



CUYAMACA  
· COLLEGE ·

THE CUYAMACA VETERANS CENTER CELEBRATES

# AAPI HERITAGE MONTH

MAY 2021



PHOTO: 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM, FRANCE, WORLD WAR II (P.2)

## Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage month

is celebrated throughout May to commemorate the valor, courage, and countless contributions the AAPI community has made to the United States. The Cuyamaca Veterans Center would like to pay tribute to our siblings in arms, and recognize that the journey the AAPI community has taken has not been an easy one. Our AAPI siblings have endured hatred, racism, internment camps and bloodshed. Yet the dedication to preserve peace and serve within our military in the pursuit of protecting the American people warrants all of our gratitude and thanks.

1901

1911

1923

1935

1941

Philippine Scouts are formed during the US occupation of the Philippines, recruited and inducted into the US Armed forces to restore order on the islands.

The first Asian-American and first Filipino to receives the Congressional Medal of Honor, US Army Private Jose Nisperos, while serving in the Philippine Scouts.

The Supreme Court Associate Justice Sutherland rules that Hindu's are "aliens ineligible to citizenship" after a US Army veteran from Southeast Asia applies for citizenship following service. 261 US 204

Supreme Court ruling Hidemitsu Toyota v United States was overturned and 400 Japanese veterans who had their citizenship revoked were granted naturalization under the new Nye-Lea Act.

Japan launches an attack on Pearl Harbor and the US declares war on Japan, which leads to the participation of the US in World War II.

# World War II (1941-1945 US)

in February 1942, 2 months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed [Executive Order 9066](#) calling for the internment of all Japanese Americans. Over 117,000 people, both migrants and citizens were relocated to these prison camps.

Despite enduring one of the nation's most atrocious civil rights violations in the 20th century, many Japanese Americans joined the US military. In 1943, the [442nd Regimental Combat Team \(RCT\)](#) was activated,

made entirely of Nisei (second generation) Japanese Americans. This combat team (pictured on page 1) was deployed to Italy and earned 9 Distinguished Service Crosses. In 1944, the 442nd RCT rescued a ["lost battalion"](#) in the Southern France. In 1945, the 442nd RCT attached to the 92nd Infantry Division, an African-American unit, and drove the Germans out of Northern Italy. The 442nd RCT was deactivated in 1946, holding the title of [most decorated unit](#) in the history of American warfare.



PHOTO: INTERNMENT CAMP, LOS ANGELES, 1942



# The Vietnam War (1965 - 1975, US)

Of the roughly 8 million US troops who served in the Vietnam War, 35,000 were Asian-Americans. Though many volunteered for military service during the Vietnam war, it was not without racism and discrimination, a lot of which started in basic training. Asian recruits were often used as examples of Viet Cong soldiers, even if they weren't actually Vietnamese. Once in Vietnam, many Asian-American soldiers wore their full

uniforms around the clock to remain more visible as an American soldier. Many Asian-American soldiers were delayed critical medical care because medical staff assumed they were North Vietnamese, again despite their actual ethnicity, nationality, or obvious US military uniform.

Despite the carnage of war, and the racism of the US military in the four wars in Asian countries in the span of 60 years, Asian-American service members grew to [3.7%](#) of the US military, an over representation when compared to their overall population. Within the Filipino community alone, re-enlistment rates were [95%](#) following the Vietnam War.

Photo link: KPBS podcast "He fought in Vietnam, but had the face of the enemy", 04/2020

1945

1945

1946

1950

1965

[President Roosevelt dies](#) and leaves the Presidency to Vice President Truman. Before his death, FDR would begin closing internment camps after the Supreme Court decision [Ex parte Mitsuye Endo](#).

The US drops the [atomic bomb](#) on Hiroshima instantly killing 80,000 people, and another on Nagasaki, killing 40,000. Japan unconditionally surrenders 6 days later, ending WW2.

The [last internment camp](#) in the US is closed in Tule, CA., months after the end of the war.

The US enters the [Korean War](#) in an attempt to contain communism, and indirectly, the Soviet Union. Of the 36,000 people who died, 241 were Asian Americans. The war reaches an armistice in 1953.

The US enters into battle in the [Vietnam War](#) in an effort, again, to contain communism. The US entered to support the anti-communist South Vietnam fight the North.

# Petty Officer, ET2, Monico Rosal, US Navy

ET2 Rosal was held captive by the Japanese Imperial Army as a Filipino prisoner of war for helping the Americans during the World War II Japanese invasion of Cebu, Philippines. The same invasion that killed his mother and grandmother. The Japanese prisoner vessel he was being held on was attacked and sunk, leaving him afloat at sea. Floating on a raft in the Pacific he was then rescued by the US Navy. He enlisted and was granted citizenship. After his duty with the Navy ended, he re-enlisted in the US Coast Guard. After his honorable service, he would go on to serve as a civilian at NAS Miramar and build a family in the US, with 6 of his descendants following in his military footsteps.



This is the grandfather of the Veterans Center Coordinator, Kaylin Rosal. Do you have a family member you'd like to highlight? Send info to kaylin.rosal@gcccd.edu, we'd love to hear your history!

# Captain Sunita Williams, US Navy



Captain Williams received her commission as an Ensign in the US Navy from the US Naval Academy in 1987. After her designation as a Naval Aviator in 1989, she was deployed several times to support the Gulf War in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Provide comfort. In 1992, Captain Williams was the Officer-In-Charge of a detachment during Operation Hurricane Andrew Relief aboard the USS Sylvania. Capt. Williams would log over 3,000 flight hours over 30 different aircraft. In 1998, she was selected by the NASA Astronaut Program and in 2007 she broke the record for longest single spaceflight by a woman.

# Major Kurt Chew-Een Lee, USMC

In 1946 the then 2nd Lieutenant Lee became the first non-white and the first Asian-American Officer in the Marine Corps. His valor in the Korean War is just one of his notable acts of heroism. He led his company through unmapped mountainous terrain in China, during a blizzard to rescue a "decimated company" holding a crucial pass in North Korea during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir. Lt. Lee's only instructions for his mission was to "stay off the road". Lt. Lee was wounded during this battle, earning him a Silver Star and 2 Purple Hearts. Lee would go on to serve in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War where he earned the rank of Major. Major Lee's heroism is highlighted in the Smithsonian Channel documentary Uncommon Courage: Breakout at Chosin.



1976  
President Ford officially repeals Executive Order 9066 and in 1988 Congress issues a formal apology and passes the Civil Liberties Act awarding over 80,000 Japanese Americans \$20,000 as reparations for internment camps.

1990  
President George HW Bush declares May national Asian American Heritage month to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the US on May 7, 1843.

2004  
The 100th Infantry Battalion was activated for its first deployment in Iraq; their first activation since the Vietnam war.

2016  
Asian-Americans are 28% more likely to be among officer ranks than they were 12 years earlier.

2021  
The Cuyamaca Veterans Center reaffirms dedication to stop AAPI hate. As they answered the call to duty, we too must answer ours.