

Enemy?

Soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, all Japanese Americans were reclassified to 4-C (Enemy Alien) and were not allowed to enlist in the U.S. military. Even though not one case of spying or espionage was recorded.

More than 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry (including 60 percent who were American citizens) were forcibly "relocated" from their homes, businesses and farms in the western states. They were incarcerated in crowded, tarpaper barracks, in the desolate wind-swept desert.



The Japanese Americans in Hawaii weren't subjected to this treatment because they made up a significant portion of the local work force and incarcerating them would have a disastrous effect on the economy.

Behind the barbed wire of the U.S. concentration camps (President Truman's term), even though their country had failed to protect their rights, these American-born Japanese men wanted to risk their lives to fight for their homeland, America.

On February 1, 1943 President Roosevelt and the War Department announced the formation of an all Japanese-American military unit, composed of volunteers from Hawaii and the mainland. The new unit would be designated the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, but would go down in history based upon the unit's motto: "Go For Broke"

The troops of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought in eight major campaigns in Italy, France and Germany. The 4,000 men who initially joined in April 1943 had to be replaced nearly 3.5 times. In total, about 14,000 men served, earning more than 18,000 individual decorations, including 53 Distinguished Service Crosses, 588 Silver Stars, 5,200 Bronze Star Medals, 9,486 Purple Hearts, and eight Presidential Unit Citations (the nation's top award for combat units).

In June 2000, President Clinton awarded an additional 20 Medals of Honor to members of the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team, bringing the total to 21 This was the result of a re-examination of the files of dozens of Japanese-American soldiers to see if any of them might have been denied awards because of possible prejudice.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team is the most decorated unit for its size and length of service, in the entire history of the U.S. Military.

Immediately following their return, the 442nd realized that the attitudes of many Americans had not changed. World War II veterans of Japanese ancestry were welcomed home by signs that read, "No Japs Allowed," and "No Japs Wanted." In many cases, veterans were denied service in local shops and restaurants, and their homes and property were often vandalized or set on fire.

"No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." (President Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 1, 1943 upon activating the 442nd RCT)

1. What were Japanese-Americans classified as? Why?
2. What happened to them?
3. Why did the Japanese -Americans in Hawaii not receive the same treatment?
4. What is the 442 Regimental Combat Team most famous for?
5. Upon return to the United States, did the decorations help in combating prejudice? Explain!
6. In your opinion do you think that Japanese-Americans were a security threat to the United States during World War Two? Explain!
7. Why do you think the 442 Regimental Combat Team was sent to the European Theater and not the Pacific?