ONE CAMP • 10,000 STORIES

In spring 1942, the US Army turned the abandoned townsite of Manzanar, California, into a camp that would confine over 10,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants. Margaret Ikuno斯坦ii later said, “I was put into a camp as an American citizen, which is against the Constitution because I had no due process...it was only because of my ancestry.”

For decades before World War II, politicians, newspapers, and labor leaders fueled anti-Asian sentiment in the western United States. Laws prevented immigrants from becoming citizens or owning land. Immigrants’ children were born US citizens, yet they too faced prejudice. Japan’s government deprived over 120,000 people of their freedom. Half were children and young adults. Ten thousand were incarcerated at Manzanar from this one camp came 10,000 stories.

CONFLICT
Why didn’t the government give us the chance to prove our loyalty instead of herding us into camps?

Joseph Kurihara
People's diverse reactions to incarceration and conditions in Manzanar often led to conflict, erupting on December 6, 1942. A large crowd gathered to protest the jailing of Harry Ueno. The confrontation escalated and military police fired into the crowd, killing two men and injuring nine others. Soon the confrontation turned into a mass meeting with government officials. The Miyatake’s eldest son Archie met and fell in love with Takuko Maeda. They later married and spent over 70 years together.

REMEMBRANCE
It was shocking to your soul, to your spirit, and it took many years for people to talk about it.

Jeannie Wakatsuki Houston
The Manzanar camp closed on November 31, 1945, three months after the war ended. Despite having regained their freedom, some people found life equally difficult after the war. Most spent decades rebuilding their lives, but few spoke openly about their wartime experiences. Buddhist and Christian ministers returned to the cemetery each year to remember the dead. In 1969, a group of activists came on their own pilgrimage of healing and remembrance. With the formation of the Manzanar Committee, this pilgrimage grew into an annual event attended by over one thousand. Efforts to remember and preserve the camp led to the creation of Manzanar National Historic Site in 1992.

APOLOGY
America is strong as it makes amends for the wrongs it has committed...we will always remember Manzanar because of that.

Sue Kunitomi Embrey
In the 1980s, a congressionally authorized commission concluded “race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership” led to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. It recommended a presidential apology and individual payments of $20,000. After receiving her apology letter from President George H. W. Bush, Mimi Sumi Shirahashi: “First as though the shame of all these years had been lifted and I was able to talk about the experience with much more ease. This letter of apology has meant a great deal to me, more than anyone can imagine.”

The US government issued over 22,000 apology letters and made payments to Japanese Americans in order of age, oldest to youngest, between 1990 and 1992.