

CHAPTER 12

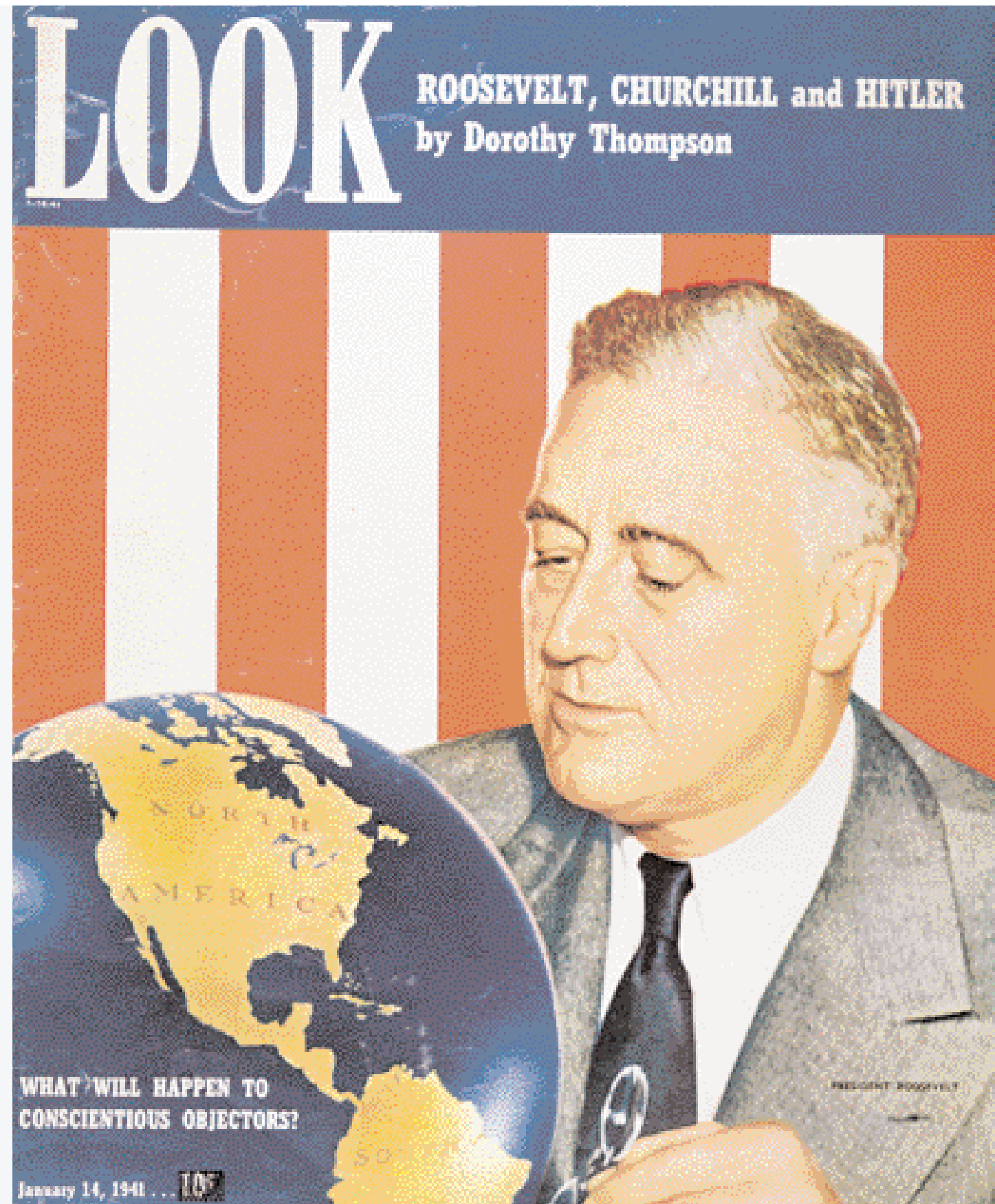
INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

FOUR-YEAR-OLD JOHN TATEISHI WOULD OFTEN STAND AT THE BARBED-WIRE fence beneath the guard towers and feel the dry desert wind across his face. He was too young to recall what life had been like before he and his family were sent with thousands of others to this camp in a desolate wasteland where the wind blew endlessly down into the Owens Valley from snowcapped Mount Whitney and the Sierra Nevada. John had just turned three the day they were forced from their home in Los Angeles. He was told later that he had come down with German measles and was taken from his mother and placed in quarantine at Los Angeles General Hospital with armed guards posted at his door. About three weeks later, he was placed on a bus and sent with other internees from Los Angeles to the Manzanar Relocation Center, where his parents were waiting.

Armed guards were everywhere, carrying guns, shining searchlights across the camp at night. All the adults were silent, depressed, and guilt-ridden for being suspected of disloyalty to the United States—a stigma worse than being sent to the camps—and shamed by their inability to protect themselves or their children from the humiliation of losing their homes and livelihoods. They had no idea when or whether they would ever be allowed to return to their former lives. Little John Tateishi had not seen his father in more than a year, since the night of a riot in the relocation center when the guards took him away, and he was sure his father was going to be shot.

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, MORE CONCERNED WITH THEATERS OF WAR THAN WITH THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS ON THE WEST COAST, INSTRUCTED HIS ATTORNEY GENERAL AND WAR SECRETARY TO DO AS THEY THOUGHT BEST, BUT TO TREAT THEM HUMANELY AND "BE AS REASONABLE AS YOU CAN."



THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, A HEARST PUBLICATION, WAS AMONG THE WEST COAST NEWSPAPERS MOST EAGER TO SEE AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT ROUNDED UP IN THE INTEREST OF NATIONAL SECURITY.



John and his family were among about 120,000 Japanese Americans—more than two-thirds of them native-born American citizens—quarantined in ten federally operated military internment camps from early 1942 until early 1945, when it was clear that the Allies would win the war and the federal government determined that the Japanese Americans were no longer a security risk.

What prompted the roundup and internment of law-abiding civilians? On December 7, 1941, in what President Franklin D. Roosevelt described as “a day which will live in infamy” in his address to Congress the following day, an attack force of Japanese emperor Tojo’s warplanes blitzed the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The assault destroyed nineteen naval vessels and 188 aircraft and killed 2,280, nearly eliminating the entire U.S. Pacific Fleet in a single morning. The attack was unprovoked, and it took the American public completely by surprise. In recent years, the nation’s attention had been focused on the worsening war in Europe, where German forces were advancing almost unopposed. Americans were already worried that the United States might be drawn once again into a great European war.

The morning after Pearl Harbor, California Governor Culbert L. Olson and State Attorney General Earl Warren (later chief justice of the U.S.

Supreme Court) worked with sheriffs and district attorneys to dismiss from civil service positions all first-generation Japanese Americans (*Issei*) and their U.S.-born children (*Nisei*). Licenses to practice law and medicine were revoked, and commercial fishermen were barred from their boats. The civil authorities’ drive to round up Japanese Americans was loudly seconded by the West Coast press, especially the excitable San Francisco-based Hearst newspapers.

There had long been a strong intolerance of Asians on the West Coast, especially in California, dating back to the 1860s, when Chinese laborers (called coolies) were imported as essentially slave labor to build the Transcontinental Railroad and for other projects. Japanese and Chinese immigrants were targeted for exclusion by state laws and by such federal legislation as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited Japanese immigration. Other discriminatory laws prevented immigrants from becoming citizens, thereby enforcing an alien status on people who would willingly have sought citizenship.

Although Japanese constituted only 1 percent of California’s population, their contributions to the state’s economy were substantial. Japanese farmers occupied only 1 percent of the state’s cultivated land, but they supplied about 40 percent of its fruits and vegetables. They mainly kept to themselves in ethnic enclaves. After Pearl Harbor, old prejudices were inflamed against all Japanese in the Golden State. Attorney General Warren had frozen their assets, so banks would not honor their checks. Insurance companies canceled policies, grocers refused to sell them food, and so on.

The state of California demanded that the federal government do something about the internal threat to domestic security, the so-called Yellow Peril. After Pearl Harbor, Californians feared the next attack would be on their shores. In congressional testimony on February 4, 1942, General Mark Clark, the deputy chief of staff, and Admiral Harold R. Stark, chief of naval operations, said people on the Pacific coast were unduly alarmed. General Clark said the chances of an invasion were “nil.”

But their assurances calmed no one. On January 24, the commission appointed by Roosevelt to investigate the attack on Pearl Harbor reported, among other findings, that the Japanese air force had been aided by espionage agents based in Hawaii, including Japanese Americans, though that assertion was not substantiated by any evidence. Only days earlier the *Los Angeles Times* had been urging calm and moderation; now the *Times* called for relocation of all Japanese Americans in California, whether they were citizens or not.

Lieutenant General John De Witt, army commander of the West Coast, asked his superiors for permission to evacuate all Japanese from the Coast, but the army was not inclined to grant his request. In a memorable demonstration

PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING
 (1882–1945)
 • THIRTY-SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (1933–45) AND GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK (1929–33)
 • BORN JANUARY 30, 1882, IN HYDE PARK, NEW YORK
 • DIED APRIL 12, 1945, AT WARM SPRINGS, GEORGIA
 • INHERITED THE GREAT DEPRESSION FROM HERBERT HOOVER; INITIATED MASSIVE RECOVERY EFFORT THROUGH NEW DEAL LEGISLATION, INCLUDING NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION, WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION, AND CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
 • ESTABLISHED SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION (1934) AND SOCIAL SECURITY (1935)
 • ELECTED TO UNPRECEDENTED THIRD AND FOURTH TERMS (1940, 1944); LED THE NATION THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II
 • MET WITH WINSTON CHURCHILL AND JOSEPH STALIN AT TEHRAN (1943) AND AT YALTA (1945) TO PLAN POSTWAR GLOBAL SECURITY THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS, A GLOBAL SECURITY COLLECTIVE
 • WIDELY REGARDED AS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PRESIDENT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The President has signed the following Executive Order:

AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF WAR TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY AREAS
9066

WHEREAS the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 2, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 555, as amended by the Act of December 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1820, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 659 (U.S.C., Title 50, Sec. 104):

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area heretofore authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 6975, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the control and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

February 19, 1942.

of wartime logic, De Witt insisted, "The very fact that no sabotage has taken place [in California] is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action *will* be taken."

After an interview with General De Witt, the influential liberal columnist Walter Lippmann published a column in the February 12, 1942, *Herald Tribune* titled, "Fifth Column on the West Coast." Lippmann declared the whole Pacific coast a battle zone and asserted, "Nobody's constitutional rights include the right to reside and do business on a battlefield." The widely read conservative columnist Westbrook Pegler opined, "The Japanese in California should be under armed guard to the last man and woman right now. And to hell with habeas corpus until the danger is over."

War Secretary Henry L. Stimson believed an invasion on the West Coast was a possibility, though he had doubts about the necessity for a mass relocation of civilians. Stimson had the authority to deny General De Witt and the California officials' requests, but before doing that he consulted the president. Roosevelt was weary of the issue and trying to concentrate on larger concerns such as theaters of war and arms production. When Stimson called on February 11, the president expressed no opinion on the evacuation question, but, according to Stimson's diary, "told me to go ahead on the line that I thought the best."

After being taken by surprise at Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was inclined to play it safe. He would have preferred voluntary relocation, but, logistically and practically, it was unrealistic to expect that 120,000 citizens with businesses and jobs embedded in close-knit communities would

willingly relocate, or that people in the rural West and Midwest would accept them. The president urged Stimson to be as humane as possible.

Stimson's assistant secretary for domestic security, John J. McCloy, viewed relocation as a military necessity: "If it is a question of the safety of the country or the Constitution of the United States, why the Constitution is just a scrap of paper to me." After Stimson's talk with the president, McCloy wrote to Fourth Army headquarters in San Francisco, "We have carte blanche to do what we want to as far as the president is concerned ... He states there will probably be some repercussions, and it has got to be dictated by military necessity, but as he puts it, 'Be as reasonable as you can.'"

AFTER PEARL HARBOR, OLD PREJUDICES WERE INFLAMED AGAINST ALL JAPANESE IN THE GOLDEN STATE. ATTORNEY GENERAL WARREN HAD FROZEN THEIR ASSETS, SO BANKS WOULD NOT HONOR THEIR CHECKS. INSURANCE COMPANIES CANCELED POLICIES, GROCERS REFUSED TO SELL THEM FOOD, AND SO ON.

U.S. Attorney General Francis B. Biddle, however, recommended caution. He regarded relocation as "ill-advised, unnecessary, and unnecessarily cruel," and advised the president that the army had not yet advised him of its conclusions on the question. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director J. Edgar Hoover agreed, calling the evacuation "utterly unwarranted." Biddle sought the views of three trusted New Deal legal thinkers, hoping their opinions would help him make the case against relocation, but they surprised him by returning a seven-page brief that affirmed the constitutionality of removing citizens on the basis of race in case of military necessity.

Further, Biddle was at odds with War Secretary Stimson, the strong man of the Roosevelt cabinet who was being pushed toward relocation by De Witt and McCloy. The attorney general recalled twenty years later, "If Stimson had insisted, had stood firm, as he apparently suspected that this wholesale evacuation was needless, the president would have followed his advice. And if ... I had urged the Secretary to resist the pressure of his subordinates, the result might have been different. But I was new to the cabinet and disinclined to insist on my view to an elder statesman."

On February 19, 1942, three months after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which suspended the civil rights of Japanese Americans and authorized Stimson to designate military exclusion zones from which the United States could exclude "any or all persons," without having to prove disloyalty or ill intent, for the duration of the war. Then, in March, Roosevelt's Executive Order 9012 established the War Relocation Authority (WRA). On March 21, at the request of the War Department, Congress unanimously passed

THREE MONTHS AFTER PEARL HARBOR, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 SUSPENDED THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS AND AUTHORIZED WAR SECRETARY HENRY L. STIMSON TO DESIGNATE MILITARY EXCLUSION ZONES FROM WHICH THE U.S. COULD EXCLUDE "ANY OR ALL PERSONS" WITHOUT NEEDING TO PROVE DISLOYALTY OR ILL INTENT.



were accidentally separated from their parents, and truck convoys pulled up as soldiers shouted, “Out, Japs!” The internees were allowed to bring only the bags they could carry.

Trucks drove the internees to fifteen processing centers and assembly areas, including Pasadena’s Rose Bowl and the race tracks at Santa Anita and Tanforan, where families were housed in horse stalls. In the summer and fall of 1942, families were assigned to one of ten barracks-like internment camps established in the wastelands of California and Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming and administered by the WRA. Because the main impetus for the roundups in the first place came from the demands of California state officials, the roundups involved mainly the Japanese Americans in the Pacific coast states of California, Oregon, and Washington. The large Japanese population in Hawaii and those in the rest of the United States were for the most part not affected by the executive orders. The general public was told that the Japanese Americans were being gathered into the relocation centers to assure their protection.

The camp where John Tateishi and his family were settled, at Manzanar, California, was, at 813 acres, one of the largest incarceration centers, and one of the first to be settled. Manzanar, which means “apple orchard” in Spanish, was a desolate spot in the Owens Valley in the shadow of the Sierra Nevada, about halfway between Los Angeles (to the south) and Reno, Nevada. Once watered by the nearby Owens River, the area by the early 1900s had grown into a thriving agricultural settlement of about 200 European immigrant farmers and ranchers. But in 1919, Manzanar was bought by the government so that the river could be diverted to the Los Angeles aqueduct. The apple orchards turned to desert.

Busloads of internees began arriving at Manzanar on March 21, 1942, and within six months, more than 10,000 people were settled in 504 barracks measuring 120 feet by 20 feet and divided into six one-room apartments that ranged in size from 320 to 480 square feet. The rooms were furnished with army cots, straw mattresses, and electricity. The camps provided an infirmary and each block of fifteen barracks shared bath, latrine, mess (dining), and laundry buildings. Temperatures in the Owens Valley varied between extremes. Even in late spring the temperature could dip below freezing, and in summer the heat would rise to hotter than 110 °F (43 °C).

WRA administrators living at the camps tried to establish conditions approximating normal life, and the internees did their best to adapt. Girls could join a choir, boys could join the Boy Scouts and play in a basketball league and in physical education programs, and there were churches—Buddhist (the largest congregation), Catholic, and Protestant. Adults took courses in the English language and American history. Internees were also

THE PUBLIC NOTICE ON THE RIGHT INSTRUCTS ALL SAN FRANCISCO-AREA “PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY” TO REPORT TO CIVIL CONTROL STATIONS FOR PROCESSING. OF THE 120,000 INCARCERATED, MOST WERE GIVEN NO MORE THAN TEN DAYS TO STORE OR SELL THEIR PERSONAL POSSESSIONS AND ARRANGE TO RENT HOMES, FARMS, AND BUSINESSES.

legislation authorizing removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

Lost amid all the official concern and press hysteria was the quiet fact that there had not been a single reported instance of disloyalty, sabotage, or plotting against the United States by a Japanese American.

“OUT, JAPS!” Abruptly, between March and June 1942, all Japanese Americans on the West Coast were ordered to sell their homes, liquidate their businesses, pull their children out of school, and report to civil control stations for processing. The residents of Terminal Island in Los Angeles Harbor had less than three days to store or sell their personal possessions and arrange to rent homes, farms, and businesses, while Japanese in other areas were allowed up to ten days. In a brisk military operation beginning at dawn on March 30, copies of General De Witt’s Civilian Exclusion Order No. 20 directed at “persons of Japanese ancestry” were nailed to doors, toddlers were issued I.D. tags like pieces of luggage in case they

FAILURES OF THE PRESIDENTS

ON THIS PAGE AND THE NEXT, PHOTOGRAPHS SHOW THE RELOCATION CENTER AT MANZANAR, CALIFORNIA, ABOUT HALFWAY BETWEEN LOS ANGELES AND RENO. ABOUT 10,000 PEOPLE WERE HELD HERE IN 504 BARRACKS HASTILY BUILT ON LAND WHERE TEMPERATURES DIPPED BELOW FREEZING IN WINTER AND SOARED TO 110°F (43°C) IN SUMMER.

employed in the camp's infirmary and mess hall and were kept busy planting trees and painting Army recruiting posters. Chemists and doctors assisted in the infirmaries and in conducting experiments making artificial rubber, among other tasks. Determined to show their loyalty to the United States, internees at Tule Lake in northern California assembled each morning to raise the flag while their Boy Scout drum and bugle corps played "The Star-Spangled Banner." In the three years the ten relocation camps were in operation, from early 1942 through 1944, there were 2,120 marriages, 5,981 christenings, and 1,862 funerals.

Despite the WRA's efforts, however, camp life strained relationships and upset the social order within the community. Most families lived in one-room apartments, and privacy was impossible. Children often stayed away from the dwelling and refused to eat with their families. Parents complained that they could not discipline their children. Working women received the same amount of pay as men, and the traditional patterns of arranged marriages disintegrated. At first the WRA, to the embitterment of many internees, deprived the older



men of power within the community, but eventually traditional community leaders were allowed to participate in camp "self-government."

The Japanese Americans showed incredible stoicism and personal discipline, but not everyone took the internment submissively. Japanese Americans who had been born in the United States but were educated or partly raised in Japan, known as *Kibei*, tended to be the most outspoken in protesting the mass incarceration. The authorities regarded them as troublemakers. John Tateishi's father was a Kibei, and so was his father's friend, Harry Ueno. Ueno had discovered that shipments of meat, flour, and sugar to the Manzanar mess hall were being shorted: Someone was skimming goods off the top. When Ueno complained to camp administrators, he was arrested. Tateishi confronted the authorities and demanded his friend's release, and he, too, was arrested.

MANZANAR BARRACKS BEFORE THE MOUNTAINSCAPE OF THE SIERRA NEVADA, HOME OF MOUNT WHITNEY. MANZANAR MEANS "APPLE ORCHARD" IN SPANISH. UNTIL THE NEARBY OWENS RIVER WAS DIVERTED TO THE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT ABOUT 1920, THIS AREA IN THE OWENS VALLEY WAS A THRIVING AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT.



A JAPANESE GIRL STANDS WITH A CONVOY OF TRANSPORT TRUCKS LOADED WITH HER FELLOW AMERICANS BOUND FOR ONE OF TEN FEDERALLY RUN MILITARY INTERNMENT CAMPS IN THE WEST, IN CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA, UTAH, COLORADO, AND WYOMING. THE CAMPS WERE CLOSED AND PEOPLE RELEASED IN EARLY 1945.

It was about that time, as Ueno and Tateishi were being handcuffed and taken away to jail at Independence, California, that a riot broke out across the camp, prompted mainly by fellow Kibei. While guards shot at the crowd of rioters—two internees were killed—in other parts of the camp Japanese were attacking Japanese, accusing them of snitching and collaborating with the administrators, betraying their own people. All night long, the prisoners heard gunshots and shouts and barking guard dogs, and the searchlights swept across the grounds until daybreak.

On January 28, 1943, War Secretary Stimson announced that the U.S. Army would accept Nisei (second-generation, American-born) volunteers. Before the end of the war, more than 17,000 Japanese had joined the army, taking the oath of allegiance to the United States while still behind barbed wire. The 442nd Infantry and the 100th Infantry, for example, served with great distinction; their bravery was legendary in the European theater. The 442nd, the most celebrated all-Japanese unit, fought in the Italian campaign, suffering massive losses but still winning 3,000 Purple Hearts, 500 oak-leaf clusters, 810 Bronze Stars, and 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, among many other honors.

Driving the soldiers' valor, of course, was the hope that by proving their loyalty to their country they could win their families' freedom. In late 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the government could not continue to impound

people and exclude them from the Pacific coast without proof of disloyalty. The army rescinded the exclusion order on January 1, 1945, and Japanese Americans were allowed to return to the coastal areas of California, Washington, and Oregon. The internees came home, if it could be called that, only to find that in many cases their stored possessions had been stolen and their homes, farms, and businesses were now being run by the white Californians who had bought the properties at fire-sale prices and would not sell them back. Returning Nisei soldiers still in uniform were refused haircuts and service at restaurants. The *San Francisco Examiner*, a Hearst publication, printed a headline "Soldiers of Nip Ancestry Allowed to Roam on Coast," and a soldier who had lost a leg in Europe was publicly beaten.

Gradually the most brazen acts of intolerance subsided as the War Department launched a public relations campaign in which non-Japanese American soldiers toured West Coast towns and attested to their Nisei comrades' bravery and loyalty.

BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR, MORE THAN 17,000 JAPANESE HAD JOINED THE ARMY, TAKING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES WHILE STILL BEHIND BARBED WIRE.

The loss of property, however, was irreparable. The Japanese Americans had been forced to liquidate their homes and businesses at pennies on the dollar, and the federal government had provided no assistance in securing fair prices, guaranteeing land values, or securing goods in storage. "I am not concerned about that," Roosevelt had said to Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. in March 1942. Some Japanese Americans stored their belongings in churches or community organization buildings, but many of these storage facilities were looted during the war. Estimated property losses were more than \$400 million in 1942 dollars—about \$5 billion today. In 1948, Congress passed the Evacuee Claims Act, awarding \$37 million in reparations.

NATIONAL REGRET A movement for redress gathered force in the late 1960s and early 1970s and gradually, belatedly, won some concessions from the government. In 1976, President Gerald Ford rescinded Executive Order 9066 and issued a formal apology to Japanese Americans. Federal courts vacated opinions that had upheld the constitutionality of the internment. In 1988, Congress passed a bill authorizing a tax-free payment of \$20,000 payable to some 60,000 survivors of the camps. In 1990, the reparations checks were sent along with a letter of apology on White House stationery signed by President George H. W. Bush. The letter conveys a sense of the nation's guilt and awkwardness half a century after the roundups began:

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

During the 1980s, while searching for official records to assist the redress movement, researcher Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga came across a document showing that in 1942 the federal government had deliberately suppressed official reports from before the incarcerations began that found no evidence of disloyalty among the population about to be rounded up. And in all the years since, not a single case of sabotage or espionage by Japanese Americans was ever proved.

California Attorney General Warren wrote in his memoirs that he had been wrong to push for internment of Japanese Americans. "I have since deeply regretted the removal order and my own testimony advocating it," Warren wrote. "Whenever I thought of the innocent little children who were torn from home, school friends, and congenial surroundings, I was conscience-stricken. It was wrong to act so impulsively ... even though we had a good motive."

Attorney General Biddle later wrote in his memoir, *In Brief Authority*, "I do not think [Roosevelt] was much concerned with the gravity or the implications of this step ... What must be done to defend the country must be done ... Nor do I think that the constitutional difficulty plagued him—the Constitution has never greatly bothered any wartime president."

The political consequences of the internments for the Roosevelt administration were slight to nil. The nation's attention was wholly centered on the war, and there was little sympathy for the rights of Japanese Americans. Roosevelt died in April 1945, just months before the end of the war, and he was succeeded by Harry S. Truman, who had his own Japanese remorse following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. But like the atomic bombing, in which much greater force was used than was militarily necessary, the imprisonment of innocent, loyal Japanese Americans in what Roosevelt himself termed "concentration camps" has long been a stain on the nation's reputation for protecting civil rights. Today, few Americans even know the internments took place, and probably the majority who do hear of the camps are not greatly distressed.



Roosevelt and Stimson might have steered a different course, however, that could have set a precedent more helpful to Americans' civil liberties in later decades. With the incarceration and torture of "enemy combatants" at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in the years since September 11, 2001—including U.S. citizens suspected of collaborating with terrorist organizations—and little-known provisions in the U.S. Patriot Act that allow for warrantless wiretapping and arrests and confiscations without cause, many Americans worry that the internment camps of the 1940s might one day reappear. The revelation in late 2007 through declassified documents that former FBI director Hoover sent the White House a plan, shortly after the Korean War began in 1950, calling for the imprisonment of some 12,000 Americans he suspected of disloyalty, gives further reason for concern that the mass imprisonment of a group of Americans on the basis of suspected disloyalty may turn out not to be a unique incident in United States history.

JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNEES WERE ALLOWED TO BRING ONLY THE BAGS THEY COULD CARRY, AND CHILDREN WERE TAGGED LIKE PIECES OF LUGGAGE IN CASE THEY WERE SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS.



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The camps were certainly never far away for John Tateishi. In the 1970s, he returned to Manzanar for the first time in thirty years, and he wrote about the experience some twenty years later in “Memories from Behind Barbed Wire,” a chapter in the collection *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans*. He recalled that when he was there as a child, “I knew (and I can distinctly remember being aware of this) that my confinement was because I was Japanese. I knew, even at the early age of three or four, that I was different from the men who stood in the towers, different from the white faces that stared curiously at the camp and at us from the cars that passed by on the distant highway ... And somehow for me, in the strange logic of a child’s mind, that represented America, riding off into the solitary distance away from this wasteland and this prison.” In his return visit, when he stood where the barbed wire had been strung beneath the search towers, it struck him that he had never really left. “[S]tanding there, I realized that I have never been free of this place ... no one really leaves ...”

EARL WARREN, 1948, THREE-TERM GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, LATER CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT. MANY OF THE OFFICIALS PUSHING MOST AGGRESSIVELY FOR THE INTERNMENTS WERE DEMOCRATS, OFTEN NEW DEAL LIBERALS. FBI DIRECTOR J. EDGAR HOOVER, HOWEVER, CALLED THE INCARCERATIONS “UTTERLY UNWARRANTED.”