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Japanese American Internment, A Fools Fire

When decisions are made on behalf of xenophobia and greed, harmful acts are carried out. The decision by the United States government and the War Department to uproot, detain, and terrify people of Japanese lineage after World War II may have been constitutional, to some degree. In the eyes of the United States government and West Coast hatemongers, the Japanese American internment was definitely justifiable. However, the process to remove the *Writ* should not be done to reinforce hateful thoughts of racism and prejudice. Consequently, the internment of Japanese Americans in camps such as Topaz was ignis fatuus and a dark misuse of political power.

The xenophobic atmosphere on the West Coast was fueled with jealousy of land development by Japanese immigrants that had tamed the desirable land in Central California and along the West Coast. According to Ourdocuments.gov after Pearl Harbor many, “lobbyists began to persuade Congress, and the President...to remove issei and nisei from their property.” The lobbyists were operating on behalf of companies that wanted to make even more money (Ourdocuments.gov). During the debates Congress and the Department of Justice pushed responsibility on to the United States Army.

However, after the Japanese raids on Pearl Harbor. The lobbyists initiated a campaign to fuel fears of invasion and espionage on the West Coast. Armed with an ambiguous constitutional fact the United States government started to remove Japanese Americans on the grounds that they might not be loyal to the Union. The Lobbyists found their loophole they needed to force the government to take action using the Constitution:

The Suspension Clause of the Constitution (Article I, Section 9,

Clause 2), states: "The Privileges of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it." (LII / Legal Information Institute).

As a consequence or because he was pressured and dis-informed, President Theodore Roosevelt issued EO 9066 (100thbattalion.org). At first, the option to be detained was voluntary. However, the unjustifiable removal was carried out with military force.

On the eleventh of September, 1942 the Central Utah Relocation Center (Topaz) began processing and holding internees. Most of the Japanese Americans detained in Topaz were from San Francisco, where they had been held temporarily on the Tanforan Race Track (Topazmuseum.org). Sadly, the conditions were very challenging to say the least. Not only did the Japanese Americans get forced out of their homes and away from their livelihood, they were forced to live in very poorly insulated shacks with no privacy. Unfortunately, the climate in Utah does not allow for such thoughtless construction. In Utah the winters are harsh and cold, in the summer the heat is unbearable. Moreover, the size of the room was based on the size of the family and food was less nutritious than army rations. The best thing that ever happened to Topaz was on the 31st of October, 1945 when it forever closed (Topazmuseum.org).

While held in camps such as Topaz, Japanese Americans faced more scrutiny. As if losing their business, or farm and being relocated by force was not enough, individuals over the age of seventeen were ordered to fill out a loyalty questionnaire (Topazmuseum.org). The questionnaire drove a spike between more families of Japanese lineage. One of the questions, according to American film actor George Takei's interview, fathers turned on sons (YouTube). Ultimately, the Japanese Americans wanted to prove their loyalty to America.

As a result, the Japanese pledged their loyalty only to please the United States government. Kissing their families good-bye behind barbed-wire surrounded internment camps, brave young men

enlisted to fight in Europe. Perhaps, only to contradict how the Japanese were being treated by the American government, the all Nisei regiment would be one of the hardest fighting group in history. “The story of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team must really begin with the Nisei’s fight to regain their right to fight for their country in its hour of peril” (100thbattalion.org).

At the end of World War II, soldiers that survived and their families returned to the place they once called home, the West Coast. The Japanese Americans soon discovered that their houses, and farms were unavailable. And, storage units looted. The farms that Japanese worked so hard and the small percentage of the market that the Japanese received, was absorbed by the companies that funded the Lobbyists that started the whole movement. Ultimately, over a few decades the greedy capitalists and xenophobic attitudes forced a smoke-screen. Perhaps, American perception was fear. But, the unjustifiable act of placing Japanese Americans in concentration camps never sounds like good intentions.

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