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 M. Izui
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POST WAR barracks and a watchtower are drawn in a sketch from Minidoka internment camp in Idaho.

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Out of the past

On its 60th anniversary, the Japanese American Service Committee shows its roots.

By **Kate Rockwood**

December 7, 1941, may be a date that has lived in infamy, but for many Japanese-Americans it's no more important than February 19, 1942. On that day President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, forcibly relocating 120,000 Japanese immigrants and their American-born children to internment camps in remote parts of interior states like Idaho and Arkansas.

"We were in a country that was governed by laws and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and all of that was denied to us," says Kiyo Yoshimura, one of the whopping 30,000 Japanese-Americans who relocated to Chicago following imprisonment in a World War II internment camp.

This little-known story of the mass-Japanese-American migration to Chicago is on display at the Japanese American Service Committee (4427 N. Clark St.). The Chicago-area community center kicks off its three-month exhibit "Origins of Now: Rebuilding

Community" on Saturday 10 as part of its 60th anniversary celebration. The exhibit not only traces the Japanese-American plight, it also follows the role JASC played in the Chicago resettlement.

Founded in 1946 as the Chicago Resettlers Committee, the JASC helped those coming from the camps find jobs, housing and other services in Chicago. JASC executive director Jean Fujiu explains why the exhibit focuses on the resettlement: "Many people have heard about the internment but very few understand the resettlement and how the Japanese-American community was formed in Chicago." Fujiu also tells why the number of Japanese-Americans seems so high, when there's no "Little Tokyo" in Chicago. "A lot of people don't realize that there were instructions for Japanese-Americans at that time not to congregate in public and there were restrictions about forming a geographic community," he says.

To display this history, the exhibit combines video documentaries of personal internment-camp experiences and original items from the JASC's archives. The art organization Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) brought elders who had been in the camps to speak with teen students

about their experiences. Visual art and sound installations made by students will form part of the exhibit.

Amy Rasmussen, the associate director for CAPE, says that when she was facilitating the student's artwork,

"Part of this is recapturing my Japanese-American culture and heritage."

several compared the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II to that of Arab-Americans in recent years. "The students are connecting with the story of the Japanese-American experience in a very personal way," says Rasmussen.

Michael Tanimura, a JASC board member and one of the organizers of all of the open-house activities, says he didn't learn that his grandparents and parents were interned in the camps until he reached college, and even then they refused to speak about their experiences. "For me," Tanimura says, referring to the exhibit, "part of this is recapturing my Japanese-American culture and

heritage, which essentially didn't exist for the longest period of time."

The JASC still remains a historical and community center for Chicago residents, offering everything from health screenings to traditional cooking lessons. Along with the exhibition, the JASC open house will showcase some of these offerings as well as hands-on demonstrations in origami, *sumi-e* (ink painting), *ikebana* (flower arranging) and tai chi. Cultural community groups will also be featured, including Japanese classical dance troupe the Fujima Ryu of Chicago, drumming group JASC Tsukasa Taiko and workshops by the Tohkon Judo Academy.

The open house and exhibit are part of a yearlong plan to bring the largely unspoken stories of internment-camp experiences to a wider audience. "[Some people] have said this has nothing to do with third generation and later generations and I tend to differ," says Yoshimura, who relocated to Chicago from an internment camp in 1945. "This is our heritage and I think it's important for the third generation, subsequent generations, to hear about what happened to us."

The open house takes place Saturday 10, from 10am to 4pm. The exhibition runs through June 2. See Museums.