



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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"Before They Were Heroes: Sus Ito's World War II Images" from the Japanese American National Museum opens Jan. 22 at the California Museum

Traveling exhibit featuring more than 200 images & artifacts offers an intimate look at the heroic service of Japanese American soldiers in the Rescue of the Lost Battalion & other significant European Theater events

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. — Jan. 14, 2019: The California Museum announced "Before They Were Heroes: Sus Ito's World War II Images," organized by the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and toured by Flying Fish, will open Tues., Jan. 22, 2019. The traveling exhibit, which features more than 200 images taken by Susumu "Sus" Ito (1919-2015), documents Ito's tour of duty as a soldier in the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion of the celebrated 442nd Regimental Combat Team, offering an intimate look at the all-Japanese American unit's humble yet heroic service in the Rescue of the Lost Battalion, liberation of a Dachau sub-camp and other significant events in the European Theater.

"We are honored to host 'Before They Were Heroes,'" said California Museum Executive Director Amanda Meeker. "Sus Ito's images spotlight the often-overlooked history of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, whose brave soldiers faced tremendous discrimination but made their unit the most highly decorated of its size in American military history, receiving more than 18,000 individual decorations for bravery and almost 9,500 Purple Hearts."

Born in Stockton, Calif., to immigrant tenant farmers, Ito was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1940. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, however, he was placed on civilian duty in Oklahoma because of his Japanese ancestry, and his rifle was confiscated. In 1943, after Japanese American citizens were reclassified as eligible to serve in combat, Ito was assigned to be a forward observer on the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, responsible for identifying the enemy's location — a dangerous position on the unit's front line.

Before leaving for combat, Ito visited his family in the Rohwer incarceration camp, where he was given a senninbari (a belt of 1,000 stitches) made by his mother and women in camp to protect him in battle. Ito carried the amulet with a Bible and a camera across nearly 5,000 miles over the next two years. He went to great lengths to preserve the thousands of images he took with the camera, having film developed in villages along the way.

Unseen for decades, Ito's images on display in "Before They Were Heroes: Sus Ito's World War II Images" offer an intimate look at the daily lives of soldiers in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, continuing at the California Museum through Mar. 17, 2019. For more information and an exhibit press kit, visit <http://www.californiamuseum.org/press-kits/sus-ito>.

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RELATED PROGRAMMING:

2019 Day of Remembrance

Sun., Feb. 3, 2019, 12-4 p.m.

In conjunction with Sacramento Museum Week and the 77th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, the California Museum will offer visitors reduced \$5.00 admission to explore Japanese American programs on Sun., Feb. 3, 2019, from 12 to 4 p.m. Highlights include docent-led tours of "Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII" as featured in the Museum's "Time of Remembrance" field trip tour program, plus a complimentary hands-on origami activity and self-guided tours of current exhibits including "Before They Were Heroes: Sus Ito's WWII Images," organized by the Japanese American National Museum and toured by Flying Fish. For tickets or to reserve a guided tour, visit <http://www.californiamuseum.org/2019-remembrance>.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA MUSEUM:

The California Museum educates visitors on California's diverse history, arts, culture and unique influence on the world. Through interactive exhibits and engaging programs, the Museum inspires visitors to make their mark on history. Open Tues. through Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sun. 12-5 p.m. Admission: \$7-9. Learn more at <http://www.californiamuseum.org>.

ABOUT THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM:

Established in 1985, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) promotes understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. Located in Los Angeles' historic Little Tokyo neighborhood, JANM provides a voice for Japanese Americans, as well as a forum enabling all people to explore their own heritage and culture. Open Tues., Wed., Fri., Sat. and Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and Thurs. 12-8 p.m. Admission: \$6-12. Learn more at <http://www.janm.org>.

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