

A Step Forward

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Imagine soldiers marching up to your house, banging on your door, and demanding you to leave with only what you can carry in one suitcase. George Takei remembers two men marching up his driveway and banging on the door, only a few weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and demanding that he leave his home. After the Takei family left their home they were released into horse stables and the barbed wired prison camp for three years. Internment ended near the end of 1945. During the time of internment, America bypassed the 5th amendment which protects the right to due process. The people interned had no charges against them, nor any trial. They were interned only because they looked like the people who bombed Pearl Harbor. America has learned a lot since the time of internment.

As an American we are given rights which our government must uphold. As a human we are given rights as well. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor the government betrayed the rights of the Japanese Americans as Americans and as humans by "relocating" them into prison camps without reason other than they "looked" like the enemy. The right to due process is upheld by the government to advocate human rights. Due process is the right to know charges and a public, speedy trial. One prisoner, Fred Korematsu, appealed his case against the internment of Japanese Americans, to the Supreme Court. Fred argued that Order 9066 violated the amendments written in the constitution. The court decided that the president, during wartime, could do anything he thought was necessary for the nations safety. Even though these people were being imprisoned they were not told charges, nor were given trial. America learned you can't disregard amendments for any American individual, while upholding the same amendment for other

citizens. America also learned you can't imprison an entire race, or religion. Although we learned this, the government, and some citizens, are profiling Muslims' due to terrorist attacks on 9/11. Still, the government supports freedom and equal protection, and that is a big step up from previous years.

The lessons America learned weren't all harsh. After the camps shut down, some Japanese American citizens did not have a home to move back to. In some cases the houses the citizens lived in had been burned or vandalized, but many internees had friends or neighbors to help them take care of their houses, animals, or farms. Picture yourself being sent off to an internment camp and asking your neighbor if they can take care of your house while you are gone. You would hope they would take care of your place of living. Then you come home to see everything is perfect. Two members from the Japanese American Citizens League came to our school and shared a short film about the civilians of Sebastopol helping their fellow citizens during times of internment. The people told stories of looking after their friends' immense orchards while taking care of their own land. Another individual remembers taking care of her neighbor's pet while they were in prison camps. This shows America matured not only as a government but as a community.

After a case from a prisoner, Mitsue Endo, the Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional to hold loyal citizens in prison against their will. After the Mitsue Endo case, the internment camps started shutting down. In 1945 most internment camps were shut down. In 1988, America finally recognized the wrong that was internment and gave 20,000 dollars to surviving internees and their families. Putting American citizens in these prison camps violated constitutional amendments. It violated the 5th amendment, the right to due process, and the 8th

amendment, the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment of an American citizen. America learned not to incriminate someone because they look like the enemy.

America has been educated on the well being of all citizens, but still struggles with the understanding of cultural freedom and religious commemoration. Muslim and African-Americans still struggle with the government and its bias policies. Prejudice based on religion or race is prohibited by the 14th amendment, just like it violated internment. The abolishing of internment proved that the American government is willing to try to move forward to complete freedom. America learned its citizens are the strongest part about its country, and the promise of protection, not based on race, gender, or religion, is why it is looked up to.

Bibliography

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