

A Grave Injustice

Most people know about the horrific concentration camps that existed in Europe during World War II. But did you know the United States had concentration camps too? During the war, the U.S. government forced over 120,000 Japanese Americans to move to internment centers, or concentration camps, where they stayed for the remainder of the war.

The Japanese Americans who were sent to these camps were mostly U.S. citizens. They lost their freedom, their jobs, and their property. Even though the U.S. and Japan were on opposite sides of the war, there was no reason to believe that Japanese Americans were traitors or spies. The suspicion that they were working against the United States was racism. Finally, more than 40 years after the war, the U.S. congress admitted that confining Japanese Americans to concentration camps was a “grave injustice.”

Starting in 1942, not long after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, ten camps were opened in California, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Arkansas. Living conditions at the camps were simple and basic. Although reports say the conditions were mostly humane, the camp residents were still treated like second-class citizens and criminals.



The last concentration camp was closed in 1946. Thirty years later, in 1976, President Gerald Ford repealed the order that had made the camps possible. In 1988, Congress gave \$20,000 each to more than 80,000 Japanese Americans to compensate them for their suffering. They also apologized for the government's policy towards Japanese-Americans.

Learning about this chapter in U.S. history might be uncomfortable, but it is necessary. With knowledge comes power. And with power comes the responsibility to avoid past mistakes.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Who was put in concentration camps in the U.S. during World War II?
 - a. Jewish people
 - b. Nazis
 - c. Japanese Americans
 - d. People with disabilities

2. When did congress give money to Japanese Americans?
 - a. 1942
 - b. 1988
 - c. 1976
 - d. 1946

3. Why were Japanese Americans put in concentration camps?
 - a. Because Japan and the U.S. were on opposite sides of the war
 - b. Because of racism towards Japanese Americans during World War II
 - c. Because Japanese Americans were spies and traitors
 - d. Because it would protect them

4. Why is it important to learn about difficult periods of history?
 - a. So that we don't repeat past mistakes
 - b. So that we know the truth
 - c. So that we can make amends with people who were harmed by injustices
 - d. All of the above

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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