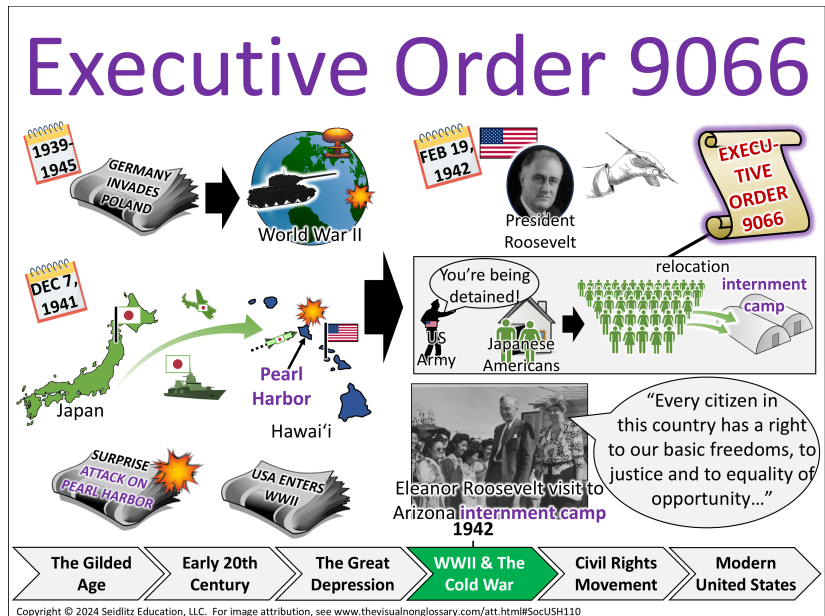


A Family Displaced

The purpose for reading is to explore how government actions during wartime can impact civil rights.

Pay Attention To:

- What Executive Order 9066 allowed the government to do
- How Japanese Americans were treated
- Kenji's family's experience
- Who visited the internment camp
- What Eleanor Roosevelt did and said after her visit



On December 7, 1941, something terrible happened. Japanese planes attacked a U.S. navy base called Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Many people were killed, and several ships were destroyed. After the attack, Americans were very scared and angry. Some began to look at Japanese Americans with fear and suspicion, even if they were born in the United States.

Kenji Nakamura was a high school senior who lived with his family in California. After the attack, he noticed that people started treating him differently. Neighbors stopped saying hello. A classmate called him a traitor. Kenji didn't understand. He loved his country and had done nothing wrong.

Then, in February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed **Executive Order 9066**. This gave the U.S. military the power to create special zones and remove people they thought were dangerous. Even though the order didn't name anyone directly, it mostly affected Japanese Americans. Kenji's family received a notice. They had to leave their home in just a few days. They could only bring what they could

carry.

The Nakamura family boarded a crowded train and traveled to an **internment camp** in the hot desert. Soldiers watched over the camp, and the families lived in small wooden buildings called barracks. There wasn't much privacy or comfort. It was hard for Kenji to focus in school. His parents tried to stay strong, but Kenji saw the worry on their faces.

Months later, someone important came to visit the camp, Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States. She talked to the families and saw how they lived. She didn't speak out against the order right away, but later she wrote about the need to treat Japanese Americans fairly and with respect. Her visit gave Kenji a small sense of hope. Maybe people would start to see the truth.

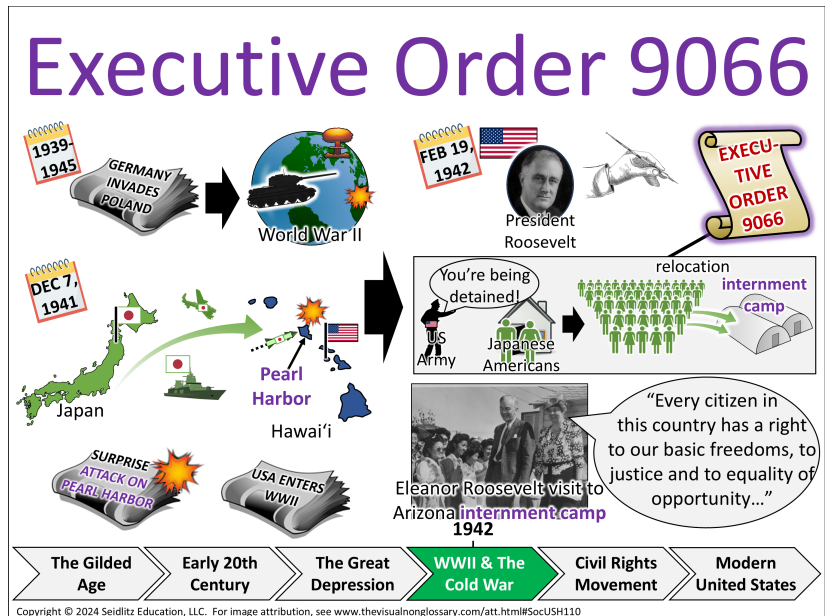


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It was December 7, 1941, when Kenji Nakamura, a second-generation Japanese American high school senior, first heard about the **attack on Pearl Harbor**. The radio crackled with reports: Japanese planes had bombed the U.S. naval base in Hawaii, sinking ships and killing over 2,000 Americans. The next morning, the country felt different. Flags flew at half-mast, headlines screamed of war, and fear crept into everyday conversations. At school, Kenji felt the tension. Some classmates eyed him with suspicion, even though he was as American as they were.

By February, that fear had reached Washington. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed **Executive Order 9066**, a powerful law that gave the U.S. military the authority to identify "military zones" and remove anyone they believed could be a threat. The order never named a specific group, but its impact was immediate and clear: over 100,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast were ordered to leave their homes. "Because of Pearl Harbor," Kenji's father said quietly, "they think we're all spies."

A few days later, the Nakamura family received instructions from the government. They could bring only what they could carry. Kenji's mother packed clothes, blankets, and a family photo album. His father sold the family's store for a fraction of its worth. Their neighbors watched silently as they left.

The Nakamuras were taken to an **internment camp** in the Arizona desert, where they were assigned to a cramped barrack surrounded by fences and guards. The heat was unbearable, and dust crept into everything. Kenji struggled to understand how the country of his birth could see him as dangerous. "We didn't do anything wrong," he whispered to his younger sister.

Months later, a visitor arrived at the camp, Eleanor Roosevelt. She walked slowly through the grounds, speaking to families and listening closely. Though she had not openly opposed the order, she later wrote about the importance of treating Japanese Americans with fairness and dignity. Her presence at the camp sent a quiet message, that someone in power was paying attention. For Kenji, it was a flicker of hope in an otherwise uncertain time.

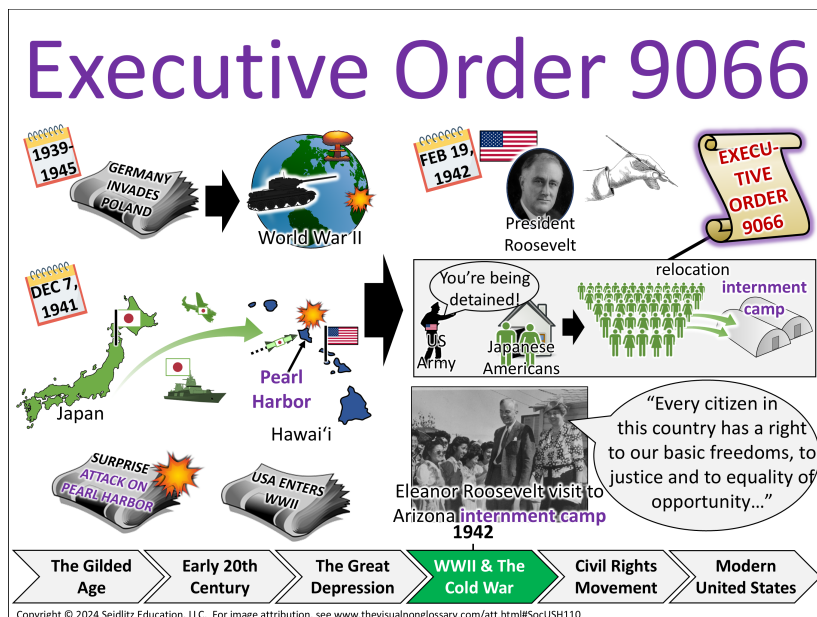


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The day after the **attack on Pearl Harbor**, seventeen-year-old Kenji Nakamura walked through his Los Angeles neighborhood and felt a chill unrelated to the weather. Though he had lived his entire life in California, his Japanese heritage now made him a suspect in the eyes of many. On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces had bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, killing over 2,000 Americans. As the nation braced for war, fear transformed into suspicion, and suspicion into policy.

That fear reached the White House quickly. In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed **Executive Order 9066**. The order granted the military sweeping authority to create “military exclusion zones” and remove any individuals deemed a threat to national security. While the order appeared neutral on the surface, its application focused almost entirely on Japanese Americans. Over 100,000 men, women, and children (many of them citizens) were told to leave their homes, their businesses, and the lives they had built.

Kenji's family was among them. They were given a week to prepare. His father sold their family grocery store at a loss. His mother packed what she could, blankets, clothes, family photos. When the day came, they were loaded onto a train and taken to a remote **internment camp** in Arizona. Surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, they lived in cramped barracks under extreme conditions. For Kenji, the experience was both confusing and humiliating. How could his country treat him like a criminal without cause?

Months later, a rare visitor arrived, Eleanor Roosevelt. She walked through the camp slowly, meeting with families, asking questions, and listening more than she spoke. Though she had not publicly opposed the order at the time it was signed, she later used her voice to advocate for justice and dignity for Japanese Americans. Her writings urged the nation to reflect on its actions and protect civil rights, even during wartime.

As she left, Kenji watched from a distance. He didn't know if her visit would change anything. But for the first time in months, he felt seen. And in a place built on fear, that feeling meant everything.

