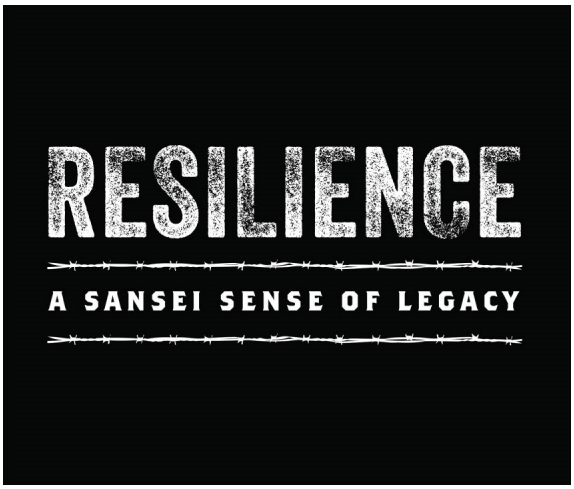


TERMINOLOGY

Using correct historical terminology is crucial when speaking about the *Resilience* exhibition. This allows for accurate representation of the past, acknowledges the nuances of language used at the time, and helps individuals understand the power dynamics and perspectives of different groups involved. This further prevents harmful stereotypes and misinterpretations by using the most appropriate and respectful language possible.

Since the 1970s, Japanese Americans, historians, educators, journalists, and others have increasingly advocated for the use of terminology that more accurately represents this history. Rather than repeat the euphemisms used by the U.S. government and other defenders of WWII incarcerations, we encourage individuals to think critically about the impact of words like "internment," "relocation," and "evacuation."

In the words of redress hero Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, "words can lie or clarify." When we use language that distorts the past, we lose our ability to recognize patterns of repeating history. But language that imparts truth and understanding can help us avoid repeating those same mistakes today.

OVERVIEW

In the 1940s, government officials and military leaders used euphemisms to describe their punitive and unjust actions against people of Japanese ancestry in the United States. The deceptiveness of that language can now be judged according to evidence from many sources, most notably the government's own congressionally ordered investigation, documented in Personal Justice Denied (1982-83), the report of the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC).

Today, these decades-old euphemisms persist in textbooks, news sources, and other platforms—meaning that most Americans learn about this history through a distorted lens that diminishes the harsh realities of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

Forced Removal vs. Evacuation/Relocation

In early 1942, Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from the West Coast and forbidden to return. The government called this an "evacuation," implying the forced move was a precaution for Japanese Americans' own safety, as in a natural disaster. The term "relocation" was also used to suggest that people voluntarily moved from one location (private homes) to another (War Relocation Authority camps). The usage obscures the fact that the U.S. military forced "all Japanese persons, both alien and non-alien" to leave their homes and many of their belongings behind, often with less than a week's notice.

"Power of Words Handbook A Guide to Language about Japanese Americans in World War II Understanding Euphemisms and Preferred Terminology." Japanese American Citizen League. August 2020
"Terminology." Densho, http://www.densho.org/, September 9, 2020

RECOMMENDATION: The phrase *forced removal* should be used which more accurately describes the lack of choice provided to Japanese Americans who were ordered to leave their homes.

Incarceration vs. Internment

The commonly used term "internment" fails to accurately describe what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II. "Internment" refers to the legally permissible, though morally questionable, detention of "enemy aliens" in time of war. There were approximately 8,000 Issei ("first generation") arrested as enemy aliens and subjected to what could be described as "internment" in a separate set of camps run by the Army or Department of Justice. * This term becomes misleading, an othering euphemism when applied to American citizens detained by their own government; yet two-thirds of Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII were U.S. citizens by birth and right.

RECOMMENDATION: Although "internment" is a recognized and widely used term, we encourage the use of "incarceration," except in specific case of Japanese Americans detained by the Army or DOJ. "Detention" is used interchangeably – although some argue that the word denotes a shorter period of confinement than the four years the camps were in operation.

**A smaller number of Nisei, mostly Kibei and mostly in Hawaii, were also swept up in the DOJ internment system*.

Concentration Camps vs. "Relocation Centers"

There is still some debate over the most appropriate terminology for the camps where Japanese Americans were confined during World War II. At first, Japanese Americans were held in temporary camps the government called "assembly centers" – facilities surrounded by fences and guarded by military police. This term is clearly euphemistic in nature, as the "assembly" was carried out by military and political force. Therefore, we recommend its use only as part of a proper noun (e.g.: "Puyallup Assembly Center") or in quotation marks for specific references to this type of facility.

Japanese Americans were later transferred to longer-term camps which the government called "relocation centers." Despite the innocuous name, these were prisons – compounds of barracks surrounded by barbed wire fences and patrolled by armed guards – which Japanese Americans could not leave without permission.

RECOMMENDATION: Instead of relocation center, American concentration camp* is recommended. Depending on the context, words with quotation marks ("American concentration camp") may be used. Alternatives are incarceration camp or illegal detention center.

**The use of "concentration camp" is not meant to undermine the experiences of Holocaust survivors or conflate these two histories in any way.*

In 1994, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and seven American Jewish organizations created the following language: "A concentration camp is a place where people are imprisoned not because of any crimes they committed, but simply because of who they are.

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Although many groups have been singled out for such persecution throughout history, the term 'concentration camps' was first used at the turn of the century in the Spanish American and Boer Wars.

During World War II, America's concentration camps were clearly distinguishable from Nazi Germany's. Nazi camps were places of torture, barbarous medical experiments, and summary executions; some were extermination centers with gas chambers.

"In recent years, concentration camps have existed in the former Soviet Union, Cambodia, and Bosnia. Despite the difference, all had one thing in common: the people in power removed a minority group from the general population and the rest of society let it happen."

Japanese American vs. Japanese

Media outlets and other sources often refer to the more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent imprisoned by the U.S. government during WWII as simply "Japanese" – but both erases their American identity and conflates Japanese Americans with Japanese citizens in Japan. The wartime government employed this strategy itself, inventing the term "non-alien" to describe Japanese American citizens in public documents.

The Nisei ("second generation") were U.S. citizens born to Japanese immigrant parents in the United States. Many had never set foot in Japan. Their Issei parents were forbidden by discriminatory law from becoming naturalized American citizens, but by the 1940s most had lived in the U.S. for decades and raised their families here. Most had no plans of returning to Japan and would have become naturalized citizens if allowed. By birth or by choice, Japanese Americans were just that – Americans.

Recommendation: Japanese American, as a large majority of those forced into camps were American citizens of Japanese descent.

Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei

Issei: term for Japanese immigrants originating from the Japanese language term for "first generation." In the American context, the term is understood to apply to those who migrated prior to the cessation of Japanese immigration to the U.S. under the Immigration Act of 1924, the bulk arriving after 1885. The vast majority of Issei were thus middle-aged or older during WWII.

Nisei: term for children of Japanese immigrants, "second-generation"

Sansei: term for grandchildren of Japanese immigration, "third generation"

Yonsei: term for "fourth generation"

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