

Beyond Barbed Wire: The Debate and Diplomacy Surrounding Japanese Internment

Izabella Maestroianni and Annie Hodge

Group Website

Senior Division

Website: 1,196

Process Paper: 463

The theme this year for National History Day is Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences. With deep research and personal involvement, we decided to focus our project on the Japanese internment camps spanning from 1942 to 1945. As we are both Asian Americans, we had a strong desire to study and immerse ourselves in history surrounding that topic. One of us visited Manzanar, an internment camp in California, which also had a profound influence on the perspective and curiosity about Japanese internment camps. Specifically, an aspect that surprised us was the government's motive behind the internment. The justification was solely “national security” with no consideration to the elements of racism or war hysteria.

To create our website, we began by gathering a variety of different types of resources and evidence, emphasizing the need for photo portrayals as well as strong primary sources. One source that provided a substantial amount of background information about the conditions was “harvardgazette.” This allowed us to have a deepened perspective on the Japanese American experience within the camps. Another major source for primary material was *The National Archives*, which helped us gain insight into the life of internees, activists, and the consequences of the internment. Photographs also gave vivid details of the challenges that Japanese Americans faced and how they overcame them.

When discussing what category would be best to display our developed understanding of the topic and its connection to the theme, we chose a website because of our experience with the NHD WebCentral website and its ability to allow an interactive learning experience for viewers. We strongly believe websites allow us to effectively use our creativity in a way that could not be accomplished through other categories. Furthermore, we wanted our skills to be challenged, so we agreed to work towards improvement from our website last year. To remain organized, we

created an agenda and checklist to ensure we included all our ideas. Additionally, we developed a timeline to accurately portray the chronological order of events. As we continue to develop this website, we shall collaborate by staying engaged through check-ins on our progress.

The Japanese American internment camps have a profound connection to the theme of debate and diplomacy. There was a significant number of debates and disagreements surrounding the internment, including the motivation for internment. The diplomacy that followed Japanese Americans fighting for justice was immense. The US government refused to take accountability for the real reason for internment until years after, as it was debated through Supreme Court cases and governmental acts. The consequences of the internment were extensive, with clear psychological effects that continually affected their lives. We, as historians, hope to inform the public about the Japanese American internment while incorporating reasonings of debate, diplomacy, and the consequences that followed.