

THE MASS EVACUATION OF PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

The events of December 7, 1941 stunned and outraged the Japanese - American communities. As the war hysteria grew, angry voices cried for the ouster of all "Japs" from their West Coast homes. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which authorized the Secretary of War to designate certain military areas and exclude any and all persons of Japanese ancestry (alien and non-alien alike) from them. The military, politicians (such as Los Angeles Mayor Bowron, California Attorney General Earl Warren) and columnists such as Walter Lippmann all urged the evacuation, citing as proof of the "great danger" the fact that not a single case of sabotage or espionage had yet been uncovered. This was presumably due to the Japanese in America who were so tightly organized and disciplined that they were merely awaiting the proper time to unleash their treachery!

Consequently, 110,000 aliens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry were sent to "assembly centers" which were no more than hastily constructed barracks on race tracks such as Santa Anita, California, or state fairgrounds. In the autumn of 1942, they were sent inland to concentration camps where many would live surrounded by barbed wire and watch towers until the end of World War II.

The economic loss of business, homes and possessions, has been conservatively estimated to be over 400 million dollars. The US government has made only partial settlement on these

property losses (generally \$0.10 for every dollar loss). Presently, there is a movement to urge passage of national legislation providing reparations or compensation to Japanese Americans for the incarceration during World War II.

In 1976, over 30 years later, President Gerald Ford signed a Presidential Proclamation finally lifting Executive Order 9066. Never in the history of this country has a majority of its citizens acting out of fear of the "yellow peril" determined that democratic principles need not apply to select group of minority members within its society.