

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Japanese Relocation during World War II

By National Archives  
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*Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt ordered the relocation and internment of Japanese Americans in the United States. This order resulted in devastating financial and emotional damage to Japanese Americans that persisted for generations. As you read, take notes on the different reasons why the United States authorized the internment of Japanese Americans.*

- [1] President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, would live in infamy. The attack launched the United States fully into the two theaters<sup>1</sup> of the world war. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the United States had been involved in the European war only by supplying England and other antifascist countries<sup>2</sup> of Europe with necessary war materials.

The attack on Pearl Harbor also launched a rash of fear about national security, especially on the West Coast. In February 1942, just two months after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt, as commander-in-chief, issued Executive Order 9066, which had the effect of relocating all persons of Japanese ancestry, both citizens and aliens, inland, outside of the Pacific military zone. The objectives of the order were to prevent espionage<sup>3</sup> and to protect persons of Japanese descent from harm at the hands of Americans who had strong anti-Japanese attitudes.



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1. In warfare, a "theater" is an area in which important military events occur or are progressing.
2. Antifascist countries were countries that opposed radical authoritarian rule, such as the fascist rule in Germany and Italy.
3. Espionage is the practice of spying or using spies.

In Washington and Oregon, the eastern boundary of the military zone was an imaginary line along the rim of the Cascade Mountains; this line continued down the spine of California from north to south. From that line to the Pacific coast, the military restricted zones in those three states were defined.

Roosevelt's order affected 117,000 people of Japanese descent, two-thirds of whom were native-born citizens of the United States. The Issei were the first generation of Japanese in this country; the Nisei were the second generation, numbering 70,000 American citizens at the time of internment. Within weeks, all persons of Japanese ancestry — whether citizens or enemy aliens, young or old, rich or poor — were ordered to assembly centers<sup>4</sup> near their homes. Soon they were sent to permanent relocation centers<sup>5</sup> outside the restricted military zones.

- [5] For example, persons of Japanese ancestry in western Washington State were removed to the assembly center at the Puyallup Fairgrounds near Tacoma. From Puyallup to Pomona, internees found that a cowshed at a fairgrounds or a horse stall at a racetrack was home for several months before they were transported to a permanent location. Relocation centers were situated many miles inland, often in remote and desolate locales. Sites included Tule Lake, California; Minidoka, Idaho; Manzanar, California; Topaz, Utah; Jerome, Arkansas; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Poston, Arizona; Granada, Colorado; and Rohwer, Arkansas.

As four or five families with their sparse collections of clothing and possessions squeezed into shared barracks<sup>6</sup> made of tar paper, life took on some familiar routines of socializing and school. However, eating in common facilities and having limited opportunities for work interrupted other social and cultural patterns. Persons who became troublesome were sent to a special camp at Tule Lake, California, where dissidents were housed.

In 1943 and 1944 the government assembled a combat unit of Japanese Americans for the European theater. It became the 442d Regimental Combat Team and gained fame as the most highly decorated of World War II. Their military record reflected their patriotism.

As the war drew to a close, the relocation centers were slowly evacuated. While some persons of Japanese ancestry returned to their home towns, others sought new surroundings. For example, the Japanese American community of Tacoma, Washington, had been sent to three different centers; only 30 percent returned to Tacoma after the war. Japanese Americans from Fresno had gone to Manzanar; 80 percent returned to their hometown.

The internment of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II sparked constitutional and political debate. In the 1940s, two men and one woman — Hirabayashi, Korematsu, and Endo

4. "Assembly centers" were location that Japanese Americans would live until they were moved to a permanent relocation center.
5. internment camps
6. Barracks are buildings, or a group of buildings, used to house soldiers.

— challenged the constitutionality of the relocation and curfew orders.<sup>7</sup> While the men received negative judgments from the court, in the 1944 case *ExParte Mitsuye Endo*, the Supreme Court ruled that, “Mitsuye Endo is entitled to an unconditional release by the War Relocation Authority.” Some people refer to the relocation centers as concentration camps; others view internment as an unfortunate episode, but a military necessity. During the Reagan-Bush years Congress passed Public Law 100-383 in 1988 which acknowledged the injustice of the internment, apologized for it, and provided a \$20,000 cash payment to each person who was interned.

- [10] One of the most stunning ironies in this episode of American civil liberties was articulated by an internee who, when told that the Japanese were put in those camps for their own protection, countered, “If we were put there for our protection, why were the guns at the guard towers pointed inward, instead of outward?”

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7. In March 1942, the movements of Japanese Americans were further restricted when a nighttime curfew was implemented.