in 2020 and was designated as San Francisco’s #291 Landmark on May 30th, 2021. Along with these recognitions, the JACS award will help NLF “further promote the building’s unique history and cultural significance,” stated NLF Executive Director Cathy Inamasu.

The “Dreams Interrupted” project seeks recollections from Nikkei whose mothers, grandmothers, or great grandmothers in San Francisco were incarcerated in the Tanforan Assembly Center and the Manzanar, Topaz, and Tule Lake concentration camps. The project also invites NLF alumni and their families who were involved in community organizing associated with the Soko Bukai v. YWCA case to contribute their photos and stories. As one of the JACS grant recipients, NLF needs to match \$2 in federal funds for every \$1 in either non-federal funds or in-kind contributions. For more information on the project and to donate, please contact NLF at 415-922-8898 or via email at nlfchildcare@gmail.com.

The NLF grant proposal was selected through a competitive process. In 2021, NPS awarded 22 grants totaling over \$3,155,000. With these funds, JACS grants are awarded to private nonprofit organizations; educational institutions; state, local, and tribal governments; and other public entities to preserve and interpret U.S. confinement sites where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.

For questions on the JACS grant program, please contact Kara Miyagishima, Program Manager, Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program, NPS, at 303-969-2885.

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