The CSU Japanese American Digitization Project

What is CSUJAD?
A web portal to connect researchers with the CSU’s rich archival collections.

During the last half-century the archives, libraries, oral history projects and history departments at several California State Universities (CSU) have collected archival materials, objects and media relating to the era when 120,000 law-abiding Americans of Japanese descent were forcibly uprooted from their homes and imprisoned in incarceration camps during World War II.

The CSU Japanese American Digitization Project is the first statewide collaborative initiative among CSU archives.

Participants
The Archives at 15 different California State Universities are participants in the project. These include:
Other partners include the Claremont Colleges, UC Santa Barbara, California Digital Library and Densho.

Funding
CSU Dominguez Hills, home of the CSU System Archives, received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Planning grant in 2014 to start the project.
This led to a 2015 National Parks Service (NPS) grant to digitize 10,000 archival items. In 2016, the project received an NEH Implementation Grant to digitize another 5,000 objects.

www.csujad.com
Designed by Maria Hernandez - 2017
Between 1885 and 1924, 380,000 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii and the mainland United States. Despite success at creating communities, institutions, farms and businesses, the Japanese in the U.S. only faced racism and anti-Japanese sentiment. Laws throughout this period prevented this first generation of immigrants from becoming citizens, owning land, attending public schools, and marrying whites.

This “yellow peril,” though not unlike discrimination against other immigrants groups, was especially virulent on the West Coast and in California. Despite these impediments, Japanese Americans became part of the fabric of the Western U.S. in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite speaking English and being American citizens, second generation Japanese Americans (Nisei), faced discrimination in employment and housing as well as other community activities.

Source: Densho Encyclopedia
The shock and fear brought on by the Japanese Government’s attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 led the U.S. into World War II accompanied by years of fear and outrage among the U.S. population. This fear merged with anti-Asian xenophobia resulted in President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066.

The order designated coastal areas as military zones, from which groups could be excluded, and led to the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.
EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066
AUTHORIZED THE REMOVAL
OF ANY AND ALL
PERSONS FROM MILITARY AREAS
ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST.

“Any and all persons” were specified as all Japanese Americans on the West Coast in a later “Civilian Exclusion Order.” This facilitated the removal of Japanese Americans to 16 temporary assembly centers. The Centers consisted of fairgrounds, racetracks and other public facilities in California, Oregon, Washington State, and Arizona. The Assembly Centers were temporary holding facilities until more permanent camps could be constructed away from the coast. The Centers were administered by the U.S. Army’s Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA).

The Japanese Americans were forced into the Assembly Centers behind fences and guarded by police in watchtowers. They were confined to horse stalls and other unsanitary areas that immediately resulted in a striking loss of privacy and freedom. Though newspapers were published and recreational events took place, the Centers were temporary and that state of flux resulted in additional stress for those uprooted citizens.
American Incarceration Camps

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) was established in 1942 to administer the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in permanent camps outside the West Coast exclusion zones.

Ten WRA camps were built in Gila River and Poston, Arizona; Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas; Manzanar and Tule Lake, California; Granada, Colorado; Minidoka, Idaho; Topaz, Utah; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

Placed in deserts and out-of-the-way locations, the camps consisted of barracks, mess halls, communal latrines, hospitals, post offices, schools, factories and farms. All had barbed wire or fences with guard towers.

In addition to the WRA camp facilities, there were several other locations where Japanese Americans were imprisoned during World War II, including:

- WCCA Temporary Assembly Centers
- WRA Citizen Isolation Centers
- Department of Justice Internment Camps
- U.S. Army Internment Camps
- Other facilities.

WCCA Incarceration Camps, WRA Incarceration Camps, WRA Citizen Isolation Centers, Department of Justice Internment Camps, U.S. Army Internment Camps, or other facilities.

Included among these camps was the Crystal City, Texas operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Though the WRA attempted to camouflage the effects of the camps on its inhabitants through various PR campaigns, the stark environment of the camps were always apparent.

Those incarcerated attempted to keep to a routine of work and occasional recreation. The camps began to close in early 1945 although Tule Lake was open until 1946.
Japanese Americans soldiers distinguished themselves in several theaters of war during World War II. While Americans of Japanese descent were being declared enemy aliens, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was organized on March 23, 1943. The Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) was first established in San Francisco and later at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling, Minnesota. It was created to supply the military with Japanese American translators. The MISLS was critical in producing skilled linguists who were essential to the World War II effort and later the occupation of Japan.

Source: Densho Encyclopedia

“You fought the enemy abroad and prejudice at home and you won,” President Harry Truman addressing Japanese American troops, July 15, 1946.
American Incarceration Camps: Loyalty?

A “loyalty questionnaire” was given to all Japanese Americans age 17 and over in the camps. Question 27 inquired if an individual would be willing to serve as a combat soldier, nurse, or in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. Question 28 stated: “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States... and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?”

These questions resulted in a great deal of outrage, confusion, and controversy. Japanese American citizens (Nisei) resented being asked to renounce loyalty to someone who had never been their Emperor.

First generation Japanese Americans (Issei) could not gain U.S. citizenship, thus renouncing their Japanese citizenship would leave them stateless.

Those who answered “no” to one or both of the questions were designated as “disloyal” to the U.S.

These individuals and their families were sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center on the California-Oregon border. Many immigrants and citizens determined that it was possibly safer to be “repatriated” to Japan rather than stay in the United States.

The concept of giving up United States citizenship, though shocking to some, was a choice of serious consideration and implications.

Many feared for their safety after being released from the camps and so determined Japan after World War II would be safer than the U.S. Others were outraged with their imprisonment. Ultimately, many were repatriated, while many others who signed up to go to Japan decided to stay in the U.S.

This project was funded, in part, by a grant by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program. The project was also funded, in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Background watercolor by H. Takada, Granada Camp, 1944-45, CSUDH.
Resettlement

The government diaspora of Japanese Americans led to renewed stress after the Supreme Court ruled in December 1944 that “loyal” citizens could leave the camps and resettle.

While many returned to California, large groups of former prisoners settled in Chicago, New York, Minneapolis and elsewhere.

Ultimately, and despite attempts by the WRA to “resettle,” the Japanese Americans faced racist violence, housing shortages and financial hardship.

As World War II ended, the Japanese Americans found themselves among the millions of people around the world migrating to a new home, but this U.S. imposed migration had been generated by an executive order and domestic fear.
The Redress Movement refers to efforts to obtain restitution of civil rights, an apology, and/or monetary compensation from the U.S. government during the decades that followed the World War II mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. Beyond the fight for recognition and redress from the U.S. government, Japanese Americans have also fought on a personal level and collectively to ensure that this dark period in American History is remembered and that future generations will have the opportunity to learn about this incarceration of American citizens. Redress resulted in each living former prisoner receiving $20,000.
Immigration Issues After 1945

Over 120,000 Japanese American citizens and immigrants were imprisoned during 1942-1945.

Portions of majority populations in the U.S. have always feared rather than embraced differences. Politicians listen to that fear.

- Housed in detention centers in Texas during 2014-2016, immigrant families and children have been imprisoned in ICE facilities (often managed by private contractors) while awaiting deportation.
- In all 762 detainees were swept up nation-wide, including 491 in the New York area (after 9/11). The arrests came after the FBI was flooded with tips to a hotline, including 96,000 in the week after 11 September 2001. [The Guardian, June 21, 2015].
- Japanese American community organizations are often quite vocal when it comes to the government infringing on the rights of immigrants.

- In 2016 the Presidential campaign of Donald Trump brought many of these issues to the forefront of public opinion.
- Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump told TIME that he does not know whether he would have supported or opposed the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
  "I would have had to be there at the time to tell you, to give you a proper answer," he said during a recent interview in his office in New York City."
  "I certainly hate the concept of it. But I would have had to be there at the time to give you a proper answer."
  [Time.com, December 8, 2015].

Toske Hoshimiya to J. Ralph McFarling, Nov 1, 1945. CSUDH.

South Texas Family Residential Center Web Page
https://www.ice.gov/detention-facility/south-texas-family-residential-center

Article from Aljazeera America

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