

In May we are taking a look at Asian Pacific American Heritage, Older Americans, and Jewish American Heritage. While I could easily make this a really long message by covering all of them, I think I'd like to focus on the Japanese this month.

I've lived in Arkansas for many years, and until just recently did not know that we have a history, a not so good history, with the Japanese.

From the National Archives: "In his speech to Congress, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was "a date which will live in infamy." The attack launched the United States fully into the two theaters of World War II – Europe and the Pacific. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the United States had been involved in a non-combat role, through the Lend-Lease Program that supplied England, China, Russia, and other anti-fascist countries of Europe with munitions.

The attack on Pearl Harbor also launched a rash of fear about national security, especially on the West Coast. In February 1942, just two months later, President Roosevelt, as commander-in-chief, issued Executive Order 9066 that resulted in the internment of Japanese Americans. The order authorized the Secretary of War and military commanders to evacuate all persons deemed a threat from the West Coast to internment camps, that the government called "relocation centers," further inland."

Two of those "relocation centers" were located right here in Arkansas, near a town called McGehee. Approximately 8,000 of the 120,000 Japanese Americans that were relocated found themselves here at Arkansas' relocation centers.

"The Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center in Arkansas is largely lost to history. Between 1942 and 1945, more than 8,000 Japanese Americans were interned at Rohwer—a 500-acre camp surrounded by barbed wire and armed

guards. Although most physical remains have been wiped from the landscape, important stories remain to be shared.” ~From the Rohwer Museum.

#### [Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center](#)

<https://rohwer.astate.edu/#:~:text=The%20Rohwer%20Japanese%20American%20Relocation,barbed%20wire%20and%20armed%20guards.>

In 1942, at the age of 5, George Hosato Takei (Star Trek's Lt. Sulu) and his family were taken to the Rohwer Relocation Center, and the next year (because they said no to questions 27 & 28 on the Loyalty Questionnaire) were considered disloyal to the U.S. and moved to a high security facility, Tule Lake Segregation Center in California. They were allowed to return to Los Angeles in 1946. Takei did an interview with the University of Arkansas, and you can find that information here:

#### [The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History](#)

<https://pryorcenter.uark.edu/interview.php?thisProject=Arkansas%20Memories&thisProfileURL=TAKEI-George&displayName=&thisInterviewee=474#:~:text=In%201942%2C%20soon%20after%20the,Lake%20Segregation%20Center%20in%20California.>

I found this short 4 minute video about two of the Arkansas camps here:

#### [Meet the Locals of the Japanese American Internment Museum in McGehee](#)

<https://youtu.be/rEL8VS0Jl9I>

A 6 minute video, Takei talks about his experience:

[Interview with George Takei](#), Being a fellow bibliophile, this one hurt.

<https://youtu.be/4N7oaJ9pvVs>

I found these pictures in the public domain and wanted to share them with you.





One of the focuses of my Diversity class has been showing us that we all have bias. Even if you're in a minority category, we all have biases that we can challenge. One way we were asked to do this, is to ask ourselves, "how do I know that to be true?"

It's a simple question, but when I asked my son just last night when he stated something I thought was absurd. This prompted him to research his statement, and when he was done, he came back and admitted that he might have been mistaken and he learned so much about a subject that he felt he knew about already. I'd like to challenge you to ask yourself this question, the next time you are sure you know the answer, do some digging.

Unconscious Bias: <https://youtu.be/tEoajtG90qY> Please give this video a watch, it's about 15 minutes long, and was an eye opener for me.

And lastly, [Remembering to Forget: A Japanese Pilot's Memory of World War II](#) from the National WWII Museum in New Orleans website, the story of Takeshi Maeda, a Japanese Imperial Naval pilot, he participated in the bombing at Pearl Harbor, helped to sink the USS West Virginia, and later went on to become a leading figure in reconciliation efforts between Japan and the United States.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/japanese-memory-of-world-war-ii>