

Executive Order 9066: Rights Violated, Responsibilities Neglected

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Process Paper

After hearing that the topic of National History Day 2014 was “Rights and Responsibilities in History”, we thought back to a speaker that came to our class last year. The speaker was the son of an internee in the Japanese American internment camps of World War II and his account of his father’s experiences was breathtaking and inspirational. One part that stuck out in his presentation was his description of how the United States violated the rights of Japanese Americans, most of which were citizens. We realized that this would fit well into the History Day theme began to research on the topic.

We commenced the research process by looking into the background of the event and especially first-hand accounts from people who were involved in the internment. After developing a basic outline of the ideas we wanted to talk about, we split up and each worked on something separate and reconvened with our new findings at the end of every week. During this period, we often visited the library in search of books and asked the librarian for reading recommendations. After putting all of the text onto the website, we searched for various videos, audios, and images that would be able to enhance the meaning of the text.

Since some of our group had previously participated in the Junior Division Website category and all liked the idea of being able to work on the project simultaneously in the comfort of our homes, we decided that our medium of presentation would be a website. We split the website up into tabs and each worked on particular tabs. After finishing our individual tabs worked together on revising the website and making it into a refined, final product.

Executive Order 9066 and the actions that followed it showed aspects of both rights and responsibilities. The rights, provided by the US Constitution, of the Japanese American internees were clearly violated. An example of this would be the First Amendment’s rights, guaranteeing freedom of religion. The United States Government was not able to fulfill its fundamental responsibility of promoting the general welfare of its people as it unjustifiably took away the rights of a big group of people and caused them great distress. Looking at the internment of the Japanese Americans through the lens of rights and responsibilities provides new insight into an incident a major governmental failure that impacted the lives of tens of thousands of people.