

WWII Debates - A Timeline

Japanese-American Internment

Historical Context: In 1941, about 127,000 Japanese-Americans lived in the U.S., 2/3 of whom were U.S. born citizens. The majority lived in CA and the 3 Pacific states. Anti-Japanese sentiment existed on the West Coast prior to the war. Japanese-Americans competed with white Americans for jobs, homes, etc. and were regarded as a potential threat and believed to possibly be serving as spies for Japan.

Chronology for Japanese-American Internment

December 7, 1941	Japan attacks navy base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. WWII & the attack on Pearl Harbor simply provided an outlet for racism. Rumors of sabotage spread quickly. The press fueled the flames of speculation with provocative article titles and editorials.
December 1941- January 1942	Registration and questioning of Japanese-born U.S. aliens & U.S. citizens of Japanese descent. Political & military pressure picked up to respond to the perceived threat of Japanese-Americans.
February 19, 1942	FDR issued <u>Executive Order 9066</u> giving West Coast officials the right to do whatever they deem necessary for security. They were given no compensation for property lost or left behind, very little time to sell homes/businesses, often not told where they were being sent, uprooted from their communities.
March 1942	The <u>War Relocation Authority</u> was created to manage relocation centers and resettlement. The WRA built camps located in barren areas of the Pacific Northeast and Midwest. They provided barracks-style living, which were shoddily constructed. Camps were surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. Communal bathing, one blanket.
Spring - Summer 1942	Relocation of men, women, and children of all ages and physical conditions are sent to 13 concentration camps or "relocation centers"
January 1943	The U.S. govt announced plans to recruit for a Japanese-Americans Combat Team. They became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service. Over the course of the war, more than 17,000 Japanese-Americans served in the armed forces. About 1200 enlisted from the relocation camps, many also came from Hawaii where no camps were established.
October 1944	The Supreme Court upholds the legality of Executive Order 9066 and the relocation of the Japanese-Americans in the case <u>Korematsu vs. United States</u> . The Court asserted that the policy was a necessity in war-time while a dissenting opinion called it clearly racist.
December 1944	President Roosevelt withdrew Exec. Order 9066, meaning that Japanese Americans could leave the camps and return to their homes—or anywhere else they wished to go.
August 1945	Japan surrenders
1980	A Congressional Commission re-investigates the internment and deemed Executive Order 9066 to be unjustified. Japanese-Americans are given formal govt. recognition and an apology.

August 1988

Reparations made in the amount of \$20,000 to survivor or family of a survivor of internment and a formal apology (in the form of a form letter, which was not personally addressed) was issued by President Reagan.



The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb

Atomic Bomb Chronology

- August 2, 1939 Albert Einstein letter to FDR suggesting that an incredibly powerful new type of bomb could be built by the Germans. This led to the development of the top secret Manhattan Project in August 1942 (it was unofficially begun in 1939.)
- September 1, 1939 WWII begins when England & France declare war on Germany, a decision prompted by the German invasion of Poland.
- October 9, 1941 FDR gives approval for the development of an atomic weapon.
- April 1945 U.S. troops seized control of Germany's atomic research site, discovering that German scientists had not yet succeeded in developing the bomb.
- April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt dies and Vice President Truman is sworn in as president. He is quickly told of the atomic bomb project.
- April 27, 1945 The Target Committee of the Manhattan Project selects four Japanese cities as possible targets for the atomic bomb. They are: Kyoto, Hiroshima, Kokura, and Niigata.
- May 1945 An advisory group of scientists, military leaders, and government officials, called the Interim Committee, was established to debate the decision and make a recommendation.
- May 8, 1945 Germany surrenders and the war ends in Europe.
- July 16, 1945 The first atomic test bomb, code-named "Trinity," was successfully detonated in a desert in New Mexico. After twelve years of research and more than \$2 billion in expenditures, President Truman set about the task of deciding if and how the atomic bomb would be used.
- July 26, 1945 Potsdam Declaration is issued by the Allies demanding the unconditional surrender of Japan. It was presented as an ultimatum and stated that without a surrender, the Allies would attack Japan, resulting in "the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland". The atomic bomb is not explicitly mentioned. Two days later, the Japanese govt. rejects the demand.
- August 6, 1945 The Enola Gay dropped "Little Boy" on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Hiroshima was described as "an important army depot and port of embarkation in the middle of an urban industrial area. It is a

good radar target and it is such a size that a large part of the city could be extensively damaged.” An estimated 80,000 people (more than 30% of the population of Hiroshima) died and at least as many were injured by fire, radiation sickness, or the force of the explosion. At least 90% of the city’s buildings were damaged or destroyed.

August 7, 1945

U.S. decides to drop warning pamphlets on Japanese cities.

August 9, 1945

“Fat Man” was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, one of the largest seaports in Japan and a center of much of their industrial activity. It is estimated that somewhere between 40,000-75,000 people were immediately killed and by the end of 1945, the death toll had reached 80,000.

August 10, 1945

U.S. drops more warning pamphlets on Nagasaki.

August 14, 1945

The Japanese govt. officially surrendered.

September 2, 1945

A formal agreement was signed aboard the USS Missouri detailing the Japanese govt.’s unconditional surrender.

