

# When We Imprisoned Our Own:

## LESSONS FROM THE JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION

Thursday, November 2, 2017, at 5 p.m.  
Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall  
Doheny Memorial Library 240  
University of Southern California

### ABOUT THE PANELISTS

- ◉ **Varun Soni** (moderator) is the dean of Religious Life at USC.
- ◉ **Kathy Masaoka** is a member of Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, a volunteer-based organization that fights for civil rights broadly and specifically for redress for Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans. They call for monetary compensation, a community trust fund, the overturning of wartime court cases of Japanese Americans, and public education about the Japanese American incarceration, as well as social justice for all. Masaoka also works with Vigilant Love Coalition. She was born and raised in Boyle Heights.
- ◉ **Lane Ryo Hirabayashi** is a scholar of Japanese American studies and author of books including *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens*, a collection of photographs by War Relocation Authority photographer Hikaru Iwasaki.
- ◉ Artist and educator **Traci Kato-Kiriyama** is a member of the spoken-word group Zero3, director of Tuesday Night Project, a producer, an actor, a poet, an activist, and more.
- ◉ **Jean Reisz** is the Audrey Irmas Clinical Teaching Fellow at the USC Gould School of Law. She co-teaches the Immigration Clinic.

### TIMELINE

**1850s** The first wave of Asian migration to the United States, as Chinese people come to work in the gold mines and on railroads.

**1870** The 1870 Naturalization Act puts controls on immigration to the U.S. and excluded Asians from receiving citizenship.

**1882** Amid anti-Chinese sentiment, the Chinese Exclusion Act effectively bans immigration from China. There is an increase in Japanese immigration to replace Chinese laborers.

**1905** In San Francisco, 67 labor unions form a Japanese and Korean Exclusion League. It is renamed the Asian Exclusion League in 1907 to also target Indian immigrants.

**1907–08** The United States enters a “Gentleman’s Agreement” with Japan to slow the flow of Japanese immigration to the United States.

**1924** The Immigration Act of 1924 creates national quotas for immigration. All immigrants from Asia are excluded.

**1939** Hitler annexes Czechoslovakia and invades Poland; France and Great Britain, then Canada, declare war against Germany. Japan, at war with China, declares itself neutral in the European war. The United States, taking an isolationist stance, also declares itself neutral.



**1940** Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France. Italy joins the war as an ally of Germany. Great Britain, France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, and South Africa declare war on Italy. Germany, Italy, and Japan sign a pact to create a new order in Europe and Asia. Italy invades Greece.

**1941** Germany invades the Soviet Union.

**DECEMBER 7, 1941** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

**DECEMBER 8, 1941** The United States declares war on Japan. Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.

**FEBRUARY 19, 1942** U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, which authorizes the removal of anyone from military areas as deemed “necessary or desirable” by military commanders.

**1942** The U.S. military defines much of the U.S. West Coast as a military area. Over the next few months, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans are relocated to internment camps created by the U.S. military. They live in camps for two and a half years.

**DECEMBER 17, 1944** U.S. Public Proclamation No. 21 declares that, effective January 2, 1945, Japanese American “evacuees” can leave the camps.

**1988** U.S. President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, giving each survivor of the Japanese American internment \$20,000 and an apology.

## TERMS

**Civilian Exclusion Orders:** A series of directives issued by General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command of the U.S. military, from late March to August 1942. The orders directed the exclusion of “all persons of Japanese ancestry, including aliens and non-aliens” from designated areas on the West Coast (where most Japanese Americans lived). The orders were posted and published in newspapers with the large headline, “Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry.”

**Executive Order 9066:** An executive order issued by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. It granted the U.S. military the power to exclude “any and all persons” from military areas. The order did not mention any specific ethnic or social group, but it was quickly applied to the Japanese American population on the West Coast.

**War Relocation Authority:** A U.S. government agency established in 1942 to “Take all people of Japanese descent into custody, surround them with troops, prevent them from buying land, and return them to their former homes at the close of the war.”

**Xenophobia:** Fear and hatred of strangers, or of anyone or anything that is foreign.

## IS \$20,000 ENOUGH?

In 1988, the U.S. government authorized reparations of \$20,000 per internment survivor. But even aside from psychological and other impacts of incarceration, the concrete economic impacts were considerable. Many families had as little as one week to prepare to leave their homes and businesses and relocate to internment camps, bringing only what they could carry with them. Most interned Japanese Americans lost all of their property: homes, businesses, and farms (nearly two-thirds of West Coast Japanese Americans worked in agriculture).

In at least one camp, experienced agricultural workers who could no longer work their own farms worked on U.S. government agricultural projects for as little as \$12 a month (much lower than typical agricultural wages at the time).

After the war, some internees stayed in the desolate areas where the camps were located rather than return to areas that now had housing shortages and where they feared racial hatred. Economic opportunities in the rural areas where the camps were located were slim. A study published in August 2017 found that “the economic consequences of internment lingered among internees even 50 years later,” and affected not only those interned but subsequent generations of their families.



Japan attacks Pearl Harbor



### PANIC ON THE WEST COAST

Some say President Roosevelt was responding to a culture of fear and panic on the West Coast, where some Americans feared invasion by Japan, or sabotage by Japanese American spies. Combined with preexisting racism, their fear became a wave of xenophobia.



## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ What do you think would be a fair amount of reparations for the survivors of internment camps or their families?
- ◉ Do you see any parallels between the xenophobia that led to the incarceration of 110,000 Japanese Americans and any events or conversations occurring today?
- ◉ What would it take to prevent something like this from ever happening again?

## TO LEARN MORE OR TAKE ACTION, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

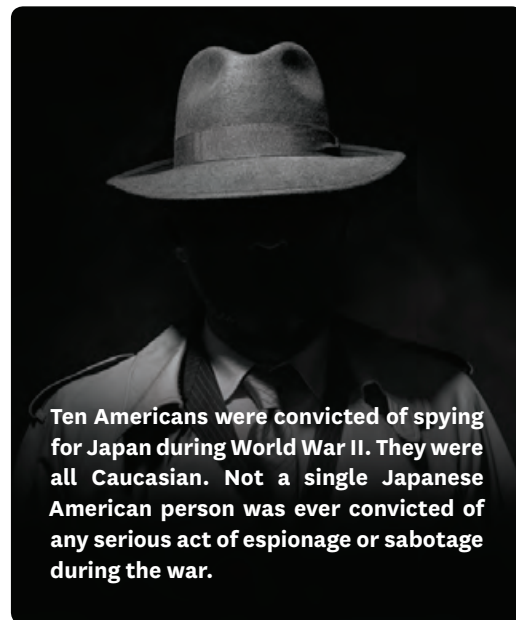
- ◉ The Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo  
[janm.org](http://janm.org)
- ◉ Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress  
[ncrr-la.org](http://ncrr-la.org)
- ◉ The Vigilant Love Coalition, a group of allies led by Japanese Americans and Muslim Americans fighting Islamophobia in the U.S. today  
[Facebook.com/vigilantlove](https://Facebook.com/vigilantlove)
- ◉ *Japanese Relocation through the Lens: Hikaru Carl Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943-1945* by Lane Ryo Hirabayashi with Kenichiro Shimada
- ◉ *Manzanar Free Press*, an independent newspaper published by interned Japanese Americans at the Manzanar camp in California. Digital archives available in the Densho Digital Repository.  
[ddr.densho.org/browse/topics/204/](http://ddr.densho.org/browse/topics/204/)
- ◉ *Farewell to Manzanar*, a memoir by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston
- ◉ *Farming Behind the War: Japanese Americans Remember World War II Incarceration*  
[npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/02/19/515822019/farming-behind-barbed-wire-japanese-americans-remember-wwii-incarceration](http://npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/02/19/515822019/farming-behind-barbed-wire-japanese-americans-remember-wwii-incarceration)

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

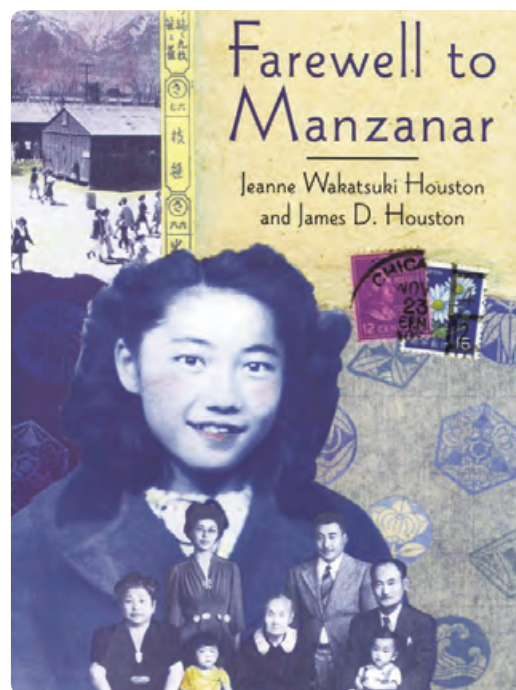
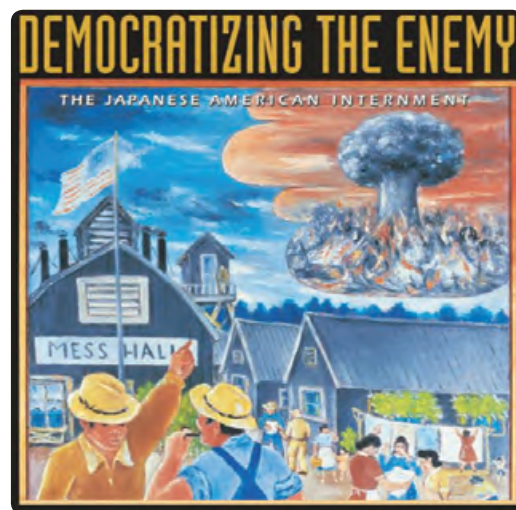
**Dr. Robert V. Labaree** [[labaree@usc.edu](mailto:labaree@usc.edu)] of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about the forcible removal of Japanese-Americans from their homes during World War II and the legacy of their imprisonment.

### RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- ◉ Cahan, Richard and Michael F. Williams. *Un-American: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II*. Chicago, IL: CityFiles Press, 2016.  
**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 C194 2016**
- ◉ Hayashi, Brian Masaru. *Democratizing the Enemy The Japanese American Internment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.  
**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 H39 2004**
- ◉ Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki and James D Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.  
**Leavey Library and Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 H68 2002**
- ◉ Inouye, Karen M. *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.  
**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 I55 2016**
- ◉ Neiwert, David A. *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.  
**Doheny Memorial Library F899 .B39 N45 2005**



Ten Americans were convicted of spying for Japan during World War II. They were all Caucasian. Not a single Japanese American person was ever convicted of any serious act of espionage or sabotage during the war.



- Reeves, Richard. *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015.

**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 R43 2015**

- Shimabukuro, Mira. *Relocating Authority: Japanese Americans Writing to Redress Mass Incarceration*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2015.

**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 S54 2015**

- Soga, Keiho; Kihei Hirai (Translator). *Life Behind Barbed Wire*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008.

**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 S66 2008**

- Uchida, Yoshiko and Traise Yamamoto. *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2015.

**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 .A6 U25 2015**

- Yamaguchi, Precious. *Experiences of Japanese American Women during and after World War II: Living in Internment Camps and Rebuilding Life Afterwards*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014.

**Doheny Memorial Library D769.8 . A6 Y343 2014**

## RECOMMENDED DATABASES

The following databases provide access to scholarly research literature related to the Japanese-American internment as well as literature that helps you see the internment experience through the eyes of those most affected by Executive Order 9066. They can be accessed alphabetically by going here: [libguides.usc.edu/az.php](http://libguides.usc.edu/az.php)

- America: History and Life**

Reference tool for U.S. and Canadian history and culture with full-text coverage of hundreds of journals and books, and selective indexing for journals from 1863 to the present.

- Ethnic NewsWatch**

A full-text database containing newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters of the ethnic, minority, and native press. Designed to provide the other side of the story, *Ethnic NewsWatch* content provides additional viewpoints from those proffered by the mainstream media.

- Worldwide Political Science Abstracts**

Provides citations, abstracts, and indexing of the international journal literature in political science and its complementary fields, including international relations, law, and public administration and policy.

## SELECTED ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

The following resources provide access to archival collections that support research on Japanese-American internment and the internment experience during World War II.

- USC Digital Library – Japanese American Relocation Digital Archive, 1941–1946**

[digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll75](http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll75)

A collection of photographs from the Hearst Collection of the *Los Angeles Examiner* newspaper in the USC Regional History Collection documenting the relocation of Japanese-Americans in California during World War II.

- Ansel Adams's Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar**

[loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/](http://loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/)

A collection of approximately 240 portraits of Japanese-Americans and images documenting daily life, agricultural scenes, and sports and leisure activities in 1943 at the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California taken by Ansel Adams, America's best-known photographer.

- JARDA: Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives**

[calisphere.org/exhibitions/t11/jarda/](http://calisphere.org/exhibitions/t11/jarda/)

Archive of official documents, personal papers, transcribed oral histories, and works of art that illuminates the Japanese-American internment experience during World War II. Part of the University of California's Calisphere.

- Out of the Desert – Resilience and Memory in Japanese American Internment**

[outofthedesert.yale.edu/](http://outofthedesert.yale.edu/)

A dynamic digital exhibit made available from Yale University Library that highlights the university's extensive collections of internee correspondence, artwork, and literature related to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

- Topaz Museum**

[topazmuseum.org/topaz-camp](http://topazmuseum.org/topaz-camp)

More than 11,000 people were processed through the Topaz Internment Camp during its duration. At any one time the population of the camp was about 8,300. This archive of artifacts, photographs, artwork, and other materials document offer detailed insight into the life of the internees and the fortitude they exhibited.

- War Relocation Authority Documents**

[libguides.bgsu.edu/c.php?g=227381&p=1506890](http://libguides.bgsu.edu/c.php?g=227381&p=1506890)

A guide to resources on the Department of the Interior's War Relocation Authority, the federal agency charged with forcibly removing and relocating nearly 120,000 individuals to ten isolated centers in remote parts of Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming.

- WWII Japanese American Internment and Relocation Records in the National Archives**

[archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/internment-intro](http://archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/internment-intro)

The records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) relating to WWII Japanese-American internees.