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First Year Seminoar 09, Ethnic Studies 125, Professor Jodie Roure

## Background History

- In 1942 President Roosevelt ordered the relocation of Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. The relocation of Japanese Americans lasted until the war was over.
- After the release of Japanese Americans from the internment camps, many had nothing to turn to; many of their possessions and property were confiscated.
- Businesspeople sold their establishments and farmers sold their land (Leonard, 1990).

## Anti-Japanese Violence

- Even before the war there were high levels of anti-Japanese sentiment in California.
- When Japanese Americans returned to their homes many were greeted with hostility especially from white people.
- There were more than 40 “repeated incidents” in the first six months of 1945 (Smith, 1949).
- Violent attacks against Japanese Americans were not limited to the years immediately following the war.
- In 1982 Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two white men who called him a “jap” and blamed him for the hard economic times they were facing. Vincent’s murderers were only given two years probation and a \$3,700 fine. They received no jail time as a result of anti-Japanese sentiment.



## Economic Discrimination

- Due to previous sentiment Japanese Americans were denied equal opportunities, property rights and fair education.
- In 1913 the state legislature had passed the Alien Law Land designed to keep Asian immigrants from purchasing lands.
- The political climate of the war years had resurrected this law, and in 1946 legislators proposed Proposition 15 which would’ve barred Japanese Americans from purchasing land and led to further institutional discrimination (Leonard, 1990).
- The opponents of the measure received little support; they were only supported by small membership organizations such as the JAACL (Japanese Americans Citizen League) and the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union).
- Fortunately Proposition 15 was defeated.
- The defeat of Proposition 15 marked a turning point of public anti-Japanese sentiment.

## Forced Social Changes

Many social changes that occurred after World War II were influenced by the dynamics in the camps.

- When Japanese Americans returned to California they were unwilling to rebuild the Japanese community as it had been before with different conclaves.

- Due to the generational change from Issei (first generation) to Nisei (second generation), “many took advantage of the GI bill to further their education, and when anti-Asian prejudice began to decline in the 1950s and the job market improved, the Nisei were educationally prepared to take advantage of the opportunities” (Healey, 2011, p.349).

- Between 1940 and 1990, the percentage of the group employed in agriculture declined from about 50% to 3% and the percentage employed in personal services fell from 25% to 5% (Healey, 2011, p. 349).

- Many of the occupations held by Japanese Americans were “safe” careers such as engineering, pharmacy & accounting that did not require extensive contact with the public or supervision of whites.

## Discrimination in Schools



- Blacks and Hispanics were not the only ones to be segregated.
- Two sections in the California Education Code addressed Japanese Americans directly:
  - Section 8003 states: “The governing board of any school district may establish separate schools for Indian children...and children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage.”
  - Section 8004 states “When separate schools are established for Indian children or children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage, [they] shall not be admitted into any other school.”
- Mendez v. Westminster (1947) resulted in ending the segregation of Mexicans in California’s public schools, which lead to Governor Earl Warren signing the Anderson Bill that repealed Section 8003 & Section 8004 that same year (“Brown v. Board”).

## References

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