

Primary Sources: Presidential apologies for Japanese internment in World War II

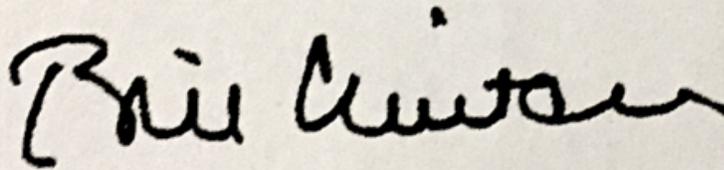
By Newsela staff on 01.03.20

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We recognize the wrongs of the past and offer our profound regret to those who endured such grave injustice. We understand that our nation's actions were rooted in racial prejudice and wartime hysteria, and we must learn from the past and dedicate ourselves as a nation to renewing and strengthening equality, justice, and freedom. Together, we can guarantee a better future for generations to come.

You and your family have my best wishes.



This is an apology letter from Bill Clinton to the Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II.

Editor's Note: Japan attacked the U.S. Navy's base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. After the attack, the United States began to relocate and imprison Americans of Japanese descent. Japanese American internment, or imprisonment, lasted until the end of the war in 1945. But the United States did not immediately apologize for its poor treatment of the Japanese American community. It took more than 40 years for anyone to take action.

President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. It guaranteed the U.S. government would compensate the formerly imprisoned citizens and their families. Each Japanese American affected by the internment was promised \$20,000.

George H.W. Bush Apology

President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. However, President George H.W. Bush oversaw the first round of reparations the following year. The first payments

were given on October 9, 1990. Each person affected by the internment received this apology letter from Bush with their payment.

Bill Clinton Apology

Reparations for Japanese Americans continued into Bill Clinton's presidency. Clinton became the president in 1993. This apology note arrived with the \$20,000 granted to each individual.

