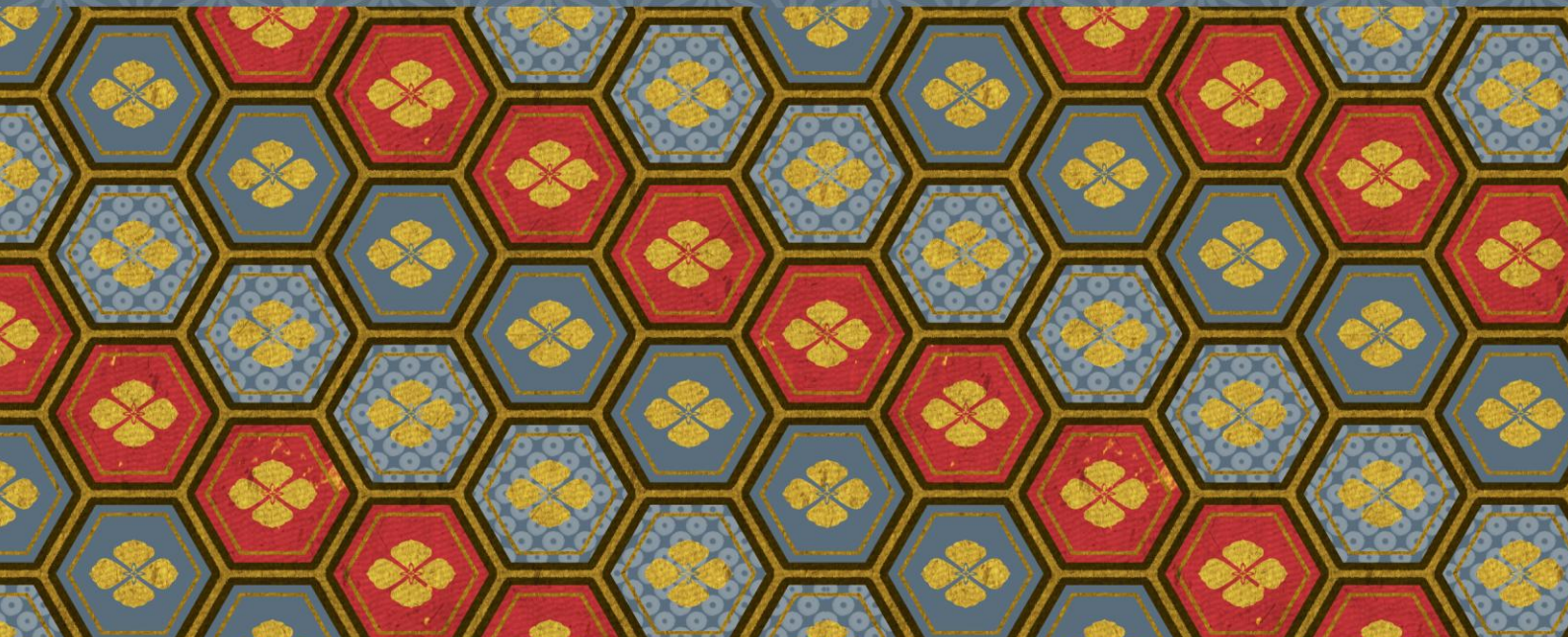


Rising Sun Behind Bars: Mistreatment of Japanese-Americans During the Second World War

A Bachelor Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the theme of Japanese-American internment during World War II. The goal of this research is to determine why the treatment of this group was significantly harsher than that of Italian and German-Americans, despite all three being related to Axis Power nations. Through a documentary analysis, this thesis will prove that the exceptionally harsh treatment of Japanese-Americans was a result of racism rather than a direct consequence of the attack on Pearl Harbor, which it is commonly thought to be.

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Introduction

"You're not getting your diplomas because your people bombed Pearl Harbor" (par. 2 qtd. in Migaki). That is what Japanese-American high school student Aiko Yoshinaga was told the day after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. When Japanese-Americans were starting to face discrimination as a result of the attack, she tried to run away, but both her and her family ended up in camps, separate from each other (par.4). Yoshinaga only got to see her father one more time after that, before he passed away from illness, undoubtedly caused by the poor living conditions in the camp. This is but one of the many stories of a Japanese-American family living in America during wartime. With them, another 112,000 Japanese-Americans were deported from their homes on the West Coast of the United States to internment camps (Wu 237).

America is often thought of as the big 'hero' of World War II, as Europe proved to be unable to protect itself, and needed American help. While the horrors of the many concentration camps in Europe are common knowledge nowadays, many forget that aside from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there is another large stain on America's heroic deeds in the war, which is the internment of these thousands of Japanese-Americans. Conditions in these internment camps were terrible, and one cannot overlook the irony of

America fighting a war against an enemy that relocated people into camps, while making use of similar camps itself.

The attack on Pearl Harbor, which forced the United States to participate in the war, is said to be the direct cause of this internment of Japanese-Americans, as shortly after this attack President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed America to imprison Japanese-Americans, German-Americans and Italian-Americans; in other words, enemy aliens with ancestry relating to one of three Axis Power nations. While people of all three groups were relocated to internment camps, the number of German and Italian-Americans that suffered this fate was significantly lower than the number of Japanese-Americans forced into camps. This of course, does not mean that the suffering of Americans of German and Italian descent was insignificant, but the difference between the three groups in terms of imprisonment is large enough to make one ask the following question: Why did Japanese-Americans receive a much harsher treatment compared to those of Italian and German descent during World War II?

In this thesis I will research this gruesome mistreatment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II, focusing on the Japanese communities on the West Coast of the United States. Especially the differences between the treatment of Japanese-Americans and German and Italian-Americans will play a key role, with a hypothesis that centers around a racially-motivated reason for a difference in this treatment as despite the fact that Italy, Germany and Japan were all enemies of America in the war, Italian and German-Americans have European –in other words, white– ancestry, while Japanese-Americans were the Asian ‘other’. It has to be stressed that the goal of this thesis is *not* to research which group has suffered more than the others, or to invalidate the suffering of any group. This thesis merely aims to objectively explore the differences in treatment, and to examine possible reasons for these differences with a focus on racial tensions.

While at the time of writing, World War II is a little over seventy years in the past, this topic remains very relevant. In a time in which a president of the United States attempts to block citizens from certain countries from entering the US altogether, it is important to reflect on how easily ‘wariness’ can turn into full-blown hatred towards a minority when they are turned into the ‘barbaric other’, in which ‘other’ refers to anyone who does not fit into the picture of the white Western stereotype. “Never again”, we all say when remembering the atrocities of the WWII camps, but the raw reality is that we are never all that far from such situations reoccurring. Therefore, it is important to study examples of such events from the past, so that we may recognize the signs of a repeating history in time.

Existing research on this topic is mainly focused on describing the horrors that happened inside the internment camps; while this is of course, an important part of research as well, many of these researches only manage to briefly cover facts about the differences between treatment of the three main enemy aliens of America at that time; never are camp living conditions of the three groups actively compared and contrasted. Only rarely is the research concerned with racist or xenophobic motivations behind internment, as it is often taken as a natural consequence of America entering the war, rather than internment being an event that fits into a larger timeline of brewing racism, as merely one of many anti-Japanese actions.

A documentary analysis will form the basis for this research. The first chapter of this thesis will briefly introduce the attack on Pearl Harbor, which is the event that is commonly believed to be the direct cause of the relocation of Japanese-Americans. In this chapter, I will also look at Executive Order 9066, which is the instrument that allowed the American government to put these wartime relocation plans into action. Brian Masaru Hayashi’s *Democratizing the Enemy – The Japanese-American Internment* (2010) will prove to be an extremely valuable tool for this, and throughout the rest of this thesis, as this book provides us

with crucial details from a Japanese-American perspective. The second chapter will be used to analyze the ways German, Italian and Japanese-Americans were treated during wartime, and how these living conditions inside the camps contrast against each other, followed by exploring potential alternative reasons for Japanese-American internment through a process of elimination, with potential causes starting from most to least directly related to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Was Japanese-American animosity towards America large enough to form a reason for internment, to prevent them from turning against the US? Was there an American aversion of people with Japanese, or Asian roots in general, and was Pearl Harbor merely the last push that was needed to push the Japanese-Americans into the position of scapegoat? Or perhaps, were there any ways in which Americans could profit from this internment? This will be followed by a short case study in chapter three, namely the *Korematsu v. United States* court case. This court case will back the hypothesis that my research centers around by illustrating the fight of a single Japanese man in America against internment. Finally, in chapter four I will present my conclusions considering my findings from the first three chapters.

Chapter One – America Enters the War, Internment Begins

In order for us to come to an understanding of the reasons for differences between the treatment of German and Italian-Americans versus Japanese-Americans, it is important to start at the very beginning, namely that what is conventionally perceived as the main reason for the US to commence the incarceration of Japanese-Americans: the attack on Pearl Harbor. The second part of this chapter will describe what happened immediately after this attack, including Executive Order 9066 and its execution.

Pearl Harbor

December 7, 1941, 07:55 in the morning. The United States Pacific Fleet is shaken up by a sudden attack. Japanese planes caught the US naval base Pearl Harbor, located in Hawaii, by surprise, wreaking havoc all over the base. Nineteen American ships are destroyed, along with 188 aircrafts. Well over two thousand Americans –mostly military personnel– lost their lives, and another 159 planes and 1,178 people are damaged and wounded. Japan's number of losses as a result of the attack was far smaller; only twenty-nine Japanese planes were destroyed, and sixty-four Japanese found their death during the attack on Pearl Harbor (Weiss par. 4). Remarkable about this battle is that for the first time, *kamikaze* attacks were introduced to the world; young Japanese pilots who were given a sheet of paper with three options on it: “to volunteer willingly, to simply volunteer, or to say no” (McCurry par. 1). The third option however, was only there for formality. With honor always having played –and still playing– a heavy role in Japanese culture, and its importance being deeply ingrained into the country's society, most, if not all, considered it an insult to the emperor, and with that the entire empire, to say ‘no’. And thus, these young pilots were forced to fly a plane, filled with just enough fuel for a one-way flight, and a bomb attached under it, towards the American fleet. The goal was simple: to crash the plane, with bomb and pilots on board, into the American ships to cause as much destruction as possible (McCurry par. 24). These kamikaze

attacks are part of the reason why Japanese soldiers were often perceived as cold, emotionless and unmoved by destruction or the fear of death, and undoubtedly, this image must have influenced the general American public's image of Japanese-Americans as well. In reality however, these kamikaze pilots were often young men who did not want to die, pressured by their homeland and family, to keep up the honor of Japan.

It was around noon in Washington D.C. when the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor took place. Coincidentally, during the attack, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, was in the middle of a meeting with a Japanese ambassador, to discuss a "growing tension between the two nations" (Aitken 59). "It is impossible to reach agreement through further negotiation" (qtd. in Aitken 59) is what the ambassador, Kichisaburo Nomura had told him during that meeting, although he himself at that moment was not yet aware of the attack. These words were proved correct, as the devastation of Pearl Harbor soon made it clear to Roosevelt what the near future held for the country: despite America's initial wish to stay neutral in the second World War, Roosevelt saw no other option than to declare war on Japan the next day; war declarations of Germany and Italy to the United States followed shortly after ("The Attack" par. 2).

Executive Order 9066

February of the following year, 1942, only a mere two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, marks the beginning of the oppression of Japanese-American people. It was then when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which enabled the US government to relocate Americans of Italian, German and most of all, Japanese descent. In fact, preparations for action against Japanese-Americans leading up to Executive Order 9066 were taken already in December 1941, less than a month after the attack. After starting to face criticism from

fellow Americans, on the 29th of that month, Japanese-Americans were ordered to “surrender short-wave radios, firearms, and explosives to governmental authorities” (Hayashi 71). A month later, Japanese-Americans were restricted from traveling further than fifty miles, and lost their right to oppose any governmental actions against them, which would later make it easier for the US to realize Executive Order 9066. On top of that, they had to “register as enemy aliens” (71), a detail that is eerily similar to the way Jews had to get registered in Nazi-controlled Europe during the same war.

As Brian Hayashi describes in *Democratizing the Enemy*, the internment of Japanese-Americans did not happen overnight, but instead was a process consisting of a number of phases, in which different departments of the government and military were involved. The removal of Japanese-Americans from their homes for example, was the task of the War Department, while the Justice Department and the WRA, the War Relocation Authority, dealt with the actual internment of these people (76). The WRA was a direct result of Executive Order 9066, created specifically for this task of relocating Japanese-Americans who were forced out of their homes due to their neighborhoods being turned into so-called “military zones”, which they could not oppose to because of the earlier mentioned pre-internment measures taken against these “enemy aliens” (Robinson, “War Relocation Authority” par. 3).

Initially, during the days immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hayashi describes, the internment of Japanese-Americans was mostly focused on males, and federal agents made arrests “based on their assessment of the suspects’ beliefs and sympathies” (Hayashi 76); in other words, focusing on higher-ranked Japanese who “held leadership positions within organizations that had ties to the homeland, owned property there, and traveled frequently between the two countries” (77). “Regular” Japanese-Americans were still spared from internment, albeit not from discrimination. These internments during this phase of the execution of Executive Order 9066 totaled ‘only’ 3,771 (77). It is, without a doubt, still

a significant number, but this is only a small percentage of the total amount of Japanese-Americans that would eventually be relocated to internment camps. The suffering from ties and communication with their homeland being cut off, heavy censoring, restrictions on use of Japanese language and being pressured to report fellow Japanese-Americans whose loyalty to the United States was doubtful, were a good indication of what was to come for the remaining Japanese-Americans (78).

It was on February 19, 1942, that mass-scale removal and relocation of West Coast Japanese-Americans was announced. Resistance to this decision was remarkably little, as many Japanese-Americans felt no will to fight against something they had expected to happen sooner or later during the war, or simply hoped to be safe from further discrimination or violence towards them from Americans once they would move into the camps, together with their family. After all, while they were stopped from going outside, the camp fences would also keep out others who would want to harm them –of which there were many– thus forming a protective barrier, rather than a mere obstacle. For others, being “captured” gave a sense of honor and patriotism, as George Yamaguchi, who was there to experience the internment firsthand, explains: “Some of the Isseis (first-generation Japanese-Americans) that I have known thought it an honor to be taken a prisoner of war. At least some thought that was the least they could . . . do for their efforts to help out the old country” (qtd. in Hayashi 86).

Those who were to be incarcerated were forced to report themselves and all their family members to “control stations”; there they would be given no more than about fourteen days to pack their belongings, sell what they could not take with them, and say their goodbyes (“Japanese-American Internment” par. 5). “They were told to only bring what they could carry in their hands, which was usually one suitcase” (“Japanese-American Relocation” par. 7), which shows just how much the internees were forced to leave behind, in the hope that their homes and possessions would still be there once they would be allowed to return after

the war. A short poem written by Joy Kogawa, “What Do I Remember of the Evacuation”, which was published in *Chicago Review*, illustrates the fear that Kogawa felt as a young girl when she and her family were sent to one of the camps:

I hear there were people herded
Into the Hastings Park like cattle
Abandoning everything, leaving pets
And possessions at gun point (Kogawa 137)

And thus, the removal and relocation began. Relatively calmly, 112,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry –Issei, Nisei and Sansei, first, second and third generation Japanese-Americans, named after the Japanese words for one, two and three (*ichi, ni, san*)– were relocated to various camps, usually starting at temporary camps located at racing tracks and other similar types of places, but eventually being taken to one of the ten WRA Relocation centers, to stay there until the end of the war:

- Manzanar, California
- Tule Lake, California
- Poston, Arizona
- Gila River, Arizona
- Granada, Colorado
- Heart Mountain, Wyoming
- Minidoka, Idaho
- Topaz, Utah
- Rohwer, Arkansas
- Jerome, Arkansas

Despite the focus of this thesis lying specifically on Japanese-American internment on the West Coast of the United States, it is interesting to note that the number of 112,000 West Coast internees strongly contrasts the mere 2,270 internees of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii (“Internment Camps in Hawai’i par. 2), despite the Japanese population in Hawaii in 1940 totaling a massive number of 157,905 (total population of Hawaii in 1940: 422,770). This means that although about 40% of the Hawaiian population was of Japanese ancestry, only a relatively tiny group was incarcerated (Nordyke and Scott 165). This is quite surprising, considering the fact that Pearl Harbor is located in Hawaii as well, and one may expect that *especially* Hawaii would be a target for internment. However, possibly it is exactly because this large percentage of Japanese-Americans in Hawaii, that internment remained small there: incarcerating 40% of the population of a island group certainly would have unhinged the society and economy of Hawaii, bringing us to the conclusion that the disadvantages of incarcerating such a large part of the Hawaiian population outweighed the potential risks of having these “enemy aliens” living in freedom.

Chapter Two – A Necessary Evil?

To research and compare differences in treatment between German, Italian and Japanese-Americans, these exact treatments need to be described, which is what the focus of the first part of this chapter will lie on. To further examine whether Japanese-Americans were truly as big a threat the US Government perceived them to be, questions about the Japanese-American view on World War II must be asked, as this will give us an insight into the legitimacy of America’s actions against Japanese-Americans: How justified was Executive Order 9066? Part of this will also be a closer look at pre-WWII Japan-America relations, as poor relations before the war may indicate that Pearl Harbor was not a direct cause for internment, but rather an event that was used to justify acting upon possible racist sentiment towards the Japanese-American part of the US population. For this, the way American

citizens reacted to Japanese internment must be analyzed, but also economic consequences, as profit may indicate another hidden motive for internment.

Living Conditions in the Japanese WRA Camps.

After a short stay in one of the temporary camps, the majority of internees was deported to one of the ten aforementioned semi-permanent WRA camps. Living conditions in these camps were poor, as K. Inue (codename) recalls:

First we were put into the Santa Anita racetracks. We stayed in the stables. Straw mattresses. We had to stuff them with straw and the smell and the stench of the horses, and the urine, and all that junk. And then from there we were sent to Arkansas; the bayou. Of course they set up these camps in very desolate areas. (qtd. in Yamaguchi 58)

As many of the temporary camps were located on horse-racing tracks, hygiene was problematic from the very beginning. Sleeping on filthy straw mattresses in “horse stalls still redolent of manure” (Jensen par. 5), a lack, or in some cases complete absence, of running water, pollution of what little water was available, cooking being done by unqualified internees who had never learned about the proper hygiene when cooking for large groups and pollution caused by the heating inside the camps all formed major health risks (par. 5). Living conditions in the semi-permanent camps were not any better, as they had been built in a rush, since the temporary camps could not possibly hold all 112,000 Japanese-Americans. Added to this comes the fact that even young children and those who were ill, disabled or elderly, four groups that are generally weaker to outbreaks of diseases, were not spared from incarceration (par. 2). As camps could hold multiple thousands of people, all living close together with little

personal space, an internment camp could be compared to a small city. Thus, contagious diseases would also spread just as *rapidly* as in a small city. There were attempts to vaccinate the internees, but again the rushed pace at which relocation happened, made it challenging, if not impossible, to vaccinate everyone in time upon their arrival at the camps (par. 4).

Medical equipment and medicines were highly inadequate, and although initially healthcare was supposed to be provided by authorities, it soon became a responsibility of the internees themselves (par. 6), again under circumstances of poor hygiene, and often done by internees who lacked the experience to properly deal with medical issues. On top of that, what little healthcare *was* available, was mostly geared towards men, resulting in great risks for women who, for example, had to give birth inside the camps (pars. 5 & 7). As a result of this poor hygiene and healthcare, dysentery, food poisoning, and E. coli bacteria spread through the camps with ease (par. 10).

The locations of the camps also proved to form a hazard to the health of the internees; since the camps were meant to remove people of Japanese ancestry far enough from civilization to prevent America from the “risk” of these people, deserts or swampy areas were popular locations for internment camps. Because of that, its inhabitants were exposed to extreme climates all year round: “Despite its harshness, Manzanar was one of the more hospitable camps. It was very hot in the summer, very cold in the winter, and windy all of the time, but its extremes were not as bad as some” (Wenger 34). Excessive amounts of dust from desert areas, or the heavy humidity of swampy areas put internees at risk of lung diseases, some of which fatal, others bad enough to force survivors to cope with the effects for the rest of their lives (Jensen pars. 11 & 12).

Another factor that put especially the weakest groups at risk, was the poor diet of internees. A lack of foods that provide sufficient nutrition quickly caused numerous serious deficiencies. As early as the year 1944, reports of serious deficiencies of vitamins B and C,

and lack of protein, responsible for various issues including severe fatigue, headaches, weight loss, eczema and eye problems, already started to appear in medical magazines, such as *The Lancet* (“Malnutrition” 508-509).

Aside from health issues, construction of the camps itself posed additional problems, even before the start of construction. “Regional land and water disputes” (Hayashi 88) were a hindrance in construction, as were issues with Native Americans, whose lands often overlapped with the internment camp construction sites, giving them reason to fear a loss of land, and an “antagonistic attitude towards the Japanese” (Hayashi 88-89). As a result of these issues slowing down the construction process, more stress was put on the already rushed construction of camps, resulting in extremely poorly built barracks. Consequences of this not only included animal plagues, a lack of comfort, and poor healthcare facilities that caused the previously mentioned health risks, but also highly inadequate guard and security facilities. Electricity was not widely available in the form of both regular lighting and watchtower searchlights, and sloppily constructed barbed-wire fences weakened security (91). While the latter may seem like an advantage for the internees, as a possible means to escape, this poor construction meant that manpower would have to make up for it, and quite strictly so: General John DeWitt who was in charge of dealing with these issues, quickly tightened security, armed the guards with machine guns, and “changed their orders to shoot violators” (92). This quickly changed the atmosphere inside the camps; while initially, a general feeling of *shou ga nai*, a very common Japanese saying with the meaning of “it can’t be helped” (86) prevailed among Japanese-Americans, they were now undoubtedly treated as prisoners.

Finally, censorship also formed a great issue inside the WRA camps. Photography for example, was not officially allowed and often had to be done in secret, as Toyo Miyatake, a photographer interned in camp Manzanar, California did (Wenger 36). Rarely, famous American photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams were invited to

photograph inside the camps, but even they were bound to strict rules and could not freely publish these photos (35-36). Newspapers too, which were made even inside the WRA camps, were subject to heavy censorship, especially the ones published exclusively in the Japanese language. These were deemed unnecessary and a possible threat to American safety, as Japanese-language newspaper publications would require translators (Mizuno 209), but the large number of internees who only spoke Japanese made it impossible to get rid of Japanese-language publications altogether (212). This in turn, raised another question: Which translators were reliable and loyal enough to accurately translate a Japanese text for camp officials to check its contents? “The proposed solution was rather paradoxical; the WRA would find absolutely “loyal”, trustworthy translators among Japanese-Americans who were incarcerated in the first place as a potential menace to national security” (213).

Censorship also affected the more than 30,000 children inside the camps; educational facilities were available to them, but were undoubtedly heavily controlled by the US government. Class material often centered around American patriotism, seeking to legitimize the camps by describing the removal and relocation as a necessary evil (Wu 238). This however was not entirely successful, as despite the attempts of the WRA to use education to indoctrinate Japanese-American students with American values, students often reacted to these assignments with doubt, as the following excerpt of a student’s essay shows: “Our fathers who came to this country 30 or 40 years ago, perhaps some even fifty, or sixty years, and still not being able to receive their American citizenship. Wasn’t this racial prejudice?” (qtd. in Wu 246).

Italian and German-Americans, Friend or Foe?

Although the United States had initially declared war only to Japan, Italy and Germany had followed soon after, as the three nations together formed the Axis Powers. Totaling

1,623,000 in 1930, presumably even more at the beginning of the 1940s, Italian-born residents were the largest group of foreigners in the United States, keeping this position all the way through the end of the 1970s (Pozzetta par. 21, Cavaoli 222). The number of German-born Americans, during that time was not much smaller, reaching a total of 1,237,000 (*Personal Justice Denied* 289). They too, like Japanese-Americans, were officially enemy aliens of America during wartime. To fully understand the magnitude of these groups, it is important to realize that these only include those who were *born* in Italy or Germany, and thus do not include those born in America with Italian or German blood, from either one or both parents; no exact population numbers of these groups are available, but it is safe to say that American-born Italians and Germans included, their numbers at that time must have totaled multiple millions. Their treatment however, wildly differed from the much smaller, Japanese group.

Executive Order 9066 officially was not aimed at Japanese-Americans as a single group, but rather at enemy aliens in general, including Italian and German-Americans. Despite this, where a 112,000 Japanese-Americans, nearly the entire Japanese-American population of America, was affected by Executive Order 9066, only 10,000 Italian-Americans faced relocation. 600,000 others had to register themselves as enemy aliens and were restricted in their ability to travel, but faced no incarceration (Taylor par. 5). On top of that, about 50,000 of the 600,000 Italian-Americans who were registered as enemy aliens were relieved of that status before the end of 1942, as President Roosevelt considered them “a bunch of opera singers” (Hayashi 77) rather than a security threat, while even elderly or ill Japanese-Americans had been deemed big enough a threat to justify incarceration. 11,500 German-Americans faced internment, a number that is about equal to the Italian-American internment rate (Densho par. 1). The cause of these relatively low numbers, compared to the 112,000 Japanese internees, can be attributed to the immense effect that exclusion of the entire Italian and German groups would have had on American society and economy, as it would mean the

removal of millions of people from large, and thus economically important cities, similar to the reason for largely sparing Japanese Hawaiians from internment. This however, does not explain why the limit for the total amount of Japanese internees was nearly ten times higher than it was for these two groups, resulting in internment percentages of 0.62% of Italian-born Americans, 0.93% of German-born Americans, and nearly 100% of Japanese living on the mainland of America.

The few who *were* relocated, many of which were seamen, were categorized as “detainees”, rather than “prisoners” (Van Valkenburg 25), and living conditions inside the camps fit this description. Facilities of the Fort Missoula camp in Montana, built specifically for Italian-Americans, included luxuries such as “bowling alleys, a dance hall, a cocktail lounge...” (25), while camps for Japanese were barely equipped with the basic facilities needed purely for survival. Detainees of Fort Missoula were given money in exchange for tasks done inside the camp, and were given time and resources for various hobbies. Portrayal of the camp in the media also differed significantly from Japanese camps; while photographer Dorothea Lange had been forced to keep silent about her photos (Wenger 36), cheerful reports praising the Italians’ singing and accounts of “happy-go-lucky sailors, excited to be at their new home” (Van Valkenburg 27) were published. What however was the largest difference with Japanese internment camps, was that while guards of camp Missoula were reasonably armed, “they were not allowed to shoot to prevent escapes” (26). Security and rules in camp Missoula tightened significantly when a group of Japanese-Americans was detained at the camp as well, as many other camps had reached their limit already. Even then however, the new restrictions mostly applied to the Japanese newcomers, while Italian detainees remained relatively free inside the camp (30, 37).

Germans, and with that German-Americans, suffered from a bigger stigma than Italian-Americans, due to their role in the previous world war, which made their initial position at the

start of World War II unfortunate. They were seen as “barbarous Huns who could never be assimilated into American society” (*Personal Justice Denied* 291), despite the massive number of Americans with German ancestry having been part of the population for quite a few decades already. All the more surprising is it therefore, that treatment of German-Americans upon the outbreak of World War II did not reflect those decades of prejudice (292). Mild American reactions towards their fellow citizens of German ancestry can be explained by American embarrassment of its treatment of German-Americans during the first World War, and the fact that Japan had been the country to first attack America, rather than Germany (Wittke 15).

This did not mean that German-Americans faced no repercussions for the fact that their home country was at war with America; President Roosevelt clearly stated that unlike Italians, he thought Germans were potentially dangerous (Dietze 10). As the number of German-American internees was so much smaller than that of Japanese-American internees, German-American internees did not have camps specifically built for them, instead populating camps shared with internees of other ancestries. The camp in which most of the interned German-Americans lived during World War II was Crystal City, Texas. Some Japanese and Italians lived in the camp as well, but those of German ancestry were the first to arrive (“Crystal City” par. 2). Reports of this camp are not as full of cheer as descriptions of Italian internment camp Fort Missoula, as mentions of hindrances in the form of large amounts of mud, extreme temperatures, both high and low, and animal plagues can be found (par. 6), but despite the fact that Americans of Japanese ancestry were interned here as well, Crystal City varied greatly from the average Japanese camp experience, possibly exactly due to large number of German-Americans living there. The main difference between Crystal City and camps in which only Japanese-Americans resided, is the availability of various facilities and goods. Food, tools and clothing were readily available in Crystal City camp, and descriptions of the

camp even include mentions of a swimming pool, running water, insulated living spaces and air conditioning of the medical facilities (Dietze 5, 19). Aside of the swimming pool, multiple other leisure facilities were taken care of, including facilities for numerous sports, music-playing, movies and gardening (22, 23). “Despite the hardships of incarceration, the staff at Crystal City made a conscious effort to create an environment at the camp that was as comfortable and accommodating as possible” (24) and cultural traditions were relatively well-accepted within the Crystal City (26). An interesting detail is that most interned German-Americans did not actually hail from the United States mainland; 99% of them was taken from Latin America instead, with only a very small group, ironically being the group that would have been the largest “threat” coming from the mainland (30). These facts, combined with internees later describing Crystal City as a “nice place” (7), highly suggest that although it cannot be ignored that German-American internees have suffered under America’s anti-enemy alien measures, their trauma was mostly of emotional nature, caused by the forced relocation itself, rather than a combination of emotional and physical trauma caused by poor living conditions in camps.

Japanese-Americans, a Dilemma.

Caught between on the one hand, the country where they now lived and had built up their future, where they planned to stay for the coming generations, and on the other hand, their homeland, where either they or their (grand)parents were born, of which they carried not only physical traits, but also hundreds, thousands of years worth of culture and traditions, Japanese-Americans undoubtedly must have faced a burdensome dilemma: whose side were they on? Which country, both of each were each other’s enemies, would they be loyal to? President Roosevelt, as explained, declared Japanese-Americans a larger national risk than Americans with a German or Italian background, with the aforementioned events as a

consequence. Italian-Americans were not seen as much more than pasta-eating opera singers (Hayashi 77), while even German-Americans, who were considered slightly more risky, were mostly left alone, with the majority of German internees being taken from Latin America, rather than the US mainland. Yet, Japanese-Americans were interned en masse, with even the elderly, disabled ones or children being considered 'risky' enough to incarcerate. Could this assumed risk be justified, for example by Japanese-Americans clearly siding with Japan in the war, or was there no need for doubt and were they loyal to America? That would suggest that American doubt towards Japanese-Americans was based on them being a non-white, barbaric 'other', to borrow Edward Said's wording from *Orientalism*, rather than as a legitimate threat.

Now that the differences between the treatment of Japanese, Italian and German-Americans have been ascertained, the next logical step in this research is to analyze the height of the risk of these Japanese-Americans, and whether this was actually any higher than that of Italian and German-Americans. Were the answer to be 'yes, it was', then that would mean a conclusion to this thesis. However, following the hypothesis, it is highly likely that we will need to look at other possible reasons afterwards.

It cannot be said that absolutely none of the people of Japanese descent in America were in favor of Japan; in *Democratizing the Enemy*, Hayashi describes that there indeed were some who seemed to favor Japan over America. He writes that some Japanese-language newspapers would word their news in such a way that it would downplay American wins, to make it seem like Japan was winning the war (72, 73). Roucek also mentions that pro-Japan propaganda did exist among Americans of Japanese descent (Roucek 641). However, Hayashi also clearly states that others very openly pledged loyalty to America, and organizations such as the JACL (Japanese-American Citizens' League) actively celebrated support towards America and Americanization of those with Japanese ancestry, in the form of simple donations, joining the American military, or even going as far as supplying information about

potentially suspicious fellow Japanese in order to fulfill “their duties as American citizens” (74). On top of that, immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, some even *before* the attack, students, monks and various public figures announced their loyalty to America; especially Nisei, second-generation Japanese-Americans, were avid US-supporters, some to a point where they were seen as “un-Japanese”; in fact, perhaps even more from within the Japanese community than from the outside, loyalty questions were raised, as many Japanese-Americans feared that their peers may hold sympathy towards Axis Power nations (70-73). Surveys and thorough investigations conducted by the ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) however failed to bring any evidence of Japanese-American espionage or other harmful actions or plans by the end of 1941, shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and “suggested that Japanese-Americans were generally loyal to the United States” (“Enemy Aliens” par. 9). This is a detail of great interest, especially when we consider the large number of suspicious Japanese-Americans that was arrested immediately after Pearl Harbor. This raises another question, namely that if no evidence of dangerous activity could be found after such thorough investigation conducted by intelligence bureaus, how was America able to identify hundreds of Japanese-Americans as ‘dangerous’ –which an LA-based intelligence official at the time reported as being “entirely because of the physical characteristics of the people” (qtd. in Frail par. 3)– within mere days after Pearl Harbor, hardly two months after the investigation by ONI was concluded? One option would be to conclude that the investigation by ONI in 1941 was conducted badly, and that they had simply missed the thousands of ‘suspicious’ enemy aliens that were arrested from December 7, 1941 until 1943 (Hayashi 76). Although only part of those were deemed ‘dangerous’ in the end, it is hardly believable that such a large number could have been overlooked during thorough investigations. The second option therefore is, that these accusations of espionage or otherwise suspicious activity were false, which most likely is the case here. Had there genuinely been espionage conducted by Japanese-Americans,

then doubtlessly, these cases would have been known by the end of World War II. However, as Edward Barnhart writes, there was no such evidence: “In fact, no espionage or sabotage by Japanese was discovered during the war and none was known to the Western Defense Command at the time (Barnhart 126). In *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, it is also confirmed that there is a complete lack of evidence regarding any acts of espionage or similar offences committed by Japanese-Americans on the West Coast of the United States (3). Barnhart continues to explain that it would have been incredibly difficult for Japanese-Americans to commit any such offences at all, as the restrictions that had been placed on them and “elaborate precautions” simply did not allow these people to get close enough to obtain any useful information in the first place. The only mentions of Japanese-American espionage or sabotage that appear to be backed by some evidence, all originate in Hawaii, as Roucek writes (644-645), but as has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, Hawaii did not undergo the mass-internment that happened on the West Coast, due to the grave economic damages Hawaiian WRA internment would lead to. In other words, West Coast-Japanese-Americans who could *not* be proven guilty of espionage were incarcerated as a result of serious doubts regarding their loyalty, while those on Hawaii, where espionage allegedly *did* occur, were spared in favor of the Hawaiian economy. These conclusions raise serious doubt regarding America’s claims of internment being a ‘necessary evil’ to guard the country against Japanese-American espionage, as the situation in Hawaii provides us with evidence that fear of espionage or disloyalty certainly did not have the highest priority when other factors, such as economy or disruption of society still managed to hold more importance. If reports of actual espionage in Hawaii were not sufficient to consider mass-incarceration there, mass-incarceration of those on the West Coast who could not be proven to be guilty of such acts, going as far as interning even the elderly, disabled and young children certainly could not be justified by a fear of disloyalty.

Pre-War Relation

With fear of disloyalty, espionage or sabotage being concluded to lack in strength as a justification for the mass-internment of Japanese-Americans against minimal internment of Italian and German-Americans, analysis of the pre-war relation between America and Japan, or possibly Asia in general could shed light on the reason why Japanese-Americans were singled out as a danger to America. A potential poor relation between America and Japan before the start of world War II, or indications of a longer history of American prejudice and/or discrimination against Asians in general, could explain why the US was this quick to act against Japan in particular, and why the US government was this eager to incarcerate nearly the entire West Coast-Japanese-American population.

About halfway into the nineteenth century, the first large wave of Asian immigrants arrived to America, consisting of predominantly Chinese at first, soon followed by Japanese, and other East-Asian countries. Especially Hawaii and the West Coast were popular destinations for these people, which can be explained due to these locations being the most accessible when traveling from Asia. Extreme competitiveness on especially the West Coast however due to for example the Californian gold rush and poor American knowledge regarding Asia and its cultures and people proved to be a weak base for acceptance of these new immigrants (“Asians and Asian Exclusion” pars. 2 and 4). Especially differences of religion quickly formed a barrier between the first Chinese immigrants and their integration into American society (par. 5). The Chinatowns that came to exist in areas where many of these immigrants lived together were thought of as “breeding grounds for drugs and prostitution” (par. 5) which further widened the gap between West Coast-Americans and the Chinese immigrants, making it more difficult for them to gain more inclusion, the result being that they mostly stayed within their own Chinese communities.

It was not long after the arrival of Chinese immigrants, that Japanese also decided to leave their homeland for America in search of success. Despite Japan's efforts to separate its emigrants from the ones from China in an attempt to allow them to be received with more positivity in America, they could not prevent the same thing happening to them: Japan's difficult-to-meet requirements for emigration were in vain, as Japanese immigrants were quickly grouped together with Chinese, suffering from the same prejudice as a result (par. 6). This aversion of Chinese, Japanese and later Asian immigrants altogether, mainly grew from an economical point of view, as their cheap labor was seen as too big a competition for Americans on the job market; if they were willing to work for lower wages, under worse circumstances, the Americans feared that the same would soon be expected of them as well. Consequence of this was mass-exclusion, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which managed to decrease the flow of Chinese immigrants to the United States ("Chinese Exclusion" par. 1, "The Asiatic" par. 8). In 1908, through the Asiatic Exclusion League, the exclusion was expanded from only Chinese immigrants, to all other immigrants coming from Asia, including Japanese, Korean and Indian immigrants. Although morality and protection of the 'American way of life' formed important reasons to impede Asian immigration, labor and competition on the job market still seemed to be the largest motivation behind the Asiatic Exclusion League, as this metaphor, spoken by California Congressman James Maguire in 1908, shows:

I say that the sheep is as good as the horse, and as useful to mankind, yet it would be criminal folly to confine horses and sheep to the same pasture. The sheep would thrive, but the horses would starve, for they cannot feed upon pasture over which sheep are in the habit of running. So it is with Asiatic and American labor; the former will thrive where the latter will perish, and we are interested in the welfare of the latter ("The Asiatic" par. 11).

Around the same time, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908 would further halt Japanese emigration to the United States; this informal agreement meant that Japan would be forced to almost entirely halt emigration from Japan to America. In return, Japan was promised a reversal of the Japanese-American segregation at a San Francisco school, in an attempt to decrease the steadily-growing American distrust towards Asians; this however applied to only a small group of students within a certain age range, thus resulting in the agreement bringing advantages to only one side of both (Imai pars. 1-3). One exception however managed to keep the immigration flow running: wives and children of male Japanese laborers already living in America were allowed to immigrate, which triggered a massive number of long-distance arranged marriages (par. 5). Another measure that formed an obstacle to aliens was the 1913 California Alien Land Law, which rendered non-citizen aliens *including* Japanese and other Asians unable to own Californian land. As such a law applying to *all* aliens would have affected other much more welcomed aliens such as white Europeans, the decision to have it apply only to non-citizen aliens quickly singled out Japanese as a target (Ferguson 66, 67). Its effectiveness leaves room for doubt however, as many Japanese in America were active in agriculture, and a 1911 treaty between Japan and America protected residential and commercial short-term land-owning for up to three years, which meant that work in agriculture remained possible (67). By 1920 however, these rules were tightened as anti-Japanese sentiment skyrocketed, and Japanese-owned land in California nearly cut in half from 321,276 acres to 191,427 within the following decade (70-71). The 1924 Immigration Act meant the death blow to Asian, and with that, Japanese immigration: while immigration from all countries in general was brought back to a maximum of 2% of the number of aliens of each country present in the United States based on the 1890 US census, Japanese immigration was now blocked altogether ("Outstanding Features" 1).

As can be seen, a significant number of measures taken against Japanese and other Asian immigration and rights-related matters many decades prior to Pearl Harbor and World War II shows that anti-Asian sentiments were skyrocketing in the period from the mid-nineteenth century through the period leading up to the second World War. This further fuels the hypothesis that the American doubt towards its Japanese-ancestry population was racially-motivated, rather than being a direct result of the attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, in “Enemy Aliens”, it is written that Japanese-American internment was suggested by President Roosevelt as early as 1937, four years before Pearl Harbor, in reaction to Japan’s military activity in Asia (par. 8).

American Reactions to Internment

Considering the governmental actions mentioned in the previous subchapter, a new question arises: why, aside from fear for the ‘yellow peril’, did the American people not seem to oppose a measure as rigorous as Japanese-American internment? As economy and labor-related fears appear to have formed the initial foundation for discrimination towards Japanese-Americans, it is highly likely that American citizens in some way profited from the relocation of Japanese-Americans.

Almost immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, reports of various types of assaults against Japanese-Americans started to appear; the worst cases including physical attacks and murder cases, but Japanese businesses were also ravaged on large scale, and Japanese-American employees were quickly removed from their job positions (Hayashi 71). On top of that, when relocation was announced, Japanese families received only little time to prepare to leave, including the selling and closing of their homes and businesses. As this timeframe could be as short as a mere fourteen days, this means that there was no time to negotiate about

prices for the possessions, homes and businesses they had to sell, consequence of this being that these prices had to be incredibly low, giving buyers not one, but *two* economic advantages: not only did relocation of Japanese-Americans mean that a large part of Americans' competition on the labor market was now gone, but they could also take over their competition's businesses and possessions for unfairly low prices, which explains why many Americans must have been eager to see relocation happen.

This however, is not to say that no resistance happened *at all*, albeit coming only from a small group of American citizens, mainly consisting of people such as those with a background in higher education, Quakers and other religious groups, but also African Americans, who suffered from their share of racial oppression themselves, and therefore saw the oppressed Japanese-Americans as a sort of ally (Hayashi 85). Despite their efforts, these people were outnumbered by the general American public which tended to back general DeWitt's words "A Jap's a Jap. They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not" (qtd. in Frail par. 3); especially the phrase "A Jap's a Jap" would be repeated often for the entire duration of the war. On top of that, 1942 was an election year, in which drastic actions such as relocation could win many votes from those in favor of internment ("Enemy Aliens" par. 13).

Another factor that is likely to have contributed to the way most Americans accepted Japanese-American internment, is the way news about the internment was brought to the outside world; much akin to the way most Europeans were not aware of the Nazi concentration camps during the war, the general American public was not aware of the WRA camp horrors either, as strict regulations forced employees and reporters to use euphemisms to refer to the situation. Although treated as prisoners, internees were referred to as such and the words "camp" or "internment" were strictly forbidden from being used; instead, they were "evacuees" in "relocation centers" (Robinson, "War Relocation Authority" par. 4). Although a seemingly weak attempt at hiding the truth, in a time in which the luxury of internet and

social media were non-existent which forced the public to rely on the information that the government allowed to be shown, it was an incredibly effective tool. As long as the wording in news coverage gave its audience the impression that it was better for both Americans *and* those of Japanese descent, most Americans saw no reason to object to relocation and internment.

Chapter Three – A Case Study

Although objection to relocation and internment were rare from both the oppressor *and* the oppressed, be it due to economic advantages, euphemisms in camp reports, enemy aliens losing the right to oppose to actions taken against them by the government or the Japanese “*shou ga nai*”, “*it can't be helped*” attitude, few rare cases of Japanese opposition did happen. A short case study of what is generally seen as the best example of such a case, the *Korematsu v. United States* court case, will reinforce the hypothesis of this thesis that Japanese-American internment was above a matter of national safety, inherently a matter of racism.

Korematsu v. United States

While in the short period between Pearl Harbor and the activation of Executive Order 9066 the decision was made to rob Japanese-Americans of the right to oppose any governmental actions taken against them (Hayashi 71), only few dared to stand up against the injustice of Executive Order 9066. The then twenty-three-year-old Japanese-American Fred Korematsu was such a person. Determined not to face imminent threat that was looming over him and his peers, using plastic surgery, he became the ‘Spanish-Hawaiian’ Clyde Sarah (“Facts” par. 3). Pretending not to be of Japanese descent, he hoped to avoid relocation with this new identity; to no avail, because within three months after Executive Order 9066 was put into action, Korematsu was arrested for his attempt to avoid relocation. Despite new laws stating that due to his enemy alien status he would not be allowed to oppose arrest, he managed to get as far as being given a court case. Although the outcome of this case was foreseeable, resulting in probation (five years), and being sent to an internment camp after all for “violation of military orders”, its process was rather unique: knowing that he would face such a sentence regardless of the course of his trial, he decided to “allow the American Civil Liberties Union to represent him and make his case a test case to challenge the

constitutionality of the government's order" (par. 4), thus making his case valuable material for future research purposes.

It is exactly because of this decision that the *Korematsu v. United States* court case is an interesting addition to this research, as the question that Fred Korematsu sought to see answered, is not unlike the focal point of this thesis, namely the question of whether race was a motive for the systematic oppression of Japanese-Americans during wartime. According to the Supreme Court, Korematsu's relocation, just like that of other Japanese-Americans, had been a necessary evil of military nature, but analyses of the court case suggest otherwise. In "*Korematsu v. United States: A Tragedy Hopefully Never to Be Repeated*", Erwin Chemerinsky claims that *Korematsu* was "one of the worst Supreme Court rulings in history" (Chemerinsky 166). He harshly criticizes Justice Hugo Black, who was in charge of the *Korematsu* case at the time, for arguing that "racial classifications" could justify a measure that was to be taken only when of sufficient positive significance to the American government, which Black thought to be applicable to *Korematsu* (168). The largest issue however, according to Chemerinsky, is the fact that the American government focused too closely on its goal, namely to keep the country safe from spies, saboteurs and otherwise dangerous persons related to Axis Power nations, but not enough on *how* to do so effectively and most of all, as humanely as possible; Justice Black argued that during times of war, it was a necessity to incarcerate 'suspects', in other words, enemy aliens, as fast as possible, and that any sort of hearing or trial would merely slow down the process, thus forming a danger to the US (168). Fred Korematsu disagreed with Black's reasoning, finding relocation and incarceration without granting these 'enemy aliens' a process unconstitutional as this did not follow what is stated in the Fourteenth Amendment, which contains a passage about the unconditional right of any person to be granted a fair process in which the government would not be allowed to pass any boundaries set to protect the legal rights, freedom and possessions of said person

(Aitken 61). Chemerinsky takes Korematsu's side, arguing that while safety of the people of the United States was indeed a priority, fast deportation without fair legal process was not strictly necessary, as the United Kingdom had proved through the way it had screened German enemy aliens, that a process to isolate dangerous individuals from the rest of the target group certainly *was* possible, thus claiming Black's judgment concerning wartime necessities unjust (Chemerinsky 168), especially when taking into account that during *Korematsu v. United States*, no doubt had existed about Korematsu's loyalty to America, as prior to the war he had even been willing to join the US Navy (Aitken 61).

Robert Pushaw, in his reaction to the article about *Korematsu* written Chemerinsky, argues that although he agrees with Chemerinsky on wartime not being a correct justification for drastic actions that disregard human rights, it is not necessarily true that Justice Hugo Black and others who were in charge of the *Korematsu* case were inherently racist or breaking laws (Pushaw 174). Instead, he continues, it is the President and Congress that officially stand above the Supreme Court in times of war, as "the Constitution assigns war powers exclusively to the elected branches", thus excluding the Supreme Court in such situations (175). As the decision to put Executive Order 9066 into action can be considered a "war power", the Supreme Court would never have been able to give Fred Korematsu any other sentence than the one he was given, despite his process leading to the conclusion that he formed no danger to the United States. It goes without saying, of course, that this does not necessarily mean that any decision the President takes during wartime is necessarily a good one; it *does* however explain why it is that even those few Japanese-Americans who managed to open court cases could not be spared from internment, despite gross lack of evidence of activities that could bring the United States in danger, as the Supreme Court simply lacks the power to make significant changes in such cases. What *Korematsu v. United States* shows is that the very Constitution that was made to protect the rights and liberties of the American people, also

holds the power to *reject* these same protections during times of war. One could argue that the outcome of *Korematsu* therefore is not a matter of racism, as it is ‘simply’ how the Constitution is written; however, it is exactly because of this that the outcome of this court case is undoubtedly racist. *Korematsu*, in his process, attempted to find an answer to the question whether relocation of Japanese-Americans was constitutional, and it *was* because the Constitution states that in times of war, presidential decisions stand above the Supreme Court, which proves that basic human rights weighed less than a feeling of security for the rest of the American population. Shortly said, the Constitution was written in such a way that racism could always pass human rights, without giving those who are opposed a chance to object.

Chapter Four – Conclusion: The Aftermath

Returning Home After Camp Life

By the end of the war, when American victory over Japan, and Allied victory over the Axis Powers in general were secure, the strict orders from the beginning of the war could finally start to be loosened, although not without problems. The American government saw the introduction of a military draft in the camps, thus allowing Japanese-American men – albeit only the *Nisei*, the second generation – to fight for America during the last leg of the war. This draft was met with resistance, as internees demanded apologies, compensation for their suffering and better civil rights before speaking of a draft; in some camps opposition was quiet, but in larger camps such as Poston and Manzanar resistance against a military draft resulted in multiple arrests (Hayashi 186). Yet ironically, after the war was won, these Nisei soldiers were praised for standing up against and winning from oppression (Frail par. 6).

Had they truly won? As the internees had been forced to sell or leave behind their houses, businesses and all possessions they could not fit into their one suitcase that they were allowed to bring with them, most returned from the camps to empty lives. Emotionally and physically scarred, they now had to rebuild their lives from scratch, which was far from easy: even as internees were starting to be released in early 1945, threats against them continued to be made. “You bring them back, we won’t be responsible for how many are hanging from the lamp posts”, head of the Central Labor Council of Seattle, Charles Doyle spoke about the return of Japanese-American internees, hinting at violent reactions to their return (Speidel par. 22). White families now living in homes previously owned by Japanese-Americans refused to give up their homes, and anti-Japanese groups feared that a lack of housing, labor and manpower to keep an eye on the returning internees were looming over American citizens (pars. 29-31). Out of the many Japantowns that had been flourishing before the war especially in the state of California, only the ones in San Jose, San Francisco and Los Angeles managed

to regain some of their pre-war glory after Japanese-Americans returned from internment (Graves and Shiraki par. 1).

Another factor that increased the difficulty of returning after camp life was the poor level of education inside the camps. Over 30,000 children had been in these camps, and had gone to school there. Poor education during these years so crucial to their development resulted in weak foundations for further careers. Martin Saavedra who researched the consequences of having gone to a school in a WRA camp, provides us with figures which compare educational achievements –measured by how many pursued college or post-college education later in life– of children that were of school-going age during the internment years, divided into two groups, the first group being West Coast Japanese, which were interned, the second group being non-West Coast Japanese (mostly Hawaiian, who were not interned). Saavedra's research shows that while before the war years, West Coast Japanese-Americans ranked higher on education than non-West Coast Japanese; his graphs show that when internment started, West Coast-Japanese (post-)college education fell dramatically, while non-West Coast Japanese education rates continued to rise (Saavedra 66). Saavedra also stresses that along with the poor level of WRA school education, discrimination may have played a role in this decline of Japanese-American college-level education, as post-war scholarships for WWII veterans may have caused white veterans to be favored in the process of accepting applications (76).

Compensation for affected Japanese-Americans was low. It took until 1988 for President George H.W. Bush to formally apologize by signing the Civil Liberties Act. A compensation payment of twenty thousand dollars was promised to each surviving internee in that year. It took, however, as long as until 1999 for these payments to be fully processed (Van Valkenburg 39). More than four decades after the war, out of the approximately 112,000 Japanese-American internees, only about 60,000 were still alive, and thus eligible for this

payment, meaning that nearly half of the victims of internment never received compensation (Ormseth par. 20). For many of those who *were* alive to receive compensation, the payment of twenty thousand dollars managed to cover only a small fraction of what they had lost; taking into account the worth of homes, possessions, businesses (both the businesses themselves, and profits they would have made between 1940-1945) and agricultural land, which were all lost or sold against extremely low prices, twenty thousand dollars could hardly compensate for the financial losses that were made, therefore only functioning as a compensation for the emotional trauma of internment.

Conclusion

It has to be clear that differences between the treatment of Japanese-Americans and that of German and Italian-Americans are vast; not only the mere numbers of internees (112,000 of Japanese ancestry versus 10,000 of Italian, and 11,500 of German ancestry), but also the living conditions each group experienced in their respective camps differed greatly. Where swimming pools, movie theaters and other luxury leisure facilities could be found in camps that housed Italian and German-Americans, the WRA camps to which Japanese-Americans were relocated lacked bare necessities in the field of hygienic, medical and educational facilities. Just as greatly, varied the reasons for internment.

Those of Italian or German ancestry who were interned, were usually either military personnel belonging to one of those two nations, or were otherwise found suspicious after thorough screening. No attempts for such screening were made for Japanese-Americans as the American government rushed to relocate them, and nearly the entire mainland population of this group, the elderly, disabled, ill and children included, was interned, despite reports stating that throughout the entirety of World War II, none were ever found guilty of activities that put the United States in danger.

With military necessity and potential disloyalty of Japanese towards America ruled out as solid justifications for the difference in treatment of Japanese-Americans, placing the internment period into a timeline that starts not at Pearl Harbor, 1941, but around 1850, when along with Chinese immigration, anti-Asian sentiment was on the rise, is a much more logical alternative to the common idea that Pearl Harbor was the direct cause for internment; this shows that internment was merely yet another step in oppressing Asian, and especially Japanese-Americans. Economic advantages of relocating Japanese were much higher for American citizens than the risk of Japanese disloyalty, which explains why the Americans were eager to see them removed, with only little opposition. On top of that, court cases such as *Korematsu v. United States* were a bitter pill for those who felt that relocation and internment were unconstitutional; although the Fourteenth Amendment was supposed to protect their legal rights, the fact that war tools such as Executive Order 9066 issued by a president automatically weighed heavier than decisions made by the Supreme Court meant that Japanese-Americans could easily be singled out as a scapegoat, without giving them a chance to object.

Therefore, taking all these facts into consideration, it cannot be denied that behind the explanation of Japanese-Americans as a (potential) national danger after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the underlying factor of growing racism towards Japanese-Americans was the true reason for the relocation and internment of 112,000 mainland Americans of Japanese descent. Although an attempt at compensation was made in 1988, it lacked in both size and sincerity. While the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II was acknowledged as unjust, it was never truly acknowledged as an act of racism. The word 'Jap', for example, which is used almost exclusively when referring to Japanese people in negative contexts and was widely used during the war, was never officially acknowledged as a racial slur (Varner par. 2).

Playing the devil's advocate, we could consider Japan's imperialist expansionism in East-Asia prior to and during World War II as a possible justification for internment. The kamikaze bombers introduced during the attack on Pearl Harbor showed how far the Japanese empire was willing to go for honor, making them an unpredictable enemy. Were internment restricted to only those whose loyalty to the US could not be proved or who, after thorough screening, could form a potential danger, this imperial thirst for expansion could have worked as an explanation for internment. It cannot, however, be used to justify the oppression, relocation and incarceration of an entire population, based on nothing else than its ancestry; the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II is therefore an undeniable act of racism.

List of Keywords

- pg. 8: *enemy alien* – person with ancestry related to an enemy of the United States
- pg. 11: *Kamikaze* – suicide attacker, generally a pilot
- pg. 13: *WRA* – War Relocation Authority, authority tasked with the removal, relocation and internment of Japanese-Americans and other enemy aliens
- pg. 14: *Issei* – first generation Japanese-American
- pg. 15: *Nisei* – second generation Japanese-American
- pg. 15: *Sansei* – third generation Japanese-American
- pg. 19: *Shou ga nai* – common Japanese saying, meaning “it cannot be helped”, used for inconveniences that one has no influence on
- pg. 42: *Imperialist expansionism* – Japan’s efforts to conquer East-Asian territories

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