

A photographer's photos show WWII life of Japanese in America

By Newsela staff on 01.02.20

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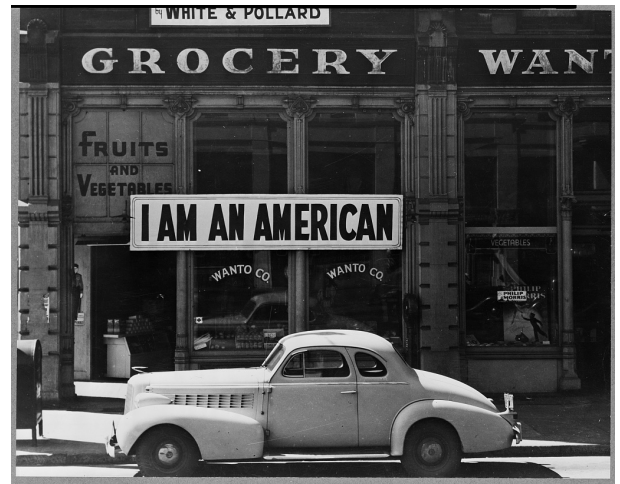
On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, a large American naval base in Hawaii. The U.S. government did not think Japanese American people on the West Coast were loyal to the country. The government made them leave their homes and move to "internment camps," or War Relocation Centers. These camps were mostly in the desert and were filled with simple wooden homes called "barracks."

The government sent a photographer named Dorothea Lange to take pictures of the Japanese Americans leaving their homes and of their new lives at the camps. She was well known for the pictures she took during the Great Depression. The government did not use her photos. Instead, her work was quietly given to the U.S. National Archives.

A sign saying "I am an American" hangs above the window of a store in March 1942. The sign was put up on December 8, 1941, a day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The business is owned by the Matsuda family, who will have to leave their business behind for the internment camp.

Children pledging allegiance to the American flag at the Raphael Weill Public School in San Francisco, California, on April 20, 1942.

A woman looks around while on line with others of Japanese ancestry on April 25, 1942. They are



registering themselves with the government before leaving for the internment camps.

A soldier and his mother in a



strawberry field in May 1942 in Sacramento County, California. The soldier was 23 years old and had volunteered to join the Army, but came home to help his family get ready to leave their home.

The first day at an assembly center in Stockton, California, May 19, 1942. Luggage and other bags needed to be checked for anything considered illegal by the U.S. government.

A picture of a barracks in San Bruno, California, June 16, 1942. This is a family apartment and the windows were made bigger. Five people lived in two small rooms.

Harvey Akio Itano, pictured on May 20, 1942. He was 21 years old and had graduated from college where he studied chemistry. He wanted to go into medicine and had brought his school books with him to the camp.



An elementary school class at Manzanar Relocation Center in Manzanar, California, July 1, 1942. The teachers were also Japanese Americans who had had to leave their homes behind. They were volunteers and some had just graduated college. They did not have supplies or desks for their

classes
yet, so
they



sometimes held class outside.

A barracks in San Bruno, California, that was being used as a library. The librarian was Japanese American. All books and magazines were donated. The shelves were made out of scrap wood by the internees. This photo was taken on June 16, 1942.



Japanese Americans clear bushes to make the Manzanar Relocation Center bigger. The photo was taken on June 30, 1942.

Baseball players during a game at Manzanar Relocation Center. The sport was popular in the camps. This photo was taken on July 2, 1942.

A



grandfather teaching his grandson how to walk at the Manzanar internment camp on July 2, 1942.

Quiz