

# Commemorating the Day of Remembrance and Norman Y. Mineta

February 2024

In honor of the Day of Remembrance, we pause to remember our founder [Secretary Norman Y. Mineta](#) and the approximately 120,000 other Americans of Japanese ancestry living in the United States who were forcibly relocated and incarcerated. On this day in 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which led hundreds of thousands of Americans having to abandon their jobs and homes and be forced into concentration camps despite never being charged with a crime.

Today we remember, reflect on, and learn from the past. At ten-years-old, Norm was forced to relocate with his family from California to Heart Mountain, Wyoming, suddenly “a prisoner in his own country.” With unmatched resilience and heart, Norm went on to become mayor of San Jose in 1971, before serving in Congress for 10 terms, and then serving as Secretary of Commerce under the Clinton Administration. In 2001, Norm was appointed Secretary of Transportation by President George W. Bush. He was also the first Asian-American Cabinet member, the first Cabinet member to switch directly from a Democratic to a Republican Cabinet, and the longest serving U.S. Secretary of Transportation in the history of the U.S. DOT. Norm was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and has left an immeasurable legacy in transportation, education, and in our understanding of freedom and community.

In his final speech before his passing, Norm spoke of the impacts of intolerance now and in our nation’s history, referencing the rise in discrimination and crimes against Asian Americans during the pandemic. He said, “We have seen this disease [of hatred and intolerance] before. The passage of Jim Crow laws, the Trail of Tears, the McCarthy era, the aftermath of 9/11, and once again the rise in hate crimes and violence against Asian Americans and immigrants. It is the same sickness I witnessed standing in the shadow of Heart Mountain, Wyoming.”

This Day of Remembrance, we are thankful for him and his wisdom, and we carry his words in our work: to remember to live with “a courageous heart, a determined eye, and a steady spirit” as “nation builders” who can shape the world for good.

Read and/or watch Norm’s speech to the APA Asian & Pacific Islander Interest Group at <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/Norman-Y.-Mineta>.

