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Issei Nisei Argumentative Essay

Moving to a new country can be very difficult, especially when facing discrimination based on race. During WWII America stayed uninvolved, until December 7th, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Because of the attack on Pearl Harbor many American citizens and the government became suspicious of Japanese Americans. The government took Japanese Americans from their homes, forcing them to leave almost everything behind, and put them into internment camps until the end of WWII. Since both first generation and second generation immigrants were put into the camps it made many people ask the question, did the Issei or the Nisei struggle more with internment? The Issei struggled more with internment because they had everything taken away from them, couldn't become U.S. citizens, and they had difficulties rebuilding their lives after internment.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were removed from their homes without cause and the Issei had everything taken away from them. Jeanne Wakatsuki tells how her father, an Issei who had lived in America for 35 years, had everything his family owned taken. "The next morning two FBI men in fedora hats and trench coats knocked on Woody's door, and when they left Papa was between them... About all he had left at this point was his tremendous dignity," (Houston 5). This proves how the Issei had their homes and possessions taken away from them, no matter how long they had been living in America. Furthermore, George Takei tells how his Issei parents had everything taken away from them as well. "We had

lost everything. They were at the middle of their lives and starting all over.” (Takei). This shows how the Issei were forced to give up everything they had and start again. Because the Issei lost everything they owned, they struggled more with internment than the Nisei.

Another reason why the Issei struggled more with internment than the Nisei is because it was difficult for them to start their lives again when coming back from internment camps, and many families thought it was a better idea to stay in the camps than trying to restart their lives all over again. The article “Japanese American Internment” tells how many Japanese Americans had nowhere to go after internment was over. “Although the people and families who were put into the camps had had their lives turned upside down, most of them decided not to seek redress immediately after the war and instead lived quietly in the camps without complaint.” (Japanese American Internment). This shows how it was so difficult for Japanese Americans to find anywhere that would hire them that it was easier to stay inside the internment camps that they were confined in for so long. Additionally, George Takei tells about how difficult his Issei parents had to work just to be able to afford a decent home after internment. “They worked their fingers to the bone, and ultimately they were able to get the capital together to buy a three-bedroom home in a nice neighborhood.” (Takei). This shows how difficult it was for Issei to rebuild their lives after internment because both of his parents had to work extremely hard just to be able to afford a house since their last one had been taken by the government. The Issei had many difficulties rebuilding their lives after internment, showing that the Issei struggled more with internment than the Nisei.

Some may argue that the Nisei struggled more with internment because they had to fill out the “War Relocation Authority Application” which meant that they could be drafted for the 442nd all-Nisei combat team, or be sent back to Japan. In Farewell to Manzanar Jeanne

Wakatsuki shares how her brother struggled with the application, ““If you say NO NO, you will be shipped back to Japan with all those other bakatare!’ ‘But if I answer YES YES I will be drafted anyway, no matter how I feel about it.’”(Houston 65). This shows how the Nisei struggled because they believed that no matter what they answered they would be taken away from their family. Another reason the Issei struggled more however is that they couldn’t ever become U.S. citizens no matter how long they were living in America. For example, the article “Japanese American Internment” talks about the law. “Racist federal laws already prohibited first-generation Japanese Americans from owning land in the United States and even from becoming US citizens” (Japanese American Internment). This shows how the Issei struggled more than the Nisei, because at least the Nisei were able to become U.S. citizens and were able to be drafted for their country while the Issei weren’t allowed to become citizens until 1952. The Nisei struggled with being drafted, however the Issei struggled more since they were considered non-citizens.

In summary, the Issei struggled much more with internment than the Nisei did because of many factors including, being unable to become U.S. citizens, having everything taken away from them, and having difficulties rebuilding their lives after internment ended. Finally, it is made clear that the Issei struggled more because of the overwhelming evidence shared by the sources, “Farewell to Manzanar,” George Takei, and “Japanese American Internment.”

Works Cited

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