

# Key Issues of Identity in the Lives of Adult Survivors of Japanese Internment Camps: Exploring Utah's own Internment Camp through the USU Digital Archives



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## How did the concept of IDENTITY factor into the children's views of their internment at Topaz?

Following WWII, there was deep prejudice against Japanese-Americans. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, over 100,000 Japanese-Americans were gathered and sent to various communities in the United States to be held against their will.

**One of these communities was in Utah, and was called Topaz.**

While the centers were called "communities", they were surrounded by barbed wire, and had armed guards who were instructed to shoot anyone who tried to leave.

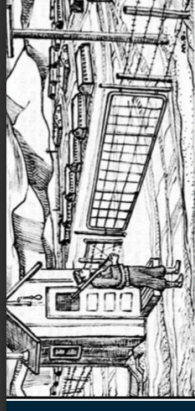
The most powerful theme that arose in my research was that of identity. I chose to focus on the lens of identity, and I looked at the topics that seemed most prevalent and powerful.

**Conceptual Framework:** Identity is a very useful lens when considering people's lived experiences, especially when who a person is thought to be is at the center of that experience, in this case being held at an internment camp. Identity frames events through how one perceives themselves, as well as how they are perceived by others.

### Methodology: Case Study

- Carefully combed through the digital collection
- Read additional sources referenced in digital archives
- Viewed and studied the documentary and associated references
- Examined historical sources to confirm understanding

**"The history of the relocation camps and the assembly centers that preceded them is one of suffering and deprivation visited on people against whom no charges were, or could have been, brought. The Commission hearing record is full of poignant, searing testimony that recounts the economic and personal losses and injury caused by the exclusion and the deprivations of detention. No summary can do this testimony justice (1982).**



# TOPAZ

## JAPANESE AMERICAN RELOCATION CENTER

DIGITAL COLLECTION

UtahStateUniversity®

Perspective of Japanese Americans: Abandonment, Vulnerability, Grief, Self-Image



It's the self-loathing. I would look in the mirror and think if could change these eyes and these lips so that I could fit in. As a child, I imagined I was responsible for the war.  
(Richard, interned at Topaz)

"My mother went through hell, and I remember that hell through her eyes, and her inability to explain or understand. I think it magnified things for me, seeing her suffer. When you see your mother suffer, you suffer too."

"The boys kept calling me 'jap' and 'dirty jap' and telling me to 'get out ya dirty jap' I started crying and walked up to the teacher for help. I told her, Those kids are calling me a dirty jap. She looked at me and said, Well, you are, aren't you?"



Perspective of United States Government & General Population: Racism, Xenophobia, Deception