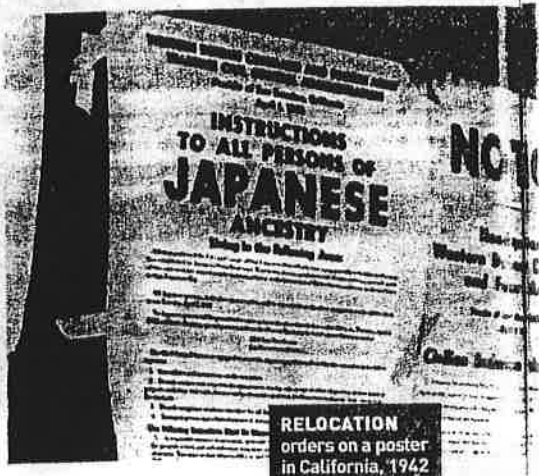




A JAPANESE FAMILY waiting to have their luggage inspected at an assembly center in Turlock, Calif., 1942



RELOCATION orders on a poster in California, 1942

**NEW RULES CONFINE ALL COAST JAPANESE**  
They Are Made Virtual Prisoners of Own Communities

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., March 29 (AP) — The new rules under which a limited number of Japanese-Americans and Italian-Americans may be exempted from exclusion orders and military curfew regulations covering military areas in the West were listed tonight. These rules were discussed in a meeting here today.

# ave

During World War II, more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans were forced to abandon their homes and businesses and move to guarded camps surrounded by barbed wire

Once upon a time in America—not in Nazi Germany—tens of thousands of citizens and their families were forced to leave their homes, take only as much clothing and other belongings as they could carry, and resettle in camps surrounded by barbed wire. They lived in flimsy barracks with cots and communal latrines in desolate, wind-whipped outposts. They suffered through all this not because of crimes they had committed but because of their ethnic background.

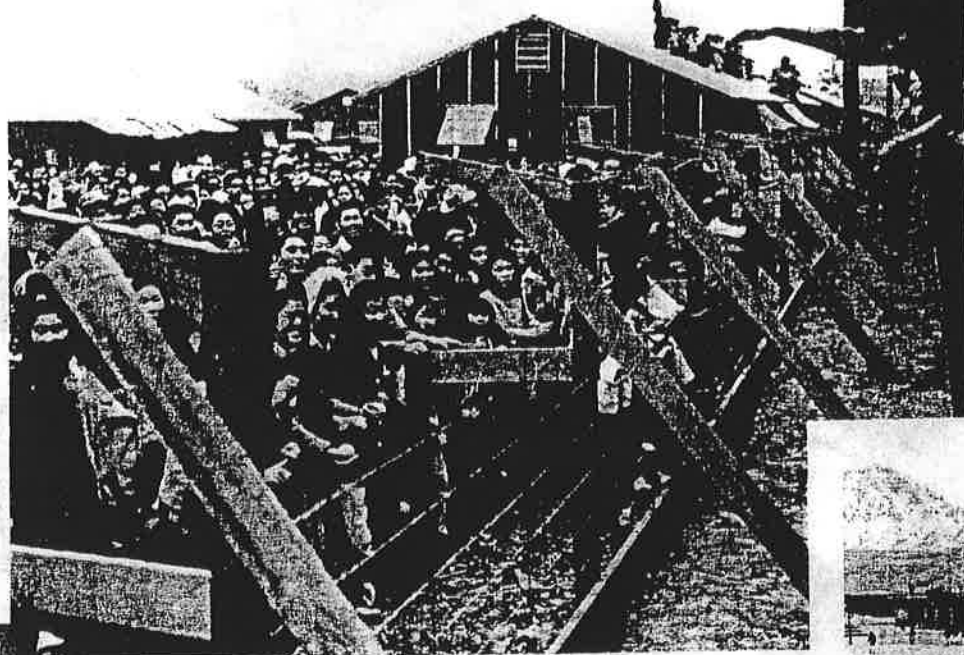
"We have had absolutely no fresh meat, vegetables, or butter since we came here," wrote Ted Nakashima, a young architectural draftsman who grew up in Seattle and was one of the 7,000 internees at the Puyallup Assembly Center.

informally known as Camp Harmony, in western Washington State. "Mealtime queues extend for blocks; standing in a rain-swept line, feet in the mud, waiting for the scant portions of canned wieners and boiled potatoes."

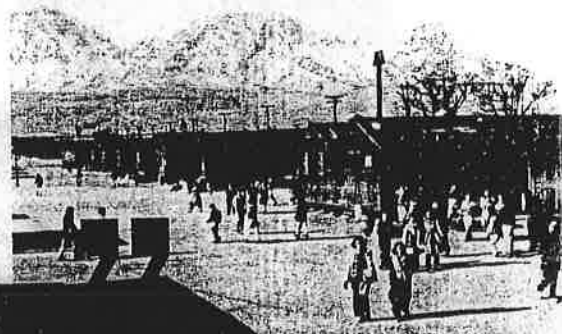
The 120,000 people interned or relocated were all of Japanese descent. They were subjected to this treatment during World War II because the U.S., at war with Japan, was concerned about possible saboteurs or spies should Japan invade the West Coast.

Sixty-two percent of those resettled were American citizens and the rest legal immigrants, and no attempt was made to distinguish between those who were loyal or disloyal. Although a handful of Japanese-Americans were arrested for espionage in Hawaii during the war, and a few thousand renounced their American citizenship and in some cases

THE ASSEMBLY CENTER at Santa Anita racetrack near Los Angeles, 1942: Japanese were kept here until they could be sent to internment camps farther inland.



THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN owner of a store in San Francisco put up a sign to reassure customers after Pearl Harbor. He was later forced to leave.



THE MANZANAR internment camp near Independence, Calif., 1943

# Wrong

By Joseph Berger

returned to Japan, the vast majority of Japanese-Americans were indeed loyal.

So why was their allegiance to the U.S. questioned? Asian immigrants had long faced hostility and discrimination in America, beginning with the Chinese who arrived by the tens of thousands in the 19th century to work in gold mines and, later, build railroads. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 all but ended Chinese immigration for 60 years.

## PEARL HARBOR

In the decades before World War II, fears were raised that Asians would displace whites from their businesses because of their strong work ethic. Some localities enacted covenants preventing them from buying homes. In 1917, the U.S. suspended immigration of most East Asians, and in 1924, it barred citizenship to all ethnic Japanese except those born in the U.S.

Anti-Japanese sentiment reached a peak with Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, which led to a U.S. declaration of war against Japan and to America's entry into World War II against Germany, Italy, and the other Axis powers.

Two months later, on Feb. 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the military to designate zones in which Japanese-Americans could not live. By May, all people of Japanese ancestry in California, the western half of Washington and Oregon, and southern Arizona were ordered to gather at "assembly centers" in fairgrounds and racetracks for resettlement. From there, they were sent to 10 watchtower-guarded camps ("relocation centers") run by the Army on barren Indian reservations or federal lands in places like Wyoming and Idaho.

(The government of Canada, also concerned about possible espionage, interned more than 20,000 ethnic Japanese living in coastal areas of British Columbia, beginning in January 1942.)

"Trucks of all sizes, station wagons, and private cars, piled high with household and personal goods, threaded their way out of San Francisco's Japantown," is how *The New York Times* described a long caravan of Japanese heading for resettlement on March 29, 1942. Japanese merchants and businessmen were forced to run fire sales of their merchandise, the article reported,

*Joseph Berger is an education columnist for The New York Times.*

**JAPAN'S ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR**  
 on Dec. 7, 1941, raised fears of sabotage  
 and espionage on the West Coast.



**MEMBERS**  
 of a Japanese-  
 American  
 Army battalion  
 in World War II.

like the druggist who sacrificed his \$2,000 stock for \$250.

At 10, Norman Mineta saw his father crying as their train left the freight yards at San Jose, Calif., heading for an assembly center at the Santa Anita racetrack near Los Angeles, with each family member carrying a single suitcase. They had just sold their new Packard automobile for a third of its price. Just as painful for his father was the humiliation of being branded an alien by the nation he had lived in since 1902.

"He loved this country and he thought it was terrible what was happening," said Mineta, who in 2000 became the first Asian-American to hold a Cabinet post—Secretary of Commerce, under President Bill Clinton—and later served as Secretary of Transportation under President George W. Bush.

"There was no rounding up of Germans or Italian citizens," Mineta said. "It was only the Japanese." (Defenders of the policy argued that people of German and Italian origin had been in the U.S. for so long and had so completely assimilated into American life that it was unnecessary, and probably impossible, to do.)



**PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT**  
 authorized the internment  
 of Japanese-Americans in  
 February 1942, two months  
 after Pearl Harbor.

### BOY SCOUTS & G.I.'S

For youngsters, the two-plus years spent inside the camps were not always miserable. In one of the ironies of the episode, children behind barbed wire attended school and were taught about the virtues of American freedom

or could join Boy Scout troops and practice tying knots and putting up pup tents.

While internees were allowed to take "leaves" for jobs anywhere in the country outside the coastal evacuation regions, the loss of dignity and livelihoods was often deeply depressing, and some detainees attempted or committed suicide.

The evacuations had wide support from politicians. But some Americans were heartsick. A letter in *The Times* in April 1942 from Frank Duveneck of Los Altos, Calif., said that evacuating people because of their parentage would scar America's image. "We should realize also what kind of weapon this kind of action gives our enemies," he wrote.

Most Japanese did not protest, deciding that it was important to demonstrate loyalty and adopting a resigned attitude described by the phrase *shikata ga nai* ("it cannot be helped"). Thousands of Japanese men, including many living in intern-

ment camps, volunteered for the Army, serving in both the Asian and European theaters.

As the tide of battle in the Pacific turned against Japan, the Army began releasing residents from the camps. By September 1944, 30,000 Japanese had been allowed to leave the relocation centers on "indefinite leave" to take jobs to work on farms, or in factories and stores away from the coastal zone.

### REPARATIONS

In January 1945, the evacuation order was rescinded and internees began the slow process of rebuilding their lives, families, and careers. In the 1960s, inspired by the civil rights movement, younger Japanese started what was known as the redress campaign. By then, Mineta had become a Congressman representing California's Silicon Valley, and he sponsored a resolution in 1988 that called for \$1.2 billion for reparations.

Looking back today, most Americans consider the internments one of the nation's most shameful episodes, and at least three presidents—Gerald R. Ford, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush—have apologized. In 1988, President Reagan, calling the internments "a grave wrong," signed a reparations bill that provided a \$20,000 payment for each surviving internee. More than 80,000 people received such payments.

Japanese-Americans have held regular commemorations of the internments and two former camps, Manzanar in California and Minidoka in Idaho, are now preserved as national historic landmarks.

Sally Sudo, who as a 6-year-old lived with her parents and nine siblings in two rooms in Block

14-Barrack 2 in Minidoka, returned to the camp in 2005 and recalled the hardships. Her father had immigrated to Seattle from Japan in 1899 and had worked in restaurants, but lost his livelihood—and self-respect—as a result of the internments.

"For my father, it was devastating," she said. "He was 64 or 65 when he left camp, and he had lost everything. He lived until he was 88, but he didn't really live, he just existed." @

