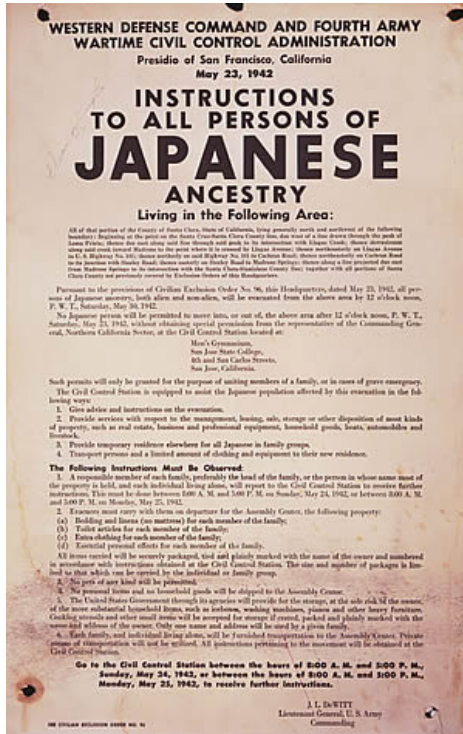


TAHPDX: Great Decisions in U.S. History

Teaching American History: A partnership between Portland State University and the Beaverton, Hillsboro and Forest Grove School Districts (funded by the U.S. Department of Education)

HISTORY TOPIC: Japanese Internment



Attention: This is one of twenty-four topic summaries included in the TAH program and is designed to orient readers to the breadth and depth of the subject. These summaries are by no means exhaustive. Each one is a brief overview of a complex historical topic. Because of the informal nature of a summary, they are not necessarily based on primary sources nor do they employ the full range of scholarly techniques, such as foot- or endnotes. This style of presentation is merely one of the varieties of historical writing that readers will encounter as they explore history.

Abstract: The internment of Japanese Americans attracts a great deal of notice today from academic and popular historians alike. It strikes most of us as a great contradiction, a puzzling error. How could a nation that defined itself as the bastion of liberty, a nation determined to defeat fascism and spread freedom across the globe, so readily conceive of and execute such a patently racist and brutal plan? How could it strip citizens of their right to due process, much of their property, forcefully move them out of their homes in the largest migration of its kind in the nation's history and imprison them for years simply on the basis of their ethnicity, on what they might do? The

mystery deepens when we learn that the internment was broadly supported by the American public, that only a few voices opposed it. In fact many progressive-minded Japanese-Americans professed to support the policy, or at least urged eager and full cooperation. As always, understanding how our ancestors could have pursued and countenanced an act that strikes us as inhumane and ill-advised requires historical empathy. We must travel back several generations to understand the context in which decisions about internment were made.

SUBTOPICS:

1. Context
2. The Decision to Intern
3. Internment
4. Accommodation and Resistance
5. Oregon
6. Aftermath
7. Sources

1. Context

Substantial numbers of Japanese began immigrating to the U.S. mainland late in the nineteenth century. They were pushed and drawn by many of the same factors that drew so many Europeans and Mexicans to the U.S. at that time. Industrialization pushed people from the land, impoverishing and marginalizing many people even as it enriched others. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, meanwhile, had cut off a major source of cheap labor in the American West, where the builders of railroads and the operators of large farms were eager to find employees willing to work long, hard hours for modest pay. By 1890 the census counted 2,039 Japanese in the U.S. Two decades later there were more than 72,000, including 40,000 in agriculture, 10,000 railroad workers, and 4,000 cannery laborers.

Like their Italian counterparts, only more so, these workers were overwhelmingly comprised of young men who hoped to make a lot of money in a short time and then return to Japan. Even by 1910, most Japanese Americans were males between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. This formed a mobile, often restless work force that was much more likely than their descendants would be to struggle with violence, alcohol, and gambling. These problems were exacerbated by intense racial discrimination in employment, housing, and every-day life.

Japanese-American life shifted decisively in the 1910s, when many of the *Issei* (first-generation Japanese immigrants) decided that remaining in the U.S., its many prejudices notwithstanding, was preferable to returning to Japan. They formed families and settled down. Most of their wives were picture brides, usually younger women who did not see their husbands until they met them in the U.S. after having agreed to marry them. The great majority of these couples settled on farms or in cities and commonly owned their own businesses. By 1925, nearly half of employed Japanese Americans worked on small farms, and the *Issei* were remarkably successful at growing large amounts of vegetables and fruits on small plots of ground that they rented, leased, or owned. Cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland had substantial Japanese-American communities and hundreds of businesses: motels and boarding houses, restaurants, barbers, pool halls, and a variety of stores. In an era of tightly knit ethnic groups, Japanese-Americans were perhaps the tightest of all. Farmers banded together in co-ops to purchase and sell goods more effectively, urban Japanese-Americans worked for and frequented each others' businesses, and rural and urban communities alike created mutual-aid societies which extended credit and other financial services. Japanese Americans had extremely low crime rates between the wars, and the *Nisei* (second generation) rarely married outside the ethnic group. The percentage of women steadily climbed from 17 percent in 1900 to 46 percent by 1940.

This strong internal focus was partly the product of intense racism. White Americans noticed and resented Japanese-Americans success. This had something to do with Japan's rise in the Pacific and with the same long-standing prejudices against "Orientals" that Chinese-Americans had long faced. White Americans charged people of Japanese descent as being from an alien, inferior, and unassimilatable race—even as they resented and feared their economic success and castigated them for working too hard and being willing to pay such high rates to lease land. "They increase like rats," warned a Sacramento newspaper. The federal and state governments responded with a series of laws calculated to reduce immigration from Japan and to discourage

Japanese-American entrepreneurs. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908 excluded Japanese laborers (though it opened the door for Japanese women to emigrate), and five years later California banned Japanese immigrants from owning land and limited their leases to three years. State and then federal law essentially ended Japanese immigration early in the 1920s. Japanese Americans found it very difficult if not impossible to get professional jobs outside their community, and they were routinely discriminated against in housing, motels, restaurants, and movie theaters. Japanese immigrants could not become citizens as they were defined as "aliens ineligible for citizenship."

The *Issei* responded by emphasizing hard work and cooperation. They found ways around laws designed to limit their ability to lease or own land—by having their American-born children listed as the owners of property, for example. They poured their hopes into the second generation. They raised the *Nisei* to respect their elders and to work hard at home and at school without showing resentment. "The nail that sticks out is the one that gets hit," they liked to say. The *Nisei* generally agreed. "It is not enough even to be their *equals*" pronounced one leader; "we must surpass them." But the impressive marks that the *Nisei* made in high school and college could only take them so far. Only 25 percent of *Nisei* graduates from the University of California found work in the professions they had trained for. In 1940 Los Angeles had not a single Japanese-American school teacher.

But the *Nisei* tended to blend old and new, to embrace their Japanese ethnicity and American ideals. Many of them belonged to Protestant churches, and the great majority spoke English fluently.

2. The Decision to Intern

Tensions between the U.S. and Japan rose in the 1930s as the island nation sought to expand outward to control more petroleum and other natural resources required by its growing factories, an expansion that the U.S. sought to curb. As World War II escalated and Japan joined the Axis powers (with Germany and Italy), U.S. leaders expected Japan to strike somewhere in the Pacific but were caught flat-footed when Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) in December 1941. The attack served to unite the nation behind jumping into World War II—a step that many had been resisting. It also placed Japanese-Americans under immediate suspicion and greatly exacerbated the prejudice they faced.

The FBI began arresting Japanese-Americans immediately after Pearl Harbor—as well as German and Italians. By mid-February, more than 2,000 Japanese-Americans had been detained as "enemy aliens" by the Justice Department

Not all whites favored internment. Some agricultural leaders worried that relocation would exacerbate their labor shortage. Many rural residents were already leaving to join the armed services or work in the booming defense industries cropping up in cities. A handful of liberals, such as religious leaders and the American Civil Liberties Union, pointed out that it was unconstitutional and "approximates the totalitarian theory of justice practices by the Nazis in their treatment of the Jews."

But the public pressure to remove Japanese-Americans from the West Coast was intense and mounted with the spread of wild rumors and Japan's victories early in 1942. Japanese Americans were widely reported to be spying, using radios and signal flags to aid and abet the enemy that had so unexpectedly and shockingly brought America to its knees.

This seems silly in retrospect. Historians argue that Allied victory was essentially a foregone conclusion once the U.S. joined the war. Japan had badly miscalculated in estimating how the American public would react to Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack inflicted heavy naval losses. But there were losses easily made up once the most powerful industrial power in the world put itself on a war footing. The U.S. would soon be turning out more ships and airplanes in a month than Japan could muster in a year.

But ordinary citizens did not know this late in 1942 and early in 1943. The Japanese fleet might turn up anywhere. Blackouts were strictly enforced along the West Coast to keep Japanese submarines from bombarding its homes. People worried about invasion. Few residents had close Japanese-American friends, and they readily believed that local Japanese-Americans were more loyal to the "old" country than to the U.S. Politicians eager for votes and newspapers looking to boost circulation fanned these anxieties. Earl Warren, then the Attorney General of California, warned that the state's Japanese-Americans "may well be the Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort. Unless something is done it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor." "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched—so a Japanese American, born of Japanese parents—grows up to be a Japanese, not an American" editorialized the *Los Angeles Times*. "A Jap's a Jap," went a popular saying. A columnist for the sensation-loving Hearst newspapers demanded the "immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior, either. Herd 'em up, pack, 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands." Such comments suggest that many white Americans assumed or even hoped that Japanese-Americans were not loyal. A nation and "race" that Americans had long regarded as inferior had just defeated them, and revenge was proving hard to come by on the battlefields of the Pacific Ocean. The fury created by this defeat could be released on people of Japanese ancestry closer to home—even on those who professed to be loyal Americans. They were handy scapegoats on which to vent the nation's wrath.

The push for removal also owed something to economic self interest. A writer early in 1942 urged Roosevelt to send Japanese-Americans "back" to Japan because of military security and because they "occupy all the best farm ground in California." "We've been charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons," noted the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association in the *Saturday Evening Post*. "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." The association was sure that the former could flourish if the latter were removed: "the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows." Many local people would in fact enrich themselves at the expense of *Issei* and *Nisei* families forced to sell their property for a fraction of its worth. White farmers and business owners flourished in the absence of competition from Japanese-American neighbors who had been so frugal and industrious.

Racism played a major role in the decision to intern. There was certainly an argument to be made that people of German and Italian ancestry should also be interned. German-Americans

had faced a great deal of prejudice during World War I, when German-speaking pastors were ordered to start preaching in English, for example, and German street names were removed. But these ethnic groups were much more established than were Japanese-Americans in mainstream American life by the 1940s. They also constituted important voting blocs, unlike disenfranchised Japanese-Americans.

Hawaii provides an instructive comparison. Large numbers of Japanese immigrants had begun coming to Hawaii late in the 1800s, and by the date of Pearl Harbor there were more of them in Hawaii than in all of the mainland U.S. put together. Roosevelt lobbied harder for relocating Hawaii's Japanese population than he did for relocating the mainland's precisely because they constituted a very large contingent of people who could be deemed loyal to Japan smack in the middle of the nation's war effort. But only about 1 percent of Hawaii's Japanese were detained. Why? Hawaii's Japanese had long faced discrimination. But by 1941 they were a deeply embedded part of Hawaii's economy and culture. Officials pointed out that shipping some 150,000 people from Hawaii to the interior of the U.S. would be difficult and expensive. They also worried that Hawaii simply could not function without 35 percent of its population, especially when people of Japanese ancestry comprised about 90 percent of Oahu's carpenters and were a central part of the islands' sugar plantations. More to the point, perhaps, Hawaii's Japanese population had become an integral part of its culture and society. Hawaii was a highly race-stratified and race-conscious place. But it was also a place where whites were a minority and several races or ethnic groups blended and rubbed shoulders. Just two weeks after Pearl Harbor, Hawaii's military governor announced: "There is no intention or desire on the part of the federal authorities to operate mass concentration camps. No person, be he citizen or alien, need worry, provided he is not connected with subversive elements. . . . we must remember that this is America and we must do things the American Way." Hawaii's white population both depended on and trusted the many Japanese who lived among them and was therefore less prone to assuming that they were in league with Japan.

The lack of such sentiments on the mainland drove Executive Order 9066, which Roosevelt signed on February 19, 1942. It gave military commanders the authority to exclude Japanese Americans from military zones. On March 2 the military identified the entire West Coast as such a zone. On March 24 it set a curfew of 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for Japanese Americans. On May 3 it required all Japanese Americans remaining on the West Coast to report to one of seventeen assembly centers. By the end of August over 110,000 had been forced to leave their homes. Nearly two thirds were U.S. citizens, people of Japanese ancestry born in the U.S. Historian Greg Robinson makes a strong argument that much of the blame for internment must be laid at the door of President Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a genial and urbane man who had friends of Japanese descent. But he also had a long record of viewing them as fundamentally un-American in a way that Jewish and black people, for example were not. He did not conceive them as being capable of joining what people liked to refer to as the American "melting pot." He even hoped that during and after the war people of Japanese ancestry could be somehow distributed in very small numbers across the nation so that they would cease to exist as a distinct people. An aid recounted Roosevelt telling a story about how the Japanese people originated from sexual liaisons between a Chinese woman and baboons. He readily assumed that *Issei* and *Nisei* alike were prone to aid and abet the enemy. He certainly put winning the war and the 1944 election above sticking up for the constitutional rights of a marginalized and hated ethnic group.

He simply did not trouble himself much about the details of how Japanese-Americans were treated once it had been decided to remove them from the West Coast. An administration official doubted that Roosevelt was “much concerned with the gravity or implications of this step. He was never theoretical about things.”

3. Internment

In the spring of 1942 more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes in California, Washington, and Oregon, the largest enforced migration in the history of the U.S.

The trip began with a move to one of seventeen relocation centers. People were given about six days notice and had to dispose of whatever property they could not carry in a suitcase or two by that time. Cars and appliances were sold for a fraction of their worth, and the owners of farms, stores, and homes had to make rushed arrangements for their operations with neighbors who might or might not prove trustworthy. Once at the relocation centers people settled into several weeks of uncertainty and humiliation. The centers were often located at exposition centers or fairgrounds. Families had to make themselves at home in small, filthy stalls that had housed livestock. Privacy and dignity were hard to maintain.

The internees then traveled by train, bus, or truck to internment centers located in the West’s interior. These centers were located in places where the climate was challenging—usually hot and dry in the summer and cold in the winter. Each center housed roughly 10,000 people in densely packed huts. The average home was about 500 square feet—20 by 25 feet. The food was poor, lines ubiquitous, and privacy very hard to come by. Meals, toilets, and showers were communal, and everyone wore the same type of clothing.

The internees farmed a great deal. At Minidoka, in Southern Idaho, they produced more than 1,000 tons of produce from 250 acres by the fall of 1943, in addition to the products of small family gardens.

Adult men seemed to suffer the most. Women kept themselves busy with housework and caring for children, the same activities that had consumed much of their time before the war. Children went to school and often outstripped their parents in learning the ins and outs of camp life and bureaucracy. But husbands and fathers had both too much time on their hands and lacked the traditional levers of status, the job titles and incomes and community authority that they had enjoyed at home. Those who were fortunate enough to be employed earned very modest wages. Wives and especially children became more autonomous in the camps, quarrels within and between families more common. Youth were often the first to leave the camps, and they increasingly married when and whom they chose, contrary to traditional practice.

Internment began to ease as the war progressed. Even early in 1943 officials in the federal government realized that internment had been an unnecessary overreaction and that locking up more than 100,000 hard working people was hardly helping the war effort. Of course it would not have been politically wise to admit this publicly, and Roosevelt insisted on waiting until he had been safely re-elected late in 1944 before dismantling the camps in earnest. But in the spring

of 1943 camp officials began the laborious process of determining which internees might be allowed to settle east of the Rocky Mountains to work or go to college, and the camps slowly lost members to resettlement and military service in the European theatre. Some 23,000 Japanese-Americans would admirably serve the U.S. by the war's end, and *Nisei* units had very high rates of casualties and decorations. In 1944 the Supreme Court found that the government had no right to detain individuals whose loyalty was not in question, a decision that hastened the end of the camps.

4. Accommodation and Resistance

Internment shocked the Japanese-American community, a community already reeling from Pearl Harbor, attacks by local newspapers and officials, and the obvious contempt in which so many of their neighbors—including former friends—held them. “Shigatoa jan-ai” (it can't be helped) was a phrase that issued often from the lips of the *Issei* during this time. Matsuo Hashiguchi of Bellevue, Washington sent an open letter to the local newspaper in which he expressed his belief that the *Issei* and *Nisei* would, upon their eventual return, “be welcomed back, not as pariah but as neighbors.” “There will be no trace of bitterness within our group,” he continued, or any show of disrespect toward our government.” Some *Nisei* were not so sure. The JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) generally urged cheerful and ready cooperation with internment. Other *Nisei* argued both before and after internment that relocation and internment alike were not necessary. This was particularly true of the *Kibei*, Japanese-Americans who had been born in the U.S. but who had spent several years of their childhoods in Japan before returning to the U.S. in their teens. The *Kibei* constituted about 9 percent of internees, and they had of course been exposed to much more Japanese nationalism than their counterparts who had never lived in Japan.

Minidoka's internees exhibited their resentment of being fenced in with barbed wire by nightly tearing out the fence as it was built. Wrote one resident: “I want my children to respect America and love America but with barbed-wire around such a task can never be accomplished. . . . I feel like I am caged like an animal.”

Tensions ran especially high at Tule Lake's internment center in northeastern California. Tule Lake was designated in 1943 as the center for Japanese-Americans deemed to be disloyal to the U.S., but it also had a significant minority of more conventional internees who elected to stay behind once the newcomers arrived in November 1943. Japanese-Americans critical of the American government—deemed “segregationists”—dominated camp life and persecuted those who did not share their political views.

Other camps experienced less intense forms of this division. At Manzanar, near the Nevada border in California, more than 2,000 internees late in 1942 who backed the Emperor of Japan placed several JACL leaders on a death list for purportedly collaborating with camp authorities. One was beaten, and the military killed two internees in a camp riot. Wrote one critic of the JACL: “These boys claiming to be the leaders of the *Nisei* were a bunch of spineless Americans.”

Resentment commonly took more passive forms. Upon learning that the army was recruiting *Nisei* to serve in a special combat unit, Dunks Oshima was outraged: “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!” Only a small fraction of *Nisei* volunteered for military service early in internment—though this number would grow dramatically later in the war. The *Issei*, especially, tended to mute their reactions, to focus on surviving rather than resisting internment. More than 5,000 renounced their U.S. citizenship, though only a small fraction of this number returned to Japan, and many who opted for renouncing their citizenship either misunderstood the question or its implications.

5. Oregon

The history of Japanese-Americans in Oregon closely resembled their history in other parts of western North America. Early immigrants were largely young, unattached men who worked as laborers. But these immigrants by early in the twentieth century were renting, leasing, and even purchasing land to farm and moving to cities. Thousands of Japanese women had come to Oregon and started families before immigration restriction began in the early 1920s, so the number of Japanese-Americans in Oregon grew that by 1940 they constituted the largest non-European ethnic group in a state that had become overwhelmingly white. Mobs drove *Issei* out of La Grande, Woodburn, and Toledo. As with African Americans, the city of Portland offered something of a refuge. Unlike African Americans, however, the *Issei* succeeded in creating a substantial business class. By 1920 the 1700 Japanese Americans of Portland included 90 hotel operators and many grocers. Truck farmers (farmers who produced vegetables and fruits for consumption in urban markets) lived in many nearby communities, and the Hood River Valley also had many Japanese-American farmers. Many became Christians, and children ordinarily attended public schools. But Oregon’s Japanese-Americans remained a highly distinctive and discriminated against ethnic group.

Pearl Harbor put much more pressure on the community. Few people objected when Japanese-Americans were forced to the Exposition Center in north Portland for several months, then sent to internment camps. Many who returned home after the war found their homes had been looted, orchards and fields had been neglected, even their ancestors’ gravestones broken. White residents of Hood River, Gresham, Sherwood, and Forest Grove called for deportation of all people of Japanese ancestry, even as thousands of *Nisei* were fighting for their country in Europe. “We should never be satisfied until every last Jap has been run out,” asserted former Governor Walter Pierce, “and our Constitution changed so they can never get back.” The Hood River American Legion refused to recognize the sixteen local *Nissei* who had fought for the United States—including two who had died.

Not all whites participated in these efforts and some actively worked against them. Sherman Burgoyne, a Methodist minister in Hood River, very publicly supported the returning Japanese Americans. Prejudice subsided in the next few years, in part because Oregon’s Japanese-Americans worked so hard and patiently to make themselves again at home here.

One of the most prominent *Nisei* of Oregon was Minoru Yasui, whose legal case would end up being decided by the nation's Supreme Court. Yasui was the son of a prominent Hood River family. Born in 1916, he graduated from the University of Oregon in 1933 and became an officer in the Army Reserve. He then obtained a law degree from the same university. Wayne Morse, the future Senator and one of his professors, discerned "a streak of blind stubbornness in him." Yasui's accomplishments notwithstanding, he was unable to get a job upon graduating until his father's connections got him a position with the Japanese Consulate in Chicago. Yasui's patriotic father urged him to enlist the day after Pearl Harbor, and he reported to Fort Vancouver only to be ordered off the base. The military refused to accept an officer of Japanese ancestry. He returned and was turned away eight times. To this humiliation was added his father's arrest. Prosecutors claimed that some maps that his younger children had drawn in school of the Panama Canal constituted a clear example of the elder Yasui's plans to blow up this strategic point. He would be detained until 1945.

Minoru Yasui tried to work as an attorney in Portland and then, after the appearance of Order 9066 and the curfew that followed it, determined to get himself arrested to test the constitutionality of that military order. He had his secretary call the Portland police the evening of March 28 to report that a Japanese man was walking the streets, but "I had an awful time getting arrested." He finally resorted to confronting a police officer with a copy of the military order and his birth certificate only to be told to "run along home." Finally the sergeant at the Second Avenue police station obliged him.

Yasui was confident that the justice system of the nation he loved would acquit him. The War Relocation Authority attorneys argued that the curfew was justified by reason of Japanese Americans "racial characteristics and belief which stamp and distinguish them from other nationalities," that military necessity and the presence of a "Japanese fifth column . . . of undisclosed and undetermined dimensions" merited this suspension of constitutional rights. Judge Fee of the federal court in Portland disagreed in his November 1942 ruling that the federal government was justified in suspending the rights of its citizens, but he ruled that Yasui had surrendered these rights when he served the Japanese consulate. The case went to the U.S. Supreme court in May of 1943. The prosecution again argued that Japanese Americans "had never become assimilated." The court disagreed with both of Judge Fee's conclusions. Serving for the Japanese consulate had not terminated Yasui's citizenship, but the military was within its rights to do so. Yasui was released from jail because of time already served and sent to an internment camp. He soon left for Chicago and then Denver, where he practiced law for many years and became active with the JACL and other groups. He was a leader in the internee-redress movement and died in 1986, shortly after courts overturned his convictions.

6. Aftermath

Internment harmed Japanese-Americans in very tangible ways. In contrast, World War II was a great boon to most Americans. A substantial fraction of African Americans had access to decent-paying jobs for the first time in the nation's history. The *bracero* program was far from ideal, but it welcomed many thousands of Mexican workers into the U.S., and thousands of Mexicans from inside and outside of that program resolved to stay in the U.S. when the war

ended. Japanese Americans instead lost much of their property during the war and were largely excluded from the high-paying jobs that opened up during the war.

Age strongly affected how Japanese-Americans reacted to the war's end. The *Issei* tended to be most deeply scarred by the war. More than a few tried to stay in the internment camps, where at least they were safe from attack. The great majority returned home. Roughly 80 percent of Japanese-Americans had returned to the West Coast by 1950. Most of those who did not were *Nisei*, who detected opportunities elsewhere.

Those who returned faced a great deal of anger and discrimination. Groups such as the American Legion, Native Sons of the Gold West, and labor unions actively discouraged their return. Historians count at least fifty episodes of violence against returning Japanese-Americans. Even decorated veterans were snubbed. Mary Musada accepted at her modest home in Orange County the posthumous medal that her brother, Kazuo, had earned fighting in Europe. General Stillwell made the presentation and Will Rogers and the young Ronald Reagan were also in attendance for the well-publicized ceremony. But Musada was also visited by another delegation: local whites telling her that she was not welcome to return to her home. Even more difficult were the economic problems the returnees confronted. They had lost almost all their wealth while other Americans had gained a great deal. They returned to farms and businesses that had often been neglected or stripped of valuable equipment. Those who returned to Bellevue, Washington found that whites routinely refused to buy their crops or to hire them. Internees who returned to San Jose were welcomed home by an interracial group of black and white women who fed them and transported them. But this was not typical.

Prejudices faded with time. Japan had been defeated, after all, and many Americans admitted both that many *Nisei* had died fighting for their country and that the war been, at least in part, about defeating fascist ideas about racial superiority. As Reagan put it on Mary Masuda's porch at the war's close: "not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way." The *Nisei* and their children slowly gained access to professions that they had been banned from before the war. In 1948 Japanese-Americans could apply for compensation for property lost because of the war. In 1952 the *Issei* could become naturalized citizens, and the California's Alien Land Law was declared unconstitutional. The *Sansei*, or third generation, would become the ethnic group most likely to intermarry.

But an "invisible scar" festered deep in many Japanese-Americans following the war. The *Issei* and *Nisei* alike commonly avoided talking about the war, and some scholars have posited that Japanese-Americans' eagerness to prove themselves or assimilate owed something to a deeply held sense of shame, a sort of internalized racism that World War II had seared into their collective sub conscience. If so, the remarkable renewal of ethnic pride, including a thorough examination of internment that has flourished among Japanese Americans since the late twentieth century has constituted a sort of self healing. One landmark of that healing occurred in 1988, when President Reagan signed a bill allocating \$20,000 to each surviving internee. The children and grandchildren of the internees have contributed greatly to our knowledge of internment through oral histories and other forms of historical research.

For other Americans, the lessons of internment should be more disturbing. The episode raises thorny and awkward questions about how readily patriotism and racism intersect during times of war. It is easy enough in retrospect to dismiss the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II as an aberration. But it was an aberration that the great majority of non-Japanese citizens either loudly insisted on or quietly assented to the internment and for reasons and assumptions that were anything but exceptional.

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