

Transcript:

I did my research project on the dual citizenship status of Japanese Americans in Hawaii.

The thesis I developed for my project was: dual citizenship was a major argument used to deny citizenship and equal rights to first and second-generation Japanese residents in Hawaii. Hawaii's territorial status only worsened this problem. Even though many individuals renounced their Japanese citizenship, white Americans did little to encourage loyalty to the United States.

I titled my paper "American and nothing else," from this Theodore Roosevelt quote, which reads, "There is only room for one kind of man in this country, and that is an American who is an American and nothing else." This quote summarizes common perceptions about dual citizenship status in the early 20th century.

The sources I used to develop my research were mostly Hawaiian newspapers that gave insight into what popular opinions about dual citizenship were at this time. I also explored Congressional testimonies about Japanese citizenship in Hawaii and found some sources written in the early 20th century about Japanese immigration. And lastly, I used secondary sources to develop historical context on this subject.

The basis of dual citizenship for Japanese Americans came from differing ideas about citizenship in the United States and in Japan. Japan based its understanding of citizenship under the principle of *jus sanguinis* at the time, in which children of Japanese citizens were given citizenship regardless of where they were born. This differed with the United States' understanding of citizenship, which was based under *jus soli* in which anyone born within the United States was a U.S. citizen. Because of these differing ideas, Japanese Americans were given Japanese citizenship at birth until 1924, which created difficulties for these individuals trying to gain equal access to rights as U.S. citizens.

White elites had various concerns about the dual citizenship status of Japanese Americans. They worried that they would lose the territory to Japan, thinking that this large population of Japanese residents and Japanese Americans in Hawaii would take over the territory and give control to Japan. They also worried about a lack of loyalty to the United States in general, especially fearing that if a war broke out between Japan and the U.S. these individuals would side with Japan. For those who supported Hawaiian statehood initiatives, they worried that the population of Japanese citizens (with dual citizenship) would cause Congress to turn down statehood because the population was not dominantly white and was not solely loyal to the United States, in their eyes.

This changed in 1916 when Japan changed its nationality laws. In 1916, Japanese Americans could now expatriate, except those of certain ages for military service. And then in 1924, the same year that the U.S. cut off Japanese immigration, Japan changed its nationality laws again so that individuals were only Japanese citizens if they registered within 14 days of birth if they were born in the United States.

In connection with dual citizenship issues, Americanization efforts were carried out in Hawaii to deter loyalty to Japan and encourage Japanese residents and Japanese Americans to adopt

Western practices. In many of the sources I explored, Japanese Americans did embrace these efforts because they thought that proving their allegiance to the United States could help them gain access to better treatment and to more rights.

Many Japanese Americans decided to expatriate, for various reasons, and give up their dual citizenship status. Expatriation increased into the 1930s and 40s when relations with Japan deteriorated. As hostilities increased against Japanese residents, expatriations tended to increase. It was also encouraged by many Japanese Americans. They were using it to claim the United States as their home and as their country, and to prove their loyalty to the U.S. however, this did require cutting ties with family and property in Japan, so it was a very difficult decision to make. To the right, I placed a pledge from The Garden Island in 1922. A member of the Americanization and Memorial Committee in Hawaii, who was a Japanese American individual, included this pledge for those with dual citizenship to sign, emphasizing their loyalty to the United States. For the first generation, they had mixed emotions about expatriation because they were barred from naturalization until 1952. So mostly, they chose to maintain their ties to Japan, seeing it as a place of refuge since they were not able to become U.S. citizens.

Expatriation was a complicated process because individuals had to secure various documents, such as a U.S. birth certificate, and they had to send a request to Japan. As we've discussed previously, complications with the validity of Hawaiian birth certificates meant that they were not really respected as evidence of U.S. citizenship. So for those living in Hawaii, they faced additional challenges for expatriation than those living on the mainland. Various challenges kind of deterred people from taking on expatriation or lengthened the process greatly, such as not even being registered with Hawaii's government, not having access to a birth certificate, and having to write that request to Japan in Japanese. Additionally, some were unsure if they were dual citizens after 1924 because the decision was often made for them by their parents. So they had to figure out whether or not they needed to expatriate and had to navigate this difficult process.

In addition, many took issue with the double standard that the United States held for people of Japanese descent based on their place of birth. For Japanese immigrants, they could not naturalize and become U.S. citizens. And the Bureau of Naturalization noted in 1922 that once these individuals had citizenship, quote, "purging our country becomes more difficult." So, they wanted to keep these individuals as aliens so that less people were voting in Hawaii (of Japanese descent). So, this contradictory system bothered a lot of individuals seeking to Americanize or seeking out expatriation. Japanese Americans, in comparison, were expected to have a single nationality, adopt western practices, and act as loyal U.S. citizens. So they had different expectations based on whether or not they had immigrated directly to the United States.

Hawaii's territorial status only further complicated this issue, and added an additional layer to Japanese individuals' legal standing. For those with dual citizenship, they were Japanese citizens, U.S. citizens, and as Hawaiian citizens, they were living in a territory that did have the same legal standing as a state. That meant that they had limited rights and access to mobility, as compared to those living on the mainland. Many whites were also concerned about the potential influence that Japanese Americans would continue to have in Hawaii because of their voting

abilities, and efforts were taken to deter people from voting. And Americanization and statehood initiatives were both heavily influenced by the issue of dual citizenship. Americanization differed, in some ways, in Hawaii because Japanese individuals were the largest ethnic group in the territory and whites feared losing their control.

In conclusion, the United States and Japan had differing understandings of citizenship that held Japanese Americans in a difficult situation up until 1924. And until that point in time, they had no choice over their dual citizenship status to begin with but were discriminated against as a result. For those who sought out expatriation, they endured a difficult bureaucratic process because of the status of Hawaii. The dual citizenship status of Japanese Americans was used to deny them access to full rights even though they were U.S. citizens. And Japanese individuals used Americanization and expatriation efforts as a means to reinforce their loyalty to the United States and to reinforce that the United States was their home. Unfortunately, these individuals faced increasing pressures going in World War Two, again, over concerns that these individuals were not fully loyal to the United States.