

Japanese Internment in the United States

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Racial tensions between Americans and citizens with Japanese heritage grew following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in 1942 which established Japanese internment camps in the United States. Instead of adjusting immigration laws, or allowing Japanese-Americans to continue living in the United States like previously, the government sent those with Japanese heritage to internment camps on the west coast demoting them to subjects rather than citizens. Many historians analyze this issue through the lens of racial tensions being stirred by the war. I will be explaining this issue through the lens of political cartoons, and how they contributed to the racial tensions against the Japanese-Americans. Racist feelings about Japanese people in the United States during the 1940s were encouraged by Japanese internment camps and political cartoons, like those illustrated by Theodor Seuss Geisel, more commonly known as Dr. Seuss. By attacking the apathetic spirit of Americans leading up to the war and directly attacking the Japanese, political cartoons served as a more innocent means of spreading anti-Japanese propaganda. These racist feelings towards Japanese people in the United States promoted the idea that citizenship in the US was based more on loyalty to the country than to legality.