

Media Alert June 1, 2009

Signing Ceremony Permits Millions of Alien Files to Become Permanent Records at the National Archives

WHO: Adrienne Thomas, Acting Archivist of the United States
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WHAT: A joint signing ceremony between the National Archives and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the National Archives will designate as permanent the immigration files created on the millions of aliens residing in the United States in 1944, as well as those arriving since then. These Alien Case Files (commonly referred to as A-Files) document the famous, the infamous, the anonymous and the well-known, and are an historical and genealogical goldmine. The new agreement authorizes the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services/Department of Homeland Security to send A-files to the National Archives when 100 years have passed since the birthdate of the subject of a file. The National Archives expects to receive the first transfer of A-files later this year, and will store the files at National Archives facilities in San Francisco and Kansas City. Researchers will be able to access the files at these two sites, or request copies of files. An index will be available to support research use.

The A-files are a key to unlocking the fascinating stories of millions of people who traveled to the United States in search of opportunity. They include information such as photographs, personal correspondence, birth certificates, health records, interview transcripts, visas, applications and other information on all non-naturalized alien residents, both legal and illegal. The files are of particular interest to the Asian American community because many A-files supplement information in Chinese Exclusion Act era case files (1882-1943) that are already housed at the National Archives.

The signing ceremony is an important first step in the preservation of the 32 million records that were originally scheduled for disposal. At the ceremony, the National Archives will have samples of the alien registration form that was used to create the A-files. The form requests detailed information revealing valuable material for researchers and family historians, such as the alien's current name, the name that he or she used when entering the country, marital status, occupation, name and address of employer, height, weight, and date and place of birth.

WHERE: Room 105, National Archives Building
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408
Please use the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance.

WHEN: 11:30 AM, Wednesday, June 3, 2009

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For press information, contact the National Archives Public Affairs staff at 202-357-5300.

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