

The odyssey conclusion narrative



Japanese-American During WWII By: Sean E-mail: emailprotected Japanese immigrants and the following generations had to endure discrimination, racism, and prejudice from white Americans. They were first viewed as economic competition. The Japanese Americans were then forced into internment camps simply because of the whites fear and paranoia. The Japanese first began to immigrate to the United States in 1868. At first they came in small numbers. US Census records show only 55 in 1870 and 2, 039 in 1890. After that, they came in much greater numbers, reaching 24, 000 in 1900, 72, 000 in 1910, and 111, 000 in 1920.(Parrillo, 287) Most settled in the western states.(Klimova, 1) Many families in Japan followed the practice of primogeniture, which is when the eldest son inherits the entire estate. This was a “ push” factor. Because of primogeniture, “ second and third sons came to the United States to seek their fortunes.”(Parrillo, 287) The promise of economic prosperity and the hope for a better life for their children were two “ pull” factors. These foreign-born Japanese were known as Issei (first generation). They filled a variety of unskilled jobs in railroads, farming, fishing, and domestic services. (Klimova, 1) The Japanese encountered hostility and discrimination from the start. In California, a conflict with organized labor was due to their growing numbers in small areas and racial visibility.(Parrillo, 287) White workers perceived Japanese as economic competition. Their willingness to work for lower wages and under poor conditions brought on hostility from union members. The immigrants became victims of ethnviolence. In 1890, Japanese cobblers were attacked by members of the shoe maker’s union, and Japanese restaurateurs were attacked by members of the union for cooks and waiters in 1892. It was very difficult to find steady employment; therefore, most of them entered

agricultural work. They first worked as laborers, accumulated sufficient capital, then as tenant farmers or small landholders. Some became contract gardeners for whites.(Parrillo, 287) The Japanese farmers were very knowledgeable of cultivation, which made them strong competitors against white farmers. More discrimination by the dominant group soon followed. “ In 1913, the California legislator passed the first alien landholding law, prohibiting any person who was ineligible for citizenship from owning land in the state, and permitting such persons to lease land for no more than three years in succession.”(Parrillo, 287) This was ofcourse aimed at keeping the Japanese in the working class. Their native born children, the Nisei (second-generation), were automatically US citizens. Thus, the Issei had land put under their children’s names directly or by collectively owning stock in landholding companies. Discrimination against the Japanese continued after World War I. The California legislature passed a law in 1920 “ prohibiting aliens from being guardians of a minor’s property or from leasing any land at all.”(Parrillo, 288) Yet another attempt by the dominant group to preserve power. Japanese American children also suffered racism and discrimination. In 1905, the San Francisco School Board of Education passed a policy sending Japanese children to a segregated Oriental school in Chinatown. (Parrillo, 288) “ Superintendent, Aaron Altmann, advised the city’s principals: “ Any child that may apply for enrollment or at present attends your school who may be designated under the head of Mongolian’ must be excluded, and in furtherance of this please direct them to apply at the Chinese school for enrollment.”(Asia, 1) Japanese immigrants being extremely racially distinct, had different cultural customs and religious faith, and tended to chain migrate and stay within their own small communities. This aroused distrust

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and the idea that they could not be assimilated.(Klimova, 2) Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 fueled the irrational distrust and prejudice. It led to the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, secured by President Roosevelt, which "Japan agreed to restrict, but not eliminate altogether, the issuance of passports."(Parrillo, 288) This attempt at reducing Japanese immigration had a huge loophole, it allowed wives to enter. Many Japanese practiced endogamy and sent for "picture brides." "Several thousand Japanese entered the United States every year until World War I, and almost 6, 000 a year came after the war."(Parrillo, 288) The anti-Japanese attitudes grew stronger. The Immigration Law of 1924 stated that all aliens ineligible for citizenship were refused entry. Thus, "...the Japanese migration to America came to a complete cessation."(Klimova, 2) The law stayed in effect until 1952. By 1941, "about 127, 000 ethnic Japanese lived in the United States, 94, 000 of them in California."(Parrillo, 289) Only "37 percent were Issei..."(Klimova, 1) On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. When news of the attack reached the west coast, Japanese neighborhoods were surrounded by police. Within the first day, the FBI arrested 1, 300 dangerous aliens'. They had jailed nearly 2, 000 more by the end of December.(Spickard, 93) Most of them were business executives, leaders of Japanese associations and community leaders whose only suspicious act was visiting relatives in Japan or contributing to the Japanese equivalent of the United Service Organization (USO). Those arrested were thrown into county jails and then transferred to detention centers run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).(Spickard, 93) The fear of bombing or even an invasion caused rumors to spread about treachery and deceitfulness by the Japanese Americans. The allegations of

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sabotage and espionage were twisted by racial bias and lacked any evidence or rationale. Some were absolutely ridiculous. Such as poisoned vegetables and planting tomatoes so that they formed arrows pointing at US military objects.(Klimova, 2) The anti-Japanese paranoia held by the dominant group echoed in the media. Newspapers printed unfounded racist reports about Japanese Americans, starting in December 1941 and more throughout February 1942. Common examples of racist articles, some openly using degrading ethnophalisms, are these headlines from the Los Angeles Times: “ Jap Boat flashes Message ashore” “ Two Japs With Maps and Alien Literature Seized” “ Caps on Japanese Tomato Plants Point to Air Base”(Spickard, 96) The fear and hostility toward the Japanese Americans was accompanied by a wide spread hysteria. People began to call for their removal from the western states. White farmers were among those advocating their evacuation. By now, Farmers of Japanese origin had turned desert into some of the most fertile farmland, which was less than 4 percent of the California farmland, and produced 10 percent of the total value of the states farm crop.(Klimova, 3) Autin Anson of the Grower-Shipper Association of Salinas, California, made this statement while lobbying for the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans: “ We’re charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It’s a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown men. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over.”(Spickard, 97) This terribly racist statement explains on e conflict over the limited resources available. The dominant group wants the competition removed and deep the minority group with as little as possible. Lieutenant General John L. Dewitt, the head of the Western Defensive Command, Major General Allen W. Gullion, and <https://assignbuster.com/the-odysseyconclusion-narrative/>

other high ranking officers, all guided by their own racism, also campaigned for the Japanese American Population to be removed. Dewitt said: " A Jap's a Jap. They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not. there is no way to determine their loyalty...it makes no difference whether he is an American; theoretically he is still Japanese, and you can't change him...you can't change him by giving him a piece of paper."(Spickard, 98) They claimed the evacuation was a military necessity; however, such a necessity was never demonstrated. The Department of Justice defended the rights and liberties of U*S. citizens guaranteed by the constitution of the United States.(Klimova, 3) J. Edgar Hoover also opposed the mass evacuation. He argued that all the dangerous Japanese Americans were already jailed.(Spickard, 98) Despite the protest, the Roosevelt administration supported the evacuation. On the 19th of February, 1942, " President Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066, authorizing the War Department to prescribe military areas and to exclude any or all persons from these areas."(McWillans, 108) " More than 110, 000Japanese...were removed from their homes and placed in " relocation centers" in Arkansas, Arizona, Eastern California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming."(Parrillo, 289) They lost everything they owned. Joseph Kurihara was a Japanese American soldier in the US Army and was for Americanization prior to the evacuation, he recalls the Terminal Island evacuation: " It was cruel and harsh. To pack and evacuate in forty-eight hours...mothers bewildered with children crying...Did the government of the United States intend to ignore their rights regardless of their citizenship?"(Myer, 3) Life in the internment camps was hard. They had to endure unsanitary conditions. (Asin, 1) Most of the imprisoned Japanese Americans conformed and followed orders. There were some that protested what was being done to them, but

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their resistance came very late.(Spickard, 108) Kurihara was one of the few that practiced defiance. He eventually renounced his US citizenship.(Myer, 4) These people that openly expressed their new hatred for America as a result of the injustices they suffered were known as the “ no-no’s”. On the other side, there were those that desperately wanted to prove their loyalty to the United States. In January 1943, The US War Department announced the formation of a segregated regiment. Theses Nisei volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) to fight for their country. They joined forces with the 100th Infantry Battalion, formed in May 1942 and were also Nisei volunteers, in Europe. The 442nd RCT eventually consisted of the 2nd, 3rd, and 100th Battalions; the 522nd field Artillery Battalion; the 232nd engineering Company; the 206th Army Band; Anti-Tank Company; Cannon Company; and Service company.(Research, 1) The famous 442nd RCT were the most decorated unit in US military history for it’s size and length of service. In total, there were 18, 000 individual decorations for bravery, 9, 500 purple hearts, and seven Presidential Distinguished Unit citations. (Research, 2) After W. W. II, Japanese Americans were demoralized and in economic disarray. Because all of their possessions and property had been taken away, they simply had to start all over again. There were emotional and psychological consequences for the Nisei. It took decades for them to overcome a lingering shame.(Spickard, 134) There is also a generation and cultural gap between the Nisei and Sansei. The Sansei are in a Quandary over their identification with their “ dual cultural heritage”. Their parents push then to become “ white and to “ subscribe to the legacies of American society”. Yet they are told by their major social environment that they are not white.(Miyoshi, 20) The Japanese Americans have indeed prospered since

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the 1940's. The Nisei and Sansei strongly emphasized conformity, aspiration, competitiveness, discipline, and encouraged the Yonsei (fourth-generation) and Gosei (fifth-generation) to higher education. Their numbers are increasing in the professional fields. The higher education achievements equate into their having higher incomes than any other ethnic group, including all white Americans. (Parrillo, 294) The Japanese Americans have come a long way. But of course some prejudice and discrimination still exists today. The "contemporary depiction's of the Japanese tourists and samurai businessman...offer little of value to clarifying the identities and realities of Japanese Americans...these stereotypes continue to shape how they are perceived." (Kiang, 2) Early Japanese immigrants came to the United States in search of economic prosperity. They were met with hostility, prejudice, and discrimination. Everything they worked so hard for was taken and their rights violated. The dominant group demonstrated total economic exploitation. After enduring such injustices and hardships, many are now enjoying the life the Issei dreamed of for their families. Bibliography Work Cited Parillo, Vincent N. Strangers to These Shores: Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States. Needham Heights, : Massachusetts: 2000, 287-289. Klimova, Tatiana A. "Internment of Japanese Americans: Military Necessity or Racial Prejudice." Old Dominion University. 1-9 (5/2/00) Asia, Ask. "Linking The Past to Present: Asian Americans Then and Now." The Asia Society 1996. 1-3 (5/1/00 Spickard, Paul R. Japanese Americans: The transformation and Formation of an Ethnic Group. New York: 1996, 93-159 McWilliams, Carey. Prejudice Japanese Americans: Symbol of racial Intolerance. Boston: 1945, 106-190. Myer, Dillon S. "Joseph Yoshisuke Kurihara." Unprinted Americans 1971. 1-5 (5/1/00) Asin, Stefanie." Poignant Memories." Houston Chronicle <https://assignbuster.com/the-odysseyconclusion-narrative/>

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