

Rohwer Japanese American Internment Camp

(Arkansas History CG.6.AH.7-8.1, H.7.AH.7-8.1 and H.7.AH.7-8.6)



During World War II, the United States and its allies were at war with Germany and Japan. Some Americans feared that American citizens of Japanese heritage might secretly be spying for Japan. This led to a law requiring Japanese Americans to be held in internment camps until the end of the war, even though they had done nothing wrong and had been charged with no crime. One of these camps was located in south Arkansas, at a town called Rohwer. Actor George Takei, who played Mr. Sulu on the TV series *Star Trek*, was interned at Rohwer with his family. He described his experience there in a 2012 interview with the *Arkansas Times*:

I was very young at that time. I got there when I was 5 years old. I must confess, my real memories are fun memories. Catching pollywogs in the creek, catching ants and putting them in pickle jars. My father was a block manager, one of the representatives of each block there. I don't really remember how it was, but he was able to borrow a jeep from the camp administrator. He took us, our family, for a ride outside of the barbed wire fence. We visited a hog farm, and that was the first time I had seen anything that huge, that ugly, that smelly. I thought, surely that must be the descendant of some dinosaur. I started school, and they taught us the Pledge of Allegiance. From my schoolhouse window, I could see the barbed wire fence and the sentry tower. I recited the words "with liberty and justice for all," without ever realizing how strongly ironic that was.

Instructions: Read the passage above. Write a paragraph in which you answer the question: Was it right or wrong to hold Japanese American citizens at Rohwer? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.