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English 10

14 March 2023

The Lost World of The Issei

Losing a happy life is worse than being born in a bad one. *Farewell to Manzanar* shows the view of a Japanese citizen in America after the surprising attack at Pearl Harbor from the Japanese in 1941 being written by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. The attack caused America to enter the second world war, leading them against many enemies, Japan being one of them. This gives the question about the Japanese citizens in America, consisting of the Issei and Nisei generations. With Japan being one of their biggest enemies, America got very desperate having the judgment of their Japanese citizens having a chance of being the enemy so they forcibly imprisoned all Japanese in internment camps. Both Issei and Nisei generations had an uneasy struggle being in the camps, the Issei was the first generation of Japanese people in America and they undoubtedly had a harder struggle than their Nisei counterparts by suffering with loss of their freedom and dread of knowing about a war between their countries.

The Issei were once people who lived in America just like other Americans, having a place to live with precious goods but the camps all changed that, the place and goods they no longer had in their hands giving them a huge scuffle to experience. When the Issei were brought on to the camps, many had felt that their lives were at an end, they weren’t dead but finished. (36-37) The feeling of your life has just ended without death because the total loss of your home and belongings made Issei’s place in the camps a much bigger struggle than Nisei. When the camps had ended, all of the Japanese were free and the Issei had one remaining option to continue in life and it was to start over but there was an unsettling catch. Many Issei seem to have gotten their freedom back as soon as they tried to reset in America was not easy for them as houses were getting shorter and shorter. (118) The Issei had nowhere to go after the loss of their belongings giving them no way to build themselves back together. The Issei’s struggle was upscaled compared to the Nisei by the loss of their livelihood with nothing to return to.

The Issei were born in Japan calling it their home once and as they arrived in the United States they called it their new home soon the war began giving the Issei a devastating reaction of seeing their homes in a war attacking each other. Many Issei were interviewed and were asked about the incoming war, the Issei reply that they felt the fatal war was about fathers against mothers to the Issei. (49) The Issei hopelessly waited for a battle of family against family, knowing that each one was killing each other with no stopping. After the camps ended, the Issei tried to move on as they hoped that the war had a peace outcome so they were trying to focus on living their lives until news of bombs being used. (104) Seeing the world you loved being painfully destroyed by the bomb that was created by the world you lived in gives a striking struggle to the Issei. The Issei’s struggle of their view on their home countries’ war made their life on the camps rougher than the Niseis.

On the other hand the Nisei were born in the camps, being young and had their first life there but the Issei had their old lives sacrificed just to be there. The camps had some paid work the Issei could do, many had worked to pay for their old furniture on the riskiest of warehouses to save what they had left. (29-30) Losing the things you had and having them left to rot in a place that wastes your hard earned money you get from a camp is worse than being born in that camp. The Issei once had the freedom to go anywhere in the United States but the camps trapped everyone, everyone were now confined, the Issei lost a world they once lived by the camps surrounding them to not travel on. (50) Knowing you once had freedom in your life and you can be anywhere just gives a worse struggle for the Issei than the Nisei. The Nisei had their first lives in the camps but the Issei lost their previous lives to be in the camps losing furniture to warehouses and having no way to travel the very land they once had the freedom to step on.

The Issei and Nisei were greatly challenged in the internment camps but out of the two, the Issei suffered greatly when compared. The Issei had the hard suffering of losing everything forever, they once had. With war going on the Issei heard many people getting killed and many places being destroyed in Japan, knowing a place they once called home being destroyed with people they once considered friends being killed by the country the Issei were living in. The loss of everything and dread of seeing war gave the Issei a harder time to struggle than the Nisei. Many are born in terrible events and places, these people were born being lost but they didn’t know it, but loss is worse when you know you had a place in the world you lived, the loss of your world is worse than being born in one.