

The Lies Behind the Smiles

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government took action against the Japanese citizens and aliens in the country. Due to their racial prejudices and desire to maintain an illusion of safety and national security, the American government placed all people of Japanese descent located in the United States in internment camps.

The United States government demonstrated racial prejudice by targeting only those people of Japanese descent or those who appeared to be of a Japanese race and placing them in internment camps. During the Second World War, other races, such as the Germans and Italians, also posed similar threats to American security on the Eastern coast. Even though the United States was at war with Germany and Italy, the American government did not take such radical actions like internment, nor did they discriminate against the members of these races. The Germans and Italians did not experience the same levels of prejudice as the Japanese simply due to their features and the color of their skin. They were not labeled a threat to the nation because they had an American appearance. In other words, they were still considered to be a part of the Caucasian race (Document C). Internment was not only racially biased, it was also pointless because the United States government was interning people that were not even posing a major security threat. The Munson Report stated that “only 50 or 60 [Japanese] in each district can be classed as really dangerous,” and yet everyone of Japanese descent was interred (Document B). The article “Personal Justice Denied” also supports the notion that racial discrimination against the Japanese played a crucial role in the creation of internment camps. Forty years after the war, Congress sanctioned the Commission on War Time Relocation to investigate the internment camps and determine whether or not they were constitutional. The Commission concluded that “the broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” (Document E). This source is proven to be reliable because the Commission on War Time Relocation compiled a variety of 700 first-hand sources from multiple perspectives and collected government documents and second-hand analyses; thus this source provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of Japanese internment.

While racial prejudices played a large role in the internment of the Japanese people, the American government's decisions were also widely influenced by their desire to create a facade of security for the American people. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, hysteria and panic increased among American citizens who feared another potential attack by Japan. Placing the Japanese in these camps provided a false sense of security to other citizens of the United States because it allowed the people to feel as though the threat had been assessed and contained. The video increases this feeling of safety and security by depicting people smiling and cheerfully waving. The speaker also reassures the audience that the government is protecting its people without violating Christian principles and human decency, thus re-emphasizing the perception of security (Document A).

Japanese citizens of America were targeted and put in internment camps because of their Japanese culture and to give a false sense of security to white American citizens.

