

What's Happening

IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 18, NO 7 MARCH 2017

AMERICANS REMEMBER EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

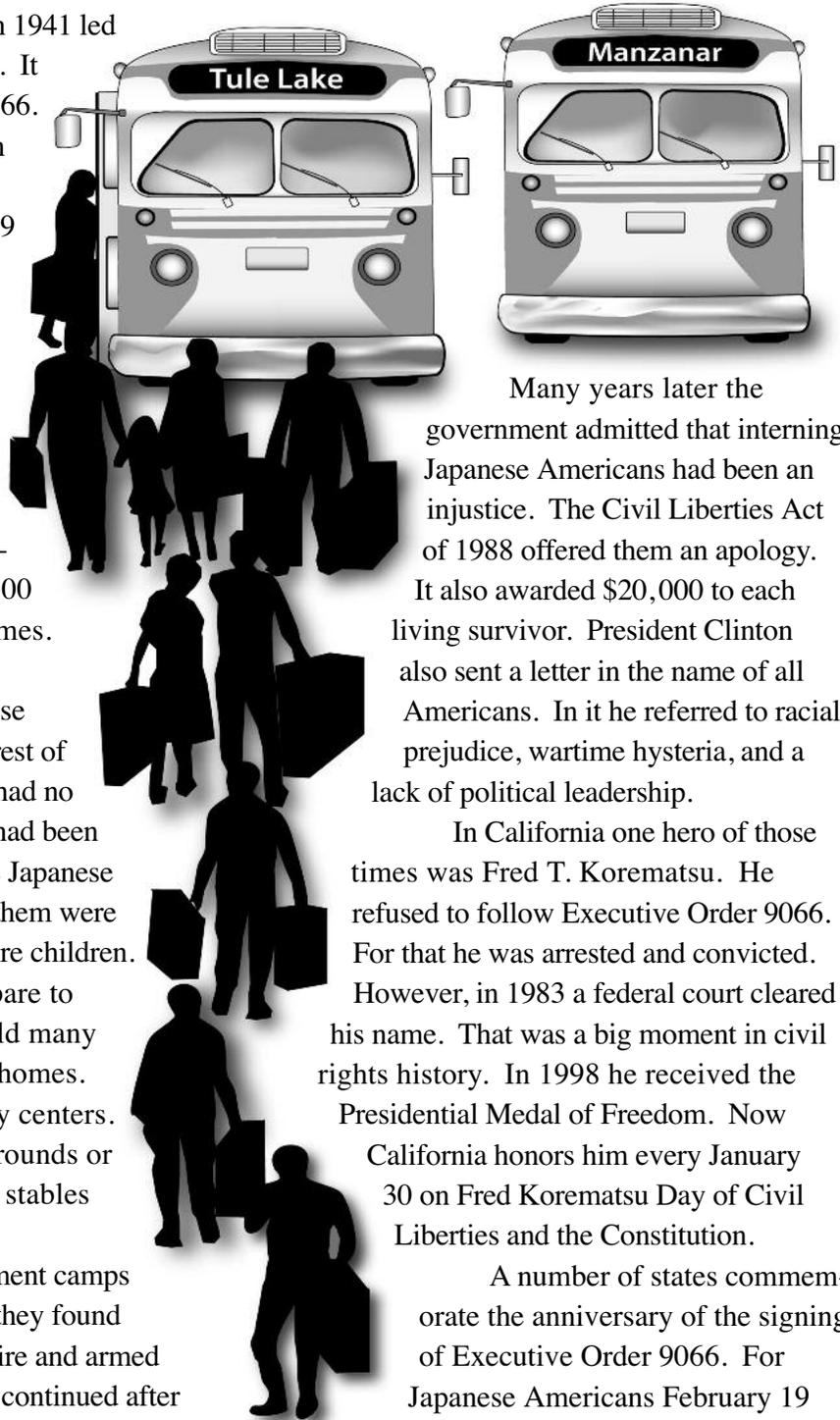
Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 led the U.S. to enter World War II. It also led to Executive Order 9066. That order by President Roosevelt in 1942 forced Japanese Americans to go to internment camps. February 19 marks the 75th anniversary of that terrible mistake.

The executive order allowed the government to consider the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington as military zones. Then the military could remove people whom it considered dangerous. As a result, it removed 120,000 Japanese Americans from their homes. Most of them lived in California.

The U.S. government sent those people to internment camps for the rest of the war. However, the government had no proof that any Japanese Americans had been spies. They had no allegiance to the Japanese government. Almost 70 percent of them were American citizens. Half of them were children.

People had little time to prepare to leave. They gave up their jobs, sold many of their possessions, and left their homes. First they had to report to assembly centers. They were at large areas like fairgrounds or racetracks, where people stayed in stables and livestock areas.

After that they went to internment camps until the war ended in 1945. There they found themselves surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. Unfortunately the suffering continued after the war. Many returned to their communities only to find that they had lost everything. Japanese Americans also still faced prejudice as they rebuilt their lives.



Many years later the government admitted that interning Japanese Americans had been an injustice. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 offered them an apology. It also awarded \$20,000 to each living survivor. President Clinton also sent a letter in the name of all Americans. In it he referred to racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a lack of political leadership.

In California one hero of those times was Fred T. Korematsu. He refused to follow Executive Order 9066. For that he was arrested and convicted. However, in 1983 a federal court cleared his name. That was a big moment in civil rights history. In 1998 he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Now California honors him every January 30 on Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution.

A number of states commemorate the anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066. For Japanese Americans February 19 is called the Day of Remembrance.

It recalls a shameful episode in America's past. It also reminds all Americans to oppose any racial profiling by the government ever again.

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BIOGRAPHY

KAREN KOREMATSU

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FRED T. KOREMATSU INSTITUTE

When Karen Korematsu was a girl, she had no idea how famous her father was. His story is directly related to Executive Order 9066. Now she spends her time talking and teaching about him. She is the founder and executive director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute in San Francisco.

When Japanese Americans had to go to internment camps in 1942, Fred Korematsu was 23 years old. He refused to go, and he was arrested a few weeks later. A few months later a court convicted him for his refusal. He appealed that decision all the way to the Supreme Court. The family never had talked about it though. When Karen was in high school, a classmate reported on the internment camps. When she also mentioned the Supreme Court case, that was the first time that Karen had ever heard about her father's heroic fight.

Karen was always artistic. That led her to study Fine Arts in college. Throughout college she worked at a hotel. When it came time to remodel the hotel, she offered some good ideas. Then she opened her own business in commercial design. For her business she traveled about nine months per year. However, her focus changed when a court voided her father's conviction in 1983.

Soon many people around the U.S. invited Fred Korematsu to speak to them. Since he was

getting older, Ms. Korematsu accompanied him.

That required a lot of time. A few years later

she gave up her design business. Instead she helped her father teach people about injustice and Executive Order 9066.

Ms. Korematsu founded the Institute in 2009, a few years after her father had died. The Institute's goal is an educational one. It teaches about the racial profiling of Japanese Americans during World War II. It also addresses the civil rights abuses of other people today.

The Institute began as a community youth program. It

grew larger after California named a day in Fred Korematsu's honor. Ms. Korematsu saw then that their work had just begun. Immediately she and others developed lessons for schools to use.

Now Karen Korematsu travels around the country to speak. Sometimes she is the main speaker at a national conference. Other times she talks to students from elementary schools to universities. She also does interviews with journalists, and on radio and television.

The anniversary of Executive Order 9066 is an especially busy time for her. She will attend events in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Although the anniversary recalls a sad episode in American history, she is proud. Her father was one who took a stand for racial equality, justice and human rights.



"It makes me sad to see that people are being racially profiled today, just like in 1942."

Background Information

The National Museum of American History will open a special exhibition on the Day of Remembrance in February 2017. Its photos, documents and artifacts from camps will show how Executive Order 9066 shaped the lives of Japanese Americans during World War II.

The official name for the internment camps was “relocation centers.”

Locations of the 10 internment camps:

Arizona—Poston and Gila River

Arkansas—Rohwer and Jerome

California—Manzanar and Tule Lake

Colorado—Granada

Idaho—Minidoka

Utah—Topaz

Wyoming—Heart Mountain

The smallest camp held just over 7,000 people. The largest, at Tule Lake, held almost 19,000.

The zone from which Japanese Americans were expelled extended 50–60 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Part of it also extended into southern Arizona.

The executive order affected anyone with 1/16th or more Japanese blood. In all, over 17,000 children under 10 years old, 2,000 persons over 65 years old, and 1,000 handicapped or infirm persons were evacuated.

Under Executive Order 9066 the government detained 11,000 people of German ancestry and 3,000 people of Italian ancestry, and interned some of them.

In 2009–10 the University of California gave honorary degrees to Japanese American students who had been interned and had not continued their studies.

Individuals born in Japan were not allowed to become naturalized American citizens until 1952.

President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

Hawaii, Virginia, and Florida have established Fred Korematsu Day permanently. On January 30, 2017 a Google Doodle recognized Fred Korematsu. It is possible that a U.S. postage stamp will honor him in 2019 on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

The Japanese American National Museum is located in Los Angeles.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- Describe what racial profiling is and why it is wrong.

Comprehension:

- Explain why Americans now know that Executive Order 9066 was a mistake.

Beyond the Text:

- How do you think Japanese American survivors of the camps felt when the government sent them \$20,000 more than 40 years later?
- Who are the people in America these days who are sometimes victims of racial profiling?
- What does it mean to be loyal to one’s country?

Vocabulary

Article-specific: executive; internment; allegiance; stable; livestock; barbed wire; hysteria; convicted; to commemorate; racial profiling

High-use: to consider; possessions; assembly; prejudice; injustice; to award; survivor; to refer to; federal; episode

Sources

National Public Radio “Talk of the Nation”
January 3, 2012

California Museum www.californiamuseum.org

Fred T. Korematsu Institute
www.korematsuinstitute.org

National Park Service
www.nps.gov/articles/historyinternment

Public Broadcasting System
www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history

Common Core Curricular Standards

Reading — Grades 5–12

- Quote accurately from text
- Cite textual evidence
- Draw inferences
- Determine central ideas
- Analyze structure of text
- Interpret words and phrases