

## RIVERSIDE: RCC social justice center opening features speakers



DAYNA STRAEHLEY/STAFF PHOTO

The new Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties in historical building recently renovated, at left, will open Wednesday, June 27. The center, on the west side of Market Street between White Park and University Avenue, is part of Riverside Community College District's Renaissance Block, where district offices, the Culinary Academy and the Henry W. Coil Sr. and Alice Edna Coil School for the Arts is to be built.

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation and World War II camp internee Norm Mineta and Consul General Jun Niimi from the Japanese consulate in Los Angeles will speak Wednesday, June 27, at the preview opening of Riverside Community College District's new Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties.

The opening is also the official commemoration of Japanese-American artist Miné Okubo's 100th birthday.

Okubo's book "Citizen 13660," the first chronicling of the Japanese-American internment camp experience by an internee, was published to critical acclaim in 1946.

Her personal collection of 8,000 pieces of artwork, professional papers, correspondence and memorabilia, which she bequeathed to her alma mater, Riverside City College in 2001, was the catalyst for the new center in downtown Riverside and anchors the inaugural exhibitions.

Elena Tajima Creef, associate professor at Wellesley College and one of a handful of scholars who has seen the material firsthand, noted that because Okubo saved everything, "for a historian it's an absolute dream ... there is simply nothing like this that exists."

The Okubo Collection offers research opportunities in a range of academic disciplines, including art history, women's studies, Asian-American studies, and American history.

It is housed on the second-floor main level of the center, which underwent a museum-quality adaptive restoration.

Architects and craftsmen restored the original, ornate Spanish baroque facade on the historic 1926 building, and museum experts repurposed the interior space to create a two-level exhibition gallery and research facility.

Complementing the Okubo Collection is the plaza-level Riverside Stories interpretive exhibition that explores the struggle for social justice and civil rights through citizens engaged in the fight for equality.

Almost 300 guests and dignitaries are expected to attend the event at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday in White Park, which is next to the center. The program will be followed by tours of the center, at 3855 Market St. Okubo's family will be present.

Free parking for the event will be available a couple of blocks away at the corner of Ninth and Orange streets in downtown Riverside. For more information about the event, call 951-222-8958.