



Shortly after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Japanese Americans were subjected to extreme prejudice and racism. Despite having no evidence to suggest these citizens were disloyal to the United States, President Roosevelt ordered the military to round up all 120,000 Japanese Americans living along the West Coast and imprison them in heavily guarded internment camps. Many young men in these camps wanted to prove their loyalty to the United States and volunteered to join the armed forces. They were denied on account of race. However, by 1943, as the need for soldiers grew, the Army had a change of heart. The all Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed and deployed for combat in Europe. The 442nd became the most decorated unit in American history, winning thousands of awards for bravery. Of the 14,000 men who served, 9,486 were wounded and received the Purple Heart.



Japanese American family waiting for transportation to internment camp.

Manzanar Relocation Center, California, 1943.



Do you believe the decision to force families into internment camps was racist? Why?

Why did so many Japanese Americans volunteer to fight in World War II?



© Michael Goldfein

Daniel Inouye was among twenty-one members of the 442nd who earned the Medal of Honor, America's highest award for bravery. Inouye, who lost his right arm in combat, served nine terms as a U.S. Senator from Hawaii.



442nd infantryman on patrol in France, 1944