

Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II

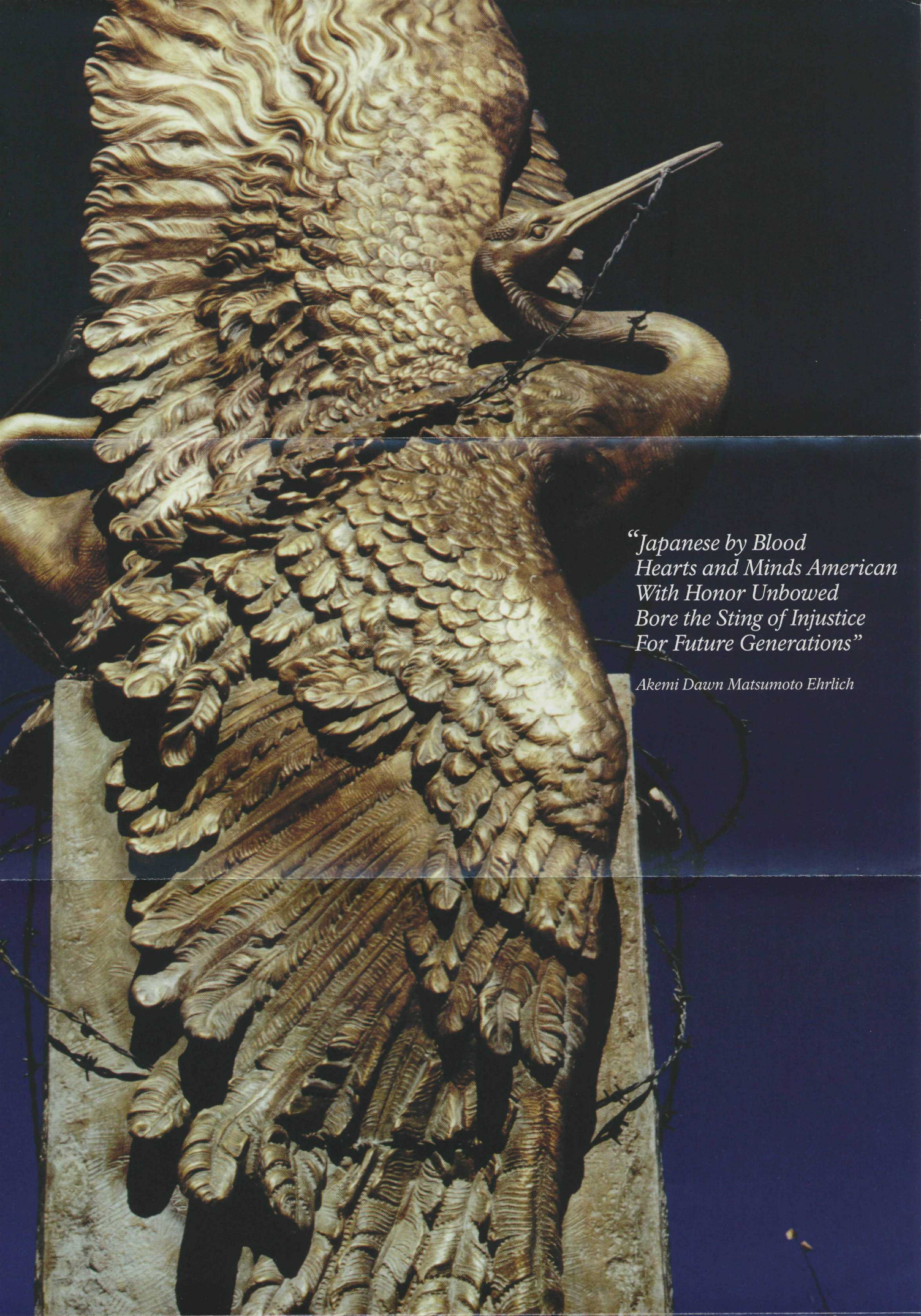
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Washington, D.C.



*“Here we admit a wrong.
Here we affirm our commitment
as a nation to equal justice under
the law.”*

PRESIDENT RONALD W. REAGAN
Upon the signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988



*"Japanese by Blood
Hearts and Minds American
With Honor Unbowed
Bore the Sting of Injustice
For Future Generations"*

Akemi Dawn Matsumoto Ehrlich



all photos NPS

“The lessons learned must remain as a grave reminder of what we must not allow to happen again to any group.”

DANIEL K. INOUE

U.S. Congressman; U.S. Senator; Captain, 42nd Regimental Combat Team

The quotations engraved in the memorial's walls and the symbols of the memorial blend the story of Japanese American patriotism and internment with warnings against discrimination. This is most clearly shown in the quotations from prominent citizens that stress the universal messages of justice, equality, and liberty under the law.

The centerpiece of the memorial is the fourteen-foot sculpture of two Japanese cranes entangled in barbed wire. The cranes symbolize the quest to achieve freedom and equality while struggling to free themselves from prejudice, hatred, and hysteria represented by the barbed wire.

A Patriotic Memorial

The Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II was built as a lasting tribute to the more than 33,000 Japanese American soldiers who served the United States of America during World War Two. The memorial also pays tribute to the more than 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly relocated in American confinement sites during the Second World War. After the Empire of Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in 1941, the weight of wartime fears mixed with racism motivated the U.S. Government to intern persons of Japanese ancestry from the western part of the United States to remote, inland internment camps for the duration of the war. While their families were placed behind barbed wire fences, thousands of Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) fought in Europe as part of the legendary 442nd Regimental Combat Team or provided critical information to the war effort in the Pacific from captured Japanese documents as part of the U.S. Military Intelligence Service. This patriotic story is immortalized here in granite and bronze.

The popular illusion that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were gigantic moats that protected the United States from the world's trouble disappeared with Japanese bombs at Pearl Harbor and German torpedoes off the Atlantic coast. Anger and fear swept across the nation. The desire to protect the nation motivated over



The five boulders in the fountain represent the five generations of Japanese Americans who were living in 1988 when the national apology was enacted. The recycling water in the fountain serves to re-energize future generations in their commitment to the historic significance of the memorial. The bell calls the American public to the memorial to reflect on the meaning of patriotism under difficult circumstances. When former Japanese American internees and veterans first saw these symbols, the tears they remembered from the dark days of 1942 were replaced with tears of happiness.

sixteen million men and women to make great sacrifices on the battlefield and home front from 1941 through 1945. Americans and their allies destroyed German, Italian, and Japanese regimes dedicated to controlling the world. At

the end of the war, horrified GIs entered prison camps in German and Japanese occupied lands that contained the corpses of people condemned because of their race, religion, or politics.

A Veterans' Memorial

Distrust of anyone of Japanese ancestry, especially on the Pacific Coast, led to one of the great violations of constitutional rights in American history. In 1942, the United States struggled to overcome racial, cultural, and religious differences among its diverse populations. German and Italian communities were large, powerful, and largely left alone, with just a few exceptions. Japanese Americans in the then forty-eight states were isolated politically, racially, and culturally from their neighbors. False reports of Japanese American disloyalty appeared in newspapers, police stations, and military bases. Based on the prevailing prejudice, distrust, and war hysteria, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, authorizing the removal of persons of Japanese ancestry from the western part of the United States. General John DeWitt, Commander of the Western Defense Command, used this executive order to evacuate Japanese Americans living on the west coast to confinement sites for the remainder of the war.

With less than two weeks notice, the U.S. Government forced these Americans of Japanese ancestry to abandon millions of dollars in property and personal possessions. They were then sent to large confinement sites in the western, southwestern, or southern United States named Manzanar (CA), Poston (AZ), Gila River (AZ), Topaz (UT), Granada (CO), Heart Mountain (WY), Minidoka (ID), Tule Lake (CA), Jerome (AR), or Rohwer (AR) and to other facilities across the nation. To their credit, the internees attempted to bring normalcy to their daily lives despite the abnormal circumstances of the camps. While living behind barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards in watch towers, Japanese American internees created newspapers, schools, markets, police, and, even fire fighting squads. All of the internees were asked to answer humiliating questions about their loyalty. Despite this, thirty-three thousand of them served in the military.

Japanese Americans living in Hawaii laid the foundation for Nisei frontline service. They comprised over half of the population of Hawaii and were crucial to the defense of the islands; so, authorities never interned them en



The names of over eight hundred Nisei soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific are inscribed on the walls of the memorial so their service to the United States will not be forgotten. Behind them stand several Japanese cherry trees that are a reminder of the beauty and shortness of their lives.

masse. Despite groundless suspicions of their loyalty and some harassment, these young men formed the 100th Infantry Battalion. The Nisei loved their country and dignified their patriotism with combat valor. The 100th fought up the wind-swept mountains of Central Italy in some of the tougher battles of the European Theater at Monte Cassino and the cauldron of the Anzio beachhead. They were joined later by other Japanese American men from Hawaii, from confinement sites, and states not affected by Executive Order 9066 to form the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 442nd RCT fought in the rugged Italian terrain north of Rome and then were transferred to southern France. When the Germans surrounded the First Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment in October 1944, the 442nd RCT fought for five days to rescue their comrades. During the fight up the wooded and heavily defended hills, Private Barney Hajiro saw German machine gunners kill eight of his twenty-one buddies. He and several other men yelled the regiment's motto "Go for Broke," and charged the German positions. Hajiro knocked out two machine gun positions. His award of the Distinguished Service Cross was later upgraded to the Medal of Hon-

or. His Medal of Honor was one of twenty-one awarded to this most highly decorated unit in American history for its size and length of service.

During World War Two, Japanese Americans also contributed to America's victory in the Pacific Theater. More than three thousand joined the Army's Military Intelligence Service where they used their knowledge of Japanese culture and language to provide valuable information to American forces in the North, Central, and South Pacific, as well as to allied forces that fought in Burma and China. They were assigned to combat units so they could interrogate prisoners, decipher Japanese radio messages, and translate captured documents that helped reveal Japanese plans. This intelligence allowed the Allies to attack where the Japanese were weakest, and to hasten the end of the war. After the war, the Military Intelligence Service greatly assisted with the allied occupation of Japan. They helped American officials bridge the cultural and linguistic differences between Japanese and Americans to strengthen relations between the former combatants.

An American Memorial

The memorial also honors the efforts of Japanese American internees and soldiers who worked tirelessly to make sure their story became part of America's collective memory of the war. In 1948, the U.S. Congress offered miniscule reparations to the internees for their property losses. In 1982, the Report of the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that "Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity" and that its decisions were shaped by "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 made a national apology to the internees

and offered symbolic reparations for their loss of constitutional rights. When President Ronald Reagan signed the act into law on August 10, 1988, he stated, "Here we admit a wrong. Here we affirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law." In 1992, legislation was passed authorizing the building of this memorial. The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation raised more than fourteen million dollars to design and build this memorial. The memorial was dedicated in 2000 and was transferred to the National Park Service two years later as a gift from the Japanese American community to the American public.



About Your Visit

The memorial is located in Washington, D.C. at the intersection of Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues and D Street, NW. Nearest Metro Stop: Union Station Red Line. To experience National Park Service ranger talks about the memorial, explore Guide by Cell by calling (202) 747-3472.

More Information

Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II

National Mall and Memorial Parks
900 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, D.C. 20024-2000
www.nps.gov/nama



National Japanese American
Memorial Foundation
www.njam.org

©GPO:2009—353-344
Printed on recycled paper.