The Japanese Internment: Civil Liberties Denied

Nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans were forced to abandon their property and homes and sent to internment camps during World War II. More than half were U.S. citizens. The last left the camps in 1946.

By 1943, Tule Lake became the sole camp for so-called "disloyal" Japanese Americans and their families. It soon became the largest camp, holding more than 18,000 people.

In 1942, some Nisei (Japanese Americans born in the U.S.) college students were allowed to leave the camps so they could finish their studies at such schools as the University of Idaho and the University of Nebraska.

In 1942, Fred Korematsu defied the order to evacuate to a camp. Korematsu was arrested but sued the U.S. government. In 1944, the Supreme Court ruled that the internment order was constitutional. In 1983, Korematsu's conviction was overturned. Government officials had lied or withheld evidence in the earlier case.

Camp Shelby: The U.S. Army 442nd Infantry Regiment trained here before fighting in Europe. The regiment was composed almost entirely of Japanese Americans. It was the most decorated Army unit for its size in U.S. history. The soldiers received over 9,000 Purple Hearts, 21 Medals of Honor (one during World War II and 20 from President Clinton), and over 5,000 other bravery citations.

Fort Snelling and Camp Savage: About 6,000 internees were sent to learn/improve the Japanese language at the Military Intelligence Service Language School. These specially trained soldiers served in Asia interpreting enemy papers and messages.

Washington, D.C.: On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. This order authorized the military to prescribe certain areas "from which any or all persons may be excluded." The order cleared the way for the deportation of Japanese Americans to internment camps.