

# LANGUAGE AND DEHUMANIZATION IN ALASKAN JAPANESE INTERNMENT DOCUMENTS

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During World War II, thousands of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast of the United States were sent to internment camps. At least 100 of these were Japanese Alaskans, who were removed from the Alaska territory when the US military designated Alaska a military zone. In order to coordinate internment policies, a number of government correspondences were produced by the Alaska territorial government and other authorities in Alaska communities. Although there have been numerous historical studies of the Japanese internment in the US during World War II, few have specifically studied the language of race and dehumanization used in Alaskan internment documents. I address this by analyzing a set of these documents for examples of language that dehumanizes Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. I argue that authorities and other represented authors in the document set used dehumanizing language to help justify internment policies. Overall, this analysis provides a window into how the Japanese internment was carried out in Alaska and how it affected Alaskan communities and individuals and sheds light on how language can support and facilitate official acts of racial oppression.

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The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, gave rise to mass hysteria and public racial discrimination against both first-generation Japanese immigrants and Japanese-American citizens (Robinson 89). In February 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the military the power to exclude anyone they wished from “military areas” that they would designate (Hosokawa viii). Soon thereafter, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), established in March 1942, created internment camps in the contiguous states, and the systematic removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast

began (Murray 9). The territory of Alaska—Alaska did not become a state until 1959—was included in these policies, as it was made a military zone at this time due to its proximity to Japan and its potential strategic value in the war. As a result, Japanese Alaskans were also included in the internment order. In many cases, this required them to leave behind wives and children as well as their businesses, properties, and most of their belongings. By August 7, 1942, around 110,000 people of Japanese heritage had been imprisoned in internment camps, according to authorities on the West Coast (Daniels, *Japanese* xix), including between 130 and 230 Japanese Alaskans. Many

Japanese Alaskans were incarcerated in the camps for around three years before they were permitted to return home to Alaska or relocate.

Internment policies implemented on national, state, and territorial levels severely dehumanized Japanese immigrants and Americans. Japanese Americans were forced to abandon their livelihoods and properties on very short notice (Murray 9). They were forcibly relocated into improvised communities with people they often had no previous contact with; established communities were separated in the process of internment, as were families. Camps were overcrowded, unsanitary, and sparse (Daniels, *Prisoners* 65-66). Japanese Americans impacted by the order were fully aware that their internment was due to racial prejudice (Shimabukuro 651, 659). The experiences of Japanese Americans in these camps are well documented in numerous firsthand accounts (e.g., Kikuchi, Soga, and many more).

Internment policies in the territory of Alaska consistently disregarded the effects of internment on Japanese Alaskans' families and communities. Most Japanese immigrants were men who arrived alone (Inouye 259), and most also moved into separate communities, leaving significant distance between people of Japanese heritage as a result of Alaska's great size. Many opened businesses in their communities, married Alaska Native women, and started families (Inouye 259). As a result of their geographic isolation, many arrived at the internment camps without having had previous contact with others of Japanese heritage, and they often felt socially isolated within the camps (Inouye 261). In some cases, people who were half Japanese and half Alaska Native

were interned without regard for whether or not they had had any contact with others of Japanese heritage. Further, because many Japanese Alaskan men were married to Alaska Native women, and because authorities kept those not of Japanese heritage from following loved ones into internment, Japanese Alaskan men were often forced to leave their families behind in Alaska with indefinite support available to them ("Governor" 42).

This essay examines how internment policies dehumanized Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans by analyzing a government file of documents generated during the Japanese internment in Alaska titled "Governor Ernest Gruening's File on Japanese Internment in Alaska during World War II, 1942-1945." I argue that the dehumanizing language in these documents was used by authorities to support internment policies in Alaska. In my analysis, I examine how othering and dehumanizing processes were enacted through racial naming, labels of internment, and language of immigration and citizenship. To understand the relationship between dehumanization and language that others, I draw on theories of semantics and racialization that allow me to analyze the negative content of racial names and othering language. I also draw on historical analyses of World War II to understand the use of dehumanizing language in wartime contexts. I make brief connections to psychology and immigration research, which informs my understanding of dehumanization through homogenous grouping.

Existing theories of racial language by Herbert J. Gans argue that othering is often based in racial difference and in the negative

representation of that difference. Other scholars, such as Jeff Greenberg et al., Christopher Hom, and Adam Croom, show that racial epithets contribute to dehumanization through ethnic labeling, which is used to designate in-group and out-group status, and through derogatory racial epithets, which carry inherently negative semantic content. According to studies from John D. Chappell, Paul Fussell, and John W. Dower, this kind of dehumanization occurs particularly often during wartime. Additionally, linguistic grouping and hyperbolic language are often used to target immigrant groups according to Stephen M. Utych, a finding supported by Erin Cooley et al.'s and Gordon Hodson and Clair Doucher's studies of dehumanization through the linguistic homogenization of groups. My essay contributes to existing research by analyzing how the negative content associated with racial labels and racial slurs supports policies that dehumanize immigrant racial groups.

## METHODOLOGY

For this project, I used a group of archival documents titled "Governor Ernest Gruening's Files on Japanese Internment in Alaska during World War II," located in the digital Alaska State Archives. These documents were included in Governor Ernest Gruening's subject file on the Japanese internment, archived by the Alaska Office of the District and Territorial. Most of these documents, namely the documents from 1942, initially came to Bob Bartlett, who was acting governor while Gruening was out of the territory. The documents suggest that Gruening was outside the territory of

Alaska for at least the beginning of the implementation of Japanese internment policies in Alaska. The telegrams sent to Gruening during April 1942 list Gruening's location as Washington, D.C. ("Governor" 56,62) or San Francisco ("Governor" 23,24). The title "acting governor" appears under Bartlett's name in all telegrams sent to him in Juneau, Alaska. It is possible that the file was begun by Bartlett as a way to keep records of correspondence that Gruening could review upon return to the territory. I limited my focus to this file because it illustrates how Japanese Alaskans, the public, and the territorial government responded to the Japanese internment through written documents and how language was used to support the internment of Japanese Alaskans.

The majority of these documents are from 1942. Several later documents, newspaper clippings only, were written in 1945 by unidentified authors and concern the public response to the return of Japanese Alaskans to their homes after the internment ended. There is one document from 1943 that references a letter not included in the file. There are no other documents from the years 1943 and 1944. Two documents include writing by Japanese Alaskans, which complicate the dehumanizing language used in other documents. Overall, the documents provide a snapshot of government policy for Japanese internment and public and private responses to this policy. Because most of the documents were created during the initial stages of internment in Alaska, they illustrate language use during the earliest stage of Japanese internment.

To analyze this file, I read through each document and transcribed most of them into

a word processing program. Papers excluded from transcription include duplicate documents and documents that contained no reference to people of Japanese heritage. I then went back through each transcribed document individually and coded the texts for the language of othering and dehumanization, including racial naming, terms relating to internment, and language of immigration. I also coded instances of humanization. I used this coding to help me group parts of these texts according to these categories.

In my analysis, I examine language that others and dehumanizes Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. This part of the analysis is divided into the subcategories of racial naming, labels of internment, and language of immigration and citizenship. These categories were drawn from reading the documents and identifying themes in the language. I am primarily concerned with the semantic content of the terms being used. I consider a term to be a form of racial naming if it contains any content that evokes the racial identity of people of Japanese heritage, including ethnic identifiers like “Japanese,” as well as more problematic terms such as “oriental”<sup>1</sup> that carry cultural, ethnic, and social content as well as racial content. I also consider the language of othering in the documents, which appears in the form of labels of internment and language of immigration.

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1. As part of this analysis, I examine many sensitive and derogatory words. Where quoted, these words are included to preserve the original language of the texts and do not represent my own words. I have chosen to quote them in this essay for the sake of the analysis and for clarity. As a result, these words will always appear in quotation marks.

Language can be said to have the effect of othering on a group if it works to distinguish the group in some way from groups with social and political power (Croom; Weber 73). In this section, I mainly consider terms that accomplish othering without making explicit reference to race. For example, I consider the term “evacuee” to be a term of othering that contains no obvious racial content.

The presence of humanization in the documents complicates the language of the file. I identify humanization as moments where individuals are named and where the negative impact of the internment on these individuals is acknowledged. Examples of humanization occur in some documents written by authorities and in the two documents written by Japanese Alaskans. Humanization in this context, when used by authorities, cannot be considered positive content; it does not counteract the dehumanization present in the file, nor does it excuse the participation of the authors in internment policies. Rather, it is in tension with the language in the file that dehumanizes and others Japanese Alaskans, emphasizing the dehumanizing effects of other language choices.

## ANALYSIS

### RACIAL NAMING

Racial naming is language that specifically evokes race, including ethnic labels, racial epithets, and racial slurs. In the documents of Governor Gruening’s file, racial naming supports the dehumanization of Japanese Alaskans. Through most of the documents in the file, the most commonly used identifier is simply “Japanese.” Some variations on

this include “persons of Japanese ancestry” (“Governor” 15), “persons of the Japanese race” (“Governor” 13), “persons of Japanese parentage” (“Governor” 11), and in one published letter written by several Alaskan Japanese couples who were interned by the order, “persons of Japanese heritage” (“Governor” 8). These variations reflect some of the more formal, legal language that appears in some of the documents, but they also acknowledge that many people affected by the order were biracial. However, in this context, “Japanese” is a problematic racial identifier because it makes no distinction between Japanese people currently living in Japan, immigrants from Japan who have adopted the culture of the new country, and the children of immigrants who have never been to Japan and have little connection with its people. That is, “Japanese” here is a term that conflates multiple identities with a single marker of difference.

The term “oriental” is less commonly used in the file but further conflates both race and East Asian cultures. It appears in two separate documents, both newspaper clippings. This indicates that it was considered an acceptable racial label at the time, since it appears in publications for the general public. The first is a short article from May 1942 that inaccurately reported that a new office was being established to handle “the farm lands and other properties of the evacuated Orientals” (“Governor” 9).<sup>2</sup> The second use of the term is slightly more enigmatic and appears in an article from July 1945. In advising several Japanese couples, the

2. This was an inaccurate reporting because there were no farms owned by people of Japanese heritage in the Alaska territory at the time of the internment order (“Governor” 20, 22).

article says that race hatred is likely inevitable as more horrors of war are uncovered as US troops reach Japan, which may increase “the oriental hatred of the occidental” (“Governor” 6). This suggests that Americans based their fear of people of Japanese heritage on a belief in indiscriminate Japanese hatred for the US. In addition, it situates Americans, “the occidental,” as “normal” and wronged by suggesting that this hatred only came from the Japanese side. At the time, many Americans believed that people of Japanese heritage as well as people from other East Asian cultures could not assimilate to US culture (Murray 50; Robinson 41; Hosokawa vii, 11; Daniels, *Prisoners* 10). The article exempts the Japanese families from this by remarking on the embarrassment this hatred might cause “Japanese in our midst” (“Governor” 6). These two uses of “oriental” evoke the exoticization of East Asian cultures and East Asian stereotypes that Americans believed and still may believe about a number of East Asian cultures, including Japanese culture. This stereotyping was intensified by the additional typecasting that took place as a result of the war (Fussell 115; Dower 7).

Another less common form of racial naming in the file is applied exclusively to children. The term “half-breed” is twice used to speak of children with a Japanese and Alaska Native parent. In one of the earliest iterations of the internment order, issued from Ft. Richardson on April 2, 1942, it is stated, “Half breeds under sixteen may accompany parents or guardians” who are affected by the internment order (“Governor” 13). Later, General Buckner wrote in a telegram from April 22, 1942, “Evacuation of Native wives and half breed Japanese children not repeat not favorably considered at

this time” (“Governor” 33). Buckner specifically uses the term to refer to children of mixed Alaska Native and Japanese heritage. The use of the word “breed” even in place of “blood” strongly connotes animals and pedigree and has a dehumanizing effect on the group being discussed. That this kind of wording is used specifically by powerful military authorities further suggests that this kind of bestial characterization based on race was deemed acceptable by US authorities.

Finally, the racial slur “Jap” appears in a number of different places in the documents. Although it may appear to be shorthand, this slur contains negative meaning specific to race and ethnicity (Hom 422), and it historically gained usage and additional negative content in the US during World War II. During the war, the slur was used to urge violence, vengeance, and racial hatred, as well as convey the bestiality of the Japanese enemy. It formed an important part of propaganda used to urge soldiers and Americans in general to exert their efforts towards obliterating the Japanese race (Fussell 116-117, 119). The use of the slur in the documents is somewhat mixed, as it seems to have varying degrees of negative severity depending on how it is framed in the texts.

Among the documents, the slur appears in General Buckner’s April 9, 1942, telegram to Bob Bartlett, where he explains further details of the Japanese internment order. He says, “Japs may report to any troop location . . . Jap women legally married to Eskimo Indian or white men are exempt” (“Governor” 64). This example demonstrates that the slur does not function as shorthand, since another racial

designator, “Eskimo Indian,” is spelled out in full. Much later, after the end of the internment, a newspaper clipping from 1945 uses the phrase “the Jap question” to refer to the debate about whether Japanese Alaskans who were interned should be able to return home to their communities. In the same article comes the line, “Naturally all of us are prejudiced against the Japs,” followed by, “But many of us also believe in tolerance” (“Governor” 7). Interestingly, in this document both the slur and “Japanese” are used, suggesting the normalization of the slur in public language. The slur is used in a total of eight times in five of the documents, two of which are newspaper clippings.

These forms of racial naming contain negative meaning because they derogate and misrepresent Japanese Alaskans. The authors of these texts use this inherent negative meaning to separate themselves from Japanese Alaskans by implicating the subhuman or the socially and culturally separate. In these documents, racialization that contains strong negative content includes in particular the racial slur “Jap” and the blood status term “half breed.” The racial slur draws its negative content from the context it was developed in and from its wartime associations with extermination rhetoric (Dower 37), while the blood status term holds strong associations with animals. Additionally, racial labels used during this time provided no clear distinction between Japanese out of Japan and the Japanese immigrants or Japanese Americans living in Alaska and the US; “Japanese” and the slur “Jap” could be applied equally to all of these groups (Dower 34, 78). This lack of distinction easily facilitates

othering and dehumanization on the basis of race rather than citizenship and even patriotism, and this othering and dehumanization can then be used to justify the unjustifiable.

#### LABELS OF INTERNMENT

The documents often identify men and women of Japanese heritage as “evacuees” or “internees,” especially shortly after the internment order was issued. On April 7, 1942, Governor Gruening sent a telegram to Bob Bartlett concerning how the property of the Japanese affected by the order would be handled. He used both “Japanese evacuees [sic]” and “Alaska evacuees” (“Governor” 62) to describe the Japanese people whose affairs he was discussing. Other correspondence, produced between April 6 and April 8, makes use of the terms “Japanese evacuees” (“Governor” 52) or “Alaskan evacuees” (“Governor” 57). Another use of the term appears in a letter sent by Michael Hagiwara, a Japanese American and Alaskan who was interned in Idaho, to Governor Gruening in October 1942. Hagiwara uses “evacuee” several times in the letter, as well as the similar term “internee” (“Governor” 3-5). It bears noting that this document is one of just two in the file that are written by Alaskans of Japanese heritage who were affected by the internment order. In general, “evacuee” is used more commonly than “internee” in the file.

The term “internee” appears in just two documents in the file. In a telegram from April 8, 1942, “internee” is attached to the names of specific people, e.g. “Internee W H Fukuyama” and “Internee George Suzuki” (“Governor” 52). Here this term places emphasis on the interned

status of the Japanese Alaskans as a result of its placement before their names. Hagiwara also uses the term in contrast with humanizing language. In his letter, he writes, “From records, many of these Alaskans, today held as internees, can be judged as good Americans.” The emphasis here falls more upon “Alaskans,” with the term “internees” being treated more negatively. Hagiwara contrasts citizenship, reflected in the words “Alaskans” and “Americans,” with being interned, emphasizing the dehumanizing nature of the term “internees.”

Both “evacuee” and “internee” are terms directly related to the state of being interned. These terms label people of Japanese heritage according to their relationship with the internment order, separating them from those not affected by the order and ignoring differences between individual members of the affected group. In this context, these terms also include racial content, since only people with at least one ethnically Japanese parent could be evacuated and interned, and geographical content, since only people residing in military zones on the West coast were interned. Specifying “Japanese evacuees” or “Alaskan evacuees” only helps to reinforce this content. Hagiwara’s use of both “evacuee” and “internee” in his letter to Governor Gruening suggests that both terms had been normalized so that people of Japanese heritage also used them to refer to themselves.

Dehumanization here in some ways works differently from racial naming. Terms like “evacuee” and “internee” are not overtly negative, but they categorize people of Japanese heritage according to their state of being interned rather than by their individuality, or

even their ethnic identity. However, like racial naming, there is an implied stigma associated with these terms. Words like “evacuee” only thinly veil the fact that Japanese Alaskans were being forcibly removed from their homes and detained indefinitely. These terms also deliberately avoid referring to the personhood of Japanese Alaskans. They put people of Japanese heritage in a homogenized group, which distances the reader from the individual humanity of the specific people contained within the group. In these ways, labels of internment act to further dehumanize Japanese Alaskans.

#### LANGUAGE OF IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS

One term that appears in the file that relates to immigration status is the word “alien.” This term is still used legally to refer to foreigners and immigrants. Among the documents in the file the word appears most prominently in the Department of Public Welfare’s report to Bob Bartlett, which discusses the aid that was being offered to the wives and children of Japanese men who had been interned. In the first paragraph, the report explains the services being offered to “families of aliens who have been interned” (“Governor” 26). Maynard later rephrases this slightly as “families of interned aliens” (“Governor” 27). The term “alien” reduces people to their immigration status and emphasizes foreignness above all, erasing any change in identity that the Japanese men may have experienced after immigrating to Alaska as well as cultural identity.

Not all of the documents in the file use such specific terms to other people of Japanese

heritage. The article “Should Japanese Citizens Return to Ketchikan?,” written in July 1945, is a response to a letter sent by several Japanese couples who had been interned asking whether they can return to the Ketchikan community. The article explains that these couples “seek to return to their pre-war civilian roles and to take up the ways of life they were forced to give up when their *fellow countrymen* attacked America at Pearl Harbor” (“Governor” 6, emphasis mine). Referring to Japanese living in Japan, and specifically Japanese who took part in the Pearl Harbor attack, as the “fellow countrymen” of the Japanese families who had immigrated to Alaska is an example of the belief of the time that people arriving from Asian cultures could never truly be Americanized. This language is an example of othering because of the implication that the Japanese who went to war against the US and the Japanese who immigrated to Alaska with the intention of staying there are grouped together as “not American.”

This kind of othering appears again near the end of the article. The article recommends caution on the part of the Japanese families if they choose to return, and then, speaking of them, says, “Perhaps they have decided to take the risk and adventure once more in Americanism – their own and our own” (“Governor” 6). Similar to the example above, the men and women of Japanese heritage who were interned are framed as not American and thus as an “other.” The words “once more” suggest further that either there was a failure to become properly “Americanized” in the past or that during the span of years occupied by the war it was not possible for them to be considered



American. In addition, “risk and adventure” and “Americanism” in this quote do not suggest that Japanese Alaskans can become truly American at all, rather that they might become more like Americans but will continue to be separated from the “true American” population. This idea is further emphasized by the division between “their own [Americanism]” and “our own [Americanism]:” the author considers these to be two separate things. By calling their status of citizenship into question, the Japanese families are distanced from the Alaskans of Ketchikan.

In these examples, dehumanization appears through the implication of different or inferior social status based on immigration and citizenship status. The immigration term “alien,” as well as the phrases that I illuminate above, serve to emphasize foreignness and to erase changes in identity that occur as a result of immigration, adopting the practices of the new home country, and naturalized citizenship. A clear distinction is always maintained between Japanese Alaskans and majority culture Americans, and it is suggested that this justifies their exclusion from status as American citizens. Given all this, it could be suggested that the language of othering used in this file was likely an important part of the justification used to apply and sustain internment policies for three years.

#### HUMANIZATION

The documents in Governor Gruening’s file do not exclusively dehumanize men and women of Japanese heritage. A number of the documents acknowledge individual people and

circumstances, and some even seem to express sympathy to a degree. There are also two texts written by Japanese Alaskans themselves, which give voice to some of their experiences. Despite the humanizing voices of Japanese Alaskans and their own occasional use of language with humanizing effects, government authorities and the public still consistently use dehumanizing language in their writing, which suggests that dehumanizing language was consciously employed to justify the Japanese internment. The presence of humanization in these documents highlights the tension between the experiences of people of Japanese heritage affected by the internment order and both the unaffected public and the officials in charge of executing internment policies.

Some documents in the file are written on behalf of a single individual or family. For example, writing on April 8, 1942 for Harvey Sharai, an Alaskan who was “half Tsimpsean [sic] half Japanese” (“Governor” 42), Leonard C. Allen, a government authority in the “Indian Service” in Ketchikan, Alaska (“Governor” 40), says, “He unable [sic] to learn if family will be left here and if so will army provide for them ” (“Governor” 42). Sharai’s situation was similar to that of many others: his wife was Tlingit, and Alaska Native wives were unable to accompany their husbands per internment policies. Many families were left in situations where the main breadwinner of the family was interned (“Governor” 26-28, 33). This telegram demonstrates some attention beyond the basic logistics of the Japanese internment by acknowledging Sharai’s worry that his family will not be cared for. A similar telegram sent to Bartlett from Earl Ohmer, who was located in

Petersburg, Alaska, presented the case of Mrs. Sam Kito, an Alaska Native woman whose husband was to be removed by the order, leaving her pregnant and caring for three other children. Ohmer concludes, “Extreme hardship on her if left here STOP Strongly recommend she be evacuated” (“Governor” 35), which again shows some sensitivity to the hardship the Japanese internment caused to families. This language, however, stands in contradiction with the dehumanizing language used throughout the file. Ohmer, for example, uses the racial slur “Jap” twice in an earlier letter (“Governor” 39).

I identified one document in which the author appears to directly convey sympathy for the situation. After requesting that an exception be made for Henry Hope, whose situation I mention in the “Racial Naming” section, Bartlett received the answer that no exceptions would be made. He then sent a letter back to Alice Stuart in which he told her this news and then says the following:

I, too, regret the necessity for taking Henry away from his homeland. In this case I very definitely wish an exception could have been made. From the facts you present, I do not see how he could have endangered his country in any way. This is one of the cruel things about war which really hurt. (“Governor” 21)

This likely would have been little comfort to Alice Stuart. This letter does suggest that Bartlett was not fully detached from the implications of the situation, which humanizes those involved in this particular letter. However, this

sympathy has no apparent effect on internment policy, which creates tension between expressed regret and actual events.

The documents in this file with the most humanizing elements are two written by Japanese Alaskans themselves. One document is a letter reproduced in a newspaper clipping from June 1945 (“Governor” 8). This letter was written by four Japanese Alaskan couples who had been interned, and it expresses their desire to return home to Alaska and their uncertainty about how their communities will receive them. The other relevant document is a much longer letter composed by Michael Hagiwara to Governor Gruening, written from an internment camp on October 20, 1942 (“Governor” 3-5), which I also consider above in my discussion of othering. In this letter, Hagiwara appeals to Gruening about the separation of Alaskan families: many first-generation Japanese Alaskan men were interned in separate areas from their families and were not given hearings (“Governor” 3). Hagiwara calls for this to be rectified by making a few different appeals: he asks Gruening to consider the effect that separation from their fathers will have on the children and suggests that a logical course of action is to grant hearings for Japanese Alaskan men, as has been done for others. Given a hearing, he knows that their records show good citizenship, which should be enough to at least allow them to reunite with their families. Whether Gruening ever responded to this appeal is unknown. This document is the clearest example in this data set of a Japanese Alaskan voice unhampered by outside interpretation. Both of these documents highlight

the humanity and personhood of Japanese Alaskans, where many other documents in the file consider primarily their racial identities or treat them as objects of internment. Hagiwara's letter also shows that Alaskans of Japanese heritage who were interned did not perceive themselves as an "other" in the same way the authors of many of the other documents did. From the perspective of Alaskans of Japanese heritage, there was not the same sense of being an irreconcilable "other," and there was an expectation of fair treatment as both Alaskans and Americans. Their construction as the "other" in governmental and public documents directly contradicts this perspective. Humanization in these documents does not appear to have had any effect on internment policies; rather, it suggests that government officials and the public ultimately rejected humanizing language in favor of dehumanizing language that supported internment.

## CONCLUSION

The internment of Japanese Alaskans had long-lasting effects on both communities and individuals. The question that follows is how incarceration on this scale and at such cost, both monetary and human, was permitted in the first place. This analysis of othering, dehumanization, and humanization suggests that language played a significant role in facilitating internment policies. The historical racial discrimination against Japanese Americans that preceded the Japanese internment contributed to wartime language used to dehumanize Japanese Americans, which appears

in the documents through the use of racial language and the language of othering. These documents are predominantly governmental in nature or are related to policy, and thus the dehumanizing language used in them can be seen as a reflection of how military and political leaders perceived Japanese Americans. This language further suggests that the consistent dehumanization of Japanese Americans was used by authorities to help justify the Japanese internment. Finally, the public writing that appears in the file reflects how society perceived Japanese Americans, excluding them from citizenship. In contrast, documents written by Japanese Alaskans themselves reflects some of how Japanese American communities perceived themselves in respect to society, as members of the larger American community and deserving the rights of citizens. Their voices can be heard on this subject despite their consistent marginalization in this context.

Further research on this topic in Alaska might serve to better illuminate the experience of Japanese Alaskans and Alaska Native communities during World War II and the Japanese-Alaskan internment. Studies might consider the public response to Japanese-Alaskan internment in Alaska and other government documents. Additional research might consider the experience of Japanese Alaskan and Alaska Native women, as these documents allude to how women were treated differently by internment policies. Further studies of linguistic elements in documents about the Japanese internment might consider the language of othering and dehumanization in a larger data set, compare data across states, or compare

state and federal documents. My study is limited by a small data set, and therefore its findings cannot be generalized. However, larger studies might expose patterns in language that may further our understanding of how acts like Japanese-Alaskan internment are justified and executed within a country that values inalienable rights.

The negative meaning intrinsic in language that others and dehumanizes in these documents aligns with various theories of dehumanization, particularly those that concern derogatory ethnic labels and dehumanization through grouping and homogenization of groups (Greenberg et al.; Cooley et al.). These

terms reflect ideologies of race and immigrant and citizenship status specific to representations of Americans of Japanese ethnicity during World War II. However, the documents in this file cannot be solely characterized by dehumanizing language. The humanization in these documents shows that a tension existed with the dehumanizing effects of racial language and the language of othering. That is, its presence suggests that authorities were aware of the human cost of internment policies even as they failed to alter these policies. My analysis illustrates how only a few Japanese American voices mix with cold policy orders and complicated public responses.

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