

ENG 280

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### America did Right by Interning Japanese

Learning from our mistakes so we do not repeat history is something that we all do on a regular basis. Some of these mistakes are very minute, while others have big impacts on our lives. However, to learn from our mistakes, we need to understand why we made the mistake in the first place. One mistake that America can learn from is when Japanese American citizens and aliens were interned during World War II. In order not to repeat this mistake Americans need to understand why Japanese Americans were interned. Even though today we know that putting the Japanese in internment camps was wrong, at the time of WWII, America did the right thing based off the information and facts around them. Before World War II started, there was already a racial prejudice against Japanese Americans that continued well into the war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was only reacting to the influx of information he was receiving about Japanese aliens, and the American people themselves did not do enough to fight the military or government on the orders to intern the Japanese.

Well before World War II started, in the late 1800s, prejudice against Japanese Americans was already in the minds of American citizens. While some may argue that what happens in the past should not affect future decisions, this history of racist remarks and thoughts towards people of Asian descent did play a great role in deciding to intern Japanese Americans.

The prejudice against Japanese people started way before World War II even occurred, and even before World War I. According to Greg Robinson, who wrote *By Order of the*









Many argue that American citizens were against interning Japanese aliens and citizens, and that the feelings of fear and hostility towards them rested solely in the hands of the government and military. However, while there were many Americans who were against internment, there were several more who were in favor of it.

Even though a majority of Americans were for interning Japanese aliens, there were protests made by Americans who were against the order. At Washington University, mothers of the Seattle Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in February 1942 made a demand for the removal of 27 Japanese secretaries from the university. Students started a petition to fight this, gaining over 1,000 signatures, but in the end the secretaries ended up resigning all together to avoid further controversy (Schaffer 602). Another school teacher of seventh and eighth grade students had her students write down their feelings in a letter about how they felt losing their Japanese classmates. While some wrote that their Japanese counterparts were their friends and they would be sad to lose them, other students wrote awful things about how these “Japs” needed to be locked up from the rest of America (Schaffer 606). Reverend Emery Andrews traveled more than 42,000 miles in one month going back and forth from Seattle to Manzanar (one of the internment camps) to deliver things to the Japanese who were interned there. These things would be gifts, news, and sometimes a car to a family who planned to leave and travel elsewhere (Schaffer 609). Despite all these cases where there was someone good fighting the internment of the Japanese Americans, the Japanese were still interned in the end. In most cases the majority wins, and in all

A big contributor to the negative feeling that dominated Americans is propaganda. Some headlines that were featured in newspapers were “Vegetables Found Free of Poison”, “Chinese able to spot Jap”, and “Japanese here sent vital\$

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