

Weglyn, Michi
*Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of
America's Concentration Camps*
Morrow, 351p., \$10.95
Publication Date: April 27, 1976

Here is a very detailed, nightmarish account of perhaps the greatest single violation of human rights in the history of our nation—the evacuation, internment, and subsequent treatment of 110,000 Japanese-Americans, the majority of whom were American citizens. Under the hysteria of war and possible invasion, complicated by strong feelings of racism and motivations of economic exploitation and sometimes political gain, an identifiable, law-abiding ethnic group was suddenly stripped of their most basic constitutional rights and subjected by their government, which was engaged in a war to preserve democracy, to worse treatment in many ways than were convicted federal felons or prisoners of war.

Yet these actions were perpetrated shortly after the White House-sponsored Munson Report (one of the best kept secrets of World War II) which concluded that not only did this minority pose no serious threat to the national security but that they had exhibited an extraordinary degree of loyalty. In addition, this book describes how thousands of men, women, and children of Japanese descent living in a number of Latin American countries were involuntarily removed and transported to the United States to be incarcerated.

Michi Weglyn, a Nesei, who was a teenage internee, has written her work with surprisingly little bitterness in almost a dissertation style. It is meticulously documented with some seventy-two pages of footnotes and appendixes, providing overwhelming evidence that these flagrant, calloused injustices were committed with the full knowledge and often the mandate of the President and other respected national leaders. However, this is no abstract academic work, but a painstakingly vivid portrayal of what could be the most grotesque and saddest chapter in our two-century history.

Years of Infamy could be read as a terrible testimonial to a monumental wrong, the senseless uprooting and inhumane commitment of humans to camps of barbed wire and towers (concentration camps), people whose major "crimes" were that they were industrious, ingenious, and Oriental. Yet, more importantly, it should serve as a severe warning that constitutions and statutes are not worth the paper they are printed on unless vitalized by public opinion and a leadership of integrity and compassion.

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