

Ex parte Endo's Impact

Immediate Impact

Ex parte Endo (1944) was pivotal in ending the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The case contrasted sharply with *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), where the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Japanese American internment. In *Endo*, however, the Court ruled that the government could not detain loyal citizens without due process, marking a significant legal victory. This ruling led to the closure of incarceration camps and the release of approximately 120,000 wrongfully imprisoned Japanese Americans.



Children at Manzanar Incarceration Camp, 1942. National Parks Services Collection.



President Ronald Reagan Signs The Reparations Bill for Japanese Americans with Pete Wilson Spark Matsunaga, Norman Mineta, Robert Masui, and Bill Lowrey.
National Archives

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Long Term Impact

Ex parte Endo verified the unconstitutionality of the Japanese American incarceration. The forced removal deprived over 120,000 Japanese Americans of their freedom, livelihood, and dignity. Additionally, the psychological and social scars of the camps lingered for generations. The Japanese American community led a grassroots redress movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement successfully led Congress to appoint a commission in 1980 to conduct an official study on the World War II Japanese American incarceration. After its investigation, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Injustice reported that the decision to detain Japanese Americans was based mostly on fear and racism and determined it was a “grave injustice.” Lawmakers and staff in the California State Legislature, including Priscilla Ouchida, fought for legislation to bring justice to the incarcerated victims, leading to the passage of Assembly Bill 2710. The Civil Rights Act of 1988, signed by President Ronald Reagan, made sure that issues like these would be prevented in the future. Echoing the Commission’s report, the Act recognized that the incarceration was founded in fear and racism and remarked that it was a “grave injustice.” Five years later, President Clinton directed the Letter of Sincere Apology, which rearticulated regret from the government on the unjust incarceration. From there, over 82,200 Japanese Americans were paid \$20,000 as redress for what they went through.



Mitsuye Endo leaving the Topaz, UT, Incarceration Camp, 1945.
Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.

“If this precedent is established, any minority group may land in a concentration camp under the guise an emergency exists which makes them dangerous to the country, because some military dictator ex cathedra, pronounced them suspect.”

-James Purcell, 1942



A couple prepares to leave the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.
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