

Lesson 2. Korean Americans and World War II – Selected Passages

Sik, Kim Young. “The Korean Americans in the War of Independence: The left-right confrontation in Korea – Its origin.” *Association for Asian Research*. November 9, 2003. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100918010308/http://asianresearch.org/articles/1633.html>.

“There is no question that many Koreans in America have made valuable contributions to our war of independence. Dr. Suh Jae Pil, Dr. Rhee Syngman, Ahn Chang Ho, and many others made inspiring speeches and wrote articles for Korea’s independence.

The Koreans in America were small in number before our liberation and America was a long way from the killing fields of China and Siberia. Although about 100 Koreans enlisted in the US Army during World War II, few Koreans in America shed blood in our war of independence.”

Lutz, Amy. 2013. “Race-Ethnicity and Immigration Status in the U.S. Military.” In *Life Course Perspectives on Military Service*, edited by Janet M. Wilmoth and Andrew S. London, 68-96. Philadelphia: Routledge: 85. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com>.

“Korean immigrants were in a unique position during World War II. Because their homeland had been occupied by Japan since 1910, they were highly supportive of the United States in the war. Nevertheless, like Japanese immigrants and their children, they were often treated by the U.S. government as ‘enemy aliens’ (Takaki 2000). Korean participation in the war took several forms, from purchasing large numbers of war bonds to translating documents from Japanese, which they had learned in school in Korea during the occupation, into English; many also served in the Korean “Tiger Brigade” unit of the California National Guard (Takaki 2000). Those who were working in the defense industry in Hawaii were forced to wear badges indicating their Japanese classification; however, ultimately, they were allowed to include a printed notation on their badges: ‘I am Korean’ (Takaki 2000: 127).” (Lutz 2013, 85)

Armstrong, Charles K. 2007. *The Koreas*. Philadelphia: Routledge. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com>.

“After 1910, Koreans were officially treated as Japanese subjects by the U.S. government.... This created a paradox after Pearl Harbor—whereas the Korean community in the United States was largely pro-independence, Koreans as Japanese subjects should have been considered enemy aliens. Nevertheless, unlike Japanese-Americans, Koreans in the United States were not sent to internment camps. U.S. Military Order No. 45, promulgated in December 1943, exempted Koreans from enemy alien status.

By 1945 the Korean immigrant population in the United States numbered only a few thousand, a miniscule population compared to the ethnic Korean communities in Japan, China, and Russia, and far smaller than the population of Americans of Chinese or Japanese descent. Nevertheless, the United States had been a haven for some of the most prominent pro-independence leaders.... [T]he Korean independence movement in the United States was quite different in character than that of Russia, China, or Japan. In the United States, there was no

large independent political organization of Koreans, no government-in-exile, or ethnic Korean guerilla army. In America, the Korean independence movement was led by highly educated.... In particular, there was no organized left-wing party in the United States that was instrumental in mobilizing the Korean independence movement as was the Communist Party in China, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Like the Korean-American community as a whole, indeed like the United States as a whole, the Korean independence movement in America was predominantly Christian, urban, and liberal.” (Armstrong 2007, 104-105)