

American Nation, Paul Boyer, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2005.

[812]

Japanese American Relocation

In general, World War II did not produce the kind of home-front intolerance as did World War I. A tragic exception was the internment, or forced relocation and imprisonment, of Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast. U.S. State Department adviser Eugene Rostow called relocation “a tragic and dangerous mistake.” In 1941 about 119,000 people of Japanese ancestry lived in California, Oregon, and Washington. About one third of these people – the issei (ee-say) – had been born in Japan and were regarded by the U.S. government as aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship. The rest – the nisei (nee-say) – had been born in the United States and thus were American citizens.

No evidence of disloyalty on the part of any issei or nisei existed. Nevertheless, because of strong anti-Japanese feelings among some politicians and residents of western states, the federal government decided to remove people of Japanese descent from the West Coast. In February 1942, Japanese Americans were ordered to detention camps in Wyoming, Utah, and other states. Because Hawaii’s Japanese population was too large to relocate, the islands were placed under martial law for the duration of the war.

[812]

[Chart] Japanese American Relocation, 1942-1945

Interpreting Maps By September 1942 more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were interned in 10 camps located in relatively isolated, underdeveloped areas.

HUMAN SYSTEMS Why was the Japanese American population located primarily on the West Coast?

U.S. Citizenship About two thirds of the 1 27,000 people of Japanese ancestry living in the continental United States were American born and thus U.S. citizens.

[813]

[Photo] BIOGRAPHY Norman Mineta

One imprisoned Japanese American was Norman Mineta, a nisei from San Jose, California. On the day of the Pearl Harbor bombing, the young Mineta fearfully watched his neighbors being taken away for questioning by the FBI. He recalled bitterly that “they had done nothing; the only thing that they had done was to be born of Japanese ancestry.”

Just 10 years old when his family was uprooted, Mineta wore his Cub Scout uniform on the train. He hoped that it would show his loyalty to the United States. Mineta’s family was interned with some 10,000 others at a camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming. “These camps were all barbed wire, guard towers, searchlights,” recalled Mineta.

After the war Mineta attended college and became an insurance agent. He later went into local politics in San Jose. In 1974 he was elected to the House of Representatives. Mineta introduced legislation seeking reparations for Japanese American internees. He retired from the House in 1995. He later served as Secretary of Commerce under President Bill Clinton and as Secretary of Transportation under President George W. Bush.

Patriotism and the desire to disprove accusations of disloyalty inspired many young men in the camps to volunteer for military duty, even though they served in segregated units. One nisei combat team, the 442nd, fought in Europe and became one of the most decorated units in the armed services. Several thousand Japanese Americans also served in the Military Intelligence Service as interpreters and translators in the Pacific. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld internment in 1944, and many Japanese Americans remained imprisoned until 1945.

***The American Nation*, Paul Boyer, FL: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1998.**

[754-756]

Japanese American Relocation

By and large, World War II did not produce the kind of home-front intolerance that erupted during World War I. One tragic exception was the forced relocation and imprisonment, or internment, of Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast. In September 1945, U.S. State Department adviser Eugene Rostow called internment “a tragic and dangerous mistake” and argued that “its motivation and its impact on our system of law deny every value of democracy.”

When Pearl Harbor was bombed, about 119,000 people of Japanese ancestry lived in Washington, Oregon, and California. Of these, about a third, the Issei (EE-SAY), had been born in Japan and were regarded by the U.S. government as aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship. The rest, the Nisei (NEE-SAY), had been born in the United States and were thus American citizens.

People of Japanese ancestry had long suffered racial discrimination in the United States. Laws prevented Japanese immigrants from becoming citizens, and prejudice restricted the kinds of jobs they and their descendants could hold and the neighborhoods where they could live.

When war came, prejudice turned into near hysteria. There was no evidence of disloyalty on the part of any Issei or Nisei. Strong anti-Japanese sentiments among some vocal politicians and residents of western states, however, persuaded the federal government to remove people of Japanese descent from the West Coast. In February 1942 they were ordered to detention camps in Wyoming, Utah, and other states. Here most were imprisoned until 1945 – an action upheld by the Supreme court in 1944.

■ Because of prejudice and war hysteria, Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were interned in relocation camps.

Relocation profoundly disrupted the lives of Japanese Americans. They were forced to leave hurriedly, abandoning or selling their homes and businesses at rock-bottom prices. A government estimate later put Japanese American property losses at \$400 million.

One imprisoned Japanese American was Norman Mineta, a Nisei from San Jose, California. On the day of the Pearl Harbor bombing, the young Mineta fearfully watched his neighbors being taken away for questioning by the FBI. He recalled bitterly that “they had done nothing; the only thing that they had done was to be born of Japanese ancestry.”

Ten years old when his family was uprooted, Mineta wore his Cub Scout uniform on the train, hoping that it would show his loyalty to the United States. After six months in a barracks at the Santa Anita racetrack in southern California, Mineta’s family was interned with some 10,000 others at a hastily built camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming. “These camps were all barbed wire, guard towers, searchlights,” recalled Mineta. “They were concentration camps. There’s no question about it.”

After the war Mineta attended college, became an insurance agent, and went into local politics in San Jose. In 1974 he was elected to the House of Representatives, where he served on several committees and introduced legislation seeking reparations for Japanese American internees.

Like most other internees, Mineta deplored what had happened, but his patriotism never wavered:

“Despite the color of our hair and skin, despite the shape of our eyes, the U.S. was our country. I remember how my parents reminded us of that fact. Just before our family was evacuated, my father ... said, “No matter what happens, *this* is your home.”

Patriotism, and the desire to disprove accusations of disloyalty, inspired many young

men in the camps to volunteer for military duty (in segregated units). One Nisei combat team, the 442nd, fought in Europe and became one of the most decorated units in the armed services. Several thousand Japanese Americans also served in the Military Intelligence Service as interpreters and translators in the Pacific.

[Photo] Norman Mineta

[754]

[Drawing] This painting of the internment camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, was done by Japanese American artist Estelle Ishigo.

[754]

[Photo] Toyo Miyatake photographed this scene in Los Angeles in the early days of World War II. With their belongings piled high on the sidewalk, Japanese Americans wait for the buses that will take them to a relocation assignment center.

[755]

[Chart] Japanese American Relocation. Internees. By September 1942 some 100,000 Japanese Americans were interned in 10 camps located in relatively isolated, undeveloped areas. **Location** Which two states had the largest Japanese American population in 1942?

American Citizenship. About two thirds of the 127,000 people of Japanese ancestry living in the continental United States were American-born and thus U.S. citizens.

The American Nation, James West Davidson and Michael B. Stoff, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005.

[786]

Viewing History

[Photo] Relocation of Japanese Americans

Here, American troops oversee the movement of Japanese American families on the West Coast to relocation camps. "Herd 'em up, pack 'em off" was the reaction of one newspaper columnist.

Identifying Points of View

How do you think the families shown in this picture felt about what was happening?

[787-788]

A Calamity for Japanese Americans

The war brought suffering to many Japanese Americans. Most lived on the West Coast or in Hawaii. Many of those on the West Coast were successful farmers and business people. For years, they had faced prejudice, in part because of their success.

Forced Relocation. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, many people on the West Coast questioned the loyalty of Japanese Americans. Japanese Americans, they said, might act as spies and help Japan invade the United States. No evidence of disloyalty existed. Yet, President Roosevelt signed an order allowing the army to move Japanese from their homes to "relocation camps." Many were American citizens by birth.

About 110,000 Japanese Americans were forced to sell their homes and businesses at great loss. "We didn't know where we were going," recalled Peter Ota, who was 15 at the time. "We didn't know what to take. A toothbrush, toilet supplies, some clothes. Only what you could carry." In the camps, Japanese Americans lived in crowded barracks behind barbed wire.

In the Service. Despite unfair treatment, thousands of Japanese American men served in the armed forces. Most were put in segregated units and sent to fight in Europe. There, they won many honors for bravery. The 442nd Nisei Regimental Combat Team became the most highly decorated military unit in United States history.

Years later, in 1988, Congress apologized to Japanese Americans who had been driven from their homes in World War II. Congress also approved compensation, or repayment for losses, in the amount of \$20,000 to every survivor of the camps.

Other Groups Face Problems

Japanese Americans were not the only group to face wartime restrictions. About 11,000 German Americans and several hundred Italian Americans were also held in government camps as "enemy aliens." Other German Americans and Italian Americans faced curfews or travel restrictions.

A growing Mexican American population also faced problems. Because of the need for workers, the United States signed a treaty with Mexico in 1942. It allowed the recruitment of Mexican laborers to work in the United States. Under this bracero program, many Mexicans moved north to work on farms and railroads.

In June 1943, a group of sailors on leave attacked some young Mexican Americans, beating them on the streets. The incident led to several days of rioting in Los Angeles. Newspapers blamed the violence on the Mexican Americans. But in her newspaper column, Eleanor Roosevelt argued that the riots were the result of "longstanding discrimination against the Mexicans in the Southwest." Still, like other groups, Mexican Americans served bravely in the military during World War II. Despite lingering problems at home, Americans were united in their resolve to push on to victory in Europe and the Pacific.

***The American Nation*, James West Davidson and Michael B. Stoff, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.**

[750-752]

Relocation of Japanese Americans

The war brought suffering to many Japanese Americans. Most Japanese Americans lived on the West Coast or in Hawaii. Many of those on the West Coast were successful farmers and business people. For years, they had faced prejudice, in part because of their success.

After Pearl Harbor, many people on the West Coast questioned the loyalty of Japanese Americans. Japanese Americans, they said, might act as spies and help Japan invade the United States. No evidence of disloyalty existed. Yet the President agreed to move Japanese Americans to inland camps set up by the Wartime Relocation Agency (WRA). About 120,000 Japanese Americans were forced to sell their homes and businesses at great loss.

In WRA camps, Japanese Americans lived in crowded barracks behind barbed wire. Most were American citizens. They could not understand why they were singled out for such treatment. German Americans and Italian Americans were not sent to camps. Even Japanese Americans in Hawaii were not moved to camps.

In 1944, the Supreme Court ruled that the camps were a necessary wartime measure. Only after the Allies were certain of victory were Japanese Americans allowed to return to their homes.

Memories of a Bitter Time

UP CLOSE

“On the evening of December 7, 1941, my father was at a wedding. He was dressed in a tuxedo,” recalled Peter Ota, a Japanese American. At the time, Ota was a boy of 15. His father owned a successful fruit and vegetable business in Los Angeles.

When the reception ended, FBI agents rounded up many of the guests, including Peter’s father. The world suddenly changed for Peter and his family. After days of waiting, they heard that Mr. Ota was in jail.

“When we found out, my mother, my sister, and myself went to [the] jail. I can still remember waiting in the lobby. When my father walked through the door, my mother was so [ashamed]. She didn’t say anything. She cried. He was in prisoner’s clothing, with a denim jacket and a number on the back.”

Breakup of a family. Mr. Ota was sent to a WRA camp in Montana. It was one of 10 camps the government had set up for Japanese Americans. The shame tore into Mrs. Ota. She became ill and went to the hospital with tuberculosis. She died a short time after ward.

Peter and his 12-year-old sister were alone. Then, in April 1942, they were taken to a holding center at the Santa Anita racetrack in California.

“At the time, we didn’t know where we were going, how long we’d be gone. We didn’t know what to take. A toothbrush, toilet supplies, some clothes. Only what you could carry.... My sister and I were fortunate enough to stay in a barracks. The people in the stables had to live with the stench. Everything was communal. We had absolutely no privacy.”

In September, the children and their father were reunited. It was a happy yet sad moment. The children were glad to see their father. They were sad, however, because the outgoing, successful businessman they remembered had been replaced by a tired, resigned man.

Life in camp. The Otas were sent to a WRA camp in Colorado. For days, their train crawled eastward with its shades drawn. The new camp sat in a barren wasteland surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers. Armed guards patrolled the area.

The family lived in a single room in a barracks building. The room contained a

potbellied stove, three cots, and a few blankets. The children attended school. “One of our basic subjects was American history,” said Peter. “They talked about freedom all the time.”

Peter’s sister lived in the camp until the war ended. His father was moved from camp to camp. Like more than 30,000 other young Japanese American men, Peter eventually served in the armed forces. He spent his leaves visiting his father and sister in the camps.

Postwar years. After the war, the Otas returned to Los Angeles. Peter married and had a family. His daughter became a lawyer. Years later, she joined a group that worked to win a government apology for Japanese Americans. Peter's father, however, never recovered from his years in the camps. Forced to sell his business, he lived the rest of his life in poverty and died a broken man.

Loyal Service and a Delayed Apology]

Even though they and their families were treated unfairly, thousands of Japanese American men served in the armed forces. Most were put in segregated units and sent to fight in Europe. There, they won many honors for bravery. The 442nd Nisei Regimental Combat Team became the most highly decorated military unit in United States history.

Years later, Americans began to recognize the injustice that had been done to Japanese Americans. In 1988, Congress reviewed the government's wartime policy to ward Japanese Americans. Lawmakers admitted that they could not right the wrong that had been done. They did, however, vote to apologize to Japanese Americans who had been driven from their homes in World War II. They also approved a payment of \$20,000 to every survivor of the camps.

[752]

[Photo] Forced From Their Homes

"Herd 'em up, pack 'em off," recommended one newspaper columnist as the proper treatment for Japanese Americans. Here, troops move the Kitamoto family from their home in the state of Washington.

Citizenship. What reasons did the government give for forcing American citizens out of their homes and into camps?

[766-767]

History Through LITERATURE

***Farewell to Manzanar.* Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston**

Introduction. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, more than 100,000 Japanese Americans were forced to relocate to camps set up by the Wartime Relocation Agency. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston was a young girl when she and her family were relocated to Manzanar, a camp in eastern California. In the following excerpt from her book about her experiences, Houston describes the bus ride to Manzanar.

Vocabulary. Before you read the selection, find the meaning of these words in a dictionary: Caucasians, evacuation, anguish, destination, barracks, expectantly, ominously, intact, hysterical

The name Manzanar meant nothing to us when we left Boyle Heights. We didn't know where it was or what it was. We went because the government ordered us to. And, in the case of my older brothers and sisters, we went with a certain amount of relief. They had all heard stories of Japanese homes being attacked, of beatings in the streets of California towns. They were as frightened of the Caucasians as Caucasians were of us. Moving, under what appeared to be government protection, to an area less directly threatened by the war seemed not such a bad idea at all. For some it actually sounded like a fine adventure.

Our pickup point was a Buddhist church in Los Angeles. It was very early, and misty, when we got there with our luggage. Mama had bought heavy coats for all of us. She grew up in eastern Washington and knew that anywhere inland in early April would be

cold. I was proud of my new coat, and I remember sitting on a duffel bag trying to be friendly with the [bus] driver. I smiled at him. He didn't smile back. He was befriending no one. Someone tied a numbered tag to my collar and to the duffel bag (each family was given a number, and that became our official designation until the camps were closed), someone else passed out box lunches for the trip, and we climbed aboard.

I had never been outside Los Angeles County, never traveled more than ten miles from the coast, had never even ridden on a bus. I was full of excitement, the way any kid would be, and wanted to look out the window. But for the first few hours the shades were drawn. Around me other people played cards, read magazines, dozed, waiting. I settled back, waiting too, and finally fell asleep. The bus felt very secure to me. Almost half its passengers were immediate relatives. Mama and my older brothers had succeeded in keeping most of us together, on the same bus, headed for the same camp. I didn't realize until much later what a job that was. The strategy had been, first, to have everyone living in the same district when the evacuation began, and then to set all of us included under the same family number, even though names had been changed by marriage. Many families weren't as lucky as ours and suffered months of anguish while trying to arrange transfers from one camp to another.

We rode all day. By the time we reached our destination, the shades were up. It was late afternoon. The first thing I saw was a yellow swirl across a blurred, reddish setting sun. The bus was being pelted by what sounded like splattering rain. It wasn't rain. This was my first look at something I would soon know very well, a billowing flurry of dust and sand churned up by the wind through Owens Valley.

We drove past a barbed-wire fence, through a gate, and into an open space where trunks and sacks and packages had been dumped from the baggage trucks that drove out ahead of us. I could see a few tents set up, the first rows of black barracks, and beyond them, blurred by sand, rows of barracks that seemed to spread for miles across this plain. People were sitting on cartons or milling around, with their backs to the wind, waiting to see which friends or relatives might be on this bus. As we approached, they turned or stood up, and some moved toward us expectantly. But inside the bus no one stirred. No one waved or spoke. They just stared out the windows, ominously silent. I didn't understand this. Hadn't we finally arrived, our whole family intact? I opened a window, leaned out, and yelled happily. "Hey! This whole bus is full of Wakatsukis!"

Outside, the greeters smiled. Inside there was an explosion of laughter, hysterical, tension-breaking laughter that left my brothers choking and whacking each other across the shoulders.

[767]

[Drawing] Arrival in Camp

Like thousands of other Japanese Americans, artist Henry Sugimoto and his family were interned during World War II. This self-portrait shows the Sugimoto family just after they arrived at a WRA camp.

Citizenship. Why might people be more likely in wartime to tolerate government decisions that deny citizens' rights?

The American Pageant: A History of the Republic, 13th Ed., Advanced Placement Ed., David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.

[822-823]

The Shock of War

National unity was no worry, thanks to the electrifying blow by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. American Communists had denounced the Anglo-French “imperialist” war before Hitler attacked Stalin in 1941, but they now clamored for an unmitigated assault on the Axis powers. The handful of strutting pro-Hitlerites in the United States melted away, while millions of Italian-Americans and German-Americans loyally supported the nation’s war program. In contrast to World War I, when the patriotism of millions of immigrants was hotly questioned, World War II actually speeded the assimilation of many ethnic groups into American society. Immigration had been choked off for almost two decades before 1941, and America’s ethnic communities were now composed of well-settled members, whose votes were crucial to Franklin Roosevelt’s Democratic party. Consequently, there was virtually no government witch-hunting of minority groups, as had happened in World War I.

A painful exception was the plight of some 110,000 Japanese-Americans, concentrated on the Pacific Coast (see “Makers of America: The Japanese,” pp. 850-851). The Washington top command, fearing that they might act as saboteurs for Japan in case of invasion, forcibly herded them together in concentration camps, though about two-thirds of them were American-born U.S. citizens. This brutal precaution was both unnecessary and unfair, as the loyalty and combat record of Japanese-Americans proved to be admirable. But a wave of post-Pearl Harbor hysteria, backed by the long historical swell of anti-Japanese prejudice on the West Coast, temporarily robbed many Americans of their good sense – and their sense of justice. The internment camps deprived these uprooted Americans of dignity and basic rights; the internees also lost hundreds of millions of dollars in property and foregone earnings. The wartime Supreme Court in 1944 upheld the constitutionality of the Japanese relocation in *Korematsu v. U.S.* But more than four decades later, in 1988, the U.S. government officially apologized for its actions and approved the payment of reparations of \$20,000 to each camp survivor.

[822]

American song titles after Pearl Harbor combined nationalism with unabashed racism: “We Are the Sons of the Rising Guns,” “Oh, You Little Son of an Oriental,” “To Be Specific, It’s Our Pacific,” “The Sun Will Soon Be Setting on the Land of the Rising Sun,” and “We’re Gonna find a Fellow Who Is Yellow and Beat Him Red, White, and Blue.”

[823]

Monica Sone (b. 1919), a college-age Japanese American woman in Seattle, recorded the shock she and her brother felt when they learned of Executive Order No. 9066, which authorized the War Department to remove Japanese – aliens and citizens alike – from their homes: “In anger, Henry and I read and reread the Executive Order. Henry crumbled the newspaper in his hand and threw it against the wall. ‘Doesn’t my citizenship mean a single blessed thing to anyone? Why doesn’t somebody make up my mind for me? First they want me in the army. Now they’re going to slap an alien 4-C on me because of my ancestry....’ Once more I felt like a despised, pathetic two-headed freak, a Japanese and an American, neither of which seemed to be doing me any good.”

[823]

[Photo] Enemy Aliens

When the United States suddenly found itself at war with Germany, Italy, and Japan in December 1941, noncitizen German, Italian, and Japanese immigrants became

“enemy aliens” and were required to register with the authorities. Several hundred resident Germans and Italians were detained in internment camps, but the harshest treatment was meted out to the Japanese, some 110,000 of whom, noncitizens and citizens alike, were eventually interned. Ironically, the two Japanese-American Boy Scouts posting this notice in Los Angeles would soon be on their way to government detention camp.

[824-825]

MAKERS OF AMERICA

The Japanese

In 1853 the American commodore Matthew Perry sailed four gunboats into Japan's Uraga Bay and demanded that the nation open itself to diplomatic and commercial exchange with the United States. Perry's arrival ended two centuries of Japan's self-imposed isolation and eventually led to the overthrow of the last Japanese shogun (military ruler) and the restoration of the emperor. Within two decades of Perry's arrival, Japan's new "Meiji" government had launched the nation on an ambitious program of industrialization and militarization designed to make it the economic and political equal of the Western powers.

As Japan rapidly modernized, its citizens increasingly took ship for America. A steep land tax imposed by the Meiji government to pay for its reforms drove more than 300,000 Japanese farmers off their land. In 1884 the Meiji government permitted Hawaiian planters to recruit contract laborers from among this displaced population. By the 1890s many Japanese were sailing beyond Hawaii to the ports of Long Beach, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Between 1885 and 1924, roughly 200,000 Japanese migrated to Hawaii, and around 180,000 more ventured to the U.S. mainland. They were a select group: because the Meiji government saw overseas Japanese as representatives of their homeland, it strictly regulated emigration. Thus Japanese immigrants to America arrived with more money than their European counterparts. Also, because of Japan's system of compulsory education, Japanese immigrants on average were better educated and more literate than European immigrants.

Women as well as men migrated. The Japanese government, wanting to avoid the problems of an itinerant bachelor society that it observed among the Chinese in the United States, actively promoted women's migration. Although most Japanese immigrants were young men in their twenties and thirties, thousands of women also ventured to Hawaii and the mainland as contract laborers or "picture brides," so called because their courtship had consisted exclusively of an exchange of photographs with their prospective husbands.

Like many Chinese and European immigrants, most Japanese who came to America expected to stay only temporarily. They planned to work hard for wages that were high by Japanese standards and then to return home and buy land. In Hawaii most Japanese labored on the vast sugar cane plantations. On the mainland they initially found migratory work on the railroads or in fish, fruit, or vegetable canneries. A separate Japanese economy of restaurants, stores, and boardinghouses soon sprang up in cities to serve the immigrants' needs.

From such humble beginnings, many Japanese—particularly those on the Pacific Coast—quickly moved into farming. In the late nineteenth century, the spread of irrigation shifted California agriculture from grain to fruits and vegetables, and the invention of the refrigerated railcar opened hungry new markets in the East. The Japanese, with centuries of experience in intensive farming, arrived just in time to take advantage of these developments. As early as 1910, Japanese farmers produced 70 percent of California's strawberries, and by 1940 they grew 95 percent of the state's snap beans and more than half of its tomatoes. One Japanese farmer, known as the Potato King, sent his children to Harvard and Stanford and died in 1926 with an estate

valued at \$15 million.

But the very success of the Japanese proved a lightning rod for trouble. On the West Coast, Japanese immigrants had long endured racist barbs and social segregation. Increasingly, white workers and farmers, jealous of Japanese success, pushed for immigration restrictions. Bowing to this pressure, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 negotiated the "Gentlemen's Agreement," under which the Japanese government voluntarily agreed to limit emigration. In 1913 the California legislature denied Japanese immigrants already living in the United States the right to own land.

Legally barred from becoming citizens, Japanese immigrants (the "Issei," from the Japanese word for first) became more determined than ever that their American-born children (the "Nissei," from the Japanese word for second) would reap the full benefits of their birthright. Japanese parents encouraged their children to learn English, to excel in school, and to get a college education. Many Nissei grew up in two worlds, a fact they often recognized by Americanizing their Japanese names. Although education and acculturation did not protect the Nissei from the hysteria of World War II, those assets did give them a springboard to success in the postwar era.

[824]

[Photo] Pledging in Vain These Japanese American school-children in San Francisco were soon evacuated along with their parents.

[823]

[Photo] Japanese American Evacuees, 1942 After the U.S. Army's Western Defense Command ordered the forced evacuation of all Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast, families had no choice but to pack up whatever they could carry and move to the "relocation centers" hastily erected farther inland.

[823]

[Photo] Manzanar Internment Camp, 1943 This view of Manzanar is deceptively picturesque and tranquil. In reality, the six-thousand-acre camp on the barren flats of a dried-up lake in California's interior was enclosed in barbed wire, and the twenty-by-twenty uninsulated cabins were virtually uninhabitable. A riot in late 1942 against the government's use of informants within the camp resulted in the deaths of two internees and the serious injury of eight others.

(10-12)

***The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, 11th Ed., Thomas A. Bailey, David M. Kennedy, and Lizabeth Cohen, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.**

[848-849]

The Shock of War

National unity was no worry, thanks to the electrifying blow by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. American Communists had denounced the Anglo-French “imperialist” war before Hitler attacked Stalin in 1941, but they now clamored for an unmitigated assault on the Axis powers. The handful of strutting pro-Hitlerites in the United States melted away, while millions of Italian-Americans and German-Americans loyally supported the nation’s war program. In contrast to World War I, when the patriotism of millions of immigrants was hotly questioned, World War II actually speeded the assimilation of many ethnic groups into American society. Immigration had been choked off for almost two decades before 1941, and America’s ethnic communities were now composed of well-settled members, whose votes were crucial to Franklin Roosevelt’s Democratic party. Consequently, there was virtually no government witch-hunting of minority groups, as had happened in World War I.

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[848]

American song titles aimed at the Japanese after Pearl Harbor were “Goodby, Mamma, I’m Off to Yokohama,” “Oh, You Little Son of an Oriental,” “To Be Specific, It’s Our Pacific,” and “The Sun Will Soon Be Setting on the Land of the Rising Sun.”

[849]

A young Japanese-American recorded in his diary on May 3, 1942, some of his first impressions of his hastily thrown-together “detention center”: “I saw a soldier in a tall guardhouse near the barbed wire and did not like it because it reminds me of a concentration camp.”

[849]

[Photo] Enemy Aliens

When the United States suddenly found itself at war with Germany, Italy, and Japan in December 1941, non-citizen German, Italian, and Japanese immigrants became “enemy aliens” and were required to register with the authorities. Several hundred resident Germans and Italians were detained in internment camps, but the harshest treatment was meted out to the Japanese, some 110,000 of whom, non-citizens and citizens alike, were eventually interned. Ironically, the two Japanese-American Boy Scouts posting this notice in Los Angeles would soon be on their way to government detention camp.

[850-851]

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Between 1885 and 1924, roughly 200,000 Japanese migrated to Hawaii, and around 180,000 more ventured to the U.S. mainland. They were a select group: because the Meiji government saw overseas Japanese as representatives of their homeland, it strictly regulated emigration. Thus Japanese immigrants to America arrived with more money than their European counterparts. Also, because of Japan's system of compulsory education, Japanese immigrants on average were better educated and more literate than European immigrants.

Women as well as men migrated. The Japanese government, wanting to avoid the problems of an itinerant bachelor society that it observed among the Chinese in the United States, actively promoted women's migration. Although most Japanese immigrants were young men in their twenties and thirties, thousands of women also ventured to Hawaii and the mainland as contract laborers or "picture brides," so called because their courtship had consisted exclusively of an exchange of photographs with their prospective husbands.

Like many Chinese and European immigrants, most Japanese who came to America expected to stay only temporarily. They planned to work hard for wages that were high by Japanese standards and then to return home and buy land. In Hawaii most Japanese labored on the vast sugar cane plantations. On the mainland they initially found migratory work on the railroads or in fish, fruit, or vegetable canneries. A separate Japanese economy of restaurants, stores, and boardinghouses soon sprang up in cities to serve the immigrant's needs.

From such humble beginnings, many Japanese -- particularly those on the Pacific Coast -- quickly moved into farming. In the late-nineteenth century, the spread of irrigation shifted California agriculture from grain to fruits and vegetables, and the invention of the refrigerated railcar opened hungry new markets in the East. The Japanese, with centuries of experience in intensive farming, arrived just in time to take advantage of these developments. As early as 1910, Japanese farmers produced 70 percent of California's strawberries, and by 1940 they grew 95 percent of the state's snap beans and more than half its tomatoes. One Japanese farmer, known as the Potato King, sent his children to Harvard and Stanford universities and died in 1926 with an estate valued at \$15 million.

But the very success of the Japanese proved a lightning rod for trouble. On the West Coast, Japanese immigrants had long endured racist barbs and social segregation. Increasingly, white workers and farmers, jealous of Japanese success, pushed for immigration restrictions. Bowing to this pressure, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 negotiated the "Gentleman's Agreement," under which the Japanese government voluntarily agreed to limit emigration. In 1913 the California legislature denied Japanese immigrants already living in the United States the right to own land.

Discriminated against in their adopted homeland, Japanese immigrants (the "Issei," from the Japanese word for first) became more determined than ever that their American-born children (the "Nissei," from the Japanese word for second) would succeed. Japanese parents encouraged their children to learn English, to excel in school, and to get college educations. Many Nissei grew up in two worlds, a fact they often recognized by Americanizing their Japanese names. Although education and acculturation did not protect the Nissei from the hysteria of World War II, those assets did give them a springboard to success in the postwar era.

[850]

[Photo] Pledging in Vain These Japanese-American school children in San Francisco were soon evacuated along with their parents.

[851]

[Photo] Japanese-Owned Loganberry Farm, Centerville, California, 1942 Successful farmers for generations before. World War II, many Japanese-Americans lost their land forever as a

consequence of wartime internment.

[Photo] Japanese-American Evacuees, 1942 This farm family in Los Angeles County was "relocated" shortly after this photograph was taken.

***The Americans*, Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch, IL: McDougal Littell, 2005.**

[800-801]

Internment of Japanese Americans

While Mexican Americans and African Americans struggled with racial tension, the war produced tragic results for Japanese Americans. When the war began, 120,000 Japanese Americans lived in the United States. Most of them were citizens living on the West Coast.

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii had stunned the nation. After the bombing, panic-stricken citizens feared that the Japanese would soon attack the United States. Frightened people believed false rumors that Japanese Americans were committing sabotage by mining coastal harbors and poisoning vegetables.

This sense of fear and uncertainty caused a wave of prejudice against Japanese Americans. Early in 1942, the War Department called for the mass evacuation of all Japanese Americans from Hawaii. General Delos Emmons, the military governor of Hawaii, resisted the order because 37 percent of the people in Hawaii were Japanese Americans. To remove them would have destroyed the islands' economy and hindered U.S. military operations there. However, he was eventually forced to order the internment, or confinement, of 1,444 Japanese Americans, 1 percent of Hawaii's Japanese-American population.

On the West Coast, however, panic and prejudice ruled the day. In California, only 1 percent of the people were Japanese, but they constituted a minority large enough to stimulate the prejudice of many whites, without being large enough to effectively resist internment. Newspapers whipped up anti-Japanese sentiment by running ugly stories attacking Japanese Americans.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order requiring the removal of people of Japanese ancestry from California and parts of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona. Based on strong recommendations from the military, he justified this step as necessary for national security. In the following weeks, the army rounded up some 110,000 Japanese Americans and shipped them to ten hastily constructed remote "relocation centers," euphemisms for prison camps. About two-thirds were Nisei, or Japanese people born in this country or parents who emigrated from Japan. Thousands of Nisei had already joined the armed forces, and to Ted Nakashima, an architectural draftsman from Seattle, the evacuation seemed utterly senseless.

A PERSONAL VOICE. TED NAKASHIMA

"[There are] electricians, plumbers, draftsmen, mechanics, carpenters, painters, farmers – every trade – men who are able and willing to do all they can to lick the Axis.... We're on this side and we want to help. Why won't America let us?" -- from *New Republic* magazine, June 15, 1942

No specific charges were ever filed against Japanese Americans, and no evidence of subversion was ever found. Faced with expulsion, terrified families were forced to sell their homes, businesses, and all their belongings for less than their true value.

Japanese Americans also fought for justice, both in the courts and in Congress. The initial results were discouraging. In 1944, the Supreme Court decided in *Korematsu v. United States* that the government's policy of evacuating Japanese Americans to camps was justified on the basis of "military necessity" (See pages 802-803). After the war, however, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) pushed the government to compensate those sent to the camps for their lost property. In 1965, Congress authorized the spending of \$38 million for that purpose – less than a tenth of Japanese Americans' actual losses.

The JACL did not give up its quest for justice. In 1978, it called for the payment of reparations, or restitution, to each individual that suffered internment. A decade later,

Congress passed, and President Ronald Reagan signed, a bill that promised \$20,000 to every Japanese American sent to a relocation camp. When the checks were sent in 1990, a letter from President George Bush accompanied them, in which he stated, “We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.”

[800]

Japanese Relocation Camps, 1942

GEOGRAPHY SILLBUILDER

1. **Location.** How many Japanese internment camps existed in 1942?

2. **Place.** Why do you think the majority of these camps were located in the West?

[Photo] On March 3, 1942, a Japanese-American mother carries her sleeping daughter during their relocation to an internment camp.

[802-803]

HISTORIC DECISIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT

***KOREMATSU v. UNITED STATES* (1944)**

ORIGINS OF THE CASE. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, U.S. military officials argued that Japanese Americans posed a threat to the nation’s security. Based on recommendations from the military, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which gave military officials the power to limit the civil rights of Japanese Americans. Military authorities began by setting a curfew for Japanese Americans. Later, they forced Japanese Americans from their homes and moved them into detention camps. Fred Korematsu was convicted of defying the military order to leave his home. At the urging of the American civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Korematsu appealed that conviction.

THE RULING. The court upheld Korematsu’s conviction and argued that military necessity made internment constitutional.

LEGAL REASONING. Executive Order 9066 was clearly aimed at one group of people – Japanese Americans. Korematsu argued that this order was unconstitutional because it was based on race. Writing for the Court majority, Justice Hugo Black agreed “that all legal restrictions which curtail the civil rights of a single racial group are immediately suspect.” However, in this case, he said, the restrictions were based on “a military imperative” and not “group punishment based on antagonism to those of Japanese origin.” As such, Justice Black stated that the restrictions were constitutional.

“Compulsory exclusion of large groups,... except under circumstances of direct emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when under conditions of modern warfare our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger.”

Justice Frank Murphy, however, dissented – he opposed the majority. He believed that military necessity was merely an excuse that could not conceal the racism at the heart of the restrictions.

“This exclusion ... ought not to be approved. Such exclusion goes over ‘the very brink of constitutional poser’ and falls into the ugly abyss of racism.”

Two other justices also dissented, but Korematsu’s conviction stood.

WHY IT MATTERED. About 110,000 Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps, as shown above [photograph], during World War II. Many had to sell their businesses and homes at great loss. Thousands were forced to give up their possessions. In the internment camps, Japanese Americans lived in a prison-like setting under constant guard.

The Court ruled that these government actions did not violate people’s rights because the restrictions were based on military necessity rather than on race. But the government treated German Americans and Italian Americans much differently. In those instances, the government identified potentially disloyal people but did not harass

the people it believed to be loyal. By contrast, the government refused to make distinctions between loyal and potentially disloyal Japanese Americans.

HISTORICAL IMPACT. In the end, the internment of Japanese Americans became a national embarrassment. In 1766, President Gerald R. Ford repealed Executive Order 9066.

Similarly, the Court's decision in *Korematsu* became an embarrassing example of court-sanctioned racism often compared to the decisions on *Dred Scott* (1857) and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). In the early 1980s, a scholar conducting research obtained copies of government documents related to the *Hirabayashi* and *Korematsu* cases. The documents showed that the army had lied to the Court in the 1940s. Japanese Americans had not posed any security threat. *Korematsu's* conviction was overturned in 1984. *Hirabayashi's* conviction was overturned in 1986. In 1988, congress passed a law ordering reparations payments to surviving Japanese Americans who had been detained in the camps.

[803]

[Photo] President Clinton presents Fred Korematsu with a Presidential Medal of Freedom during a ceremony at the White House on January 15, 1998.

***The Americans*, Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch, IL: McDougal Littell, 2000.**

[760-761]

JAPANESE AMERICANS IN A STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE For Japanese Americans locked up in U.S. internment camps, the war was a daily struggle to maintain their dignity in the face of injustice. Many young men escaped the camps by volunteering for military service. As William Hosokawa explained, they “felt it was their obligation to volunteer and go into service and do what they could to demonstrate that they were indeed loyal, and the government was wrong in putting them into camps.” The all-Nisei 442nd Regiment, better known as “Go for Broke,” became the most decorated combat unit of the war. In 1946, President Truman welcomed the 442nd home with these words: “You fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice – and you won.”

Japanese Americans also fought for justice, both in the courts and in Congress. The initial results were discouraging. In 1944, the Supreme Court decided in *Korematsu v. United States* that the government’s policy of evacuating Japanese Americans to camps was justified on the basis of “military necessity.” After the war, however, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) pushed the government to compensate those sent to the camps for their lost property. In 1965, Congress finally authorized the spending of \$38 million for that purpose – less than a tenth of Japanese Americans’ actual losses.

But the JACL did not give up. In 1978, the organization called for the payment of reparations, or restitution, to each individual who suffered evacuation and internment. “Restitution does not put a price tag on freedom or justice,” the JACL pointed out. “The issue is not to recover what cannot be recovered. The issue is to acknowledge the mistake by providing proper redress to victims of injustice, and thereby make such injustice less likely to recur.” Ten years later, Congress finally passed a bill that gave \$20,000 to every Japanese American sent to a relocation camp during the war. Each check was accompanied by a letter from President George Bush.

A PERSONAL VOICE

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation’s resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II. In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice.

George Bush, from his letter accompanying redress checks to Japanese Americans, 1988

America would barely have time to deal with the aftermath of war and to adjust to peace, however, when it began to mobilize against a new enemy without and within – fear and the threat of communism.

[760]

POINT Japanese-American internment was necessary for national defense.

The United States was still reeling from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that had brought it into World War II – a threat, some felt, to its very existence. Tom Clark, assistant to the commanding general of the U.S. Army’s Western Defense command and later associate justice of the Supreme Court, offered a justification for internment. “Soon after Pearl Harbor I was deluged by demands that, regardless of citizenship, every person of Japanese descent must be removed from the West Coast,” he explained. “The threatening public attitude ... would permit nothing less than total mass relocation.”

Chief Justice Earl Warren pointed out, on the other hand, that many Japanese

Americans held dual citizenship and were educated both Japan and the United States. “Their affiliation in time of war worried us,” he explained.

War correspondent Walter Lippman offered more concrete reasons. “It is the fact that the Japanese navy has been reconnoitering the Pacific Coast.... It is the fact that communication takes place between the enemy at sea and the enemy agents on land.”

Historians Donald Pike and Roger Olmsted observe that only Japan among the Axis nations had attacked the United States, and “suddenly the Japanese ... threatened our very national existence.”

COUNTERPOINT Japanese-American internment was an unnecessary and a racist act.

“Our unjust imprisonment was the result of two closely related emotions: racism and hysteria,” says Edison Tomimaro Uno, a former internee. Uno says the claim that Japanese Americans were relocated for their own protection was “sheer hypocrisy” and denies that Japanese Americans posed a national security threat. Instead, he calls the relocation a crime attributable to “racism [and] economic and political opportunism.”

“War makes for harsh measures,” notes the historian Cary McWilliams, “but we cannot justify the evacuation even as a war measure. No such measure was taken against German or Italian nationals.”

Another historian, Henry Steele Commager comments, “It is sobering to recall that the record does not disclose a single case of Japanese disloyalty or sabotage during the whole war.” In fact, more than 25,000 Japanese Americans served in the armed forces during World War II, and the all-Japanese-American 442nd combat team inflicted more casualties and received more decorations than any other comparable army unit.

Relocation left many Americans with a legacy of shame. Chief Justice Earl Warren confessed in his autobiography that he “deeply regretted” his testimony in favor of internment. Tom Clark said, “It was a sad day in our constitutional history.”

INTERACT WITH HISTORY

1. FORMING OPINIONS. Do you believe internment of the Japanese was necessary? Give reasons to support your opinion. SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE 1049.

2. RESEARCHING INTERNMENT. Use library resources or the Internet to research the experience of a specific Japanese American in an internment camp. Present your findings as a diary entry or a report.

[761]

[Photo] Japanese Americans were finally released from U.S. internment camps at the end of the war.

American Odyssey: The 20th Century and Beyond, Gary B. Nash, NY: Glencore, 2004
[546-548]

Internment of Japanese Americans

Fear Leads to Relocation

Generally, World War II brought about few restrictions on civil liberties, or rights guaranteed to all citizens. Almost no one vocally opposed the war after Pearl Harbor, and little danger existed of an attack on the United States. As a result, there was not a repetition of the hysteria and pressure to conform that had occurred during World War I. Most Americans showed tolerance toward persons of foreign ancestry. The treatment of Japanese Americans was the exception.

Relocation

Spring 1942 brought events that are burned into the memories of Japanese Americans. Even though they showed no evidence of disloyalty, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were moved from their homes to relocation camps. One evacuee, Helen Murao, explained why. "We looked like them [the enemy]. That was our sin." Of the 120,000 Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast and in Hawaii, about one-third were Issei -- foreign-born Japanese who had entered the United States before the National Origins Act of 1924 had dramatically cut the number of immigrants allowed into the country. Two-thirds were Nisei--mainly children of Issei who were citizens because they had been born in the United States. In February 1942, the government decided that all Japanese Americans, citizens as well as aliens, would be relocated to internment camps located in Arkansas and the Western states.

Japanese Americans were vulnerable because they could easily be singled out and they lacked political power. In addition, they had little economic influence.

Popular sentiment against Japanese Americans on the West Coast grew intense after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The San Francisco Chronicle pushed to have Japanese Americans interned. Individuals, including Earl Warren, attorney general of California, (later chief justice of the United States), and several members of Congress, supported relocating Japanese Americans. Finally, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

Economic Hardship

The executive order subjected Japanese Americans to extreme economic hardship. Because they were permitted to take only a few belongings with them to the camps, they were forced to sell most of their possessions. Signs began to appear reading Evacuation Sale-Furniture Must All Be Sold. In the end most Japanese American families received about 5 cents for every dollar's worth of their possessions. Property not immediately sold was either stored or left with friends. Much of this was stolen, vandalized, or sold through legal loopholes. Even more devastating was the loss of farms, houses, and places of business. Estimates of this loss hover around \$500 million.

Over the course of several months, the Japanese Americans were ordered to report to relocation centers. The military justified this action on the basis that Japanese Americans would commit sabotage to aid Japan in an attack on the West Coast. General John DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command argued: "The very fact that no sabotage to aid Japan has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken."

Other motives played a role, too. Farmers and business associations thought they would profit by eliminating Japanese American competitors. Politicians believed they would win popular support by favoring relocation. General DeWitt expressed the commonly held view, "the Japanese race is an enemy race."

Life in the Camps

From the relocation centers, Japanese Americans were moved to 1 of 10 armed and

guarded internment camps located in sparsely settled areas. For example, Topaz, a camp in Utah, was 4,600 feet (1,402.08 m) above sea level. Here inmates endured temperatures ranging from 106 F (41.1 C) in summer to -30 F (-34.5 C) in winter. They also lived in a constant whirlwind of dust.

The other camps were similarly barren. Japanese Americans taken to Heart Mountain, Wyoming, also suffered from winter temperatures as low as -30 F (-34.5 C). For those from the mild California valleys, the camps were tolerable at best. One camp resident wrote a poem in the camp newspaper, the Sentinel.

snow upon the rooftop Snow upon the coal;

Winter in Wyoming-

Winter in my soul.

One evacuee, Peter Ota, recalled the camp where he was interned:

It's a desolate, flat, barren area. The barracks was all there was. There were no trees, no kind of landscaping. It was like a prison camp. Coming from our environment, it was just devastating. -As told to Studs Terkel, "The Good War," 1984

This was no exaggeration. Entire families lived in a single room in the barracks, sparsely furnished with cots, makeshift dressers, and bare lightbulbs.

Despite the stark surroundings, the evacuees created a number of alternative communities to serve their cultural needs. The Japanese Americans published newspapers; started schools, churches, bands, Boy Scout groups, and Softball leagues; built tennis courts; landscaped flower and vegetable gardens; and gave trumpet and tap dancing lessons. They were determined to replenish their lives with the dignity and the resources that they and their children would need when the war ended.

Some of the evacuees were released to work at jobs in the interior of the United States before the end of the war. They were allowed to resettle in the East or the Midwest. Most, however, remained in the camps for the duration of the war.

Judicial Rulings Support Relocation

The Supreme Court upheld the wartime policies toward Japanese Americans. In 1943, in *Hirabayashi v. United States*, the Court unanimously ruled that a curfew order affecting only Japanese Americans did not violate their civil rights. Chief Justice Harlan Fiske Stone wrote: "In time of war residents having ethnic affiliations with an invading enemy may be a greater source of danger than those of a different ancestry." In December 1944, in *Korematsu v. United States*, the Court upheld the order providing for internment. It based its ruling largely on the grounds that the judiciary could not second-guess military decisions. One of the dissenting justices, however, termed the decision a "legalization of racism." Although the Court ruled that citizens could not be held in relocation centers once their loyalty was proven, the camps were being closed down by then. In 1998, Fred Korematsu, who had refused to report for transport to an internment camp, won the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

During the war, the nation saw both gains and losses in civil rights and liberties. While African Americans fought hard to win small victories, Japanese Americans were treated as enemies of the United States. As the war ended, Americans could only hope for a more just, prosperous, and peaceful postwar world.

[546]

[Photo] Internment On March 30, 1942, Japanese American evacuees are led from their homes on Bainbridge Island, Washington. What does the armed escort suggest about the nature of the relocation?

[547]

[Photo] Internees Return Shigeo Nagaishi and his Nisei family find broken windows in their home and garage when they return to Seattle, Washington, from the relocation center in Hunt, Idaho, on May 10, 1945. Why was this treatment of Japanese Americans unfair?

[548]

[Photo] Compensation for Internees On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed Public Law 100-383. Among other things, this law makes apologies and restitution to individuals of Japanese ancestry who were interned during World War II. Each eligible person received \$20,000 in tax-free payments over a 10-year period. Do you think that this compensation was adequate? Why or why not?

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The United States recorded both gains and losses in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties during the war years. While African Americans fought hard to win the smallest of victories, Japanese Americans found themselves regarded as enemies of the United States and suffered humiliation and loss of their liberties. As the war ended, however, all Americans looked ahead and hoped for prosperity and justice in a peaceful postwar world.

[546]

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***A History of the United States*, Daniel J. Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley, NJ: Peason-Prentice Hall, 2005**

[677]

Japanese Americans are interned. Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry had long faced discrimination on the West Coast. After Pearl Harbor their situation became much worse. For no good reason, other citizens blamed them for what the Japanese militarists had done and even began to suspect that they might be helping the enemy across the Pacific. Western politicians and frightened military men pressured FDR to remove them from the coastal states. President Roosevelt gave in. Early in 1942, under the excuse of national security, 110,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up. There was no evidence that these Americans were disloyal. They were forced to sell their homes and businesses on short notice and at sacrifice prices. They then were confined in camps, watched by armed guards, and treated as if they were dangerous. Not until after the presidential election of 1944 did the government change its policy and begin to release these innocent citizens.

Despite this humiliating treatment, 1200 men volunteered from the camps to serve in the United States armed forces. In a segregated unit these soldiers in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought heroically in Italy. Another Japanese American battalion was recruited from Hawaii, where there was no internment because there were so many Japanese.

In time of war it is harder than ever for a free nation to preserve its freedoms. Defending the country becomes a matter of life and death. Dissenters are open to the charge of being traitors. This is a true testing time of democracy. In World War II, except for the disgraceful treatment of Japanese Americans, the nation's record was far better than it had been in World War I.

[678]

[Photo] Ordered to leave their homes and businesses on short notice by the United States government, anxious Japanese Americans wait in Los Angeles for a train to take them to an internment camp.

A History of the United States, Daniel J. Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992

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Japanese Americans are interned. Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry had long faced discrimination on the West Coast. After Pearl Harbor their situation became much worse. For no good reason, other citizens blamed them for what the Japanese militarists had done and even began to suspect that they might be helping the enemy across the Pacific. Western politicians and frightened military men pressured FDR to remove them from the coastal states. President Roosevelt gave in. Early in 1942, under the excuse of national security, 110,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up. There was no evidence that these Americans were disloyal. They were forced to sell their homes and businesses on short notice and at sacrifice prices. They then were confined in camps, watched by armed guards, and treated as if they were dangerous. Not until after the presidential election of 1944 did the government change its policy and begin to release these innocent citizens.

Despite this humiliating treatment, 1200 men volunteered from the camps to serve in the United States armed forces. In a segregated unit these soldiers in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought heroically in Italy. Another Japanese American battalion was recruited from Hawaii, where there was no internment because there were so many Japanese.

In time of war it is harder than ever for a free nation to preserve its freedoms. Defending the country becomes a matter of life and death. Dissenters are open to the charge of being traitors. This is a true testing time of democracy. In World War II, except for the disgraceful treatment of Japanese Americans, the nation's record was far better than it had been in World War I.

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[Photo] Ordered to leave their homes and businesses on short notice by the United States government, anxious Japanese Americans wait in Los Angeles for a train to take them to an internment camp.

Making America: A History of the United States, 4th Ed., Carol Berkin, Christopher L. Miller, Robert W. Cherny, and James L. Gormly, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006 [802-804]

America Responds to War

■ What actions did Roosevelt take to mobilize the nation for war? How did new wartime necessities affect the relationship between business and government?

■ What new social and economic choices did Americans confront as the nation became the "arsenal of democracy"? In particular, what doors opened and closed for women and minorities?

■ How were the military experiences of the Nisei, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Indians different, and why?

The attack on Pearl Harbor unified the nation as no other event had done. Afterward, it was almost impossible to find an isolationist.

Thousands of young men rushed to enlist, especially into the navy and marines. On December 8, 1,200 applicants besieged the navy recruiting station in New York City, some having waited outside the doors all night. Eventually over 16.4 million Americans would serve in the armed forces during World War II.

The shock of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor raised fears of further attacks, especially along the Pacific Coast. On the night of December 7 and throughout the next week, West Coast cities reported enemy planes overhead and practiced blackouts. Phantom Japanese planes were spotted above San Francisco and Los Angeles. In Seattle, crowds hurled rocks at an offending blue neon light that defied the blackout and then, venting both fear and rage, rioted across the city. The Rose Bowl game between Oregon State and Duke was moved from the bowl's home in Pasadena to Duke's stadium in Durham, North Carolina. Stores everywhere removed "made in Japan" goods from shelves. Alarm and anger were focused especially on Japanese Americans. Rumors circulated wildly that they intended to sabotage factories and military installations, paving the way for the invasion of the West Coast. Within a week, the FBI had arrested 2,541 citizens of Axis countries: 1,370 Japanese; 1,002 Germans; and 169 Italians.

Japanese American Internment

There were nearly 125,000 Japanese Americans in the country, about three-fourths of whom were Nisei Japanese Americans who had been born in the United States. The remaining fourth were Japanese immigrants, or Issei-officially citizens of Japan, although nearly all had lived in the United States more than eighteen years. Almost immediately a belief emerged that they posed a threat. General John L. De Witt, commanding general of the Western Defense District, stated, "We must worry about the Japanese all the time... until he is wiped off the map." Echoing longstanding anti-Japanese sentiment, California moved to "protect" itself. Japanese Americans were fired from state jobs, and their law and medical licenses were revoked. Banks froze Japanese American assets, stores refused service, and loyal citizens vandalized Nisei and Issei homes and businesses. The few voices that came forward to speak on behalf of Japanese Americans were shouted down by those demanding their removal from the West Coast. On February 19, 1942, Roosevelt signed Executive Order #9066, which allowed the military to remove anyone deemed a threat from official military areas. When the entire West Coast was declared a military area, the eviction of the Japanese Americans from the region began. By the summer of 1942, over 110,000 Nisei and Issei had been transported to ten internment camps (see chapter-opening map). When tested in court, the executive order was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Korematsu v. the United States* (1944).

The orders to relocate allowed almost no time to prepare. Families could pack only a

few personal possessions and had to store or sell the rest of their property, including homes and businesses. Finding storage facilities was nearly impossible, and most families had to liquidate their possessions at ridiculously low prices. "It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced," one man recalled, "as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over all our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept." In the relocation it is estimated that Japanese American families lost from \$810 million to \$2 billion in property and goods.

Having disposed of a lifetime of possessions, Japanese Americans began the process of internment. Tags with numbers were issued to every family to tie to luggage and coats-no names, only numbers. "From then on," wrote one woman, "we were known as family #10710." In the camps, the Nisei and Issei were surrounded by barbed wire and watched over by guards. The internees were assigned to 20-by-25-foot apartments in long barracks of plywood covered with tarpaper, and each camp was expected to create a community complete with farms, shops, and small factories. Within a remarkably short period of time, they did. Making the desert bloom, by 1944 the internees at Manzanar, east of the Sierra in California's Owens Valley, were producing more than \$2 million worth of agricultural products.

Some internees were able to leave the camps by working outside, supplying much-needed labor, especially farm work. By the fall of 1942, one-fifth of all males had left the camps to work. Others volunteered for military service. Japanese American units served in both the Pacific and European theaters, the most famous being the four-thousand-man 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which saw action in Italy, France, and Germany. The men of the 442nd would be among the most decorated in the army. Years later, in 2000, the federal government, citing racial bias during the war for the delay, awarded the Medal of Honor to twenty-one Asian Americans-most belonging to the 442nd Regiment. Included in the group was Daniel Ken Inouye, who was elected to the U.S. Senate from Hawai'i in 1960.

Aware of rabidly anti-Japanese public opinion, Roosevelt waited until after the off-year 1943 elections to allow internees who passed a loyalty review to go home. A year later, the camps were empty, each internee having been given train fare home and \$25. Returning home, the Japanese Americans discovered that nearly everything was gone. Stored belongings had been stolen. Land, homes, and businesses had been confiscated by the government for unpaid taxes. Denied even an apology from the government, Japanese Americans nevertheless began to reestablish their homes and businesses. Decades later, in 1988, and after several lawsuits on behalf of victims, a semi-apologetic federal government paid \$20,000 in compensation to each of the surviving sixty thousand internees.

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The Good War.

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the evil nature of Japanese militarism and German fascism, combined with the image of American soldiers fighting and dying for freedom and democracy and the lack of significant domestic opposition to the war made World War II the "good war" and its soldiers "the greatest generation." These images have become etched in the American mind and have shaped a vision of the United States' mission to fight evil in the world.

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[Photo] In February 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order sending all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast to internment camps. This photo, taken at a staging area for transportation to the internment camps, shows the quiet dignity of those waiting to be interned. National Archives.

Making America: A History of the United States, 2nd Ed., Carol Berkin, Christopher L. Miller, Robert W. Cherny, and James L. Gormly, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999 [835-836]

America Responds to War

- What actions did Roosevelt choose to mobilize the nation for war?
- What new social and economic choices did Americans confront as the nation became the "arsenal of democracy"?
- What new opportunities and old constraints did women and minorities encounter on the home front and in their military experiences?

The attack on Pearl Harbor unified the nation as no other event had done. Afterward, it was almost impossible to find an isolationist. Thousands of young men rushed to enlist, especially in the navy and marines. On December 8, in New York City, twelve hundred applicants besieged the navy recruiting station, some having waited outside the doors all night. Eventually more than 16.4 million Americans would serve in the armed forces during World War II.

The shock of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor raised fears of further attacks, especially along the Pacific coast. On the night of December 7 and throughout the next week, West Coast cities reported enemy planes overhead and practiced blackouts. Phantom Japanese planes were spotted above San Francisco and Los Angeles. In Seattle, crowds hurled rocks at an offending blue neon light that defied the blackout and then, venting both fear and rage, rioted across the city. The Rose Bowl game between Oregon State and Duke was moved from the Bowl's home in Pasadena to Duke's stadium in Durham, North Carolina. Stores everywhere removed from their shelves goods made in Japan. Alarm and anger were focused especially on Japanese Americans. Rumors circulated wildly that they intended to sabotage factories and military installations in order to pave the way for the invasion of the West Coast. Within a week, the FBI had arrested 2,541 citizens of Axis countries: 1,370 Japanese, 1,002 Germans, and 169 Italians. Attorney General Francis Biddle announced that he did not believe it would be necessary to arrest more. Biddle soon changed his mind as anti-Japanese hysteria spread.

Japanese-American Internment

The feelings against Japanese Americans were a product of long-standing racist attitudes and an immediate reaction to the war. Of the nearly 125,000 Japanese Americans in the country, about three-fourths were Nisei, who had been born in the United States. The rest were Issei, officially citizens of Japan although nearly all had lived in the United States more than eighteen years.

Fueling the hatred following the attack on Pearl Harbor were the actions of General John L. De Witt, commanding general of the Western Defense District. On December 7, he had seen Japanese planes over San Francisco where none existed, and he believed that everyone of Japanese heritage was a threat. Except for individual cases, the nation did not need to worry about Americans of Italian or German ancestry, he pronounced, but the Japanese were a different matter. "We must worry about the Japanese all the time," De Witt stated, "until he is wiped off the map." Unable to discover any acts of espionage or sabotage, California Attorney General Earl Warren nonetheless concluded that a plot existed and it was only a matter of time until "zero hour," when the enemy within would carry out its sinister plans. Echoing long-standing anti-Japanese feelings, California moved to "protect" itself. Japanese Americans were fired from state jobs and had their law and medical licenses revoked. Banks froze Japanese-American assets, stores refused service, and loyal citizens vandalized Nisei and Issei homes and businesses.

Although some doubted the reality of any threat from the Japanese-American

community, few came forward to speak on its behalf or to protest the growing cry to relocate people of Japanese ancestry away from the coast. President Roosevelt was no exception. On February 19, 1942, he signed Executive Order #9066, which allowed the military to remove from official military areas anyone deemed a threat.

When the entire West Coast was declared a military area, the eviction of the Japanese Americans from the region began. By the summer of 1942, more than 110,000 Nisei and Issei had been transported to ten internment camps (see chapter-opening map).

When tested in court, the Executive Order was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944).

The orders to relocate gave Japanese Americans almost no time to prepare. Families had to pack the few personal possessions they were allowed to take and to store or try and sell the rest of their property, including homes and businesses. Some had two weeks, others had two days, but it did not matter. Finding storage facilities was nearly impossible, and most families had to sell their possessions at ridiculously low prices. "It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced," one man recalled, "as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over all our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept." A twenty-six-room hotel was sold for \$500; a pickup truck went for \$25; farms sold for a fraction of what they were worth. When denied a few additional days to harvest his strawberry crop, one bitter farmer plowed it under. The FBI promptly arrested him for sabotage. Japanese-American families lost an estimated \$810 million to \$2 billion in property and possessions.

As if having to dispose of a lifetime of possessions almost overnight was not bad enough, the process of internment produced a feeling of helplessness and isolation. Tags with numbers were issued to every family to tie to luggage and coats—no names, only numbers. "From then on," wrote one woman, "we were known as family #10710." Going to the camp, she had lost her identity, dignity, and privacy. In camps, Nisei and Issei were surrounded by barbed wire and watched over by guards in towers mounted with machine guns pointing inward. Photographers were not allowed to take pictures of the wire or the guard towers. Families and individuals were assigned to apartments measuring 20 by 25 feet in long barracks of plywood covered with tar paper. On average, eight people were assigned to each apartment. A cot, a straw-filled mattress, and three army blankets were furnished to each person. Between rows of barracks were communal bathrooms and eating areas. Within each camp, the internees were expected to create a community complete with farms, shops, and small factories. And within a remarkably short period of time, they did. Making the desert bloom, the internees at Manzanar by 1944 were producing more than \$2 million worth of agricultural products.

Some internees were able to leave the camps by working outside, supplying much-needed labor, especially farm work. By the fall of 1942, one-fifth of all males had left the camps to work. Others volunteered for military service, the other escape route from the camps. Japanese-American units served in both the Pacific and Europe. The most famous unit was the four-thousand-man 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which saw action in Italy, France, and Germany. The men of the 442nd were among the most decorated in the U.S. Army (see *Individual Choices: Daniel Ken Inouye*).

Aware of rabidly anti-Japanese public opinion, Roosevelt waited until after the off-year 1943 elections to allow internees who passed a loyalty review to go home. A year later, the camps were empty, each internee having been given train fare home and \$25. Returning home, the Japanese Americans discovered that nearly everything they owned was gone. Stored belongings had been stolen. Land, homes, and businesses had been seized by the government for unpaid taxes. Denied even an apology from the government, Japanese Americans began to re-establish their homes and businesses. Decades later, in 1988, and after several lawsuits on behalf of victims, a semiapologetic federal government paid \$20,000 in compensation to each of the surviving sixty

thousand internees.

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[Photo] In February 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order sending all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast to internment camps. This photo shows a young boy, with a chocolate bar and comic books, awaiting transportation to one of the ten camps. FDR Library.

Nation of Nations: A Narrative History of the American Republic, 5th Ed., James West Davidson, William E. Gienapp, Christine Leigh Heyrman, Mark H. Lytle, and Michael B. Stoff, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2005

[884-886]

Concentration Camps

Americans showed no such tolerance to the 127,000 Japanese living in the United States, whether they were aliens or citizens. Ironically, tensions were least high in Hawaii, where the war with Japan had begun. Local newspapers there expressed confidence in the loyalty of Japanese Americans, who in any case were crucial to Hawaii's economy. General Delos Emmons, the military governor of the islands, rebuffed pressures from Washington to evacuate as many as 20,000 "dangerous" Japanese. He branded a Justice Department report warning of widespread sabotage as being "so fantastic it hardly needs refuting."

On the mainland, Japanese Americans remained largely separated from the mainstream of American life. State laws and local custom threw up complex barriers to integration. In the western states, where they were concentrated around urban areas, most Japanese could not vote, own land, or live in decent neighborhoods. Approximately 47,000 Japanese aliens, known as "Issei," were ineligible for citizenship under American law. Only their children could become citizens. Despite such restrictions, some Japanese achieved success in small businesses like landscaping, while many others worked on or owned farms that supplied fruits and vegetables to growing cities.

West Coast politicians pressed the Roosevelt administration to evacuate the Japanese from their communities. It did not seem to matter that about 80,000 were American citizens, called "Nisei," and that no evidence indicated that they posed any threat. "A Jap's a Jap," commented General John De Witt, commander of West Coast defenses. "It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not." In response, the War Department in February 1942 drew up Executive Order 9066, which allowed the exclusion of any person from designated military areas. Under De Witt's authority, the order was applied only on the West Coast against Japanese Americans. By late February Roosevelt had agreed that both Issei and Nisei would be evacuated. But where would they go?

The army began to ship the entire Japanese community to "assembly centers." Most Nisei incurred heavy financial losses as they sold property at far below market value. Their distress became a windfall for people who had long resented their economic competition. "We've been charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons," admitted the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association. "We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man." At the assembly centers-racetracks, fairgrounds, and similar temporary locations-the army had not prepared basic sanitation, comfort, or privacy "We lived in a horse stable," remembered one young girl. "We filled our cheesecloth with straw-for our mattress." The authorities at least had the decency to keep families together.

Most Japanese were interned in 10 camps in remote areas of seven western states. Notions that the camps might become self-sufficient communities proved wishful thinking. Even resourceful farmers could not raise food in arid desert soil. No claim of humane intent could change the reality-these were concentration camps. Internees were held in wire-enclosed compounds by armed guards. Temporary tarpapered barracks housed families or small groups in single rooms. Each room had a few cots, some blankets, and a single light bulb. That was home.

Some Japanese within the camps protested. Especially offensive was a government loyalty questionnaire that asked Nisei citizens if they would be willing to serve in the armed forces. "What do they take us for? Saps?" asked Dunks Oshima, a camp prisoner. "First, they change my army status to 4-C [enemy alien] because of my ancestry, run me

out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed for this damn democracy. That's going some, for sheer brass!" Yet thousands of Nisei did enlist, and many distinguished themselves in combat.

Other Japanese Americans challenged the government through the courts. Fred Korematsu in California and Gordon Hirabayashi in Washington State were arrested when they refused to report for relocation. "As an American citizen, I wanted to uphold the principles of the Constitution," recalled Hirabayashi. But the Supreme Court let stand military policies aimed specifically at Japanese Americans. The majority opinion stated that "residents having ethnic affiliations with an invading enemy may be a greater source of danger than those of different ancestry," even though the army had never demonstrated that any danger existed. And in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), the Court upheld the government's relocation program as a wartime necessity. Three justices dissented, criticizing relocation as the "legalization of racism."

Concentration camps in America did not perpetuate the horror of Nazi death camps, but they were built on racism and fear. Worse, they violated the traditions of civil rights and liberties for which Americans believed they were fighting.

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[Photo] The bleak landscape of the Internment camp at Manzanar, California, was typical of the sites to which the government sent Japanese Americans. In such a harsh environment the Japanese had no real opportunity to create productive farm communities, as government officials had promised.

Nation of Nations: A Narrative History of the American Republic, 3rd Ed., James West Davidson, William E. Gienapp, Christine Leigh Heyrman, Mark H. Lytle, and Michael B. Stoff, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998

[962-964]

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Some Japanese within the camps protested, especially when government officials circulated a loyalty questionnaire that asked Nisei citizens if they would be willing to serve in the armed forces. "What do they take us for? Saps?" asked Dunks Oshima, a

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[963]

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The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, Brief 5th Ed., Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, NY: Pearson-Longman, 2006

[737-738]

Internment of Japanese Americans

Cooperating with the war effort fostered pride and a feeling of community-but also hate for the enemy. The Nazis, especially Hitler and his Gestapo, were synonymous with evil before 1941. Later, most Americans ceased making distinctions between Germans and Nazis, although the anti-German hysteria that had swept the country during World War I never returned.

The Japanese were easier to hate. The attack on Pearl Harbor created a special animosity toward them, but depicting them as warlike and subhuman owed something to an old American distrust of all Asians. Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, Time magazine told Americans how to distinguish the friendly Chinese from "the Japs." "Chinese... have an easy gait. The Chinese expression is likely to be more kindly, placid, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant." Racial stereotypes played a role in the treatment of Japanese Americans during the war. They were the only group confined in concentration camps, in the greatest mass abridgment of civil liberties in American history.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, about 127,000 Japanese Americans lived in the United States, most on the West Coast. About 80,000 were nisei (Japanese born in the United States and holding American citizenship) and sansei (the sons and daughters of nisei); the rest were issei (aliens born in Japan who were ineligible for U.S. citizenship). They had long suffered from prejudice-barred, for example, from intermarriage with other groups and excluded from many clubs, restaurants, and recreation facilities. Many worked as tenant farmers, fishermen, or small businessmen, or were land-owning farmers, but some belonged to a small professional class of lawyers, teachers, and doctors.

Although many retained cultural ties to Japan and spoke Japanese, these people posed no more threat to the country than did the much larger groups of Italian Americans and German Americans. But their appearance made them stand out. After Pearl Harbor, an anti-Japanese panic seized the West Coast. Rumors suggested that Japanese fishermen were preparing to mine harbors, blow up tunnels, and poison water supplies.

West Coast politicians and citizens urged the War Department to remove the Japanese. The president capitulated and issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing the evacuation in February 1942. "The continued pressure of a largely unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, bound to an enemy nation by strong ties of race, culture, custom and religion, constituted a menace which had to be dealt with," General John De Witt argued, justifying the removal on military grounds. But racial fear and hatred, not military necessity, explained the order.

"The Japs live like rats, breed like rats, and act like rats. We don't want them," the governor of Idaho announced. So it was in remote, often arid, sections of the West that eventually the government built the primitive "relocation centers." "When I first entered our room, I became sick to my stomach," a Japanese-American woman remembered.

The government evacuated about 110,000 Japanese, who lost almost all of their property. Farmers left their crops to be harvested by their American neighbors. Store owners sold out for a small percentage of what their goods were worth. Japanese Americans lost all of their personal possessions, and something more-their pride and respect.

The evacuation was unjustified. In Hawaii, with its much larger Japanese-American population, there was no evacuation, and no sabotage and little disloyalty occurred.

Late in the war, the government allowed Japanese-American men to volunteer for military service, and many served bravely in the European theater. The 442nd Infantry Combat Team, made up entirely of nisei, became the most decorated unit in all the military service-another indication of the loyalty and patriotism of the Japanese Americans. In 1988, Congress belatedly apologized and voted limited compensation for Japanese Americans relocated during World War II.

The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, 4th Ed., Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, NY: Pearson-Longman, 1998

[886-887]

Internment of Japanese Americans

Cooperating with the war effort fostered a sense of pride, a feeling of community. But wartime campaigns not only stimulated patriotism but also promoted hate for the enemy. The Nazis, especially Hitler and his Gestapo, had become synonymous with evil even before 1941. But at the beginning of the war, there was little animosity toward the German people. "You and I don't hate the Nazis because they are Germans. We hate the Germans because they are Nazis," announced a character in one of Helen MacInnes's novels. But before long, most Americans ceased to make distinctions. All Germans seemed evil, although the anti-German hysteria that had swept the country during World War I never developed.

The Japanese were easier to hate than the Germans. The attack on Pearl Harbor created a special animosity toward the Japanese, but the depiction of the Japanese as warlike and subhuman owed something to a long tradition of fear of the so-called yellow peril and a distrust of all Asians. The movies, magazine articles, cartoons, and posters added to the image of the Japanese soldier or pilot with a toothy grin murdering innocent women and children or shooting down helpless Americans. Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, Time magazine explained to Americans how they could distinguish our Asian friends the Chinese "from the Japs." "Virtually all Japanese are short, Japanese are seldom fat; they often dry up with age," Time declared. "Most Chinese avoid horn-rimmed spectacles. Japanese walk stiffly erect, hard-heeled. Chinese, more relaxed, have an easy gait. The Chinese expression is likely to be more kindly, placid, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant."

The racial stereotype of the Japanese played a role in the treatment of Japanese Americans during the war. Some prejudice was shown against German and Italian Americans, but Japanese Americans were the only group confined in concentration camps, in the greatest mass abridgment of civil liberties in American history.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, about 127,000 Japanese Americans lived in the United States, most on the West Coast. About 80,000 were nisei (Japanese born in the United States and holding American citizenship) and sansei (the sons and daughters of nisei); the rest were issei (aliens born in Japan who were ineligible for U.S. citizenship). The Japanese had long suffered from racial discrimination and prejudice in the United States. They were barred from intermarriage with other groups and excluded from many clubs, restaurants, and recreation facilities. Many worked as tenant farmers, fishermen, or small businessmen. Others made up a small professional class of lawyers, teachers, and doctors and a large number of land-owning farmers.

Although many retained cultural and linguistic ties to Japan, they posed no more threat to the country than did the much larger groups of Italian Americans and German Americans. But their physical characteristics made them stand out as the others did not. After Pearl Harbor, an anti-Japanese panic seized the West Coast. A Los Angeles newspaper reported that armed Japanese were in Baja, California, ready to attack. Rumors suggested that Japanese fishermen were preparing to sow mines in the harbor, blow up tunnels, and poison the water supply.

West Coast politicians and ordinary citizens urged the War Department and the president to evacuate the Japanese. The president capitulated and issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the evacuation in February 1942. "The continued pressure of a largely unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, bound to an enemy nation by strong ties of race, culture, custom and religion, constituted a menace which had to be dealt with," General John De Witt argued, justifying the removal on military grounds. But racial fear and animosity, not military necessity, stood behind the order.

Eventually, the government built the "relocation centers" in remote, often arid, sections of the West. "The Japs live like rats, breed like rats, and act like rats. We don't want them," the governor of Idaho announced. The camps were primitive and unattractive. "When I first entered our room, I became sick to my stomach," a Japanese American woman remembered. "There were seven beds in the room and no furniture nor any partitions to separate the males and the females of the family. I just sat on the bed, staring at the bare wall."

The government evacuated about 110,000 Japanese. Those who were forced to leave their homes, farms, and businesses lost almost all their property and possessions. Farmers left their crops to be harvested by their American neighbors. Store owners sold out for a small percentage of what their goods were worth. No personal items or household goods could be transported. The Japanese Americans lost their worldly possessions, and something more—their pride and respect. One 6-year-old kept asking his mother to "take him back to America." He thought his relocation center was in Japan.

The evacuation of the Japanese Americans appears in retrospect to have been unjustified. Even in Hawaii, where a much larger Japanese population existed, the government attempted no evacuation, and no sabotage and little disloyalty occurred. The government allowed Japanese American men to volunteer for military service, and many served bravely in the European theater. The 442nd Infantry Combat Team, made up entirely of nisei, became the most decorated unit in all the military service—another indication of the loyalty and patriotism of the Japanese Americans. In 1988, Congress belatedly voted limited compensation for the Japanese Americans relocated during World War II.

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[Photo] Japanese American children on their way to a "relocation center." For many Japanese Americans, but especially for the children, the nightmare of the relocation camp experience would stay with them all their lives. (Library of Congress)

A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, 7th Ed., Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, David W. Blight, Howard P. Chudacoff, Fredrik Logevall, Beth Bailey, Thomas G. Paterson, and William M. Tuttle, Jr., MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005 [751, 753]

The Limits of American Ideals.

During the war, the U.S. government worked hard to explain to its citizens the reasons for their sacrifices. In 1941 Roosevelt had pledged America to defend "four essential human freedoms" -- freedom of speech; freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear -- and government-sponsored films contrasted democracy and totalitarianism, freedom and fascism, equality and oppression.

Despite such confident proclamations, as America fought the totalitarian regimes of the Axis powers, the nation confronted questions with no easy answers. What limits on civil liberties were justified in the interest of national security? How freely could information flow to the nation's citizens without revealing military secrets to the enemy and costing American lives? How could the United States protect itself against the threat of spies or saboteurs, especially from German, Italian, or Japanese citizens living in the United States? And what about America's ongoing domestic problems--particularly the problem of race? Could the nation address its own citizens' demands for reform as it fought the war against the Axis? The answers to these questions often revealed tensions between the nation's democratic ideals and its wartime practices.

For the most part, America handled the issue of civil liberties well. American leaders embraced a "strategy of truth," declaring that citizens of a democratic nation required a truthful accounting of the war's progress. However, the government closely controlled information about military matters. Censorship was serious business, as even seemingly unimportant details might tip off enemies about troop movements or invasion plans. Government-created propaganda sometimes dehumanized the enemy. Nonetheless, the American government resorted to hate mongering much less frequently than during the First World War.

More complex was the question of how to handle dissent, and how to guard against the possibility that enemy agents were operating within the nation's borders. The Alien Registration (Smith) Act, passed in 1940, made it unlawful to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government by force or violence or to join any organization that did so. After Pearl Harbor, the government drew upon this authority to take thousands of Germans, Italians, and other Europeans into custody as suspected spies and potential traitors. During the war, the government interned 14,426 Europeans in Enemy Alien Camps. Fearing subversion, the government also prohibited ten thousand Italian Americans from living or working in restricted zones along the California coast, including San Francisco and Monterey Bay.

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INTERMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

In March 1942, Roosevelt ordered that all the 12,000 foreign-born Japanese and Japanese Americans living in California, Oregon, and the state of Washington (the vast majority of the mainland population) be removed from the West Coast to "relocation centers" for the duration of the war. While individual German and Italian nationals were interned because of specific charges against them, that was not the case here. There were no individual charges; Japanese and Japanese Americans were imprisoned as a group, under suspicion solely because they were of Japanese descent.

American anger at Japan's "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor fueled the calls for internment, as did fears that West Coast cities might yet come under enemy attack. Long-standing racism also played a critical role, and General John L. DeWitt, chief of the "Western Defense Command, warned, "The Japanese race is an enemy race." Finally,

people in economic competition with Japanese Americans were among the strongest supporters of internment. Though Japanese nationals were forbidden to gain U.S. citizenship or own property, American-born Nissei (second generation) and Sansei (third generation) were increasingly successful in business and agriculture. The relocation order forced Japanese Americans to sell property valued at \$500 million for a fraction of its worth. West Coast Japanese Americans also lost their positions in the truck-garden, floral, and fishing industries.

The internees were sent to flood-damaged lands at Relocation, Arkansas; to the intermountain terrain of Wyoming and the desert of western Arizona; and to other arid and desolate spots in the West. The camps were bleak and demoralizing. Behind barbed wire stood tarpapered wooden barracks where entire families lived in a single room furnished only with cots, blankets, and a bare light bulb. Toilets and dining and bathing facilities were communal; privacy was almost nonexistent. In such difficult circumstances, people nonetheless attempted to sustain community life, setting up schools for the children and clubs for adults to battle monotony.

Betrayed by their government, almost 6,000 internees renounced U.S. citizenship and demanded to be sent to Japan. Some Japanese Americans sought legal remedy, but the Supreme Court upheld the government's action in *Korematsu v. U.S.* (1944). Still others sought to demonstrate their loyalty. The all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, drawn heavily from young men in internment camps, was the most decorated unit of its size. Suffering heavy casualties in Italy and France, members of the 442nd were awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, and more than 3,600 Purple Hearts. In 1988, Congress issued a public apology and largely symbolic payment of \$20,000 to each of the 60,000 surviving Japanese American internees.

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[Photo] In February 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered that all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast be rounded up and placed in prison camps. These families were awaiting a train to take them to an assembly center in Merced, California; from there, they would be sent to relocation camps in remote inland areas. (National Archives)

A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Brief 4th Ed., Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, Paul D. Escott, Howard P. Chudacoff, Thomas G. Paterson, William M. Tuttle, Jr., and William J. Brophy, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996

[526-527]

THE INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS

After America entered the war, U.S. leaders had to consider whether enemy agents were operating within the nation's borders and threatening the war effort. It was clear that not all Americans were enthusiastic supporters of the nation's involvement. After Pearl Harbor, several thousand "enemy aliens" were arrested and taken into custody, some of them Nazi agents. Other people had conscientious objections to the war. During the Second World War, conscientious objectors (COs) had to have a religious (as opposed to moral or ethical) reason for refusing military service. About twenty-five thousand qualified COs accepted noncombat service, most as medical corpsmen. An additional twelve thousand were sent to civilian public service camps, where they worked at forestry or conservation or as orderlies in public health hospitals. Approximately fifty-five hundred, three-fourths of whom were Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to participate in any way; they were imprisoned.

"An Enemy Race"

The one enormous exception to the nation's generally creditable wartime civil liberties record was the internment in "relocation centers" of, ultimately, 120,000 Japanese Americans. Of these people, 77,000 were Nisei, or native-born citizens of the United States. Their imprisonment was based not on suspicion or evidence of treason; their crime was solely their ethnic origin—the fact that they were of Japanese descent. Charges of criminal behavior were never brought against any Japanese-Americans; none was ever indicted or tried for espionage, treason, or sedition.

"It was really cruel and harsh," recalled Joseph Y. Kurihara, a citizen and a veteran of World War I. "To pack and evacuate in forty-eight hours was an impossibility. Seeing mothers completely bewildered with children crying from want and peddlers taking advantage and offering prices next to robbery made me feel like murdering those responsible."

Life in the Internment Camps

The internees were sent to flood-damaged lands at Relocation, Arkansas, to the intermountain terrain of Wyoming and the desert of western Arizona, and to other arid and desolate spots in the West. Although the names were evocative -- Topaz, Utah; Rivers, Arizona; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Tule Lake and Manzanar, California -- the camps were bleak and demoralizing. Behind barbed wire stood tarpapered wooden barracks where entire families lived in a single room furnished only with cots, blankets, and a bare light bulb. Toilets and dining and bathing facilities were communal; privacy was almost nonexistent. Japanese-Americans were forced to sell property valued at \$500 million, and they lost their positions in the truck-garden, floral, and fishing industries. Indeed, their economic competitors were among the most vocal proponents of their relocation.

The Supreme Court upheld the government's policy of internment. In wartime, the Court said in the *Hirabayashi* ruling (1943), "Residents having ethnic affiliations with an invading enemy may be a greater source of danger than those of different ancestry." In the *Korematsu* case (1944), the Court approved the removal of the Nisei from the West Coast. One dissenter, Justice Frank Murphy, denounced the decision as the "legalization of racism."

In 1983, forty-one years after he had been sent to a government camp, Fred Korematsu had the satisfaction of hearing a federal judge rule that he -- and by implication all detainees -- had been the victim of "unsubstantiated facts, distortions and misrepresentations of at least one military commander whose views were affected

by racism." A year earlier, the government's special Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians had recommended compensating the victims of this policy. Finally, in 1988, Congress voted to award \$20,000 and a public apology to each of the surviving sixty thousand Japanese-American internees.