

Timeline of Events for Japanese Internment Camps

December 7, 1941

Attack on Pearl Harbor where 3,500 U.S. servicemen were killed or wounded.

December 8, 1941

U.S. declares war on Japan and the arrests of Japanese American community leaders begins. Three days later war is also declared on Germany and Italy.

January 19, 1942

Japanese American draft status changed from 1-A (available for unrestricted military service) to 4-C (“enemy alien” or dual national).

February 19, 1942

President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 authorizing military authorities to exclude civilians from any area without trial or hearing.

August 7, 1942

After General DeWitt designates Western coastal areas as places where people of Japanese descent should be removed, the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) opens 15 Assembly Centers to detain them. The War Relocation Authority (WRA) is established through Executive Order 9102 and the transfers of 119,803 men, women, and children to these more permanent facilities are completed.

October 1, 1942

WRA Leave Clearance Procedures enabled circa 17,000 Nisei (majority 18-30 years-old) to re-enter civilian life after loyalty check, prospects for self-support, and the reception of the community were reviewed (about 7% of total Japanese American incarcerated). Many went to Chicago, Denver, or Salt Lake City.

1943

The War Department begins to reclassify Japanese Americans from 4C “enemy alien” to 1A to permit Nisei to serve in the military forces and decides to create segregated Japanese American army units—the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regiment Combat Team. There were calls for volunteers and about 10,000 volunteers (2,686 chosen) from Hawaii (where there were no incarceration camps) and 1,256 volunteers (about 800 chosen) from mainland WRA camps.

February 10, 1943

The War Department developed a questionnaire to identify possible military volunteers and the War Relocation Authority decided to use it to identify incarcerated who might be released from the camps. Called the “Application for Leave Clearance,” it was distributed to all WRA camps to determine the loyalty of all persons of Japanese descent over 17 years of age, male and female. Two clumsily worded questions caused confusion/consternation. Refusal to fill out the questionnaire, qualified answers, or “no” answers were treated as evidence of disloyalty.

July 1943

Loyalty questionnaire leads to about 12,000 “disloyals” being transferred to the newly transformed Tule Lake Segregation Center. About 6,500 people in the Tule Lake Camp were to sent to other WRA camps to make room and about 6,000 pre-segregation people decided to stay in Tule Lake.

November 1943 to January 1944

Martial Law in place at Tule Lake Segregation Center due to camp disturbances.

January 20, 1944

The War Department announced that normal Selective Service procedures would be applied to Japanese Americans inside and outside the WRA camps and draft procedures begin.

May 10, 1944

63 Japanese American draft resisters at Heart Mountain, Wyoming (the only organized resistance to the draft) are indicted (later pardoned by President Truman in 1947). There were a total of 315 draft resisters in all the WRA camps.

December 1944-January 1945

War Department announces that the exclusion order is rescinded. WRA announces all camps to close before the end of 1945. In *ex parte Endo* the Supreme Court rules that WRA has no authority to detain “concededly loyal” American citizens.

May 7, 1945

Germany surrenders, ending war in Europe.

August 1945

U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrenders.

November 13, 1945

Wayne Mortimer Collins, Civil Liberties Attorney, prevents the Department of Justice from deporting en masse the people of Japanese descent who renounced their U.S. citizenship (7,222 Nisei and Kibei at Tule Lake renounced, whereas only 128 from all the other WRA camps renounced). The effort to restore citizenship took 22 years (all restored, except about 40-50 people).

March 20, 1946

Tule Lake “Segregation Center” closes, the last WRA camp to do so.