"Hito Hata," the first film about Japanese Americans written and produced by Japanese Americans, makes its television debut in Hawaii on Monday, September 14 at 8 p.m. on KHET Channel 11. The Hawaii broadcast of the 90-minute drama, starring veteran Asian American actor Mako ("Sand Pebbles"), is made possible by a grant from Duty Free Shoppers, Ltd.

"Hito Hata"—literally "single banner"—derives its title from an expression commonly used by the Issei, the immigrant first generation, who migrated to the U.S. with plans to return to Japan with enough wealth to enable them to raise banners and flags—an honor given only to the samurai and the wealthy lords.

The drama centers on Oda (Mako), an elderly bachelor living in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, whose life typifies the experiences of Issei bachelors now retired from the laboring work of their youth. Because of anti-miscegenation laws and poverty, many were forced to remain single and, as a result, were often overlooked by the Japanese community where family is important and went unrecognized for their role in building America.

The film has won the Gold Award in the Houston Film Festival for Theatrical Feature Films—Low Budget Category. In addition to Mako, other featured performers include Pat Morita, the late Yuki Shimoda, Saachiko, and Tad Horino. The first feature length production of Visual Communications, a Los Angeles-based Asian American film company, "Hito Hata" was produced by Steven Tatsukawa and directed by Duane Kubo and Robert Nakamura. Original music for the film was composed and performed by Hiroshima.
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MAKO AS ODA—Veteran actor-director Mako (The Sand Pebbles) stars as Oda the Issei in "Hito Hata," a 90-minute special about Japanese life in America since the turn of the century. Featured on KHET, Channels 11, 18 and 4 at 8 p.m. Monday, September 14, the drama traces Oda's life as a farm worker, war prisoner and elderly bachelor in "Little Tokyo."

AFTER PEARL HARBOR—After the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and the U.S. in 1941, Oda was among the 120,000 Japanese-Americans living on the west coast who were stripped of their property and possessions and forcibly detained in internment camps.

ODA AT 90—Faced with yet another fight to save his home from demolition, Oda's expression mirrors the difficulties of Japanese life in America. The 90-minute documentary features seldom-told experiences of the Issei in the U.S. during and before WWII.

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