Japanese in the USA after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

National security and the rights of citizens and non-citizens.

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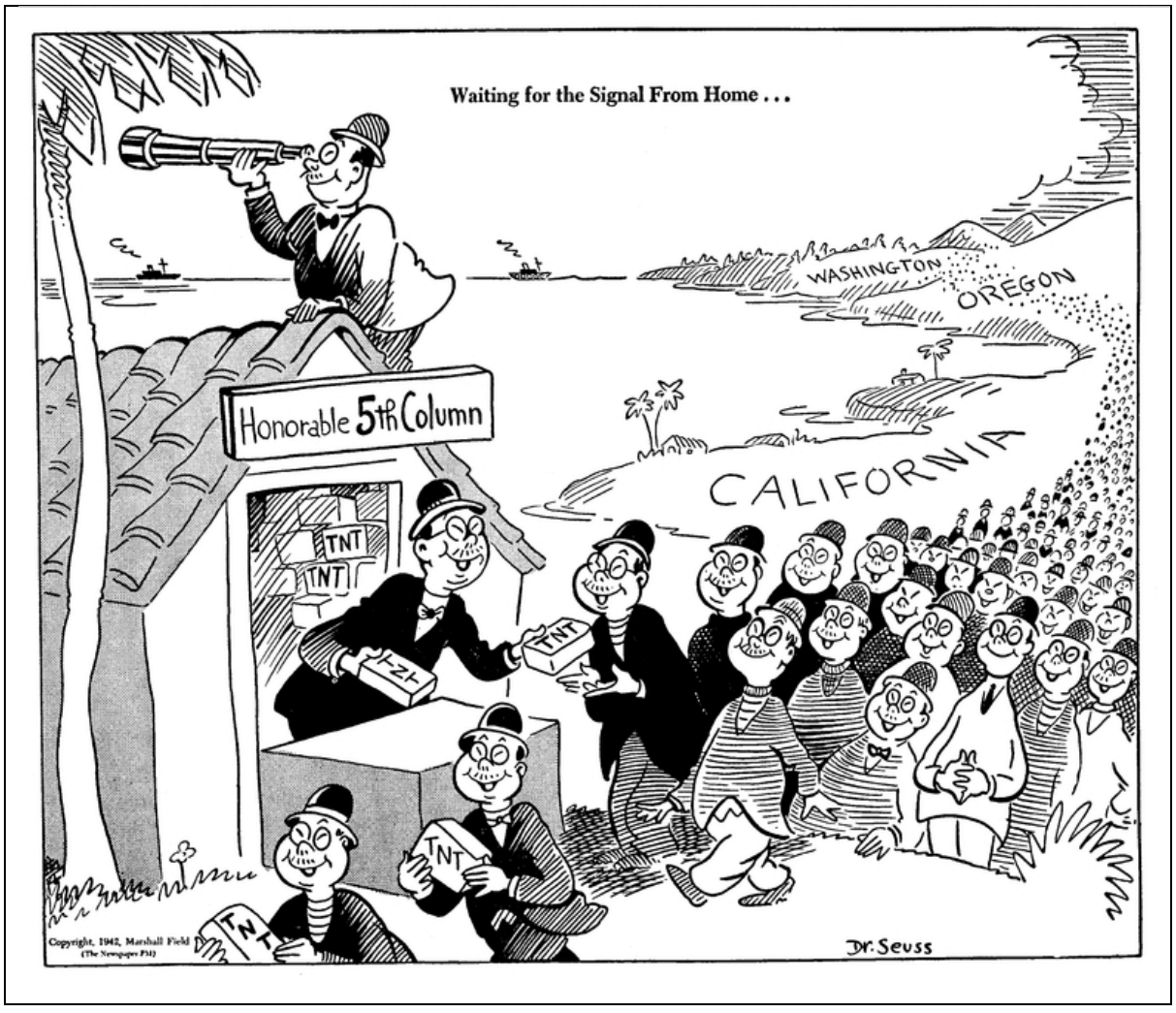

A cartoon published by Dr. Seuss on February 13, 1942 that illustrates the racial anxiety that led to the creation of Japanese internment camps.

Case Opening

At 7:55 AM on Sunday, December 7, 1941, hundreds of Japanese warplanes, launched from aircraft carriers far out at sea, attacked the American Pacific fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack took a terrible toll: eight battleships, including the *USS Arizona*, three light cruisers, three destroyers and four other naval vessels were either sunk or damaged. One hundred and sixty-four American aircraft were also destroyed. Most hadn't even gotten off the ground. 2,403 American servicemen and civilians were dead. Nothing like this had ever happened to the United States of America before.

This was not the first war in which the USA was involved, but it was the first war where they were attacked on their own soil. The Japanese destroyed much of the American Pacific Fleet, and the American military became concerned about the security of the mainland United States, particularly along the West Coast. At the time, approximately 112,000 people of Japanese descent lived on the West Coast; about 70,000 of these were American citizens. Many Japanese Americans had close cultural ties with their homeland, sending children home for schooling and even collecting tinfoil and money to send to Japan during its war with China.

The USA intelligence service informed President Roosevelt that Japanese and other 'subversive persons' be evacuated from the Pacific Coast. The concern of the intelligence services was fueled by the following facts.

- Many migrants of Japanese descent lived near the harbor of Los Angeles, which was strategically vital for economic and military reasons. There were serious concerns of an attack from the 'inside'.
- Japanese warriors were known for their Kamikaze attacks, in which pilots were prepared to kill themselves.

General DeWitt, the commanding officer of the Western Defense Command, recommended that: "In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on Unites States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted. To conclude otherwise is to expect that

children born of white parents on Japanese soil sever all racial affinity and become loyal Japanese subjects ready to fight and, if necessary, to die for Japan in a war against the nation of their parents." He also said that there was "no ground for assuming that any Japanese, barred from assimilation by convention as he is, though born and raised in the United States, will not turn against this nation when the final test of loyalty comes." [1]

[1] *from Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942, Headquarters Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, Office of the Commanding General, Presidio of San Francisco, California, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1943) as found at The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco. As seen on 1-12-2020.*

Presidential powers in wartime vs minority (or even majority) rights.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt acted on this recommendation by signing Executive Order 9066. This authorized the Secretary of War or any designated commander, at their sole discretion, to limit and even prohibit some people from being in certain areas. Soon after the order was enacted, Congress sanctioned the executive order by passing a law that imposed penalties for those who violated the restrictions that evolved from the order. The ensuing restrictions on people of Japanese origin included curfews and forced removal to assembly and relocation centers much farther inland. Relocation to these centers was called internment.

At first, plans had been drawn up in Washington for the wholesale internment of all 158,000 people of Japanese descent living in Hawaii, nearly 40 percent of the total population of the islands. But wealthy landowners in Hawaii opposed the plan; they depended on Japanese field workers to tend their sugar and pineapple plantations. And the presence of a massive American military force on the islands made the danger of an internal threat seem less and less plausible. In the end, Japanese Americans in Hawaii would be allowed to go about their lives more or less as they always had.

But their counterparts on the West Coast would find themselves the subject of an anti-Japanese frenzy that seemed immune to reason. While they represented a tiny portion of the population, Japanese Americans on the West Coast had long been special targets of white hostility. Laws and customs shut out Japanese Americans from full participation in economic and civic life for decades. Japanese immigrants – known as ***Issei*** – could not own land, eat in white restaurants, or become naturalized citizens. But the American-born descendants of Japanese immigrants – called ***Nisei*** – were citizens by birthright, and many had become successful in business and farming. Pearl Harbor gave whites a chance to renew their hostility toward their Japanese neighbors, it also offered white growers and businessmen an opportunity to agitate anew for the elimination of unwanted competitors. The head of the California Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association told the *Saturday Evening Post published May 9, 1942:*

"If all of the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them… because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don't want them back when the war ends, either."[2]

Within days of Pearl Harbor, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover assured the U.S. Attorney General that "practically all" suspected individuals were already in custody, and there was no need for mass evacuations of Japanese for security reasons. But Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, pushed for wholesale Japanese evacuation. "The Japanese race is an enemy race," DeWitt wrote, "and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted."[3]

[2] *Saturday Evening Post published May 9, 1942.*

[3] https://www.pbs.org/thewar/at_home_civil_rights_japanese_american.htm as seen on 21-12-2020.

Primary Sources:

The Saturdayevening Post, Originally published May 9, 1942
By Frank J. Taylor.

On the fateful day that Lt. Gen. John L. De Witt, chief of the Western Defense Command, ordered the removal of all persons of Japanese blood from the Pacific Coast Combat Zone, chunky little Takeo Yuchi, largest Japanese farmer in "the Salad Bowl of the Nation," California's Salinas Valley, was wrangling over the telephone with a produce buyer in San Francisco.

"That fellow purchases for the Navy," he said, slamming down the phone. "He wants me to grow more Australian brown onions because the Navy needs them. The Army tells us to evacuate our farms right now. Just where do we stand, anyway?"

In a dozen areas, from San Diego to Seattle, set apart on Pacific Coast defense maps as "Japanese islands," thousands of American citizens of Nipponese extraction were faced with similar dilemmas. The **Nisei,** or second-generation Japanese, had long anticipated that the **Issei**, or Japan-born aliens, would be ordered from the coast defense zone. But not that American citizens might go with them. Like Takeo Yuchi, they were stunned.

At least half of the 112,905 people of Japanese ancestry affected by the order were rooted in the soil; the rest were fishermen, merchants, hotelkeepers, nurserymen, gardeners, or in domestic service. It temporarily deprived 71,896 American citizens of their constitutional rights. It launched in its course the greatest hurry-up mass hegira this country has seen.

"Tak's going to leave a hole here when he pulls out," a professional man who went to school with Yuchi told me the day De Witt's order came through. "I've known him ever since he was the best sprinter in Salinas High."

Yuchi's own family, consisting of his alien mother, his Salinas-born wife, his 8-year-old daughter, 6-year-old son, and a baby daughter, is an average California-Japanese household. His wife's brother, Hideo Abe, is in the Army. His younger brother, Masao, was called in by the local draft board for his physical examination the day I was there. Of the 21,000 Japanese families on the Pacific Coast, one in every five has contributed a son to the Army.

"Well, are you going to go voluntarily or wait until the Army evacuates you?" I asked.
"It's a tough one to figure out," Yuchi replied. "I'm American. I speak English better than I do Japanese. I think in English, not Japanese."
After leaving the Yuchi household, I called on another Nisei, Dr. Harry Y. Kita, a dentist. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Kita, a University of California graduate, enjoyed a thriving practice. Half of the patients who sat in his three chairs were whites. Since then, most of them had been from the Japanese community. "I haven't much practice left," said Kita, with a hearty but forced laugh. "I understand why it is," he continued. "I feel American. I think American. I talk American. My only connection with Japan is that I look Japanese."
"Could you tell a good Japanese from a bad one?" I asked him.
"No more than you could," he replied. "But if I knew one who was disloyal to this country, you can bet I'd turn him in."

Executive decree: *Issued on April 1, 1942, the Civilian Exclusion notice was posted on buildings, billboards, telephone poles, and high visibility areas, directing the removal by April 7 of persons of Japanese ancestry. Dorothea Lange*

Vegetable Wars

From white vegetable growers I heard the other side of the story. The Salinas Vegetable Grower-Shipper Association had just published a brochure titled *NO JAPS NEEDED* to counteract a widespread impression that Californians would go hungry if the Japanese truck gardeners were removed. The dislike of the militant Grower-Shipper Association for the valley's Japanese farmers is an old and bitter one. The association is composed of a few score large-scale white growers who lease lands, produce lettuce, carrots, and other fresh vegetables the year round in the Salinas, Imperial, and Salt River Valleys for the

Eastern markets. … At one time the lettuce growers, like the sugar-beet growers, depended upon Japanese for field labor. As the Japanese, one by one, became farmers in their own right, and competitors, their places in the field were taken by Mexican or Filipino labor. White men and women, largely Oklahomans, handled the trimming, icing, and crating in the packing plants, but they were never able to endure the back-breaking stoop work in the fields. Only the short-legged Japs could take that.

Shortly after December 7, the association dispatched its managing secretary, Austin E. Anson, to Washington to urge the federal authorities to remove all Japanese from the area. "We're charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons," Anson told me. "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. … If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don't want them back when the war ends, either."

The Japanese-American loyalty creed, to which all Nisei publicly subscribe, is about to get its first real test, particularly these portions of it: "… I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics. … Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. …" In such a test, the tolerance of the new host states will also feel the fire which has been ignited by the obvious requirements of a stern military emergency.

—"The People Nobody Wants," Frank J. Taylor,

May 9, 1942

Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the City of Los Angeles, State of California, within that boundary beginning at the point at which North Figueroa Street meets a line following the middle of the Los Angeles River; thence southerly and following the said line to East First Street; thence westerly on East First Street to Alameda Street; thence southerly on Alameda Street to East Third Street; thence northwesterly on East Third Street to Main Street; thence northerly on Main Street to First Street; thence northwesterly on First Street to Figueroa Street; thence northeasterly on Figueroa Street to the point of beginning.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 33, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Saturday, May 9, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Sunday, May 3, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Southern California Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

Japanese Union Church,
120 North San Pedro Street,
Los Angeles, California.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 5, 1942.
2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
   (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
   (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
   (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
   (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
   (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

   All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.
3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.
4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.
5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.
6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 500 P.M., Monday, May 4, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., Tuesday, May 5, 1942, to receive further instructions.

J. L. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

Questions to Consider:

1. Look at a copy of the American Constitution (online). Which part (Article and Section) describes the war power of the President? Which Article and Section describes the war powers of the Congress? Copy-paste the essential sections and describe where you see the potential conflict between the two?

2. In your opinion, how convincing is General DeWitt's argument about the loyalty of the Japanese and Japanese Americans? To what extent is it important to make a distinction between ***Nissei*** and ***Issei*** Japanese? Write a short essay of maximum 500 words.

3. In times of war, governments must often balance the needs of national security with the civil rights of their citizens. In your opinion, did the Japanese internment order find the right balance between these competing values? Explain your reasons. Another 200 words.

Fact Sheet

110,000 Japanese Americans were held in 10 internment camps from May 1942 to January 1945.

Japanese Americans comprised 40% of Hawaii's population when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Representing over 90% of carpenters and almost all the transportation workers in Hawaii, Japanese labor was essential for the rebuilding of Pearl Harbor.

Author(s)

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