

Euphemisms, Definitions, and Preferred Terminology: *Language Related to the Imprisonment of Japanese Americans and Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II*
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Terminology is very important when working on your projects. One needs to be aware of euphemistic language that has been around to make the Japanese American Experience seem more palatable or, at times, even attempt to hide the historical truth. A euphemism is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for another considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

Please use clear, precise, and accurate terminology when working on your project.

Euphemism

Preferred Terminology

Alien	Immigrant, Issei, not a citizen of the US (could not legally become naturalized citizens until 1952—see below, the Immigration and Nationality Act)
Assembly center	temporary detention facility
Civilian exclusion orders	detention orders
Evacuation	forced removal
Nazi concentration camps	death camps; killing centers—see Important Note below*
Evacuees	incarcerees, inmates, prisoners of forced illegal removal
Internees	incarcerees, inmates, prisoners of forced illegal removal
Internment center	Department of Justice center or Army camp holding alien enemies under Alien Enemies Act 1798
May be excluded	evicted from one’s home; forced removal
Non-aliens	U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry
Relocation center	American concentration camp, incarceration camp, illegal detention center; the inmates held here are ‘incarcerees’
Relocation	incarceration in camps or concentration cam

Definitions

Euphemism—a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for another considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing. Euphemisms are often used to conceal the truth.

Concentration Camp—People often think of concentration camp as a World War II phenomenon, but historical records of concentration camps exist much earlier. The English opened concentration camps during the Boar War at the turn of the last century, and Spanish forces imprisoned Cubans during the Ten Years War, even earlier. (See also the definition for Nazi “Death Camp” or “Killing Center.”)

Death Camp, Killing Center—Nazi “Killing Centers” or “Death Camps” were facilities designed for the methodical slaughter of human beings in an “assembly line” fashion during World War II. Millions of Jewish people were systematically and brutally put to death. These “Killing Centers” also slaughtered with depraved impunity, children, political enemies, people with disabilities, and other ethnicities and religious groups deemed “undesirable” through a warped racist and genocidal lens. (*see Important Note below*).

Issei—a first generation Japanese immigrant

Nisei—the second generation of children born to first generation *issei* immigrants. Since they were born in the United States, they were first generation Japanese Americans to be citizens.

Chinese Exclusion Act—an 1882 law which prohibited Asian immigrants from becoming U.S. citizens at all, obstructing the initial force of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution

Asian Exclusion Act of 1924—a law which prohibited Asian immigration into the United States

Executive Order 9066—the presidential order that resulted in the imprisonment without a trial of Japanese Americans and persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II. (Enacted February 19, 1942).

The Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the McCarran-Walter Act)—a law which finally allowed for people of Asian descent to immigrate to and become citizens of the United States. (Enacted June 27, 1952).

***Important Note:** The term *concentration camp*, in reference to the experience of Japanese Americans and persons of Japanese Ancestry is in no way any sort of diminishment of the cold-blooded atrocities and genocide experienced by the Jewish population and other groups during the Holocaust, when millions of human beings were systematically and sadistically murdered in **Nazi Death Camps / Killing Centers**. These appalling atrocities were crimes against *all* humanity and should never be forgotten. As caring, compassionate human beings, we must learn from these painful lessons that attack the very core of our humanity so that they never happen again. We must forever remember the souls lost and honor the survivors who lived through these somber times.

Useful Links Regarding Use of the Term *Concentration Camp*

“The term *concentration camp* refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy.”

Quote From: “Nazi Camps” / *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-camps>

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“Generically defined, a concentration camp is a site for the detention of civilians whom a regime perceives to be a security risk of some sort. What distinguishes it from a prison (in the modern sense) is that incarceration in a concentration camp is independent of any judicial sentence or even indictment, and is not subject to judicial review.”

Quote From: “The Nazi Camp System: Terminology” / Subheading: “Differences Between a Concentration Camp and a Killing Center” / *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-camp-system-terminology>

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“What arrangements and plans have been made relative to **concentration camps** [Emphasis added by author.] in the Hawaiian Islands for dangerous or undesirable aliens or citizens in the event of national emergency?”—**President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1936**

Quote From: “FDR Called Them Concentration Camps: Why Terminology Matters” / *Huffington Post*:

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fdr-called-them-concentration-camps-why-terminology_b_58a7f3b6e4b026a89a7a2b73

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“As a member of President Roosevelt's administration, I saw the United States Army give way to mass hysteria over the Japanese . . . Crowded into cars like cattle, these hapless people were hurried away to hastily constructed and thoroughly inadequate concentration camps, with soldiers with nervous muskets on guard, in the great American desert. We gave the fancy name of 'relocation centers' to these dust bowls, but they were concentration camps nonetheless.”—**Harold Ickes, U.S. Secretary of Interior, 1946**

Quote From: “Euphemisms, Concentration Camps, and the Japanese Internment” / *NPR*:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/publiceditor/2012/02/10/146691773/euphemisms-concentration-camps-and-the-japanese-internment>

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