Santa Ana voice Mayra Herrera: Japanese American Oral History project links generations

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According the National Park Service, “Congress established the Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant program for the preservation and interpretation of U.S. confinement sites where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.”

This means that anyone willing to learn about WWII history will be able to view and hear many primary sources.

Cal State Fullerton Archivist Stephanie George says, “The Japanese American Oral History Project Collection was launched in 1972 and over the last 43 years has been one of the most-used collections held by the Center for Oral and Public History. In addition to the oral histories held (in several projects), our holdings have prompted several other projects including multiple publications, the Orange County Japanese American Historic Building Survey, an exhibition and exhibition catalog, historical preservation, documentary films, interpretive essays and numerous lectures on the topic.”

Very few of the original survivors are still with us, but family members of Issei and Nisei generation Japanese Americans have expressed their appreciation, knowing that their family members’ recordings and photographs are saved in perpetuity.

This project isn’t simply for the sake of students, but for the global community with computer access.

Materials long “hidden” in archives, requiring those attempting to access these items to visit each archive, will be available online.

Moreover, there are lots of secondary source materials that interpret the Japanese American experience, and a good number of primary sources will be available.

How much richer will the story be when one can listen to or read the experiences of working in the celery or sugar beet fields of Orange County or those who spent time in a confinement site like Poston and Manzanar?

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