

“The Japanese race is an enemy race:” Legalized Scapegoating of  
Japanese Americans During World War II

Serena Rapoport  
Department of History, Barnard College  
Senior Thesis Seminar  
Professor Gergely Baics  
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## Introduction

America's military engagement with the Axis Powers in World War II had reverberating and destructive effects on the domestic front. As America fought in the war from 1941-1945, the United States government and civilians were simultaneously waging a war of racial oppression against Japanese Americans.<sup>1</sup> The country's discrimination toward all individuals of Japanese descent, regardless of citizenship status, permeated the social, legal, and political fabrics of American life. American civilians, though not fighting on the battlefields in Europe and the Pacific, were nevertheless active in a war of social and racial discrimination. This racial war on the home front ultimately culminated in the legal scapegoating of Japanese Americans, which was manifested in their collective internment with the passage of Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942.<sup>2</sup> As will be demonstrated, this policy did not serve any purpose of military necessity. Instead, the Executive Order legally sanctioned and reinforced unwarranted and paranoid racist attitudes among the public. This thesis explores the social, political, and legal dimensions of America's construction of Japanese Americans as the enemy race throughout World War II.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 was the impetus for America's entry into World War II. Prior to the surprise attack, Americans had exhibited anti-Japanese sentiment, beginning with the influx of Japanese immigration to the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pearl Harbor, however, marked a critical turning point in the country's racism toward Japanese Americans. Previous xenophobia toward new immigrants was transformed into one where the

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<sup>1</sup> The term, Japanese Americans, when used throughout this thesis, includes both United States citizens of Japanese ancestry and non-U.S. citizen Japanese residents in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> The word "scapegoat" originates from the Jewish Bible in Leviticus 16:8. This chapter describes the procedures in the Temple Service on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). A goat was chosen by lottery to represent and incorporate the sins of the nation. This goat is killed later on the same day in the Judean wilderness and is called the "*azazel*," or scapegoat. The term is fitting for the racial oppression of Japanese Americans. In an analogous sense to the biblical scapegoat, Japanese Americans, through no fault of their own, were encumbered with the guilt of the leaders of their nation of origin, no matter how many generations distant.



perception of the government and the public of the Japanese as the enemy race became the dominant and accepted ideology in mainstream society.

In addition to the sharp increase in racism toward Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor, the attack also drastically shifted the nation's inward focus on domestic affairs to one where the United States was a leading military power in the international sphere. After a mere two-hour attack, Japan's warplanes destroyed 18 warships, 164 military planes, and killed over 2,400 civilians and servicemen.<sup>3</sup> The day after Pearl Harbor, the government immediately abandoned its neutrality stance in order to avenge the unprovoked attack. On December 8, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan, as he said, "no matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory."<sup>4</sup> Three days later, on December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy, allied with Japan, forming the Axis Powers, declared war on the United States, which was allied with Great Britain and the Soviet Union, representing the Allied Powers.<sup>5</sup>

The United States' entry into World War II on December 8, 1941 was a complete abandonment of its isolationist standpoint in the more than two decades after World War I. America's position of neutrality stemmed from its severely weakened economy from World War I, in addition to a damaged national morale due to the massive number of American soldiers who were killed. After 116,516 American soldiers were killed in World War I, the country was

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<sup>3</sup> "America Goes to War," *The National World War II Museum*, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/america-goes-to-war.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Franklin D. Roosevelt, "'Day of Infamy' Speech: Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan." *National Archives and Records Administration*, December 8, 1941, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/document.html?doc=15&title.raw=%22Day%20of%20Infamy%22%20Speech%3A%20Joint%20Address%20to%20Congress%20Leading%20to%20a%20Declaration%20of%20War%20Against%20Japan%22>>.

<sup>5</sup> "America Goes to War."

vehemently opposed to fighting yet another devastating war.<sup>6</sup> The crisis that resulted from World War I was further compounded by the international economic catastrophe of the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939. Both World War I and the Great Depression led the United States to focus on its shattered domestic concerns, without any military distractions in the international sphere.<sup>7</sup> The United States retained its neutrality stance even when European powers were already involved in World War II. Congress passed the Neutrality Act of 1939, proclaiming resolutely that the nation's goal was to avoid military conflict. The act stated that America's mission was "to preserve the neutrality and peace of the United States and to secure the safety of its citizens and their interests."<sup>8</sup> It took a single attack on United States soil for the government to reverse its firmly rooted isolationism.

In addition to the weakened economic infrastructure of the United States, the country had also rejected internationalism because, until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the American government did not perceive Germany or Japan as an imminent threat.<sup>9</sup> Since the war was fought on European territory, the government and public could not foresee that the United States was susceptible to military danger. The psychological and intellectual disconnect from the war directly resulted from the geographical distance. This detachment from the war entirely changed once the Japanese warplanes attacked American territory. The crisis of World War II had officially reached American consciousness in a tangible and terrifying way. The start of America's military engagement with Japan simultaneously ushered in a new era of racial discrimination toward Japanese Americans.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "World War I Casualty and Death Tables," PBS, accessed April 19, 2015, <[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath\\_pop.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html)>.

<sup>7</sup> Waldo H. Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the American Entry into World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

<sup>8</sup> United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Neutrality Act of 1939, Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed. Serial Set Vol. No. 10299, Session Vol. No. 4, 76<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, June 17, 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Heinrichs, 7.

Historians have written extensively on the disproportionate racism toward Japanese Americans throughout World War II. John Dower's book, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* explores why the American people and government hated the Japanese far more than the Germans and Italians.<sup>10</sup> Dower primarily focuses on the social component of their discrimination by highlighting the virulent racism throughout popular culture. He analyzes the way in which Americans portrayed the Japanese as a sub-human, barbaric, and enemy race in newspapers, films, political cartoons, songs, and a plethora of other media sources. Dower particularly emphasizes the way in which the Japanese were often depicted through primitive imagery, most commonly as apes and monkeys. His analysis is pivotal to understanding the cultural and social underpinnings of Americans' unabashed racism. This work, however, largely excludes the way in which legal policy echoed social propaganda. The legal manifestation of the social discrimination is a critical factor throughout this thesis.

While propaganda in popular culture was viscerally racist, the policy of collective internment represents the nadir of Japanese Americans' experiences during the war. John Schmitz's book, *Enemies Among Us: The Relocation, Internment, and Repatriation of German, Italian, and Japanese Americans During the Second World War*, is critical in terms of his comparative analysis between Japanese collective internment versus the relocation of a select number of German and Italian saboteurs.<sup>11</sup> Historians have often overlooked German and Italian internment and focus exclusively on Japanese collective internment. By contrasting the internment of Germans and Italians with that of the Japanese, Schmitz powerfully highlights the impact of racism on legal decisions. Schmitz dissects the proceedings of the Tolan Committee, which held congressional hearings regarding the West Coast evacuation, and ultimately upheld it

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<sup>10</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> John E. Schmitz, *Enemies Among Us: The Relocation, Internment, and Repatriation of German, Italian, and Japanese Americans During the Second World War* (American University Press, 2007).

as lawful. It is a poignant and tragic illustration of the way that the American government utterly failed to secure civil rights for Japanese Americans.

The passage of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 was a watershed moment for the fate of Japanese Americans during the war. In order to understand better how this racially oppressive order could have possibly been enforced, it is critical to trace the evolution of Roosevelt's attitude toward Japanese Americans. Historian Greg Robinson, in his book *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*, conveys the transformation of the President's view of Japanese Americans as an "unassimilable" immigrant group before the war, to his perception after Pearl Harbor that their race as a whole posed a national security threat.<sup>12</sup> The centrality of Roosevelt's role in the internment of Japanese Americans is a core component of this book. By focusing on Roosevelt's active participation in racial scapegoating, Robinson reveals the way that a government firmly predicated on democracy was able to use "military necessity" as an excuse to arrive at a blatantly unjust and racist policy. Robinson's research highlights that the racism directed at Japanese Americans was certainly not confined to popular culture. Rather, it completely infiltrated the judicial, legislative, and particularly the executive branch of the American government.

The complexity of America's discrimination toward Japanese Americans stems from the fact that its legal manifestation varied according to region. Historian Gary Okihiro's book, *Cane Fires: the Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*, explores the regional divergence of racism.<sup>13</sup> Historians often oversimplify the government's discrimination by focusing solely on the collective internment along the West Coast. In doing so, they ignore that racism that did not necessarily culminate in legal policy, even in places with large Japanese populations, particularly

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<sup>12</sup> Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991).

in Hawaii. Through a qualitative analysis of the economic and social criteria of the Japanese population in Hawaii, Okihiro demonstrates that anti-Japanese attitudes did not always translate into legal discriminatory actions. He breaks down the common assumption that racism and internment were consistently intertwined. Instead, he shows that the two are correlated, but are not necessarily inseparable. His book is significant in that it explains how racism can be socially pervasive, but not necessarily legally applied.

Each of these sources deals, often quite deeply, with distinct issues. This thesis incorporates these works as building blocks in a more holistic assessment. By weaving these, among many other scholars' works, in conjunction with a wide variety of primary sources, I trace the political, economic, and social components involved in the projection of racism, thereby illustrating its complexity as a social construct.

Chapter one contrasts the public's perception of Germans versus Japanese, revealing the dominance of racism in their hatred of the Japanese enemy. In order to delve into the opinions of the American people, I analyze a variety of media, including newspapers, films, public opinion polls, political cartoons, songs, magazines, as well as congressional documents. The range of media reveals the way in which the view of all Japanese individuals as the enemy involved a wide spectrum of American society, including ordinary civilians, journalists, Hollywood directors, government officials in the Roosevelt administration, and even President Franklin Roosevelt himself.

Chapter two explores the legal dimension of America's treatment of the Japanese as an enemy race by comparing the internment of the Japanese versus that of Germans and Italians. Internment is a key aspect of this thesis because it represents the degree to which legal policy solidified popular opinion toward these three national groups. This chapter sheds light on the sharp contrast between the collective internment of the Japanese versus the selective internment of

European nationals. The House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, or the Tolan Committee, is a significant aspect of this chapter. It represents a key instance where the government explicitly acknowledged that the collective internment of the Japanese on the West Coast stemmed from the fact that it was convenient from both a logistical and economic perspective. Legal documents, such as those produced by the Tolan Committee, show that collective internment was not only racist, but was also fueled by its economic feasibility.

Chapter three underscores the complexity of the seemingly unmitigated racism toward Japanese Americans. The regional aspect of racism will be considered, in terms of the impact of discrimination toward Japanese Americans living in California versus Hawaii. Although all Japanese individuals were perceived as the enemy race, this chapter explores the extent to which the discriminatory treatment they received depended on the region they inhabited. Only the Japanese along the West Coast were collectively interned, since they were a smaller and less economically influential population. The Japanese population in Hawaii, however, was too solidified socially and too critical economically to be interned en masse. The legal extension of racism in the United States during the war was thus either exaggerated or muted, in response to the practical needs of the region.

The period covered in this thesis extends from pre-war discrimination against Japanese Americans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the Pearl Harbor episode, and the war itself. Each phase in the chronology is associated with a new tone of the discrimination toward the Japanese. Pearl Harbor represents the most critical point within the historical span of the period covered in this thesis because it triggered the mass hysteria and paranoia toward all individuals of Japanese descent. By covering a wide historical range, I highlight the ways that attitudes toward Japanese Americans significantly worsened during the war years and how it lent itself to efforts to isolate, delegitimize, and intern United States citizens of Japanese descent.

# Chapter 1

## Presenting the Enemy: The War in American Culture

Heightened national patriotism was essential for America's morale during World War II, given its isolationist stance after the horrors of World War I. Ideally, nationalism should bring together citizens of all races, ethnicities, and cultures in opposition against the country's military enemies. In America's fight against the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—in World War II, however, this quest for reinvigorating wartime patriotism became enmeshed with virulent racial animosity against Japanese Americans. The deeply rooted suspicion of the government and the public that all Japanese individuals were the enemy, however, did not extend to Germans or Italians of American descent. Rather, particularly in the case of German Americans, Americans were intellectually and psychologically able to separate Nazi war crimes from the totality of the German people and German American citizens. Germans, unlike the Japanese, were not collectively enveloped or held accountable for their native nation's military actions against the United States.

### The Nazi Regime versus the Japanese Race

Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 marked a significant turning point in Americans' attitudes toward the Japanese. This transformation, from the Japanese being perceived as a racial minority to an enemy race, was quite drastic, given that there was no documented evidence of espionage or sabotage among Japanese Americans when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. Nevertheless, they were viewed and treated far more severely than Germans in the United States, even though the German American Bund, an ethnic and cultural movement, which consisted of about 30,000 members, had explicitly expressed their

support for Hitler in the years before World War II.<sup>14</sup> This large constituency of pro-Hitler German Americans, however, did not cause Americans to regard all Germans as suspicious and traitorous.

Americans' psychological conflation of Japanese Americans with Japan as a military foe did not only stem from the brutality of Japan's wartime crimes. In fact, the German army engaged in horrific wartime crimes, most infamously the Nazis' campaign of genocide and mass murder of Jews, Roma, homosexuals, disabled individuals, as well as other minorities. Germany's wartime atrocities also included, as did Japan's, attacking neighboring countries without cause.<sup>15</sup> From a military standpoint, Japanese crimes did not exceed German atrocities. This further problematizes the notion that the Japanese were perceived as an enemy race. German and Italian aliens and American citizens were seen as individuals who shared cultural ties to the Axis Powers, but were not enmeshed with the Fascist regimes of Germany or Italy. In a war that involved numerous countries, armies, and millions of casualties, historian John Dower asks, "how is it possible to speak of the uncommon savagery of one antagonist in particular?"<sup>16</sup> Dower's challenge poignantly underscores the disproportionate and unjustified hatred that Americans projected on the Japanese in contrast to individuals of German and Italian descent.

While the government's international policy in the Pacific and Europe influenced how events were conveyed in the media, Americans' racist beliefs likewise influenced the federal government's suspicion that all individuals of Japanese descent were potential traitors. Other forms of popular culture, including newspapers, films, cartoons, magazines, and public opinion polls reveal the blurred boundary between the Japanese army and those who were racially Japanese, yet culturally or nationally American. The very ethnicity, culture, and race of the

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<sup>14</sup> Dower, 79.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



people became intertwined with the military's actions. When the German army committed horrific wartime crimes, Americans perceived Hitler and the Nazi regime as the enemy.

Although the American government defined Germany as its chief military enemy, this translated very differently in American public opinion at the time. For both military and ideological reasons, Roosevelt and many of his advisers viewed Germany as the nation's primary enemy, while the Japanese and Italians were viewed as more secondary and dependent on German strategy.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Germany was considered to be America's worst enemy from a military perspective, however, had almost no bearing on Americans' labeling of *all* Japanese individuals as the enemy.

### The Enemy Race in Film Propaganda

Wartime film propaganda reinforced the notion that all Japanese should be viewed and treated as the enemy race. Propaganda films accomplished this by blurring any sense of distinction between Japanese individuals and the Japanese military. Soon after the United States entered the war, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall hired Hollywood director Frank Capra to produce propaganda films, in an effort to undermine America's isolationist standpoint and to convince Americans that the military's involvement was vital.<sup>18</sup> Capra was involved in the production of the film series *Why We Fight*, which included a total of seven war propaganda films. The *Why We Fight* documentaries were shown in both public theaters and in military boot camps, fueling nationalist sentiment for public audiences and boosting soldiers' enthusiasm in fighting the war.

*Know Your Enemy—Japan*, a film produced by Capra in 1945, and commissioned by the U.S. War Department, was effective in that Capra employed real footage from enemy film in

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<sup>17</sup> Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl, *Enemy Images in American History* (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1997), 235.

<sup>18</sup> Dower, 15.

Japan, which was further dramatized by the narration over the newsreel.<sup>19</sup> The use of real footage made the racist propaganda subtle and psychologically convincing throughout the film.

Regarding his use of enemy footage, Capra maintained, “let our boys hear the Nazis and the Japs shout their own claims of master-race crude...and our fighting men will know why they are in uniform.”<sup>20</sup> Capra thus primarily viewed soldiers, rather than the American public, as the most critical audience for his propaganda films.

The film begins with various scenes of Japanese individuals using samurai swords and engaging in ethnic and cultural customs that are foreign to the general American population. Their ethnic foreignness is further emphasized by Japanese music in the background. Over the newsreel of Japanese individuals brandishing swords and other seemingly dangerous weaponry, the narrator states, “we shall never completely understand the Japanese mind.... otherwise, there would never have been a Pearl Harbor.”<sup>21</sup> This statement conflates perceptions of Japanese racial and ethnic differences with Japan’s military attack on Pearl Harbor.

*Know Your Enemy—Japan* perpetuates the view widely held among Americans that the Japanese were a homogenous enemy race, devoid of individual identity. For example, the narrator says that the typical Japanese soldier is “an average height of five feet, three inches and weighs 170 pounds. He and his brother soldiers are as much alike as photographic prints off the same negative.”<sup>22</sup> The film further reinforces the racist assumption that all Japanese individuals are a uniform mass through the various scenes of regimented group activity; as the narrator states, Japan has a “system of regimentation so perfect it made Hitler’s mouth water.”<sup>23</sup> The notion that all soldiers are an identical collective mass extends to Americans’ perception of

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1971), 330-332.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Army Pictorial Service Signal Corps, “Know Your Enemy – Japan,” *Media Burn Archive*, 1945, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://mediaburn.org/video/know-your-enemy-japan/>, 1:20 minutes.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 4:08 minutes.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 5:32 minutes.

Japanese civilians as well. For example, the narrator in the film describes Japanese women as “human machines producing rice and soldiers.”<sup>24</sup> When describing Japan’s educational system, moreover, the narrator states, “it is designed to make all children look alike. It is designed to teach students only what they need to know to be loyal to the emperor.”<sup>25</sup> By depicting women as individuals whose sole purpose is to produce the next generation of soldiers, and children whose educational purpose is to fulfill the emperor’s mission to conquer the world, Capra is successful in his propaganda technique of depicting innocent Japanese civilians as inextricably linked with Japan’s military actions.

Capra not only portrays the Japanese as a homogenous race, but he also reinforces the idea that the race as a whole is fanatically and barbarically driven to conquer the world. When the narrator rhetorically asks why the Japanese people do not rebel against their oppressive government, he answers that it results from their “belief in Japan’s divine mission to conquer runs through the whole people.”<sup>26</sup> The nature of the Japanese as a race with a mission to conquer the world is further conveyed when the narrator explains that Japanese citizens have the same living standards as they did hundreds of years ago, which includes houses without walls, chairs, or windows, because “Japan became industrialized not to raise the standard of living, but to prepare for conquest.”<sup>27</sup> Japan’s perceived military objectives thus become intertwined with the national and racial entity in the film

Capra strategically contrasts American democracy and liberty with Japanese oppression and conformity in order to garner public and military support for entry into World War II. For example, toward the end of the film, the word, “freedom,” appears on the screen, with the Statue of Liberty in the background. Accompanied with the images of American ideals of freedom, the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 32:16 minutes.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 37:32 minutes.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 34:10 minutes.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 33:52 minutes.

narrator says that in the United States, “practically all the ideas, the fortunes that have changed our thinking have come from the bottom up...all revolution starts with the people.”<sup>28</sup> In sharp contrast to American democracy, however, the narrator maintains, “Japan was westernized by decree, not by popular desire...Even today, there isn’t moral right or wrong in Japan, merely ‘Are you, or are you not, obedient to your superiors?’”<sup>29</sup> By characterizing all Japanese citizens whose sole purpose is to obey the divine mission of the emperor, Capra depicts a clear image of an entire nation of people bent on world domination.

### Anti-Hitler Film Propaganda

Capra’s productions of film propaganda were also intended to galvanize anti-German support among the public and the military. The film, *Nazis Strike*, directed by Capra and produced by the War Department Special Service Division in 1943, is the second chapter of Capra’s *Why We Fight* series. This film is significant in that it sheds light on the distinct way that Hollywood, with the government’s stamp of approval, constructed its view of the German enemy. In contrast to the emphasis on the Japanese as a foreign race and culture in *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, *Nazis Strike* primarily focuses on Hitler’s rise to power. In *Nazis Strike*, Hitler is depicted as a leader driven to conquest, rather than the German people, as was conveyed by the narrator, “this passion for conquest reached its hysterical climax when Adolf Hitler enthroned himself as god...”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the narrator captured Hitler’s maniacal mission to conquer the world when he stated, “conquer Eastern Europe and you dominate the Heartland, conquer the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 30:40 minutes.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 30:54 minutes.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Capra, “Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike,” *Internet Archive*, accessed April 19, 2015, <<https://archive.org/details/TheNazisStrike>>, 2:56 minutes.

Heartland and you dominate the World Island, conquer the World Island and you dominate the world—that was Hitler’s theory.”<sup>31</sup>

The film certainly does not ignore Germany’s war aggression, but the propaganda is limited to the Nazi regime under Hitler’s authority. The Japanese film, *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, primarily focuses on the seemingly barbaric customs of the people themselves, as evident with the opening scenes of individuals waving their swords. *Nazis Strike*, in contrast, rarely shows scenes of German civilians. Instead, the film begins with Hitler at the “Rally for Freedom” in Nuremberg on September 1, 1935, walking through a crowd of many thousands of Nazi soldiers. Drums and marching form the background sound for almost the entire film. With military sounds accompanying Hitler’s rise to power, as opposed to the culturally foreign music in *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, Capra and the Office of War Information elicited American support for the war by targeting Hitler as the face of the German enemy. The notion of Hitler as the ideological and political symbol of the Nazi regime was powerfully illustrated when the film ended with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stating, “what tragedies, what horrors, what crimes has Hitler and all that Hitler stands for brought for Europe and the world.”<sup>32</sup>

The American government played a significant role in ensuring that the film blurred any distinction between civilians and military and political leaders. This underscores that the government itself, and not only the American public, played a pivotal role in the racial grouping of Japanese individuals. Before the final production of *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, the War Department rejected numerous draft scripts of the film. The Department feared that the initial versions would evoke too much sympathy from the American public by depicting the Japanese as innocent civilians who were oppressed by their political leaders. Such sympathy, according to the War Department, would undermine the film’s fundamental purpose to strengthen Americans’

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 6:50 minutes.

<sup>32</sup> “Why We Fight: The Nazi Strike,” 39:06 minutes.

support for the military's involvement in the war.<sup>33</sup> Later versions of the script removed any scenes of political oppression.

Capra acknowledged that his role as a director for these war propaganda films significantly impacted the government's political agenda. This is evident, for example, when he explained in an interview about the film production process,

The difficult part of it was that in most cases we had to know the policy... We went through all the State Department sources...and we didn't get a clear explanation at any time of exactly what our policy was.... So in a great many of those cases, we had to make up our own policy...we made up the policy of the United States and had it approved. These pictures were approved by the State Department, by the O.W.I., by the President of the United States, General Marshall, the Secretaries of War and State—but they were approved after the policy was made...Since these films were going to soldiers, and since what they were seeing they would have to believe and accept as the absolute truth...we were in many cases forced to outline and state a policy which probably was never stated before, only because we had to crystallize it in our minds, in doing it.<sup>34</sup>

Capra's statement underscores the relationship between the public's conception of the enemy race and government policy. The government's role in hiring Capra, as well as approving the highly racist content of his films, reflected its active agenda to perpetuate anti-Japanese war hysteria.

Similar to *Nazis Strike*, other Hollywood films in the early 1940s also revealed the public's ability to distinguish German civilians from the Nazi regime and its supporters, who were guilty of unspeakable atrocities. *Four Sons*, directed by Archie Mayo in 1940, for example, exemplifies Hollywood's approach in producing anti-German film propaganda. In this film, a single family was divided in its attitude toward the Nazi regime. Each of the four sons embodied a different approach to Nazism; one son was a fervent Nazi supporter, the second son was part of

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<sup>33</sup> Dower, 19.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Capra and Leland A. Poague, *Frank Capra: Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2004), 59.

the resistance movement, the third was killed in war, and the fourth son sought freedom from totalitarianism and fascism by escaping to the United States.<sup>35</sup> Rather than presenting all Germans as a collective enemy mass, as the Japanese were often described, *Four Sons* leaves room for the “good German” since the very core of the family was divided in terms of the sons’ attitudes toward Nazism. The notion of the “good” German reinforces the idea that America was exclusively at war with the Nazi regime, and not against all individuals who happened to be of German nationality or descent.<sup>36</sup> The non-existence of the “good Japanese,” in contrast to the “good German,” in the psychological makeup of the American people is revealed through commander of the U.S. South Pacific force Admiral William F. Halsey’s infamous statement, as quoted in *Life* magazine, “the only *good* Jap is the Jap who’s been dead six months.”<sup>37</sup>

The Office of War Information, created as a government agency during World War II in order to organize information and disseminate propaganda, had argued consistently that the government’s chief enemies were ideologies that challenged American democracy, as well as the government and military who championed these ideas, rather than the German, Italian, or Japanese people themselves.<sup>38</sup> Although the OWI’s position reflected an attempt to suppress mass hysteria and panic among Americans that their fellow citizens (of Japanese, German, and Italian descent) were potential traitors, it encountered firm opposition from those who publicized war propaganda through media. For example, Bob Maxwell, the director of the children’s radio show, “Superman,” refused to remove the blatant racism against Japanese individuals in his program. When confronted by the OWI to censor the racist content of his show, Maxwell responded, “I am, at the moment, teaching this vast audience to hate...unfortunately, there is no

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<sup>35</sup> Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> Dower, 78.

<sup>37</sup> *Life*, January 24, 1944, 30. (As quoted in Dower, 79)

<sup>38</sup> Hase and Lehmkuhl, 225.

cleavage between the individual and the state whose ideology he defends. A German is a Nazi and a Jap is the little yellow man who ‘knifed us in the back at Pearl Harbor.’”<sup>39</sup>

As evident from the director’s scathing statement, there is a clear association between German crimes and the Nazi regime. The German people themselves, as a culture and as a nation, were not targeted as the enemy. Maxwell’s phrasing of the Japanese as the “little yellow man” is imbued with racist sentiment, ascribing Japan’s war crimes to the race as a whole. Although Maxwell’s depiction of all Germans as Nazis is certainly global, it is political and national in nature, and does not allude to a racial commonality. Moreover, although the OWI’s attempts to limit Maxwell’s racist comments in his show may seem to indicate that the government opposed anti-Japanese propaganda, the reality is that even within the Roosevelt administration itself, there were internal contradictions in terms of how politicians viewed, and wanted to treat, the Japanese. Ultimately, those who favored a racist approach to the Japanese enemy became dominant.

### Racism in Public Opinion Polls

Public opinion polls conducted by the Office of War Information at various intervals during the war reveal the stark contrast between Americans’ perceptions of the Nazi regime as the enemy versus their global view of all Japanese people as the enemy race. Opinion polls date back to the 1930s and they are fundamental to understanding the relationship between public opinion and the formation of government policy during the war. President Franklin Roosevelt was especially interested in public opinion polls, and his early years as president coincided with the rise of public opinion polling in the United States.<sup>40</sup> In fact, from 1935-1945, 450 national

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<sup>39</sup> Bob Maxwell to George Zachary, 12 April 1943, folder 240, box 24, Child Study Association of America Paper, Social Welfare History Archives. (As quoted in Hase and Lehmkuhl, 225)

<sup>40</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 3.



sample public opinion polls were conducted, and were considered important in both the political and cultural worlds.<sup>41</sup> Roosevelt's interest in opinion polls is significant in that his attention to the public's attitude regarding the Japanese certainly influenced the passage of Executive Order 9066. His decision did not result solely from the inner workings of government policy, but rather, his exposure to the public's voice critically impacted his racially biased legislation.

Negative racist views toward Japan as a race, culture, and nation significantly increased as the war continued and even escalated after the war ended. A Gallup opinion poll conducted in January 1942 and then again in December 1944, for example, asked Americans, "what do you think we should do with Japan as a country after the war?" and 13% of the respondents said that they wanted to "kill all Japanese" (figure 1).<sup>42</sup> Even after the war, a poll conducted in December 1945 asked the public, "which of these comes closest to describing how you feel about our use of the atomic bomb?"<sup>43</sup> The poll demonstrated that 22.7% of those surveyed expressed that they wished the United States had dropped "many more of them [atomic bombs] before Japan had a chance to surrender."<sup>44</sup> Americans' explicit disappointment that they did not kill millions more of innocent Japanese civilians with another atomic bomb reveals that the infectious anti-Japanese sentiment persisted even after the Allied powers were victorious. The construction of the Japanese as the enemy race thus transcended the context of war and remained intact within the social fabric of the United States.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>42</sup> Office of Public Opinion Research, "The Quarter's Polls," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 8 no.4 (1944): 588, accessed April 19, 2015, doi: 10.1086/265715.

<sup>43</sup> Hazel Gaudet Erskine, "The Polls: Atomic Weapons and Nuclear Energy," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 27 no. 2 (1963): 180, accessed April 19, 2015, doi: 10.1086/267159.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Figure 1. Comparison Proposed Treatment of Postwar Japan in Opinion Polls, 1942 and 1944.<sup>45</sup>

	Do Nothing	Rehabilitate/Re-educate	Police Them	Destroy as a Nation	Kill Them	Total
Jan-42	25%		40%	29%		94%
Dec-44		8%	28%	33%	13%	82%

These statistics from public opinion polls evaluating Americans' attitudes toward the Japanese are more evocative when contrasted with the same questions posed to Americans regarding their views of the Germans. For example, only 21% of Americans believed that Germans always wanted war, whereas 48% (more than double the percentage) believed that the Japanese always wanted war (figure 2).<sup>46</sup> The statistical difference between those who maintained that Germans always wanted war versus the Japanese evokes another concrete way that the perceived aggressiveness and treacherousness of the Japanese race far outweighed similar beliefs about Germans.

Figure 2. Attitudes Toward Japanese

	Japanese always want war	Japanese are too easily led	Japanese do not like war	Total
Feb-42	48%	31%	21%	100%
Sep-42	58%	26%	16%	100%
Aug-43	62%	27%	<0.5%	<99.5%

The public's tendency to separate ordinary Germans from their representative government is clearly evident from a Gallup poll conducted on December 3, 1942. Among a set of questions regarding the country's involvement in the war, Americans were asked, "in the war with Germany do you feel that our chief enemy is the German people as a whole, or the German

<sup>45</sup> The totals for both years do not add up to 100%, indicating that the remaining percentages of those polled either chose to abstain or did not have an opinion. Some questions do not have any recorded response because different questions were asked between the 1942 and 1944 polls.

<sup>46</sup> The Office of Public Opinion Research, "Public Opinion Polls," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7 no. 4 (1943): 755-56, accessed April 19, 2015, doi: 10.1086/265660.

government?” (figure 3). Only 6% of respondents said the German people, while the vast majority of respondents—75%—claimed that they viewed the German government as the nation’s chief enemy (the remaining percentages reflect those that viewed both as the enemy or had no opinion).<sup>47</sup>

Figure 3. Attitudes Toward Japanese

	People	Government	Both	No Opinion
Feb-42	6%	75%	13%	6%
June-42	6%	79%	12%	3%
July-42	5%	74%	18%	3%
Dec-42	6%	74%	18%	2%

Americans, as illustrated through the public opinion polls, did not identify themselves with the fight against Fascism in the same way as the government did. Instead, they more strongly united themselves against the Japanese as an enemy race, as reflected in the statistical contrast between Americans’ perceptions of German versus Japanese aggression. As opposed to the government’s primacy on German aggression, the general American population was more fervent about fighting the Japanese, and was rooted in racial biases. While Americans viewed German soldiers as obedient and efficient, they perceived the Japanese, both soldiers and citizens, as treacherous, disloyal, and barbaric.<sup>48</sup> These racially-predicated ideologies distorted the public’s perception of the actual war being fought, allowing paranoia and suspicion to overshadow their understanding of the nation’s military fight against Germany in Europe as well.

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<sup>47</sup> The Office of Public Opinion Research, “Gallup and Fortune Polls.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1943): 173, accessed April 19, 2015, doi: 10/1086/265611.

<sup>48</sup> Hase and Lehmkuhl, 235.

## Racism in Songs and Political Cartoons

Music was also used as a form of propaganda in grouping all individuals of Japanese descent as a collectively inferior and enemy race. The expression of racism in songs was highly effective, since music caters to a vast and diverse audience, and requires no other skill aside from listening. In the patriotic wartime song, for example, “There’ll Be No Adolph Hitler nor Yellow Japs to Fear,” (1943) one of the many songs inspired by Pearl Harbor, the title captures the disparity between Americans’ fear of Hitler and the Nazi regime, on the one hand, and their racist terror from *all* “yellow Japs,” on the other.<sup>49</sup> That racism was so blatant in the title, rather than only hinted at through obscure lyrics, illustrates the degree to which the ideology of the Japanese as the enemy race was widely accepted.

These racist ideas were present throughout a wide range of lyrics as well. In the song, “Goodbye Mama (I’m Off to Yokohama),” which was written and composed by J. Fred Coots in 1941, the lyrics state, “‘a million fightin’ sons of Uncle Sam, if you please,/ Will soon have all those Japs right down on their ‘Jap-a-knees.’”<sup>50</sup> In addition, in the song, “We’re Gonna Have to Slap The Dirty Little Jap,” written and composed by Bob Miller in 1941, the lyrics are as follows, “we’ll skin the streak of yellow from this sneaky little fellow...When we get through with him he’ll wish he was dead./We gotta slap the dirty little Jap.”<sup>51</sup> The common thread among these songs is not merely the general racist descriptions of the Japanese, but also the

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<sup>49</sup> Lewis A. Erenberg, and Susan E. Hirsch, *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 170-171.

<sup>50</sup> The Authentic History Center, "World War II in American Music: Pearl Harbor & Reaction," accessed April 19, 2015, <[http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/3-music/04-PH-Reaction/19411216\\_Good-Bye\\_Mama-Teddy\\_Powell.html](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/3-music/04-PH-Reaction/19411216_Good-Bye_Mama-Teddy_Powell.html)>.

W. Anthony Sheppard, "An Exotic Enemy: Anti-Japanese Musical Propaganda in World War II Hollywood," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54 no.2 (2001): 307.

<sup>51</sup> The Authentic History Center, "WWII in American Music: Pearl Harbor & Reaction," accessed April 19, 2015, <[http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/3-music/04-PH-Reaction/1941\\_SM\\_Were\\_Gonna\\_Have\\_To\\_Slap\\_The\\_Dirty\\_Little\\_Jap.html](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/3-music/04-PH-Reaction/1941_SM_Were_Gonna_Have_To_Slap_The_Dirty_Little_Jap.html)>; Sheppard, 307.

repeated use of the pejorative word, “Jap,” which was used to signify all Japanese people, making no distinction among soldiers, children, mothers, or political leaders.

Political cartoons similarly exemplified the contrast between the grouping of Japanese war crimes with the collective race and the association of German brutality with the Nazi regime, thereby excluding innocent German civilians and German Americans from wartime blame. The political cartoon, “Mimic,” published in the *Washington Post* in 1942 is emblematic of the sharp dichotomy of the way Americans regarded the Axis Powers (figure 3).<sup>52</sup>

Figure 3. “Mimic”



This cartoon situates Japanese military actions in the Philippines within the context of German war offensives in Czechoslovakia. While Hitler is depicted over the war ruins of Lidice and Lezaky in Czechoslovakia, the Japanese are represented as a monkey stomping over Cebu (in the Philippines) beneath the word “Japs.” The use of the pejorative “Japs,” indicates *all* Japanese individuals, blurring all boundaries between soldiers and civilians. Hitler was portrayed as the face of the German enemy, while no such human representation existed for Japan. As is

<sup>52</sup> “Mimic,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 1942, 14.

characteristic of anti-Japanese propaganda, the “typical” Japanese individual is depicted as a primitive ape. The German enemy, symbolized by Hitler in the cartoon, is a realistic version of the leader, without barbaric and sub-human features.

Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904-1991), known by his pseudonym Dr. Seuss, was most popularly renowned as a children’s books author and illustrator. During World War II, however, he was also notorious for his racist political cartoons. Hired by New York City newspaper *PM*, a leftist centered tabloid, in 1941, Geisel drew political cartoons commenting on America’s involvement in the war and condemning the United States’ lack of aggression against Germany and Japan. One of his infamous cartoons portraying the racist fervor against Japanese Americans was titled, “Waiting for the Signal from Home,” published on February 13, 1942 (figure 4). He drew this cartoon only six days before Roosevelt’s decision to evacuate all Japanese on the West Coast, with the passage of Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942.

As is emblematic of most anti-Japanese propaganda, the cartoon depicts Japanese Americans on the Pacific West Coast states—in Washington, Oregon, and California—as a mass of identical Japanese individuals. These identical Japanese men are illustrated lining up to receive TNT, an explosive, from a warehouse titled, “Honorable 5<sup>th</sup> Column.” Fifth column is a term that denotes people who are treasonous to the country. Atop the warehouse, moreover, is a Japanese man, drawn with the exact same features as the others, peering through a telescope and “waiting for the signal” from Japan. The title, “Waiting for the Signal from Home,” is quite ironic, given that in reality, no Japanese American on the West Coast was ever found to be guilty of espionage.<sup>53</sup> The implication of “home” in the title was that a Japanese American’s true home was always Japan, even if he or she had never lived there. Dr. Seuss’ cartoon exemplifies the simplistic characterization of the Japanese Americans as a sinister enemy lurking in our midst. It

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<sup>53</sup> Theodor Seuss Geisel, Richard H. Minear, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* (New York: New Press, 1999), 65.

also highlights the widespread hysteria among the public and the government who vehemently believed that Japanese individuals on the West Coast were capable of danger similar to that caused by Japan's military.

Figure 4. "Waiting for the Signal From Home."<sup>54</sup>



### Japanese Savagery in American Newspapers

American war correspondent Ernie Pyle reinforced the notion that while Germans were seen as individuals, capable of morality and peace, the Japanese were viewed on the basis of their perceived racial inferiority. Pyle reported, "in Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people," but "the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive, the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice."<sup>55</sup> W.H. Anderson, who was a journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1942, similarly expressed the idea that the Japanese race as a whole, regardless of nationality, was fundamentally treacherous, as he wrote in his piece, "The Question of Japanese-Americans" that "a viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched. So, a Japanese born of Japanese parents...grows up to be a

<sup>54</sup> "Dr. Seuss - Theodor Geisel World War II Political Cartoons," accessed April 19, 2015, <[http://www.paperlessarchives.com/wwii\\_dr\\_seuss\\_cartoons.html](http://www.paperlessarchives.com/wwii_dr_seuss_cartoons.html)>.

<sup>55</sup> Ernie Pyle, *Last Chapter* (1945: Henry Holt & Co), 5.

Japanese, and not an American.”<sup>56</sup> Anderson’s metaphorical use of a viper to describe the Japanese evokes the imagery of a deceitful and treacherous animal, rather than human enemies.

Anderson and Pyle were certainly not alone in their comparison of Japanese people to bestial animals and noxious insects. In an interview on the front page of the *New York Times* in 1943, Australian Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, who was commander of the Allied land forces in New Guinea, similarly reported after an Allied victory in Buna, New Guinea, that “fighting Japs it not like fighting normal human beings... We are not dealing with humans as we know them. We are dealing with something primitive. Our troops have the right view of the Japs. They regard them as *vermin*.”<sup>57</sup> Pyle, Anderson and Blamey’s depictions of the Japanese as animalistic and subhuman underscores the pervasive racism that was widely held among Americans from various pockets of the population, ranging from politicians, to journalists, and military leaders.

Even when the Japanese were not explicitly depicted as apes, snakes, or cockroaches, the sentiment that they were a savage race was nevertheless apparent from the way military events were relayed in the media. In response to Japan’s execution of United States army airmen, who were captured on Japanese territory in 1943, the *New York Times* highlighted the savagery of the Japanese military. The article stated, “so far Japan’s *barbarous* action stands alone... as the only known case where captured members of the armed forces of the United States have been subjected to such calculated official *savagery*.”<sup>58</sup> The article also contrasted the moral conduct of the German military with Japan, stating, “not even Germany, which has been diabolical in its conducts toward enemy civilians, has yet been accused of the killing of uniformed men for doing their military duty... Germany and Italy... have from the first abided in reasonable fashion by the

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<sup>56</sup> W.H. Anderson, “The Question of Japanese Americans,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1942.

<sup>57</sup> “Buna Vital to Foe, Declares Blamey,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1943, 4.

<sup>58</sup> John MacCormac, “Japan’s Barbarous Act Has No Parallel in War,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1943, 79.



standards of the Geneva Convention.”<sup>59</sup> As a result of their direct violation of these humanitarian standards, the article continued, “those civilian prisoners...have brought back tales and physical evidence of police cruelty that have shocked *the civilized world*.”<sup>60</sup> The media’s explicit contrast between Japan and “the civilized world” poignantly highlights the nature of the perceived primitiveness of the Japanese, civilians and soldiers alike.

Racism was not merely confined to the cultural and journalistic facets of American culture. Mainstream American society was saturated with racial intolerance to the extent that it transcended the boundaries of popular opinion and penetrated the legal and military sphere. National and political leaders did not mask their hatred of the Japanese as a race, further fueling, and even legitimatizing, the public’s hostile sentiment. For example, commander of the Western Defense Command, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, told the House Naval Affairs Subcommittee in 1943 that he was not concerned with German or Italian loyalty to the nation. Instead, he told the committee, “the Japs we will be worried about all the time until they are wiped off the face of the map.” He infamously added, “a Jap’s a Jap,” reinforcing the public’s notion of the enemy race, since all Japanese individuals should be regarded suspiciously, regardless of their U.S. citizenship.<sup>61</sup> DeWitt oversaw the implementation of Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066, rendering him a key actor in legal policy. In contrast to the racist sentiment suffused in popular culture, the tragedy of DeWitt’s violently racist attitude is that his comments legally impacted the fate of hundreds of thousands of individuals in their internment.

The insistence that the Japanese posed a substantial threat to the nation was predicated on the belief that they were an enemy race. This contagious paranoia became so entrenched in legal

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

“Geneva Conventions,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/geneva-conventions/p8778>>.

The Geneva Convention represented a series of treaties outlining issues regarding the humane treatment of civilians and prisoners of war.

<sup>60</sup> MacCormac, “Japan’s Barbarous Act Has No Parallel in War.”

<sup>61</sup> Oliver Stone and Peter J. Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States* (New York: Gallery, 2012), 156.

policy that the Commander in Chief, President Roosevelt, passed Executive Order 9066 in 1942, suspending the civil liberties of over 110,000 individuals of Japanese descent along the West Coast.<sup>62</sup> Although the Executive Order began as a precautionary military measure, it soon evolved into an act of blatant racial scapegoating. In fact, *The Washington Post* listed various discriminatory incidents, which directly stemmed from the racial prejudice inherent in Executive Order 9066. For example,

In Poston, Arizona.... a barber ejected from his shop an American Army private, wounded in Italy after two years' service overseas...because the man's forebears had come from Japan. In Hood River, Oreg., the American Legion erased from its county war memorial the names of 16 Americans now serving in the United States Army...because they happened to be of Japanese descent. These are symptoms of a spreading callousness about the rights of individuals in a land founded upon the doctrine of human equality and dedicated to the preservation of individual freedom. They are symptoms of a bigotry which has been poisonous to democracy wherever it has been allowed to grow.<sup>63</sup>

This excerpt from *The Washington Post* illustrates the dangerous interaction between propaganda in popular culture and government policy. The combination of racist legal policy and propaganda further reinforced and sanctioned Americans' complete disregard for the basic human and civil rights of individuals on the basis of race alone. While cultural propaganda spread mass racist hysteria, government policy firmly cemented the American population's racist ideology into social and legal action. It is important to understand that legal policy did not only impact the Japanese, but it also affected many German civilians and individuals of German ancestry as well. That their relocation in the United States was far less severe than the treatment toward Japanese Americans is indicative of the impact of racism on government policy. As will

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<sup>62</sup> Hixson, 63.

<sup>63</sup> "Exclusion Repeal," *The Washington Post*, December 19, 1944, 6.

be demonstrated in the next chapter, Executive Order 9066 represented a key moment when racist public opinion and legal policy converged.

## Chapter 2

### The Convenience of Racial Scapegoating: Divergent Internment Policies

The classification of all Japanese individuals as a collective enemy race transcended popular culture and significantly molded legal policy in the form of internment. The government's racist past of interning over 110,000 first, second, and third generations of Japanese Americans, 62% of whom were American-born, often overshadows the history of German and Italian internment, who were also forcibly relocated, albeit to a far lesser extent.<sup>64</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested German Americans from December 8, 1941 until the end of the war in May 1945. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the total number of individuals interned who were of German ancestry amounted to 11,000, and 2,000 who were of Italian descent.<sup>65</sup>

These numbers of Germans and Italians who were relocated may seem to indicate that Americans of European descent were subjected to the same fate of internment as Japanese Americans. While the number of those interned reached the thousands, it does not nearly compare to the collective internment of over 110,000 Japanese American citizens and aliens who were forcibly evacuated. Moreover, although all three groups in West Coast military security zones were temporary relocated, only the Japanese were subjected to permanent relocation.<sup>66</sup> Germans and Italians, who were suspected of espionage, were only detained through their investigation, while all Japanese individuals on the West Coast were evacuated without trial. The

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<sup>64</sup> Jan Jarboe Russell, *The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II* (New York: Scribner, 2015), xvii.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen Fox, *America's Invisible Gulag: A Biography of German American Internment & Exclusion in World War II: Memory and History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), xvi.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

government's decision to relocate exclusively an entire racial population presents a clear picture of the impact of racist xenophobia on federal wartime policy.

The relocation of Japanese, German, and Italian individuals applied to those living outside the United States as well. Throughout the war years, from 1941-1945, the United States government forcibly removed 4,058 Germans, 2,264 Japanese, and 288 Italians from 13 Latin American countries and interned them in the Immigration and Naturalization Service's only family internment camp, called Crystal City Enemy Detention Facility, in Texas. Its purpose was to join "enemy aliens" of Japanese, German, or Italian descent with their wives and American-born children.<sup>67</sup> The deportation of Latin Americans of enemy nationalities, who were brought to the United States, underscores the extensiveness of the government's wartime paranoia.

### Historical Origins of Alien Deportation

The historical and legal background behind Roosevelt's authority to mandate the deportation and internment of enemy aliens is historically rooted in a bill passed by Congress in 1798, called the Alien Enemies Act, which was one of the four measures of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. This act originated with the undeclared naval warfare between the United States and France.<sup>68</sup> Section I of the Alien Enemies Act allowed President John Adams to deport "aliens as he shall judge dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States, or shall have reasonable grounds to suspect are concerned in any treasonable or secret machinations against the government."<sup>69</sup> The implication of the legal term "alien enemy," moreover, was not an enemy who was of a foreign nationality, but rather, it was a foreigner who had racial or ethnic ties to the

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<sup>67</sup> Russell, xv-xvi.

<sup>68</sup> Schmitz, 36.

<sup>69</sup> United States Congress, *The Alien Act*, Fifth Congress, Enrolled Acts and Resolutions. General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11, National Archives, July 6, 1798, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17.html>>.

enemy nationality.<sup>70</sup> This linguistic and legal nuance is significant in terms of government policy during World War II because it empowered the government to discriminate legally against those who emigrated from an enemy nation, without evidence of their espionage. Government and military officials, most particularly commander of the Western Defense, General John L. DeWitt, however, crossed the boundary of legal justification by applying the legality of the Alien Enemies Act toward a single race in Executive Order 9066.

### The Initial Applicability of Executive Order 9066

President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, promulgated on February 19, 1942 did not initially target any particular race or ethnicity. Rather, the President authorized the Secretary of the War and the military commanders "...to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded."<sup>71</sup> As evident from the wording of this document, the government did not explicitly intend to discriminate solely against Japanese individuals. Not only did the order permit the incarceration of enemy aliens without charges or trial, but it also meant that their businesses and homes could be seized without prior warning.<sup>72</sup>

Executive Order 9066 ultimately became exclusively limited to the Japanese population along the Pacific West Coast states, i.e., California, Washington, and Oregon. According to the U.S. Congress House Select Committee Investigation National Defense Migration, General Dewitt issued Civilian Exclusion Order No. 1 on March 24, 1942, which stated that "all persons of Japanese ancestry, including aliens and non-aliens, be excluded from that portion of military

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<sup>70</sup> Schmitz, 37

<sup>71</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Executive Order 9066—Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas," February 19, 1942. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/?dod-date=219>>.

<sup>72</sup> Russell, xvii.

area.”<sup>73</sup> “Military necessity” became the catchphrase for Executive Order 9066, but in reality, it systematically targeted a single race. DeWitt’s amendment to the Executive Order, moreover, not only targeted the Japanese, but it also grouped Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens within the same category. American citizens of Japanese ancestry no longer enjoyed the civil rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

The exemption of Italians and Germans from collective internment became even more explicit when Dewitt issued Public Proclamation No. 5, another amendment to Executive Order 9066 order, in which he provided a list of six specific groups of German, Italian, and Japanese individuals who were exempt from the West Coast internment. Quite problematically, however, Germans and Italians represented the majority of the exemptions. The list of groups exempt from the policy included,

1. German and Italian aliens 70 or more years of age.
2. German and Italian aliens, parents, wives, husbands, children of...any officer, enlisted man, or commissioned nurse on active duty in the Army of the United States...
3. German or Italian aliens, parents, wives, husbands, children of...any officer, enlisted man, or commissioned nurse who...has died in line of duty with the armed forces...
4. German and Italian aliens awaiting naturalization...therefor on or before December 7, 1941.
5. Patients in hospitals.... and too ill or incapacitated to be removed therefrom without danger to life.
6. Inmates of orphanages and the totally deaf, dumb, or blind.<sup>74</sup>

It is striking that physically functioning and capable Germans and Italians were excused from the internment in a wide range of cases, while only Japanese U.S. residents in near life or death threatening situations, or if they were orphans, blind, deaf, or mute were excluded from the list.

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<sup>73</sup> United States Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Findings and Recommendations on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens and Others from Prohibited Military Zones. Fourth Interim Report pursuant to H. Res. 113. House Report no. 2124, 77<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), May 1942, 164.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 165.

## The Selectiveness of German and Italian Internment

In contrast to the collective internment of Japanese individuals on the West Coast, regardless of age, gender, or occupation, the government's internment of German and Italian individuals was far more selective because it was on the basis of investigative reasoning, rather than race alone. The Justice Department only interned those who were active members in German American organizations and those who were proven to be speaking or acting against the government.

The government's list of suspicious German activity in the United States, which was used throughout the war, originated from President Herbert Hoover's administration, in which Secretary of State Cordell Hull had the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigate German-controlled Nazi groups in the United States in March 1933.<sup>75</sup> Legislation against subversion reached a climax in 1939 when President Hoover requested Special Agents in Charge (SACs) to gather a list of German, Italian, and Communist sympathizers for the FBI's Custodial Detention Index (CDI). The CDI was a database of paper index cards used by the FBI before the invention of computerized databases. The FBI tracked suspicious German and Italian aliens through subscriptions to German, Italian, and Communist newspapers, their membership in suspicious organizations, and agents' reports on their attendance to pro-German, Italian, and Communist demonstrations.<sup>76</sup> These index cards also listed the "special facts" about the individual; for example, the suspect's prior military service in the German army, his or her connection to leaders in Germany or other ordinary German citizens, as well as the suspect's hobbies.<sup>77</sup> The FBI's CDI also included a "danger classification" for those who were prioritized as potential national security threats. The cards were organized according to categories A, B, and C; A represented the most dangerous class of suspects who would most likely be detained during

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<sup>75</sup> Fox, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>77</sup> Schmitz, 203.



wartime, those under category B would be under conditional release, and category C represented the individuals for whom further information was needed.<sup>78</sup> The FBI's highly organized system of suspicious Germans and Italians stands in stark contrast to the impulsive racial grouping of Japanese Americans without concrete evidence of espionage.

The CDI was pivotal in that this list formed the basis for the FBI's justification in arresting and interning American citizens of German and Italian descent, as well as German and Italian aliens. German and Italian internment was based on evidence of individuals' previous ties with organizations that potentially challenged their loyalty to the United States, as well as those who opposed America's involvement in the war. While these individuals did suffer through the process of detainment and relocation, the nature of their internment was firmly based on subversive activity, rendering it more legally justifiable.<sup>79</sup>

The German American Bund is a key example of an organization whose members were classified as suspicious by the government. Established in 1936 in Buffalo, New York, by Fritz Kuhn, the Bund emphasized that it was a cultural movement unifying German Americans, rather than a political organization, in order to prevent opposition. Regardless of its stated motivations, however, the Bund's fundamental goal was to convert German Americans to Nazism.<sup>80</sup> The Bund comprised about 30,000 followers and also had a weekly newspaper, including the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, or the *German Wake-Up Call*, and had mass demonstrations and parades, declaring publicly its affiliation with Nazism and Fascism.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Fox, 39.

<sup>80</sup> Cornelia Wilhelm, "German American Bund (Amerikadeutscher Volksbund)," in *Germany and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005, *Credo Reference*, accessed April 21, 2015, <[http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fliterati.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fabcgeamrle%2Fgerman\\_american\\_bund\\_amerikadeutscher\\_volksbund%2F0](http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fliterati.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fabcgeamrle%2Fgerman_american_bund_amerikadeutscher_volksbund%2F0)>.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

### Suspicious German American Activity

The threatening presence of pro-Hitler movements in the United States, as well as German Americans' participation in them, was exposed to the public through newspaper sources before the war. For example, according to a *New York Times* article published in March 1933, leaders of German organizations in America "said their mission was propaganda...they wanted to enable German subjects to participate in the Hitler movement and help German-Americans to understand what Hitler was doing and why."<sup>82</sup> The existence of these organizations, and their listed members, played a pivotal role in the country's imprisonment of those who were socially and politically active in undermining America's fight against the Nazi regime. The perceived threat of the German American Bund was conveyed by another *New York Times* article, in which representative John Martin of Colorado reported about a German American Bund meeting in New York, and wrote, "every man in that mass meeting who was in sympathy with it is a traitor to American democracy and government whether he is still an unnaturalized alien or was born on America soil. In the World War their fealty was to the Kaiser. Now it is to Hitler."<sup>83</sup> Evidently, there were groups of German Americans who were certainly viewed as traitors to the United States as a result of their expressed support for the Nazi regime. In contrast to the collective internment of the Japanese, the perception of the public and government that members of the German American Bund were acting suspiciously, however, was grounded in substantial evidence of the group's pro-Hitler ideology.

Germans and Italians were not simply interned on the basis of the FBI's CDI reports. Rather, in February 1942, the Justice Department ordered all court hearing boards to judge the individual based on the degree of his or her affiliation with specific organizations that threatened

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<sup>82</sup> "Nazi Units in United States List 1,000 Aliens; Admit Their Aim is to Spread Propaganda," *New York Times*, March 10, 1933.

<sup>83</sup> "Bund Meeting Here Called Traitorous: Those Who Support it Owe Fealty to Hitler," *New York Times*, February 17, 1939.

the nation's war patriotism. The United States Attorney General was responsible for presenting each case to the hearing board. The individual was then interrogated and placed in one of three categories: internment, parole, or released.<sup>84</sup> The selectiveness of European internment is statistically apparent from the fact that out of a pool of 1.2 million German aliens in 1940, the government only took 7,164 individuals into custody.<sup>85</sup> After further investigation, moreover, the total number of German aliens interned only amounted to about 1,692.<sup>86</sup>

### The "Inconvenience" of German and Italian Collective Internment

It would be overly simplistic to argue that the Japanese were only collectively interned due to the pervasiveness of racism throughout popular culture during the war. While racism certainly played a pivotal role in internment policy, the selective internment of Germans and Italians also stemmed from the fact that it was deemed economically disastrous and logistically impossible to relocate the millions of Germans and Italians on the East Coast and Midwest. Germans also represented a large number of the American population, and had significant economic, cultural, and political influence. In 1930, there were about seven million individuals of German descent, three quarters of whom were American-born and 1.6 million who were German-born.<sup>87</sup> The House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, or the Tolan Committee, was significant for the internment process because it held hearings in February and March in 1942, beginning two days after Executive Order 9066 was issued, in order to investigate the legal and economic ramifications of removing Japanese Americans from the West Coast. According to the Tolan Committee, "to evacuate the hundreds of thousands of enemy

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<sup>84</sup> Fox, 40.

<sup>85</sup> Fox, 294.

<sup>86</sup> Peter B. Sheridan, *The Internment of German and Italian Aliens Compared with the Internment of Japanese Aliens in the United States during World War II: A Brief History and Analysis* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service), 1980, 10.

<sup>87</sup> Fox, 13.

aliens from the large cities of the eastern seaboard would be palpably impracticable.”<sup>88</sup> The mass evacuation of Germans and Japanese was explicitly nullified on the basis of practical implementations, rather than “military necessity,” as was provided as a rationale for the mass evacuation of the Japanese along the West Coast. From the government’s perspective, it was “convenient” to round up an entire race along the West Coast, since they were more concentrated and it was thus logistically more feasible. The fact that the “convenience” of collective internment was prioritized over individual liberties is blatantly indicative of the racial scapegoating that took place under the supervision of the American government, which was founded on the ideals of personal freedom.

In order to get a better sense of the population disparity between Japanese and Germans, New York State had more German aliens than the total number of Japanese citizens and aliens along the entire Pacific West Coast. The Italians, moreover, far outnumbered the Japanese on the West Coast.<sup>89</sup> The Tolan Committee calculated that the mass internment of Germans and Italians in the Pacific West Coast states alone—California, Washington, and Oregon—would involve the evacuation of 57,878 Italian aliens and 22,000 German aliens. These large population sizes, according to the committee, would be far too difficult to implement and would result in adverse economic consequences.<sup>90</sup> Quite hypocritically, however, the government and military evacuated 110,000 Japanese Americans and individuals of Japanese descent in these same Pacific West Coast states. In the case of the Japanese population, the government made no excuse of economic impracticality, revealing the triumph of racial scapegoating.

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<sup>88</sup> Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, 29.

<sup>89</sup> Sheridan, 8.

<sup>90</sup> United States Congress, House of Representatives, Report of the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Seventy-seventh Congress, Second session, Pursuant to H.Res.113. Preliminary Report and Recommendations on Problems of Evacuation of Citizens and Aliens from Military Areas (United States. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office), March 19, 1942, 21.

The government also maintained that the collective internment of Germans and Italians would potentially cause a detrimental decline in civilian morale due to the extent of their assimilation.<sup>91</sup> The fear that internment would reduce national morale among the substantial populations of Germans and Italians on the East Coast was explicitly conveyed from Attorney General Francis Biddle's letter to Congressman John Tolan, a Democrat from Oakland, California. Biddle expressed to Congressman Tolan that, "a military area can be defended more effectively by keeping on doing as we are doing it now—examining individuals on suspicion. Mass evacuation is bad for the morale of the country, as the German and Italian bloc of our population is considerable."<sup>92</sup> According to Biddle, avoiding public unrest was a legitimate reason to oppose German and Italian collective internment.

The Tolan Committee also considered the professions occupied by Japanese Americans versus German and Italian Americans in its enforcement of collective internment. Compounding the influence of racism on internment, the committee also viewed Germans and Italians as more economically valuable. Due to their assimilation patterns, Germans and Italians occupied a wider spectrum of professions than did the Japanese in California. According to the Tolan Committee's analysis of immigrant occupational demographics, "whereas the Japanese have only one main economic base, vegetable production...the Americanization of second generation Italians and Germans has permitted the original immigrant group to become absorbed in a great variety of occupations and industries."<sup>93</sup> From the government's perspective, alienating the Japanese population in California, who occupied lower socioeconomic strata, was less risky economically than if it were to ostracize the Germans and Italians who had far more economic clout.

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<sup>91</sup> Stephen C. Fox, "General John DeWitt and the Proposed Internment of German and Italian Aliens during World War II," *Pacific Historical Review* 57 no. 4 (1988), 409-410.

<sup>92</sup> Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Preliminary Report, 21.

The discrepancy between the mass removal of Japanese Americans and aliens on the West Coast and the selective internment of German and Italian aliens and U.S. citizens on the East Coast, was also motivated by political factors. By evacuating Germans and Italians en masse, Roosevelt would have risked alienating these vast populations of voters. In contrast, the Roosevelt administration was not as concerned with losing the support of Japanese voters on the West Coast, who constituted a far smaller, and less economically influential, demographic sector.<sup>94</sup> The Japanese American population on the West Coast was the most practical and affordable representative scapegoat for all enemy aliens.

Policymakers' disproportionate internment of all Japanese individuals, compared to all other enemy aliens, faced almost no opposition from the American public, or the State, War, and Justice Departments. The only question was *how* to implement the internment, not *if* it would be done.<sup>95</sup> It seems odd that an entire nation, predicated on liberty and diametrically opposed to the Nazi regime's obsessive and pathologic focus on the primacy of the Aryan race, would allow these drastically racist measures to take place. The government did not formulate internment as a way to strip individuals of their civil rights. Rather, what made mass internment seem so "acceptable" at the time was that it was phrased to the public as a means of achieving military victory. The justification underlying the treatment of the Japanese is evident, for example as the Tolan Committee stated, "the numbers involved [in the Japanese evacuation] are large, but they are by no means as large, for the whole country, as those who will be involved if we generalize the current treatment of the Japanese to apply to all Axis aliens and their immediate families... *any such proposal is out of the question if we intend to win this war.*"<sup>96</sup> Phrasing collective internment in the context of national military victory was highly persuasive to a country that was embattled in war.

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<sup>94</sup> Schmitz, 126.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>96</sup> Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Preliminary Report, 24.

The same pragmatic considerations employed in the selective relocation of Germans and Italians can be similarly applied to the regional disparity of Japanese internment in California versus Hawaii, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Similar to the logistical and economic factors inherent in the government's tolerant treatment of Germans and Italians, Japanese Americans in Hawaii were not subjected to the same policy of internment, as were the Japanese in California, due to their large population size, as well as their strong political, and economic influence.

## Chapter 3

### Regional Malleability of Racism: California Versus Hawaii

Although Japanese Americans were targeted as the enemy race following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the government's discrimination toward them during World War II was not consistent throughout the United States. In fact, Japanese Americans in California suffered a disproportionate amount of oppressive racism as compared to those living in Hawaii. The regional discrepancy in racism can be clearly seen, for example, from the exclusive applicability of Executive Order 9066 to the Japanese along the West Coast, while no such mandate existed in any other region, including the vicinity of the Pearl Harbor attack in Hawaii. This regional discrepancy illustrates that racism was not a uniform or one-dimensional phenomenon. While Japanese Americans were viewed as an inferior race in both regions during the war, the extent to which this racism evolved into legal policy in each place alters their characterization as the enemy race. This chapter highlights the complexity and malleability underlying the formulation of racism during wartime.

The contributing factors to America's treatment of Japanese Americans as an enemy race involved, for example, the country's anti-Japanese sentiment that had been brewing since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, decades before the attack on Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt's description of Pearl Harbor as "a day that will live in infamy," reflects the widespread sentiment that the attack was pivotal in altering subtle anti-Japanese attitudes into overtly hostile views of the Japanese as an enemy race.<sup>97</sup> Other aspects that led to the divergent discriminatory treatments in

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<sup>97</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "'Day of Infamy' Speech: Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan." *National Archives and Records Administration*, December 8, 1941, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://www.archives.gov/historical>



Hawaii and California also include the prior national history of discrimination toward Japanese Americans in California, as well as the nature of the Japanese American population, which was far easier to scapegoat, compared to the immense, more respected, and well-integrated population in Hawaii.

The exemption of Japanese Americans in Hawaii from the collective internment does not imply that they were viewed without suspicion after Pearl Harbor. Similar to the selective internment of Germans and Italians, which stemmed from economic and logistical reasons, Japanese Americans in Hawaii were similarly not mass interned due to their indispensability to the economy as well as their necessity for military defense. The distinction between Japanese Americans' oppression in California versus those living in Hawaii underscores that the practical needs of a region significantly impacted the legal dimension of discrimination.

### The Roots of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in California

Racism toward Japanese Americans in California began around 1880, with the influx of Asian immigration, and continued through the Progressive Era and both World Wars.<sup>98</sup> Historian Kevin Leonard compares anti-Asian activists' views of Japanese Americans to racism against African-Americans in the South. As he argues, "after 1880, the rhetoric of anti-Asian activists increasingly resembled that of white southerners. Exclusionists claimed, for example, that contact with Asians hands left produce tainted."<sup>99</sup> Anti-Asian attitudes toward Japanese immigrants continued through the Progressive Era in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it extended to the children of Japanese immigrants as well, who were American citizens by birth. Japanese Americans in California thus carried the same stigmatized cultural patterns from the first

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docs/document.html?doc=15&title.raw=%22Day%2Bof%2BInfamy%22%2BSpeech%3A%2BJoint%2BAddress%2Bto%2BCongress%2BLeading%2Bto%2Ba%2BDeclaration%2Bof%2BWar%2BAgainst%2BJapan>.

<sup>98</sup> Kevin Allen Leonard, "Is That What We Fought For?" Japanese Americans and Racism in California, The Impact of World War II, *The Western Historical Quarterly* 21 no.4 (1990), 463.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

generation of immigrants, who were originally singled out as a result of their foreignness. This trend of grouping Japanese Americans with their Japanese ancestors who had first immigrated to the United States continued through World War II, as most infamously illustrated in their collective internment. The key distinction in their treatment before the war and then during the war stemmed from a transition in their perceived “otherness.” Before World War II, the Japanese population’s “otherness” was tied to their recent immigration. During the war, however, their “otherness” became fused with their presumed betrayal and disloyalty.

The internment of Japanese Americans in California can thus be understood as an amplification of the legal discrimination that they had encountered before the war. The historical background of their oppressive treatment is significant because it shows that the history of anti-Japanese sentiment in California was prevalent long before the construction of the internment camps during the war. In 1913, for example, a law was passed which made it illegal for “aliens ineligible to citizenship” to buy land in California.<sup>100</sup> This law, however, initially excluded Japanese immigrants and they were not restricted from purchasing land, since they could buy the land under their American-born children’s names. In 1920, however, voters and politicians in California passed a law that restricted Japanese immigrants from purchasing land as well.<sup>101</sup>

Anti-Japanese sentiment in California can also be traced back to the Gold Rush in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, revealing an economic dimension of the historical racism on the West Coast.<sup>102</sup> While their visibility as a distinct race played a key role in Japanese Americans’ difficulty in integrating seamlessly into the general population, they were also discriminated on the basis that they posed an economic threat. When Japanese immigrants engaged in business in America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were viewed as being imbued with a “Protestant ethic,” economically

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 106.

competing with the surrounding white population in California and igniting the racial hostility that would last through World War II.<sup>103</sup>

### From a Racially “Different” Minority to Enemy Race: The Case of California

Before World War II, Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens in California were thus viewed differently on the basis of race. What drastically changed once World War II began, however, was that these individuals became inextricably intertwined with Japan as the enemy. The war altered their previous discrimination as a “different” or “foreign” race to a group that was now seen as an enemy race. This new virulent construction of Japanese Americans as the enemy race by the federal government is evident by Jack B. Tenney’s report in 1945, called “Japanese Problems in California.” Tenney chaired California legislature’s Joint Committee on Un-American Activities, and in the committee’s report, he claimed that, “the Japanese people are fanatical in their faith that they are destined to conquer the world.”<sup>104</sup> This articulation of the Japanese race as a people driven to conquer the world reflect this drastic shift from their initial perception as racially different before the war to a group that was seen as inherently evil in wartime.

The shift in the nature of the racism toward Japanese Americans from before the war in California to World War II is revealed through President Franklin Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066.<sup>105</sup> There was no evidence of their espionage or sabotage, but they were nevertheless treated as traitors to the country. Executive Order 9066 was not limited to first generation immigrants, also known as *Issei*. Instead, the internment policy applied to second generation, the *Nissei*, as well as third generation Japanese Americans, or *Kibei*, who were American citizens by

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Un-American Activities Having Special Reference to Japanese Problems in California. *Third Report on Japanese Problems in California*, by Jack B. Tenney, Senate Report, April 16, 1945.

<sup>105</sup> Leonard, 465.

birthright.<sup>106</sup> This order blurred any distinction between first-generation immigrants and those that were American-born citizens. The fact that all generations were racially grouped with the perpetrators in the Pearl Harbor attack created widespread panic that all individuals of Japanese descent were capable of similar atrocities.

Francis Biddle, Attorney General of the United States during World War II, noted the irrationality of the discrimination directed at Japanese Americans in California. This reflects Biddle's often critical view of the excesses of internment, as seen previously in the context of Germans and Italians. Although most government officials within the Roosevelt administration shared the public's highly racist views toward the Japanese, Biddle was one of the few exceptions. He argued that the mass evacuation in California was fundamentally illogical from a military standpoint. In a manuscript from his memoir, Biddle wrote, "there was more reason than in the West to conclude that shore-to-ship signals were accounting for the very serious submarine sinking all along the East Coast, which were sporadic only on the West Coast."<sup>107</sup> Not only did it make little military sense to evacuate mass numbers of Japanese Americans in California, but Biddle adds that the only legitimate threat present on the West Coast would have come from the large numbers of German and Italian immigrants who outnumbered the small population of Japanese Americans in California, yet they were not collectively interned. It would have thus been more logical to evacuate the established pro-Nazi and pro-fascist groups, including the German Bund, on the East Coast. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, only a small percentage of these groups were relocated, on the basis that it would be too difficult, both logistically and economically, to intern Germans and Italians en masse.

Instead of evacuating thousands of Japanese American citizens based on logical military strategy, Biddle states, "the decisions were not made on the logic of events or on the weight of

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<sup>106</sup> Robinson, 4.

<sup>107</sup> Francis Biddle, "Attorney General" manuscript, pp. 394-396, Box 4, FBP. (As quoted in Robinson, 113)

evidence, but on the racial prejudice that seems to be influencing everyone.”<sup>108</sup> Biddle’s fundamental criticism of Executive Order 9066 was that Roosevelt’s decision was based on his racist ideology alone, and did not contain any semblance of logical rationale. Roosevelt’s nativist sentiment was clearly seen in his efforts to restrict immigration, through his imposition of legal discrimination in the 1920s, as well as his reference to Japanese American citizens on the West Coast as “unassimilable aliens.”<sup>109</sup> It was deeply entrenched racial and nativist prejudice toward Japanese Americans on the West Coast, rather than military necessity, that drove the passage of Executive Order 9066.

President Roosevelt’s racist attitude toward Japanese Americans in California prior to World War II, ultimately fueling his infamous Executive Order, is also evident from the way in which he failed to secure their rights and presumed their disloyalty to America, even during a time of national peace. For example, in the months leading up to the war, Roosevelt requested his intelligence network to report on the loyalty of Japanese Americans. He consistently tried to target potential subversives even after he was assured by the intelligence that no such threat existed.<sup>110</sup>

Roosevelt’s racial prejudice seeped into other areas of the American government as well. General John DeWitt, for example, similarly expressed an inability to separate Japanese Americans from Japan as America’s military enemy, most poignantly seen in the piece that he wrote, “Final Report on the Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast 1942.” In this report, General DeWitt acknowledged that many of the individuals who were interned were in fact American citizens, yet he still upheld the legitimacy of their evacuation due to their potential subversion. DeWitt’s unwarranted suspicion of a potential Japanese invasion of the West Coast was fueled by racial animosity, as conveyed in his report,

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 119.

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 United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted...That Japan is allied with Germany and Italy in this struggle is 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. It, therefore, follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today....<sup>111</sup>

As illustrated by Dewitt’s bitterly racist statement regarding the Japanese as the enemy race, the extent to which they were assimilated into American culture did not have any impact on the discrimination to which they were subjected. The majority of these citizens in California were integrated in American society, in terms of their education and cultural practices. Their oppressive treatment, however, was rooted in an irrational perspective that regardless of citizenship status, these individuals were tied to Japan culturally, racially, and ethnically, and were therefore presumed to be traitors to the United States. All generations of Japanese individuals living along the West Coast were equally and collectively viewed as a disloyal population, and no legal distinction was made between first, second, or third generation individuals.

### The Japanese Population in Hawaii: The Exception to Racial Scapegoating

Japanese Americans suffered far less discrimination in Hawaii following Pearl Harbor. It seems quite paradoxical that Japanese Americans in Hawaii, who lived in the same vicinity as the Pearl Harbor attack, retained their civil liberties, yet those who were geographically far farther away from the attack (i.e., in California) were persecuted in a far more widespread and severe manner. As will be demonstrated, this paradox stems from the fact that it was not as

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<sup>111</sup> United States Congress, *Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942: Final Report*, by John L. DeWitt (Congressional Document, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 34.

feasible to oppress the Japanese Americans in Hawaii as it was in California, in a similar way to the case of Germans and Italians on the East Coast. In contrast to Japanese Americans in California, anti-Asian sentiment was not as pervasive in Hawaii prior to the war. The 1982 Report of the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians explains that Japanese American population in Hawaii, “was more ethnically mixed and racially tolerant than the West Coast. Race Relations in Hawaii before the war were not infected with the virulent antagonisms of 75 years of anti-Asian agitation...In Hawaii, the spirit of *aloha* prevailed, and white supremacy never gained legal recognition.”<sup>112</sup> Although racism did not manifest itself legally in Hawaii, as it did in California, Japanese Americans nevertheless experienced discrimination in a social context.

The fact that Japanese Americans comprised a substantial population in Hawaii made it far more difficult for the government to suspend their civil liberties. Out of a total population of 423,330 people living in Hawaii, 157,905, or 37.3%, were Japanese (37,353 were born in Japan and 120,551 were American citizens).<sup>113</sup> The sharp regional divergence underscores the notion that while race was a dominant factor in Americans’ suspicion of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor, the statistical composition of each region had significant influence on the treatment they received.

In addition to their large population size, Japanese Americans in Hawaii had a long history as an essential source of labor. The strong presence of the Japanese workers in Hawaii began in 1865, when Hawaiian Foreign Minister Robert Wyllie oversaw the import of Japanese laborers for the sugar plantations, a major cash crop in the region.<sup>114</sup> In a letter to Eugene W. Van Reed, an American businessman who worked in Kanagawa, Wyllie explained the high demand

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<sup>112</sup> Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 261.

<sup>113</sup> Schmitz, 236.

<sup>114</sup> Okihiro, 16.

for Japanese workers in Hawaii. Regarding the Japanese, Wyllie wrote, “we are in much need of them...I myself could take 500 for my own estates.” In California, Japanese immigrants came looking for work during the Gold Rush and caused economic friction with the white population. In the case of Hawaii, however, the government sought Japanese labor. Hawaii’s necessity for Japanese agricultural workers also explains the more tolerant treatment afforded to them. Foreign Minister Wyllie explained that, due to the demand for their labor, “they would be treated well, enjoy all the rights of freemen, and in our fine [islands]...they would be better off as permanent settlers than in their own country.”<sup>115</sup>

The Japanese population in Hawaii was not only viewed positively as a necessary workforce, but was also recognized as a peaceable group by Hawaiians. A Honolulu newspaper, the *Hawaiian Gazette*, for example, reported in 1868 that, “they are very polite withal, having picked up our salutation of ‘aloha’...They are favorably received by our population, both Hawaiian and foreign, and the impression is prevalent that they will make peaceable and efficient laborers, and give satisfaction.”<sup>116</sup>

While Wyllie’s statement and the newspaper article seem to depict an idealistic picture of the relationship between the Japanese and the Hawaiian government, this soon faded in the years leading up to World War II. As tensions worsened between Japan and the United States before the war, President Roosevelt and the U.S. government grew concerned that the local Japanese population in Hawaii would be disloyal to the country if Japan were to invade the islands. As evident from the Hawaiian branch of the Army Intelligence, G2, the government questioned the loyalty of Japanese Americans in Hawaii even before World War II. The intelligence prepared a 15-volume report, the *Estimate of the Situation—Japanese Population in Hawaii* in 1933, which portrayed as disloyal and morally inferior, compared to the rest of the white population. The

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>116</sup> “Japanese Laborers.” *The Hawaiian Gazette* [Honolulu] June 24, 1868. Library of Congress, accessed April 19, 2015, <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025121/1868-06-24/ed-1/seq-3/>>.



report also claimed that these individuals resisted assimilation into American life and that Japanese schools and churches proclaimed their loyalty to Japan militarists.<sup>117</sup> The conclusion of the report captured the suspicion toward the Japanese in Hawaii, as it stated, “the local Japanese population will be disloyal to the United States...there will be, in any war, an appreciable group loyal to the enemy.”<sup>118</sup>

The historical roots of the Japanese populations in Hawaii and California are distinct. The population in Hawaii was certainly viewed favorably, while those in California experienced discrimination from the outset of their immigration. Their racial stigmatization in the years immediately prior to World War II, were, evidently, not so different in California and Hawaii. In both places, the local population was discriminated against, and presumed to be disloyal, on the basis of their shared race with the Japanese military enemy. In California and Hawaii, Japanese Americans were viewed as an extension of Japan, regardless of how successfully they immersed themselves in American culture. The divergence in their treatment between the two places once Pearl Harbor occurred did not stem from philosophically different views of Japanese Americans. Rather, what led to the more tolerable reactions toward Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was that racism became a concept that was utilitarian, as it was molded by the economic and military needs of the state.

One of the key factors that led to the divergence between Japanese Americans’ predicament in California and Hawaii was their respective population sizes. Their population in California only amounted to about 110,000 individuals.<sup>119</sup> Their composition as a minority population laid the basis for the government’s ability to scapegoat them effectively as an internal enemy within the nation. While in California, Japanese Americans were evicted from their homes and placed

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<sup>117</sup> Robinson, 55.

<sup>118</sup> “Estimate of the Situation—Japanese Population in Hawaii,” RG 165 MID, File Nos. 242-12/133 and 242-12/133A. (As quoted in Okiihiro, 165-166)

<sup>119</sup> Franklin Odo, *No Sword to Bury: Japanese Americans in Hawai'i during World War II* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 3.

in internment camps, in Hawaii, these scapegoating measures would not have been feasible, since the population of Japanese Americans was far more substantial among the local population.<sup>120</sup> Representative of the State Department Curtis Munson encapsulates the relationship between the large population of Japanese Americans in Hawaii and their perceived loyalty. In his report on “The Japanese Situation in Hawaii” in 1941, Munson states, “in fairness to them it is only right that we believe the big majority anyhow would be neutral or even actively loyal.”<sup>121</sup>

From a primarily utilitarian perspective, Japanese Americans’ substantial and well-integrated population in Hawaii was directly linked to the better treatment they received after Pearl Harbor. The fact that they comprised 40 percent of the population rendered them a necessity in terms of the economy and for military recruitment. This highlights a stark contrast from the marginalization of Japanese Americans in California.<sup>122</sup> Japanese Americans in Hawaii were thus not ideologically seen any differently from the Japanese in California, but from a purely practical standpoint, the vast numbers and respectability among locals made the legal process of subjugation essentially impossible.

The sharp dichotomy in treatment toward Japanese Americans in California and Hawaii after Pearl Harbor is evident through a contrast of Japanese American soldiers’ testimonies from each region. Japanese American soldiers in California, who were of draft age but were not yet registered in the military, were forbidden to serve because they were classified as 4C, or enemy aliens.<sup>123</sup> In an interview conducted in December 2005, Japanese American Toshio Inahara recalls his restriction from the military. Inahara told the interviewer, “it was in January of ’42. I

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Curtis B. Munson, “Report on Hawaiian Islands,” attached to Memo, John Franklin Carter to FDR, December 8, 1941. JFCF, 17. (As quoted in Robinson, 77)

<sup>122</sup> Odo, 3.

<sup>123</sup> National Archives, “Fighting for Democracy,” PBS, September 2007, accessed April 19, 2015, <[http://www.pbs.org/thewar/at\\_war\\_democracy\\_japanese\\_american.htm](http://www.pbs.org/thewar/at_war_democracy_japanese_american.htm)>.

volunteered for the United States Air Force... And had to pass a written examination and the physical and so I was ready to be inducted and I went out to the air base and at that time, *they rejected me because of my background, my ancestry*. I appealed this rejection with my attorney...but it didn't do any good. I was classified 4C the rest of the years."<sup>124</sup> Inahara was aware that he was physically and mentally fit to be a soldier, but that his racial ancestry clouded the military's view of him as a loyal American soldier.

Juxtaposed with Inahara's testimony, Ted Tsukiyama, a Japanese American from Hawaii, describes the way he was seen as a loyal citizen after Pearl Harbor, despite his race. In an interview with Tsukiyama, he said, "we were going to defend. There was no question about what we were supposed to do or what our duty was, where our loyalty lay. They knew that 80 percent of that ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) was Japanese... They didn't give us a loyalty oath, you know.... We were needed to defend and there was just no thought given to it."<sup>125</sup> Tsukiyama phrases his treatment as a loyal citizen in the context of being needed to defend against attack. His statement does not imply, however, that Japanese Americans were recruited because they were seen as racially equal to whites. Rather, Tsukiyama's race was not as limiting in Hawaii because of his indispensability as a soldier. Toshio Inahara, the soldier in California, in contrast, was not deemed essential for military defense, and racial biases thus prevailed.

The demand for military defense from Japanese Americans soldiers in Hawaii is also stated explicitly by *The Atlanta Constitution*. In a caption beneath a photograph of soldiers it described, "there encamped here today in...southern Mississippi...a military unit of 2,500 Japanese-Americans from Hawaii, who traveled 4,000 miles to learn to fight for the land of their

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<sup>124</sup> Akemi Kikumura Yano, "Classified 4C - Enemy Alien." Watase Media Arts Center, Japanese American Museum, December 6, 2005, accessed April 19 2015, <<http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews/clips/472/>>.

<sup>125</sup> Odo, 110.

birth against the military despots of the land of their ancestors.”<sup>126</sup> Although they are described as loyal soldiers, the article still acknowledges their ethnic ties to Japan. Due to the high demand for soldiers in Hawaii, the awareness of the soldiers’ racial and ethnic connections with Japan did not outweigh their capability as soldiers. Japanese Americans in Hawaii were thus in an advantageous position when compared to those in California in that their inextricability with Japan did not manifest itself in a suspension of their civil liberties.

The indispensability of Japanese Americans for military defense in Hawaii, which resulted in their tolerable treatment during the war, is also apparent from the Committee for Inter-Racial Unity in Hawaii’s mission statement. Hung Wai Ching formed the committee in December 1940, and its goal was to maintain racial and ethnic harmony among the various groups living in Hawaii. The committee included whites, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and Japanese, who discussed ways to subdue the widespread anti-Japanese attitudes in the islands, as a result of Japan’s aggressive military offensives in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>127</sup> Rather than upholding racial harmony with the Japanese as an ideological goal, the committee explicitly stated that it was a necessary measure in order to maintain national security. According to the committee, for example, “the people of Japanese ancestry, both citizens and aliens, compose about one-third of our population.... Accepted and united in purpose and action, they are an asset to the community. Rejected and treated as potential enemies, they are a burden, even a danger, to our security.”<sup>128</sup> The lack of legal discrimination targeting Japanese Americans in Hawaii stemmed from the recognition by the public and the government that any political oppression of a demographically significant population would render the islands susceptible to military threats.

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<sup>126</sup> Camp Shelby, “2,500 Hawaiian-Japs in U.S. Eager to Avenge Pearl Harbor,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 4, 1943.

<sup>127</sup> Okihiro, 202.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

Hawaii's geographic location as a command post in the Pacific also made it difficult for Japanese Americans to be interned as they were in California. To imprison Japanese Americans in Hawaii would have been detrimental to America's position in the war in the Pacific because it would have eliminated a major source of labor and resources when these factors were critical in wartime. If Japan potentially invaded the United States from across the Pacific (as they had done in Pearl Harbor), Hawaii was in a critical position to guard against a future attack. Even more threatening than a lack of resources and labor, a suspension of Japanese Americans' civil liberties in Hawaii would have turned a third of the population into "disgruntled residents or enemy sympathizers."<sup>129</sup> The military, economic, and social drawbacks that would have resulted from evacuating Japanese Americans in Hawaii undermined the government's impulse to act on the preexisting racism that had been pervasive in the region before this critical time for military defense.

### The Utilitarian Dimension of Racism

As illustrated through the regional differences in discrimination toward Japanese Americans in California and Hawaii, race can be a powerful force in oppression, but it is simultaneously malleable according to the practical needs of the particular region. In this sense, racism toward Japanese Americans during World War II is quite paradoxical, and even cruelly hypocritical. On the one hand, racism is an illogical construct, since individuals project hatred onto others as a result of their physical traits, without regard to any other reasonable factors. Americans became suspicious of Japanese Americans as a result of their shared race with Japan as an enemy nation in the war following Pearl Harbor. Their loyalty as citizens and integrity as individuals was challenged on the basis of race alone. On the other hand, racism can also be inhibited when it interferes with the economic infrastructure of the region, as was demonstrated

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<sup>129</sup> Odo, 3.

in Hawaii. The notion that discrimination can be intentionally deemphasized due to practical needs is pivotal. It reveals that hatred toward a racial group does not have to manifest itself in an inevitable and tragic reality. Although economic and logistical considerations are not equivalent to moral intentions, as the case of Hawaii demonstrates, it nevertheless reduces the likelihood of legal racial scapegoating in the form of internment.

The practical factors employed in the treatment of the Japanese population in Hawaii strongly parallel the relative tolerance afforded to Germans and Italians on the East and West Coasts. In these two cases, social pragmatism and economic sensibilities prevailed over internment measures. The fundamental distinction between the two groups, however, is that even when the Japanese population in Hawaii was spared from collective internment, they were nevertheless enveloped in the same social stigmatization as an inferior enemy race. When Germans and Italians were excluded from mass evacuation, they were not privy to the nation's fervent racial loathing.

## Conclusion

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II was not subject to much debate during the war or in the decades to come. In the early 1980s, however, there was progressively more focus on the wholesale internment of Japanese Americans. This culminated in Congressional approval of monetary reparations for those interned. Congress created the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which conducted hearings related to demands for compensation from 1981 to 1983.<sup>130</sup> The Justice Department also planned to compensate family members of those interned, who were not necessarily of Japanese ancestry. These non-Japanese individuals also deserved reparation because, according to the Justice Department, “these non-Japanese spouses and parents were confronted by a horrifying choice... They could either ‘elect’ to accompany their spouses or children or be separated from them.”<sup>131</sup>

The Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians decided to compensate 60,000 people, who would receive \$20,000 each, which amounted to a total of \$1.25 billion.<sup>132</sup> The money was more symbolic than compensatory, but it did represent formal recognition that the internment was unjustified and represented an egregious violation of the Constitutional rights of those interned. The Commission declared that the internment was driven by “race prejudice, war hysteria and failure of political leadership,” thereby verbally condemning Executive Order 9066.<sup>133</sup> The recognition of the Congressional passage is extremely significant in its formal acknowledgment of a national wrong and an attempt, however late and small, to make some effort at compensation to those whose rights were nullified in the name of national

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<sup>130</sup> Gene Oishi, "The Anxiety of Being a Japanese-American," *New York Times*, April 1985, 1.

<sup>131</sup> "U.S. Acts to Repay Interned Non-Japanese Too," *New York Times*, June 10, 1989.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

security. It is also worth noting that the compensation of \$1.25 billion was approved during a period of fiscal conservatism and an emphasis on budget cuts.

At the same time, however, these hearings also opened up deep wounds of the pain and suffering endured by those interned. Gene Oishi, a Japanese American who was interned with his immigrant parents at an internment camp in Arizona, was present at the hearings and was on the verge of an emotional breakdown in front of the Commission. In an article he wrote for *New York Times* magazine, Oishi explained, “the reason for my near-breakdown before the Congressional commission was fear. I was speaking to a commission that represented in my mind the same type of officialdom that in 1942 could not see past the color of our skin and hair and the shape of our eyes and noses and concluded that we were actual or potential enemies.”<sup>134</sup> Oishi’s statement is representative of the way in which the government’s reparation, while an attempt to rectify the government’s tragic mistake, nevertheless opened up unfathomably painful experiences that could never be absolved through monetary compensation.

Similarly, a Japanese American psychiatric social worker, Bebe Toshiko Reschke, was also interned with her parents and, like Oishi, her testimony illustrates that the Commission’s reparations can only serve as a symbol of regret. Her internment left scars of deeply suppressed emotional and psychological trauma intact. As a result of the personal violation she experienced by the government, Reschke said, “I still have a problem with that, of trusting authority... That anyone can have such control over you, and it can happen so fast.”<sup>135</sup> Reschke’s memories of the suspension of her civil liberties persist through the decades, regardless of monetary compensation or formal acknowledgement.

Throughout World War II, there was, as discussed, pitifully little opposition to the wholesale internment of Japanese Americans, apart from limited pockets of disapproval. The

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<sup>134</sup> Oishi, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 3.



necessity of such actions was broadly accepted as a given. Racial antipathy built on the reality of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Japanese actions in war (including the documented horrible mistreatment of Allied prisoners of war) combined to create an environment in which the world's leading liberal democracy could strip a racially homogenous group of citizens and residents of their civil rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

The historical pattern of the recognition of hideous wrongs is sadly a constant theme, as seen in this case and others, including the singular and unparalleled genocidal horrors wrought by Nazi Germany in World War II. There is a seemingly capricious element in which some actions come to be regretted decades later in a formal national apology, but others do not. It is a certainty that the United States and its Allies were not the aggressors in World War II. The war against the Axis powers was defensive. Yet, it is a tragic inevitability of war that even those in the right often commit horrible acts against the innocent. The internment of Japanese Americans was unnecessary, cruel, and racist in nature. No Japanese Americans were convicted of espionage on behalf of Japan and 33,000 Japanese Americans fought bravely for the United States.<sup>136</sup> The scapegoat aspect of the internment, amidst the hysteria of war, ultimately came to be recognized formally and regretted. Other cases have not been the subject of explicit national contrition. These actions on the part of the Allies include the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 and the firebombing of German cities, most notably Dresden and Berlin, which both incurred tens of thousands of civilians who were injured or killed.<sup>137</sup>

The internment of Japanese Americans was so extreme in lacking purpose and in being imposed on United States citizens. The internment could never be defended as a tragic byproduct of life and death struggle in war, as perhaps could the bombings of Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and

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<sup>136</sup> "Fighting for Democracy"

<sup>137</sup> "RAF Hits Dresden Heavy Night Blow; 1,400 Planes Also Attack Oil Plant Near Leipzig and Targets in Magdeburg," *New York Times*, February 14, 1945, 4.

Dresden, which were all justified at the time as necessary military offensives. The internment, however, stood alone –and continues to do so—as a form of turning inward with hate and malice. Anger at an all too real enemy was twisted into a campaign of hate towards those who looked different than white Americans and bore a racial commonality with our enemy. American society has long had a dark undercurrent of racism and attempting to limit the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The recognition by the Commission represented an effort to make amends to the actual victims and to make a statement to the nation that the government had erred deeply. There was no statement or action on the part of the Commission, however, that could erase the hurt and trauma borne by those Japanese Americans who were interned, as well as by their descendants.

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