Nov. 14, 2011

Internment is a personal story at forum

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II becomes more than just a moment in history this week at Sacramento State – it becomes a personal story of overcoming a dark moment in America.

Two former inmates of the camps will be guest speakers at “The World War II Incarceration of Japanese Americans,” 10:30 a.m.-noon Thursday, Nov. 17, in the University Union Orchard Suite.

Kiyo Sato was sent to a camp in Poston, Ariz., and Mas Hatano spent time in the camp at Tule Lake in California.

The public is invited to the free presentation, which is sponsored by the University’s Asian American Studies program.

“Sato and Hatano will talk about the camps, their experiences and the impact it had on them and other Japanese Americans,” says program director Gregory Yee Mark. “It was a grave injustice and a grave mistake directed at one particular ethnic group in the United States.”

Many of the internees suffered a form of post-traumatic stress syndrome. “Even the survivors who were very young at the time still have to deal with the psychological trauma,” Mark says.

Those who were taken from their homes and forced to live in the camps reacted in various ways. Many challenged the action in the courts; others dissented and refused to sign a loyalty oath. And then there were thousands who went out of their way to prove their loyalty and volunteered for active duty in the military.

“Most people wanted to be proud Americans, but it was a varied response,” Mark says.
The presentation was originally slated to be part of one of Mark’s classes. “But I thought, this shouldn’t just be for my class, this should be opened up to the larger community.”

For more information on the forum, call (916) 278-3783. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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