

Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project

JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS
&
THE HOSTAGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM DURING WWII

Q: WHAT COUNTRIES WERE INVOLVED IN THE HOSTAGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM?

A: THE UNITED STATES AND 13 LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

The United States government initiated and orchestrated the exchange program, assuming all expenses and responsibility. The Department of State was responsible for the deportations from Latin American countries and the exchanges with Japan. The Department of Justice was responsible for interning Japanese Latin Americans in the United States.

13 Latin American countries cooperated with the exchange program by apprehending, detaining and deporting citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry: Bolivia, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

Q: HOW MANY JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS WERE APPREHENDED, DEPORTED TO & INTERNED IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: 2264 JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS + 68 BABIES BORN DURING INTERNMENT

2264 men, women & children of Japanese ancestry, citizens & permanent residents of 13 Latin American countries)

At least 331 men were also interned at the U.S. military base in Panama (some being forced to perform hard labor) before being sent to internment camps in the U.S.

68 babies were born in Crystal City Internment Camp, Texas between 1942 and 1947.

? persons died while in custody between 12/41 and 2/27/48 (when Crystal City Internment Camp officially closed).

Q: HOW MANY JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS WERE EXCHANGED DURING WWII?

A: APPROXIMATELY 865 JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS WERE EXCHANGED

There were two exchanges during WWII, involving Japanese nationals who were permanent residents of Latin American countries as well as Latin American citizens of Japanese ancestry. The first exchange ship left New York on 6/18/42 (with 128 Japanese Latin American internees) and picked up additional persons in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The second exchange ship left New York in 9/43 (with 737 Japanese Latin American internees).

Q: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JAPANESE LATIN AMERICANS WHO WERE STILL INTERNED AT THE END OF WWII?

A: 112 Japanese Bolivians, Costa Ricans and Ecuadorians are assumed to have been deported to Japan at the end of WWII

945+ Japanese Peruvians were deported to Japan at the end of WWII

365 Japanese Peruvians remained in the US to fight for the suspension of deportation, with hopes of returning to their homes in Peru. Of these, about 300 Japanese Peruvians were able to resolve their "illegal alien" status in the 1950s and eventually become US permanent residents or naturalized citizens.

Eventually, about 100 Japanese Peruvians were able to return to Peru.

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