

More Information--Interpretive Center

Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. This executive order gave the U.S. government the power to force Japanese Americans from their homes and businesses. This executive order “set a dangerous precedent” for the level of power that the U.S. government “could exert during wartime and beyond.”¹ Although anti-Japanese American discrimination had already existed, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 only caused racial hatred to reach a fever pitch. Furthermore, “long-held prejudices and racism against Asian Americans were amplified by wartime propaganda.”² Although media outlets initially “lauded Japanese Americans for their patriotism,” the tide eventually turned, and the media began subscribing to the political dogma that the Roosevelt administration was espousing to the general public.³

This discrimination, which was only exacerbated by government officials, “quickly devolved into a consensus for the immediate, forced removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast.”⁴ U.S. officials cited “wartime necessity” and never gave these Japanese Americans access to “a hearing, legal aid or judicial review before being relocated” to the Heart Mountain

¹ Gary Y. Okihiro, ed., “Executive Order 9066,” in *Encyclopedia of Japanese American Internment* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2013), 47, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/lib/ou/reader.action?docID=1480679#>.

² Okihiro, ed., “Executive Order 9066,” 45.

³ Ronald Bishop, “‘Little More than Minutes’: How Two Wyoming Community Newspapers Covered the Construction of the Heart Mountain Internment Camp,” *American Journalism* 26, no. 3 (2009): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2009.10677725>.

⁴ Okihiro, “Executive Order 9066,” 45.

Relocation Center.⁵ One of the most haunting aspects of Japanese American relocation was that despite the perceived illegality, “nothing involving the relocation was illegal at the time.”⁶

On Wednesday, August 12, 1942 at 1:30 AM, 292 Japanese American internees arrived at Heart Mountain. Upon disembarking from the train, the sight that internees observed was rather intimidating. Barbed wire fencing surrounded the camp, and there were armed soldiers stationed in guard towers. The barbed wire fences “were not erected to keep intruders out but to keep Japanese Americans in,” and the armed sentries were under orders “to shoot not outsiders but Japanese Americans seeking to leave the camp’s confines.”⁷ One thing was immediately clear: despite how government officials framed the relocation, those sent to Heart Mountain were prisoners.

⁵ “Heart Mountain Relocation Center Study Act of 2009: Report Together with Additional Views (to Accompany H.R. 3989) (Including Cost Estimate of the Congressional Budget Office),” Heart Mountain Relocation Center Study Act of 2009: Report together with additional views (to accompany H.R. 3989) (including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office) § (2010), https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/congressional/docview/t15.d16.111_hrpt_529?accountid=12964.

⁶ Eric J. Sandeen, “The Japanese American Relocation Center at Heart Mountain and the Construction of the Post-World War II Landscape,” in *Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Media, Memory, and Projections of Democracy*, ed. Frank Mehring, Hans Bak, and Mathilde Roza, vol. 7 (Brill, 2018), 286, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004292017_015.

⁷ Gary Y. Okihiro, ed., “Evacuation,” in *Encyclopedia of Japanese American Internment* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2013), 42, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/lib/ou/reader.action?docID=1480679#>.

Historical images



Link: <https://www.heartmountain.org/history/forced-removal/>

Being Assigned to Quarters



Figure 3. A trainload of Japanese American internees disembarks at the Heart Mountain relocation center in August 1942, under the direction of a War Relocation Authority official. Photo appeared in the August 19, 1942 *Cody Enterprise*. Local newspapers at times portrayed the internees' arrival as the beginning of a pleasure trip. Photo courtesy of Park Country (WY) Library.



A child hangs on a barbed wire fence at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center, a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II. The image is from an archive of color photos by amateur photographer and camp internee Takeo Bill Manbo.

Link:

https://www.codyenterprise.com/news/people/article_5761223c-1296-11e4-b544-0019bb2963f4.html

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