

Timeline of Japanese American History

This timeline is designed to provide a general historic framework for understanding the Japanese American experience and the contents of *Common Ground: The Heart of Community*. It is designed specifically to help you prepare for your visit to the Japanese American National Museum and is not all-inclusive of every event in Japanese American history.

More information about the Japanese American experience can be found at janm.org/education/resources/.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Japanese American National Museum!

- 1790** Congress decrees that “any alien, being a free white person” who has resided within the United States for at least two years can become a citizen (i.e. no person of color could become a naturalized citizen)
- 1848 – 1855** Discovery of new gold brings 300,000 people westward and helps propel California into statehood
- 1853** Commodore Matthew Perry uses military might to open Japan to Western trade
- 1861 – 1865** Civil War over the question of slavery divides the United States

Immigration Period
Between 1885 and 1924, approximately 300,000 Issei immigrate to Hawai‘i and the continental United States

- 1868** Known as the **Gannenmono**, 153 Japanese—including six women and a child—are the first immigrants to Hawai‘i from Japan
- 1873** Congress decrees that “persons of African nativity or descent” are eligible for citizenship. All Asian immigrants remain ineligible
- May 1882** Congress passes the **Chinese Exclusion Act**, setting the precedent for laws explicitly excluding Asian immigrants and shutting off Chinese immigration for the next sixty years
- 1908** **Gentleman’s Agreement** between Japan and the United States effectively ends further immigration of Japanese laborers to the United States
- 1913** **Alien Land Laws** in California and Arizona prohibit “aliens ineligible to citizenship” (i.e. Asian immigrant males) from purchasing or owning land
- 1924** Congress passes the **Johnson-Reed Act** (Immigration Act of 1924), halting all immigration of Japanese into the United States

- Oct/Nov 1941** Curtis B. Munson is commissioned by President Roosevelt to gather information on Japanese American loyalty; his report (**Munson Report**) concludes that Japanese Americans are loyal and would pose little threat to the U.S. in the event of war

WWII, Forced Removal, and Incarceration
120,000 Japanese Americans—two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens—are forcibly removed from the Pacific Coast and incarcerated in ten concentration camps throughout the interior of the United States

- Dec 7, 1941** Japan attacks **Pearl Harbor**, bringing the United States into World War II. Local authorities and the FBI begin to round up the Issei leadership of Japanese American communities in Hawai‘i and on the continent
- Feb 1942** President Roosevelt signs **Executive Order 9066**, which allows military authorities to exclude anyone from anywhere without trial or hearings
- March 1942** Forced removal of Japanese Americans from the west coast starts with the Army’s first **Civilian Exclusion Order**, issued in Bainbridge Island near Seattle

Four Japanese Americans challenged the constitutionality of and **refused to comply** with the exclusion orders: Fred Korematsu, Mitsuye Endo, Gordon Hirabayashi, and Minoru Yasui
- 1943** US Army and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) administer a “**loyalty questionnaire**” within the camps. Poor administration, the invasive nature of questions, and confusion over the questionnaire’s purpose create tension in the camps
- 1943 - 1945** In addition to African Americans and Native Americans, the US Army segregate Japanese Americans into separate units. The all Japanese American **100th Infantry Battalion** and **442nd Regimental Combat Team** would become the most decorated units of their size in US military history

- 1944 – 1946** The ten American concentration camps run by the War Relocation Authority close. Japanese Americans begin the process of **resettlement** largely on their own, being given only \$25 and a one-way train ticket. Many feared leaving camp and rejoining society as anti-Japanese sentiment was still rampant
- 1952** Congress passes the **McCarran-Walter Act** (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952), allowing Japanese immigration to the U.S. once again, albeit in small numbers, and allowing Issei to become U.S. citizens for the first time
- 1970s** **Redress movement** begins. Japanese American communities demand apology and recognition of wrongdoings from the U.S. government
- 1981** The Commission for Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) hold **public legislative hearings** as part of its investigation into the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Approximately 750 witnesses testify
- August 1988** President Reagan signs the **Civil Liberties Act of 1988**, which provides for individual payments of \$20,000 to each surviving internee and a \$1.25 billion education fund
- 1990** First redress payments are made, accompanied by a **letter of apology** signed by President George H. W. Bush

Vocabulary List

This vocabulary list is designed specifically to help you prepare for your visit to the Japanese American National Museum. It includes words essential to understanding the Japanese American experience and the contents of *Common Ground: The Heart of Community*. This list is not all-inclusive. More information about the Japanese American experience can be found at janm.org/education/resources/.

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Immigration

Immigration	Moving from one country to another
Community	A group of people who share a sense of belonging and responsibility
Culture	The customs and traditions associated with a particular community including food, clothing, language, and values
Citizenship	Rights and responsibilities of being a citizen of a country
Assimilation	The process of adapting to the culture of the dominant community in a country or region
Diversity	Including people of different cultures and communities
Japanese American	An American of Japanese ancestry
<i>Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei...</i>	Generational terms commonly used within the Japanese American community. These terms stem specifically from early Japanese immigration and do not take into account post-war immigrants from Japan
<i>Issei</i>	The first generation. Issei were born in Japan; most immigrated to the United States between 1885 and 1915
<i>Nisei</i>	The second generation, the children of the Issei. Nisei are American citizens by birth; most were born before the start of WWII
<i>Sansei</i>	The third generation of Americans with Japanese Ancestry
<i>Yonsei</i>	The fourth generation
<i>Gosei</i>	The fifth generation

WWII

Civil Rights	Legal rights that protect individuals from discrimination. Civil rights help ensure equal access to the civil liberties guaranteed to everyone by the Constitution, such as the right to free speech and the right to a fair trial
Due process (of law)	Guarantee of basic constitutional rights such as right to be formally charged in a court of law, right to a lawyer and decision by judge or jury
Executive Order	A rule or order issued by the President of the United States
Alien/Non-alien	The term “alien” refers to someone who is not a citizen of the United States. A “non-alien,” therefore, is a US citizen
Prejudice	Preconceived judgment or opinion of someone

WWII (continued)

Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of someone, especially on the grounds of race, age, gender, or sexual orientation
Racism	Prejudice or discrimination against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior
Segregation	Separation of people, often enforced on the basis of race
Euphemism	The substitution of a mild or more pleasant sounding word or phrase in place of an expression that may suggest something unpleasant. Historically, euphemisms have been widely used when referencing the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII
Relocation or Evacuation	"Relocation" and "evacuation," which imply being moved for one's own safety, are euphemisms for forced removal , which indicates movement against one's will
Assembly Center	"Assembly Center" is a euphemism for the temporary detention centers that held Japanese Americans before being sent to concentration camps
Relocation Center	"Relocation Center" is a euphemism for concentration camp , a place where people are imprisoned not because of any crimes they committed, but simply because of who they are <i>More information on the JANM's use of the term concentration camp can be found here</i>
Internment	"Internment" is a commonly used euphemism for incarceration , including the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII
Loyalty	Attitude of faithfulness, allegiance, devoted attachment, and affection
Resistance	Refusal to accept or comply with something
Perseverance	Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition
Gaman	Japanese term meaning "enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity;" often translated as "perseverance"
Shikata ga nai	Japanese phrase meaning "it cannot be helped" or "nothing can be done about it." <i>Shikata ga nai</i> implies not only accepting but making the most of a bad situation

Post-War

Resettlement	Term used to refer to the migration of Japanese Americans from the concentration camps in which they were incarcerated during WWII
Redress	To remedy or set right
Reparations	To make amends; usually involving some form of compensation
Justice	The principals of rightness and/or fairness