

READING: THE INCARCERATION YEARS

Despite intelligence reports that claimed only a small fraction of the Japanese American population on the West Coast could be considered dangerous, the FBI took in more than 5,000 issei and nisei in the months after Pearl Harbor. Those picked up in the initial roundup were largely issei who held special positions in the Japanese American community. Many were sent directly to Department of Justice internment camps where they were held anywhere from a few months to the duration of the war. In the wake of Pearl Harbor, the government also froze Japanese branch bank assets, seized "contraband" items (including cameras, weapons, and radio transmitters), and imposed travel restrictions and curfews on the Japanese American population on the West Coast.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Click here to read a report from the Office of Naval Intelligence about the status of Japanese American loyalty to the United States.



This man is gathering a pile of confiscated radios. Click on the photo to see a larger image.



In this video segment, Shigeko U. remembers the imposition of dealing with curfew orders and travel restrictions.

During this period, close to 1,000 Japanese American "suspects" in Hawaii were also rounded up, placed in a detention center in Hawaii, and later removed to special camps run by the Department of Justice. A wholesale evacuation of the Japanese American population in Hawaii, however, was never completed, although it was initially proposed by the military. Such a policy would have meant the removal of more than one-third of the state's population and the bulk of its skilled labor force. Thus, Army and Navy authorities rejected a mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans in Hawaii as being too costly and logistically complex.

These same arguments, however, did not seem to apply to the mainland Japanese American population. With the urging of military authorities and despite the protests of some Department of Justice officials, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. This order allowed the Secretary of War to designate military areas in which unauthorized people could not enter or remain. Individuals without permission to be in these designated areas, that is, Japanese Americans, would be removed.

EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MASS REMOVAL

The military first exercised its new authority on the residents of Terminal Island, California. The military considered this island, located 25 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, a "strategic" location. On February 26, 1942, the Japanese American residents of Terminal Island were given 48 hours to leave. The Terminal Island population was temporarily placed in churches and community centers before being sent off to "assembly

centers" and incarceration camps. The Terminal Island incident was simply a precursor of the impending mass exclusion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

On March 2, 1942, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, commander of the Western Defense Command, issued Public Proclamation No. 1 which classified most of the West Coast states as Military Area No. 1. The proclamation called for the military to evict Japanese, German, and Italian aliens. However, DeWitt stated that German and Italian aliens would be evicted only after the removal of the Japanese. A program of voluntary exclusion was briefly attempted. It was ill defined and not successfully implemented. In the end, Japanese Americans were the only U.S. citizens affected by the proclamation.

MASS REMOVAL

By late March, the government decided that both a mandatory removal and incarceration were necessary, but could not be done simultaneously. The government also began looking for sites for both temporary "assembly centers" and permanent incarceration camps to facilitate the two-step exclusion process. The military controlled the process of removal and the construction of the "assembly centers" while the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA), a civilian agency, oversaw the administration of the centers. Another civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), coordinated the relocation of the Japanese Americans after they left the military "assembly centers."

On March 24, the military began a full-scale removal when it issued its first exclusion order on Bainbridge Island, Washington. After Bainbridge, exclusion orders were sent to Japanese Americans living in 98 other exclusion zones within Military Area No. 1. Japanese Americans were given between seven and ten days to move out.



[Click here to see a larger image of the Civilian Exclusion Order that was posted on Bainbridge Island, Washington.](#)



[Read this transcript segment in which Isami N. sheds new light on the distress Japanese Americans experienced while preparing to leave their belongings, businesses, and homes behind.](#)

Posted notices informed the Japanese Americans that they had to register at the Civil Control Office; could bring only what they could carry; and should include the following items:

- (a) bedding and linens (no mattresses) for each member of the family;
- (b) toilet articles for each member of the family;
- (c) extra clothing for each member of the family;
- (d) sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls, and cups for each member of the family;
- (e) essential personal effects for each member of the family[1]

Families were also informed through these posted notices that there would be no shipping services available, and any storage of their property by the government would be at the owner's risk. The military gave no information about the Japanese Americans' final destination, only that transportation would be provided. Once registered, each family was given a number and told when and where to assemble on "evacuation" day.

The suddenness of the removal gave the Japanese Americans little time to prepare for their departure. Many had to abandon, give away, or sell the majority of their belongings. Some trusted friends to watch over their property, sometimes with the power of attorney mandate. Junk dealers and bargain hunters sought out Japanese American homes in order to get good deals on the items that the families were forced to sell.



[Click here to see a photo of an "Evacuation Sale" in Seattle's Nihonmachi \(Japan Town\).](#)



[Watch and listen to Frank Y. talk about having only one week to prepare for leaving for the incarceration camp.](#)

On assigned days, Japanese Americans, tagged with their family numbers and carrying all of their belongings, gathered at designated spots in groups of about 500. They were loaded onto buses and trains to be transported to one of sixteen hastily constructed "assembly centers." The ride was often hours long and although food was supposed to be provided, some Japanese Americans recall not being fed for the entire journey. Armed military guards accompanied the buses and trains, and the windows were closed and blacked out.



[In this photo, a family has to say goodbye to their pet as they are removed from their home. Click on the photo for a larger image.](#)



[Click here to see a larger photo of families from Bainbridge Island, Washington as they are removed en masse from their island homes.](#)



[This woman sheds a tear as she travels to an unknown destination during the mass removal in 1942.](#)



Watch and listen to Walt Woodward, editor for the Bainbridge Island newspaper, talk about the day his neighbors were removed.

By June 6, 1942, all Japanese Americans--approximately 92,000 people--had been removed from Military Area No. 1.

"ASSEMBLY CENTERS"

The government planned to send all Japanese Americans to incarceration camps in the interior of the country, away from the coast and other "strategic" areas. Construction of these camps, however, had not yet been completed when the removal of the Japanese Americans was complete, so the Japanese Americans had to spend about three months in "assembly centers" that were located in Military Area No. 1. These temporary centers held the Japanese Americans until the inland incarceration camps were finished.



[Click here to see a picture of the muddy Puyallup Assembly Center.](#)



In this video clip, Masao W. recalls arriving at the Puyallup Assembly Center, his new home.

Upon reaching their destinations, the Japanese Americans were led by armed guards into the assembly centers, which were operated under maximum-level security conditions. The centers were surrounded by barbed wire, watched from guard towers, and patrolled by soldiers. It was only upon arrival at these centers that many Japanese Americans fully understood that they were being detained as prisoners and enemies of the United States.



Akiko K. recalls her first impressions of the Puyallup Assembly Center in Washington state.



Watch this video to hear about a military friend of Joseph F. expressing hatred toward anyone of Japanese ancestry.

Thirteen assembly centers were constructed in California and one each in Washington, Oregon, and Arizona. At their peak, most centers housed between 3,000 and 7,000 detainees. The largest center at Santa Anita, California, housed more than 18,000 people. Generally, the centers were nothing more than modified racetracks, fairgrounds, and livestock pavilions. These places were selected because they had built-in infrastructure for water, electricity, and sewage. The cost to administer the centers was between 25 cents and 73 cents per day per detainee.[2]

After arriving at the centers, each family was assigned to an "apartment." As a result of the short timeline and pressure to keep costs low during construction, the "apartments" were often windowless rooms with gaps in the walls and low ceilings. Housing constructed from pre-existing livestock stalls often retained the odors of its previous animal residents. Partitions between apartments did not reach the ceilings, ostensibly for "ventilation purposes." This decreased the occupants' privacy, since they could hear everything going on in the next room. Each "family apartment" consisted of one room that was supposed to be provided with cots, blankets, mattresses, a bare light bulb, and a stove. Often, though, there were not enough of these supplies for everyone.

The Army stated that "for the preservation of the family unit" they would house grandparents, parents, and children together. In many cases, though, small families had to share apartments, and large dormitories were built for single men and women. At Tanforan Race Track in Burlingame, California, one dormitory was home to 400 bachelors. Eight-person families were assigned to 20 ft. by 25 ft. rooms; six-person families to 12 ft. by 20 ft. rooms; and four-person families to 8 ft. by 20 ft. rooms.

The average stay at the "assembly centers" was 100 days. Most Japanese Americans arrived sometime between March and May of 1942. This meant that they spent a long, hot summer in the centers. The cramped wooden apartments did nothing to relieve the stifling heat.

On average, the WCCA spent 45 cents per day feeding each detainee. Even though the diet of Vienna sausages and bread differed greatly from the traditional Japanese menu of rice, vegetables, and fish, meals became the focal point of each day. At every meal, detainees waited in lines for hours outside the mess halls. Most felt the need to eat quickly since they knew their family and friends were waiting in line outside. Furthermore, the mess hall atmosphere made it difficult for families to spend mealtimes together. Children often ate with their friends, and the hurried pace left little time for families to talk even if they did eat together. As a result, many families began to lose their cohesion.



[Click here to listen to Louise K. talk about camp food and diarrhea.](#)



[Click here to see a photo of a camp meal.](#)

Life in the "assembly centers" was communal. Eating, showering, and using the toilet were all done with the other detainees. Until the detainees protested, the outhouse facilities had no partitions, only one long bench with holes. Despite this environment, the Japanese Americans tried to make the best of their situation. They

established schools, hospitals, churches, sports teams, and other organizations. These groups worked with limited funds and supplies but were a source of distraction and stability for the detainees, who were still unsure of what the future held for them.

INCARCERATION CAMPS

While the detainees tried to adjust to life in the "assembly centers," more permanent incarceration camps were being built for the final stage of removal. A total of ten incarceration camps, four Department of Justice internment camps, and two citizen isolation camps were built. The Department of Justice internment camps held enemy aliens individually deemed dangerous by the government, many of them issei who were arrested immediately after Pearl Harbor. The Department of Justice also administered the citizen isolation camps, which held issei and their families arrested during the initial roundup, some German and Italian enemy aliens, and a group of Japanese Latin Americans (described later in this reading). The majority of Japanese Americans were transported to the incarceration camps.



This photo shows a guardtower and entrance to an incarceration camp.



Click on this photo for a larger image of two children and rows of incarceration camp barracks.

As early as May 1942, the Army began moving Japanese Americans from the "assembly centers" to the incarceration camps. By November 3, all Japanese Americans from the West Coast were housed in incarceration camps under the control of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), the governmental agency charged with administering the camps. The WRA was given wide discretion in its powers, including the right to "[p]rovide, insofar as feasible and desirable, for the employment of such persons [Japanese Americans] at useful work in industry, commerce, agriculture, on public projects, prescribe the terms and positions of such public employment, and safeguard the public interest in the private employment of such persons." [3]

In more than 125 groups of 500 each, the detainees rode trains and buses to the remote incarceration camp locations. The rides were long and difficult. Only infants and the physically disabled were provided with sleeping berths. The government promised the detainees that the incarceration camps would be more accommodating and less restrictive than the "assembly centers."



In this video clip, Francis F. recalls moving to Minidoka and not knowing where he was going at the time.

The camp sites were selected by the Army to be "at a safe distance" from any locations perceived to be strategic. The environments of the camps ranged from the swamplands of Arkansas to the deserts of Arizona.

The land was generally barren, isolated, and harsh. In the desert camps, temperatures ranged from below freezing in winter to above 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.

These camps were home mainly for the young and the old. Of the 110,000 people incarcerated, 77.4 percent were 25 years old or younger. More than half of the issei generation was over 50 years old.[4] The age disparity within the camps further increased when young and middle-aged adults were pulled out of the camps through temporary leave given to college students, seasonal agricultural workers, and military draftees.

Some administrators who ran the camps were biased, and distanced themselves from camp life. Some did treat the camp occupants with compassion, but most shared the view that the Japanese Americans were just enemies. Many of the military guards who patrolled the camp borders shared the same attitude, and stories abound of incidents in which potshots were taken at the camp occupants.



"Are you a human being?" a young soldier asked Mutsu H. while she was imprisoned in the Amache War Relocation Authority camp.

The accommodations for the camp administrators and the military guards were fairly roomy and comfortable. Some were painted or furnished with cooling systems, refrigerators, and indoor plumbing.

Other areas of the camps were built to standard specifications. The borders of the camps were patrolled by guards and surrounded by barbed wire fences. Camps were divided into "blocks" consisting of 12 to 14 barracks, a mess hall, bathroom facilities, a laundry, and a recreation hall. Each barrack was divided into four rooms, either 20 ft. by 16 ft., or 20 ft. by 25 ft. Generally, one room housed one family, but in some cases, two small families shared one 20 ft. by 25 ft. room. These structures were built of wooden boards covered with tarpaper, which provided little protection from the harsh weather. Later, some Japanese American construction crews added ceilings and inside walls to the barracks. Each room was provided with cots, mattresses, a stove, a light bulb, and blankets. Water was only accessible at the laundry or bathroom facilities.



[Click here to see a larger image of this photo of the Tule Lake incarceration camp in California.](#)

LIFE IN THE CAMPS

As in the "assembly centers," the Japanese Americans attempted to make their lives as normal as possible. Families foraged and saved for supplies to build or buy "extras," such as chairs, tables, curtains, and sheets. In areas where the climate permitted, victory gardens sprang up and landscaping efforts appeared. The Japanese Americans tried to make homes out of their Spartan surroundings, but simply enduring these harsh conditions from day to day proved to be a challenge.



Here, Mr. and Mrs. Tazuma are shown sitting in front of their barrack at the Minidoka incarceration camp in Idaho. This is the same Mr. Tazuma seen in photos in the first reading.



Click here to see a larger image of this Issei woman collecting coal for her heater.

Employment

When Japanese Americans entered the incarceration camps, the government and the WRA decided that this population would be used to some extent as a source of labor. The government did not want the Japanese Americans to become wards of the state, dependent upon it for all their needs. The incarceration, however, had stripped Japanese Americans of their ability to earn a living. The WRA therefore adopted an employment policy that provided food, shelter, medical care, and education, as well as minimal wages for work and some unemployment benefits. The wage scale was \$12 a month for unskilled labor, \$16 a month for skilled labor, and \$19 a month for professional work.[5] The public and some members of Congress attacked this wage scale, arguing that it was too high. The incarcerated Japanese Americans, however, found that they were usually unable to meet minimal needs on these salaries. New clothing, shoes, and other consumer goods were mostly out of reach for the Japanese Americans in the camps, let alone any outside financial obligations such as mortgages.



Here is the first paycheck Mae Iseri received at the Tule Lake incarceration camp. Click here to see a larger image.

Most of the employed Japanese Americans worked inside the camps. They performed duties ranging from janitorial services to some camp administration. The WRA also established work projects supporting the war effort in the camps. At Manzanar, Poston, and Gila River, hundreds of Japanese Americans made camouflage nets for use in the war. Others worked outside of the camps as contract laborers in local farms. More than 10,000 Japanese Americans worked on such farms during their incarceration.



Here is a group of Japanese Americans from the Tule Lake incarceration camp, picking peas.

Food

Food was a major issue throughout life in the camps. Mess halls were generally overcrowded, particularly in the early months of incarceration when construction had not been completed. The Japanese Americans' diets changed little from the "assembly centers." The meals consisted mostly of hot dogs, dried fish, rice, macaroni, and pickled vegetables. Shortages of meat and milk occurred frequently. Several administrators were accused of stealing camp food supplies and selling them for personal profit. The cost to feed camp residents averaged a mere 45 cents per day. Their diets began to improve only after the Japanese Americans in the camps later began growing some of their own food.



Frank Y. shares his memories of the dirt and food at Minidoka incarceration camp.

Health Care

Health care within the camps was severely limited. The WRA relied mainly on Japanese American doctors and nurses to staff the camp hospitals. Therefore, the hospitals were always understaffed, and the doctors and nurses were overworked. In October 1942, at the camp in Jerome, Arkansas, there were only seven doctors for 10,000 people.[6] Camp populations were particularly susceptible to outbreaks of disease due to the close living quarters and communal lifestyle. Within the camps, there were reports of chicken pox, malaria, dysentery, and typhoid epidemics as well as cases of polio and tuberculosis.



[Click here to see a larger image of the hospital at Minidoka incarceration camp.](#)

Education

Schools were not in the original plans for the incarceration camps. When it became clear that the incarceration was not going to be brief, the Japanese Americans demanded that schools be built. Education was divided into four levels: nursery school, elementary school, high school, and adult education.

The curriculum emphasized assimilation to U.S. language and culture. Special classes were created for issei to learn English and become "Americanized." Classes were held in recreation halls or other buildings, and supplies were limited. Washrooms served as science labs; lettered pieces of paper served as typewriter keyboards; and textbooks were rare. Recruiting teachers from the outside was difficult because no one wanted to live in the camps and there were only a few qualified Japanese American teachers. These schools became more established over time, and later all camp schools (except those in Tule Lake, California) were accredited by their respective states.



Tsuguo I. recalls his school days and socializing in a incarceration camp.

Recreation

To cope with the monotony of everyday life, Japanese Americans formed clubs and groups in the camps. Those who were school-aged formed Boy and Girl Scout troops, service organizations, social clubs, honor clubs, sports teams, and music groups. Similarly, the older set formed groups to alleviate boredom. *Ikebana* (Japanese flower arranging) classes, music groups, YMCA, YWCA, and baseball teams were among the most popular groups for adults. Some camps had as many as 100 baseball teams. Other forms of entertainment included dances, movie nights, and talent shows.



While incarcerated, youths joined groups such as this drum and bugle corps.



Click on this photo to see a baseball game at the Tule Lake incarceration camp.

Religion

Japanese Americans also used religion to handle the stress of the incarceration experience. Church served as both a spiritual comfort and a place for community gatherings. On Sundays, Buddhist and Christian services and Sunday schools were held in the recreation halls. State Shintoism was another popular religion within the Japanese American community but was banned by the U.S. government on the grounds that it included "Emperor worship." Church services initially were given in both Japanese and English, but the WRA later banned the use of Japanese at all group gatherings (although translation into Japanese was later permitted at some religious services).



This image shows a cross high on a hill above Tule Lake incarceration camp.



This photo shows a memorial service held on dusty campgrounds, for American-born Nisei soldiers who died during combat in World War II.

Government

Community governments were created to mediate communication between the camp administration and the incarcerated population. The camp governments were usually in the form of block councils. These councils could create ordinances and policies on internal affairs, but the WRA had ultimate veto power over any activity or policy made by the councils. The WRA also held tight control over the council leadership. A WRA policy barred the issei from holding any elected office. This policy, along with the language restriction on Japanese, severely limited the autonomy and authority of the issei.

DISSENT WITHIN THE CAMPS

As the incarceration wore on, tensions within the camp population increased. Discontent over living standards caused the Japanese Americans to turn their criticism against the camp administration. Rumors of corrupt camp administrators stealing supplies and funds were pervasive. The WRA had promised that jobs would be available for all; that shipped household goods would be delivered as soon as they arrived; and that school supplies, wages, and clothing would be provided promptly. All of these promises fell short, and the Japanese Americans logically blamed the failings on the camp administration. Negative feelings toward the camp authorities increased as time went by, and daily life reminded the Japanese Americans that they were being held prisoners for no specific crime and on no legal grounds. Strikes by the camp workers were common but had little overall effect on work or life conditions.



In this video clip Jim A. remembers discovering that camp officials were stealing food.

Tensions existed not only between the camp population and the administration, but also among the Japanese Americans themselves. Some Japanese Americans supported cooperation with the camp administrators. These were largely nisei, typified by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)--an organization founded in 1929 that encouraged loyalty, patriotism, and Americanization among Japanese Americans. This group had encouraged compliance during the initial mass removal and incarceration. They saw accommodation with the exclusion orders as the most patriotic and safest way to express the loyalty of the Japanese American community to the United States. JACL leaders often became the spokespeople for the entire camp community, but their leadership role was not accepted by all Japanese Americans. To many outside the JACL, it appeared as though the JACL's cooperative stance resulted in favoritism for the JACL leaders from camp administrators.



This is James Sakamoto with his family at the Minidoka incarceration camp on December 11, 1943.

Animosity between those who helped camp administrators and their opponents boiled over in Poston, Arizona, on November 1, 1942, when an unidentified group of men beat up a suspected "informer" (that is, a Japanese American who was believed to have informed authorities about supposedly suspicious individuals in the

Japanese American community). After two "suspicious individuals" were arrested and interrogated by the FBI, about 1,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans gathered in protest and surrounded the camp jail. Community leaders agreed to try to stop further beatings, and the two individuals were released. There was a similar incident in the Manzanar camp on December 5, 1942, when six masked men beat a suspected informer. More than 2,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans gathered to protest the arrest of three "suspicious individuals." Military police who were called in for added security threw tear gas as the crowd became more aggressive. Then, for unknown reasons, the police opened fire on the crowd. Two incarcerated Japanese Americans were killed and nine were wounded. The Japanese Americans believed to be responsible for the uprising were rounded up and jailed or sent to Department of Justice isolation camps.



[Click here to see a larger photo of this prison within a prison at the Tule Lake incarceration camp.](#)



In this video clip, Kenge K. talks about riots at Tule Lake.

THE END OF INCARCERATION

At the end of 1943, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt and Colonel Karl Bendetsen, two of the strongest supporters of the incarceration, left their posts as the heads of the Western Defense Command. The Western Defense Command began to reexamine the Japanese American incarceration with a critical eye. It was clear by 1944 that all threats of a Japanese attack on the West Coast were gone. By this time, the War Department had already determined that exclusion was not necessary, but kept these opinions from the public and the President until much later.

President Roosevelt ended martial law in Hawaii on October 24, 1944. In early December, knowing that the Supreme Court would soon be releasing its decision on the *Ex Parte Endo* case (legal case challenging the exclusion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast during World War II) soon, Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent a secret message to the President saying that "mass exclusion from the West Coast of persons of Japanese ancestry is no longer a matter of military necessity." On December 17, the military issued Public Proclamation No. 21, which rescinded the mass exclusion orders and stated that the camps would be closed within a year. The next day, the Supreme Court handed down its decision on *Endo*, finding that the government could not detain "concededly loyal" persons against their will. On January 2, 1945, most restrictions preventing resettlement on the West Coast for Japanese Americans were removed. By January 1946, all of the camps except Tule Lake were closed.



[Read the Public Proclamation that rescinded the exclusion orders.](#)



Read this certificate from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals summarizing the Mitsuye Endo case in October 1944. Endo asked the courts to rule on whether or not a citizen could be held indefinitely as a prisoner without being accused, tried, or convicted of a crime.

RESETTLEMENT[8]

By 1944, several thousand Japanese Americans had resettled permanently or temporarily outside of the camps through contract labor work. These Japanese Americans were allowed to leave the incarceration camps based on affirmative answers to "loyalty questionnaires" and the labor needs of the nation. Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Denver were common destinations for the Japanese Americans who were granted leave. By the end of 1945, approximately 35,000 Japanese Americans had resettled outside of the areas where they had lived before the mass removal. Among these were 5,500 young Japanese Americans who left the incarceration camps to attend college outside of the West Coast exclusion zone.[9]

Public reaction to the end of the incarceration was largely negative, particularly on the West Coast. The *Los Angeles Times* called the ending of the exclusion "a grave mistake" and said that the best way for Japanese Americans to show their loyalty was to "find homes elsewhere than on the Pacific Coast." In rural areas, the anti-Japanese sentiment was particularly strong. Upon returning to the West Coast, many Japanese Americans faced racism, physical attacks, and destruction of property. Many urban politicians and officials, however, attempted to make the resettlement process as smooth as possible. Despite the negative public sentiment, no returning Japanese American was killed.



In this video clip, Mitsuko H. shares her memories of returning to her family's farmland and home after the war.

The resettlement process was almost as traumatic for Japanese Americans as the time spent in the camps. After three years of incarceration, they were simply told to leave. Most had lost everything they had owned before the war through theft, destruction, or inability to pay taxes. Additionally, the low wages within the camps had not allowed them to save anything for the future. The government provided transportation back to the West Coast and a \$25 allowance for each person. At the prospect of leaving the camps, many felt fear of interacting in society at-large again, and bore shame of their experience and hopelessness for recovering what they had lost. Several suicides were reported after the Japanese Americans were told to leave. After returning to the West Coast, Japanese Americans found housing and employment difficult to obtain because of post-war shortages and anti-Japanese American sentiment.



May S. remembers returning to Seattle after being incarcerated, only to face racism in her school.



Click here to watch this video clip of Frank F. recalling the challenges his parents faced after leaving the incarceration camp.

With little or no government aid, Japanese Americans began the process of rebuilding their lives. In July 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act. Through this act, Congress appropriated \$38 million to settle all property claims of Japanese Americans who had been incarcerated. The claims could compensate only for "damage to or loss of real or personal property." This meant only items that the Japanese Americans could prove they had owned and did not include lost income or profits. An independent analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco put a conservative estimate for Japanese American losses at \$400 million. Around 23,000 claims were filed under the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act, requesting approximately \$131 million in damages. In the whole year of 1950, only 210 claims were cleared and only 73 people actually received financial compensation.

Although the incarceration of Japanese Americans was never found unconstitutional, presidents and Congress have subsequently condemned it. On February 19, 1976, President Gerald Ford rescinded Executive Order 9066. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 formally apologized to the Japanese American community and provided camp survivors with monetary compensation. Upon signing the Civil Liberties Act, President Ronald Reagan said, "Here we admit a wrong. Here we affirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law."

OTHERS IN THE INTERNMENT CAMPS

Japanese Latin Americans

During World War II, 2,264 members of the Japanese community in Latin America (issei, nisei, and some Latin American women married to Japanese) were deported to and interned in the United States. Nearly all of the Japanese Latin Americans (1,799 of the total) were from Peru. The U.S. government forced their migration over international borders and their detention in the U.S. Department of Justice internment camps. Most of the Japanese Latin Americans were interned in a former migrant labor camp at Crystal City, Texas. They were interned for several reasons: their race; their influential roles as community leaders, farmers, or businesspeople; anti-immigrant sentiments; and their perceived threat to Allied interests. This was all done without indictments or hearings.



In this video clip, Kenge K. talks about his Peruvian wife who was born in the internment camp at Crystal City, Texas.

More than 800 Japanese Latin Americans were included in prisoner-of-war exchanges with Japan that took place in 1942 and 1943. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were interned until the end of the war. These internees were declared "illegal aliens," because their passports were confiscated en route to the United States, and during the war they were told that they would be deported to Japan-occupied territories.

More than 350 Japanese Peruvians remained in the United States and fought deportation in the courts with hopes of returning to their homes in Peru.

At first, the Peruvian government refused to readmit any Japanese Peruvians, even those who were Peruvian citizens or married to Peruvian citizens. As a result, between November 1945 and June 1946, more than 900 Japanese Peruvians were deported to war-devastated Japan. Eventually, about 100 Japanese Peruvians were able to return to Peru. It was not until June 1952 that the Japanese Peruvians who stayed in the United States were allowed to begin the process of becoming permanent residents. Later, many became U.S. citizens.

RALPH LAZO, U.S. Citizen and Incarceration Camp Protester (1924–1992)

Born in 1924 in Los Angeles, California, to parents of Spanish and Irish ancestry, Ralph Lazo grew up and attended grammar school, junior high, and a few years of high school in Los Angeles. At the age of 17, Lazo chose to join his Japanese American friends in Manzanar incarceration camp in May 1942. Lazo graduated from Manzanar High School. He remained in Manzanar until 1944, at which time he was drafted into the U.S. army. He is believed to be the only person of non-Japanese descent without a Japanese American spouse to voluntarily enter an incarceration camp during World War II. Until 1946, he served in the military in the Philippines.

After the war, Lazo graduated from college and pursued a career in teaching. Throughout his life, Lazo remained a loyal friend and supporter of those Japanese Americans with whom he was incarcerated. Lazo spoke out against the incarceration and was a supporter of the redress movement to compensate Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. He died in 1992.

1. John L. DeWitt, "Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast," 1943, pp. 99-100, quoted from the Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1976) p. 111.

2. Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1976) p. 79.

3. Executive Order 9102, quoted from the Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment, *Personal Justice Denied* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc, 1982) p. 107.

4. Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps, USA* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) p. 104.

5. Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1982) p. 166.

6. Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1982) p. 164.

7. Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps, USA* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) p. 157.

8. Information in this section was summarized from Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps, USA* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) pp. 158-169.

9. See Gary Y. Okihiro, *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999) for a detailed account of this experience.

Questions

- In what ways were Japanese Americans' lives impacted as a result of the mass removal and incarceration?
- In what ways do you think life in the incarceration camps impacted the lives of individual families?
- What were the similarities and differences between the "assembly centers" and the incarceration camps?
- How do terms like "assembly centers," "relocation centers," "internment camps," "internees," and "evacuees" color our understanding of the Japanese American experience during World War II?
- Why might some camp administrators have favored JACL leaders? Why might one have joined the JACL or opposed it?