



## NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### *Our Story, Your Rights:* **American Military Heroes, Former Japanese American Internees Honored at Annual Gala on April 17<sup>th</sup>**

*Washington, D.C., April 17, 2009-* The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF) held its **2009 Annual Gala on April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Capital Hilton Hotel**. The evening's theme, "Our Story, Your Rights" recalled the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the heroic service of Japanese American veterans. The Foundation is focused on increasing public awareness about the plight of Japanese American civilians during the War and the relevance of those experiences today.

The Foundation's prestigious **Chairman's Award** was presented to the **CBS Television Network** for leadership that has significantly raised the nation's awareness of the Japanese American community's contributions to the history and life of the nation. CBS's *Cold Case* featured a story based on the Japanese American internment camp experience. The episode focused on whether a man's internment in California during World War II had any bearing on his 1945 murder shortly after his release.

"We are very proud of this special episode and honored that the National Japanese Memorial Foundation is recognizing it with its Chairman's Award," said **Nina Tassler, President, CBS Entertainment**. "It's a great feeling to present a broadcast with equal ability to entertain and inform, and bring awareness to this time in American history."

NJAMF presented the **Special Recognition Legacy Award** to four Japanese American Medal of Honor Recipients, **Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Hiroshi "Hershey" Miyamura, Barney Hajiro** and **George T. Sakato** for their distinguished military careers and patriotism. The recipients are among the most highly-decorated soldiers in American military history.

- During World War II, **Senator Inouye** directed his platoon through a hail of automatic weapon fire, which resulted in the capture of an artillery and mortar post. He then crawled to within five yards of the nearest machine gun and, with grenades, destroyed the emplacement, later neutralizing the machine gun nest. Despite being wounded, he refused to evacuate.
- During World War II, **George Sakato**, under heavy fire, made a one-man rush, encouraging his platoon to charge and destroy an enemy strongpoint. He was the inspiration for his unit to halt a counter-attack, and used enemy weapons to stop an assault. He personally took four prisoners and assisted in the capture of 34.
- During World War II, **Barney Hajiro** assisted Allied troops in eastern France by exposing himself to attack and directing fire at an enemy strong point. He and a fellow soldier also took up an outpost security position and ambushed an 18-man enemy patrol, killing two, wounding one, and taking the rest as POWs. Moreover, **Mr. Hajiro** initiated an attack up "Suicide Hill" by running forward under fire. He then fearlessly destroyed two machine gun nests and killed two enemy snipers – resulting in the operation's success.



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- **Hershey Miyamura** distinguished himself by risking his own life in hand-to-hand combat during the Korean War. Emerging from shelter, and with only his bayonet, he engaged in close fighting, then administered first aid to his unit and directed their evacuation from danger. He then bayoneted his way through infiltrated enemy soldiers to a gun emplacement and assisted in the operation.

“Since our community’s darkest days during the Second World War, we have struggled, successfully, to ensure that the lessons we and our fellow Americans learned from the injustice of the internment and evacuation are never forgotten,” said **Norman Y. Mineta, former U.S. Cabinet Secretary and NJAMF Vice Chair**. “Those lessons of history are our community’s legacy to all of our fellow Americans, and the work of ensuring they will always be remembered is the heart of the Foundation’s mission. I am tremendously proud to be a part of that work.”

**Congressman Xavier Becerra** received the **Award for Constitutional Rights** for contributions to constitutional rights that have materially improved the treatment of, and opportunities made available to, all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender. **Congressman Becerra** is active in promoting redress for the Japanese Latin Americans interned during World War II and introducing legislation to investigate what occurred.

Former CNN news anchor and founder of Sachi Koto Communications, **Sachi Koto** was the event’s mistress of ceremonies.

### **About NJAMF**

The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to education and public awareness about the Japanese American experience during World War II. NJAMF raised the private funds to build the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism during World War II. The Memorial is not only a monument to the Japanese American experience, but also a reminder that we must not allow anything like this to happen to any minority community again. [www.njam.org](http://www.njam.org)

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