

# The Enemy Alien Files:

## Hidden Stories of World War II

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[www.enemyalienfiles.org](http://www.enemyalienfiles.org)

### Immigrants as “the enemy” during World War II and Today

Since the tragedies of 9/11, Muslims and persons of Arab and South Asian descent have become the targets of suspicion and harassment. They have become subject to policies such as special registration, indefinite detention, deportation and extraordinary rendition. More than ever, it is critical for the public to examine the immediate and long-term impact of similar policies carried out during World War II, when persons of German, Italian and Japanese ancestry in the U.S. and from Latin America were targeted as “the enemy.”



Today, many Americans are familiar with the U.S. government’s mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II; and how it was finally acknowledged as a “grave injustice,” caused by “race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership” (Civil Liberties Act of 1988). However, most are unaware of the U.S. Enemy Alien Control Program which targeted alleged “potentially dangerous enemy aliens” of German, Italian and Japanese ancestry in the U.S. and over 15 Latin American countries.

This program affected over a million German, Italian and Japanese immigrants and citizens in the U.S. and from Latin

America. Numerous restrictive policies were implemented to ensure “national security” including: **Internment:** Over 31,000 persons were apprehended, and thousands interned by the Department of Justice throughout the U.S. During brief hearings, they were deprived of counsel, knowledge of the charges against them, or the right to confront witnesses.

They were held indefinitely without charges or trial, for up to seven years. **Forced deportations to war zones:** Over 4,800 persons, including naturalized children of permanent resident aliens, were forcibly deported to war zones of the Far East and Europe in civilian prisoner exchanges.

Later review of those interned revealed that far too many individuals were presumed guilty; were never able to prove their innocence, and continue to suffer from the stigma of their wartime treatment.

Admittedly, wartime actions are difficult to assess decades later. To prevent future erosions of civil liberties and human rights, however, the government must fully review and acknowledge its errors to protect the integrity of our democracy. This website is a contribution toward this important goal.



Participants in April 2005 Assembly on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (AWRIC)

### The Enemy Alien Files Consortium & Partners

The Consortium member organizations came together in 2000 to present a more complete story of the World War II internment and related policies, specifically to shed light on the U.S. Enemy Alien Program. Partner organizations have joined the Consortium to examine the current relevance of this work, post-9/11 and contribute to a broader goal of strengthening our democratic processes and institutions.

Photo credits: (cover) Italian, German and Japanese residents of Latin America leaving a temporary internment camp in the Panama Canal Zone to join their male relatives in the U.S. internment camps, April 7, 1942. Courtesy of SF Public Library; World War II internees (upper row), courtesy of Lothar Eiserloh, courtesy of Heidi Donald, NJAHS (from National Archives), courtesy of Art Shibayama, (bottom row) courtesy of Nousei Network, (inside and back) “Inalienable Rights” and AWRIC photographs by Steve Wake; (mailing panel) NJAHS; (back) Crystal City, Texas, internment camp, “Alien Enemy Detention Facility” film, Department of Justice/INS circa 1942–43. National Archives.

Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage **PAID** Permit No. 548 San Francisco, CA

National Japanese American Historical Society  
1684 Post Street  
San Francisco, CA 94115

*When I was 22 years-old, I was abducted from Bolivia, where I had lived for 3 years... No explanation was given... We were herded into DC3 planes marked with American symbols. The windows of the plane were boarded up, and we were not told where we were being taken.  
— Sadaharu Sakamoto, Japanese Bolivian internee*



New Website!  
[www.enemyalienfiles.org](http://www.enemyalienfiles.org)  
Ph: 415.921.5007 Fax: 415.921.5087 Email: [njahs@njahs.org](mailto:njahs@njahs.org)



[www.enemyalienfiles.org](http://www.enemyalienfiles.org)

Explore Challenges to Civil Liberties & Human Rights During World War II and Post-9/11

- Exhibit
- Lesson Plans
- Personal Stories
- DVD & Reports



New Website!

### For the Classroom

### Traveling Exhibit

### Personal Stories

### What's New

#### Teaching Tools: 17 Complete Lesson Plans



Registration of German U.S. residents during their return to Germany in exchange for U.S. civilians and P.O.W.s, ca. early 1940s. Courtesy of Arnold Krammer

#### Download

Curriculum & Lesson Plans:  
"The World War II Alien Enemy Control Program"

#### Plus:

Three Readers Theater Plays by John Christgau:  
"ZIP," about the arrest of a German-American high school baseball star, "The Master Tailor's Wife," dramatizes a Japanese Peruvian family's attempt to avoid capture by Peruvian authorities; and "The White Line" re-enacts an Italian immigrant fisherman's struggle to support his family in spite of U.S. government restrictions on his movements.

#### "The Enemy Alien Files: Hidden Stories of World War II"



#### View online:

24 panels of rare photos, personal stories and historical narrative present the wartime experiences of German, Italian and Japanese immigrants in the U.S. and from Latin America; and links them to current concerns post-9/11.

#### Rent the Exhibit!

An ideal complement to campus and community programs on civil liberties.

#### Here, In America?

Immigrants as "The Enemy" During World War II and Today  
Report of the Assembly on Wartime Relocation & Internment of Civilians

Edited by Helen Zia



#### Order the Report & DVD

64 page report and DVD (14 min.) package highlights a public testimonial event in April 2005, held at Hastings College, SF. Diverse stories of individuals, affected by the World War II Enemy Alien Program as well as post-9/11 policies. Includes commentary by civil rights scholars, public officials and community activists.

#### Inalienable: Immigrant Rights Youth Voices from World War II and Post-9/11



April program panelists (L-R): Rose Viscuso Scudero, former Italian American excludée, was 12 when forced to leave her home in Pittsburg, California with her immigrant mother; Halema Buzayan, 19, seeks justice for the violation of her civil rights by the Davis Police Dept. for a minor traffic incident; and Yuri Kochiyama, 2nd generation Japanese American who watched her frail, immigrant father arrested by the FBI following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

#### View Video Highlights and Summary

This April 2008 event featured multicultural, intergenerational personal stories, video and poetry focused on the impact of government policies on communities targeted as the enemy during WW II and post-9/11.

### A Project of the Enemy Alien Files Consortium & Partners

#### Members

American Italian Historical Association - Western Regional Chapter; German American Internee Coalition; Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project; National Japanese American Historical Society (fiscal sponsor)

#### Partners

American Muslim Voice; Arab Resource & Organizing Center; Campaign for Justice - Redress Now for Japanese Latin Americans; Council on American-Islamic Relations-SF Bay Area; National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Major funding provided by the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

On March 23, 1943, while in class at Woodward high school, two FBI agents arrested me. I was 17. When passing through the doorways, one would precede me with a drawn rifle. When we got outdoors, I was handcuffed. I never returned to school and did not graduate... I lost not only my belongings in my school locker, but my dignity.  
— Eberhard E. Fuhr, former German American internee from Cincinnati, Ohio

After 9/11, many people didn't know what would happen. . .

Some thought we would all be interned, similar to the Japanese Americans during World War II.

—Samina Faheem, American Muslim Voice.

