

Japanese-Peruvians: 1940s Deportation to US Internment Camps

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Introduction

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Peruvian government began working with the United States government on allowing Peru to send its Japanese immigrants to U.S. Internment Camps. In 1942, the Peruvian government began deporting them to the United States, deporting over 1800 Japanese immigrants from 1942 through the end of World War II. Though this was the result of the Japanese Peruvian deportation to the camps, the events that led up to their internment are the basis of my research. Before the Japanese Peruvians' deportation, years of violence and discrimination were brought upon by the Peruvian population starting in the late 1920s after the stock market crash in 1929. Throughout the years leading up to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese families rose from working in the harsh sugar and cotton plantations of Peru to developing their own communities and economic businesses. With the Japanese's success, the Peruvian people experienced financial distress and targeted them as a result of their distress. The catalyst for this distress was the May 1940 "Saqueo" riots in Lima, Peru. This riot resulted in two days of the Peruvian people damaging Japanese businesses and homes, leaving Japanese firms and families in despair. It was clear that these riots were a clear catalyst for the Peruvian government deporting their Japanese Immigrants to the United States Internment Camps.

Thesis Statement

In my digital story map, I will assert that the history of relations between the Japanese immigrant community and the native Peruvians was exacerbated over time by anti-Japanese views and discrimination after the 1929 Stock Market Crash. This being a catalyst for the

Peruvians' act of prejudice, these relations worsened and eventually culminated in riots in 1940, which led to the Japanese people's deportation to U.S. internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Primary Sources

In researching the Japanese Peruvian deportation to the U.S. internment camps, I have used primary sources that have consisted of newspaper articles, government documents, and memoirs. These newspaper articles and government documents are all before and during World War II, which was the time of Japanese oppression at its highest in Peru. The memoir that I have also used in my research has also captivated the experiences from a Japanese man during the time of deportation to the camps in World War II. All of these primary sources tie into the story of how Japanese Peruvians were interned to U.S. camps, which details the events of the riot of 1940 in Lima, Peru to be the heightened event towards the Japanese's departure.

In a Newspaper article entitled "Japanese 'Menace' seen by Peruvian" from the New York Times from January 22, 1939, A Peruvian man wrote to an American businessman explaining his beliefs towards Japanese foreigners and their motives towards their Peruvian government. His beliefs that Japanese people were corrupting their government due to their economic success and failure to assimilate with Peruvian culture contributed to their demise and aggression towards the deportation of Japanese People.

A Newspaper article from the Gila-News Courier entitled "Crystal City Reunion Camps Being Readied For Families" describes where Japanese evacuees would be sent, not just from the United States but also from other Latin American countries like Peru, from May 15, 1943. The article mentions that the internment camp in Crystal City, Arizona, is ready for Japanese people and other ethnic people as well. The article conveys the message that both the United States and

other countries were expressing by opening more camps for countries like Peru to keep deporting their Japanese population to the camps. The key to these camps was that they were designated “reunion camps,” where families separated upon arrival could reunite. This was essential for Japanese Peruvians as they were likely separated after being deported from Peru to the United States Internment Camps.

Another primary source is a letter from the American Embassy describing the President of Peru's desire to eliminate all Japanese from Peru permanently. This letter shows even the President of Peru, Manuel Prado y Ugarteche, giving aggression to deport the Japanese immigrants for their non-compliance with the Peruvian government. This letter was from July 20, 1942, two years after the “Saqueo” Riots in Lima, Peru. Japanese people were failing to assimilate into Peruvian culture and were being blamed for Peru's economic downturn because of Japan's financial success in the country. Showing this discretion, especially years after Peru's population in Lima rioted against Japanese people, shows how impactful the riots were on deporting Japanese people to the United States Internment Camps.

Seiichi Higashide's memoirs in his book, “Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps”, describe his experience living in Peru as a Japanese immigrant and how he and his family were deported to United States Internment Camps. His experiences of how the Peruvian government deported Japanese immigrants showed him how certain the Peruvian government was to deport them. He also draws on his experiences with the riots of May 1940, which were impactful towards their eventual deportation from Peru.

Secondary Sources

One of the first secondary sources I used in my project was Cheyenne Nicole Haney's article, “Dreams Of A Far Away Land: Japanese Immigration To Peru, 1899-1950”. In this

article, she discusses one of the earliest events that would lead to Japanese oppression in the form of Japanese people bringing diseases from Japan and sickening Peruvian people. Before arriving in Peru, Japanese people were inspected for health conditions, and despite this, they still brought disease to Peru. Cheyenne emphasizes that this was an early sign of resentment toward the Japanese people by the Peruvian government and population.

Another article included Ayumi Takenaka's, "The Immigrant-Homeland Connection: The Development of the Japanese Community in Peru." In *The Japanese Empire and Latin America*, edited by Pedro Iacobelli and Sidney Xu Lu. She discussed how Japanese families developed communities in Peru after arriving from Japan in the late 19th century to work on sugar and cotton plantations. Takenaka discusses in her chapter how Japanese communities over the years faced harsh discrimination for their economic success and the spread of disease among the Peruvian population. Despite all of this, Takenyaka mentioned that Japanese communities still flourished despite the targets on their backs.

Lika C. Miyake's article, "Forsaken and Forgotten: The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II.", Lika discusses how Japanese oppression became prevalent in the news after years of discrimination towards Japanese people. Lika mentions in her article how Japanese oppression in Peru was heightened when Japanese militarism grew exponentially in Japan in the 1930s. This fueled hatred towards Japanese people in Peru and made the Peruvian population more suspicious of what they were capable of in their own country. This makes it more prevalent towards the ultimate climax of the riots against Japanese people in Lima, Peru, in 1940.

A dissertation I included in my research was Benjamin John DuMontier's, "Between Menace and Model Citizen: Lima's Japanese-Peruvians, 1936-1963", in which he heavily

mentions the psychological causes of the May 1940 riots in Lima, Peru, against Japanese people. Benjamin talks about how people of Peru associated their reasons for rioting against Japanese people out of fear of the war that was breaking out after World War II broke out in 1939. Benjamin's research collides with Miyake's as global politics and other militaristic events going on filled the Peruvian people with fear and resentment towards their Japanese population living in their country of Peru.

Daniel M. Masterson's book, *The Japanese in Latin America*, Daniel discusses the false accusations that were made against the Japanese people in Peru by Peruvians, especially after the May 1940 riots. Masterson discusses how accusations against the Japanese people were made out of fear, envy, and racial hatred. The theme of fear is also embedded in Masterson's research, particularly in how World War II was shaping the world after 1939. Also, how successful Japanese people were in Peru, fear, envy, and racial hatred were in full effect for the Peruvian population.

During my research, C. Harvey Gardiner appeared to be a renowned writer of the topic of Japanese Peruvians and their struggle before and during World War II. In his book, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, Gardiner mentions the hatred and fear Japanese Peruvians felt when first arriving in Peru to their eventual deportation to United States Internment Camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Gardiner mentions that following the events of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Peru had been eager to send its Japanese population to detention camps to keep their nation safe. When the United States began opening internment camps and started discussing with the Peruvian government, Peru knew that this was the best option for the safety of Peru.

Another dissertation I used in my research was Thomas Connell III's, "The Internment of Latin American Japanese in the United States During World War Two: The Peruvian Japanese

Experience”. Thomas mentions how Japanese Peruvians were perceived after World War II ended and U.S. internment camps were no longer in operation. They were left without anywhere to return to. The Peruvian government had made it clear that Japanese people who were interned would not be allowed to return to Peru, as they were not allowing any returnees. The United States was not allowing any people of Japanese descent to obtain U.S. citizenship at that time, so Japanese Peruvians were people drifting without anywhere to go. Thomas’s research shows the effects of discrimination and hatred towards the Japanese Peruvian people, and what the Peruvian population brought upon the aftermath.

Raul Araki’s chapter , “An Approach to the Formation of Nikkei Identity in Peru: Issei and Nisei” In *New Worlds, New Lives Globalization and People of Japanese Descent in the Americas and from Latin America in Japan*, gives insight to the aftermath of the earthquake in Lima, Peru. Araki mentions in his chapter the Peruvian perception of the earthquake and its symbolism relating to their actions just a few days earlier on the Japanese Peruvians in Lima. With the Peruvian population concerned about their speculations, Araki concluded that it did not stop Peruvian perception of Japanese civilians in Peru, and oppression still progressed until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in the United States in 1941.

Conclusion

The study of the deportation of the Japanese Peruvians to the United States Internment Camps during World War II has drawn me to conclude that this topic is not well-known in recent history. When studying the camps in the United States, it is well known that most of the population in those camps was made up of Japanese Americans. Japanese people stationed at these internment camps are often unfamiliar with people, which is why I intended to create the

idea of making a story with map features to help captivate the story of how Japanese Peruvians were eventually interned in the camps. Using images of actual events that happened during the eventual lead-up to the Japanese deportation helps visualize how cruel the Peruvian people treated Japanese people before and during World War II.

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