

Museum Evidence:

Japanese Internment
during WWII

1. Children pledging allegiance to the American flag at San Francisco's Raphael Weill Elementary School in 1942. Those whose families were of Japanese ancestry were sent to internment camps.



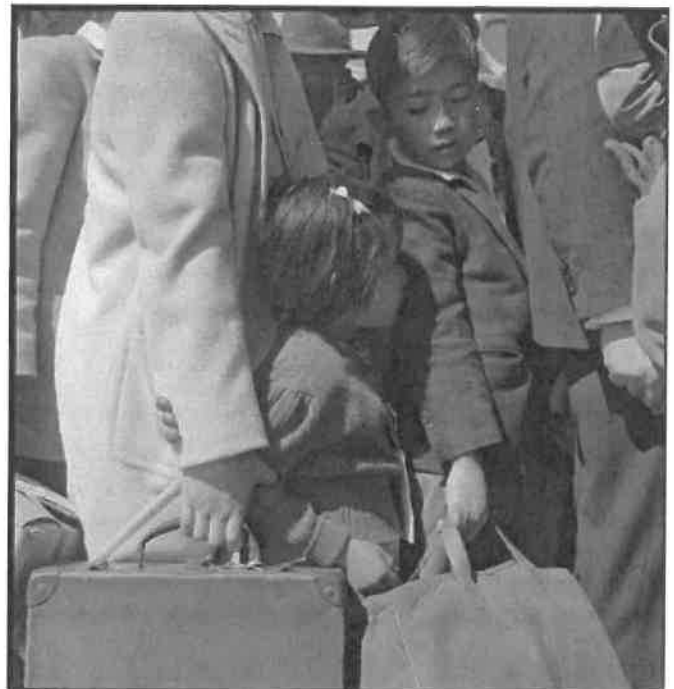
2. Japanese-Americans were registered in San Francisco before being sent to internment centers in 1942.



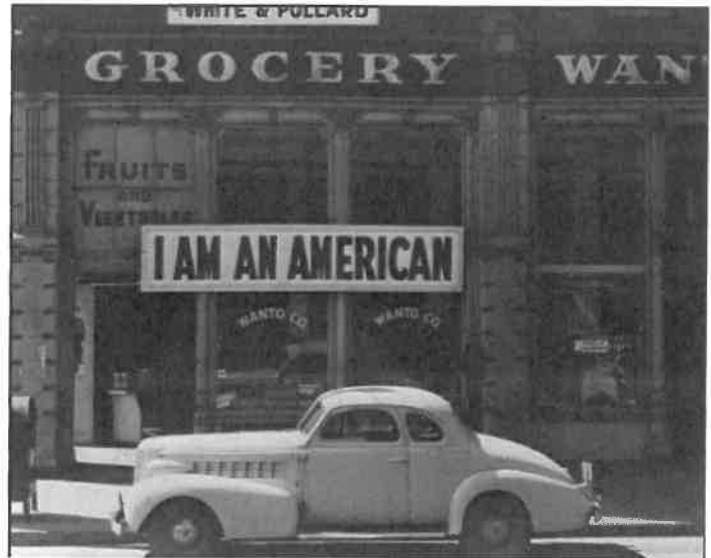
3. Henry Mitarai, 36, in one of his sugar-beet fields on his mechanized farm in Mountain View, Calif., in 1942, before he was relocated. His payroll ran as much as 8,000 a year.



4. Third-generation American children of Japanese ancestry in Byron, Calif., awaiting the arrival of the bus that would take them from their homes to an internment center.



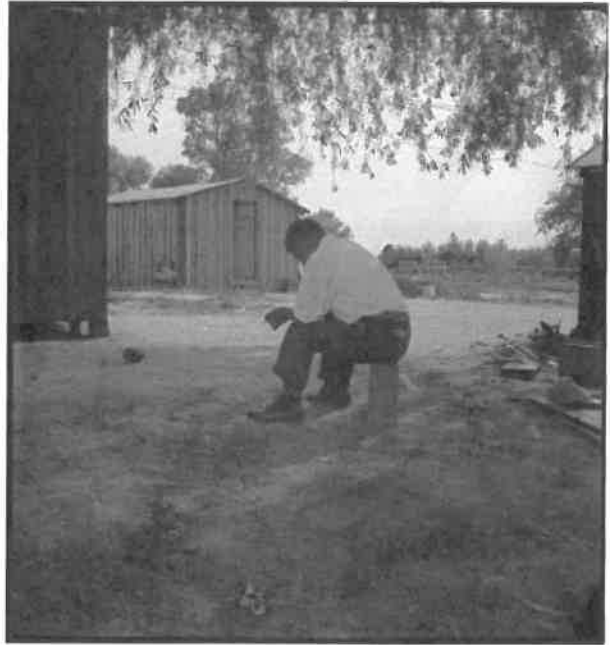
5. A sign in Oakland, Calif., in 1942. It had been placed in the window of a store on Dec. 8, 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The owner, a University of California graduate, would be sent to the internment camps.



6. A young man arrived at 2020 Van Ness Avenue, the meeting place of the first contingent to be moved from San Francisco to the Santa Anita assembly center in Arcadia, Calif.



7. A tenant farmer in Woodland, Calif., about to be interned, after he finished settling his affairs and packing his belongings.



8. Kimiko Kitagaki guarding her family's baggage in Oakland before leaving by bus for the Tanforan assembly center. Her father had been in the cleaning and dyeing business.



9. Field laborers in front of a Wartime Civil Control Administration station in Byron, where they had come for instructions and assistance regarding their relocation.



10. A child looked out the window of a bus before it left San Francisco for the Tanforan assembly center.



11. Barracks at the internment camp in Manzanar, Calif.



12. A woman making artificial flowers in the Manzanar internment camp's art school.



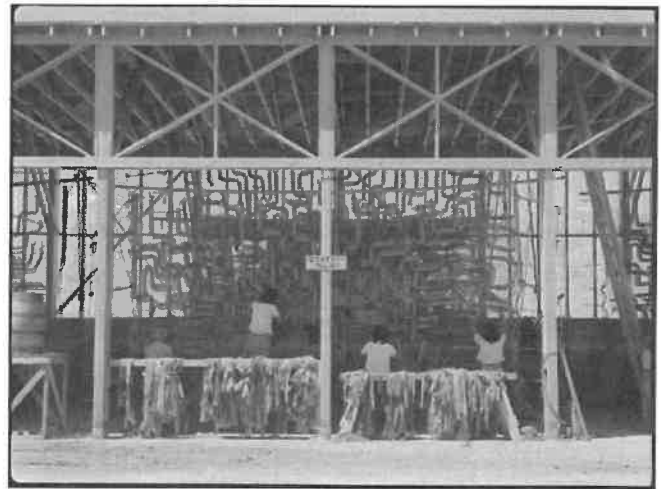
13. Guayule (used in making rubber goods for the war) beds in a lath house at the Manzanar internment center.



14. A man teaching his grandson to walk at the Manzanar camp.



15. Making camouflage nets for the United States War Department.



16. A young boy getting a haircut in the Manzanar camp.



#17: Japanese-Americans and World War II

At the time of Pearl Harbor I was twenty-one, a music major at Santa Barbara State College. That Sunday I was having dinner with friends. Somebody turned on the radio and flipped through the dial. We didn't catch the actual words that the announcer said, but the voice was so tense, so full of emotion, that we all froze.

I was absolutely stunned. My mother had told me how she felt when the war was declared in 1917. I thought, My God, it's happening to me. Then came the hideous fear that the bombers would come and we'd all be killed. It was a horrible moment.

In an incredibly short time—it seemed to be almost a matter of moments—a wave of patriotism swept the country. As we drove home we felt, This is our country, and we're going to fight to defend it. When we got home that evening we were glued to the radio. "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played, and everyone in the room automatically rose. And we were disillusioned college students—the 1940s version of the 1960s kids. The outward show of patriotism was something that I had always sneered at, but we all stood and we all tingled. So the fervor started right off the bat. It was like a disease, and we all caught it.

The next day we all returned to classes, but there was a Japanese student in my art class who stayed in her room and was afraid to leave because of the attack. The art teacher mentioned this to us, and we all thought, Well, she should. We had no understanding, no pity, no tolerance. She was a Jap and that was that.

Dellie Hahne, from The Homefront: America During World War II

#18: **New Jap Evacuation Order**

New orders were issued for the evacuation of 5100 more Japanese from Alameda, Contra Costa and Los Angeles Counties as part of the Japanese exclusion program today.

This brought the total evacuation close to the halfway mark in California.

The orders, issued by Lieut. Gen. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, raised the number of Japanese moved or in the process of being moved to 35,000 for the Pacific Coast.

Meanwhile, almost two-thirds of the Japanese in San Francisco and the East Bay who are being evacuated to the Tanforan assembly center under earlier orders have already been transferred.

The evacuation was coast wide, covering zones from Alaska to Arizona. Approximately 100,000 Japanese were living in the Pacific defense zone when the exclusions began. Of these, possibly 5000 to 8000 moved out voluntarily. In addition, Japanese formed the majority of the dangerous aliens seized in the area by the FBI, a total of under 5000 on the Pacific Coast.

General DeWitt has announced the evacuations would be completed before the end of May; those affected by the new orders today were to be removed to assembly centers by noon Thursday, May 7. The announcement covered five separate civilian exclusion orders running from Order No. 27 to 31, inclusive; Orders 27-28 affect 1900 Japanese in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. The other three, 3200 in Los Angeles County.

A Civil Control Station was established at 530 18th St, Oakland, to which heads of families and individuals living alone were directed to report May 1 and 2 to make arrangements for removal to Tanforan Assembly Center by May 7. They were advised they would be permitted to use private automobiles in the evacuation.

A civil control station was established at 1117 Oak St, Oakland, for aliens to report for processing May 1 and 2 prior to removal to Tanforan by Noon May 7. Private automobiles will be permitted.

Today's orders were the second group issued this week; Tuesday General DeWitt ordered two areas in Oregon—including all of Portland—cleared of 1900 Japanese by May 5.

San Francisco News, April 30, 1942

#19:

I was born in San Francisco. My parents came from Okinawa and had the capitol Laundry on Geary street, where I lived when I was very little. Then my father moved to Turlock. When I was ten, he moved his family to Florin to raise strawberries, and became one of the bigger strawberry farmers there. From ten on I grew up in Florin, where I had the shock of attending the Florin Elementary School, because a few years before we arrived, the school was segregated. Until then we hadn't really encountered that kind of prejudice. Everyone whispered, and you felt kind of ashamed and afraid, and it made you kind of tighten up your body.... I do remember Pearl Harbor day. I was about twenty-seven, and we were in church. It was a December Sunday, so we were getting ready for our Christmas program.... But after the service started, my husband ran in. He had been home that day and heard it on the radio. We just couldn't believe it, but he told us that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. I remember how stunned we were. And suddenly the whole world turned dark. We started to speak in whispers, and because of our experience in Florin, we immediately sensed something terrible was going to happen....

But soon enough we were reading reports of other communities being evacuated from San Pedro and from Puget Sound. After a while we became aware that maybe things weren't going to just stop but would continue to get worse and worse....

A few days earlier signs had been nailed to the telephone poles saying that we were to report to various spots. They told us to register as families. We had to report to the Elk Grove Masonic building where we were given our family number, No. 2076. In the family I was *B* and my husband was *A*, and we were registered. We found out we were going to the Fresno Assembly Center....

We were finally moved from Fresno in October 1942 to the Jerome relocation camp in Arkansas. After we were there awhile, all of a sudden cold weather arrived, and they didn't have enough wood to heat the rooms. We were on the edge of the Mississippi River, the swamplands of Arkansas. We had to go into the woods to chop wood. All the men stopped everything; school, everything, was closed and the young people were told to go out and work. They brought the wood in, and the women helped to saw it....

After all I had gone through and when I had an opportunity to speak, when people asked me to tell them the story, why didn't I have the courage to tell the truth? I realized that I needed to be angry not just for myself personally, but for what happened to our people. And also for our country because I really believe that it wasn't just Japanese Americans that were betrayed, but America itself.... We need to be angry enough to do something about it so that it will never happen again. It's not anger because I'm so bitter or disappointed that it happened to me. I'm disappointed for America that it had to happen, and I want the record to be straight....

I know many Niseis who say, That was all so long ago. Let's forget it and leave well enough alone. But I just say, we were the ones that went through it—the tears and the shame and the shock. We need to leave our legacy to our children. And also our legacy to America, from our tears, what we learned.

Mary Tsukamoto, from And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps

#20: Japanese-American Internment

Over 127,000 United States citizens were imprisoned during World War II. Their crime? Being of Japanese ancestry.

Despite the lack of any concrete evidence, Japanese Americans were suspected of remaining loyal to their ancestral land. **ANTI-JAPANESE PARANOIA** increased because of a large Japanese presence on the West Coast. In the event of a Japanese invasion of the American mainland, Japanese Americans were feared as a security risk.

Succumbing to bad advice and popular opinion, President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the **RELOCATION** of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to **CONCENTRATION CAMPS** in the interior of the United States.

Evacuation orders were posted in **JAPANESE-AMERICAN** communities giving instructions on how to comply with the executive order. Many families sold their homes, their stores, and most of their assets. They could not be certain their homes and livelihoods would still be there upon their return. Because of the mad rush to sell, properties and inventories were often sold at a fraction of their true value.



After being forced from their communities, Japanese families made these military style barracks their homes.

Until the camps were completed, many of the evacuees were held in temporary centers, such as stables at local racetracks. Almost two-thirds of the interns were **NISEI**, or Japanese Americans born in the United States. It made no difference that many had never even been to Japan. Even Japanese-American veterans of World War I were forced to leave their homes.

Ten camps were finally completed in remote areas of seven western states. Housing was spartan, consisting mainly of tarpaper barracks. Families dined together at communal mess halls, and children were expected to attend school. Adults had the option of working for a salary of \$5 per day. The United States government hoped that the interns could make the camps self-sufficient by farming to produce food. But cultivation on arid soil was quite a challenge.



Many Americans worried that citizens of Japanese ancestry would act as spies or saboteurs for the Japanese government. Fear — not evidence — drove the U.S. to place over 127,000 Japanese-Americans in concentration camps for the duration of WWII.



Most of the ten relocation camps were built in arid and semi-arid areas where life would have been harsh under even ideal conditions.

Evacuees elected representatives to meet with government officials to air grievances, often to little avail. Recreational activities were organized to pass the time. Some of the interns actually volunteered to fight in one of two all-Nisei army regiments and went on to distinguish themselves in battle.

On the whole, however, life in the relocation centers was not easy. The camps were often too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. The food was mass produced army-style grub. And the interns knew that if they tried to flee, armed sentries who stood watch around the clock, would shoot them.

FRED KOREMATSU decided to test the government relocation action in the courts. He found little sympathy there. In ***KOREMATSU VS. THE UNITED STATES***, the Supreme Court justified the executive order as a wartime necessity. When the order was repealed, many found they could not return to their hometowns. Hostility against Japanese Americans remained high across the West Coast into the postwar years as many villages displayed signs demanding that the evacuees never return. As a result, the interns scattered across the country.



In 1988, Congress attempted to apologize for the action by awarding each surviving intern \$20,000. While the American concentration camps never reached the levels of Nazi death camps as far as atrocities are concerned, they remain a dark mark on the nation's record of respecting civil liberties and cultural differences.

Fred Korematsu challenged the legality of Executive Order 9066 but the Supreme Court ruled the action was justified as a wartime necessity. It was not until 1988 that the U.S. government attempted to apologize to those who had been interned.

#21:

I'm Used to It

I'm used it.
Once a man came up to me
and said, "Hello, Sonny Boy!"
and then for no reason I could see
punched me in the temple
and walked off down the street.
He didn't even
call out "Go back home!"
or "Yellow dog!"
like the others did.
I wrote a poem about it:

Even the purple welt
on my head is more American
than you are, Mister!

Now in the camp here's what I'm used to:
I sleep in dust and eat the dust,
they don't even let me bathe
and I am rotting, my hair growing
every which way. I chew off
my fingernails but have no way
to cut the nails on my toes.

Am I a dog to you?
But even dogs get bathed sometimes,
you dirty guard. Woof!

They shot into a crowd of us
and killed a man.

That's hard to get used to.
Then they shot one of us
in the back. That night we wept
and pounded on the table.

A hole in his back.
Empty space at the table.
No one will sit there.

I hear the sister kept the tee-shirt
with a bloody hole in the back.
She held on to it for years
but her brother was dead
and no one cared.
Finally she buried the thing.

*Prisoner, Japanese-American Internment Camp,
1942*

#22:

The Battle for Saipan

They served us steak for breakfast. Then I saw
against the sky the slender island palms
erupt in the bombardment, ripped apart.
We shimmied down from the ship's deck at dawn,

on long rope ladders into landing craft
that pitched and ran aground on coral reefs.
Machine gun fire and phosphorus shell blasts
hit us wading chest deep to the beach.

The Japs had set up trenches and tank traps.
To get our range they'd placed tall bamboo poles
at intervals. They cut us up. At last
we made a beachhead, ducked into fox holes.

Once inland it was like a firing range,
a butcher shop of torn-up men, the air
alive with cries, the spent shell casings, strange
sugary blood smell, white dust everywhere.

We took that island, but the worst of it
was the civilians, who feared our men like death.
Hundreds of them dove right off the cliffs.
Mothers, weeping, held their kids and leapt.

I was Intelligence, spoke Japanese,
but though I called to them on loudspeaker,
"We won't harm you. Don't jump! Surrender, please!"
they thought it was a trick, embraced the air.

They served us steak for breakfast, some fresh flesh
red on the metal plate.
That's what you get
before they send you rushing at your death,
tough steak. I ate it, killed, and lived. And yet,

back home, they took our grocery store and land.
And though I signed up, shipped out, fought like hell,
back home, they put my family into camps
as if we weren't American at all.

*Japanese American Soldier, M.I.S., Saipan,
Mariana Islands, 1944*

*Both poems are written by Tony Barnstone
and come from his collection *Tongue of War:
from Pearl Harbor to Nagasaki*.