JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM TO HONOR
JEANNE HOUSTON, LINKIN PARK’S MIKE SHINODA AT
ANNUAL GALA DINNER SET FOR FEBRUARY 5

LOS ANGELES.—The Japanese American National Museum will honor author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston (Farewell to Manzanar), Linkin Park MC/vocalist and composer Mike Shinoda, innovative publication Giant Robot and its publisher Eric Nakamura, and designers and illustrators Sandra Higashi and Byron Glaser as part of its 2006 Annual Gala Dinner set for Saturday, February 4, at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza Hotel and Spa in Century City. The National Museum will also present its Cultural Ambassador Award to Madame Sosei Matsumoto, the highest-ranking instructor of the Urasenke School of Tea in the United States.

The theme for the 2006 Annual Gala Dinner is “Creative Connections: Linking History, Culture and Identity”. The National Museum recognizes that Japanese Americans have contributed and continue to contribute in creative ways to America’s culture. Since their sense of their own heritage often infuses their work, those contributions often historically connect back to the Nikkei community.

Houston co-wrote with her husband James the autobiographical novel about her family’s World War II unconstitutional incarceration in the government-run Manzanar camp in California. Since the story is told through the eyes of the seven-year-old Jeanne, the book, which was also turned into a made-for-TV movie, has been utilized in schools across the nation to relate this important historical event from the standpoint of how it affected one family.

Shinoda, one of the founders of the Grammy Award-winning band Linkin Park, composed a song for his solo album Rising Tied based on personal stories his father and aunt told him about their camp experiences. The song, “Kenji”, includes the voices of his father and aunt, and like Farewell to Manzanar, has the potential to reach millions of individuals, many who will want to learn more about this chapter of American history. Shinoda attributes his inspiration to write the song to a visit to the National Museum.

Giant Robot was launched by Nakamura and Martin Wong in 1994 as a stapled and photocopied publication with a grand total of 240 copies distributed. Without a budget, but also without the restrictions of a marketing plan and advertisers, the publication delved deep into Asian and Asian American popular culture or whatever the staff and writers found of interest and soon was proclaimed the best “zine” of the last decade. The franchise has expanded into several retail stores and a café and the magazine reaches a multicultural audience interested in “Asian pop culture and beyond.”
Higashi and Glaser developed a line of award-winning educational, innovative toys, books and calendars under the Zolo and Curious Bonz brands. Their creations encourage self expression in children and inspire their imaginations. Both graduates of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Higashi grew up in Gardena and Glaser in Santa Barbara and integrated their ties to the Japanese American community into their creative work.

Madame Sosei Matsumoto was born in Hawai‘i and moved to Kyoto to study chado or the “way of tea” under Tantansai, then the 14th generation Grandmaster of the Urasenke School of Chado. When the Urasenke Los Angeles Association was founded in 1951, Madame Matsumoto became one of the leading demonstrators of the Japanese tea ceremony at colleges, special events and even on television. In 1994, Matsumoto Sensei was named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts. Madame Matsumoto becomes the third recipient of the National Museum’s Cultural Ambassador Award, following bonsai master John Naka and Japanese classical dance instructor Madame Fujima Kansuma.

Prudential Financial is the 2006 Annual Gala Dinner Premier Sponsor. The dinner is the largest single fundraising event for the National Museum each year. Tables of 10 are available at the Platinum ($10,000), Gold ($5,000), Silver ($3,500) and Bronze ($2,250) levels. Individual tickets are sold at each of these levels. Community sponsored tables for community nonprofit organizations are available ($1,500). The event includes a silent auction during the reception before dinner.

For more information on the 2006 Annual Gala Dinner, call the Japanese American National Museum at (213) 625-0414.

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