

**Stuck between an Island and Internment: How Bay Area-Native
Japanese Americans were Wedged between Two Clashing Identities**

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Website

Website: 1199 words

Process Paper: 500 words

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Process Paper

How did I choose my topic and how does it relate to the annual theme?

Near the start of my project, I recently read *When the Emperor was Divine*, a novel describing a Japanese American family shipped away to concentration camps, and the dehumanization involved. Reading this novel led me to wonder how those living in my area specifically were affected by the government's actions during World War 2, and made me want to explore the significant political, economic, and social implications of internment camps and their effects on Japanese Americans.

How did I conduct my research?

I began my research by looking through many historical sources to understand the context of the situation. This gave me insight to what I should continue researching about throughout the rest of my project. I looked through personal accounts, court cases, photos, etc, and searched for peer-reviewed analysis on the situation. Finally, I looked at newspaper articles and other primary sources from outside perspectives and related this to how society treated Japanese Americans following World War 2.

How did I create my project?

I wanted to use a website to convey my argument mainly because I found it important to convey my argument in a visual and interactive form. Utilizing images can allow readers to truly understand how horribly Japanese Americans were treated, allowing for more of a connection between the reader and the situation. I've worked on website design before and found it enjoyable, so choosing to design a visually appealing website for this project proves as a doable project.

What is my historical argument?

When Japanese Americans living in the Bay Area had their rights taken away during World War 2 (e.g. shipped to internment camps, forced to sleep in horse stalls, placed under close watch by armed guards), they were placed in a precarious situation wedged between their rights and responsibilities. Were they to fight for the rights taken away by the United States government, or to follow their responsibility of following their country - or was their responsibility to rebel against this oppressive government and fight for their rights as Americans did hundreds of years before in the American Revolution? Using historical evidence, I answer this question in my argument.

In what ways is my topic significant in history?

This topic explores how the government rationalizes and allows outright disregard for basic human rights during war-time, and how we, as Americans, should respond. It represents a fight for rights by Asian Americans during this timeline, and how during wartime the government rationalizes inhumane acts by using war as an excuse. It proves as a cautionary tale for the future, as well as an important memory to hold in respect for those who were forced to go through internment and have their rights taken away.

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Lange, Dorothea. A photograph of a Japanese American woman arriving at Tanforan Racetrack in San Bruno, California, 1942. . 1942.

<https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/japanese-american-internment-during-world-war-ii/sources/1272>. This photograph shows Japanese American people arriving at the Tanforan Racetrack, a temporary place where 8000 Japanese Americans were processed in 1942 stayed before being relocated to internment camps in the middle of the U.S. The photo makes the assembly center seem chaotic and unorganized, and the people photographed have their heads hanging, carrying their limited possessions.

Lange, Dorothea. April 29, 1942 — Tanforan Assembly center, San Bruno, California. Barracks for family living quarters. 1942. The barracks where Japanese Americans stayed at look incredibly shabby, and they show how the government treated Japanese Americans terribly, forcing them to live in old horse stalls that were essentially falling apart. There is loose wood all over the floor and barracks are small. The scene looks incredibly disorderly and makes it evident how terrible living conditions were for Japanese Americans.

Lange, Dorothea. Hayward, California, Two Children of the Mochida Family who, with Their Parents, Are Awaiting Evacuation. 1942. In this photo, there is a well-dressed family that have identification tags around their necks, looking strikingly similar to baggage tags you use to tag your luggage at the airport. It shows how Japanese Americans were dehumanized by the American government, reduced to a number.

Lange, Dorothea. Oakland, California. Kimiko Kitagaki, young evacuee guarding the family baggage prior to departure . . . 1942. This picture depicts a Japanese American child that looks sad and fearful during the evacuation process. The girl stands with her eyes closed and her face in a frown, sad and fearful, with luggage piled behind her.

Lange, Dorothea. San Francisco, Calif., Apr. 1942 - residents of Japanese ancestry registering for evacuation and housing, later, in War Relocation Authority centers for duration of the war. 1942. A Japanese American woman appears standing in line with many other Japanese Americans to be registered for the evacuation.

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