



Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II

Richard Reeves

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A *LOS ANGELES TIMES* BESTSELLER • A *NEW YORK TIMES* BOOK REVIEW EDITOR'S CHOICE • Bestselling author Richard Reeves provides an authoritative account of the internment of more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans and Japanese aliens during World War II

Less than three months after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and inflamed the nation, President Roosevelt signed an executive order declaring parts of four western states to be a war zone operating under military rule. The U.S. Army immediately began rounding up thousands of Japanese-Americans, sometimes giving them less than 24 hours to vacate their houses and farms. For the rest of the war, these victims of war hysteria were imprisoned in primitive camps.

In *Infamy*, the story of this appalling chapter in American history is told more powerfully than ever before. Acclaimed historian Richard Reeves has interviewed survivors, read numerous private letters and memoirs, and combed through archives to deliver a sweeping narrative of this atrocity. Men we usually consider heroes-FDR, Earl Warren, Edward R. Murrow-were in this case villains, but we also learn of many Americans who took great risks to defend the rights of the internees. Most especially, we hear the poignant stories of those who spent years in "war relocation camps," many of whom suffered this terrible injustice with remarkable grace.

Racism, greed, xenophobia, and a thirst for revenge: a dark strand in the American character underlies this story of one of the most shameful episodes in our history. But by recovering the past, *Infamy* has given voice to those who ultimately helped the nation better understand the true meaning of patriotism.

Praise for *Infamy*

"A compulsively readable, emotionally rich and passionately written account of the internment of 120,000 American Japanese in concentration camps during World War II.... Reeves' excellent *Infamy*, the first popular, general history of the subject in more than 25 years, reminds us that not only can it happen here, it did.... Every reader who has lived the post-9/11 era will immediately notice the parallels." — *Los Angeles Times*

"Highly readable.... The story of this national disgrace, long buried...still has the power to shock. [*Infamy* is a] vivid and instructive reminder of what war and fear can do to civilized people." — **Evan Thomas**, *The New York Times Book Review*

"History's judgment is that internment...was wrong. Mr. Reeves's excellent book gives us an opportunity to learn from past mistakes.... Reeves is especially good at bringing to life the social experience of internment." — *The Wall Street Journal*

"Richard Reeves's book on the harsh, prolonged and unjustified internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II is a detailed account of a painful and shameful period in modern American history. *Infamy* combines Reeves's journalist's training with his historian's eye to give us a page-turner on how hysteria at the highest levels can shatter our most fundamental rights. Brace yourself and read this very important book." —

Tom Brokaw, author of *The Greatest Generation*

“For years, the unjust relocation and incarceration of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast during World War II - the majority of them American citizens - was shrouded in shame and secrecy.... [*Infamy*’s] greatest strength is probably Reeves’s masterful use of anecdotes, which enliven an epic story with poignant tales of individual hardship, courage, and endurance.” — ***The Boston Globe***

“*Infamy* tells the story of why and how the American government--with the full support of its citizenry--illegally interned Japanese-Americans. Richard Reeves even-handedly examines this dangerous precedent-setting time when the Constitution was trampled by misinformation, prejudice, and fear. Today as Muslim and Hispanic immigrants are being blamed for America’s ills, *Infamy* is a timely and important read.” — **James Bradley, author of *Flags of Our Fathers* and *The China Mirage***

“In *Infamy*, journalist Richard Reeves...provides a sweeping and searching account of this appalling chapter in the history of the United States.... Reeves reserves the heart of his book -- and rightfully so -- for a narrative of the heartbreakin experiences of evacuated individuals and families.” — ***San Francisco Chronicle***

“*Infamy*...is perhaps the most thorough history of the relocation to date.” — ***The Denver Post***

“More than 120,000 Japanese-Americans were locked up during World War II...[and *Infamy*] tells their tale with energy, compassion and moral outrage.... With meticulous care [Reeves documents] the decisions made in Washington by the world’s most powerful men, and how those decisions affected the lives of ordinary Americans whose only crime was to be of Japanese descent.” — ***Minneapolis Star Tribune***

Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II Details

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From Reader Review Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II for online ebook

Jessica Leight says

Reeves has an engaging writing style and addresses an important and underresearched question, but this book is more a collection of anecdotes than a real work of history. Some of the anecdotes are interesting, but I eventually grew tired of jumping around between various sketchily drawn historical figures and wished for more depth and more detail.

Mal Warwick says

Imagine that you live in a town of about 115,000 people. Berkeley, California, say. With only rumors and rumblings in the news media to warn you, an edict comes down from the Federal government that all the Muslims in town must be “relocated” to camps monitored by the US Army. Why? Because, supposedly, the threat of terrorism is so great, and the behavior of many Muslims so troubling, that they must be removed from their homes and placed in detention for the duration of the War on Terror.

Couldn’t happen here? Well, it did.

On April 21, 1942, the front-page story in the Oakland Tribune was headlined, “‘Japs Given Evacuation Orders Here.’ The article reported, ‘Moving swiftly, without any advance notice, The Western Defense Command today ordered Berkeley’s estimated 1,319 Japanese, aliens and citizens alike, to be evacuated to the Tanforan Assembly Center by noon, May 1.’ These Berkeley residents were among a total of about 120,000 Japanese Americans who were interned, two-thirds of them United States citizens — including the adopted Japanese children of Caucasian parents.

No doubt you’re aware that, not long after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the removal of all American Japanese from a broad swath of California, Oregon, and Washington bordering the Pacific and moved them into what even many at the time called “concentration camps.” However, chances are you don’t know the half of it. I certainly didn’t.

In Infamy, Richard Reeves brings the full story to light for the first time, working from one-on-one interviews, unclassified files, records of legislative hearings, and published sources to put a human face on this shameful episode in American history. His accounts of the families who lost everything, the children who grew up bitter, and the courageous soldiers of the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team are profoundly moving.

Today, many are aware that “the 442” was the most decorated unit in the history of the US Army and famously rescued the so-called Lost Battalion trapped behind German lines, losing as many as nine out of ten of its own men in some units to bring the surviving Texas National Guard members to safety. However, “[f]or most of the American reporters, the rescued not the rescuers, white men not Nisei, were the focus of the story.” The New York Times ran the headline “‘Doughboys Break German Ring to Free 270 Trapped Eight Days.’ The article did not mention that the ‘doughboys’ were Japanese Americans.”

FDR didn’t act alone in setting all this in motion. Far from it. Reeves unmasks the powerful people who

lobbied and spoke out for the evacuation. My jaw dropped as I tallied the list: Earl Warren, then Attorney General, later Governor of California and Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court. Edward R. Murrow and other prominent broadcasters. Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Artist and writer Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss). Walter Lippmann and other, less influential but then-famous newspaper columnists. Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy (“The Constitution is just a scrap of paper to me”), later president of the World Bank, chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations, and member of the Warren Commission. Plus every member of the Congressional delegations from California, Oregon, and Washington.

Warren, McCloy, and Lippman appear to have been the most influential in channeling into terms that could persuade the President the upwelling of vicious racism triggered by the attack on Pearl Harbor and early Japanese victories in the Pacific. (However, FDR himself was by no means immune to racism, as indicated by his decisions that adversely affected African-Americans and Jews.) Most of the nation’s newspapers — even the allegedly liberal New York Times — editorialized in favor of the evacuation. Within the Army, which managed the evacuation, the driving force was an ignorant and deeply prejudiced general named DeWitt and his top aide, a pathological liar named Bendetsen.

Why did they do this? Those who championed the evacuation argued that “[t]he Pacific Coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and without.” But economic motives figured in as well: the evacuees were forced to sell their homes, their farms, and their businesses for a pittance to their neighbors or other profiteers, who benefited hugely from the opportunity their government had given them.

There was dissent, but not much of it at first. The Navy objected because they knew perfectly well that the threat of invasion was an absurd fantasy; there was a single Japanese submarine off the Coast of California. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke out in her newspaper column. J. Edgar Hoover didn’t like the idea because he had already arrested everyone the FBI had tagged as potential spies and saboteurs starting the day after Pearl Harbor, and he wanted the credit; of course, Hoover’s idea of a “Suspect Enemy Alien” was wildly distorted. In the upper reaches of the Administration, only the Attorney General, Francis Biddle, spoke out forcefully and repeatedly in opposition — at Cabinet meetings and in letters to the President.

In 1943, a year after the evacuation, some of its erstwhile backers realized they had made a huge mistake. Despite continued opposition from the Army, regulations were steadily relaxed at most of the camps, with 4,300 young Japanese-Americans released to attend those colleges that were willing to take them and 4,000 more were recruited into the Army to form the 442. (Those 4,000 men “had to be replaced nearly 2.5 times. In total, about 14,000 men served, earning 9,486 Purple Hearts.”) Meanwhile, Lt. General DeWitt and Colonel Bendetsen were quietly relieved of their duties and promoted. The general even received a fourth star.

Roosevelt charged McCloy and Stimson with drawing up the evacuation order with great care to avoid giving the impression that the action was racist. Naturally, that’s exactly what it was. There were no concentration camps for German and Italian immigrants on the East Coast.

Reeves documents in abundant detail the hysterical wave of racism that swept through the West — in newspaper editorials, speeches by public officials, confrontations between whites and Japanese-Americans, and in the occasional violence directed at individual families.

Infamy fills a void in documenting a vital example of the racism that has scarred American history from the time the Pilgrims landed until the present day. The evacuation of American Japanese in World War II paled against slavery or the genocidal war against Native Americans. However, if the shameful treatment of immigrants over throughout our history — Irish, Germans, Italians, Jews, Chinese, and others — were to be

ranked in order of severity, the incarceration of more than one hundred thousand Japanese-Americans would top the list. And after the war, thousands of the internees were deported to Japan!

Diz says

The tragedy of what happened to Japanese-Americans on the west coast is well documented in this book. It includes lots of stories and personal accounts from people who were in the camps, so the content is good. However, the information was not well organized. This book jumps around in time without a strong focus, and several accounts were repeated multiple times. Perhaps the author of this book needs to find a new editor. With some sharp editing, this could have been a really good book.

Amelia says

I wish this book had been better...I think the narrative focus was bogged down by too many quotes unlinked from descriptive context. Too journalistic? I don't know, I've read other books by journalists which didn't suffer from this problem. I think this is a book that needed to be written -- the author mentions many other books written in the 70's and 80's on the subject of Japanese internment, but I still feel like many people don't have a good understanding of what happened. This book attempted to provide context as well as personal stories, and I wish that it had a more focused, cohesive thesis to really bring its points home.

Emily says

5 Stars for Content
3 Stars for Readability

"The dangers of history repeating itself seem greater given that this story is often forgotten, or treated as a footnote in the larger, mostly heroic description of World War II found in American history textbooks."

This quote from the second page of the introduction is honestly my favorite part of the book. We have already seen with at least one specific political candidate this season suggest camps for someone seen as an enemy, without any justification. When we fail to learn about these shameful periods of American history we curse ourselves with repeating them. Infamy thoroughly examines the quick, prejudicial internment of American citizens in the days following Pearl Harbor based significantly on hearsay and rumors. Although some of these citizens were living on expired visas, many were American citizens and therefore unconstitutionally detained.

Although the information within the story is not only important, but also interesting, as a historical book goes it is a difficult read. For the most part this book reads like a disjointed litany of short, anecdotal quips. Although the book seems to be arranged chronologically, that doesn't make it easier or more interesting to read. Normally I can read a smoothly transitioning historical nonfiction piece in large increments, but I could only muster a few pages at a time with this one. On a brighter note, I LOVE the biographical notes, notes, and an extensive bibliographic information.

Elizabeth Theiss says

Many years ago when I served as district director of a congressional office, an elderly Japanese gentleman came to see me to discuss the Congressman's position on a resolution apologizing for the internment of over 120,000 Japanese who had resided on the West coast during the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. In later years I would read the Korematsu opinion in which the US Supreme Court would affirm the constitutionality of the Japanese internment without due process of law. At the time, I listened politely and promised to do what I could.

Infamy is the story of how and why loyal Americans of Japanese descent and resident aliens with jobs and property were rounded up and sent to Assembly Centers and then on to concentration camps in the harshest conditions for the remainder of the War. Most did not have sufficient time to secure their property or arrange for the operation of their businesses. In many cases, the greedy offered them a pittance for valuables and property. They lost their homes and their livelihoods.

Richard Reeves has chronicled what happened, why, and with what consequences in this detailed and fascinating history. Racism was rampant when news spread about the deaths at Pearl Harbor and the knee jerk reaction was fear. Executive Order 9906 created a large Japanese exclusion area based in the mistaken belief that people of Japanese descent would form a "Fifth column" to welcome Japanese invaders to the west coast and hasten their victory. Dissenting voices were drowned in the drumbeat of fear and anger.

The most compelling element of this book is Reeves' accounts of individuals on all sides of the chaotic removal policy. He quotes liberally from letters and documents describing the daily lives of internees. What bothered many of them the most were the armed guards and barbed wire surrounding the camps; guns were pointed inward at the people who voluntarily surrendered their lives and property during removal.

Reeves is not a neutral narrator. His outrage is clear between the lines on every page and it is impossible not to feel the same. It reminded me of how I felt about the anti-Muslim tide in the wake of 9/11. Because we are human we can and must learn from the past. Infamy has much to teach.

Greg Brozeit says

The idea of the United States is pretty good in theory. That's what makes the despicable parts of our history so infuriating. Most who pay attention and are intellectually honest know something (or at least should) about how we have treated indigenous civilizations, black Americans—from slavery through Jim Crow to Black Lives Matter—and virtually every large category of immigrants or easily marginalized populations. Yet large numbers of Americans believe accounting for societal and governmental wrongs is, in and of itself, unpatriotic and anti-American. They fear history. They embrace ignorance to justify their ideologies and prejudices. That's why we are often subjected to the rule of demagogues at local, state, national and commercial levels. Today their primary targets are Muslims, progressives and those who accept the validity of the scientific method. Our seemingly endless penchant to identify new—or re-identify old—scapegoats inspired Richard Reeves to recount the story of the internment of Japanese-Americans in WWII to illuminate current events.

Today, relatively few Americans know anything about the internment of Japanese-Americans. Before the term meaning of the term changed, they were known as concentration camps. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, hysteria, racism, and political expediency all converged to hastily create a policy to round up Japanese-Americans who lived in the west coast states of California, Oregon and Washington and place them in camps in the west, the mountain states and Arkansas. For no other reason than their appearance, 120,313 Japanese-Americans were wrongfully suspected being either active or potential collaborators with Japanese empire. With very few exceptions, they lost their homes, jobs, businesses and financial security. They were transported to isolated areas with harsh, unfamiliar climates. While officials claimed this was done to protect them, the camps were fenced in with the guns of the watchtowers aimed inward.

Reeves' account is mostly a compilation of anecdotal experiences of those interned: how their abrupt removal was taken advantage of by profiteers (much like European Jews in WWII) what life was like in the camps, how—despite their treatment—many tried to demonstrate their “Americanness” by serving in the military, and how some, especially older persons without family support, actually found comfort and stability in the camps. Some took \$75 for cars that had been purchased for thousands just months earlier. Many sold their businesses at low costs with the promise that they could buy them back only to find out that the people they trusted sold them on to others of a big profit. A regiment of Japanese-American soldiers, virtually all who had been in internment camps, that was sent to Europe became the most decorated American battalion in WWII. On the other hand, older, first generation Japanese-Americans were forced to leave the camps—everyone who was released was given a train ticket to their destination and \$25—because they realized that they had no place to return, some committed suicide.

Much like the survivors of the Holocaust in the two decades that followed WWII, most internees did their best to hide their experiences from the public. Even the best movie about greed of those who profited off the internment polices, *Bad Day at Black Rock* didn't portray the plight of the Japanese-American community (but it did have one of the best fight scenes in the history of cinema). While a few internees later were elected to Congress and sponsored legislation to garner a national apology and grant minimal reparations of \$20,000 per internee after more than 30 years, the national monument to them, while stunningly beautiful and touching, is the hardest to find in Washington, DC, nestled on a small triangular block near the foot of Capitol Hill. And the racism encountered by Japanese-Americans still exists in parts of the U.S.

There was little that was new to me. I was fortunate to have had a great professor who taught about the *Korematsu* case that reached the Supreme Court, which challenged the constitutionality of internment. It was unsuccessful. Together with the infamous *Dred Scott* decision that upheld slavery prior to the Civil War and *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, which maintained Jim Crow laws, *Korematsu* is one of the great stains on American constitutional law. The attorney general of California, Earl Warren, used his support of internment to propel himself to the governorship. He would later become the greatest Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (and most hated by conservatives) who led the most progressive decisions in U.S. history including the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* case that led to the desegregation of public schools. He rarely spoke of internment and broke down crying when asked about it in a 1971 interview.

As Reeves recounts in his conclusion, President Harry Truman wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, “These disgraceful incidents almost make you believe that a lot of our Americans have a streak of Nazi in them.” An awareness of the history of concentration camps like those of the Boer War, the Nazi death camps, and the Japanese internment camps is more important today than ever. Consider the responses of Fox News (sic and sick) to the June 3, 2017 London terrorist attacks: these “pundits” actually raise the foolish, sick (not sic) idea that the United Kingdom should consider creating internment camps!

I struggled with this review because I so wanted to like this book. I gave it two stars because I realized that I

had a greater knowledge and understanding of this history than I thought I did. It read like a long newspaper article that spent no time on the “whats,” “hows,” and “whys” behind the stories. What, for example drove the individuals behind these decisions, how were they made, and why were none of them held accountable? More cynically, it had the feel of a well-known author who strung together bits of information that research assistants were feeding him in assembly line fashion. Perhaps I would give it three stars for adults who are completely ignorant of this episode and four stars for high school students and young adults. It has lofty goals but falls far short of its promise.

H Wesselius says

Its a shocking story yet not untold and nowhere in the book do you get the sense this story needs to be retold. In other words, there's nothing new here. The current anti-foreign sentiment in the US especially towards Arabs and/or Muslims may make the story relevant for today's fear based political narratives and in that way the book does serve a purpose. However, a far more interesting and fresh look at the interment camps is the Train to Crystal City which looks at the family camps and reparation programs -- a fairly unknown part of this story.

Steven Z. says

At a time when Donald Trump harangues the American electorate with his views on prohibiting Muslims from entering the United States in reaction to the horrific attack in San Bernardino, CA we find the Republican candidate as well as political pundits pointing to Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 which created “internment camps” for American Japanese during World War II. If we are to accept what Trump says, then FDR's actions set a precedent for going against the freedom of religion amendment to the United States Constitution. With the repeated reference to the plight of American Japanese during the war on cable and network news it is propitious that veteran journalist and biographer, Richard Reeves' latest book, Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese Internment in World War II has recently been published. The story that Reeves unveils was not a shining moment for the United States, a moment that saw the US government wait decades to apologize for, and make somewhat of a restitution (in 1988 President Reagan signed a bill paying each living survivor of the camps \$20,000). Having visited the Heart Mountain Japanese Internment camp, located outside Cody, WY this past summer I find Reeves' approach to his topic, providing a window into what life was like for the victims of America's racist and xenophobic policy towards its own citizens extremely important. The author bases the core of the book on the stories of the evacuated families who “were caught between those heroes and villians” who either used the situation for their own political or economic agendas or those whose values were repulsed, who spoke out against what was occurring.

From Reeves' account the reader is introduced to a number of American Japanese families as they react to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the government's actions against them. First, they must deal with “white” anger that is visited upon them through violent acts and destruction of their property. Second, after FDR issues the executive order, they are rounded up by the military and police and are sent to assembly camps for a few months until the government could build the camps that eventually would house 120, 313 inmates. Reeves' is correct as he develops the political process that led to the executive order, in that, as he did with America's response to the Holocaust, FDR wanted to separate himself as much as possible from the final decision delegating responsibility to American military officials rather than taking a public role himself.

Once the ten camps were built between March and October, 1942, the inmates were moved and families had to live in barracks with no plumbing. Reeves' describes in detail the effect on American Japanese families; loss of dignity, loss of property, loss of self-identity, and of course loss of civil rights. Reeves has mined memoirs, documents, and conducted numerous interviews in creating an accurate narrative of what actually happened in the camps, events leading up to internment, and what the inmates experienced following their release.

Reeves does a commendable job introducing the major political and military figures who were at the core of the story. Lt. General John DeWitt, an army bureaucrat and former Civilian Conservation Corps organizer, a man untrained militarily for his position, but was the head of the western command of the US Army in December, 1941. DeWitt believed that "A Jap is a Jap... You can't tell one Jap from another." According to Reeves, DeWitt was not an especially bright individual who usually parroted the last opinion he heard as his own. His second in command was Captain Karl Bendetson, who changed the spelling of his last name to hide his Jewish roots, and developed the plan that would result in the internment program. Other important individuals include California Attorney General and later Governor, Earl Warren whose racist ideas led him to support internment. However, later in his career as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court he oversaw *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, KA decision, and headed the most liberal court in American history. Walter Lippmann, the well-known columnist whose column of February 13, 1942 pressured FDR to act as he argued if nothing was done a surprise domestic attack would occur as the enemy within was waiting for the critical moment to act. Eleanor Roosevelt warned that Americans should not overreact and succumb to public hysteria. Attorney General Francis Biddle who refused to implement the plan, Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes fought behind the scenes against the internment program, referring to them as "fancy-named concentration camps." Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson who agreed the action was unconstitutional but rationalized, as many other officials did, the camps were designed to protect American Japanese from the violence of vigilantes. As Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy summed up, "If it is a question of safety of the country and the Constitution...why, the Constitution is just a scrap of paper to me."

What drove the policy was fear and greed. Fear of a possible Japanese invasion of the West Coast, a fear that should have disappeared after the Battle of Midway in June, 1942 when the damage to the Japanese fleet was such that they could no longer threaten the West Coast. A part from fear, was greed; as California businessmen, fisherman, and farmers resented their American Japanese, and as Reeves describes saw an opportunity to seize property and profits once internment began. Greed also motivated regular citizens as American Japanese were forced to sell their property and possessions at ridiculously low prices when they were given only 48 hours to get ready, and were told they could only bring what they could carry.

The conditions at the outset were abhorrent as the government was not prepared to receive so many inmates. At the outset they were sent to race tracks, fairgrounds, and livestock auction sites until camps could be built. The description of the constant odor of horse manure and urine reflects how American Japanese citizens were treated. The program was instituted to prevent a "fifth column" of Japanese from hurting the war effort, but as historians have found, none ever existed. To the credit of the inmates they did their best to show what patriotic Americans they were by dutifully responding to government orders, and peacefully cooperating as they were being rounded up and dispatched to camps. One of the most interesting facets of the book is Reeves' description of how the inmates did their best to make a bad situation better as part of their contribution to the war effort. They created a "small town" atmosphere in the camps by developing hospitals, schools, movie theaters, to improve their situation. No matter how ill-treated the inmates were, they tried to respond positively and make as little trouble as possible. There were dissenters, and Reeves describes the law suits and legal battles that led to Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of FDR's order. Even a civil libertarian justice like William O. Douglas supported internment.

Importantly, Reeves explores the role of the American Japanese who were either born in the US, the Nisei, and the Kibei, those born in the US, educated in Japan and had returned. The US military had a tremendous need for Japanese linguists and the role American Japanese played in the war in the Pacific was extremely important. The linguists were used as interrogators, “cave flushers,” (men who went into the caves that Japanese soldiers had hidden in during island warfare and tried to convince them to surrender), combat, and other areas. Perhaps their most important contribution to the war effort was in military intelligence. The Japanese government felt that their language was so difficult that it was impenetrable. As a result their codes were halfheartedly developed allowing the US to break them resulting in the victory at Midway, the death of Pacific Commander Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the man who developed the plan and carried out the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and a number of other important victories. Historians agree with Reeves that the intelligence contributions of these American Japanese saved American lives and perhaps shortened the war. Another major contribution by American Japanese was as soldiers as the war progressed. By 1943 they were seen as a solution to some manpower issues and the government began to encourage enlistment and later a draft. Inmates were hesitant because of how they and their families were treated, in addition to the loyalty oaths they were expected to sign. In all, 25,778 Nisei served in the military during World War II, roughly 13,500 from the mainland and the remainder from Hawaii. Of that figure 18,143 received combat decorations. Between the 442nd Regimental Combat Team that excelled in northern Italy and France, success as pilots, and their intelligence work, they made an important contribution to the war effort despite how they were despised by so many.

Another area that stands out is Reeves’ discussion as to how the inmates reacted once they were finally released. Many felt they had nowhere to go as they realized returning to their homes and businesses on the West Coast was very problematical. Others, mostly elderly, did not want to leave because they had settled into camp life, and the fact that housing, food, and comradeship were provided, as over time they began to feel more secure. As Reeves accurately perceives it became “assisted living” for many. Reeves does a remarkable job describing the experiences of the inmates who tried to return to the West Coast after the war, finding their property was destroyed or stolen, and being brought face to face with the remnants of the racism that had led to their incarceration. It is interesting to note that 88% of American Japanese lived on the West Coast before the war, and after the war it declined to 70%, in a sense following FDR’s goal that the former inmates would be scattered throughout the United States after the war to avoid trouble.

It is important to note that six weeks after FDR’s reelection on December 18, 1944 the Supreme Court ruled that the government and the army acted constitutionally when it came to mass detention in the Korematsu case. The day before the decision came down the government released everyone from the camps. Interestingly, that decision had been reached a year before, but as usual for FDR, politics came first, and he would not allow the release until after his reelection. The decision itself was predicated on a 6-3 vote supporting the mass incarceration. Writing in dissent, Justice Frank Murphy wrote that the decision is a “legalization of racism, all residents of this nation are kin and in some way by blood and culture to a foreign land. Yet they are primarily and necessarily a part of a new civilization of the United States. They must be treated at all times as the heirs of the American experiment and as entitled to all of the rights and freedoms granted by the Constitution...Such exclusion goes over the very brink of constitutional power and falls into the ugly abyss of racism.” Perhaps Donald Trump should read this dissenting opinion, and Reeves splendid book before spewing his seemingly constant racist remarks.

Ms.pegasus says

Journalist Richard Reeves tells a multi-faceted story of the Japanese-American internment during World War II. The administrative chronicle is a cascade of dates beginning with Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. A little over a month elapsed between Executive Order 9066 (Feb. 19, 1942) and the opening of the first relocation settlement, Manzanar, in southern California (March 22, 1942). Shelter, food, clothing, plumbing, climate control and medical facilities for some 120,000 newly confined men, women and children in the space of one month? Well, not quite. The chaos was overwhelming. Many families had less than 48 hours to pack up. The temporary assembly centers included sites such as Santa Anita Racetrack and the Pacific International Stock Exposition Grounds. The actual relocation settlements were being constructed while families arrived. The tenth and final resettlement site, Jerome, in southeastern Arkansas, did not open until Oct. 6, 1942. With the “Bring only what you can carry” directive, families were left to scavenge for building materials, share unpartitioned communal latrines and showers, and cope with insects and temperature extremes on their own.

Reeves touches on the political narrative that includes President Roosevelt, then attorney general of California Earl Warren, secretary of war Henry Stimson and ACLU founder Roger Baldwin. He devotes considerable space to racism which had a history dating back to long before Pearl Harbor. He also includes the story of economic motivations. Mass evacuation of Japanese-Americans in Hawaii did not occur because it would have ruined the Hawaiian economy. In the U.S. there were “...white merchants and farmers who wanted to eliminate competition from California's six thousand Japanese-operated farms, which totalled at least 250,000 acres and were worth more than \$75 million. More than 40 percent of California's produce was from American Japanese farms that often stood on land white farmers ignored as too poor for cultivation.” (p.20) As a result of the relocation, one Oregon farm in Klamath Falls complete with land, crops and buildings was sold by its Japanese-American owners for only \$75. Cars, furniture, and household goods were practically given away. Other losses could not even be measured in dollars: books, family albums, letters, heirlooms, records, beloved family pets. There is also a less publicized sociological narrative of fractured family structures and exacerbated inter-generational conflict.

Amidst these varied perspectives, the human stories are the most eloquent. Richard Karasawa, fourteen years old at the time, recalled visiting a friend at one of the assembly centers: “*The horse urine was so strong you could never get rid of the smell. So when I'd visit my friend, I couldn't stay there long because of the horse urine. I don't know how they could stand it...and I'm from a farm family, I was around horses all the time you know.*” (p.79) Mary Sakaguchi Oda described her older sister's contracting bronchial asthma at Poston in the Arizona desert. “*The asthma became intractable, and she died at the age of twenty-six.*” (p.128)

It was a telling sign that so many Nisei went by American names. It was not just because teachers had difficulty pronouncing Japanese names. They considered themselves American. Military intelligence recruiters had difficulty finding bilingual translators because only an estimated three percent of Nisei were fluent in Japanese. Bill Hosokawa, a journalist, recalled: “*I thought I [had] a fair speaking knowledge of the language, but the interviewer quickly proved me completely inadequate....First he asked me to read a high school text. I could make out perhaps two or three characters in a hundred.*” (p.145)

One of the most interesting events was the story of Isamu Noguchi, the famous sculptor. He was a U.S. citizen living in New York, was half Japanese, and was educated in Japan. Looking for a way to help the incarcerated families, he volunteered to go to Poston to teach art. It was a big mistake. He was a sophisticated intellectual. Poston was primarily populated by apolitical pragmatically minded farmers with no interest in art. On July 28, 1942 Noguchi sought permission to leave Poston. The suspicious army bureaucracy detained him and would not grant permission to leave until Nov. 2 of that year.

Reeves recognizes the range of responses to life in the relocation camps. On the whole, younger people were

more adaptable. Sports teams, dances, schools and scout troops were formed. While teenagers often revelled at the freedom from authoritarian family control, their Issei parents were still grieving for their lost livelihoods, homes, and property. Now, they began to see the disintegration of their values and culture as well. As early release initiatives became available, youthful Nisei embraced educational and employment opportunities. The evacuees were a diverse mix in other ways as well. Reeves notes: “*City people were uncomfortable with country folk. The same was true of English speakers and monolingual Japanese. Buddhists and Christians often distrusted each other. Californians were generally disliked by Oregon and Washington people.*” (p.116)

Reeves has successfully sifted through mountains of information including taped oral histories and newspaper archives. In attempting to make his story more readable he frequently diverges from a strictly chronological narrative. For example, he introduces material on the so-called “Loyalty Oath” of January 1943 in Chapter 6 on page 143). However, he then diverts his story to the history of Japanese-American participation in the American military, including the formation of the One Hundredth Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He resumes the story of the “Loyalty Oath” on page 155. As a result of this interruption, the cause and effect relationship between the “Loyalty Oath” event and the transformation of Tule Lake into a volatile and troubled “Segregation Center” is obscured. January 1943 was Act 2 of an evolving emotional dynamic.

In contextualizing the personal stories, Reeves loses a certain emotional impact due to the demands of space. For example he relates Hiroshi Kashiwagi's mother's painful experience. “*Because of curfews it was difficult for her to see a dentist. When she did find a dentist, he told her there would be no dental care where she was going. He then proceeded to pull out all her teeth one by one.*” (p.69) The complete story is much worse. In KINENHI; REFLECTIONS ON TULE LAKE, Kashiwagi is quoted: “*She was supposed to have all her teeth pulled slowly one at a time. He [the dentist] was outside the 5-mile limit, so he decided to pull out all her teeth at one time. That night she started to bleed and it wouldn't stop. We phoned the doctor and he said to have her bite on gauze. He knew about the curfew and, of course, he wouldn't come out. My mother was already going through a lot of gauze and sheeting material, and the bleeding wouldn't stop. She was getting pale. Luckily, another dentist had moved out from another town and happened to be in town. So we took her to this dentist and he said he would sew her gums. That stopped the bleeding for a while, then it started again. We took her back and he sewed it again. Finally it stopped. Later in camp she went to see that first dentist. He wouldn't make any false plates for her because he wasn't supposed to. That was another traumatic thing for my mother: she wasn't yet 40 and she had to go to camp without any teeth. To go into the mess hall and sit in front of strangers and try to eat gracefully without any teeth was really something.*” (p.20)

This book is an important summary of the events of that period. The Epilogue is a forceful statement of the relevance of these events to Americans today. However, it should not be the last book readers explore on this subject. There remains considerable debate about the role of the Japanese American Citizen League and its failure to advocate forcefully against the government's policy. There is also much debate about the language used in discussing the event. There is a considerable body of literature on the legal arguments regarding the west coast evacuation. In addition, readers seeking greater detail will also need to research the stories about each of the individual camps.

NOTES:

Examples of Isamu Noguchi <https://www.rockefellercenter.com/blo...>

Camps

Tule Lake (northern California), opened May 27, 1942;

Minidoka (southern Idaho), opened Aug. 10, 1942;
Topaz (western Utah), opened Sept. 11, 1942;
Manzanar (southern California), opened March 22, 1942;
Poston (western Arizona), opened May 8, 1942;
Gila River (eastern Arizona), opened July 20, 1942;
Heart Mountain (northern Wyoming), opened August 12, 1942
Amache (southeastern Colorado), opened Aug. 24, 1942
Rohwer (Arkansas), opened Sept. 18, 1942
Jerome (Arkansas), opened Oct. 6, 1942

Richard Levine says

The US internment of Japanese Americans during WWII is an important but shameful part of American history. Especially now, it is crucial for us to remember what happened, try to understand it, and to learn from our mistakes. This book by the well-known journalist Richard Reeves is thus timely and useful. Unfortunately, while Reeves clearly has conducted extensive research and is properly sympathetic to the plight of those forced from their homes and herded into "concentration camps," his book isn't terribly enlightening, lacks a clear focus, and suffers from some sloppy editing.

The book does one thing well: as suggested by the subtitle, it provides pages and pages of "shocking" anecdotes from numerous different Japanese Americans of the brutal hardships they endured. Families were abruptly uprooted from their homes, often forced to sell their land or possessions at fire sale prices (i.e., property was basically stolen from them), and shipped off to poorly constructed camps in the harsh desert. While we heroically fought a world war against the evil Axis powers, we did some very bad things here at home against fellow Americans, based on a racist point of view. It is important to remember this; and retelling these stories is necessary to help us not forget. And yet, there are many chapters in Infamy that just read like a mishmash of similar anecdotes, with the same things sometimes recounted more than once, and with no clear point other than to say, "See, isn't this utterly SHOCKING?"

On the other hand, when it comes to explaining how and why the US government decided to do this incredibly Un-American thing to American citizens -- which to me is the main (and shocking) historical question that needs to be addressed -- Reeves doesn't give what I found to be a very clear or cogent summary. In his Introduction, Reeves names a number of "villains" and "heroes" of the saga. But in his narrative he chooses to fixate on two army officers as being the main villains. This seemed odd to me, because while these two men displayed obvious racism and were responsible for much misinformation about the degree to which Japanese Americans posed a threat to US security, they were not the ultimate decision makers. One of the greatest Presidents, Franklin D. Roosevelt (not a known racist), after hearing differing views from cabinet members, agreed to sign the Executive Order authorizing the removal and internment. (As a side note, and an example of the sloppy writing and editing in the book, Reeves names FDR's Secretary of State Cordell Hull as one of the "villains" on p xvii in the Introduction, but then Hull is never mentioned again in the book.) Another major historical figure who played a large role in the events, strongly supporting removal, was Earl Warren, then the California Attorney General. Reeves discusses Warren's role and is highly critical of him, which seems fair. But he never addresses the question that comes to mind for any reader who knows of Warren's later career as Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, where he showed himself to be a decent and courageous public figure: Why?

[I was so dissatisfied with Reeves's chapter discussing the lead up to FDR's Executive Order, that after finishing Infamy I picked up biographical works about FDR and Warren to try to get a better understanding of what they might have been thinking. In the Earl Warren bio, *Justice for All*, by Jim Newton, there is one excellent chapter that discusses Warren's role, as well as his later regrets about it (although during his lifetime he refused to make a public apology). In *No Ordinary Times*, by Doris Kearns Goodwin, there's a three-page discussion of the events leading up to FDR's signing of the Executive Order, which much more clearly and succinctly covers the same ground as Reeves.]

If I hadn't known anything about this topic before reading this book, maybe I would have been less disappointed. But I knew the basics of what happened; I had read the appalling Supreme Court decisions that upheld FDR's Executive Order, and I have visited the very moving Japanese American Patriotism Memorial in Washington, DC, within sight of the US Capitol. Since, as Reeves notes in his Epilogue, there have now been hundreds of books written about this sorry episode in American history, I was hoping that this one would give me a better explanation, a more complete understanding not just of **WHAT** happened, but **WHY** it happened.

Pat says

Richard Reeves has researched the history of the Japanese American internment very thoroughly. The brutal facts of their incarceration following President Roosevelt's decree are combined with the personal stories that make this a compelling read. It is haunting to realize how many Japanese Americans served in WWII despite their treatment, and how the lives of so many good Japanese Americans were impacted by the hysteria following the invasion of Pearl Harbor. It isn't easy to read about the greed by those who profited from the internment of their neighbors and the bewilderment of the families who thought of themselves as patriotic Americans prior to their imprisonment. I am grateful to LibraryThing for the opportunity to review this riveting account of a shameful period in America's history.

Kara says

Revised Review April 21, 2015:

***Infamy* Best "Big Picture" History A Reader Could Hope to Find -- Concisely Details Causes, Human Impact & Present Significance of Great Injustice with Passion & Clarity**

I. Why I Read This Book --

Because of the gravity and continued relevance today of the issues raised by our country's disgraceful treatment of Japanese-American citizens under color of law during WWII, I was immediately drawn to this book when I saw it listed among the titles available in a recent Early Reviewer giveaway. I studied the Supreme Court case failing to invalidate the "internment" program under the Constitution in law school (i.e. *Korematsu*). However I didn't know any of the details of the policy's development and enforcement -- let alone the experience of the people forced from their homes and collected in concentration camps (that was the name used in government documents apparently -- the term was not linked with the Nazi genocide program directly at that time). I wanted to know more.

II. My Personal Opinion After Reading --

Ultimately, author Richard Reeves did more than satisfy my intellectual curiosity with an engaging, accessible and concise history of the key events. However, these qualities would not suffice to constitute an outstanding history. Reeves managed to accomplish what I think is the more difficult and more important work of the historian -- to give the reader a fuller, more palpable and cognizable sense of the toll on human dignity involved in what happened. He achieved this due to the combined effects of two strengths of this history:

- 1) The reader got a textured sense of the impact of the incarceration on the substance and quality of daily life of the people affected and on individuals' lifetimes, which was tantamount to stealing years of time from the totality of human beings' experience on this earth! This is to say nothing of the disruptions to the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness of each victim that could not be remedied upon release from internment. Lives could not be picked up and continued as if nothing had happened, to grossly understate the matter. This history makes sure readers get some understanding of what that specifically meant in individual victims' post-war lives. Through reading this book, one way readers can better appreciate the injustice done to Japanese Americans by their government during this period due to this wise choice to particularly focus on its human impact despite the book's relative brevity. Different histories might have focused primarily on explication of the causes and machinations of state that made the injustices possible as well as detailing exactly what (as well as how, why, where and to whom) it happened. Rather than going into further analysis of the unfolding of this awful chain of events, Reeves balanced his history with a sense of the lives impacted by the events at issue.
- 2) Granted I came to this book with a deep sense of personal outrage at what my country's government did -- as an American and as a human being. But, I think that the second way this history does an outstanding job of presenting the breadth, depth and sheer grievousness of what happened is Reeves's own contagious passion -- which is appropriately contained between the lines, yet constant throughout -- about what happened. Because Reeves does not assume a false neutrality to the question of whether actions taken which effectuated this chain of events were right or wrong, he does an outstanding job on maintaining a laser like focus on what is most important. I, for one, couldn't ask for a better big picture from a historian.

This book effectively argues that what was done during WWII in the western part of the United States to some people on the sole basis of personal connections to Japan through ancestral descent and/or nativity, are deeds which should most properly -- most vitally -- live ever on in infamy among the people of this country and every country.

III. My Thoughts for Prospective Readers

In conclusion, I will go so far as to say that whatever you think of the title when you start reading, you will probably better appreciate the relative fitness of the choice when you finish. I personally think this is an outstanding contribution to American historical discourse that should reach as many people as possible of every nationality. I've set forth some of its particular strengths that distinguish it from the pack, IMHO, for your consideration...

But for realies, who the heck am I to estimate your final valuation of a purely hypothetical reading of some book I happen to love? This is the rub: the good people at LibraryThing's Early Reviewers program gave me a free copy of this gem to read on the condition that I'd share my honest impressions in a review posted on their site. I have always thought in such cases: "Why not copy to Goodreads and Amazon?" I figure it couldn't do any great harm. So here we are. Thank you for considering my ideas, and in all seriousness, I

really hope they prove useful to some of you.

Steve Hahn says

Rambling at best. Entire book could have been condensed to a long magazine article.

George says

COMPREHENSIVE, INFORMATIVE AND SAD.

“Guarded by soldiers in machine-gun towers, none of them were charged with any crime against the United States. In fact, there was not a single American of Japanese descent, alien or citizen, charged with espionage or sabotage during the war.”—page 6

As national policy blunders go, Executive Order 9066 was a doozie. The forced removal, and indeterminate imprisonment in concentration camps, of more than one hundred and twenty thousand Japanese Americans (seven out of ten of whom were U. S. citizens) in truly horrible conditions—in the words of Depression-era photographer, Dorothea Lange, *“entirely on the basis of what blood may be coursing through a person’s veins...”* (page 156)—and place of residence, was unconscionable.

Richard Reeves’s book *INFAMY: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II*, offers an insightful, illuminating, and comprehensive look at the times, the people and the attitudes of the period. It is also the first time that I learned about the two thousand Latin Americans of Japanese descent who were kidnapped, held imprisoned in Crystal City, Texas, and used to exchange for diplomatic Americans held in Japan. [That moves Jan Jarboe Russell’s book, *The Train to Crystal City* up my to-read list.]

The role and riots of the Tule Lake segregation center—for those considered and/or confused into seeming ‘disloyal’—was new to me, too.

Kudos to Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams and Pearl Buck. Shame on you Dr. Seuss. Shame on you Earl Warren. Shame on you Aimee Semple McPherson. Quadruple shame on you Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Recommendation: Read, study, and think about the similarities of attitudes prevailing then and now.

“When Private Shiro Kashino, who joined the army from Minidoka, first saw the row of huts behind barbed wire at Dachau, he said, ‘This is exactly what they had built for us in Idaho.’ ”—page 209

“The Japanese American experience clearly answered the question, ‘Could it happen here?’ It did.”—page 240

NOOKbook edition, 340 pages
