

From the Director: Tom Ikeda

It is easy to become frustrated by how slowly our government is going about preserving the World War II Japanese American confinement sites. In 2006, after years of discussion, Congress passed and President Bush signed Public Law 109-441, authorizing \$38 million for a grant program to preserve and interpret the sites of the detention camps. In 2007, the National Park Service conducted twenty public listening sessions across the country and drafted criteria and guidelines for this grant program. It is now 2008 and although there are many compelling projects to fund, the President's proposed 2009 budget still does not contain any money to fund the grant program. In the meantime, thousands of Japanese Americans who can tell us what it was like to be incarcerated at these sites are dying. They will not see the fruits of this legislation, and we will lose their testimonies. Unless Congress is convinced to appropriate funds for this program now, 2010 will be the earliest that any grants will be available.

While urging Congress to appropriate money for the preservation grants, Densho is proceeding in 2008 with capturing the memories of Japanese Americans who were held in the camps. Their stories will help provide the human context for the confinement sites. This year we will travel to at least ten U.S. cities to conduct interviews that will meet the goals of the federal legislation: to preserve and interpret the legacy of the camps "in order that present and future generations may learn and gain inspiration from these sites" and to "demonstrate the Nation's commitment to equal justice under the law."



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Executive Order 9066: Choosing War over Justice

"It is a fact that since the outbreak of the Japanese war there has been no important sabotage on the Pacific Coast... This is not... a sign that there is nothing to be feared. It is a sign that the blow is... held back until it can be struck with maximum effect."

-- Walter Lippmann

February marks a painful and fateful anniversary in Japanese American history. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt ended a heated debate between the War Department and Justice Department when he signed Executive Order 9066, the implement that opened the way for the Army to force every person of Japanese descent on the West Coast away from their homes and businesses and into indefinite detention. The Army claimed military necessity. The true motivations were more complex.

>> [Read more of this article](#)

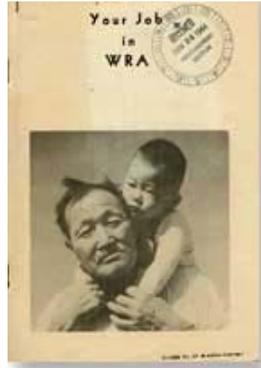
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New to the Densho Digital Archive

Densho is constantly adding video interviews, photographs, and historical documents to the online Digital Archive, offered free of charge to students, teachers, and the general public for educational purposes. This indexed and transcribed collection of primary sources -- from propaganda photos to family letters, from government proclamations to intimate recollections -- provides depth and detail to a poorly understood chapter in American history. We recently added the Merrill Collection from a former administrator for the War Relocation Authority (WRA), the agency in charge of what the government called "frontier communities" that detained Japanese Americans. This document collection includes letters and contracts, booklets preparing civilian employees for life in the "relocation centers" (*Your Job in WRA*), and a Nisei man's tribute to the struggles of the Issei (*These Are Our Parents*). We invite you to explore the rich heritage resources in the Digital Archive.

>> [To register for the free Densho Digital Archive](#)



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Community Events

Day of Remembrance Ceremonies

February 19 is observed as a Day of Remembrance, marking the date in 1942 when President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. Citing military necessity, Roosevelt authorized the Army to exclude anyone it chose from any area it declared off limits. EO 9066 led the way to the unparalleled removal and detention of 120,000 Japanese Americans without due process of law. Among other groups around the country, the Pinedale Assembly Center Memorial Project in Fresno, California, is holding a Day of Remembrance event as a reminder that such a grievous injustice should never be repeated. Norman Mineta and other dignitaries will be honored at a dinner on February 17.

>> [For more information on the Pinedale Assembly Center Memorial Project dinner](#)

>> [For information on other Day of Remembrance observations](#)

>> [For the events calendar at Discover Nikkei](#)



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Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project - 1416 S. Jackson Street - Seattle, WA 98144

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