

# Undated: General: Speech for dinner celebrating the completion of the memorial to Japanese American patriotism during World War II

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**SPEECH FOR DINNER CELEBRATING THE COMPLETION OF THE  
MEMORIAL TO JAPANESE AMERICAN PATRIOTISM DURING WORLD  
WAR II**

60 years ago, many of us felt that the world we knew had come to a crashing end. December 7, 1941, was a dark page in our lives. As anticipated by many, that dark page was followed by another on February 19, 1942, when President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the establishment of ten internment camps by the U. S. Army and rounding up men and women of Japanese extraction, citizen and non-citizen alike, to incarcerate them in these camps without due process of law. More than 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese extraction, many of whom were citizens, were interned in these camps. None were ever charged with the commission of a crime prior to incarceration, and subsequent investigations have revealed that throughout the war no charges were ever made.

These dark pages were followed by another when, on June 17, 1942, the War Department announced that it, "will not accept for service with the armed forces, Japanese or persons of Japanese extraction, regardless of citizenship status or other factors." We were declared 4-C, enemy aliens.

Many of us looked upon the 4-C designation as the ultimate insult because we considered ourselves law-abiding, patriotic Americans. Hundreds joined to send

petitions to Washington requesting that we be given the opportunity to serve in the armed forces in any capacity, if only to demonstrate our love of country.

On February first, 1943, President Roosevelt issued another Executive Order in which he stated, "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry," and authorized the establishment of a special combat team of Japanese Americans. This was the birth of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

The response to this order was immediate and astounding. In Hawaii, nearly 85% of the eligible Japanese American men responded, and, to the surprise of many, more than 1,200 Japanese American men who were held in internment camps stepped forward to volunteer.

We were shipped to Mississippi for our training. Before we were finished, our older brothers in the 100th Infantry Battalion were sent to Italy to fight in some of the bloodiest campaigns: the battle of Mount Cassino and Anzio Beach. As history has shown, the men of the 100th Infantry Battalion demonstrated extraordinary bravery, and in so doing suffered extraordinary casualties. The

**casualties were so high the 100th Battalion was called the “Purple Heart Battalion.”**

**In the spring of 1944, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team including the 100th Battalion began its journey northward on the Italian Peninsula. The rest is history --- the battle of Hill 140, the crossing of the Arno River, the battle of Bruyeres, the rescue of the “Lost Battalion,” and the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp, to name a few. Although the 442nd Regimental Combat Team initially consisted of approximately 4,500 officers and men, during the year of almost nonstop combat, the casualties were so high that when the war ended more than 12,000 officers and men had gone through the ranks. The turnover was nearly three times the original number. Among the thousands of decorations awarded to members of the Regimental Combat Team were 21 Medals of Honor, 7 Presidential Unit Citations, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 4,000 Bronze Stars, and 9,486 Purple Hearts. A total of 18,143 individual decorations were awarded to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, earning it the distinction of being the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service.**

**“The Battle of the Lost Battalion” is viewed as one of the ten most important events in the history of the United States Army. A painting depicting this battle hangs in the halls of the Pentagon. The names of those who served and made the**

**ultimate sacrifice in this battle are engraved on this memorial. These men stand together with many others who served in the Military Intelligence Service and in other capacities. The men who served in the Pacific had the most difficult assignment: they were called upon to do battle with men from their ancestral land.**

**This journey that began on December 7, 1941, has taken nearly 60 years. It has been a journey of many tears and many sacrifices, but also one of many victories. The brightest page in this journey occurred on August 10, 1988, when President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which provided for restitution of a token sum to those interned as a result of Executive Order 9066. This law also acknowledged the wrongs our government had committed, and, most important, issued an apology. No other country has ever issued a similar apology to its citizens. It demonstrated the greatness of our nation. It was a proud moment for all of us. It made us all stand taller with the knowledge that we were all part of a great and magnificent country.**

**The dedication of this Memorial to Japanese American Patriotism during World War II is the end of a journey that began in darkness and ended in brilliant glory. It stands together with the other National Capitol Area Park System memorials along the National Mall. Today, we join the great memorials honoring George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano**

**Roosevelt, the Korean Conflict heroes, and the Vietnam Conflict heroes. I believe those whose names are inscribed for posterity on our memorial should be smiling and saying, "it was worth it."**