

Japanese Internment: Our Homeland Tragedy

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Junior Division

Group Exhibit

Student-Composed Words: 500

Process Paper: 499

Process Paper

How did we choose our topic?

For our NHD project, we chose Japanese Internment Camps. One of us had never heard of Japanese Internment camps before. We learned that after years of forced relocation, released survivors were reluctant to discuss their experiences. Decades later, their stories are finally being told. When we researched it further, we made connections to things happening today. If history truly does repeat itself, it is doing so right now. We want others to see what happened. We want them to see the results of racism so that we will stop discriminating against races due to our fear of what is different.

How did we conduct our research?

Our group used Britannica databases and other credible sources. We also conducted an interview with Doctor Burkholder, a professor at Grace College who helped us see our thesis in a whole new light. We also analyzed a wealth of primary sources about how inhumanely Americans were treated in Japanese POW camps abroad. This did not justify how we treated Japanese-Americans in the ten internment camps in Colorado, Arizona, Wyoming, Idaho, and Arkansas. We widened our research and found an Indiana connection. We learned that Quakers in Indiana protected and spoke up against the injustice inflicted on Japanese-Americans. We began to uncover secrets the government held during the time of Japanese Internment camps. We concluded our research by looking at the contribution of Japanese-Americans as linguists to help us win WWII. We recently presented our new information to our community and school board. We analyzed a wide range of resources and drew conclusions that helped us form our thesis. This

was a homeland tragedy that was acknowledged due to the triumphant work of one survivor who led the way for a government apology.

Why did we choose our category and how did we create our project?

We chose to do a group exhibit project so that we could invest more time on this historical event. After regionals, we took the judges' feedback, narrowed our focus, and added visuals to help tell this tragic story. We designed our board as a fence to show the separation and containment. We added barbed wire to signify the harshness of this time. Another thing we did was put our student-composed words on clipboards. This symbolized the control the guards had. Lastly, we wanted to show how Japanese immigrants had already assimilated. As evidenced in primary photographs, their clothing was like any other American, so we tagged an authentic 1940s outfit. The vintage suitcase symbolizes their rushed departure from their homes.

How does our topic relate to the theme? Tragedy and Triumph?

The idea of internment based on the Japanese being a "threat" was a *cover* for the people in those times having a fear of someone different from them. Officials leveraged people's fear from the bombing of Pearl Harbor to push their political agenda. Saying that these acts of racism was a tragedy is an understatement - one source wrote, "It's Japanese American INCARCERATION, not Japanese internment." Our interpretation from this period is that we can, and did, learn from our mistakes. May we never again isolate a race or people group from another based on culture or religion.