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2021

Japanese and Jewish Concentration Camps (Episode 1)

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Recommended Citation

Diaz, Austin and Gallegos, Anthony, "Japanese and Jewish Concentration Camps (Episode 1)" (2021).
OtterPod. 7.

<https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/otterpod/7>

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Final Transcript

Introduction

-Otterpod Intro Music-

Austin: Hello Everyone this is Austin Diaz

Anthony: And Anthony Gallegos from “Otterpod” our first ever Podcast, in this episode we will be talking about Concentration Camps of the 1940’s

Austin: Imagine yourself in this time period, and suddenly one day your own government considers you a “threat to security”

Anthony: And with little time and warning you and your entire family is forced out of your homes and struggling to grab as many items as you can.

Austin: You are then instructed to report to military personnel who tag you and give you instructions for what will happen next.

Anthony: You are then forced onto a bus which takes you to a secluded area far off into the countryside away from your home. You are isolated from the public eye and fear the fate awaiting you and your family at the camp.

Austin: When you hear us describe this situation what is the first thing that comes to mind, was it the Jewish Concentration camps in Germany. If that is the case then you are only half correct, as the events we just described did happen, just not solely in Germany.

Anthony: We are describing the camps closer to home that thousands of Japanese Americans experienced during World War 2 instituted by the United States government and supported by the American public

Austin: Before we continue, we must quickly define a term we will be constantly using throughout this podcast, the use of the term Concentration.

Anthony: The reason we will be doing this is to differentiate from past descriptions of the American camp system such as relocation, internment and evacuation which are more akin to propaganda terms thrown around by the U.S government.¹

Austin: These terms ultimately overshadow and ignore the severity of this event in American history and doesn't treat this event in the same respect as Jewish concentration.²

Anthony: Our end goal of this episode is to show the grim similarities between Japanese Concentration in America and Jewish Concentration in Germany and why they should be viewed in the same light.

First Main Point Racism of the camps

Austin: The first main point we want to present in this podcast is how for both the Japanese in America and the Jews in Germany, the process of concentration did not occur overnight but slowly and gradually.

Anthony: In both nations we see anti-Japanese and anti-Jewish sentiment steadily building among the populace. This was greatly reinforced by government policies before World War 2 even began.

¹ <https://densho.org/terminology/>

² Ibid.

Austin: An example of this in the US is the 1913 alien land laws. The alien land laws were originally aimed at Chinese immigrants to stop them from owning any sort of property.³

Anthony: As mentioned before the anti-sentiment towards Japanese Americans increased during the war. This changed the law to be directed towards the Japanese community.

Austin: Even though the Japanese Americans had these laws against them they did have some ways to work around them.

Anthony: What ways are you talking about Austin

Austin: The Japanese Americans would buy land through their 2nd generation children, formed group corporations or third-party intermediaries.⁴

Anthony: The loophole found in the writing was calling them Illegal Aliens but since the next generation was born in America, they were not considered illegal aliens. This was the only way they could mask the racial motivations behind the law⁵

Austin: That is correct and that is why many supported the law without understanding the racial targeting behind it

Anthony: Was there any other laws against the Japanese Americans Austin

Austin: Yes, the next one was the Immigrant Act of 1924 also called Johnson Reid Act.⁶

Anthony: That was the Act that stopped immigration from Japan and restricting the number of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe rights⁷

Austin: Yes, that is correct, this decision specifically targeted the Japanese populace and was fueled by xenophobic and racial rhetoric of the time

Anthony: Which was the fear of the foreigners coming to take jobs and wages and being a threat to the Anglo-Saxon race. How do these issues in America compare to the ones in Germany?

Austin: April 1st, 1933 was the first nationwide boycott of the Jewish owned businesses. The star of David was marked along with the word of Jude written across store windows informing the public of their Jewish background.⁸

Anthony: Do you remember the Nuremberg laws Austin which were implied in 1935 to reduce Jews to 2nd class citizens. This took away the rights of the Jews and prevented them from relations with people with German descent under threat of criminal punishment. They also included more people under the category of a Jew if 3 grandparents were practicing Judaism.⁹

Austin: These policies in both America and Germany greatly contributed to the criminalization and diminishment of political power of both Japanese Americans and German Jews, these policies would only serve to fuel racial rhetoric and would set the foundation for more extreme measures of the “removal” of these groups

Anthony: We know these events today as “the Holocaust” or “Final Solution” in Nazi germany and “Order 9066” in America which would lead to the establishment of the American

³ Cherstin Lyon. "Alien land laws," *Densho*

Encyclopedia <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien%20land%20laws> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Shiho Imai. "Immigration Act of 1924," *Densho*

Encyclopedia <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Immigration%20Act%20of%201924> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United States Holocaust Museum. “Jews in Prewar Germany” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jews-in-prewar-germany?parent=en%2F11232> ((accessed Dec 10 2020).

⁹ Ibid.

Concentration Camp system in response to the bombings of Pearl Harbor and the Nazi Concentration Camp system for the industrial scale slaughter of German Jews.¹⁰

Second Main Point Camps Life

Austin: The second main point we want to talk about in this episode is the camp life the Japanese Americans and Jews were forced into.

Anthony: For those who are unaware these camps were very similar in design. The process of entering these camps was also similar

Austin: At the start, both camps brought the prisoners in by force. The Jewish people and Japanese Americans were forced out of their homes and businesses. Leaving them little chance to gather their belongings.¹¹

Anthony: The buses or trains in regard to the Jews, brought them to these camps which were usually away from the public eye and were places unsuitable for living.

Austin: Don't forget about the wire fences and the guard towers with armed guards at each camp. To our listeners we ask this question to you: do these camps sound more like a prison or a summer camp you would want to go to?

Anthony: Before both groups were even displaced to the camps they were herded off into smaller designated areas.

Austin: The United States called them "Assembly centers" and were nothing more than cheaply built barracks and animal stalls painted over.¹²

Anthony: the Jewish populace in Germany was forcefully displaced into ghettos which were confined districts that separated the Jewish community from the rest of society. Like the Japanese, these were temporary places of assembly before being displaced to the camps and the living conditions were terrible.¹³

Austin: I want to get back to the camp designs, and how they felt more like a prison to the people, but we failed to mention the other living conditions of the camps

Anthony: Which living conditions are you referring to Austin. Are you talking about the fact that these places were poorly built, that these places were uninhabitable or the poor quality of housing and amenity?

Austin: I'm talking about all of those facts. Japanese concentration camps were out in remote areas and were met with terrible weather conditions such as windstorms along with little electricity, limited sanitation and access to decent food.¹⁴

¹⁰ Brian Niiya. "Executive Order 9066," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Executive%20Order%209066> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

United States Holocaust Museum. "Introduction to the Holocaust" *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

¹¹ Densho Encyclopedia "Looking Like the Enemy" <https://densho.org/looking-like-the-enemy/> (accessed Dec 10 2020)

United States Holocaust Museum. "Deportation to Killing Centers" *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/deportations-to-killing-centers> (accessed Dec 10 2020)

¹² Densho Encyclopedia "American Concentration Camps" <https://densho.org/american-concentration-camps/> (accessed Dec 10 2020)

¹³ United States Holocaust Museum. "Ghettos" *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ghettos> (accessed Dec 10 2020)

¹⁴ Barbara Takei. "Tule Lake," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tule%20Lake> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

Anthony: People were forced to live in close proximity with one another making even the simplest luxury of privacy nonexistent. As many as 7 people would be bundled together in a small room which was extremely uncomfortable and demeaning to many Japanese families.¹⁵

Austin: While Jewish camps were primarily places of extermination, those who were not outright killed were met with abysmal treatment from shoddy living quarters, lack of food and water, exhaustion and pure mistreatment and torture.¹⁶

Anthony: Man, Austin based on all these similarities between the two camps how come one is mentioned as an internment camp and the other concentration camp.

Austin: The sheer severity and scale of death of the extermination of Jews is what immediately comes to mind on the subject concentration and rightly so. However, while this difference does exist both of these groups ultimately had their rights revoked, were forcefully taken from their homes and forced to reside in horrible conditions and treated as subhuman enemies of the state. This is why both of them should be considered concentration at the end of the day.

Third Main Point: Forced Labor

Anthony: The final similarity we want to present is the forced labor that occurred in both camps.

Austin: The camps exploited the prisoners for their labor, particularly during the war effort.

Anthony: By imprisoning the families this gave the countries a source of labor.

Austin: Many believed the start of the camps began due to the lack of labor, but other factors did play a role in that.¹⁷

Anthony: The forced labor was Justified by the cost of the camps. Since they were living in the camps for free even though they didn't want to, this justified the labor for many at the time.

Austin: That does not excuse the actual labor they had to do since the labor conditions were poor in both camps and were dangerous to the health of all those imprisoned.

Anthony: In both camps workers were heavily exploited for their labor. In America workers were offered terrible wages for back breaking work. In Germany they were worked till death.¹⁸

Austin: The subjugation throughout the American camps was ultimately more subtle in the ways they exploited the Japanese Americans in contrast to the Nazi camps which were more overt in their exploitation and mistreatment of those imprisoned.

Conclusion:

Music Outro – saddy (<https://www.bensound.com/royalty-free-music/track/sad-day>)

Anthony: We need to see the similarities between the two camps and need to refer to them both as Concentration camps

Austin: We need to take this opportunity to learn more about our history and not repeat the actions that happened during this time period.

Anthony: Both of these camps have left a lasting effect on the communities that suffered living through them and will forever be part of their history and the history of the world

¹⁵ Densho Encyclopedia “American Concentration Camps” <https://densho.org/american-concentration-camps/>

¹⁶ United States Holocaust Museum. “Concentration Camps 1933-1939” *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camps-1933-39> (accessed Dec 10 2020)

¹⁷ Morgen Young. "Oregon Plan," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Oregon%20Plan> (accessed Dec 10 2020).

¹⁸ United States Holocaust Museum. “Concentration Camps 1933-1939” *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camps-1933-39>

Austin: We must not sugarcoat this part of American history and must acknowledge (this practice and implementation of) concentration camps in America.

Anthony: We hope you learned from our podcast today in understanding the similarities between the Japanese and Jewish Concentration of World War 2

Austin: It is more important than ever that we understand this “stepped over” portion of American history as it is already happening again right before our very eyes.

Anthony: This is Anthony

Austin: And Austin from the “Otterpod” podcast signing off from this episode

Anthony: Hope you enjoyed this week's podcast and as always, we will see you next week.

Austin: Special thanks to our sponsor Dr. LAU for making this podcast happen.