

The Question of Loyalty



ACTIVITY: *In February 1943, after the incarceration of Japanese Americans from the West Coast had been completed, the War Department and the War Relocation Authority required all of those incarcerated, 17 years of age and older, to answer a questionnaire, which presumably tested their “loyalty” to the United States. Two questions proved to be particularly troubling.*

Question #27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

Question #28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

As a class, debate whether the government had the right to ask Japanese Americans in incarceration camps to serve in the military. Also, discuss the specific wording of both questions. Would you have volunteered to fight for the U.S. Army had you been in the camps? How would you have answered these questions? In answering these questions, consider the quotes from the film listed below.

“My folks were put into concentration camp when I was already in uniform, and so I thought this was not right.”

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steve Yamamoto
First Language Class
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1941-61

“You take the oath to uphold the Constitution and fight for freedom and liberty and to find your parents and siblings in camp—it was very difficult.”

Grant Hirabayashi
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1942-47

“When you lose your freedom by being locked up for no other reason than being a Japanese, it really hurt.”

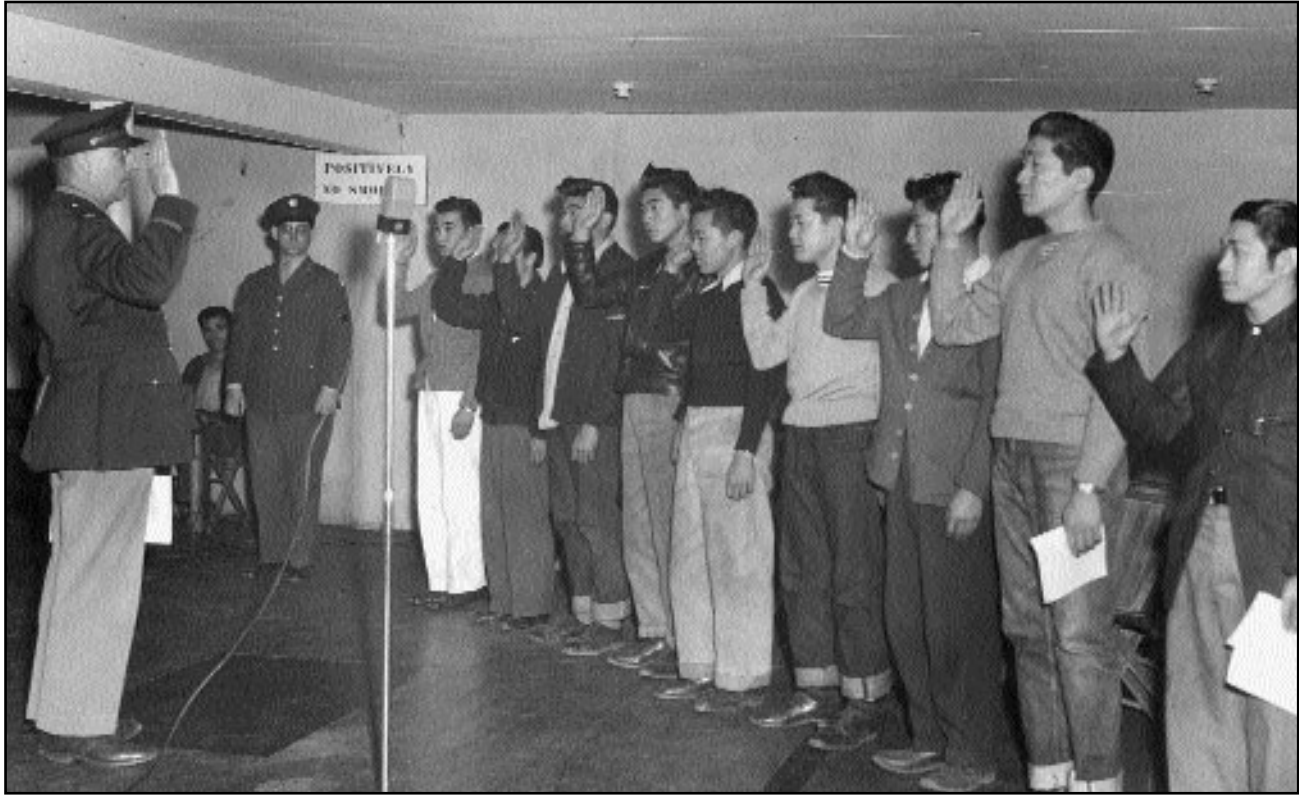
Ken Akune
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1942-45

“The climate, the situation at that time is so much different than at any other time. It’s a crisis. There’s a war going on and, I thought, well, right or wrong, this is America. This is my country.”

Maj. (Ret.) Walter Tanaka
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1941-61

SEE MORE QUOTES ON NEXT PAGE.

Film Quotes #2



NISEI MEN VOLUNTEERING FOR THE U.S. ARMY FROM MANZANAR CONCENTRATION CAMP. (PHOTO: TOYO MIYATAKE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.)

“Colonel Rasmussen sent recruiting teams to each of the 10 camps. In some camps, men would volunteer, but they had to be snuck out of the relocation camps or be subjected to beatings by the pro-Japan group in the camps.”

Shig Kihara
Instructor, First Language Class
Military Intelligence Service
Language School

“The government would willingly take her sons away, but she had to stay behind the barbed wire. And there’s no freedom. Some American families had sent two, three, four boys to the service, but the difference is they were not behind the barbed wire.”

Maj. (Ret.) Gene Uratsu
First Language Class
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1941-62

“When they came around asking for volunteers, that was our only escape to get out of that type of atmosphere where one day is the same as the day before and the day after will be the same as it was today, and God knows how long it’s going to last.”

Sho Nomura
Military Intelligence Service
U.S. Army, 1942-46