

## Japanese American Incarceration Timeline

- 1853-54** U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry sailed gunships into Tokyo Bay and demanded Japan's government end its centuries-old isolationist foreign policy, throwing Japan into political, and later, economic turmoil.
- 1880s** Laws excluding Chinese immigrants from the U.S. were enacted, causing a labor shortage in Western states. Railroad companies recruited Japanese laborers, and a wave of Japanese immigration to the U.S. began.
- 1898** The U.S. annexed Hawaii, which had a large Japanese population.
- 1906** San Francisco passed a resolution that required all Japanese and Korean students to join Chinese students at a segregated school.
- 1907** The U.S. agreed not to restrict Japanese immigration, and Japan agreed to stop further emigration to the U.S. through the Gentlemen's Agreement.
- 1913** California passed the Alien Land Law, forbidding "all aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land. Though the law affected all Asian immigrants, it was mostly directed at Japanese.
- 1924** Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, effectively ending Japanese immigration to the U.S.
- 11/7/1941** *Munson Report* released (Document B).
- 12/7/1941** Japan bombed the U.S. Pearl Harbor military base in Hawaii.
- 2/19/1942** President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing military authorities to exclude civilians from any area without trial or hearing.
- 12/18/1944** The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Executive Order 9066 in *Korematsu v. United States* (Document D).
- 3/20/1946** The last War Relocation Authority facility, the Tule Lake Segregation Center, closed.
- Late 1960s** The Asian American Movement began.
- Late 1970s** Japanese American activists started the Redress Movement to get compensation and an apology from the U.S. government for the mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- 1980** The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was established. In 1983 it issued its report, *Personal Justice Denied* (Document E).
- 8/10/1988** President Ronald Reagan signed HR 442 into law. It acknowledged that the incarceration of more than 110,000 individuals of Japanese descent was unjust and offered an apology and reparation payments of \$20,000 to each person incarcerated.

## Document B: The Munson Report

*In 1941 President Roosevelt ordered the State Department to investigate the loyalty of Japanese Americans. Special Representative of the State Department Curtis B. Munson carried out the investigation in October and November of 1941. The product of this investigation became known as the “Munson Report,” and it was presented to President Roosevelt on November 7, 1941. The excerpt below is from the 25-page report.*

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There is no Japanese ‘problem’ on the Coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese. There will undoubtedly be some sabotage financed by Japan and executed largely by imported agents. . . . In each Naval District there are about 250 to 300 suspects under surveillance. It is easy to get on the suspect list, merely a speech in favor of Japan at some banquet being sufficient to land one there. The Intelligence Services are generous with the title of suspect and are taking no chances. Privately, they believe that only 50 or 60 in each district can be classed as really dangerous. The Japanese are hampered as **saboteurs** because of their easily recognized physical appearance. It will be hard for them to get near anything to blow up if it is guarded. There is far more danger from Communists and people of the **Bridges type** on the Coast than there is from Japanese. The Japanese here is almost exclusively a farmer, a fisherman or a small businessman. He has no **entree** to plants or **intricate** machinery.

**Source:** The Munson Report, *delivered to President Roosevelt by Special Representative of the State Department Curtis B. Munson, November 7, 1941.*

### Vocabulary

saboteurs: a person who deliberately destroys something to gain a military advantage

Bridges type: a reference to Harry Bridges, a leader of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union

entree: access

intricate: complicated

## Document C: *The Crisis*

*The following excerpt is from an editorial published in The Crisis shortly after the establishment of incarceration camps for Japanese Americans. Founded in 1910, The Crisis is the official magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization dedicated to promoting civil rights.*

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Along the eastern coast of the United States, where the numbers of Americans of Japanese ancestry is comparatively small, no concentration camps have been established. From a military point of view, the only danger on this coast is from Germany and Italy. . . . But the American government has not taken any such **high-handed** action against Germans and Italians – and their American-born descendants – on the East Coast, as has been taken against Japanese and their American-born descendants on the West Coast. Germans and Italians are “white.”

Color seems to be the only possible reason why thousands of American citizens of Japanese ancestry are in concentration camps. Anyway, there are no Italian-American, or German-American citizens in such camps.

**Source:** Harry Paxton Howard, “Americans in Concentration Camps,” *The Crisis*, September 1942.

### Vocabulary

high-handed: using authority without considering the feelings of others

## Document D: The Korematsu Supreme Court Ruling

*In 1944, Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American convicted of evading incarceration, brought his case to the Supreme Court. In a controversial ruling, the Court decided that national security outweighed Korematsu's individual rights and upheld the constitutionality of Executive Order 9066. The excerpt below is from the Court's majority opinion written by Chief Justice Hugo Black.*

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We uphold the exclusion order. . . . In doing so, we are not unmindful of the hardships imposed by it upon a large group of American citizens. . . . But hardships are part of war, and war is an **aggregation** of hardships. All citizens alike, both in and out of uniform, feel the impact of war in greater or lesser measure. Citizenship has its responsibilities, as well as its privileges, and, in time of war, the burden is always heavier. **Compulsory** exclusion of large groups of citizens from their homes, except under circumstances of direct emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when, under conditions of modern warfare, our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be **commensurate** with the threatened danger. . . .

To cast this case into outlines of racial prejudice, without reference to the real military dangers which were presented, merely confuses the issue. Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded because we are at war with the Japanese Empire, because the . . . military authorities feared an invasion of our West Coast and . . . because they decided that the military urgency of the situation demanded that all citizens of Japanese ancestry be segregated from the West Coast temporarily, and, finally, because Congress . . . determined that our military leaders should have the power to do just this.

**Source:** Chief Justice Hugo Black, *Korematsu v. United States*, 1944.

### Vocabulary

aggregation: sum

compulsory: mandatory

commensurate: in proportion

## Document E: Personal Justice Denied

*In 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to investigate the detention program and the constitutionality of Executive Order 9066. The Commission released its report Personal Justice Denied: The Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, on February 24, 1983. The passage below is an excerpt from this report.*

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The Commission held 20 days of hearings in cities across the country, particularly on the West Coast, hearing testimony from more than 750 witnesses: evacuees, former government officials, public figures, interested citizens, and historians and other professionals who have studied the subjects of Commission inquiry. An extensive effort was made to locate and to review the records of government action and to analyze other sources of information including contemporary writings, personal accounts and historical analyses. . . .

Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it—exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion—were not founded upon military conditions. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership. Widespread ignorance about Americans of Japanese descent contributed to a policy conceived in haste and executed in an atmosphere of fear and anger at Japan. A grave personal injustice was done to the American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II.

**Source:** *Personal Justice Denied: The Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, February 24, 1983.