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# California Today

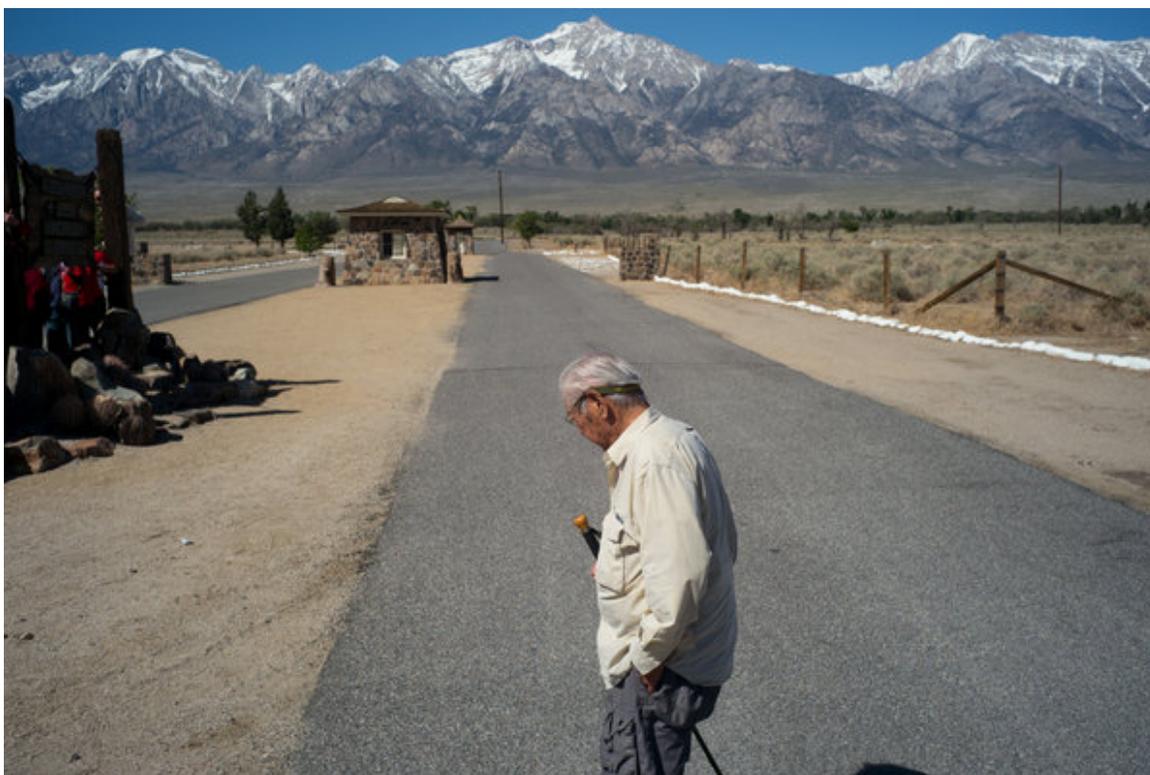
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## Recalling Japanese Internment in the Era of Trump

By INYOUNG KANG AND MATT STEVENS



Mas Okui walking to the entrance of Manzanar in April. James Tensuan for The New York Times

*Good morning.*

Mas Okui was 10 years old when he was separated from his mother.

It was April 1942. Two months before, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 9066, which turned the West Coast into a military zone after

Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. American citizens and other residents of Japanese ancestry were evicted from their homes and held in internment camps across the country.

The Okui family was sent to Manzanar, in the remote desert east of the Sierra Nevada 200 miles north of Los Angeles. But Mr. Okui's mother, who was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, was placed in the prison ward at the Los Angeles County Hospital because she was pregnant with her fourth child.

She was reunited with the family behind barbed wire three or four weeks later, Mr. Okui said. But her absence remained with him.

"When you're 10 years old and that happens to you — I pretty much sublimated that from my existence," he said. "I don't like to think about it, because to me it was so unfair. Painful things you kind of just block from your consciousness, and that was one of them."

Mr. Okui, 86, is a retired history teacher who taught for decades at Gardena High School. For more than 30 years he has also led annual tours to the former campsite at Manzanar and taught workshops at United Teachers Los Angeles to help guide public-school teachers on how to educate their students about Japanese internment.

Last year, Gov. Jerry Brown signed the [Civil Liberties Public Education Act](#), which provided \$3 million in state funding to expand education on Japanese internment. The legislation aims to link historic civil rights violations "with current civil liberties challenges."

"We have to remember that the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans without any due process of law began with an executive order, much like the ones that President Trump has been issuing," Al Muratsuchi, the State Assembly member who sponsored the bill, said in 2017.

For Mr. Okui, news of President Trump's Muslim ban in 2017 and the separation of immigrant children from their parents in recent weeks distressed him.

"When I saw those kids in cages, it reminded me of a dog pound," Mr. Okui said. "What is my government doing with these children? It just doesn't seem moral."

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