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"The caravan of buses takes us miles out of town into the country. The blacktop ends and we travel along a barely visible road on flat dry terrain. Dusk lends an eerie look to the brown dust clouds churned by the buses ahead.

"In the distance, in the middle of the vast dry, flat land, hundreds of black barracks enclosed by barbed wire come into view. Silhouettes of guard towers surround the compound. We stop by the gate, above which is one of the towers, with the two guards armed with rifles. A machine gun at their feet, pointed at us, sends a chilling message. How come, I ask myself? Didn't they tell us that we were being sent here for "protective custody?" What are the guards thinking? Will they shoot anybody running sideways? Do they really think that we are dangerous?"

Former internee, Kiyo Sato, describing arrival at Pinedale Assembly Center. From *Kiyo's Story* © 2008, 2009 by Kiyo Sato, courtesy of Soho Press, Inc. Photo of Guard Tower at Fresno Assembly Center - Library of Congress Archives

**"Imagine, tonight--  
You and your whole family  
Asleep at this site."**

Lawson Fusao Inada



When these Japanese American citizens were interned during World War II, playing, watching, and supporting the game of baseball inside of the camps brought a sense of normalcy to very abnormal lives. In this rare 1942 photograph, athletes in various team uniforms, often made from torn mattresses, are posed in front of barracks constructed at the Fresno Fairgrounds. Library of Congress Archives

After Executive Order 9066 was signed authorizing removal of persons of Japanese Ancestry from the West Coast, 16 Assembly Centers were built as temporary detention facilities until more permanent housing was constructed. Most of the Assembly Centers were converted from pre-existing race tracks and fairgrounds with horse stalls used as living quarters. The largest and longest-occupied temporary detention center was at the Santa Anita Race Track, housing 19,348, of which 8,500 were living in converted horse stalls.

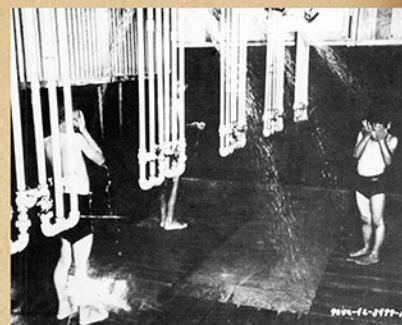
The Fresno Assembly Center was located on the Fresno Fairgrounds. Over 5,100 Japanese Americans from Central California were interned at that facility from May to October 1942, before being moved to War Relocation Centers in Jerome, Arkansas, and Gila River and Poston, Arizona.

"The stall was about ten by twenty feet and empty except for three folded Army cots lying on the floor. Dust, dirt, and wood shavings covered the linoleum that had been laid over manure-covered boards, the smell of horses hung in the air, and the whitened corpses of many insects still clung to the hastily white-washed walls." Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*, Bancroft Library

"... [I]t is hereby ordered that from and after . . . May 17, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, be excluded from that portion of Military Area No. 1 described as follows: All of the City of Fresno, State of California." Civilian Exclusion Order No. 64 issued by General DeWitt, May 11, 1942



Visitors to any Assembly Center could expect to be thoroughly searched for possible contraband. Library of Congress Archives



Few Japanese Americans would have ever believed that their young children would be forced to take communal showers at the Fresno Assembly Center. Library of Congress Archives



Japanese Americans from San Pedro arrived at the Santa Anita Race Track where they were housed in the horse stalls seen in the background. National Archives

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