

**Japanese Internment Camps:
Rights, Responsibilities and Reparations**

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Junior Division

Individual Documentary

Process Paper

Why I Chose This Topic:

Last summer, my grandparents took me to Hawaii. I visited Pearl Harbor and learned about America's entrance into World War II. I wanted to learn more. I was surprised to discover that shortly after Pearl Harbor, the American government removed and imprisoned all Japanese Americans, even citizens, living on the West coast solely because of their race. I decided to research the history of Japanese immigration to America and the discrimination Japanese immigrants faced which resulted in their relocation and internment during World War II. I was also interested in the government's justification for internment.

How I Conducted My Research:

I started my research by searching the Internet and found a Smithsonian website that overviewed Japanese immigration, discrimination and internment. I read many articles and watched documentaries that discussed these issues in depth. When I understood the events prior to Pearl Harbor, I searched for more primary sources. I watched hours of personal interviews from internees. These stories taught me about the problems Japanese Americans faced during the 1940s. I also studied the Supreme Court cases on internment to determine the government's justification for it. I reviewed Congressional testimony regarding Japanese American resettlement after the camps closed. I also located presidential apologies and examined governmental reparations to internees. Finally, I applied my research to the modern War on Terror. I visited the library often to find additional sources and took notes as I went along. I also located pictures to help tell this story. I interviewed many experts who helped me better understand the issues involved, including a Constitutional law professor, college history

professors, and a former internee. After state, I did additional research and revised my documentary.

How I Selected and Created my Documentary:

I made a documentary because internment is best represented visually. After finishing my research, I wrote a script and organized my pictures. My script was too long, so I shortened it. I used Windows Movie Maker to make my documentary. It took some trial-and-error to get the documentary to work. I learned how to import pictures, convert documents into jpegs, and convert videos to audio files. After my documentary was finished, I checked that it met the NHD rules and burned it to a DVD. Then, I finished my annotated bibliography and process paper.

How My Topic Relates to the National History Day Theme:

My project relates to the theme “Rights and Responsibilities” in many ways. The American government has a responsibility to protect the nation while safeguarding the rights of its citizens. Japanese internment camps highlight the difficulty in balancing these competing interests during times of war. During internment, Japanese American citizens were stripped of their Constitutional rights simply because of their race. The Supreme Court ruled that racially discriminatory laws may be constitutional if they serve an extremely important government purpose, like national security. Japanese internment camps demonstrate that in times of war, the government’s responsibility to preserve national security outweighs the rights of its citizens.

(500 Words)