

COMPARING TWO PERIODS OF U.S. HISTORY: 2020 AND 1942

2020: With the Covid-19 pandemic, people in the United States were asked to stay in their homes; schools, universities, museums, and many businesses closed. Some people were already homeless. Some others lost jobs and homes because their work situations changed. There were differing opinions and confusion about how people should protect themselves. Often family members could not be with each other. Many children could not attend their regular schools for months. Large numbers of people became sick, and many died. In some places, and at certain times, there was not enough room and staff at hospitals to treat the large numbers of very sick people. By 2021, some situations had improved but there were still many issues.

1942: Americans of Japanese ancestry on the west coast were forced by the government to leave their homes and live in “relocation centers” that were built quickly in remote areas. Barbed wire fences surrounded the area, and there were numerous towers where guards with guns watched everyone constantly.

These families had no choice but to leave behind all their furniture, pets, most clothing and other possession. Adults had a very short time to deal with leaving their jobs and businesses. Quickly, they were denied access to their money in the banks. Children of Japanese descent on the West Coast had to leave their schools and friends.

People of all ages were transported to the centers where they lived in small barracks, with no running water, a single light bulb, and no cooking facilities other than rough cafeterias. The barracks were cold, with very little heat. Bed frames were provided, but no mattresses or pillows. Instead they were given large cloth sacks and straw to make mattresses. No other furniture was available. As many as seven people lived in these one-room units. At that time, there were no computers, televisions or cell phones. No radios and cameras could be brought along. Most people were not allowed out for medical appointments, shopping or travel of any kind.

Many Feelings

A. There are many feelings that people **had** in 2020 that people in 1942 may also have felt. Check the ways you think may be the same:

___ Fear of what would happen to them

- ___ Worry about losing their jobs
- ___ Fear of losing their homes
- ___ Sad because they cannot see or be with others that they love
- ___ Missing pets
- ___ Feeling that they cannot control things they want to control
- ___ Feeling that they were treated unfairly
- ___ Concerns about not getting the food they need

Racism vs safety

B. Make a comparison between these two circumstances. Answer each question first for the pandemic of 2020 and then for the Japanese-Americans imprisonment starting in 1942.

1. What were the reasons for these changes in people's lives?

Consider:

2020

1942

- Were these changes to protect people?

- Were these changes important for the United States?

- What was the danger people feared?

2. How did the government bring about these changes? (local or federal)

Consider:

- Were these changes voluntary?

- What reasons did the people have for making these changes?

3. People were not to travel.

Consider: In which of these periods was traveling considered dangerous. Why? _____

In the other time, certain people were not allowed to travel for three years. Was there concern about danger? Why or why not? _____

4. Where did people live during these times of being confined?

- Compare staying in your home with having to quickly leave your home, leaving most possession behind, and not knowing if they would be there when and if you returned.
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- Consider being homeless in a time of illness when people are advised to stay in their homes.
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INFO BELOW NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED:

- Here are links to articles comparing issues of discrimination of Japanese immigrants and Japanese-Americans during World War II and recent immigrant and migrant issues.
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- Use these for research, journaling, historical content, discussion, or charting.
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- **The Legacy of Japanese Internment Lives on in Migrant Detention:**
<https://psmag.com/ideas/the-legacy-of-japanese-internment-lives-on-in-migrant-detention>
- **Nikkei WWII experience parallels Latino immigrants' plight today:**
- <https://www.nichibei.org/2019/02/nikkei-wwii-experience-parallels-latino-immigrants-plight-today/>
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- **Troubling History Repeating? Art Examines Parallels Between Japanese Americans Internment and Today's Migrants**
- <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/troubling-history-repeating-art-examines-parallels-between-japanese-american>
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- **From the Washington Post: Perspective**
- **By Karen Korematsu, executive director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute**

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/12/04/my-father-resisted-japanese-internment-trumps-travel-ban-is-just-as-unfair/>
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- **Current discrimination against Arab and Muslim Americans reflects WWII discrimination against Japanese Americans**
- <https://www.michigandaily.com/section/community-affairs/japanese-americans-see-similarities-their-discrimination-during-wwii-and>
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