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# Holocaust: Japanese American Internment Camps

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Did you know that an entire population of Japanese Americans was once imprisoned? This event took place during the second world war for “security reasons”. During the Second World War, Americans doubted the loyalty and trustworthiness of the Japanese American Population. After the attacks on Pearl Harbor by the Empire of Japan, the citizens of the United States grew even more uncertain about their loyalty. After pressure from fellow politicians, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. Executive Order 9066 gave the military power to imprison a whole population of Japanese Americans. Though this raised issues and arguments about whether this was lawful and constitutional, the imprisonments continued throughout the war. Further, the Holocaust that was also taking place across the Atlantic Ocean was also becoming increasingly horrific. Hitler’s regime rounded up millions of different races and populations and created concentration camps for them to suffer in. During the Second World War, millions of Jewish people and other races were exterminated in Germany in the event called the Holocaust, and similarly in the United States there was a smaller incident; the Japanese American Internment Camps.

The holocaust was a horrific anti-semitic event carried out by Hitler’s Nazi Regime. During the duration of Hitler’s position of power in the Nazi Regime, he commanded an event called the holocaust, which “..was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators” (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). Hitler’s holocaust was a horrific event that saw the industrialized and murderous killings of millions of Jews. Antisemitism was supported and used throughout the holocaust: , though it is now a new thing “antisemitism is an old and widespread prejudice that has taken many forms throughout history” (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). Anti-Semitism, which was common throughout the holocaust, was not created by Hitler’s regime as it has been utilized throughout the events of history. Nazis often blamed the Jews for many of their failures: “the Nazis falsely accused Jews of causing Germany’s social, economic, political, and cultural problems. In particular, they blamed them for Germany’s defeat in World War I..” (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). With their anti-semitic views, the Nazis publicly blamed the Jewish people for their failures and ultimately used this to increase the morale of their people. The holocaust included anti-semitic views, murderous actions by the Nazis, and their hatred for the Jews.

The Nazis did not view other races as important or human. After blaming them for their failures, “the Nazis believed that the so-called ‘Jewish race’ was the most inferior and dangerous of all” (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). The Nazi Regime believed that the Jewish people were incredibly dangerous and responsible for the major failures of the country. “The Nazis believed that the world was divided into distinct races and that some of these races were superior to others” showing just how little they cared about others (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). The Nazi ideology was that the German race was far superior to any other race around the world. The Nazi Regime believed that their race was superior over others: “they considered Germans to be members of the supposedly superior ‘Aryan’ race. They asserted that ‘Aryans’ were locked in a struggle for existence with other, inferior races” (“Introduction to the Holocaust”). The official Nazi German race, the “Aryans” was viewed by the regime as the superior race above all others, and they were being threatened by others. Once Adolf Hitler took over as Chancellor of Germany, “..the Nazi German regime (which called itself the Third Reich)

excluded Jews from German economic, political, social, and cultural life" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). With the hatred of the other races growing, Hitler began inciting terror upon the inferior and hated races. Upon Hitler rising to power in the Nazi Germany Regime, Hitler preached to the people of Germany that the other races were inferior and were a threat to the Aryan race, further causing violence and terror.

The Nazi Regime carried out systematic killings throughout the entirety of World War Two. Over the course of World War Two "...Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews using deadly living conditions, brutal mistreatment, mass shootings and gassings, and specially designed killing centers" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). Behind the scenes of the devastating Second World War, Nazi Germany and its close allies worked together to round up millions of Jews and other populations and systematically murder them. During the early years of the war "...the Nazi regime began building specially designed, stationary killing centers in German-occupied Poland" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). After Germany invaded Poland at the beginning of the war, Nazi Germany began building huge facilities with industrialized killing centers. To gain the trust of the holocaust victims the Nazis "disguised their intentions by calling the transports to the killing centers 'resettlement actions' or 'evacuation transports'" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). To ease the process of getting the Jewish to the killing centers, Nazi Germany essentially befriended their victims before turning on them and forcing them to the death camps. Nazi Germany neglected to think of the Jews as human and treated them horribly: "The conditions on deportation transports were horrific. German and collaborating local authorities forced Jews of all ages into overcrowded railcars" ("Introduction to the Holocaust"). The Nazis and their allies publicly showed their hatred for the Jews and transported them in compact cattle cars. Nazi Germany gained the trust of the Jewish and other races before putting them into small cattle cars and shipping them to killing centers.

Hitler created a unique army that specialized in the killing of Jews and other enemies of the Nazi Regime. After Hitler rose to power within the German government "Adolf Hitler's persecution of German Jews turned from words of hate to deeds of destruction early in 1933". (Resnick 27). Before he was a key member of the German government, Hitler spread words of hate towards the Jewish, though once he rose to power things quickly changed. Hitler's new army, the SS, was a horrific and murderous unit: "Hitler and his Nazis did not stop at mere humiliation and oppression of the Jews. Hitler organized a black-shirted security guard called the Schutzstaffel, or SS for short" (Resnick 27). Hitler created his own private army to execute his views of the Jewish and for them to be taken out. With Hitler's view on the Jewish people known, Hitler used his power in the government to create and special private army to execute those ideas.

The Leadership in the Nazi Regime quickly decided to make the killings systematic rather than random. "...Nazi leaders realized it would be more efficient if the victims were brought to the killers," effectively making their killing machine even more powerful and devastating (Resnick 37). The Nazis took the victims of the holocaust and they were brought to their killing centers to make the killing easier. "Once the Nazis had forced the Jews into the mostly walled-off ghettos, they tried to trick their Jewish prisoners into cooperating" to make murdering them an easier process (Resnick 38). After the Nazi Leader decided they needed to change their ways of killing the Jewish, they started making ghettos and began befriending their victims so they could easily trick them into coming to the camps where they would be murdered. "As difficult as it was for the ghetto inhabitants to avoid sickness, especially since it was almost impossible to obtain medicine, it was even more difficult for them to avoid starvation". (Resnick 40). Because of the German occupation of the ghettos, it was more difficult to get any food inside the ghettos than to avoid catching diseases and other illnesses. Hitler used his special army to easily gain the trust of, deprive the rights, and starve the victims of the Holocaust.

The German holocaust was similar to the one that happened in the American homeland. Hitler used his power to create a special army to carry out his acts and ideologies of the Jewish. This special army made the lives of Jewish and

other populations miserable and torturous. These people lived in poor conditions within the ghettos and concentration camps. Similar to these events in Nazi Germany, the Japanese Americans were subject to similar things. Throughout the war, thousands of Japanese Americans were rounded up and placed in Internment Camps and Relocation Centers. They experienced conditions similar to those in the Nazi Concentration Camps. Thus, the holocaust took place in different locations and was not just carried out by the Nazi Regime.

Executive Order 9066 was a Presidential Order that gave the military the power to imprison anyone in a certain area, though it was obviously pointed to the enemy races. Three months after the tragic events of pearl harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created Executive Order 9066: "on February 19, 1942, Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the U.S. military authority to exclude any persons from designated areas..." ("Japanese American Internment" A). With the concern for the safety of the citizens of the United States following the attacks of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used his executive power to racially exclude Japanese Americans from areas of the west coast. Shortly after the creation of executive order 9066 "...the War Department created 12 restricted zones along the Pacific coast and established nighttime curfews for Japanese Americans within them" ("Japanese American Internment" A). After the creation of the Executive Order, the military made up a dozen zones that restricted the rights of Japanese Americans. "Under the authority of the executive order, DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 4" that targeted races of enemy countries and which marked the beginning of "the forced evacuation and detention of Japanese-American West Coast residents on a 48-hour notice" ("Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II"). Following the Executive Order, a top general in the military created a proclamation that would force populations of Japanese Americans and other races to be evacuated. After the proclamation was issued "Japanese Americans along the West Coast were ordered to report to control stations and register the names of all family members" ("Japanese American Internment" A). Following the proclamation issued by the military, the west coast population of Japanese Americans was ordered to report to locations to list their family member's identities. A sequence of government orders and actions led to the beginning of the internment of Japanese Americans.

Though many politicians thought it was unconstitutional and unlawful, congress officially made it a crime to violate the Presidential Order. Though it seemed unconstitutional, "only a few days prior to the proclamation, on March 21, Congress had passed Public Law 503, which made violation of Executive Order 9066 a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine" ("Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II"). Before the proclamation was made, the executive order which would authorize it was made a misdemeanor crime to violate it. Even with worries about the legal basis of the executive order, "the task was turned over to the U.S. Army as a security matter" ("Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II"). The Executive Order gave the United States Army the power to evacuate and imprison many enemy races, primarily Japanese Americans. Without regard of the legal basis of the Executive Order, congress made it a crime to violate the Executive Order and the power was handed over to the United States Army for them to carry out the order.

With the majority of the Japanese American population living on the West Coast, in the homeland, Roosevelt had someone investigate their loyalty, and it turned out that the majority of them were loyal to the United States. "By 1940, most Japanese immigrants and their descendants lived on the West Coast, especially in California" meaning that the majority of the population could be easily put in internment camps ("Japanese American Relocation"). The United States' west coast was the most populated area of Japanese Americans at the time of 1940. "Roosevelt's investigator, Curtis B. Munson, determined that more than 90% were loyal to the United States" though it was never considered and the Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps ("Japanese American Relocation"). Even though President Roosevelt's investigator concluded that most Japanese Americans were loyal, this investigation was never considered and the government continued to imprison the Japanese Americans. Though the majority of Japanese

Americans were loyal to the United States, the government carried out the imprisonments on the populations of the west coast.

Politicians suggested that all Japanese Americans be put into internment camps following the events of Pearl Harbor. "Japanese American internment, the forced relocation by the U.S. government of thousands of Japanese Americans to detention camps during World War II" is a very unpopular and rarely talked about incident of the Holocaust ("Japanese American Internment" A). Unlike the extremely popular Holocaust which took place in Europe, the Japanese American Internment Camps are much less popular though much similar. Because of the Japanese act of war on the United States with Pearl Harbor, "the U.S. War Department suspected that Japanese Americans might act as saboteurs or espionage agents, despite a lack of hard evidence to support that view" ("Japanese American Internment" A). Even though the military and other officials lacked sufficient evidence, the military assumed all Japanese Americans were disloyal to the country and would carry out violence. Because of the events of Pearl Harbor, "some political leaders recommended rounding up Japanese Americans, particularly those living along the West Coast, and placing them in detention centres inland. A power struggle erupted between the U.S. Department of Justice, which opposed moving innocent civilians, and the War Department, which favoured detention" ("Japanese American Internment" A). Even though the Justice Department, the legal department of the federal government was against the act of imprisoning the Japanese Americans, the military felt otherwise. People of different fields of government felt differently about the option of imprisoning the Japanese Americans after the events of Pearl Harbor.

Living conditions in the internment camps were not great, though most people ignored it and lived their lives as they would if they were free. The conditions of the relocation camps were unbearable such as "rudimentary barracks and other buildings surrounded by barbed-wire, and guarded by the US Army" ("Japanese American Relocation"). The conditions of the Japanese American internment camps were miserable and unbearable similar to those in the Nazi Germany concentration camps. The prisoners of the camps strived to 'live' normally as "each Relocation Center was its own 'town,' and included schools, post offices and work facilities, as well as farmland for growing food and keeping livestock" (History.com Editors). Even though the living conditions in the internment camps were miserable and inhumane, the prisoners did their best to live their lives within the fences as normally as possible. The housing units were not made for families as their barracks were "...tar-papered army-style barracks" ("Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II"). The places in which families were housed were not in good condition or built to be used for families, similar to the barracks found within the Nazi Germany concentration camps. Even with the poor housing and horrible conditions, families imprisoned in the internment camps did not let that stop them from living their lives.

Many incidents were reported that people were shot or shot at for getting too close to the fencing and other barriers. "The camps were enclosed by barbed-wire fences, and armed guards were told to shoot anyone who tried to leave" which shows how the government really felt about the Japanese Americans ("Japanese American Internment" B). The government truly did not value the lives of the Japanese Americans which was demonstrated by the show of force by the militarized guards of the internment camps. An example of these incidents is "at the Topaz Relocation Center, 63-year-old prisoner James Hatsuki Wakasa was shot and killed by military police after walking near the perimeter fence. Two months later, a couple was shot at for strolling near the fence" (History.com Editors). There are many cases of prisoners of the internment camps being murdered by the very people who were said to be protecting them. Even though they were told that they were in the camps for protection and a report proved they were loyal, "one of the most stunning ironies in this episode of denied civil liberties was articulated by an internee who, when told that Japanese Americans were put in those camps for their own protection, countered 'If we were put there for our protection, why were the guns at the guard towers pointed inward, instead of outward?' " ("Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II"). The prisoners were once told they would be put in the camps for their own protection, but the actions of the guards proved otherwise. "Despite these

... austere conditions, internees attempted to make their lives feel as normal as possible through gardening, cultural events, and playing sports such as baseball. Interned prisoners attended schools, joined scout troops, or opened small businesses that catered to their fellow prisoners" showing just how dedicated they were to survive and how they had hope ("Japanese American Relocation"). Even though people were being murdered, and the living conditions were horrible, the prisoners continued to try to live the best they could inside the camps. The internment camps had militarized guards who on multiple occasions shot people for going too close to fences, though prisoners continued to live their lives.

The President's wife told the imprisoned people that it was a mistake, but once they returned home from imprisonment, they found their home taken away from them. "Upon their return from imprisonment, Japanese Americans often discovered that their homes, lands, and businesses had been confiscated by the US government or by other Americans" and since this was unfair, unjust, and unconstitutional "many sought to regain their prewar property, often unsuccessfully" ("Japanese American Relocation"). Many of the imprisoned found their homes were taken over by the government or other Americans and upon trying to get them back, they often failed. Most likely to repair the image of the president, in the year "...1943, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Gila River camp and gave a speech to the internees in which she called their removal a 'mistake' caused by 'unreasoning racial feeling.' " ("Japanese American Relocation"). While the Japanese Americans were still imprisoned, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited one of the camps calling the imprisonment of the Japanese Americans a mistake. Before coming home to other people living in their homes, prisoners were given a speech by the First Lady who called their imprisonment a mistake motivated by racial views.

With a majority of the Hawaiian population being Japanese American, many people called for them to be incarcerated to ensure security, and these actions took up resources. "One-third of Hawaii's population was of Japanese descent. In a panic, some politicians called for their mass incarceration. Japanese-owned fishing boats were impounded" even though they posed no threat to the United States (History.com Editors). Because of the attacks on Pearl Harbor, and a fraction of Hawaii's population being of Japanese ancestry, politicians felt it was needed to take action. Precious resources that could be used for the war were wasted when the "...Army deployed tanks and soldiers to Tule Lake Segregation Center in northern California to crack down on protests" (History.com Editors). Furthering the resources wasted on the internment of loyal Japanese Americans which could have been used for the war effort in Europe or the Pacific. Politicians in Hawaii and many other states were worried about the Japanese Americans and how they posed a threat to the country, and they continued to waste military resources on protests and taking racial action against Japanese Americans instead of using them in the war.

The relocation centers of the camps were disgusting and overall horrible to live in, though the imprisoned population did their best to live normally. After the proclamation was in place "Japanese Americans reported to 'Assembly Centers' near their homes. From there they were transported to a 'Relocation Center' where they might live for months before transfer to a permanent 'Wartime Residence'" (History.com Editors). Once the military proclamation was issued, Japanese Americans were transported to mass centers used for the processing and temporary housing of the imprisoned. "Assembly Centers were located in remote areas, often reconfigured fairgrounds and racetracks featuring buildings not meant for human habitation, like horse stalls or cow sheds, that had been converted for that purpose" showing just how quickly the camps were coordinated and how the conditions were horrible (History.com Editors). The assembly centers created for the beginning of the internment of Japanese Americans were often made on ranch land which had horse stables used for housing and other uses. Japanese Americans were transported to centers where they were temporarily held in animal barns, race track buildings quickly converted into housing units and buildings.

To provide further evidence of the discrimination, other races were not imprisoned as much as the Japanese Americans. Even though the Executive Order targeted all ethnicities, "The War Relocation Authority detained only

14,000 'enemy aliens' born in Europe (most from Germany or Italy, both Axis powers and wartime enemies of the United States) out of the more than one million European immigrants living in the United States who were not yet US citizens" ("Japanese American Relocation"). The Executive Order targeted all enemy ethnicities, though the majority of those imprisoned and rounded up were Japanese Americans. "After the War Relocation Authority closed camps, US officials gave internees little or no financial or material support, simply forcing them to leave the camps" showing just how little they cared for the prisoners. ("Japanese American Relocation"). Following the discrimination specifically against the Japanese Americans, the government did not support them after their release from the camps. Even though the Japanese Americans were falsely imprisoned and discriminated against via the Executive Order and other things, the government provided little support to the affected.

The Japanese Americans were heavily discriminated against during the duration of World War Two and experienced conditions similar to those in the Nazi Germany Holocaust. The Japanese American Internment Camps were a smaller incident within the holocaust, which saw the imprisonment of a whole population, similar to the acts of the Nazis during the holocaust. The Nazi German Holocaust was a horrific event carried out by the Nazi German Regime led by their leader Adolf Hitler. Hitler used his powers to create a special army to execute millions of Jewish people and many other races, though primarily Jewish. These people endured horrible conditions in the death camps or more popularly called, concentration camps. Similarly in the United States, Japanese Americans were primarily discriminated against and also endured horrible conditions in the internment camps. The Japanese Americans were under the constant watch of the United States Army and were ordered to shoot anyone who attempted to escape, also similar to the events of the Nazi German Holocaust. Even though most of the Japanese Americans were found to be loyal to the United States, the government allowed for these things to happen. The Nazi German Holocaust was very similar to the events of the Japanese American Internment Camps, both consisted of horrible conditions and unfair treatment of different races.

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