*Why Were Japanese Americans Interned During World War II?*

During World War II, the United States government failed American citizens of Japanese descent. They were torn from their homes and businesses along the west coast, because the United States feared another attack from anyone of Japanese ethnicity or connection. This fear-infused racial stereotyping led to the American people living in a state of hysteria. In addition to living in a cloud of fear and racism, the American government fell short on their duty to lead the people out of this chaos.

Chaos doesn’t happen overnight; a cascade of events led to rash decisions made by the U.S. Government. First, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, any Japanese person was associated with the devastating attack. In addition, the government assumed the fishermen that were near naval bases were actually spies for the Japanese government. A justifiable fear slowly grew and developed into an unprecedented suspicion. Very simply, America was desperate and did what they thought was necessary to keep the masses safe. The only decision to be made was a rash one: put Japanese-American citizens in internment camps.

In addition to this chaos caused by fear, racism played a large role in the selection of suspects taken to the camps. Munson states, “The Japanese are hampered as saboteurs because of their easily recognizable physical appearance” (document B). Not only the American government, but the American people began assume anyone who looked Japanese also looked like an enemy. Another way race played a role was that the east coast was not evacuated “of threats” in the same way the west coast was. The only “threats” from the east coast are the Italians and Germans, and since “Germans and Italians are “white,” the are less likely to be identified as a threat.” This information came from a black periodical from the time, so they are very familiar with racism from the government.

The U.S. government needed to take a stand. Instead of going about the situation diplomatically, they immediately jumped to irrational conclusions, and they gave into stereotypical prejudice. This ultimately led to internment camps as the only solution to public peace.