

**Title** – Paranoia and Prejudice: Motivations for U.S. Internment of Japanese-Peruvians during World War II

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**Abstract:**

Through a coordinated effort between the United States and Latin American governments, over 2,000 ethnic Japanese Latin Americans were deported to the United States and placed in internment camps for the duration of the war. Business owners and school teachers, often with their families, were transported to the United States after having their assets frozen and their names printed in a “Black List” in newspapers both in Peru and in the United States. Concentrating on Peru, where over eighty percent of the deportees originated, this research asked why “inconsequential” men such as an elementary school teacher in a small coastal town in Peru would pose such a concern to the United States to spur the monumental decision to initiate a transcontinental and international internment agreement.

Using original oral interviews of Japanese-Peruvian survivors of internment and archival research both in the United States and Peru, this research examined the motivations of two countries that suspended constitutional rights of their citizens in favor of “hemispheric solidarity.” Research results revealed that both paranoia and prejudice played a large role in the motivations for internment, including a history of anti-Japanese language in prominent newspapers, valid and unsubstantiated reports of Japanese sabotage, and even the desire to exchange Latin American Japanese for American citizens who remained in Japan. FBI undercover agents, mutually beneficial agreements between President Roosevelt and Peru’s

President Prado, and opportunistic neighbors also served to facilitate the internment of so many Japanese-Peruvians. While justification for the wrongs suffered by Latin America's ethnic Japanese population is not offered in this study, an examination of the motivations for internment offers a fuller picture of the situation that is crucial to understanding Latin America's surprising role in World War II.