The Internment of Japanese Americans During the War

How were Americans of Japanese descent treated after U.S. entry into World War II, and why?
Prejudice, coupled with wartime fears, can affect civil liberties of minorities.

Internment refers to the relocation of Japanese Americans to "concentration camps" in desert.

Courtesy of California State Library
Reasons for Internment

- Strong anti-Japanese prejudice on the West Coast
- False belief that Japanese Americans were aiding the enemy
- Anti-Japanese propaganda

Photo: National Archives
Internment of Japanese Americans

Japanese Americans were re-located to internment camps.

The were forced to sell their property and move into these guarded areas.

Following evacuation orders, this store was closed. The owner, a University of California graduate of Japanese descent, placed the "I AM AN AMERICAN" sign on the store front the after Pearl Harbor.

Photo: National Archives
Internment of Japanese Americans

- Internment affected Japanese American populations along the West Coast.
- While in the camps, liberties were severely limited.
- Camps were little more than prisons.

A close-up of an entrance of a family apartment (converted horse stall). Five people occupy two small rooms, the inner one of which is without outside door or windows.

Photo: National Archives
Internment of Japanese Americans

The Supreme Court upheld the government’s right to act against Japanese Americans living on the West Coast of the United States.

This assembly center has been open for two days. Only one mess hall was operating today. Photograph shows line-up of newly arrived evacuees outside of this mess hall at noon.

Photo: National Archives
Internment of Japanese Americans

A public apology was eventually issued by the U.S. government. Financial payment was made to survivors.

There were NO actual plans of espionage discovered during the entire war!!!

It was President George Bush who formally apologized to the evacuees in the 1990’s. Survivors also received $50,000 for compensation.