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Asian American and African American Masculinities:
Race, Citizenship, and Culture in Post-Civil Rights

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Chong Chon-Smith

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This dissertation of Chong Chon-Smith is approved, and it
is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2006

DEDICATION

I have had the extraordinary privilege and opportunity to learn from brilliant and committed scholars at UCSD. This dissertation would not have been successful if not for their intellectual rigor, wisdom, and generosity. This dissertation was just a dim thought until Judith Halberstam powered it with her unique and indelible iridescence. Nayan Shah and Shelley Streeby have shown me the best kind of work American Studies has to offer. Their formidable ideas have helped shape these pages. Tak Fujitani and Lisa Yoneyama have always offered me their time and office hospitality whenever I needed critical feedback. I want to thank them for their precise questions and open door. Finally, Lisa Lowe has generously supported my study, providing me with intellectual freedom and unwavering guidance. Her gift to me extends beyond mere institutional brick and mortar—I now have a mind that thinks and dreams the impossible.

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why we do it and allowing us men to talk about it. Arvind Santhanam has never stopped providing me with good cheer and the warmth of cross-cultural friendship. Gilberto Porter is a shining light in Texas and everyone knows it. Jason James shares his humanity and humor with me and I thank him for that. Manilay Khamphan is the best that *chunsa* spirit offers on Earth. Finally, my family has been my greatest source of inspiration. I thank especially my sister and niece for supporting me unconditionally and to my mother whose dreams allowed me to follow my own.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Asian American and African American Masculinities:
Race, Citizenship, and Culture in Post-Civil Rights

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Through the interpretation of labor department documents, journalism, and state discourses, I historicize the formation of both the construction of black “pathology” and the Asian “model minority” by analyzing the comparative racialization of African Americans and Asian Americans in the United States. Beginning with the Moynihan Report and journalistic reports about Asian Americans as “model minority,” Black and Asian men were racialized together, as if “racially magnetized,” in an attempt to maintain U.S. liberalism and U.S.-powered globalization. The post-civil rights era names this specific race for U.S. citizenship and class advantage when state selection of Asian immigration and deindustrialization of the Black working class helped usher in

a new period of depoliticized class struggle and racial realignment. As the state abandoned social programs at home and expanded imperial projects overseas, the post-civil rights moment was a period of danger and contradiction when Black radicalism and the Asian American Movement challenged the understanding that social equality through civil rights had been achieved. Thus, the discursive and representational containment of an Asian-Black radicalism had maintained a form of racial hierarchy and gender politics that reconstituted white supremacy and gender relations in post-civil rights. Through the concept of *racial magnetism*, this dissertation examines both dominant and emergent representations of Asian and African American masculinities as mediating *figures* for the contradictions of race, class, and gender in post-civil rights U.S.A. While some reports pair together Black “pathology” and the Asian “model minority,” African American and Asian American counter-discourses of solidarity and identification—in literature, film, music and performance arts—link social movements to cultural production as active critical responses to these reports. Selected works and texts discussed include *The Moynihan Report*, *Aiiieeee!*, *No-No Boy*, *Rush Hour*, *Romeo Must Die*, Yao Ming, Ichiro Suzuki, *I Was Born With Two Tongues*, and *Mountain Brothers*.

Introduction

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The Architecture of Racial Magnetism: Constructing Post-Civil Rights Racialization

“Citizens inhabit the political space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied. Although the law is perhaps the discourse that most literally governs citizenship, U.S. national culture—the collectively forged images, histories, and narratives that place, displace, and replace individuals in relation to the national polity—powerfully shapes who the citizenry is, where they dwell, what they remember, and what they forget.” Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*.

“Any progressive political project will have to address the racialization of politics and seek to challenge and deconstruct the racial meanings attached to, or embedded in, a range of issues, from immigration to foreign trade imbalances. In the post-civil rights era, such a progressive politics needs to reassess the adequacy of the original civil rights vision to deal with contemporary patterns of inequality. This would include an examination of the impact of class and class relations within and between racially defined groups and their meanings for race-specific remedies.” Michael Omi, “Racialization in the Post-Civil Rights Era.”

“How does it feel like to be a solution?” Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*.

“It Isn’t Fair”: Vincent Chin and National Manhood

On June 17, 1982, the final day before his wedding to Vikki Wong, twenty-seven year old Vincent Chin came face to face with Ronald Ebens and his stepson Michael Nitz, two autoworkers in the once invincible car capital of Detroit, Michigan. Celebrating his bachelor party, Chin and his friends, Gary Koivu and Jimmy Choi, were in a festive mood and entered a bar called the Fancy Pants, a strip club located near the automobile factories. Inside, there were predominately blue-collar workers, including plant superintendent Ebens, who was visibly drunk and belligerent. He sat

across from Chin and saw in a swift and precise moment in time—as if on a Ford assembly line—the face of the enemy. Ebens yelled out racial epithets before finally accusing Chin, “it’s because of you little motherfuckers that we’re out of work.” A short time later, a fistfight ensued and from all witness accounts, Chin was the last man standing. Twenty minutes later, the disgruntled autoworkers chased Chin into a McDonald’s parking lot where Nitz held Chin in a bear hug while Ebens shattered his body and skull with a baseball bat. Two African American police officers, Michael Gardenhire and Morris Cotton, initially shocked by the brazen display, stopped the beating and arrested the attackers. In the classic documentary film *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, eyewitnesses reported brain matter speckled on the concrete.¹ Later at Henry Ford Hospital, before he lapsed into a death coma, Chin had whispered his last words alive: “it isn’t fair.”

This pivotal episode in Asian American history has been a central rallying point for Asian American studies. All agree; its familiar account of an anti-Asian hate crime and the “Justice for Vincent Chin” campaign have helped to establish a foundation for understanding Asian American antiracist struggles and panethnic cultural politics. Certainly this moment of political mobilization had been an important and unparalleled response by Asian American social movements to challenge the inequality of U.S. citizenship in the post-civil rights era. Yet, by revisiting the history of Vincent Chin, I want to listen again, dig deeper, with greater critical intimacy, to Chin’s final words concerning what the “it” is that was not fair, which led to the premature end of his promising life.

Behind the veil of economic and national injury, two white men addressed their economic displacement and resolved their lost sense of superior manhood through the entitlements of white supremacy and lynch mob violence. Despite the promise of the Civil Rights Movement, the manhunt for Vincent Chin represented, quite literally, the incommensurability of Asian American masculinity and post-civil rights national belonging. That is to say, it has provided plain proof, what Asian American historiography has taken as indisputable evidence of U.S. liberalism's failures, showing the limits of Asian ethnic assimilation into U.S. national culture. However, the attempt to understand the construction of Asian American gender politics within a framework of U.S. imperialism and comparative racialization continues to remain invisible in such nostalgic and nationalist explanations. Under the neon sign of McDonald's "golden arches," Vincent's battered body, his ruined skull and traumatized organs, exposed the material conditions and contradictions of race and masculinity in the post-civil rights moment of U.S.-powered globalization. Indeed, his broken body had been a corporal sign of something greater than mere skin and bone, symbolizing the fragmentation of alienated Asian American life and the limitations of U.S. liberal democracy within multicultural celebrations of diversity.

In one sense, Ebens marked Chinese American Chin as a nameless and faceless *tableau blanche*, in which he could inscribe onto Chin the sinister face of Japanese capital and the abject body of Asian American masculinity. The epithet, "it's because of you little motherfuckers that we're out of work," conjoined Chin's racial identity as a member of the Yellow Peril, miniature Asiatic hordes that threaten white folks,

especially menacing white women, and the dispossessed labor market in the automobile industry. By then, capital flight and deindustrialization had traumatized Detroit's automobile industry. Eben's hate speech, an act of linguistic dehumanization, racialized the power to discriminate national belonging through the gaze of whiteness, through historical amnesia and blind assertions of privilege that could conflate the physical markers of Asian American masculinity as nationally, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogenous.

In another sense, Eben's comment situated his white national manhood in direct relation to Chin's "foreign" body. It revealed fears located in the North American racial imaginary, of orientalized labor that threatened the viability of white male patriarchy within the basic unit of the middle-class nuclear family. Disallowed to stand in for the U.S. nation-state, the figure of Chin's body symbolized his incommensurability with white national manhood, at the moment in which the U.S. nation-state used the rhetoric of multicultural inclusion for helping to set its foreign policy agenda of neoliberalism and military intervention throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Furthermore, as the brain trust of U.S. imperialism, his waged body represented the promise of technocratic labor and the corporatization of higher education to achieve such surplussed supply of math and science labor pools. More importantly, the adjective "little" signified Asian American political and cultural power in the United States, as a community displaced, replaced, and ignored in the political and cultural formation of 'American' identity.

When inside the Fancy Pants Club, Ebens asserted his status as the arbiter of

national manhood. He invoked a blue-collar individualism, centered upon the breadwinner ethic and compulsory heterosexuality, which constructed his manhood and whiteness as conceivable *only* through the power to discriminate who can and who cannot belong to the nation. Not only did Ebens feel the will-to-power of his masculinity (that had seemingly lost its elevated status in the wake of multicultural, feminist, and queer assaults on white male social domination), but also his drunken sense of remasculinizing his manhood had been understood through an understanding of Otherness, of orientalized male submission, best dramatized by David Henry Hwang's *Song Liling*. The moral outrage that Ebens experienced, a sudden crisis over the meaning of white masculinity in the post civil-rights era, erupted violently because of the breakdown of this social order. Sadly, Chin did not understand or perhaps refused his place within the architecture of U.S. racial hierarchy. Indeed, U.S. racial hierarchy in post-civil rights has organized the juridico-cultural set of material practices and social relations affecting race, masculinity, and Asian ethnic assimilation. It is not accidental that Ebens brutalized the sign of this racial transgression—the body of Vincent Chin. To many, Vincent's body is the corporeal difference of those included in citizenship, those conferred the privileges of the American Dream, and those left in what Russell Leong has called “the country of dreams and dust.”²

Perhaps achieving a semblance of the “American Dream,” Chin had worked as an industrial draftsman in the auto industry, precisely when post-civil rights film and visual culture represented Asian American men as technocratic nerds. More

importantly however, the absence of the two African American police officers from the subsequent criminal trial negated a vital link between Vincent Chin and the Black Detroit community. First of all, Chin was beaten in Highland Park, an urban area in Greater Detroit approximately ninety-percent African American. Moreover, an African American male had been bribed twenty dollars by Ebens to help find “two Chinese guys,” which revealed Ebens’ deep psychosis of race over and beyond national difference: he had known Chin was not Japanese.³ When the bystander reported police officers in the area, Ebens responded he could care less. This comment reflects the history of legal exclusions and courtroom chicanery in the judicial system for Blacks and says a great deal about those communities that fear the law and fortunately for them, those that do not. It unequivocally mandates from Chin’s case that the Asian color bar is entwined with the legacy of the Black color line. The fact that white prosecutors ignored Gardenhire and Cotton as eyewitnesses illustrates how racialized bodies struggle for legal recognition and equal protection under the law. The fact that American orientalism and the decline of the auto industry were not integrated in narratives of multiracial Detroit left the prosecution of Ebens and Nitz wholly dependent upon “good boys, gone bad” jurisprudence.⁴ Most importantly, what might have happened if Gardenhire and Cotton had testified?

Vincent’s mother Lily Chin asked, "What kind of law is this? What kind of justice? This happened because my son is Chinese. If two Chinese killed a white person, they must go to jail, maybe for their whole lives [...] Something is wrong with this country."⁵ Eventually, she left her adopted home because she could not get

justice as a formally conferred citizen. She understood, much better than most, that Asian Americans were not protected by the court system and that race played the crucial reason why. Many sympathizers thought the three-year probation and three thousand dollar fine levied against the defendants was not severe enough punishment. The inability of Lily Chin to obtain a rights-based adjudication, through uncritical faith in the legal process, is a historic and symbolic lesson concerning the ways in which race, class, and gender politics operate between Asian and Black men. Historically, I believe that Vincent Chin's life can describe the lives of many Asian Americans in multiracial communities. Many studies of Asian American history have failed to recognize the multiplicity of social and material relations that shape, conceptualize, and affect Asian American identities in diverse urban and rural geographies. His tragic death has always touched my students in meaningful ways, made them bind academic knowledge and human compassion as a necessary formation of pedagogy and reminded them that Asian Americans have a rich, comparative racial history with African Americans.

When we collectively remember and celebrate Vincent's life in Asian American classes, I am struck by an absence of African American voices both physically in classrooms and pedagogically in syllabi. Therefore, this introduction would like to challenge the field of Asian American studies to rethink its own myths of origins and to reconceptualize its singular Asian-White focus. To understand the Asian-Black arc that connects Asian and Black folks requires an important antiracist methodology that has just begun to be examined in Asian American scholarship. As

Yuri Kochiyama has taught us, understanding this Asian-Black arc “can be used as a weapon to divide us further, or as a vehicle to seek truths that might bring us to greater mutual understanding.”⁶

With Yuri’s words echoing in spirit and on these pages, I call attention to the ways scholars of race and masculinity tend to explore masculinity in relation to whiteness, a narrow focus that ignores the important cross-cultural crossings taking place between Black and Asian men. In particular, relatively little research compares the racialization of Asian and Black men because most studies, for historical and institutional reasons, rely upon dualistic models of white and non-white relationships. This critique is not to suggest that scholarly discussions of white masculinity are not important, but surveying this body of literature does not reveal much about the social relations that exist among Asian and Black communities. In particular, I am responding to most theories of masculinity that center the white bourgeois subject as the filter where racial meanings activate. As Judith Halberstam observes, “all too many studies that currently attempt to account for the power of white masculinity recenter this white male body by concentrating all their analytic efforts on detailing the forms and expressions of white male dominance.”⁷

For example, R.W. Connell’s work has pioneered research in men’s studies, which gained popularity and momentum during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Working off of poststructuralism, his concepts such as hegemonic and subordinate masculinities define the process of male gender construction as embedded within power relations. Furthermore, his work highlights the influence of psychoanalysis in

gender studies and incorporates the theoretical inroads of Second Wave feminism. At best, Freud and his antecedents make insights into the psychic lives of males, from boys to men—the taboos, repressions, and disorders that regulate gender development and maintenance. Nevertheless, critics have rightly pointed out the white middle-class as well as Viennese, bourgeois presumptions enmeshed in psychoanalysis.⁸ Connell’s book *Masculinities* does not critique or even acknowledge this inherent bias, treating “masculinities” as a direct function of white hegemonic masculinity without fully explaining the context out of which theories are produced. Investigating the construction of masculinity, other scholars have paid more careful attention to the significance of race, yet certain presuppositions still exist.

Dana Nelson, in particular, discusses the formation of national manhood as an ideological construct that has unified a fraternity of white men from capitalist alienation and democratic exclusions. Her important concept of national manhood, “analyzes the complicated desires—simultaneously democratic/communitarian *and* antidemocratic/anticonmunitarian—of and for ‘whiteness’ as they become imbricated within the production of national manhood, middle-class professionalism, and individual men’s identities.”⁹ National manhood explicitly names the racialized political dimensions to nation-building and imperialism, where white men could stake claims of an imagined community through excluding the savage, colored, and different. Similarly, Gail Bederman discusses race and masculinity using the notion of “white civilization,” a concept that defines the construction of gender dominance through racial dominance. Civilization, in her terms, was “protean,” in order to

“maintain their [white men’s] class, gender, and racial authority, whether they invoked primitive masculinity or civilized masculinity.”¹⁰ Both Bederman and Nelson analyze American identity and nation-building through gendered constructions of racial and sexual fantasies borrowed from colonialism.

This increased attention to white manhood has opened up fruitful analysis of unmarking whiteness as a racial category constantly in negotiation and contingent upon a particular historical context. For example, historian David Roediger defines the “wages of whiteness” as a collective sense of racial superiority over and beyond slave labor whereby white working men refused the “ultimate expression of the denial of liberty”—being chattel property. This identification erased their class exploitation in favor of white supremacy. As a result, Roediger explains that the white working-class identity of Free Labor Ideology categorized free labor as white and unfree labor as coolie and slave.¹¹ In this way, labor practices of the emergent U.S. political economy segmented immigrant and Black populations through racial hierarchy and dualistic thinking, indoctrinating newly arrived immigrants with U.S. constructions of racial division. Ethnic Europeans such as the Irish demanded their racial privilege of whiteness as an inherent right of their assimilation into U.S. citizenship. Furthermore, Amy Kaplan’s work investigates the connections between race and gender relations and the expansion of American imperialism. She argues that, “the female realm of domesticity and the male arena of Manifest Destiny were not separate spheres at all but were intimately linked.”¹² Her work sutures the role of U.S. imperialism as a function of gendered formations, where male power is rearticulated through imperial

conquests. Nevertheless, all of these scholars center and privilege white masculinity as the critical lens through which to understand formative conceptions of nation, citizenship, and manhood.

In the field of cultural studies, Susan Jeffords in “The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties,” observes that race and masculinity are a contested terrain in U.S. popular culture. She states, “as has been historically been the case in dominant U.S. cultures, masculinity is defined in and through the white male body.”¹³ Discussing the peplum film genre in “White Man’s Muscles,” Richard Dyer suggests that the power of white male cultural production is its ability to be universal and particular, “which still constitutes the vast majority of all cultural production in the West.”¹⁴ Yet again, in all these remarkable works, the linearity between whiteness and non-whiteness does not adequately illuminate the complex exchanges among minority masculinities that reveal the ways in which men of color create broad and particular social relations. It is these lesser-known pathways for recognition and struggle that I find fascinating for understanding cultural responses to institutional and economic power.

This dissertation, *Asian American and African American Masculinities: Theorizing Race, Citizenship, and Culture in Post-Civil Rights*, focuses on the material, discursive, and epistemological relationships between Asian American and African American communities. More specifically, *Asian American and African American Masculinities* engages in a broader interpretation of how racialization and citizenship occurs. Beyond the white and non-white framework, I want to concentrate

on understanding the process of racial formation through looking at racialized bodies. In many ways, I believe that the Vincent Chin case encapsulates the tenor, the structure of feeling, of post-civil rights racialization. Indeed, it highlights the decline of white identity, the emergence of panethnic consciousness, and the important Asian-Black radicalism that often times acolytes of U.S. liberal democracy have ignored or in more turbulent times, have represented as direct challenges to the status quo. It designates a new political climate, which means in part a new discursive field of representational containment. This includes several forms of multiculturalism and neoconservative backlashes, sparked by Civil Rights, Black radicalism, and identity-based social movements. Furthermore, it names the contradictions of capitalism, the incessant, yet transforming feud between capital and labor, and the ongoing, prevalent use of race and gender as technologies of emergent modes of transnational production. In this sense, I employ the Vincent Chin case to emphasize how the racialization of Asian American men affects and works off the racialization of African American men, and vice versa.

Furthermore, I address the uneven and simultaneous racialization produced by state power and postindustrial capitalism that has engendered ideologies of race structuring citizenship claims both institutionally and culturally. In particular, this introduction explores the ways in which the often neglected issues of sexuality and class inform narratives concerning racial comparisons of bodies, labor, and sexuality. The mediation of how they intersect and confirm each other centers the theoretical and historical concerns of my work. *Asian American and African American Masculinities*

discusses these entwined social relations that tie racialized bodies and national belonging to the contradictions in modern liberal democracy—its ideals of egalitarian property relations, its promise of abstract citizenship, and its monopoly of state-sanctioned violence.

This introduction situates the discourse of third world radicalisms and transnational economic practices emerging after the Civil Rights Movement and during the Cold War. Social movements and capital accumulation have shaped racial hierarchy in the United States and abroad. The Civil Rights Movement was the epicenter of a democratic revolution and the social movements that followed were aftershocks. Emerging from the wake created by Civil Rights, the social movements of the 1960s created a new political climate of “history from below.” Social movement politics called for panethnic identities, fought for interracial coalitions, and contested Eurocentrism. Concurrently in the third world, many formidable ideas and struggles arose including Liberation Theology, Non-Alignment Movement, Pan Africanism, and Marxist insurgencies that challenged the minefield of Cold War geopolitics.

In the United States, the role of state selection in the 1965 Immigration Act and the transformation of industrial capital created a political and economic milieu that harnessed and regulated the potency of Black radicalism and the Asian American Movement. C.L.R. James illuminates that in eras of revolutionary awakening, whether the kind to overthrow absolute monarchism or bourgeois society, contain both the seeds of revolution and a conservative backlash.¹⁵ In this sense, a conservative

counterrevolution followed the Civil Rights Movement, and African American fathers and mothers were characterized as deviant, immoral, devoid of self-improvement, and the embodiment of moral pathology. Conversely, Asian American communities, especially Japanese and Chinese Americans, were exalted as red herrings for racial uplift that exemplified a model of ethnic and racial assimilation. Subsequently, these racial logics converted diverse bodies into coherent narratives that reinforced as well as expanded domestic racial divisions and U.S imperialism.

Within this logic of Asian-Black racial containment, African American and Asian American men are positioned along binary axes—brain/body, hardworking/lazy, nerd/criminal, culture/genetics, athlete/technocrat and so forth—that can be described by what I term “racial magnetism.” My concept of racial magnetism explores how each group has occupied positions at opposite extremes on this racialized pole where an inverse proportion exists between Asian and Black men while white national manhood embodies the universal, modern subject. The term “racial” denotes, of course, a mythic category, a scientific and cultural construct that has no validity in biology or anthropology. However, it signifies an economic, political, cultural, and epistemological reification of values, accounting for a hierarchical set of life opportunities and disadvantages for citizens through crucial meanings attached to the skin, bone, and sex.

Fundamentally, race is a social construct; it operates in the United States as a regulatory concept to demarcate privileges of wealth and status, in a complex negotiation with gender, class, sexuality, and nation that sustains a social order

founded upon visual and atomistic hierarchies of difference. From segregated public schools to DNA gene research—race matters, as Cornel West has emphasized. Yet race in a post-civil rights era is said to be neutral, euphemistically called “the era of colorblind politics,” which is sanitized of its more politicized variant—racism, especially as a cultural and structural phenomena of white supremacy.¹⁶ I employ the noun “magnetism” to stress an ideological field of signification, the constitutive link between Asian and Black men, which demonstrates the zero sum relationship configuring a competitive framework of post-civil rights citizenship and gender relations. Further, magnetism suggests a sense of allure, a kinetic pull that is, at once, invisible yet powerful and desirable. There is a certain attractiveness to place human bodies in categories of differential understanding; this is rationality, the science of Enlightenment and the feeling of progress. As one important centerpiece of post-civil rights racial hierarchy, the architecture of racial magnetism seems to have organized U.S. citizenship as a fixed chain of corporal signification, in which the interplay of racial dialectics of bodies, labor, and sexuality plays a key role in maintaining a fixed, ordered, stable, and reified continuation of American hegemony.

The critical term racial magnetism offers a deeper analytic understanding of the mechanisms and discursive technologies operating in our political and racial imaginary; it begins to interrogate the basic assumptions, fears, and fantasies that harness social mobility and collective transformations. As a racial construct, racial magnetism is a precursor to multiculturalism. As such, it has established a discursive and cultural infrastructure that produces meanings of differential citizenship through

affirming the success of the civil rights project and redoubling reactionary fears of antiracist struggles. Meanwhile, the U.S. nation-state affirmed the correctness of the civil rights project in taxpayer funded research, popular journals, and daily newspapers. This development has enabled the U.S. warfare-state to proclaim itself as a modern racial state, quite civilized and enlightened, while at the same time expanding post-civil rights consumerism and transnational economies of scale and scope throughout Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In particular, the discourse of racial magnetism has used Asian American academic success and African American criminalization as a crucial piece of evidence that U.S. liberal democracy and capitalism are structurally, ideologically, and epistemologically sound. Focusing on the terrain of culture, it effectively has countered antiracist activists who called for social and economic justice through dismantling the structures of oppression. Its emergence has consolidated, domestically, the seachange in population demographics due to immigration and urbanization as well as internationally, the outward expanse of transnational capital with its focus on making foreign markets and cultures a part of U.S. imperial culture. The discursive power of racial magnetism seems to have incorporated and co-opted Asian American identity, ironically using the rhetoric of Asian ethnic assimilation as a means to promote the promise of U.S. liberalism abroad. At home, this racial logic has used strategies of containment to delegitimize Asian and Black radicalism and thus has garnered the willing consent of a future generation of acolytes dedicated to marketplace competition, commodity fetishism, and the belief in the end of structural racism.

On the one hand, liberal perceptions of U.S. post-civil rights rhetoric proposed that Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the geo-political arena of Du Bois' "darker races of the world," were part of a global assimilation process for the maintenance of Western neoimperial regimes. This formation of the global/domestic is where racial magnetism *within* the United States created a necessary racial ideology to deal with the increasing complexity and dynamic of *global* race relations. As Ann Laura Stoler and Gauri Viswanathan convincingly demonstrate, the relationship between core empires and peripheral colonies is mutually constitutive. They show how the implementation of colonial policies is often times enacted in the colonies first, and later instituted in the imperial center, and vice versa.¹⁷ Commenting on forms of U.S. racial formations, Stefi San Buenaventura argues that the comparative racialization of American minorities served as models for the export of U.S. imperialism. She says, "the Native Americans served as the prototype for American colonial policies and administrative strategy in the governing of the Filipino *indios* in the archipelago. Blacks represented the justification and model for extending 'second class citizenry' and Jim Crow segregationist behavior in the Philippines."¹⁸ This historical legacy that links domestic racial formations to imperial aspirations developed into a moment of critical mass in the post-civil rights era. Specifically, U.S. foreign policy fears of Maoist China, nationalist Vietnam, and anticolonial Black radicalism served notice to everyone that an Asian-Black alliance would be dangerous.

Later in this introduction, I will discuss the discursive power of the Moynihan Report, national newspapers, and popular journals, which created a national discourse

of racial panic through the language of impending racial apocalypse. Through close readings, I analyze this remapping of the American racial order that served as a discursive backdrop for constructing strategies of racial containment throughout the racialized world system. Allowing for the discursive and ideological regulation of social movement politics, the discourse of racial panic set the parameters of post-civil rights racialization as chaotic warfare. Ultimately, racial panic had produced widespread fear of a racial apocalypse, signifying post-civil rights fear of urban and guerilla insurgency and the breakdown of the status quo. As a result, the 1992 Los Angeles Race Rebellion represented a violent racial insurrection that mainstream media outlets portrayed as a symbol of racial apocalypse in the “urban jungle.” Meanwhile, the same media institutions ignored the opportunity to comment on urban renewal policies or white flight.

The policies of domestic racial containment and the categorization of Asian-Black bodies established the stage to export this model of discipline to the Asian and African continent. Asia and Africa had been decolonizing as well as forming alliances through the Bandung Conference in 1954. Moreover, the widespread inclusion of Asian Americans in mainstream discussions of race converged with the influx of Asian capital in the United States. The Moynihan Report, national daily newspapers, and popular journals attempted the enterprise of two convergent post-civil rights racial projects: first, manufacturing the discourse of Asian ethnic assimilation and second, eviscerating the ethics of social justice struggles as non-American values. As David Palumbo-Liu states, “Asian American serves both to prove the rightness of American

democracy as a *worldwide* model and to remind Americans of the traditional values it had cast aside in its rush to modernization.”¹⁹ Thus, racializing an Asian-Black racial imaginary helped to unify the axis of the global/domestic through post-civil rights racialization. U.S. ruling class elites and middle-class constituencies co-operated as a Gramscian historic bloc, to contain racialized anger and unrest and to veil the violence of global class struggle. As Kwame Nkrumah once said, “class struggle is a fundamental theme of recorded history.”²⁰

By seeking this type of political compass, this mode of representing racial politics and class struggle was crucial. Within political discourse, it consolidated cultural pathology as the language to interpret race and masculinity in the context of ethnic pluralism. In terms of labor, African American men suffered unequally under deindustrialization while Asian American men became stereotyped as disproportionately scientists and engineers. Labor had been racialized when African American men were scapegoated by the prison industrial-complex, and Asian American males were lauded as producers of technocratic capital. Simultaneously, cultural representations produced the image of the Black gangbanger and Asian nerd in the 1980s that linked cultural representation, labor production, and bodily sexuality. The architecture of racial magnetism helped to legitimate the prevailing ideology of meritocracy and color-blind politics that circulate widely in today’s multiculturalism. African American and Asian American men were then set off against one another, pitted in a divide and conquer competition for citizenship by conservative ideologues. In many ways, such a framework for U.S. citizenship contributed to the reactionary

politics of balanced budget conservatism to fester in the 1980s and to the Reagan-Bush dynastic republicanism to gain momentum. Let us now turn our attention to the ways in which the fictions of racial magnetism have influenced areas of labor, model minority and Black pathology stereotypes, multiculturalism, and cultural representations in the post-civil rights era.

Asian State Selection and the Remaking of the Black Working-Class

Asian American and African American Masculinities identifies the emergence of post-civil rights class struggle, both in the United States and abroad; class divisions in which the marriage between transnational corporations and state intervention continues to exacerbate the inequitable social allocation of life chances for dignity and respect. During the post-War World II boom, the Fordist Compromise between management and organized labor assured the robust growth of the American economy. By the 1960s, state intervention from the National Labor Relations Board, Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the welfare state restructured the relationship between management and labor. Due to these contradictions in the economic sphere, the emergence of state selection produced Asian managerial elites and displaced Black industrial workers.

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, a one hundred eighty-seven pound satellite that launched the post-civil rights race for technological and ideological supremacy and thus ushered in a new class struggle and profound cultural developments. A moral panic ensued whereby the creation of a military defense industry promoted the training and recruitment of new elite technocrats in

science and technology. Sheldon Ungar provides an insightful explanation, “the Soviet Threat was punctuated by moral panics unleashed by the perception of spectacular and startling Soviet challenges to American *nuclear* hegemony.”²¹ It became clear that the battlefield for empire and imperial aspirations could be fought less on tertiary landscapes but more so in the laboratories and universities of a nation-state’s knowledge centers. This conscious plan led to the grooming of new technocratic foot soldiers, and also inspired Clark Kerr’s Master Plan and the passage of the Third and Sixth Preference in the Immigration Act of 1965.²²

As one congressional representative put it, “just as we sought to eliminate discrimination in our land through the Civil Rights Act, today we seek by phasing out the national origins quota system to eliminate discrimination in immigration to this nation composed of the descendents of immigrants.”²³ Indeed, the Immigration Act of 1965 dissolved the Asia-Pacific Triangle and abolished the national origins quotas over a three-year period. Ideologically, the elimination of de jure discrimination in the law countered mounting criticism from other nation-states that openly used U.S. race relations as propaganda to expose the hypocrisy of U.S. liberalism. Derrick Bell states that the fight against desegregation by both whites and Blacks had been the result of a convergence of interests including a response to foreign policy concerns and suppression of potentate Black radicalism.²⁴ Additionally, Mary Dudziak argues that promoting a sense of racial equality had been a post-civil rights imperative to win the hearts and minds of national populations.²⁵ Ideologically then, counterinsurgency

measures dictated the production of an alternative discourse over and against the politics espoused by antiracist social movements.

During the ten years prior to the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965, fewer than 200,000 Asians immigrated or 7.7 percent of total immigrants under the restrictive provision of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. However, lawmakers could not have foreseen nor did they intend to open U.S. national borders to the huge swells of non-Western peoples from Asia and Latin America that arrived. In the decade after 1965, Asians accounted for over 1 million new immigrants or 26 percent of total immigrants. John Liu offers a concrete portrait of the professional, technical, and kindred immigrants from 1966 to 1988, averaging 21,500 annually, or approximately a tenfold increase from the 2,000 Asian immigrants who entered in 1965.²⁶ Due to industry demand for highly educated labor, formally educated engineers and later health care professionals were given visas to immigrate in record numbers. The economic needs of U.S. empire-building required a labor force more tractable than extant organized labor and one capable of being the brain trust to expand transnational capitalism abroad, possibly back to their homelands as corporate intermediaries.²⁷

State selection met the exigencies for science and math oriented occupations, and manufactured, at first glance, the changing face of Asian America. It provided transnational corporations and government agencies with foreign nationals who valued American individualism and lacked awareness of U.S. racial history and class politics. State selection of Asian professional and technical labor created the mechanism to which physicians, nurses, engineers, and scientists entered without obtaining clearance

from the Department of Labor.²⁸ This policy enabled the state to be the ultimate arbiter of managing immigrant labor pools. For example, by 1970 entry procedures had created a labor class of 13,337 immigrant scientists, with Asians comprising 62 percent of the total.²⁹ These professionals had skills that were easily transferable, many with English proficiency. With this “visible hand,” namely state selection, the Immigration and Naturalization Service acted as the main architect of racializing labor.

Because professional, health, and technical preferential immigrants had gender and national differences, the disproportionate number of male workers reconfigured immigration demographics. Countries that tried to implement U.S.-style modernity, formed by U.S. military intervention, secured the foreign aid to build educational institutions and programs. Subsequently, this circumstance helped to develop their highly educated class. Male immigrants dominated the members of this elite class due to patriarchy, Confucianism, and other structural gender divisions. From 1972 to 1985, male math, computer, and natural scientists as well as engineers (especially high-tech), and other technicians constituted a large number of the growing Asian immigration. Many of these immigrants were male students who came for postgraduate studies. They completed their formal education after two years, received jobs with “labor Certification,” and became legal aliens.³⁰ In 1976, the South Korean newspaper *Choson Ilbo* reported on the life of Korean immigrants in U.S. cities. The male author speaks about immigration problems by corporate sponsorship and hard living conditions due to cultural clashes. Such impassioned newspaper articles

represented various aspects of Korean immigration with personal and often, first-person autobiographical accounts.³¹ Structurally, state selection had produced gender identifications through labor recruitment that masculinized middle-class male immigration. It created a two-tiered system made up of males educated in science and math, and family preference admits who were disproportionately females reliant on low-skill labor.³²

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe identifies the contradictions of Asian immigration that have placed Asian bodies inside U.S. labor markets while simultaneously excluding them from political and cultural citizenship. In Lowe's analysis, this process of recruitment and repulsion, a schizophrenic condition of capital accumulation, requires the gendering and racializing of immigrant workers. For example, she describes the development of the immigrant subject into an interpellated citizen:

Immigration regulations and the restrictions on naturalization and citizenship have thus racialized and gendered Asian Americans, and this history has situated Asian Americans, even as citizens, in a differential relationship to the political and cultural institutions of the nation-state.³³

She eloquently says that the language of immigration and incorporation into citizenship is often times cast as a "heroic quest" and is defended by the "independent, self-made man." In this sense, Chinese immigrant masculinity from the 1850s to the 1940s had been marked in contradistinction to the Anglo/Euro-American "white" citizen.

In the post-civil rights era, state selection is a policy that has privileged the Asian male immigrant over and against the Black working-class male. Although Asian American studies focuses much attention on the opportunities afforded to East Asian American communities, most studies dealing with the Immigration Act of 1965 establish a linear narrative of American exceptionalism that ignores the impact of “brain drain” labor on the depoliticization of class consciousness.³⁴ Prima facie, Black working-class men have embodied the concept of masculine immobility, as undisciplined subjects, culturally, ideologically, and militarily to be contained. This impulse for containment is apparent because they have shown repeatedly the failures and contradictions of U.S. liberal democracy. Defining post-civil rights labor reconstruction illustrates the vital input by Asian professional immigration in creating the necessary expertise for transnational business practices that have affected adversely Black rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime.³⁵ However, this matter is only one part of the equation.³⁶

In *The Deindustrialization of America*, Barry Bluestone chronicles the loss of industrial jobs for different urban communities, a process called capital flight or deindustrialization. Thirty-two to thirty-eight million production jobs were lost due to capital flight from both Frostbelt and Sunbelt industries including manufacturing, steel, electronics, aviation, automobiles, textiles, and chemicals. Specifically, the Black working-class suffered from the mobility and flexibility of capital: “Blacks are especially hard-hit because they are concentrated within central cities and in those regions of the country where plant closings and economic dislocation have been most

pronounced.”³⁷ Black men were expected to take advantage of post-civil rights opportunities, but the direction of labor recruitment traveled overseas to the third world that had been challenging the shackles of colonialism. Numerous communities, from working-class white men to communities of color, faced dismal economic prospects with the loss of industrial jobs. However, at an inauspicious moment African American communities encountered such dismal forecasts for economic recovery precisely when collective social struggles secured the promise of political incorporation. Previously, African American communities had migrated from Jim Crow South, to become industrial workers. To some measure, Black men regained a sense of manhood, a sense of economic dignity and breadwinner respect through industrial work. However, this traditional base for Black men to achieve status as breadwinning patriarchs in their immediate families quickly eroded due to the loss of stable factory work.

Urban communities near industrial zones bore an unusually heavy proportion of plant closings. During the hearing on the Chrysler loan guarantee, Coleman Young, the African American mayor of Detroit, remarked that it should be named as one of the titles of the Civil Rights Act. He made this suggestion in response to the millions of workers displaced from the emerging transnational economy. In August 1979, “virtually 30 percent of Chrysler’s national employment was made up of Black, Hispanic, and other minorities, while over half of its Detroit work force was nonwhite.”³⁸ Men of color as heads-of-households are at greater risk in times of economic restructuring because they rely more on wages and salaries as sources of

family income than their white male counterparts who have larger savings accounts, more property holdings, and other personal safety nets for keeping wealth.

The Black working-class had constituted 16 percent of all urban residents in 1960, where they accounted for 22 percent in 1975. Discriminatory lending and real estate practices, urban renewal programs, and police surveillance contributed to the segregation of African American communities inside urban neighborhoods. Black workers were unable to relocate to suburban areas, which would have lessened their economic destitution resulting from capital flight out of the urban areas.³⁹ Because FHA loans favored white men as household heads, Black men could not secure the necessary loans and credit that allowed for suburban and business expansion as well as equity to soften cash shortages. In the post-civil rights era of “integration,” Black families living in suburbs increased in fifteen years from 4.8 percent to 5.0 by 1978.⁴⁰

Specifically in the automobile, steel, and rubber industries, Black men have disproportionately felt the brunt of plant closings. One labor scholar states in the 96th Congress *Committee on Labor and Human Resources United States Senate*, “the research on plant shutdowns emphasizes policymaking to deal with consequences of the shutdown rather than policies to intervene in the decision-making to relocate a plant or policies that might prevent the shutdown.”⁴¹ *Shutdown: Economic Dislocation and Equal Opportunity* report says, “Perhaps the most direct way to examine the effects of plant closings, relocations, and dislocation in general on minority employment is to look at the racial composition of the work force of a sample of companies before and after these developments occur.”⁴² In Illinois, this

development has meant the loss of an industrial core, including cities like Chicago, where “no matter who is employed at the receiving location, minorities and woman experience a disproportionate share of the disruption created by corporate relocation.” In the San Francisco Bay Area, “between 1960 and 1975, manufacturing employment decreased by 31 percent, with a net loss of about 12,700 jobs. As industry moved out of the inner city, white residents followed; more than 42,000 fled Oakland between 1960 and 1970 and more than 100,000 between 1950 and 1970.”⁴³ It is accurate to say that the Black working-class has been in no position to compete with U.S. imperialism abroad. Billions of dollars spent in foreign aid and military interventions in Asia were taxpayer funds not used to finance public education or social renewal—or to pay for MLK’s demand for payment for “insufficient funds” unpaid by the U.S. nation-state.

Racial Panic: Model Minority, Black Pathology, and Third World Radicalism

In *Race Rebels*, Robin D.G. Kelley writes about his days cooking burgers and bagging fries for McDonald’s Corporation. He discusses working in the service sector, an emerging labor market that transformed job opportunities for communities of color in Pasadena, California, near the declining aerospace and shipbuilding industries. In a humorous account, Kelley admits to “criminal behavior”: “because we were underpaid and overworked, we accepted consumption as just compensation—though in hindsight eating Big Macs and fries to make up for low wages and mistreatment was probably closer to self-flagellation.”⁴⁴ Reflecting on his working-class experience, Kelley understands through time and self-reflection that “we were

part of the ‘working class’ engaged in workplace struggles...”⁴⁵ Kelley’s narrative evokes two powerful statements. On the one hand, personal behavior usually seen at the workplace as lazy or stealing can also be viewed as survival strategies, depending on one’s perspective. This is not to suggest some form of moral relativism but rather the intersection between race and cultural behavior and the ways they inform the transfer of morals or humanity onto the skin. Kelley’s narrative responds to the discourse of cultural pathology that places Black men as culturally deficient and bankrupt of values needed for political assimilation and economic success.

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s document, “The Negro Family: the Case for National Action,” argued for rehabilitating African American families. Written under conscription by the U.S. Department of Labor, Moynihan maintains that the cyclical poverty among African American families is endemic to deficiencies in their family structure. The African American family structure is a “tangle of pathology,” to cite chapter IV’s title. Matriarchal arrangements, in which women act as heads-of-household uproot traditional structures of a nuclear family in post-civil rights domestic arrangements. Centrally, this family structure of Black womanhood explains the visible condition of urban ghettos, Black male criminalization, and ultimately, the failure of racial uplift. Moynihan suggests, “the United States is approaching a new crisis in race relations,” where a “new period is beginning.”⁴⁶ As an ominous forecast, his report inaugurates a racial panic and as such, represents a manifesto for the next generation of racial realignment.

In the first chapter, “The Negro American Revolution,” he writes about the “international implications” of the Civil Rights Movement, specifically calling attention to its political repercussions and militant upheaval of the existing social order. However, the Civil Rights Movement is not his primary concern. Moynihan directs the reader’s attention to threats exemplified by an Asian-Black racial imaginary, both domestic and abroad. In so doing, the Moynihan report is an instrument for both domestic and international policy recommendations for state counterinsurgency. In the following passage, Moynihan helps to produce a discursive logic of post-civil rights racial panic produced by a transnational racial imaginary. He does so by using the language of racial apocalypse:

The nations of the world will divide along color lines seems suddenly not only possible, but even imminent. (Such racist views have made progress within the Negro American community itself-which can hardly be expected to be immune to a virus that is endemic in the white community). The Black Muslim doctrines, based on total alienation from the white racist world, exert a powerful influence. On the far left, the attraction of Chinese Communism can no longer be ignored.⁴⁷

His commentary contains a deep fear of Black separatism, such as the “Black Muslim doctrines” of the Nation of Islam, eloquently and incisively articulated by Malcolm X. Clearly the logic of post-civil rights integration becomes the springboard to attack any separatist groups who seek redress from racial oppression through self-help or self-improvement. This slipperiness of discursive representation, the ways in which post civil rights white supremacy bifurcates between liberal whites and KKK white supremacist, creates a “divided self” of white supremacy itself. Thus, the discourse of

reverse discrimination can actually, according to liberal whiteness, injure white people, who seemingly do not benefit from post-civil rights white supremacy.

Furthermore, Moynihan redoubles his fear of Black radicalism with Chinese anti-imperialism, as represented by Mao Tse Tung and his military defeat over U.S.-backed Chiang Kai-Shek. Perhaps more significant and more formidable than its Black counterpart, Chinese anti-imperialism openly called into question laissez faire capitalism and had already fought the United States in a major “military conflict” on the Korean Peninsula. Thus, Moynihan’s assertion that “the nations of the world will divide along color lines” reflects the concept of racial apocalypse, reminiscent of Lothrop Stoddard’s *Rising Tide of Color* or Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*. As Lois Parkinson Zamora states, the apocalyptic is never nihilistic, but rather is a dialectical tension between an equilibrium of chaos and order.⁴⁸ Yet, Moynihan’s post-civil rights manifesto for racial realignment includes acknowledging “the white racist world,” a concession needed by white supremacy in order to shift the contradictions of U.S. liberalism to “imminent” threats.

As bookends for domestic strategies of containment, race and class warfare come inflected in this case through an Asian-Black transnational racial imaginary, circulating as imminent threats to white liberal democracy. This discursive move of chaos (racial apocalypse) and order (racial magnetism) must be contained through the displacement of a transnational Asian-Black racial imaginary into a national framework of Black cultural degeneration. Thus, the discourse of Black pathology incorporated a global and domestic dimension that reflected the redoubled fears of a

Black non-Christian planet and Red communist economic order. It mobilized national agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor, to articulate known “enemies of the state” as targets for national security protections by militarizing the U.S. security state. Counterinsurgency measures included not only active policing through F.B.I. and C.I.A. domestic operations such as COINTEL PRO but also an ideological war by state-sponsored knowledge industries for the “hearts and minds” of national and global audiences. For Moynihan and other leading policy makers, herein is the speed limit to reform: one may assert equal rights but do not pass (i.e. ask for more than) the Civil Rights Movement.

Establishing a secure nation-state using the language of racial apocalypse, the Moynihan Report constructs a cycle of Black pathology that hinges upon fixing the symptom and not the source. Class warfare and racial hierarchy have created dysfunctions within Black families, yet it is the exclusive domain of the state to address the personal habits, sexual tastes, and normative family structure of its citizens. Indeed, maleness and manhood, in private and public affairs, facilitate the patriarchal and heterosexual advantages of white families who utilize straight men as breadwinners and heads-of-households. Black radicalism, then, is antithetical to the imperatives of the nation-state, outside white national manhood, and publicly, the state must admonish such rebellious behavior. In this way, a transnational Asian-Black racial panic is mediated by the domestic disciplining of Black familial arrangements. The Moynihan Report discursively sets the parameter of acceptable forms of Black masculinity by linking all forms of militancy to the reproduction and mimicry of the

nuclear white (imperial) family. As Rod Ferguson states, “the Moynihan Report enunciated liberal ideology through an identification with and conception of African American male as castrated and therefore bereft of heteropatriarchal entitlements.”⁴⁹ It has been through gendering and racializing the post-civil rights moment that the Moynihan Report carries such a powerful ideological sledgehammer.

The language of pathology revolves around the imminent fear of racial apocalypse and thus expresses the primacy of white male, heterosexist patriarchy. It encompasses the limits to Black radicalism and the reproduction of post-civil rights domesticity. The incommensurability of Black men to the national project of post-civil rights domesticity is fixed and taken as the symbol of displacement. In such symbolic productions, there is a categorical understanding of Black masculinity in its totality, as a homogenous political construct. As such, the welfare state replaces the figurehead of Black fatherhood that the reproduction of capital alternates from private to public, familial to national, and male breadwinner to the state. From this prosecutorial platform, the Moynihan Report legitimizes increased surveillance, through sociological study, knowledge industries, and police mobilization of Black male bodies into the prison industries. The latter shows the failures of “family,” “values,” and “race” that may infect and corrupt the smooth efficiency of U.S. expansionism. Sander L Gilman explains the relationship between pathology and racial stereotype. He says:

Our understanding of the pathological is rooted in an awareness of the human organism’s fragility—not simply its mortality, though that has always and everywhere inspired fear of the ultimate loss of control, but

its susceptibility to disease, pollution, corruption, and alteration, things that we experience in our own bodies and observe in others.⁵⁰

Contrasting the tangle of pathology of African American families, Asian American families were newsworthy as model minorities in media accounts of post-civil rights racialization. The term “model” connotes a paradigm, ordered with efficiency that operates as a visible representation of what ideological systems should take precedent. Asian Americans were the corporeal site of capitalist values and ethics of post-civil rights technocratic mentality. The model minority stereotype disciplined unruly Blacks, hippies, and punk whites who were unwilling to conform to this standardization. Interestingly, the emergence of immigrant, later working-class Asian American radicalism in the United States coincided precisely with the same period in which predominately second and third generation Japanese and Chinese Americans reached the middle-class. Constructing the ideology of model minority uplift had crystallized post-civil rights racialization as comparative, multidirectional in U.S racial discourse; it consolidated domestic racial logics in order to legitimate the expansion of the American empire in Asia, and enabled the notion of “racelessness” to function as an instrumental veil over post-civil rights class struggle.

Believed first to have been coined by William Peterson’s “Success Story: Japanese-American Style” in *New York Times Magazine*, the term model minority conspicuously emerged into common parlance after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and at the height of antiracist social movements. Peterson states, “by any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites.”⁵¹ Peterson’s conception

of “good citizenship” unifies sociological knowledge and white adulation for Asian Americans as a cultural barometer for post-civil rights multiculturalist discourse. At the height of Black Power, the Tet Offensive, and U.S. Third World Liberation, he characterizes Japanese American assimilation into the nation-state as successful, mainly due to middle-class consumption and liberal values of class uplift, “even in a country whose patron saint is Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to this success story.”⁵² As Elaine Kim writes,

It has become fashionable since the 1940s to view Asians as a ‘model minority.’ The ‘model minority’ Asian, by never challenging white society, at once vindicates that society from the charge of racism and points up the folly of those less obliging minorities who are ill-advised enough to protest against inequity or take themselves ‘too seriously’.⁵³

Following in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, ideas of conformity, order, and individualism were important values needed for the reproduction of transnational capital and liberal democracy by differentiating the axis of good/bad citizens from the rule of law.

On the one hand, Peterson replicates the production of sociological knowledge about U.S. race relations, writing in a national political magazine, to appeal to mass audiences startled by more radical antiracist movements. On the other hand, he furthers Moynihan’s discourse of post-civil rights racial panic by introducing to a wide audience Asian American student radicalism and the dissenting masculinity of No-No Boys. Whereas Moynihan sublimated his fear of an Asian-Black racial imaginary through Black familial arrangements, Peterson proposes his version of impending racial apocalypse through the language of moral character for Asian American

citizenship. Since the 1790 Naturalization Act, the notion of moral character has been a guiding principle to exclude social classes from citizenship based upon transparent criteria based upon race, gender, and class. First, Peterson views the Berkeley Student Riots demonstrators and the Tule Lake prisoners as “problem minorities” who exhibit signs of social pathology because they deviate from the normalization of U.S. nationalism and imperialism. He constructs an imaginary Asian American racial order that is, at once, a colonial form of paternalism as well as a discourse of orientalised subversiveness. During the turmoil of student radicalism and opposition to U.S. imperialism in Asia, political activism or dissent in response to U.S. foreign policy is antithetical to a ‘national moral character’ that sociological knowledge, in tandem with the economic theories of modernization, must contain discursively. He pinpoints law and order, economic frugality, and technocratic education as more important cultural traits for minorities and even white families. What becomes most important then is the law; a system of order performed by the juridical function of the police state, which mirrors the imperial function of the Pentagon where militarized control of civilian and foreign enemies by the U.S. security state is essential for the reproduction of U.S. liberalism. No-No Boys, Berkeley anti-war students, and Tule Lake prisoners, cast under the umbrella of an imaginary Asian American racial order, are criminalized as political deviants, “bad citizens” to use Peterson’s terminology, which the U.S. security state must regulate militarily and the field of sociology must regulate discursively. In the end, this disciplinary force is self-sustaining so that Asian American communities come to police politicized delinquency and criminal behavior

themselves, actually expelling social pathology, by enacting, as Peterson advocates, “retribution [by] the whole [Asian American] community.”⁵⁴ Therefore, the discourse of model minority and “problem” masculinities seems to have promoted the ideological advantages of Asian American self-policing and post-civil rights racial magnetism—all for the containment of Asian American radicalism and anti-imperialist masculinities.

Indeed, if cultural pathology was the family structure to avoid at all costs, then model minority moral character was a picture of mimicry for reproducing American modernity and empire. Peterson’s article and other leading publication including *U.S. News and World Reports* claimed that the cultural values of Asian American families, especially East Asian ancestry, provided the mean to overcome constructs of societal racism. Openly espoused by liberal intellectuals, the culturalist turn in post-civil rights racial logics removed blame and culpability from the U.S. racial state, at a moment when discourse of racial panic had been produced by it. Subsequently, there is the construction of a post-civil rights orientalism that categorizes Asian American culture as transparent and thus knowable, simultaneously when the Vietcong and Southeast Asian populations became openly transparent and visible through chemical warfare. The massive bombing campaigns in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia reflected the history of paternalistic imperialism by the U.S. Clearly, these paternalistic traits were part and parcel of white American sociology that included respect for national authority, political silence, and economic class warfare. An article in *U.S. News* reads, “at a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent on uplifting

Negroes and other minorities, the nation's 300,000 Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own with no help from anyone else."⁵⁵ Thus, the news media exalted the East Asian community from the rank and file of Peterson's "problem minorities" in which urban communities were not unlike jungle communities so that the authoritative role of U.S. security and military control would expel and eliminate any noncompliant upheaval.

The same *U.S. News* article suggests that Chinatowns in U.S. cities are "havens for law and order."⁵⁶ After earlier magazines such as *The Wasp* and state health agencies had circulated representations of Chinatowns as spatial dens of vice and disease, *U.S. News* reconceptualizes Chinatowns as neighborhoods of law-abiding citizens and omniscient jurisprudence. Chinatowns become a racialized space of successful police surveillance in which the emergence of America's militarized domination of Asia is mediated by the presumed conformity of its immigrant kinfolk. The article thus illustrates the construction of racial fantasies within the geographic borders of the American racial imaginary that contained the symbolic fear of Asian-Black radicalisms, which in turn concretized the moral force of U.S. imperialism in Asia. Representing Chinatowns as areas of race and order internationalized the moral authority of global racial dominance as an inevitable progress narrative of liberal democracy. This mechanism of racial cooptation used the resiliency and determination of Asian Americans to succeed and thus reinforced racial magnetism as an imperial racial logic, which ultimately, created a multiracial legitimation of hierarchy and difference.

Let us now turn to Vijay Prashad's opening question: "How does it feel like to be a solution?" He promotes the self-reflexive practice of racial accountability, "this question asks us brown folk how we can live with ourselves as we are pledged and sometimes, in an act of bad faith, pledge ourselves, as a weapon against black folk."⁵⁷ Prashad addresses a vital tension that, at once, centers the historical origins and political evolution of Asian American identity including concepts of racial struggle and interracial solidarity. After the Watts Riot and the inauguration of the Great Society Program, issues of poverty and class took a center stage in the domestic agenda of U.S. race relations. Focusing on the success of specific Asian American communities was an attractive alternative for conceptualizing a new racial frontier. The elimination of the old borders seemed a foregone conclusion, the 1964 Civil Rights Act ensuring that. However, the new border seemed malleable, especially in the subsequent decade of Asian and Latin immigration. New faces meant new problems added to the existing ones.

Both Asian and African American families, under the assumption of patriarchy and heteronormativity within post-civil rights discourses of race and sexuality, revealed the tenuous construction of U.S. modernity at a time when technological and ideological facets of post-civil rights produced the rhetoric of inclusion and commensurability. Largely centered upon the ideology of multiculturalism, debates continued to place Asian ethnic assimilation over and against African American failure in higher education, which became the premier institutional and cultural site marking and remaking masculinity, race, empire, and nation.

Multiculturalism and Masculinity

As the new lingua franca of race, multiculturalism inhabits the symbolic register of our nation, often serving as the “proof” that liberal democracy works. After the San Francisco State Student Strikes in 1968, multiculturalism and higher education could be considered prominent features shaping the landscape of Asian and African American cultural politics. Knowledge production, cultural legitimacy, and racial identity were difficult and complex problems contested by movements for multiculturalism on U.S. college campuses. At its best, multiculturalism created voices for racialized communities, allowed them to have inclusive power in decision-making processes, and raised widespread consciousness of their communities in cultural discourses. K. Anthony Appiah writes that multiculturalism “is meant to be an approach to education and to public culture that acknowledges the diversity of cultures and subcultures in the United States and that proposes to deal with that diversity in some other way than by imposing the values and ideas of the hitherto dominant Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition.”⁵⁸ At its worst, multiculturalism reflects a zero-sum game, in which white identity loses proportionately to the gains of racial minorities, even when racial minorities lose in relation to each other. Samuel Huntington’s work *Clash of Civilizations* reflects this crisis of whiteness and routes this anxiety through the decline of Western civilization, which stands in for Euro-Anglo masculinity.⁵⁹

At its most optimistic and trenchant moments, multiculturalism challenged the notion of assimilation, which established the contested terrain of citizenship and

American identity in the post-civil rights era. With the ideology of assimilation promising an individual's commensurability to the nation-state—serving symbolically the laws, political institutions, and national culture—the emergence of multiculturalism challenged this uncritical process. Not only did multiculturalism interject a new vocabulary into America's racial lexicon, but it did so in response to the increasing visibility of Asian and Latino/as American (especially at its originary moment after antiracist social movements). Specifically, Angela Davis maintains that a “multiculturalism that posits itself as the solution to racial conflict, based on the Black-White interface, will hardly move us forward.”⁶⁰ She states that utilizing multiculturalism to reconcile the relationships among communities of color may reinscribe power dynamics such as Blacks on “top” and Asians on “bottom.”

Yet, the axis of masculinizing and queering multiculturalism required the reconstruction of U.S. identity through the idea of panethnicity and thus developed emergent racial identities. During the same period, public schools slowly instituted multicultural curricula that challenged the racial order of Eurocentricism. One struggle, for example, was implementing multicultural policies that benefited minority students who were languishing in substandard schools. Crafted to promote antiracist policies in the social and cultural milieu, multiculturalism called for equity in white educational institutions. Multiculturalism “imagined the building of racial democracy through popular pluralism,”⁶¹ as Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield discuss, in which,

Multiculturalism's cultural turn has been highly significant in advancing our understandings of race, power, identity, and social

institutions. It has helped displace biological notions of race and is compatible with anti-essentialists notions of racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual identity.⁶²

Higher education became the institutional battlefield where the architecture of racial magnetism is contentious. During the post-civil rights era, student movements for multiculturalism in flagship institutions such as University of California at Berkeley and University of Wisconsin at Madison required general education requirements composed of ethnic studies courses to its undergraduates.⁶³ Simultaneously, affirmative action policies provided opportunities to minority students who would have been denied access to higher education. Constructed on the grounds of culture and education, these political and racial issues were hotly contested arenas over citizenship and national belonging. Many believed that African American men belonged in the prison industrial complex rather than in the classroom; and others believed that Asian American men belonged in the laboratory rather than in national culture. Education became political, expressed in many landmark Supreme Court decisions.⁶⁴

Opening up the hallowed halls of academe to racial minorities challenged the intellectual competency of African American students and raised fears concerning Asian American over-representation. The discourse of racial magnetism became common currency: a powerful and effective strategy employed by conservative ideologues and think tanks that attempted to roll back many victories won by antiracist social movements. For example, the 1980s and 1990s culture wars in education, fought on the terrain of multiculturalism, were redefinitions of American identity.

Encapsulated by books such as Arthur Schlesinger's *Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, Harold Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, and Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multicultural Society*, nostalgic opponents of multiculturalism lamented the loss of "an imaginary transcendental universal culture—West—and the near destruction of its cathedral, the academy."⁶⁵ For example, Schlesinger writes, "it is hard to see what living connections exist between American blacks today and their heterogeneous West African ancestors three centuries ago[...]from time to time, Black leaders, notably Martin Delany in the mid-nineteenth century and Marcus Garvey in the 1920, excited passing interest in Africa."⁶⁶ He maintains that, not until multiculturalism did Blacks place their African connections as a major component in their lives. Here, the assault upon "proper" national manhood by multiculturalism and Black masculinity contributes to the decline of "Great Books," "dead white men," and ultimately Western civilization.

At the University of California, San Diego, the academic institution at which I have studied and written this dissertation, the discourse of multiculturalism and racial magnetism is widespread in the architecture. The front windows of Geisel Library include multicultural images by internationally renowned conceptual artist John Baldessari, in the form of photographic representations. Called "Read/Write/Think/Dream," this display showcases UCSD students in larger-than-life photo stills, captured on glass, and inspired by Ghiberti's fifteenth-century bronze doors in Florence. Walking towards the library doors and foyer, we see images of

various races, genders, and sexual identities, including an African American male wearing an Afro hair style and displaying the signifiers of Blackness, next to representations of a Latina female, Latino male, multiracial female, Asian American female, multiracial male, and white female. Like pillars in Greek temple, these images stand atop the great works of Western civilization, from Shakespeare to Gore Vidal. Interestingly, the two identities missing in this photographic collage are Asian American and white men, who make up forty percent of the UCSD student population. Accounting for less than two percent of the student body, Blacks are the “missing minority” at UCSD, and thus the Geisel Library invocation of multiculturalism shows the limits to such celebrations.

In this work, Baldessari prominently depicts the promise of multiculturalism in higher education where Latino/a, African American men, Asian women, multiracial people, and white females students can “get along” through pursuing knowledge that makes them “read,” “write,” and “think.” As Barthes reminds us, representations and mythologies operate as much by what is not shown as by what is. Using this idea, the visibility of one African American male in this artwork seems to construct the invisibility of one million African American males in California’s prisons. Likewise, relegating Asian American and white men into the foyer space, the backroom, produces a multiculturalism that regulates Asian American over-representation and white middle-class supremacy at UCSD. Narrating space and race, Baldessari manipulates the artistic erasure of their existence by ignoring the workings of what

Waineema Lubiano illuminates as the “universities’ relationship to an international military capitalist economy and domestic prison economy.”⁶⁷

As a major recipient of U.S. Defense Department and corporate grants, UCSD uses the visibility of African American men and the invisibility of Asian American men to erase the ways in which the militarization of higher education relies upon Asian immigrant male labor from India, China, and South Korea. Graduate students from these countries are the brain trust of research and development in the hard sciences and engineering that relies upon military funding. These racial logics seamlessly suture race and space by prescribing higher education as a multicultural and technological utopia. The Geisel Library photographs create a clear, unified narrative of racial harmony by erasing the lives of African American males who did not enter UCSD due to SP-1, SP-2, and Proposition 209. Meanwhile, it wipes from the architectural memory of UCSD the future technocrats of U.S. militarism. Tying research and development of globalization and defense industries directly on the doorstep to our elite institutions of higher education, UCSD is at the forefront of the “multiversity.” As a result, Asian American technocracy parallels African American prison labor and subsequently illustrates the politics of visual culture in today’s twenty-first century multiculturalism.

Asian Nerds and Black Criminals

Visual film culture during the 1980s and early 1990s mediated the economic, political, and cultural transformations taking place outside academe. Two archetypes that emerged during this era, the Asian nerd and the Black gangbanger, created distinct

representations of racialized manhood for Asian and African American men. After Bruce Lee's brilliant yet short-lived film career in the 1970s, representations of Asian American masculinity moved from that of the Asian martial arts hero to the figure of the Asian nerd, illustrated in such films as *Sixteen Candles*, *Revenge of the Nerds*, *Gung-Ho*, *Stitches*, *Vamp*, and *Booty Call*.⁶⁸ Likewise, after a wave of "Blaxploitation" films, representations of African American masculinity in mainstream Hollywood moved to images of urban life and thuggery. Mainly utilizing through the caricature of gang life, 1980s visual film culture included such films as *Colors*, *Juice*, *New Jack City*, *Boyz N The Hood*, and *Menace II Society*.⁶⁹ These two sets of films popularized Asian and Black masculinity as two sides of the same coin. Both maintained the notion that racialized masculinities were, visually and ideologically, representational negations of each other. In this way, both archetypes reflected the politics of racial magnetism in U.S. national culture: the Black gangbanger shot police officers in 'da hood: the Asian nerd shot space invaders in 'da computer.

The figure of the Asian nerd as sidekick extraordinaire offered comic relief for lead characters in teen comedy, horror, and drama genres. By contrast, the Black gangbanger represented the return of the repressed from America's urban ghetto, culturally street-wise, always prone to violence in gritty, murderous misadventures. If the Asian nerd is laughable and lovable, then the Black gangbanger is America's worst nightmare. All together, the Asian nerd and Black gangbanger have played off certain desires and fantasies of mainstream white audiences that had been produced

previously by the discourse of racial apocalypse. The figure of the Black gangbanger personified Black radicalism in disguise, a Malcolm X-like attitude that relied upon the gun rather than the ballot, but without political consciousness or grass-roots appeal, just the dogma of the hustle and voice of urban decay. Similarly, the Asian nerd represents the domestic containment of radical masculinities, the U.S. military still traumatized by Vietcong masculinities and notions of imperial decline.

Revenge of the Nerds, another paradigmatic film, sought to capitalize on 1980s racial climate by creating the character of Toshiro Takashi, played by Brian Toshi. Given the marketplace for raunchy teen comedies at that time, *Revenge of the Nerds*, as the title suggests, relies upon stereotypical representations of nerds, but does so through the logic of multiculturalism. Displacing racial discrimination in favor of nerd oppression, the film frames athletic masculinity as the antithesis to nerd masculinity. This tension centers the narrative. Both types of men covet the affections of beautiful white college co-eds in this contest between brains and brawn. The nerds of the film cover the entire racial spectrum, and include a queer African American male, various white nerds, and an Asian nerd, Takashi, who represents Japanese technocratic power. The band of nerds rally together and apply for membership in an African American fraternity, Lambda Lambda Lambda, which is the only Greek organization willing to induct them.

Takashi speaks broken English, wears samurai bandanas, and like his counterparts, lusts after white womanhood. He has computer expertise and uses it to devise schemes, much like the depiction found in Karel van Wolferen's *The Japanese*

Enigma, a popular book espousing a sinister Japanese character.⁷⁰ Humor portrayed through the body of the Asian nerd, whether through his voice, body, or facial expressions, places Asian American masculinity in a space of innocuous containment. As Asian men were seen as threats in U.S. national culture, shown explicitly in films such as *Gung-Ho* and *Rising Sun*, *Revenge of the Nerds* incorporates orientalist gimmicks, such as the sound of a gong every time the camera frames Takashi. What sets *Revenge of the Nerds* apart from other sex-fest comedies is the elevation of Black masculinity as meaner, tougher, and more physically intimidating than the other masculinities circulating in the film. If Takashi is harmless, as exemplified by his habitual smiling, then Black masculinity operates as an antidote to racial subjectification. In a closing scene, the nerds have won a campus-wide talent contest that gives them fame and shames the white athletes. The camera follows the anger of the white men, who are ready to apply violent revenge as they encroach upon the nerds. Perhaps reminiscent of the Black Panthers, a wide-shot of several large African American men, all wearing black Greek sweaters, frames the trepidation of these white men, no longer able to command and wield the power they once possessed.

This type of racial construction highlights the emergence of Black gangster films that arose in the 1980s and which continue to present day. The film *Colors* is a mainstream production that eventually became a cult classic. Directed by Dennis Hopper and starring Sean Penn and Robert Duvall, *Colors* is a nihilistic, incendiary film depicting gang warfare in Los Angeles' impoverished East Side. Penn and Duvall play police officers assigned to a task force on gangs: the former is a hotheaded

rookie and the latter a battle-worn veteran. The Bloods and Crips, notorious after media accounts of the crack cocaine boom in the urban ghetto, showcase Black men as premodern and barbaric. Images in the film rely on violent primitivism in contrast to the law and order of modern U.S. society, as represented through police violence and corruption. The mean streets have these cops and gangbangers walking along graffiti-scrawled wastelands, using a realist aesthetic not unlike Walter Hill's pop-mythic classic *The Warriors*. The Los Angeles depicted by Hopper is moody and dark, colored by gang violence, gang paraphernalia where the film gets its title, and judges as unnecessary and out of control.

Black masculinity in *Colors* is caged and ready to erupt at any moment for any reason. In the climatic scene between law enforcement and Black gangbangers, Rocket played by Don Cheadle, becomes an urban guerilla by arming himself with automatic weapons and a death wish. Not willing to go through legal channels or enter the prison system, Rocket commits heroic suicide by rushing the L.A. police department in a desperate attempt at honor. The film thus shows the supposedly illogical and twisted desire of Rocket, as a maniac spiraling into desperation that the law must rein in. Throughout the film, indiscriminate violence, ranging from drive-by shooting to all-out urban warfare, circumscribes the narrative documentary style in which the ferocity of the film relies upon the thuggery of Black men who are either unwilling or unable to work and thus must be placed in prison, preferably maximum-security. Yet, the overdetermination of Black male violence, unleashed and indiscriminate, works to conceptualize a foreclosure of representative possibility and

essentializes Black bodies as violence par excellence. In this way, the Black gangbanger in the post-civil rights moment elicits nervous laughter and amusement from mainstream America, because the entitlements of citizenship came through depictions of urban geographies fractured from suburban spaces which harbored a deep, resonant fear of racial unrest.

Asian American and African American Cultural Politics

Through the concept of *racial magnetism*, the dissertation examines both dominant and emergent representations of Asian and African American masculinities as mediating *figures* for the contradictions of race, class, and gender in post-civil rights U.S.A. While some reports pair together Black “pathology” and the Asian “model minority,” African American and Asian American counter-discourses of solidarity and identification—in literature, film, music and performance arts—link social movements to cultural production as active critical responses to these reports. Simply put, this work explores cultural responses to institutional and economic power. It presents critical race, queer, feminist, Marxist, and cultural theories that sustain a method of analyzing Asian American and African American gender formations using a comparative and interdisciplinary methodology. It privileges the power of culture to produce conceptions of present time, the material life of here and now, and culture as theory for imagining the possible impossibility.

This dissertation is divided into four subsequent chapters and an epilogue. Chapter One, “*Aiiieeee!* and Black Radicalism: Race and Gender Politics in Asian American Literature” reconsiders the genesis and formation of Asian American

literature by focusing less on the Chin-Kingston debate and more on the impact of Black radicalism. I explore *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* and show how the editors utilize the rhetoric of Black radicalism as a means to conceptualize the racial emasculation of Asian American men from cultural manhood and thus route citizenship and manhood claims through Black masculinity and interracial mimesis. During the post-civil rights moment of racial realignment, Black radical thought is the counterpoint to forced Asian ethnic assimilation; this Asian-Black sensibility challenges an uncritical complicity with white supremacy that tries to negate Black liberation politics. In *Aiiieeeee!*, the editors employ the vernacular languages, performance styles, and oppositional consciousness of Black masculinity as a means to expose the contradictions of racial magnetism's discursive power to disunite Asian and Black communities.

Chapter Two, "Yellow Bodies, Black Sweat: Yao, Ichiro, and Sport Internationalism," focuses on the relationship between Asian and Black athletes, global multiculturalism, and sport internationalism. Ichiro Suzuki and Yao Ming represent in clear ways the figuration of the Asian male body as both cultural phenomena and transnational commodity. This chapter describes the marked turn from the Asian male body as an unattractive representative for marketing commodity exchanges to an imported spectacle reproducing National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League Baseball (MLB) transnational capital. However, it does not simply offer a conventional study of the political economy involved in the global expansion of popular sports. Rather, it attempts to illustrate how Asian men in U.S.

sports presuppose and indeed attempt to produce Asian masculinity through inverting the bodily emasculation of Asian American men. Throughout this chapter, I detail the ways in which popular sports have been racialized as a “Black” space of colonial fantasy and fears and how Asian male athletes break down the fixity of this raciological thinking.

Chapter Three, “Voices from Afro-Asian Rhythms and Rhymes: The Hip-Hop and Spoken Word Lyrists of I Was Born with Two Tongues and the Mountain Brothers” addresses the conductive intersection of live performance by Asian American men in hip-hop music and spoken word and links the possibilities of Asian-Black cultural fusions and internet productions as their main medium of communication. It calls attention to the role of public intellectuals, such as Dennis Kim of I Was Born with Two Tongues, and the role of art, activism, and culture intertwined with Asian American cultural production and Black musical expressions. The Mountain Brothers offer a different perspective on Asian-Black connections in hip-hop because they are an Asian American group signed by street credible Ruff House Records. Importantly, this chapter focuses on little understood, yet highly significant cultural practices taking place in Asian American communities, especially youth and internet cultures. All together, it emphasizes the Asian-Black interface of spoken word and hip-hop as a revolutionary practice, as the practitioners claim, one that disrupts the constancy of racial magnetism in matters of social policy and public discourse.

Chapter Four, “‘I’m Michael Jackson, You Tito’: Kung-Fu Fighters and Hip-

Hop Buddies in Martial Arts Buddy Films,” argues that the rise of martial arts genre has wide appeal for racialized communities and young audiences because it is the genre of the underdog. The martial arts film had its introduction in the Blaxploitation films and the cult hero of Bruce Lee and quickly became a staple of Saturday matinees in urban geographies. The genre that Lee catapulted into mainstream currency has recently been adapted to the standard buddy film format prevalent in Hollywood Westerns and 1980s action films. As a result, the coupling of a streetwise African American buddy with hip-hop credentials and with an ethical martial arts hero with humble bravado has served notice to mainstream audiences and cultural critics that the development of this genre showcases antiracist and anti-imperialist representations. As such, this chapter examines Asian-Black spectatorship as an oppositional gaze in martial arts buddy films. Film construction in this genre then, can be an allegory to critique the mechanisms of liberalism and its incessant project to individualize communal sociality, to reduce structural considerations of power to unlinked individuals and to mask whiteness.

Examining literature, popular sport, film, music, and spoken word, this dissertation suggests the primacy and possibilities of Asian-Black cultural crossings. It shows the contingent, historically situated formations of culture that displaces and replaces modernist, racist narratives of the nation-state. Thus, this dissertation is an attempt to break down the walls and mythologies that alienate Asian and Black communities from each other. *Asian American and African American Masculinities*

brushes with a vibrant and exquisite stroke, the forgotten history, common goals, and cross-cultural borrowings between Asian and Black men.

***Aiiieeee!* and Black Radicalism:
Race and Gender Politics in Asian American Literature**

“Within the dialectic of this power construct no one can deny the oppression of third world men. However, men of color can call upon the circuits which charge primary category with the gendered aspects of its privileges and powers, even without the benefit of race or class privileges. This kind of identification with the powerful stratum/caste of ‘male’ for the construction of a solid sense of self has been utilized as an effective weapon for confronting the oppressions they experience. Ironically, however, women of color are cast into the critical category against which third world male subjectivity becomes constituted. The final and fourth category belongs to women of color who become survivors in a dynamic which places them as the final ‘other’ in a complex of power moves.” Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*.

“Maybe it had started then, I’m not sure, or maybe it wasn’t until I’d seen them send the Japanese away that I’d noticed it. Little Riki Oyana singing ‘God Bless America’ and going to Santa Anita with his parents next day. It was taking a man up by the roots and locking him up without a chance. Without a trial. Without a charge. Without even giving him a chance to say one word.” Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*.

“The Declaration of an American identity meant the taking on of a mask.” Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act*.

Asian American Writerly Manhood and Social Movement Literatures

In a taped interview, Virginia Lee, the noted author of *The House That Tai Ming Built*, asks Frank Chin, “So in other words, you want the white population to start thinking of Chinese other than being quiet, unassuming, passive, et cetera, right? That’s what you want, huh?” After a moment of reflection and palpable exasperation, Chin replies, “I don’t want to be measured against the stereotype anymore.” Through the mediation of race and gender politics during the Asian American Movement, this

poignant exchange between Chin and Lee reveals much about the parameters of cultural victimhood and intellectual self-determination for U.S. third world men and women. In particular, their conversation directs our attention to the comparative racialization of Asian American men and women and the role of Asian American intellectuals to respond. Like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Chin's experience of cultural marginality expresses the debilitating effect of the "inner eyes" of the United States that refuse to see him as both a man and an American. In this sense, the exchange between Chin and Lee is an illustration of "talking race," in Asian American discourses of gender and sexuality. But it ends with something lost in translation between the participants, and spotlights Chin's sense of a fragmented Asian American community in which "talking race" leads to alienation and cultural invisibility.⁷¹

Despite the existence of earlier Asian American anthologies, including Kai-yu Hsu's *Asian American Authors* and David Hsin-fu Wand's *Asian American Heritage*, the 1974 publication of *Aiiieeeee!* has been acknowledged widely as the successful emergence of Asian American literature from cultural invisibility in U.S. national literature. Subsequent critical work on *Aiiieeeee!* emphasized the feminism of Asian American women and the cultural nationalism of Asian American men. Hero worship meets the feminist revolution; this was our choice—Asian America's literary tree, deeply entrenched, with roots familiar to Asian Americanists.⁷² However, privileging that now famous and productive debate between Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston paid little attention to how *other* third world women and men had helped to mediate this troubled relationship. Nor did this passionate debate pay adequate

attention to certain forms of radicalism found in *Aiiieeeee!*, in particular the literary formation of racial trauma that, as a singular piece of Asian American literature, is comparable to the work of African American, Native American, and Chicana/o writers.

In this chapter, I examine Black radicalism and the ways in which that movement influenced the interracial literary sensibilities in *Aiiieeeee!*, an edited collection of Asian American writing.⁷³ Going further, I consider this volume as a response to the question raised by Gary Okihiro in the title of his work, “Is Yellow Black or White?”⁷⁴ By responding, “None of the above,” *Aiiieeeee!* rejects the Black-White dualism of U.S. race talk by definitively eschewing both. As a means to finding an antiracist point of immanent critique, the editors mirror Black protest masculinity—an example of interracial identification and mimesis. The process of dissimulation, through the performance of interracial mimesis, counters dominant discourses of Asian ethnic assimilation into an uncritical white identity or as a *Newsweek* article celebrates, “outwhiting the whites.”⁷⁵ During the post-civil rights moment of racial realignment, Black radical thought is the counterpoint to forced Asian ethnic assimilation; this Asian-Black sensibility challenges an uncritical complicity with white supremacy that negates Black liberation politics. In *Aiiieeeee!*, the editors employ the vernacular languages, performance styles, and oppositional consciousness of Black masculinity as a means to expose the contradictions of racial hierarchy. Shirley Hune suggests that the Black-White paradigm of race has bulldozed over “a multiplicity of simultaneous racial group dynamics that included horizontal

subordinate-subordinate or minority-minority relations.”⁷⁶ The Asian-Black interface constructs the contours of cultural citizenship through the racialization of another-Other, and thus the editors seem to complicate the fixed, closed identity fixation of cultural nationalism. Despite the productive engagement between Asian and African American voices in *Aiiieeeee!*, this chapter also explores those points in the work at which interracial mimesis becomes self-congratulatory, and addresses the limitations to such conversations. I emphasize this idea to dissect the critical axis of race/gender where racial possibility intersects with gender oppression and to determine where cross-racial solidarity and remasculinization fall into this mapping.

To be sure, the important gesture by the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* to seek identification with Black radicalism is a rare inscription of an Asian-Black interface in Asian American literature. As refusing the required function of Asian ethnic assimilation, this important identification allows the editors an expressive form that could reveal their own sense of racialized alienation and displacement from “manhood,” defined by them as the power to cultivate cultural self-determination and national legitimacy. In many ways, the editors realize the difficulties involved with Asian ethnic assimilation in post-civil rights, and they conjectured that the main locus of citizenship was located in the cultural sphere, in which cultural invisibility produced a form of racial trauma. For them, racial trauma can best be defined as the overcompensatory feeling of perpetual lack, formed by Asian America’s constant need for white America’s approval institutionally, culturally, and even erotically. This situation is fundamentally a schizophrenic condition of life under capitalism; its

productive power is its ability to reproduce the fictions of racial and material status symbols and signs of modernity. And this existential formation, the question of “where do we belong in this American society?” is for the editors, a critical commentary about the integration of an Asian-White sensibility—spatially, corporately, erotically, educationally, and literarily—forming the basis to which many middle-class Asian Americans have claimed their citizenship rights in the post-civil rights era. By identifying with Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, the Black Panthers and many others, *Aiiiiieee!* shows that Asian American cultural politics can and should engage more critically with African American liberation *through* Asian American literary production and deal with the lives of what Gwendolyn Brooks has called “the politics of everyday oppression.”⁷⁷ This approach is important to note, because how we remember and what we remember conceptualizes our understandings of political injury and forms our conceptions of racial trauma that in the end injure all citizens. Stuart Hall has indicated that we have to think about identity in relation to others and difference.⁷⁸ In this sense, the Asian-Black interface in early Asian American literature portrays how interracial expressions of radicalism and cross-racial crossings were crucial to the genesis and formation of Asian American literature.⁷⁹

Making Radical Ethnics

In *Racial Formation of the United States*, Omi and Winant explain racial formation as a relational process, dialectically working between state imperatives and social movements. They suggest that this struggle through engagement with the state creates new racial meanings and redefines the political landscape of racial hierarchy.⁸⁰

In this formulation, social movements have radical primacy in reconceptualizing race and citizenship. Utilizing this framework, activism between Asians and Blacks, carved in public spaces and struggles, influenced literature aesthetically, ideologically, and culturally. In *The Cultural Front* Michael Denning argues the important dialectic between the cultural apparatus and Popular Front social movement during the age of the CIO.⁸¹ He states that the Popular Front became a mobilization of working-class consciousness and the production of culture by artists, émigrés, and radical intellectuals. Similarly, the identity-based social movements during the politics of the 1960s liberation struggles contained an important cultural component formed on interracial organizing.

Several groups espoused radical departures from the Civil Rights Movement, claiming the ethics of human dignity and freedom from global capitalism and institutional racism. For example, the Black Panther Party, Nation of Islam, Third World Liberation Front, Red Guard, I Wor Kuen, Hard Core, League of Revolutionary Struggle, and Young Lords illustrated the politics of the third world liberation struggles. As a global struggle encompassing four continents, these liberation politics valued an antiracist state, the elimination of capitalist class divisions, and antidemocratic governments.⁸² Their heroes were not Martin Luther King, Jr., but Malcolm X, Mao Tse Tung, and Frantz Fanon. They had several common issues, which included community enrichment, ending police brutality, ethnic pride, forms of socialism, and collectivity.⁸³ Constituting their moral compass, they fought for

democratic freedom and human emancipation from police violence and economic alienation.

One of the historical roots of *Aiiiiiiii!*'s publication was the crisis of the racial state, triggered by the Civil Rights Movement and the third world politics that ensued: a crisis that reshaped the careers and works of Asian American writers. The group of writers, artists, and intellectuals, who I will refer to as "radical ethnics," were only a part of revolutionary politics, but their cultural presence was vital. Born around the watershed moment of WWII, these radical ethnics, raised during liberation struggles around the globe, emerged as the leading young writers, artists, and intellectuals in the decade after the Civil Rights Movement. They had cultural predecessors from Communist, Socialist, and Leftist artists from the 1930s-1970s; they allied themselves with third world liberation, including Black antiracist struggles in the United States and the decolonizing world. The East and West coasts were their bases, clustering in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area. There were several interconnected Asian-Black groups. Writers and activists included Janice Mirikitani, Yuri Kochiyama, Al Robles, Aki Muehara, Francis Naohiko Oka, and Pat Sumi. Slogans such as "Power to the People," "Serve the People," and "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power" represented the alliances formed with community enrichment and interracial coalitions in mind.⁸⁴ Their domestic concerns included the Soledad Brothers, three members of the Panthers locked down at Soledad Prison, as well as the forced shutdown of the I-Hotel, a San Francisco housing project for the poor and elderly. Some of their global concerns were Hiroshima's nuclear fallout, third world

decolonization struggles, and U.S. military intervention in Asia. In an article in *Gidra*, a community newspaper published by activists and artists in Los Angeles, Alan Nishio writes,

As the Black and Brown communities push for changes in our present system, the Oriental is set forth as an example to be followed—a minority group that has achieved success through adaptation rather than confrontation [...] Orientals in America have become affluent through their hard work and silence.⁸⁵

Nishio reveals the price of “hard work and silence.” Transforming American orientalism to an Asian American consciousness reflected the transformation of collective silence to political voice and empowerment. It had been the awakening of an entire community to political consciousness.

Clearly, the newly emerging Asian American consciousness had solidified through an understanding of the oppression that people of color endured daily, and that contributed to the mounting radicalization of grass-roots politics, especially African Americans. For example, Chris Iijima, a singer during the Asian American Movement, expresses the influence of Malcolm X on Asian American radicalism:

There were two groups that we worked with when we had the storefront called “Chickens Come Home To Roost.” As Nobuko [his wife] tells young people these days, we wanted something militant sounding, so we took a phrase of Malcolm’s for our name. Of course, we were known around the neighborhood as “The Chickens.”⁸⁶

Previously, Malcolm X had wanted to join the Japanese Imperial Army. Later, Iijima recalls Malcolm X’s subsequent invocation of social and poetic justice for African Americans. Writers, activists, and intellectuals had formed an oppositional consciousness shaped by the radicalism of Black men. They easily borrowed from

each other the platforms, members, organizing strategies, theories, and collective power of cross-racial politicization.

In *Aiiiiiiii!*, the editors develop tropes of racial emasculation and African American protest, drawing upon new ways of living, organizing, and seeing social relations between men of color. For Asian American male writers in the 1970s, the notion of emasculation thematized their specific conditions of historic exclusion from citizenship. I define emasculation as the exclusion from economic opportunity, cultural representation, and participatory democracy. In contrast, feminization is the miscegenation of gender roles in both public and private spheres. The two critical terms are not mutually exclusive, yet emasculation frames a broader material force whereas feminization points to the arena of gender subjectivity and performance. Rather, I deploy the descriptive term emasculation to describe the ways in which the abject Asian male body has been constructed as feminized and desexualized through historical processes that racialize and gender their labor, sexuality, and bodies. Pierre Bourdieu's idea of symbolic capital can be helpful in explaining the societal implications of emasculation. Symbolic capital for Bourdieu connotes the concentration of any property, any form of capital whether economic, physical, cultural, or social, to social classes based upon perceptions of value.⁸⁷ In history and in symbols and signification, white middle-class masculinities have embodied proper national manhood and monopolized the exclusive capital of social prestige.

This sense of alienation from manhood has been symptomatic of African American male writers. For example, W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*

writes about his “longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.”⁸⁸ In formulating his concept of double consciousness, Du Bois reveals quite eloquently the loss of citizenship as the loss of manhood. Double consciousness for Du Bois refers to his sense of displacement from power, not in any Machiavellian sense, but in terms of feeling his twoness as an American and Black man locked in a singular abject body. Du Bois’ emasculation reveals the contradictions of the liberal democratic state that promises citizenship to its racial minorities yet disenfranchises them through economic, political, and cultural alienation.

When Frederick Douglass published his autobiography in 1845, his voice was representative of an entire race of people who had been subjugated and classified as human property by law and custom. Describing the effect of slavery on plantation masculinity, he writes a chiasmus, a literary device that uses the rhetoric of inversion: “You have seen how a man was made a slave, how a slave was made a man.” Douglass describes his confrontation with his brutal slave master Mr. Covey, a struggle in which Douglass fought back, that “was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood.”⁸⁹ For Douglass, freedom means citizenship and manhood.

Producing such texts as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Native Son*, and *Black Boy*, Richard Wright served as the preeminent ambassador of protest literature during the Popular Front. His naturalist account of urban life and racialized manhood portrays Bigger Thomas in *Native Son* as an archetypal figure of Black male racialization, both

psychologically and criminally. When Mary Dalton's bedroom traps Bigger into paralysis, like an iron cage, he feels the tension from the Negro rapist stereotype. Black men were seen in antebellum society as sexual predators towards vulnerable white women and as primitive sexual beings with uncontrollable impulses. Because he is in the presence of Mary, a white female, and is aware of all that presence entails for African American men, he commits homicide to hide from detection and possibly incarceration. In "How 'Bigger' Was Born," Wright explains, "Because the blacks were so close to the very civilization which sought to keep them out, because they could not *help* but react in some way to its incentives and prizes, and because the very tissue of their consciousness received its tone and timber from the strivings of that dominant civilization."⁹⁰ Wright illustrates the sense of alienation African American men felt and their impulse to want, even desire the fruits of inclusion in a society that had deep fears against it, forming abject Black bodies excluded from "that dominant civilization."

During the height of social unrest in the 1960s, Malcolm X's public life and his *Autobiography of Malcolm X* exposed the racial contradictions of American democracy and modernity. The voice of Black radicalism, expressed by Black rage, comes alive in Malcolm X's riveting personal account of his transformation from humble origins to street hoodlum to Nation of Islam spokesman to a spiritually transformed Muslim. His transformation into an international symbol and spokesperson for Black pride and self-assertion is what Cornel West describes as "psychic conversion," in which a new conceptual map, a transformation of political

self-knowing and racial consciousness, replaces an old one. The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* rebukes American myths of origin that celebrate a white imagined history and progress narrative. At his most polemical, Malcolm X dislodges white supremacy of its purity and its amnesia of history. During his time in prison, he educates himself by reading books about European colonialism, Pan-Africanism, and Western philosophy. Excavating this knowledge would eventually set him free from self-loathing, when “book after book showed me how the white man had brought the world’s black, brown, red, and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation.”⁹¹

Working off of Malcolm X’s example, The Black Panther Party formed in Oakland, California in 1966. The Black Panthers were a political organization founded to protest the economic, political, and cultural plights of Black people across the globe. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were Black Panther leaders, admired by many activists and intellectuals of the time for the clarity and force of their anticapitalist and anticolonial stance, and for the militancy with which they conducted themselves in order to reach their goals. The Panther Program, published throughout the world in October 1966, called for freedom in Black communities: full employment, decent housing, teaching ethnic history, refusal of military service, ending the police state, legal protections, and self-determination. The Black Panther Party had led a guerilla-style protest in the capital city of Sacramento, armed with shotguns. In so doing, they received worldwide press. At the same time, they initiated nutrition campaigns to feed the poor, offered shelters for homeless citizens,

and maintained community-based initiatives for elderly care. My reading of the Black Panthers is not intended to romanticize their struggles—for they had many contradictions and blemishes, but it does highlight the best qualities that inspired non-Black audiences to the Black Panthers as a revolutionary democratic party.

One important example is Fred Aoki, who attained the rank of Field Marshall in the Black Panther Party. A childhood prisoner held at Topaz Concentration Camp in Utah from 1942-1945, Aoki joined the military and later became a key member of the Black Panther Party, who linked the Third World Liberation Front at Berkeley and the community radicalism occurring in Oakland. In *Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale writes about his relationship with the "Asian Panther":

Richard Iokey [sic] came in---the Japanese brother who gave Huey and me the M-1 and 9mm---and he got talking about how he had a .357 Magnum. We got the .357 Magnum from him and a couple more pistols, and the brothers got to getting money together, and started buying weapons.⁹²

The possibility of creating coalitions continually set the agenda of the Black Panthers, as represented by these Asian-Black alliances to arm themselves for mutual self-defense. The Panthers also had close ties with Los Siete de la Raza, a group supporting the release of seven Latinos accused of killing a San Francisco cop; the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican gang that turned political in Chicago and New York; and the Young Patriots, a poor white group who were vanguards for working-class communities. Seale says, “we can relate well with them because they are in opposition to the power structure’s oppression.”⁹³ Stylized in leather jackets, military berets, and black gloves, the Black Panthers embodied militant revolutionary politics,

an image that was confirmed when they were labeled “public enemy number one” by the F.B.I. When they took over the public space of the state capital in Sacramento, it was a media-inspired spectacle that produced mass fear for white Americans, who preferred the message of nonviolence and unity by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Interracial Mimesis and the Politics of U.S. National Culture

The editorial collective of *Aiiiiieee!* consists of Jeffrey Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. These Asian American male writers performed a literary coup d’etat in the Bay Area to expose “America’s dishonesty—its white racist supremacy passed off as love and acceptance—[that] has kept seven generations of Asian-American voices off the air, off the streets, and praised us for being Asiatically no show.”⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon rebukes this kind of racist white love in his classic *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁹⁵ By using a rough anticolonial rhetoric, the editors of *Aiiiiieee!* did in fact launch a Fanonian attack on U.S. national culture. Consisting of excerpts from novels, short stories, poetry, and drama, the *Aiiiiieee!* anthology chronicles literary voices from ten men and four women, from various East Asian ethnicities, literary traditions, and historical contexts. Including predominately Chinese and Japanese American writers, *Aiiiiieee!* introduces and establishes the future canon of Asian American literature, including Louis Chu, Hisaye Yamamoto, and John Okada. Although marginal, Filipino American literature is also in the collection, represented by authors Carlos Bulosan, Oscar Penaranda, and Sam Tagatag. Above all, in excavating these lost authors, the editors were establishing “manhood” through their presentation of a lost genealogy of Asian American authors.

Aiiieeeee! was published by Howard University Press, a publishing house in one of America's historically Black colleges and universities. In her pioneering text *Asian American Literature*, Elaine Kim suggests that Chinese American male writers (Chin's "Chinatown Cowboys") needed to clarify "their uniquely American identity" after the legacy of Vietnam and civil rights politics. These historic conditions set the necessary stage for the editors to call attention to their experiences of racial trauma within the context of domestic racial oppression and U.S. imperial conquest. Publishing in mainstream presses had been difficult for Asian Americans until an African American press gave *Aiiieeeee!*—and its authors—literary life. This step was unprecedented and extremely important. When other mainstream presses ignored Asian American literature for most of its history, Howard University Press's reception and distribution of *Aiiieeeee!* established an Asian-Black literary alliance that produced a material foundation for the Asian-Black content located inside the pages of the anthology.

In *Aiiieeeee!*, the editorial collective with Chin write that "the ideal racial stereotype is a low maintenance engine of white supremacy whose efficiency increases with age, as it becomes authenticated and historically verified."⁹⁶ In *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, George Lipsitz argues that "as the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name."⁹⁷ As an impassioned antiracist commentary, the preface of *Aiiieeeee!* conceptualizes an epistemology of racial trauma in relation to material life, what Russell Leong has described as "lived theory."⁹⁸ As the editors articulate unfortunately, many Asian

American authors had lived in obscurity or economic destitution: “the first Asian-American writers worked alone within a sense of rejection and isolation to the extent that it encouraged Asian America to reject its own literature.”⁹⁹ The material effect of this “sense of rejection and isolation” has been underestimated, for it has been foreclosed by post-*Woman Warrior* Asian American feminism as the quicksand of cultural nationalism.

In *Aiiiiieee!*, the editors reject the constellation of Asian American powerlessness within the logic of racial magnetism: the inability to effect change through participatory democracy, the dearth of cultural self-determination, and the hetero-patriarchal sexual emasculation of Asian male erotic subjectivities. On the other hand, by identifying with African American protest literature, the editors put forth representations of African American masculinity as the political personalities that they aspire to be—vocal in electoral politics, leaders in U.S. national culture, and desirable as sexual beings. This is an Asian-Black birth of a sensibility, and it was central to the success of *Aiiiiieee!* as an important work. Danny Kim notes that Asian American literature is “a site where racial invisibility that reigns in the political order can be compensated by the kinds of representations to be attained in literary culture.”¹⁰⁰ The editors had borrowed Black rage and militancy, incorporated the ideas of Black cultural nationalism, and thus located Asian American literature as a site of what Lisa Lowe calls “disidentification” from U.S. national culture.

Historically, Asian American men were designated as “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” and were vital in building the backbone of U.S. capitalism, serving as

cheap labor for the construction of railroads. Furthermore, they served as soldiers during wartime when sacrificing their lives for the nation-state converged with state-sanctioned labels such as “enemies of the state.” In *Narrating Nationalisms*, Jinqi Ling argues that one should reread *Aiiiiiii!* from the discursive moment in which it came forth. Ling’s commentary encodes masculinist language, stating “its [*Aiiiiiii!*’s] ideological thrust” constituted for the first time in over a century, “a public claim on rights.” Ling’s analysis suggests the utility of a rights discourse for the editors to frame their racial marginalization. The scope of their critique is the nation-state, which narrows the window of critique and social transformation. However, this framework departed from third world liberation movements that called for transnational and cross-continental mobilization beyond national borders. Nevertheless, the editors were correct when they identified the nation-state did mediate geographically, linguistically, and militarily the symbolic ordering of U.S. third world men’s racial trauma and national belonging.¹⁰¹

The construction of racial trauma is the inevitable outcome when wounded subjects and the nation-state negotiate the terms and conditions of racialized citizenship. Similar to feminist, queer, and Black wounded subjects, the editors recoup the emancipatory force of a rights discourse through the lens of cultural redress. In *States of Injury*, Wendy Brown argues that the emancipatory power of rights is always historically and culturally situated. As she says, rights are “protean and irresolute signifiers, varying across time and culture, but across the other vectors of power whose crossing they are sometimes deployed to effect.”¹⁰² This argument

has significance when we examine the force of the radical democratic project of *Aiiiiiiii!* after the Civil Rights Movement. Brown delineates that the paradox of rights operates “as an indisputable force of emancipation” and may become at another context “a regulatory discourse.”¹⁰³ This circumstance points to the relationship between the cultural apparatus of social movements and their material base of community activists and grass-roots support, when they collectively invoke radical political demands and when they obstruct or obfuscate the value of rights.

For the editors of *Aiiiiiiii!*, the legitimacy to wield cultural capital, the ability to shape, create, and dissect U.S. life on the terrain of national culture, is as fundamental as well as an indispensable part of U.S. citizenship. Literature—Yellow, mostly East Asian, anti-Christian, and historically “authentic”—is the medium to assert such a long-averred right of cultural citizenship. Unfortunately, during the heyday of cultural nationalism, the editors represented an Asian American version of this problematic history and consequently excluded, for the most part, a wider range of wounded racial subjects, such as women of color and queer people, even though they harbored similar sentiments of exclusion and dehumanization. I address this concern to link the contradiction of their antiracist critique with their successful attempt to dismantle the persistent, dual heritage model of Asian American abstract citizenship through an Asian-Black literary sensibility.

The dual heritage model consists of splitting the Asian American body politic—a divided self—as symmetry between white bourgeoisie and inscrutable foreigner. As Stephen Sumida says, the editors attacked the dual identity concept and

its fundamental link to white assimilationism. Because Asian Americans are both racially and culturally marked as different from whiteness, dual identity assumes an “American” norm that Asian Americans can never achieve:¹⁰⁴

The notion that American and Asian components coexist in every Asian American has regulated Asian American assimilation and negated “American” equating to blackness, even though the first African slaves arrived in 1618, one year prior to the Mayflower: This view explains Asian assimilation, adaptability, and lack of presence in American culture. This sustaining inner resource keeps the Asian-American a stranger in the country in which he was born. He is supposed to feel better off than the blacks, whose American achievement is the invention of their own American culture. American language, fashions, music, literature, cuisine, graphics, body language, morals, and politics have been strongly influence by black culture. They have been cultural achievers, in spite of white supremacist culture, whereas Asian America’s reputation is an achievement of that white culture—a work of racist art.¹⁰⁵

The passage challenges the dual heritage model as an “inner sustaining resource” of Asian ethnic assimilation, naming Black cultural resistance and Asian American false race pride, “to feel better off than the blacks,” as cultural and affective responses to the productive power of post-civil rights racial magnetism. Furthermore, the passage locates Black cultural resistance as a powerful corrective to the construction of a homogenous, modernist U.S. nation-state. From international movements such as Pan-Africanism to Negritude and U.S. movements such as the Harlem Renaissance to Motown Music, Black cultural integrity has created an autonomous political and cultural space, a transatlantic cultural diaspora, that refuses institutional co-optation. More specifically, take for examples Black folk music during chattel slavery with songs such as “This Little Light of Mine” and the blues tradition of Sam Cooke, Robert Johnson, and Billie Holliday. Going further, the passage illustrates the axis of

race/alienation/culture that reveals the relational force of post-civil rights multiracialism, including how the Asian-Black interface continues to pursue a national agenda of belonging.

Yet, the editors form an international perspective due to various social movements taking place at the time of their writing. As I mentioned previously, the politics of anti-imperialism and elimination of global poverty was central to cultural nationalism. When the editors portray Asian American man as “a stranger in the country in which he was born,” they connect U.S. continental-born alienation of colonized men to other forms of colonialism and neocolonialism. In this way, Asian American cultural nationalism constructed a “third world” unity with communities outside the geographic borders of the U.S. nation-state. Karen Su writes, “the racial paradigm emphasizes Asian as a racial category and recognizes the role of racism both in the domestic politics that subjugate people of color within the foreign policies that displace them in U.S. national culture.”¹⁰⁶ This transition from an ethnic model of Asian assimilation to a racial paradigm linked the racial formation of Cold War militarism and post-civil rights domestic strategies to contain Yellow and Black voices and bodies.

Furthermore, early Asian American works are decidedly ethnocentric, defining Asian American identity as a discreet monoracial construction. However, the editors emphasize that citizenship and difference in post-civil rights construct Asian ethnic assimilation over and against Black liberation. Therefore, they consolidate a cultural response that theorizes the post-civil rights moment as a counterdiscourse to both the

Moynihan Report and other popular journals and newspapers. At the moment in which it emerged, I find it remarkable because of the complexity and prescience of this insight: “if the source of this self-contempt is obviously generated from outside the minority, interracial hostility will inevitably result, as history has shown us in the cases of the blacks, Indians and Chicanos.”¹⁰⁷ That understanding for assimilation, “to feel better off than the blacks,” is based upon uneven levels of assimilation and resistance in the economic, cultural, and political spheres for Asian and African Americans. For Asian Americans, there is, to borrow from Roediger, “wages of yellowness,” in which the consumption of hegemonic symbols of whiteness and middle-class privilege crystallizes Asian American middle-class identities through the false sense of class and racial superiority over African American inferiority. The editors continue, “It is the racist truth that some nonwhite minorities, notably Asians, have suffered less and are better off than the other colored minorities.”¹⁰⁸ Here, they counter the emergence of model minority discourses, legitimated by the labor department and the Moynihan Report, that co-opt Asian American identity as racialized policemen in order to show the incommensurability between African American men and white liberal democracy.

Furthermore, models of cultural achievement, based upon notions of self-determination are notions that reflect the dual-heritage model of cultural silence, linguistic inarticulation, and political dependency of Asian American representation in post-civil rights. Discussing the inherent tensions of Asian American identity, Sau-Ling Wong suggests, “an indigenization model of Asian American experiences,

whereby a person of Asian ancestry has to earn the designation of “Asian American” by acquiring “American” credentials on “American” soil informs the cultural nationalist project even as it seeks to critique and resist the model’s assimilationist teleology.¹⁰⁹ The indigenization of U.S. racial politics by placing Black cultural expression as bold articulations of homegrown resistance and self-determination seeks to remedy the “perpetual-foreign within” stereotype still marking Asian American communities. It also shows the particular differences between Asian immigrants whose formative years of race and self are influenced away from the North American continent and Asian children living in North America who experience racism through a multiplicity of domestic arrangements which actively seeks to maintain cultural autonomy and national symbolic capital in concentrated forms of power.

The concept of self-determination, inspired by global movements for decolonization and domestic struggles for multiculturalism, is central to understanding the efficacy of an ethnic identity that espouses American-born authenticity. Despite the pervasive mooring of cultural nationalisms that privilege a male, heterosexual reality, a self-determined, interracial process of identity formation subverts criticisms that only discuss such inflexibility. Because African Americans have been vital agents in transforming the political and cultural constitution of the nation, utilizing African American indigenous cultural resistance destabilizes the fixity of *Aiiieeee*’s cultural nationalism. Quite effectively, they illustrate that third world liberation and its reliance on ethnic identity is efficacious to only a certain degree. Instead of reproducing the post-civil rights consumer culture that sells Black culture for mostly

middle-class consumption, or what Barbara Ehrenreich calls “the corporate manipulators of taste and dictators of the work routine,” Asian American identification with African American cultural politics is a means to reformulate political identities and contest such economic reification.¹¹⁰

Like many cultural borrowings of an Asian-Black interface, African American culture and lived experience constitute for the editors an epistemology of oppression. This human condition is how Aimé Césaire describes Black identity within colonial dehumanization as the “walking compost of human society.”¹¹¹ Armed with this process of racial injury and racial knowing, the comments of the editors reflect grassroots interracial juxtaposition of difference and solidarity, based largely on material and cultural struggle. For example, I Wor Kuen, a Chinese American activist organization has stated, “But through recent years and especially now, revolutionary organizations like the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party among many others have begun to show us ways to change the conditions that our peoples are forced to live under.”¹¹² The revolutionary masculinities of the Black Panthers and Young Lords are active participatory bodies of democracy in motion by hyperlinking the personal and political, lived experience and theory, and in some instances, putting their bodies out on the line. This vanguard role turns racial trauma on its head; what was once debilitating and dehumanizing, now becomes the source of vitality and passion to move entire communities, as the editors remark,

White racism has failed to convince the blacks that they are animals and failed to convince the Indians that they are living fossils. They did not destroy their impulse to cultural integrity, stamp out their literary

sensibility, and produce races of people who would work to enforce white supremacy without having to be supervised or watch dogged.¹¹³

We can then see the importance of culture and its impact on racial identity, masculinized alienation, and citizenship. In *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd write that culture “constitutes a site in which the reproduction of contemporary capitalist social relations may be continually contested” where politics “must be grasped instead as always braided within ‘culture’ and cultural practices.”¹¹⁴

Lastly, I want to conclude this analysis of interracial identifications and cultural construction by critiquing the limitations of Asian American mimesis of African American masculinity. Indeed, as I have been arguing, interracial identification disrupts the primacy of whiteness, as an epistemological center to citizenship and cultural memory. Yet, interracial mimesis of another Other contains power dynamics and spaces of cultural incommensurability that, often times, are fraught with co-optation, sentimentality, and violence. Keeping this in mind, protesting caricatures that mute the voices of Asian American writers, the editors in the following section graft Asian American men’s racial trauma with African American cultural memory:

The deprivation of language in a verbal society like this country’s has contributed to the lack of a recognized Asian American cultural integrity (at most, native-born Asian-Americans are “Americanized” Chinese or Japanese) and the lack of a recognized style of Asian-American manhood. These two conditions have produced “the house nigger mentality,” under which Chinese-and Japanese-American accept responsibility for, rather than authority over the language and accept dependency.¹¹⁵

In this passage, this writerly narrative uses Black vernacular language and emphasizes the trope of slavery. The editors compare Asian American manhood to plantation slavery in the Deep South and recall the field/ house slave dichotomy used by Blacks to call out submissive, disloyal subjects. By allegorizing slavery to the post-civil rights era, the editors transplant slave injuries sustained by state policy, of being human property, to Asian American men's "recognized style of Asian-American manhood." They emphasize that "Nightriders, soldier boys on horseback, fat sheriffs, and all the clowns of racism did destroy a lot of bodies, and leave among these minorities a legacy of suffering that continues to this day."¹¹⁶ However, slavery as an etched cultural memory in America's racial imaginary is the racial terror of de jure segregation, but linking that history to another aggrieved group ignores the ways in which the legal apparatus of the state enacts processes of racialization unevenly at different historic moments. I believe this point is where their Asian-Black cultural connections break down into a contradictory quagmire. I critique their interracial gesture to show both the promise and limitations to social movement masculinity formation and thus the critical awareness and cultural mindfulness needed when interracial power dynamics are activated.

The editors deploy a passing narrative and supplant visual understandings of the color line to one based upon textual and verbal inscription. More specifically, they fail to understand the different ways in which Asian Americans and African Americans have emerged historically into de jure citizenship and the ways in which social movements had placed great emphasis on the specificity of oppression in

communities of color. For example, I Wor Kuen's work, *Getting Together* locates Chinatown poverty, healthcare, and community enrichment as part of Asian American collective experiences. However, by invoking chattel slavery, the editors have ignored such radical specificity enumerated by Asian American activists. This discontinuity reflects the lack of theoretical precision and coordination within antiracist struggles.

Tales of racial passing have been historically tales of citizenship and modernization.¹¹⁷ From novels such as James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* to Nella Larsen's *Passing*, from films like *Old San Francisco* to *Gone with the Wind*, narratives of passing disrupt the certainty of fixed racial categories and reconceptualize the visual dependence of racial hierarchy in constituting the nation. Archetypal figures like the tragic mulatto or moral panics like the fear of miscegenation between races have revealed the deep anxiety of whites and their fears of mongrelization. But passing narratives have mostly centered the white, heterosexual male as the signifier of desire, the subject to pass for and thus to masquerade as. Here, in crossing the color line, the editors mimic the *vox* of African American trauma, national belonging, and public authority. To be sure, this is a transgression over to the moral and taxonomic opposite of the nation.

Taking on racialized accoutrements, they deploy an uncritical performance of Black masculinity through interracial mimesis. What do I mean by interracial mimesis? First, interracial mimesis is the transitional, processional, and ongoing rearticulation of racial discourses and transformation through racial masquerade. Who better can exemplify the trauma and anguish of emasculation than the abject Black

male body? Nevertheless, making these interracial identifications with slavery comes with many contradictions. The bold invocation of African American injury and trauma onto Asian American bodies, to be sure, conflates Black and Asian difference as discursively homogenous and reduces the institution of slavery and Asian ethnic assimilation as a Janus Face of history.

In *Blackface, White Noise*, Michael Rogin argues that Blackface is a performance of racial identities rooted in European imperialism, as a material and psychological investment colonizer and colonized had in the world capitalist system. It inverted and assigned a system of racial classification by fixating Blackness as an immutable and transparent category. Blackface formed ideologies of national belonging. It was represented on stage, theater, vaudeville, traveling shows, Hollywood films, and radio. It helped produce an imagined community in which white anxieties over African American miscegenation, citizenship demands, and criminality were contained by rigid boundaries of racial difference that only whites could transgress.¹¹⁸

The narrative of racial passing as the editors' new face rests in its theatrical approach to masculinization. Minstrelsy and Blackface incorporated the use of make-up, costumes, dialogue, and staging. These stylistic, theatrical elements transferred to Hollywood production codes in the Big Studio Era and colored up white performers for the mass entertainment of white audiences. The stage or screen had been the mirror, a transgressive *carte blanche* showing racial narratives of passing that helped construct U.S. imagined community, which moved white settlers and ethnics into the

melting pot by keeping minorities out. For the editors of *Aiiiiieee!*, their theatricality rests in their performance of language: the style, tone, metaphors, and argumentation that lays out their play on words. In the context of language and literary production, they state, “there is no conflict between East and West. That is a modern invention of whites and their yellow goons—writers who need white overseers to give them a license to use the English language.”¹¹⁹ Here, they recreate a kind of textual theater in which “yellow goons” play assimilationist writers, “white overseers” represent mainstream publishers, and the “Conflict” establishes the dramatic crisis. With characters in place and the plot in motion, not only do they call out a performance of Asian American writers who pass across the Asian color bar, but also they recreate the color line in contradictory ways.

Conclusion

In *Killing Rage*, bell hooks teaches us that “killing rage” means being complicit with white denial of white supremacy.¹²⁰ “Killing rage” means consenting to white standards of acceptable post-civil rights “race talk” because the elimination of de jure white supremacy calls for the elimination of racial militancy. When teaching comparative ethnic studies and literature courses, I am troubled that African American writers such as Toni Morrison and June Jordan are read by white and Asian American students as “angry/militant,” while Asian American writers such as Fae Myenne Eng or Chang-Rae Lee are considered more “civil.” Reproducing the “good versus bad minority” all over again, this time in the classroom of multiethnic literatures, the unequal reception and palatability of Asian American literature benefits those

audiences who are uncomfortable with critiques of white power and suburban privilege, or, what James Lee names as, “the cards that white supremacy’s regime deals that entail physical death for many, and social death for an even greater number.”¹²¹ Denial is the act of forgetting and a central component of post-civil rights white supremacy. In recalling this example from the classroom, my interpretation of *Aiiiiieee!* hopes to dislodge the centrality of the Chin/Kingston debate in Asian American literature, because it has elided some important processes of Asian American racial, literary, and canon formation. This is the project of decolonizing the mind and decolonizing the field of Asian American studies. That is to say, the act of forgetting is a political act.

**Yellow Bodies, Black Sweat:
Yao, Ichiro, and Sport Internationalism**

“Whether one’s concern is with specific areas such as interracial relations or male-female role relationships, or with more general areas of scientific inquiry such as social organization and social change, sport offers virtually unexplored avenues for generating knowledge and gaining better insights into old problems.” Harry Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*.

“We define *racial formation* as the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed...First, we argue that racial formation is a process of historically situated *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized. Next we link racial formation to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled.” Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*.

“The modern times that W.E.B. Du Bois once identified as the century of the color line have now passed. Racial hierarchy is still with us.” Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*.

The Asian Jackie Robinson?

Figuring the Asian male body in popular sport, Alexander Global Promotions has made bobblehead dolls of Ichiro Suzuki, the Major League Baseball Most Valuable Player in 2001 and star right fielder for the Seattle Mariners. Called Ichibobs, the three-dimensional caricatures stand a mighty seven and one-half inches tall and weigh 1.2 pounds while marketed as “stronger than ceramic” and “mint condition.” Officially licensed by the MLB, they are part of a global commodity chain—made in China, distributed within the Pacific Rim, and sold for less than twenty dollars in the United States. News that Ichiro bobblehead dolls would be given to the first twenty thousand fans at a game between the Seattle Mariners and the

Minnesota Twins in July 2001 nearly caused a human stampede where “the appeal for the new ones is strictly p-r-o-f-i-t.”¹²² Understanding the fanfare for the day’s promotion, the Mariners had prepared for the event by implementing extra security, setting up portable toilets, and bringing in additional garbage cans; the bobblehead craze had met the sports world and it was Ichiro who seemed to be head and shoulders (wobbly as they may be) above the competition. Ichibobs are diminutive replicas of Ichiro’s body; at once, a miniature representation of his racial identity and masculine physicality and at a world system level, his cult status as an Asian superstar along the Pacific Rim circuit. It is a simulacrum of his masculinity, of plastic and paint, and a representation of his body and his prowess on baseball’s field of dreams.

Ichiro represents in clear ways the figuration of the Asian male body as both cultural phenomena and transnational commodity. This chapter describes the marked change from viewing the Asian male body as an unattractive representative for marketing commodity exchanges to an imported spectacle reproducing NBA and MLB transnational capital. Yet, mine is not simply to offer a conventional study of the political economy involved in the global expansion of popular sport. Rather, it attempts to illustrate how Asian men in popular sport presuppose and indeed attempt to produce Asian masculinity through inverting the bodily emasculation of Asian American men. The fact that race and masculinity are profoundly difficult to separate from stereotypes of the body is a fundamental aspect of biological racism. It is difficult to separate the body from racial hierarchy because of the penetration of nineteenth-century discourses that center on scientific pseudo-knowledges. Even

today, this biological trace acts as a specter that haunts our racial imaginary even when culture has superseded, but not erased, biology as an explanation for racial difference. Spectacular athletes like Kobe Bryant or LeBron James seem to be a public illustration of Black accomplishments after civil rights, while distracting us from the slower gains or impediments for most Blacks in other spheres. This chapter details the ways in which popular sport has been racialized as a Black space of colonial fantasy and fears, and how Asian male athletes break down the fixity of racialized spaces that hinge upon bodies, essentialism, and visual common sense. Because popular sport harbors this biological trace, the fetishization of the Black male body saturates our common-sense understanding of Black male racialization in post-civil rights. Therefore, the ways in which Asian male bodies inhabit Black cultural spaces illustrate the complex process of Asian ethnic assimilation into national culture that depends upon processes of Black racialization already in motion. By inhabiting the realm of bodily agency, an arena that has been denied Asian male bodies in the popular mind, the racial logic that places Black men as only the body and Asian men as bodiless displaces visual common-sense understandings of racial difference. Yet these representations of Asian sports stars within the context of global multiculturalism depoliticize forms of Black radicalism in previous breakthroughs of the color line in popular sport.

Other analyses of Asian American masculinity have looked at literature or film, such as the masculinity of Frank Chin or Bruce Lee. Yet, little investigation is available concerning Asian American men in other cultural productions. Addressing this lack, I analyze the cultural phenomena of Ichiro Suzuki and Yao Ming, both of

whom have embodied icons of heroic masculinity on sports' grandest stages. From a postnationalist investigation of our revered pastimes, popular sport not only reveals the impact and importance of less analyzed cultural institutions, but it does so by exploring the important relations between men of color both ideologically and materially. In this sense, the relations between minority masculinities in popular sport plays a powerful ideological role and carries a material force in defining manhood, public authority, and national culture. The mediation of how these axes intersect and confirm each other centers the theoretical and historical concerns of this chapter.

Masculinity and the Male Body

Scholarly scrutiny of men and sport has attempted to explain the construction of masculinity. Contemporary discussions of Asian and Black masculinity have concerned themselves with the relationship between racial hierarchy and the male body. Many claims about manhood have been associated to citizenship claims embodied in political, economic, and social voice, from Fredrick Douglass to W.E.B. Du Bois to the editors of *Aiiiiieee!* In directing our attention to popular sport, I ask, where else are manhood claims so personified yet maintained? But another more basic question may arise: what is masculinity and why does popular sport play a pivotal role in its definition and influence? In *Female Masculinity*, Judith Halberstam defines it this way:

Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distributions of wealth. Masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; masculinity represents the power of inheritance, the consequences of the traffic in women, and the promise of social privilege.¹²³

I utilize Halberstam's important idea of linking gender identifications to state formations, kinship networks, material life, and power relations. A brilliant analysis in gender studies, her project questions the persistence in gender and queer studies that subordinate alternative masculinities, including female and minority masculinities, while only focusing exclusively on white, middle-class masculinity.

In addition, Gail Bederman helps us understand masculinity this way: "Manhood—or masculinity, as it is commonly termed today—is a continual, dynamic process." Through that process, "men claim certain kinds of authority, based upon their particular type of bodies."¹²⁴ Bederman identifies the shifting, historical definitions of masculinity linked to the body and race. She uses the example of Jack Johnson in pugilistic sport in order to analyze men's bodies to specific class (Victorian) and racial formations (white civilization). She relates the incident, in which Johnson wears extra gauze on his genital area in order to perform the stereotype of Black masculinity and instill fear and awe in his white opponents and the white boxing public. Bederman's analysis allows us to consider the impact of "particular type of bodies" and what "kinds of authority" these men can claim as well as "the promise of social privilege" that arises. Using popular sport's influence of manhood, she asks what ideological productions are occurring in "the process which creates men by linking male genital anatomy to male identity, and linking both anatomy and identity to particular arrangements of authority and power."¹²⁵

Conventional studies of popular sport have used the lens of gender to explicate the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities in sport as well as the subordination of

women.¹²⁶ Messner and Sabo incorporate feminist perspectives that have analyzed the gender order of sport, and the ways in which masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity.¹²⁷ A critical intervention, this collection demonstrated the fundamental intellectual importance of feminist theory in the emerging area called men's studies in the 1980s and 1990s.

Other texts acknowledge the growing immersion of gender analysis in popular sports, with sociologists doing the majority of the research. This critical perspective emphasizes the negative outcomes of men's experiences in sport, such as physical injury, patriarchy, homophobia, and misogyny.¹²⁸ Yet, relying on a methodology that privileges gender consequently does not pay adequate attention to race and class. Although sociologists like Harry Edwards have described the linkages between sport and class inequalities as well as structural racial discrimination, I find the literature on sport and men's studies focused heavily on the construction of nationalism and the commodification of popular sport as part and parcel of globalization. Without adequate attention to race and masculinity, various authors do not seek to challenge prevailing conceptions of sport aside from mere political economy.¹²⁹ In all, this chapter challenges such assumptions and concurrently, uses interdisciplinary and cultural studies methods to rethink the role of popular sport in global society.

Popular Sport, Capital, and Race

Popular sport seems to exemplify since the late nineteenth century dominant definitions of manhood and manliness formed around notions of power, strength, aggressiveness, heteronormativity, patriarchy, competitiveness, and domination. Its

genesis as the dominant cultural site of masculinizing the male body emerged in response to the emasculating effects of industrial capitalism. During the proletarianization of the American economy, a crisis of masculinity emerged from the loss of economic autonomy including control over one's labor and ownership of the means of production. Alfred Chandler has argued in *Scale and Scope* the impact of managerial capitalism on industrialization and the scientific rationality employed to increase productivity and profit.¹³⁰ Working bodies were routinized in a system of production that managed their time and disciplined their physical actions in a highly developed business imperative to maximize labor power. Displaced from agrarian and artisan social life and placed in the confining enclosures of factories, working-class bodies became the object of labor exploitation through low pay, dangerous health conditions, and lack of work protections. This labor-intensive process had a detrimental effect on working men's bodies. Working-class bodies embodied the contradictions between capital and labor, one which Marx eloquently describes as "the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker."¹³¹ Marx expresses the "alienation" workers feel not only from their commodities but also from themselves. In this sense, nineteenth century laborers had lost the means to control their daily work and finished products, and therefore their manhood was intricately tied to their lost sense of independence, ownership, and freedom.

Manhood symbolized the American Way, to use Sacvan Bercovitch's phrase, an ethic of open-ended freedom through entrepreneurship and property ownership. The West and the frontier, patriarchy and heteronormativity, and imperialism and genocide—these were the outward expressions of masculine mobility.¹³² At the end of the nineteenth century, white men felt an acute loss of their own bodies though simultaneously they had excluded women, immigrants, and minority men from their own sold sense of American belonging in the nation's body politic. Popular sport offered white men a means through which to emphasize the male body as the locus where remasculinization could occur. Many leading thinkers and moralists of the day espoused that the feminization of American manhood was synonymous with civilization in capitalist modernity.¹³³ This sense of feminized manhood revealed the deep anxieties and fears of a generation living in a tumultuous era of economic, political, and social transformation.

Middle-class white bodies were not immune from a sense of lost manhood. Indeed, popular discourses of men's health suggested that Victorian culture created men who were over-sophisticated and effete. Hundreds of books and pamphlets detailed a modern condition—male nervousness—that stemmed from overcivilization. George Beard's *American Nervousness* and S. Weir Mitchell's *Sexual Neurasthenia* document the psychological and somatic effects from the Victorian ideology of manly restraint including such symptoms as loss of vital fluids, brain collapse, nervous exhaustion, and hysteria. Many psychologists, intellectuals, and moralists also felt that Victorian domesticity, with its focus on conformity and

sexual repression, enervated the development of rugged, physically powerful men. Responding to these fears of feminization, gymnasiums, baseball diamonds, and boxing became popular pastimes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³⁴ Remasculinizing America was a powerful leitmotif for the problems citizens perceived with American modernity. The modernist sensibility that sought to make sense of steam power, the factories, telegraph, technocratic science, and urban cities relied upon understanding the role of masculinity, sport, and the body.

Working and middle-class men viewed popular sport as the antidote to the feminizing effects of industrial capital and the ideology of Victorian culture. Sport epitomized the rugged individualism of a Jacksonian usable past where the display of physicality and manhood was routed through the body. Michael Kimmel writes,

This preoccupation with the physical body facilitated the transition from inner directed men, who expressed their inner selves in the workplace and at home—that is, in their “real” lives—to other directed men, concerned with acquiring the culturally defined trappings that denoted manhood. The increasing importance of the body, of physicality, meant that men’s bodies carried a different sort of weight than expressing the man within. The body did not contain the man; it was the man.¹³⁵

Indeed, the male body was the repository of capitalist contradiction. For example, according to Elliot Garn in *The Manly Art*, boxers resisted proletarianization. Sports such as boxing and baseball reinvented masculinity. Working-class men resurrected the lexicon of skilled artisans when describing matches as “a profession,” “went to work,” “made good work,” “art,” “science,” and “craft.” Boxers controlled their own bodies in a physical sense, but symbolically they negotiated the exchange of their labor for remuneration in the open market of the ring and canvas; they were free from

authoritarian management and discipline as well as routinized wage-labor.¹³⁶ Here was a sport constitutive of bodily adeptness and mobility, for it allowed the formation of working-class masculinities in contrast to bourgeois gentility.¹³⁷

Evolving definitions of manhood and the male body transformed masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century, from inert, effete classifications to meanings tied to the physicality of sports. Along with the growing popularity of popular sport came a consumer culture that commodified sport leisure activity to a mass audience. The transition of popular sport from an emergent social practice to a mass cultural institution developed through complex negotiations with America's consumer society and racial apartheid. Baseball especially captured the imagination of the nation and quickly reinforced capitalist characteristics such as obedience, self-sacrifice, and discipline as well as de jure segregation, whiteness as ownership, and sport icons as proper national men. When African American ballplayers were relegated to the Negro League, white masculinity flourished both ideologically and materially as the filter to which consumerism held to be the standard of national manhood. As Thorstein Veblen says in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, the formation of a leisure culture followed the emerging capitalist order: "the end of acquisition and accumulation is conventionally held to be the consumption of the goods accumulated—whether it is consumption directly by the owner of the goods or by the household attached to him and for this purpose identified with him in theory."¹³⁸ Nowhere was this more apparent than in baseball as a participatory and spectator sport.

Sport masculinity saturated U.S. national culture with live games, cartoons, moving pictures, newspapers, dime novels, radio broadcasts, and most importantly health commodities that centered upon structuring anti-miscegenation codes between white and non-white men. Consuming manhood meant buying vast quantities of manly concoctions that white masculinity in popular sport epitomized like Sylvester Graham's crackers, C.W. Post's Grape Nuts, or J.H. Kellogg's rolled flakes. Men bought various advice manuals and guidebooks to read about ways to maintain manly vigor and health that baseball players like Ty Cobb and Shoeless Joe Jackson symbolized. Books such as William Haike's *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So* and Bernarr MacFadden's *Superb Manhood* were best sellers of the new century. Terms such as "sissy" entered popular discourses to classify men who did not partake in baseball. Perhaps Zane Grey summed up the sentiment of the times: "All boys love baseball. If they don't they're not real boys." What all these remedies reconceptualized was the regulation of the male body through racialized discourses centered on white masculinity as the epitome of health, physicality, and manliness. For the reinvention of turn-of-the-century masculinity reflected the transformation of the consumer culture that baseball actively incorporated in its rules, play, and values.

From the inception of popular sport as both a leisure activity and mass cultural institution, race played a crucial role in its cultural and material formation in U.S. society. The contested political landscape of popular sport reflected the twentieth century's turbulent crisis over the color line, and in this milieu, created new cultural agents of social transformation. African American men, as racialized subjects

excluded from citizenship, made significant strides in popular sport. Their desire and exuberance for engaging in popular sport differed from white men. When schools did not educate their minds, when employers refused to give jobs, and when vigilante mobs lynched their bodies, African American men wholeheartedly made use of other opportunities wherever they came. One such arena was using their bodies in popular sport symbolically to claim a stake against institutional and cultural racism.

Better than most, C.L.R. James, an avid player and critic of West Indies cricket, understands the power of playing sport in the face of racial exclusion. He eloquently describes in *Beyond a Boundary* the significance of race, class, and popular sport through an analysis of local West Indies culture within the hierarchy of colonialism. James' extraordinary analysis interrogates the ways in which marginal men remasculinized their sense of lost humanity, essentially their lost manhood, through playing cricket. He writes about the formation of self-determination and freedom, once forgotten ideas in a culture of skewed rules and dehumanization, "The class and racial rivalries were too intense. They could be fought out without violence or much lost except pride and honor. Thus the cricket field was a stage on which selected individuals played representative roles which were charged with social significance."¹³⁹ The cricket field contested British hegemony through creating a cultural space of respect and dignity, using the bodily ritual of physical performance. Thus, C.L.R. James and his teammates demanded through their bodies and mind a politicized and racialized sense of dignity and respect through playing games, a way to hold their heads high. The remasculinization of Black bodies for James illustrated the

defeat of their colonial masters at their game, where the rules applied equally to all. Likewise, popular sport in the twentieth century United States had been a critical cultural practice to examine the ways in which minority men used their bodies to confront institutional and cultural barriers to full citizenship. It offered them an alternative means to conceptualize being human, of being a man, mainly in response to the processes of racialization and exclusion from political, economic, and cultural life. Legacies of genetic or cultural inferiority, long the workings of irrational systems of colonialism, were widely held beliefs formed to propagate the intellectual, physical, and spiritual inferiority of racialized men.

A survey of Black masculinity in popular sport provides a rich, varied history of Black radicalism that contested and overturned these prevailing myths. Indeed, the impact of Black radicalism in motion has formed alternative narratives of citizenship and national belonging for men of color. This demand for recognition cannot be underestimated. When Jesse Owens imploded Hitler's propaganda of a superior Aryan stock in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, his triumph was a watershed for African American men excluded from membership in other spheres of American life due to de facto segregation. Likewise, Joe Louis, the great Black heavyweight champion who followed Jack Johnson, created immense racial pride for the African American community when he defeated the white boxer Max Baer. Richard Wright says in "Joe Louis Discovers Dynamite," that Louis' victory refuted "the theory that Negroes are inferiors who inevitably fail when they match skill or knowledge with whites."¹⁴⁰

No one more than Jackie Robinson embodied the wholesale rejection of Black inferiority when he shattered the color line in Major League Baseball on April 18, 1946. His groundbreaking entry into Major League Baseball spawned intense media publicity by television shows, non-fiction books, and newspaper articles. After Robinson's grand debut, the *New York Amsterdam News* wrote,

Thus the most significant sports story of the century was written into the record books as baseball took up the cudgel for democracy and an unassuming Negro boy ascended the heights of excellence to prove the rightness of the experiment. And prove it in the only correct crucible for such an experiment—the crucible of white hot competition.¹⁴¹

Clearly, to participate in popular sport for Black men was to participate in American democracy. Manhood became symbolized through base hits, slam dunks, and knockout punches, on level playing fields. Additionally, Mohammed Ali relished his newfound opportunity in the 1960s, not in only performing arias of physicality in the boxing ring but also by standing up for political issues. Ali exemplified the fullest expression of popular sports' promise as a cultural institution of social change when he used his mass platform to fight for political causes including the plight of poor Blacks in America, anti-imperialism in Vietnam, and interracial solidarity during the Black Power movement.

As described in a previous chapter, the Civil Rights Movement and identity-based social movements fundamentally changed the tenor of race. In post-civil rights, Black men have completely displaced the white male body, once the icon of physical and mental superiority, as the exclusive ideological signifier of athletic superiority. Popular sport is a mass cultural institution that embodies the new racial formation of

the U.S. in which whiteness has reconstituted itself by being less reliant on ocular displays of power. Michael Omi says, “the prospect that whites may not constitute a clear majority or exercise unquestioned racial domination in particular institutional settings has led to a *crisis of white identity*. In this respect, whites have been racialized in the post-civil rights era.”¹⁴² Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle, and Joe DiMaggio, these icons of white masculinity personified the rugged, working-class ethic that our nation’s eyes turned to, for heroes and for proper national masculinity. Today, Michael Vick, LeBron James, and Derek Jeter are one of many examples of Black men who have supplanted white male hero worship. The transformation of popular sport from white, working-class heroes to Black sport icons reminds us that cultural critics must retheorize the trajectories and circuits of national culture, citizenship, and power.¹⁴³

From the 1970s to present day, the conflation of Black men and athletic performance has become common currency in our representational and material life. It conjures up notions of physicality and Blackness, often stereotypically embodying wealth, glamour, and the fashionably hip. Yet Harry Edwards reminds us that “the disproportionately high number of black athletes in sports at all levels, and their domination of these endeavors is due to white racism in the general society...”¹⁴⁴ Because of this circumstance, Black men “often utilize sports as one means of masculine self-expression within an otherwise limited structure of opportunity.”¹⁴⁵ Popular sport offered a way out for Black bodies from police surveillance, urban ghettos, and economic destitution. The Black body signified ambivalence over the

meanings attached to success and poverty, freedom and confinement. But it definitely conjured up in our national imaginary powerful conceptions of what kinds of activities Black men excelled in (and what they could not). Racializing popular sport as a Black space of hope erased the contradictions of wealth distribution, class antagonism, and the property system. Yet, it was also a space of desire, in which white boys wanted to be Black. The Black male body came to dominate celebrity and hero worship, an identificatory process that Norman Mailer once coined as “the white negro” or to use a famous slogan from a popular sports drink: Everyone wants to “Be Like Mike.” But in that process of idolization, reducing Black men as only the body revealed the problems inherited from raciological thinking. Paul Gilroy writes in *Against Race*, “As actively de-politicized consumer culture has taken hold, the world of racialized appearances has become invested with another magic... that have added a conspicuous premium to today’s planetary traffic in the imagery of blackness.”¹⁴⁶ Gilroy explains that “planetary traffic in the imagery of blackness” depends upon race and bodily difference. Shaquille O’Neal, Lennox Lewis, Kobe Bryant, and Barry Bonds, they each generate at least ten million dollars in earnings from appearances and product endorsements, appear in over two hundred newspaper stories, and brandish their faces on global magazine covers. As such, Gilroy’s postmodern aesthetic reveals the traffic of Blackness firmly within global capital, whereby “the old hierarchy is being erased,” presumably the structure of capitalist culture reliant on white male bodies for its reproduction.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the “old hierarchy” seems to have a resilient life, constantly reappearing in different guises and shapes. Cultural ideologies of

masculinity and race persistently tied racialized bodies to colonial discourses that created racial hierarchies tied to sexuality and the male body. Of course, these taxonomies of the body have their legacies in slave empires, colonial conquest, and imperialism. Meanwhile, residual stereotypes of male bodies remain as residual cultural formations that keep racial hierarchy persistently intact. Moreover, the reliance on Black masculinity, for the reproduction of transnational sport, has moored the key concept of racial fetishism to proliferate stereotypes of the Black male body.

In *Welcome to the Jungle*, Kobena Mercer describes the fetishization of the Black male body that relies upon stereotypes of the body and sexuality. Mercer states, “blacks ‘fit’ into this terrain by being confined to a narrow repertoire of ‘types’—the supersexual stud and sexual ‘savage’ on the one hand, or the delicate, fragile and exotic ‘oriental’ on the other.”¹⁴⁸ Mercer allows us to understand, by looking at Roger Mapplethorpe’s photography, the reduction of the Black male body as sexual object, as a reified body that effaces the material process involved in the production of the image.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the overdetermination of the Black male body as the embodiment of colonial sexual fantasies reveals the idolization of Otherness. During the 1990s, evolutionary discourses had utilized “Mongolian,” “Caucasoid,” and “Negroid” categories, first employed by eugenicist scientists looking for the Holy Grail of racial taxonomies that could schematize physicality, mentality, and behavior. Alongside contracting social services and social welfare programs in civil society, intelligence and race as well as academic performance and sexualized behavior were essentialized to genes and evolution in such controversial texts as *The Bell Curve*; *Race, Evolution*,

and Behavior: A Life History Perspective; and *Taboo: Why Blacks Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid to Talk About It*.

Genes rather than social conditions explained the racial divide and class divisions in society. This was a modern day redux of colonial scientific racism. Erasing institutional culpability, ranging from affirmative action to school vouchers to welfare safety nets, the redux of gene discourses ignored contextualizing poverty, cultural depravity, and other societal ailments to processes of deindustrialization and the crisis state. Furthermore, think tanks and neo-eugenicists created a well-funded backlash that was a fundamental part of neoconservative attacks on multiculturalism and its dividends: affirmative action policies, declining white male privilege, pan-ethnic solidarities and racial diversity in culture.¹⁵⁰ This is what Robyn Wiegman has called this development the “politics of visibility,” a term that describes viewing diverse representations as multiculturalism’s end game.

In *Taboo: Why Blacks Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid to Talk About It*, journalist Jon Entine tries to prove the myth of Black physicality. He invokes whites, Blacks, and Asians in making a general observation about athletic demographics. His specious argument displays the remarkable staying power of racial hierarchy and the biological trace, and the ways in which visual culture plays a dominant role in its reproduction. Entine remarks,

Asians, who constitute 57 percent of the world’s population, are virtually invisible in the most democratic of world sports, running, soccer, and basketball...in the mid-1960s the racial breakdown in the National Basketball Association (NBA) was 80 percent white, 20 percent black; today it’s almost exactly reversed [...] white running backs, cornerbacks, or wide receivers in the NFL? Count them on one

hand.¹⁵¹

His comment, “virtually invisible,” tells us that visual evidence, what the eye can see and discriminate, the *representational effect* of racial thinking, is the litmus test for hard science. But that visual evidence correlates with common sense, what everyone supposedly thinks but no one talks about. This type of commentary represents the traces of colonial taxonomies, the ever-present legacy of biological explanations of race. As Wiegman says, the symbolic value given to the power of looking had been the superficial gaze upon which white supremacy connotes a whole host of racial meanings in which pigmentation of the skin unlocks the racial objects’ innermost development. Visual culture and its attendant human taxonomy supposedly have revealed such inner developments of human bodies.¹⁵²

Offering a more graphic example, in *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective*, J. Philippe Rushton sets out an ambitious project to map the complex associations among intelligence, brain size, and physical endowments.¹⁵³ Schematizing the male body by quantifying individual traits such as aggressiveness, strength of sex drive, anxiety, and rule-following, he tries to legitimate the relative characteristics of Asians (he uses the term “Oriental”), whites, and Blacks. A racial hierarchy that scaffolds into a triangle emerges, where Asians are classified as having the largest brains and smallest genitalia, whites ranked in the middle, and Blacks last in intelligence and largest in genitalia. Thus, to speak of the physicality of Black men is to speak of their superiority as a brute, separating the skin and body from the intellect or as Eldridge Cleaver calls it the embodiment of “Brute Power” where

“society is deaf, dumb, and blind to his mind.”¹⁵⁴ To speak of the physicality of Asian American men is to speak of their invisibility, distinguishing the mind from (body) matter in a negative dialectic of absence or what Richard Fung identifies as “Looking for My Penis.”¹⁵⁵

Invisibility can exist in minority masculinities, perhaps similar to Ralph Ellison’s scene of the “Battle Royal” in the *Invisible Man*, where racialized physicality is put on display, but is made transparent by the gaze of those watching and those blinded. Stuart Hall has described the splitting of the imperial eye that manufactures stereotypes dependent on dual representations of sexual and bodily difference.¹⁵⁶ He says, “both a nostalgia for an innocence lost forever to the civilized, and the threat of civilization being over-run or undermined by the recurrence of savagery, which is always lurking just below the surface; or by an untutored sexuality threatening to break out.”¹⁵⁷ Not only have colonial discourses produced dialectical representations of race within racial groups, for example, the savage beast and the impotent house slave, but also they have relied upon the politics of racial magnetism for the maintenance of racial hierarchy. Popular sport then can be a crucial site from which to interrogate the logic and fixity of this raciological system.

The Asian Male Body, Stereotypes, and Sport Internationalism

This context is important in order to understand the significance of the entry of Asian sports stars into a predominately Black, racialized cultural space. The symmetry of racial stereotypes of the body is quite appealing, for the logical structure is seemingly supported by visual evidence. To be sure, my key interest in mapping

this terrain is to illustrate its tectonic fragility, the tenuous ground that relies upon ocular common sense to maintain its coherence. In this way, Yao Ming and Ichiro Suzuki have entered the world of popular sport in which the meanings associated to the male body and physicality are firmly moored to the way the Black male body has been racialized as a figure of colonial phantasmagoria. Yet, the Asian male body reveals the contingency of hierarchic ideology, the main circulatory agent of stereotypes. Homi Bhabba has suggested, “an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness.”¹⁵⁸ Otherness in popular sport relies upon visual culture, the television broadcast, the print ad, the bedroom poster, the images seared in our collective minds.

If Yao and Ichiro were merely ordinary players or even all-star caliber, then their presence to the skeptic may seem trite or even analogous to tokenism. However, their prominence as the leading face of marketing in baseball and basketball and their popularity as legitimate cultural icons suggest we should not underestimate their value. Neither their revenue-generating capabilities nor their immense physical skills fully illustrate their impact on the study of postnational racial formations. If we are to believe Merleau-Ponty and later Connell’s assertions that who we are and how we relate to the world centers on our bodies, then representations of Ichiro and Yao breakdown the fixity of racial bodily classifications.¹⁵⁹ The concept of articulation enables us to understand the arbitrary closure of assigned meanings that link the male body to racialized stereotypes. Articulation in Stuart Hall’s definition has a pragmatic double denotation. On the one hand, articulate means to utter, to speak forth,

organically express. On the other hand, in Hall's Great Britain, they speak of an articulated lorry (semi-truck): a truck for which the front (cab) and back (trailer) can be linked but not indispensably; the two parts are connected to each other at a specific juncture that can be broken.

The theory of articulation allows both a way of interpreting how ideological elements organically manifest under particular conditions, to link together within a discourse, and a means of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at certain conjunctures, to distinct political subjects.¹⁶⁰ There is no necessary belongingness to racial stereotypes since they are purely ideological, established in the service of power and hegemony. The connection that binds racial hierarchy to minority masculinities is arbitrary, the signification of which transforms through cultural practice. As both cultural and political subjects, pioneers such as Ichiro and Yao have great impact on the cultural legitimacy of Asian Americans and in particular, Asian American masculinity. In so doing, they not only undermine the racialization of Asian American men but also the racialization of Asian Americans in general as alien outsiders unable to appeal to mainstream America.

The 2001 Major League Baseball All-Star Game illustrates the reworking of masculinity and transnational capital on baseball's grand stage. The All-Star Game is an event that allows MLB to represent itself as a national event, to display its stars, and to promote meritocracy where baseball's stars shine. While athletes like Cal Ripken, Jr. and Mark McGwire represent a throwback to baseball's past, with its white, male, and blue-collar ethic, international stars like Ichiro represent baseball's

future of internationalization and global multiculturalism. This is not to claim that baseball has progressed beyond an often dehistoricized and depoliticized imagination. Safeco Park, the site of the 2001 All-Star game, is a “throwback” stadium, built in the style of old ballparks with the addition of luxury boxes that cities continue to build as “new-old” ballparks.

As Ichiro made his All-Star debut at the new nostalgic ballpark, his relatively short (5’ 9”) and relatively small (160lbs) body is marker of his Asianness, a racial trope of physical size situated in racialized bodies. His body performs a particular masculinity in the national imaginary, in part, praised by mainstream media for cultural values embedded in tropes of Asian American racialization including his quiet, unassuming persona as well as poised on his work ethic, determination, and physical talents. Yet, Ichiro capitalized his talent, his batting title, his arm strength, and his revered hand-eye coordination, that made people stop and watch his performance as eye-riveting spectacle. In *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige argues that subcultures are “pregnant with significance.”¹⁶¹ Reading the gestures, movements, signs, styles, and speech of Asian sport icons shows us how the physical links with the symbolic and the ways in which this articulation impacts the political and social formation of proper national manhood.

Ichiro plays the game at his tempo, which forces the opposition to make serious adjustments. His speed on the bases, velocity with the bat, arm strength, defense and amazing hitting ability all shift the opposition out of their comfort zone and puts them firmly on the defensive. Pitchers must change up their "out" pitch

because he hits anything, anywhere. Infielders must rush and hurry their throws. Defensively, Ichiro's arm gets respect—baserunners are stuck with singles rather than ending up on an Ichiro highlight reel for an attempted double. Each at-bat is a singular experience, a discreet time capsule that reveals his perceptive powers of seeing the moving baseball. His style of play produces alternative conceptions of baseball physicality apart from that of the stereotypical baseball player, who bulks up and tries to blast the ball for a homerun. Indeed, his style is his alterity, relying less on homeruns, (although he has surprising power), and more on the nuances of the game, the steals, throwing assists, and on-base percentage. Thus, his leadoff batting position, arguably the most important hitting position in baseball, establishes the scoring opportunities a team may have. Ichiro won the batting title in his rookie year, astonishing even his most ardent critics, because, in short, it is not supposed to happen that way.

For the Seattle Mariners, Ichiro represents a \$27 million dollar bargain, a phenomenal hitter with sprinter speed and a rock star's allure. His masculinity appeals to a diverse set of people that cuts across nationality and race. His popularity specifies for Asian American communities a sense of belonging, as redemptive insiders and not forever foreigners. For Japanese Americans, they carry the collective sin of Pearl Harbor. When Ichiro hits the baseball better than anyone else, he has the redemptive power to make an entire community feel better about itself. Stephen Sumida amusingly says, "A few weeks ago, the minister asked, who is it we turn to for all our hopes and blessings? And the congregation answered with about maybe 75 percent

saying Jesus, and the 25 percent saying Ichiro.”¹⁶² His cultural impact reveals the ways in which the particularity of Japanese American racialization works off the transpacific migration of a diasporic son that ironically tethers the racial formation of Japanese Americans to Japanese nationals. For Asian American men, they have cultural heroes such as Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan, but that type of masculinity carries the veneer of exoticism and foreignness. Moreover, the physicality of martial arts, though considered masculine for its violence, does not carry the weight of popular sports’ mass appeal.

Despite coming from Japan, Ichiro dominates in America’s quintessential game, his superb skills already making him the most popular player in the 2001 All-Star balloting. A.J. Spalding said it best when he listed the appeal of baseball as the cultural institution of nation-building and capitalist modernity: “American Courage. Confidence. Combativeness; American Dash. Discipline, Determination; American Energy. Eagerness, Enthusiasm; American Pluck, Persistence, Performance: American Spirit, Sagacity. Success; American Vim, Vigor, Virility.”¹⁶³ Baseball not only allegorizes the U.S. nation-state, but it also encompasses the redemptive space the nation-state turned to for collective cultural solace after the trauma of September, 11, 2001. Indeed, Ichiro has created a unique form of hero worship, in a quintessentially American popular sport, usually set aside for other megastars known only by their first names because baseball symbolizes the progress of American modernity.

Safeco Park is a social space entangled with meanings over Americana,

today's multiculturalism, and transnational sport. In a city and region embedded with the history of Japanese internment, Ichiro's masculinity not only references African American segregation in baseball, but also anti-Asian violence in Seattle. Earlier on, I detailed Japanese American internment during World War II and the racial prejudices that followed it in the Pacific Northwest. More recently, Seattle's Asian community has felt a backlash when Japanese-owned Nintendo bought the Seattle Mariners in 1992. In a marked turn, celebrating Seattle's vanguard role in developing multiculturalism, Ichiro walked out of the dugout, embraced as Seattle's own, to a standing ovation while introduced with a hip-hop soundtrack. Celebrated as part of sporting history, the 2001 All-Star Game became the coronation of Ichiro's induction as sport internationalism's key player, but also as the first legitimate Asian male superstar accepted by white America.

It was only fitting that hip-hop, the music that was once the voice of urban Black youth filled the ears of well-to-do Seattle yuppies, as Ichiro tipped his cap in appreciation of their adulation and cheers.¹⁶⁴ Hip-hop has blown up, traversing across geographies of time and space at a global level. Likewise, Ichiro's iconography, framed as the poster child for the internationalization of baseball, is the reified body co-opted to promote baseball as a twenty-first century game. Asian and white kids cried out "I-CHI-RO" while Fox's white broadcasters explained his impact upon baseball with MVP statistics, his .350 batting average and 56 steals, the hard Enlightenment science of aficionados.¹⁶⁵ The chalked lines on the playing field, the fence that separates player from fan, and those who work in concessions and those

who own teams, represent the racial geography of Safeco Park. It is a liminal space where consumer culture meets masculine performance, and perhaps, illustrates Marx's idea of epiphenomena, the synthesis of material and ideological structures. In this way, the ballpark is a boundary that regulates class and race, a space of work, leisure, desire, and profits.

The All-Star Game is the culmination of MLB's quest to put its stars on center stage for a world audience, where the game embodies the national project of meritocracy (individualism), belonging (patriotism), and civilization (sportsmanship) as well as internationalizing broadcasting, licensing, and sponsorship. In the opening inning, Ichiro blasted a one-hundred foot single in his first at bat, then demonstrates his speed to first base, which is often compared to fleet-footed Black ballplayers. His masculinity before his arrival had been questioned, where "already his success has killed, once and for all, the long-held conceit that a small Japanese player...would be overwhelmed in the major leagues."¹⁶⁶ There seems to have been questions concerning Ichiro's power and size, the kind of imperial masculinity popular sport embodies during Pax Americana of today. Yet, his ability to dominate without excessive displays of length and brute force has endeared him to a public desiring physical performances that differentiate from homerun specialists. In a sport dominated by power, overdosed on steroids and muscled-bound hulks, Ichiro is a contact hitter, who happens to be the most popular player with the most hits and a plethora of endorsement deals.

Clearly, it seems that Ichiro's performance and appeal embodies Asian American racialization, and at once, transitions baseball from the days of segregation to global multiculturalism and thus consolidates the Pacific Rim markets tied to MLB sports internationalism. Replacing Seattle's revered baseball sons Ken Griffey Jr. and Alex Rodriguez, Ichiro has expanded the Mariners' franchise, enabling Seattle to be one major point along the Pacific Rim circuit. Connecting the local and global, Ichiro has signed endorsement deals with Cutter & Buck, a Seattle-based golf sportswear company, and Mizuno Corporation, Japan's largest sporting-goods company.¹⁶⁷ However, Ichiro's ascent has drawn criticism from the league he left, the Japanese Leagues that hinged upon national affiliations and racial homogeneity. Drawing comparisons to Jackie Robinson's departure from the Negro Leagues, Ichiro leaving his old team, the Orix Blue Wave of Japan's Pacific League, has raised alarm about Japanese baseball.¹⁶⁸ This development, however, seems to have recodified the league and not the product. Ichiro and his Mariners are broadcast daily: all eighty-one games and package deals are available to Japanese and Japanese American fans as well as inaugurated a worldwide fan system. What I call the "Ichiro Effect" has reverberated, in large measure, to how globalizing popular sport promotes greater profits as well as how national affiliations are reworked in multiple and complex ways. As the All-Star balloting became global, making its way through all parts of the planet, MLB International's broadcasting, sponsorship, and licensing agreements require that global multiculturalism capitalize on racialized men. However, this process plays off of profound contradictions including the deepening gap in global

wealth as well as the entrenchment of racialized thinking, including the entrenchment of the ever-present biological trace.

Ichiro's entry into MLB, both his record-breaking performance on the field and global marketing outside of it, knows no limits to time, geography, or media. Highlighting the merits of multiculturalism, Ichiro's Seattle Mariners team boasts players from around the world, including a starting pitcher from Venezuela, a designated hitter from Puerto Rico, and closing pitcher and MVP right fielder from Japan. With four out of ten players in Major League organizations were born outside the United States, the Seattle Mariners have signed their first Russian and Chinese prospects. Total viewership of MLB's World Series was more than one hundred million spectators, including almost one million U.S. Armed Forces personnel stationed in one hundred seventy five international territories and naval ships. Included in this global extravaganza is the planning of "multicultural celebrations" including *Fiesta de Primavera* in Mexico City, *Choques de Estrellas* in Venezuela, and the Radio Shack Opening Day in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Global multiculturalism binds Asians and Blacks into a coherent narrative of the U.S. racial state's progress and veils the deep class contradictions of big league baseball. It signals an important shift that ties the post-civil rights racialization of Black athletes to the legacy of the color line in sports. In this concluding section, I look at a particular genealogy that baseball narratives establish one that ties racial discrimination and segregation in baseball to the promise of global multiculturalism and diversity.

Major League Baseball International formed in 1989 to promote sports internationalism in America's pastime, focused "on the worldwide growth of baseball through game development, broadcasting, special events, sponsorship, and licensing."¹⁶⁹ Boasting forty corporate sponsors, recognizable names with such household names as Anheuser-Busch, American Airlines, MasterCard, and Pepsi, MLB International also has broadcasting agreements covering two hundred twenty four countries and all seven continents including Antarctica. In "Major League Baseball International 2001 Annual Report," Ichiro is the key figure for MLB global multiculturalism. He is the face of a multicultural future that moves away from the past segregation of African Americans. MLB International promotes baseball as the cultural institution that exemplifies the progression of race relations in the post-civil rights era, while at the same moment glorifying the imperial reach of U.S. popular culture. Ichiro's image is the model representative of baseball's internationalization, but the move from America's pastime to the world's multicultural leisure activity represents two separate, but wholly unequal breakthroughs of race relations. The narrative of racial pioneering in discreet and different historical contexts conflates Ichiro Suzuki's internationalization and Jackie Robinson's desegregation. Ichiro's racial transcendence seemingly answers Robinson's call for racial equality within the construct of a global multiculturalism that privileges racelessness rather than race consciousness, all the while making the once political—Black radicalism in popular sport—actively long forgotten.

In a 2001 advertising campaign by MLB International, entitled “Connect with It,” the thirty-second spot features a variety of images and traditional themes cut together linking baseball’s past, present, and future.¹⁷⁰ Showcasing a collage of visual representations and texts, “Connect with It” associates an image of Jackie Robinson to the phrase “with your heritage,” adding “with history” in quick cuts, and equating “heaven” to Black-and-white newsreel of Yankee Stadium dubbed by scratchy radio commentary. Spliced after the image of Jackie Robinson in his Brooklyn Dodgers uniform, the text “with the world” cuts to an image of a little boy at a shantytown, shirtless and shorts tattered, hitting a baseball with a stick. His racial identity is ambiguous (Is he Latin? Is he of African descent?), and the message seems to suggest that poverty is made bearable if the boy plays baseball well; baseball makes whole and complete, erasing neoliberal policies that displace children into the streets. In the closing frames, shots of Pedro Martinez and a little Asian female fan consummate the advertisement’s racial multiculturalism and geographic diversity, harmonizing the transcendence of race to the transcendence of space. In fact, the movement in historical time and geographic space, illustrated by Yankees nostalgia and Jackie Robinson’s breakthrough, parallels global internationalism that Asian male athletes promote. Global multiculturalism measures progress not in terms of social equality but, rather, the penetration of global capitalism.

By connecting Jackie Robinson and Ichiro Suzuki, the advertisement suggests that abolishing racial segregation in baseball mirrors the expansion of sport internationalism. The advertisement seems to evince that baseball’s racialization

weighs equally to internationalizing markets. This promotes MLB International's conflation of difference, promoting "connect with it." As one executive suggests, "people mark time by baseball...we want to celebrate those deep connections to get fans in seats, fans buying products, corporate sponsors and more viewing of our television programs...This game is all about bringing people together in many forms through personal connections, through statistics, through stories, through purchasing apparel."¹⁷¹ What "deep connections" are and what "it" connotes leaves much ambiguity. Nevertheless, it may be surmised that Ichiro's breakthrough, showcased by physicality and spectacle, illumines the complex ways in which Asian American masculinity works, earmarking the genealogy of baseball time from Black protest to sport internationalism. Moreover, it may be apparent then, discerned from the linkage connecting Asian bodies, global marketing, and Black radicalism, that Ichiro embodies and sutures these separate elements nicely together.

When Yao Ming emigrated from Shanghai, China, his transmigration was reminiscent of the panda bear Wei-Wei. Wei-Wei the panda bear was the first goodwill ambassador from Communist China before their entry into capitalism after Perestroika. With that un-Maoist turn, Yao Ming bargained and worked out for NBA scouts and general managers. This remarkable concession by Beijing allowed for selection of Yao Ming as the Houston Rockets' first pick in the 2001 NBA Draft Lottery. The Houston Rockets hit the proverbial jackpot, and they quickly assembled a campaign strategy, bunkered down in their corporate war room that included the slogan "Remember the last time the Rockets picked No. 1?" Good question: the

answer, of course, is Hakeem Olajuwon—the Nigerian born superstar who brought two championships in 1994-1995 and opened the African continent to NBA internationalism. Celebrated as the Houston Rocket’s top pick in the 2001 NBA Draft Lottery, Yao seemed to have captured the collective imagination of Houstonians when they exclaimed his arrival as the second coming of their beloved all-star center Hakeem Olajuwon, the “Nigerian Nightmare” who won took the team to back-to-back championships. Without a successful professional football and baseball franchise in recent memory, the redux of Olajuwon in the personification of Yao, along with his immigration into the NBA and the ensuing citywide fever that soon followed, had a special name—Yaomania. Presently, the NBA expects Yao Ming to open the Asian continent to basketball and thus Western consumerism, fulfilling the dream of NBA commissioner David Stern, “Yao Ming is attuned to the globalization of our sport.”¹⁷²

In an October issue of *Sports Illustrated*, an ESPN advertisement presents Yao to the American public. Marketing ABC/ESPN’s 2.4 billion dollar television contract with the NBA, Yao is the new spokesperson for the globalization of professional basketball in the post-Michael Jordan era. In the ad, he sleeps in a child’s bunkbed, hands nestled under a pillow, eyes closed shut, and soft comforter keeping him warm. Yet, something is awry in the picture. His body, all 7 feet 5 inches, 296 pounds, extends beyond the bedframe, causing his size 22 feet to dangle like miniature tugboats over the edge.¹⁷³ This humorous representation, as part of the circuits of visual sport culture, depicts the Asian male body as half-man and half-spectacle. It juxtaposes his body in an infantilized space and produces an affective and visual force

centered on a contradiction framed within post-civil rights racialization; the representation of his body challenges stereotypes of Asian male bodies as physically diminutive and athletically unrepresented. Significantly, memorabilia of Black masculinity—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s trading card, “Iceman” George Gervin’s poster, and Dr. J’s pennant—mark the walls. Clearly, their prominence references the ideological dominance of Black players in the NBA and, generally speaking, the cult of Black male hero worship in popular culture. They signify the NBA as racially Black, sexually heteronormative, and nationally American. Thus, the advertisement, in its frozen depiction of Asian and Black masculinity, constitutively links the Black and Asian body. In this sense, the racialization of the Black male body produces conceptions of heroic, athletic masculinity and mediates the meanings associated with the Asian male body.¹⁷⁴

Yao plays the center position in basketball, the premier point in the NBA, known as the “one slot” because it is the prime focus in team play. Historically, Black centers occupy a special place in our collective memory: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and Shaquille O’Neal, to name a few, inspire sublime images of Blackness because of their enormous size and championship heroics. Black centers reveal, by way of their extremity, that notions of excess—their height, weight, and Black skin—equate to physical domination of others. Unlike other professional sports, basketball is a game suited to represent images of the Black body with its emphasis on visual intimacy. There is a clear identification with players’ faces, expressions, muscles, and skin color. Without football and baseball’s helmets and full

uniforms, basketball's shorts and tank tops emphasizes the visual realm, in particular the skin and thus is "perfectly suited to define American culture because of the ease with which it is represented through the media."¹⁷⁵ Moreover, basketball is the game associated with the street and hip-hop music, where Sundays at Rucker Park in NYC and Public Enemy lyrics like "throwing it down like Barkley" are common cross-over moves in popular culture. Representing approximately eighty percent Black men, basketball has been at the center of formative discourses of race and masculinity. Think for example of two commonly known stereotypes centered on basketball, race, and the body: all Black men can play basketball, and white men can't jump. For Yao to enter this cultural milieu, his Brobdingnagian body and athletic performance seems to complicate the easy reduction of racial hierarchy that erases the Asian male body and fetishizes Blackness.

Celebrating the dawn of Yaomania, a Houston Rocket poster contains a photograph of Hakeem Olajuwon dunking a basketball. Above him, lines read, "Remember the last time the Rockets picked No.1?" Yao is the heir apparent to Olajuwon and this employment follows the desire of the City of Houston to place itself as a world city. Boasting a multicultural population akin to Los Angeles and in particular, a large Asian American population, Houston as the urban center of Yaomania, makes perfect sense. For one, the transition from a Black male center to an Asian male center represents the increase of foreign players into the NBA where the media has cast Black players as the front line troops protecting an American cultural institution. The discourse of race in professional basketball revolves around its urban

roots, street credibility that produces conceptions of masculinity linked to urban decay and police surveillance. On the other hand, Olajuwon's unorthodox style, his soccer-inspired footwork and multiple post moves, is indicative of Yao's original style of play.

Like Ichiro, Yao personifies a new cultural formation in Asian America because he is a pioneer. Yet, more than Ichiro, his status as the next dominant center in the league hinges on the way in which his body comes across under so much media exposure and scrutiny. Apple Computers places him in an advertisement with Verne Troyer, also known as Mini-Me, the sidekick of Austin Powers fame. Visa credit cards paid one million dollars for a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl that featured him with an African American woman dressed in hip-hop clothes. Both representations of his likeness use humor to signify his size and his foreignness—his otherness. Yet, it is his body and race that prefigures prominently in discourses of Asian masculinity, China as the next superpower, and the globalization of the NBA.

Yao's figuration of the Asian male body has several key issues and implications, both the international geo-politics of global capitalism and domestic arrangement of racial magnetism. First, Yao exemplifies the emergence of China into the world capitalist economy, mainly relying upon export models of industrialization and production. Second, for Asian Americans, and like Ichiro, he ties the diasporic imaginary of Asian Americans back to their Asian origins, but simultaneously inaugurates the cultural legitimacy of Asian American cultural visibility and pride. And finally, his promise as a cultural ambassador for global multiculturalism in the

service of NBA sport internationalism hinges upon his representational force vi-a-vis Black masculinity in the NBA. In a sport always hungry for 7 footers, Yao has tree trunks for legs and that all-important (read: Jordonesque) smile. He plays defense as a shot-blocker which in basketball parlance means he plays above the rim, swatting away shots from the likes of Allen Iverson. His skill level is not on par of say a Tim Duncan or comparably to Ichiro in his sport, but it is his size, that height that goes against the common sense logic in racial hierarchy. Nowhere is this disparity more apparent than in the media publicity surrounding Yao and Shaq. The controversy surrounding their feud exhibits the intersections of race, multiculturalism, and the cultural implications of racial magnetism.

By now, Shaquille O'Neal's unwise taunt toward Yao in 2001 has created intense media scrutiny by focusing on political correctness and multicultural tolerance. The question posed by the media and activists was: when is an ethnic joke a joke and when is it not? O'Neal appeared in a television interview in June 2001, and his Superman tattoo could not protect him from the media scrutiny that followed after he uttered what he later called a prank. O'Neal said, "Tell Yao Ming, 'Ching chong yang wah ah soh,'"¹⁷⁶ while mimicking martial arts moves in front of the camera. Six months later on Fox Sports Radio, O'Neal's comments were replayed on the *Tony Bruno Morning Extravaganza*, initiating a response from the Asian American community. O'Neal's comment had referenced American orientalism in the NBA, drawing upon Chinese racialization as coolie labor and emasculation as feminized immigrants. However, beyond that, his remarks in the national media were defined as

a linguistically insensitive play on the Chinese “sound.” Aside from the construction of Chinese as verbally incoherent to an American audience, O’Neal’s comment had represented racializing Asian American masculinity as the “Ching Chong Chinaman.” From Brete Harte to Fu Man Chu to playground taunts, Asian American racialization framed the ways in which NBA¹⁷⁷ racialized Yao. In this sense, racializing the labor of Asian male immigrants had been the logical structure that constructed the legibility of Black masculinity.

O’Neal sneered at the fanfare devoted to Yaomania, claiming that O’Neal was “a working-class hero. That’s all I am. Guys are trying to make a superstar out of a guy from the Shanghai Sharks, make a phenomenon out of him already.”¹⁷⁸ O’Neal later remarked that his labor was similar to “the construction workers, the police officer, the firefighters.” In staking out the terrain of the NBA as working-class, O’Neal not only constructed that space as a conflation of Asian American racialization (domestic) and Yellow Peril orientalism (foreign), but also a blue-collar ethic that relied upon a construction of masculinity as power over finesse, Blackness over Asian feminization. O’Neal’s antipathy for the publicity machine that produced “Yaomania” had centered on claiming himself as the common American person, someone embodying a rugged individualism that has traditionally been the role of white men. By breaking the genealogy of America’s tradition of heroic masculinity, from John Wayne to Mark McGwire, O’Neal’s inscription of himself in that discursive space comes through “policing” the foreign Other. By this claiming of a working-class identity, O’Neal relied upon sports celebrities as representative of an American

masculinity—hard working, humble, and physically endowed—that elided questions of racial difference.

In addition to the proletarianization the NBA, O'Neal had staked out the league as quintessentially American, an identification that privileged national belonging by demarcating a racial and linguistic border. O'Neal said, "Don't give me nothing. Just give me my fair share in America, because I'm American." Yao's teammate Steve Francis has remarked about Yao that "He's not like an American player," marking Yao's foreigner status.¹⁷⁹ Foreign players' exodus from other countries, especially from European countries such as Yugoslavia and Germany, produces an African American response that acts as the border patrol of "American" values, credibility, authenticity, and nationalism. Thus, the opening of the Western border to the Asian continent has engendered a form of "Black patriotism" that equates Americanism to urban masculinity in the NBA.¹⁸⁰ O'Neal had prepared a welcome for Yao, stating "Street, playing in a gym, shooting jumpers and all that...that's fine. But I'm street. I'm how to take a 'bow to your nose and (make you) think about what I'm going to do next time down."¹⁸¹

O'Neal's invocation of "street ball" encodes Yao's assimilation into the Americanized NBA, and violence is the marked difference of physicality between foreign and homegrown players. Street masculinity maintains the racial contours and establishes African American men in the NBA as "authentic" and "credible." It not only foregrounds African American men as thugs and enforcers, but it also is the convention, basketball ethics that cannot be learned in the gym. Toughness then

becomes the language to legitimate those players who can “take it” (an elbow to the face) and those players who cannot (wimps). What exactly “it” implies can be read as a rite of passage for foreign players, a sadomasochistic initiation that instills nationalism to the giver rather than the receiver, where a “welcome to the league: [is] a welcome to our country.”¹⁸² Power equates to African American masculinity, and their physicality maintains the legitimacy of national culture as xenophobic.

The response from the Asian American community questioned O’Neal’s racist comments but relied upon the same racial hierarchy used by O’Neal. Mobilization by the Asian American community called for the NAACP to revoke O’Neal’s Young Leaders Award and demanded a public apology from O’Neal. Petition letters sent to NBA commissioner David Stern, Asian American listservs, and publications drew attention to the situation. The most noted commentary came from Irwin Tang, a guest columnist for *Asian Week* and research fellow at University of Texas at Austin. Tang’s article, “APA Community Should Tell Shaquille O’Neal to ‘Come down to Chinatown’” illustrated the frustration and anger felt by Asian Americans, particularly males, who had long the objects of racist scorn and violence.¹⁸³ The article was the primary reason media interest had been sparked to what was, by then, an already forgotten comment by O’Neal. Tang writes,

This comment, combined with Shaq’s racist taunts are particularly disturbing, as Asian Pacific Americans often suffer racial taunts while being assaulted or physically intimidated. Nevertheless, Shaquille O’Neal is not a stupid brute. That is, he may be a brute, but he’s not a stupid one.¹⁸⁴

However, the framing of O'Neal's Blackness, in particular, as a "brute" racializes him by representations that rely upon Asian America's racial and sexual anxieties about African American masculinity, vocality, and politics. This is not to suggest that criticism of O'Neal had not been warranted, but reproducing white racism and colonial discourses seems to suggest white supremacy's staying power.

In this case, Black bodies are threatening, aggressive, and loud, depicting a version of Black monstrosity as attacking the weak "silent minority." As such, it is necessary for Tang to remasculinize Asian America, and more specifically Chinatown, as a discursive space that can contain Black aggression, "But I am calling Shaq out. Come on down to Chinatown, Shaq. You disrespect Asian America, and we will break you down."¹⁸⁵ Yet, Tang's Asian American political response frames around collectivizing space (Chinatown) and race (APA community) and is an identity politics that defines political response, partly, in terms of domination, violence, and submission. Reinscribing manhood, to "break" someone down, follows a patriarchal and reactionary path on which "space" will domestically contain "race." Chinatown, then, can be read as a rhetorical location to subdue the Black brute, and the journalist's role is not to establish new rules of performing and discussing masculinity, but rather to play by the old ones. The result is that Tang does not challenge the racist and sexist representations of both Asian and Black men. Rather, he relies on both in order to achieve his point.

Calling O'Neal's comments an offensive slur, various Asian American political and community groups mobilized to seek an official apology. National

organizations such as The National Association of Asian Professionals (NAAAP), National Asian American Student Conference, Asian American Journalists Association, Organization of Chinese Americans, and Chinese American Political Association (CAPA) joined the list of groups seeking redress. But it was internet mobilization across various websites including Asian-Nation.com, Goldsea.com, Yolk.com, AngryAsianMan.com, and many others, that pressed the issue into a national forum. Although I cannot explore it fully here, I find it significant that several media and communicative outlets solidified the powerful response to Black racism toward Asians, but at the same time, drew attention to the ways in which the media constructs interest in what they consider newsworthy and what they do not. Asian American mobilization called attention to why white racism toward Blacks receives heavy press coverage and why Asian American injury from racism does not. This idea translates into constructing Black masculinity as a politicized identity that Asian Americans both feared and desired.

Asian American organizations viewed O'Neal's racist humor and the media's lackluster coverage as a crisis in Asian American political and cultural voice.¹⁸⁶ Framing cultural voice around power and masculinity, visibility for Asian American interests had circumscribed the desire to remasculinize Asian American spatial and discursive space. For Yao to do well in a predominately "Black men's game," which O'Neal equated to the "street," meant that Asian American mobilization framed its response by remasculinizing Chinatown (spatial) and media coverage (discursive). In many ways, inscribing Asian American masculinity in Black cultural spaces had

conceptualized an emasculated Asian American political voice that depended on hypermasculinized notions of strength, aggression, and political struggle.

O'Neal's and Yao's responses to each other both verbally—in the media—and physically—on the playing court—shows how corporate multiculturalism facilitated the conciliation between the two. O'Neal's half-hearted apology to Yao, calling himself a “prankster,” centered on the discourse of ethnic humor in the age of politically correct speech. Stating, “I think it was a 70-30 joke. 70 percent funny, 30 percent not funny. And this guy [Irwin Tang] is one of the 30 percent who thought it wasn't funny,” O'Neal's refusal to acknowledge his racist taunt only reinforced the perception by Asian Americans that they could be the topic of racist jokes without media scrutiny. This mounted pressure created some national exposure. Television and radio shows such as “Talk Back Live” on CNN and “The Tavis Smiley Show” on NPR debated the controversy within the frameworks of multiculturalism and political correctness.¹⁸⁷ The Yao-Shaq showdown on January 17, 2003 in Houston, Texas culminated the political controversy over O'Neal's racial taunts and the mobilized response by Asian American political groups. Not since Bird and Magic had a duel between two players drawn so much media coverage, impressively telecast to hundreds of millions of spectators worldwide.

Before the tip-off, NBA commissioner David Stern stated in an interview that O'Neal's comments were “insensitive, although not intentionally mean spirited.” Mediating the controversy before any irreparable harm had occurred, the NBA knew the race question would obfuscate NBA transnationalism's colorblind rhetoric.

Clearly, expanding the NBA internationally hinges on Yao Ming, but it also relies upon foreign players' perceptions of equal treatment and nondiscrimination. The NBA has opened offices around the world, facilitated recognition of its elite clubs (Chicago Bulls) and personal logos (Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan), and placed what Eric Hobsbawm calls "the global triumph of the United States and its way of life."¹⁸⁸

With a market of 1.3 billion people in China, capitalists of Western consumerism salivate when thinking about penetrating into an untapped market with an already established sport infrastructure. As such, Yao is the spokesperson for global NBA and key marketing strategies that make brands identifiable for multinational corporations including Nike, Gatorade, Adidas, Coca-Cola, Visa, and Apple Computers. Combining existing international and national broadcasts, global NBA plans to announce contracts with regional television networks as well as to telecast one hundred fifty NBA games. Thirty of these games will show Yao and the Houston Rockets with his estimated debut viewership around five hundred million basketball-happy fans.¹⁸⁹ To be sure, licensing, broadcasting, and corporate sponsorship, as with MLB International, has wide-eyed possibilities when initiated in China. In many respects, the journey of Yao to the NBA has been a journey of China's self-promotion to transnational corporation of their willing to have open borders and open markets. As one of the last, but spectacularly important markets for increasing revenues, China's liberalization policies are coinciding with the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.¹⁹⁰

In conclusion, I call attention to the showdown between Shaq and Yao in Houston as representing the on-court and off-court convergence between racial hierarchy, sport internationalism, and the masculinity of Asian and Black men. Outside the Compaq Center, Chinese American community protestors demanded that O'Neal acknowledge his racist comments. Inside the sold-out arena, the rivalry between Shaq and Yao had established the NBA as the premier sport in Asia and U.S. cable television. The performance on the playing court was frantic and furious, especially when Yao blocked Shaq's first three shots. In later media accounts, headlines such as "Yao set tone early," "Surviving Shaq makes Yao's night a success," and "Yao wins showdown with Shaq" highlighted the news stories about the game. By all measure, O'Neal was still the most dominant player in the league, but Yao gained respect because he had withstood the "American" style of play. Afterwards, O'Neal said of Yao, "He's a classy guy. I look forward to playing him. He's a great player. It's another challenge for me."¹⁹¹ Strange words from O'Neal, especially after the controversy, but one might assume that racial animosity existing among NBA players hinders the business of basketball. Now the jabs and jousting is not verbal, but strictly left to the court. C.L.R. James says it best when he stated, "The American civilization is identified in the consciousness of the world with two phases of the development of world history. The first is the Declaration of Independence. The second is mass production."¹⁹² In this sense, U.S.-based sport internationalism, under the specter of Chinese capitalism and mass factory production in Guangzhou, needs to meet the consumer base of Chinese spectators eager for Yaomania, yet

without the feelings of foreignization by patriotic African American basketball players. Global multiculturalism and transnational sport are the winners, but the losers are yet to be determined.

**“I’m Michael Jackson, You Tito”:
Kung-Fu Fighters and Hip-Hop Buddies
in Martial Arts Buddy Films**

“There are just men; men who crave ease and power, men who know want and hunger, men who have crawled. They all dream and strive with ecstasy of fear and strain of effort, balked of hope and hate. Yet the rich world is wide enough for all, wants all, needs all.” W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*.

“They say karate means empty hands, so it’s perfect for the poor man. They say karate means empty hands, so it’s perfect for the poor man.” Dead Prez, “Psychology.”

“I’m Blackanese!” Detective Carter, *Rush Hour*.

“A Merger Where East Meets Black”

On May 16, 1973, martial arts films *Fists of Fury*, *Deep Thrust—The Hand of Death*, and *Five Fingers of Death* were ranked one, two, and three respectively.¹⁹³ This was the first time in U.S. popular cinema that foreign films dominated box office receipts and garnered mass audience appeal. Although virulent racism existed in Hollywood, Saturday matinees and drive-in theaters across the country capitalized on kung-fu fever, where atop theater billboards, Blaxploitation and martial arts films played back-to-back. Such commercial and aesthetic articulations were nonexistent in U.S. visual culture, especially representations of men of color captivating the movie-going imaginations of Asian American and African American audiences with newly formed social and political consciousness.

Call this then a merger where East meets Black, or as W.E.B. Du Bois directs our attention to in the epigraph, “men who know want and hunger, men who have

crawled.” After the impact of various antiracist social movements, the martial arts genre was one of the few interracial cultural spaces deemed mainstream, even though it incorporated the symbology of Black Power and the cult icon of Bruce Lee.¹⁹⁴ Despite the historical racialization of Asian American men in orientalist representations, Lee’s charisma immortalized him as a national and global star and thus sparked the commercial viability of the martial arts action flick. After the height of the Black Power social movement, Blaxploitation films such as *Black Belt Jones* and *Super Fly* incorporated martial arts, showcasing the physical and mental powers of Afro-wearing lead heroes who achieved racial equality or even societal revolution. In this sense, the rise of the martial arts genre has wide appeal for communities of color because it is the genre of a third world underdog with an ethical motive for his violent escapades. These pioneer representations had politicized Asian-Black spectatorship. The genre that Blaxploitation and Lee catapulted into mainstream currency has recently been adapted to the buddy genre that prevails in Hollywood westerns and action films.

Not surprisingly, the martial arts genre still packs a multi-million dollar punch today because it mixes the cultural juggernaut of hip-hop with the physical spectacle of martial arts. Released in 2000, *Romeo Must Die* was distributed by Warner Brothers and grossed over fifty-five million dollars in the U.S. film market. Historically, Warner Brothers has been the premier studio and distributor of martial arts action films with such noteworthy productions as *Enter the Dragon*. More than twice the latter’s production costs, *Romeo Must Die* created a cottage industry of Jet Li

movies that mixed his Wu Shu talents with supporting casts of Black “whipping boys.” Previously in 1998, *Rush Hour* redefined action and comedy genres with box office sales of over one hundred forty million dollars in U.S. gross and over two hundred forty million in total worldwide gross. *Rush Hour*’s distributor, New Line Cinema, created a franchise that would place Jackie Chan as the only non-white action hero in the lucrative Hollywood action/adventure film industry.

Reviews of *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die* reflected the history of critical dismissal of the martial arts genre. For *Rush Hour*, the critical responses were mixed yet similar in themes, often referring to language, race, and nation. Most reviews code the categories of race and nation through the language of interracial oddity, including such text clips as “mismatched duo,” “wacky double-team scenario,” and “truly opposites.”¹⁹⁵ Specifically, many reviews focus on Chris Tucker’s penchant for words and Chan’s poor English. Newspaper reviews such as *The New York Times* quip, “Mr. Chan’s own struggle with the language barrier has made him not only the current author least likely to have written his own English autobiography (‘I am Jackie Chan’) but also a silent partner in the film.”¹⁹⁶ The *San Francisco Examiner* is less racist in its construction of Chinese accents, yet they still remark about Asian and Black language stereotypes, “A lot of good fun is made of the contrast between Chinese and Black stereotypes, and between Tucker’s motor mouth...and Chan’s reticence.”¹⁹⁷ Thus, initial critical reviews had dialogically racialized Tucker and Chan, establishing the markers of race and nation through performance of the English language and subsequently set the early parameters of spectator expectations and genre pleasure.

For *Romeo Must Die*, the overall sentiment of movie critics had been unanimous in that race and sexuality are the primary categories of commentary. Most reviewers lambasted the method acting of Jet Li and focused most of their complaints on his supposed lack of screen charisma and sexuality. *TV Guide* lamented the “utter lack of chemistry between Li and Aaliyah.”¹⁹⁸ Other critics reinforced Hollywood production codes by calling into question Li’s sexuality and genre expectations of Asian masculinity: “let’s face it, no one’s coming to a Jet Li movie for sex.”¹⁹⁹ Yet another progressive review periodical had commented on Hollywood production codes that denied Asian and Black audiences’ desire for interracial romance. An Asian American male movie critic, Dennis Lim for *The Village Voice* remarks, “Race is the movie’s gimmick...meanwhile, the romantic angle promised by the title is barely acknowledged. Some Romeo—by the final scene, Han and Trish have barely worked their way up to holding hands.”²⁰⁰ Such discrepancies among various film critics suggest the racialized dynamic to spectator expectations and critical reception. In this way, analysis of sexuality and race differentiate across regional tastes as well as visual representations of Asian-Black desire received along an orientalist/antiracist axis.

Films such as *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die* team a streetwise African American with hip-hop credentials and an Asian martial arts hero with enough acrobatic artistry to satisfy *Matrix* fans. This transformation of the martial art action genre suggests many productive considerations of why genres adapt to the socio-historical context out of which they emerge. In the post-civil rights discourse of multiculturalism, the celebration of cultural difference translates into increased

representations of people of color in U.S. visual and national culture. This chapter challenges wholesale and uncritical acceptance of such celebratory gestures by examining the visual politics of the Asian-Black interface in martial arts buddy films. Considering *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die*, I call attention to the ways in which citizenship and interracial sociality are embedded within the transnational racialization of Hong Kong postcolonialism and U.S. interracialism. Therefore, I read the martial arts hero and Black buddy as racialized bodies that contain the contradictions of state-sanctioned property relations in *Romeo Must Die* and Western cultural imperialism in *Rush Hour*.²⁰¹ In *Romeo Must Die*, the team of Jet Li and Aaliyah illuminates the contradictions of urban renewal and capital flight in Oakland and the impossibility of interracial romance in Hollywood production codes. In *Rush Hour*, the British handover of Hong Kong to mainland China and U.S. tensions between Asians and Blacks mark Asian-Black Pacific Rim racial formations underline new identities formed within transpacific visual cultures. In particular, Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker form strategic coalitions that challenge essentialist constructions of colonial difference, U.S. national culture, and media representations of Asian-Black conflicts. Indeed, Jamaican recording artist Carl Douglas sang in 1974, “everybody was kung-fu fighting,” and this fascination with martial arts refracts not only through cross-culturally, the global popularity of hip-hop consumerism and aesthetics, but also historically, the lens of U.S. military intervention in Asia as well.

As such, I address post-civil rights formations of transpacific visual cultures that rely upon multiculturalism’s incorporation of people of color in U.S. national

culture for the expansion of U.S. imperialism abroad. This incorporation in visual film culture parallels neo-conservatism's incorporation of people of color into positions of institutional power, best represented by Condoleezza Rice, Alberto Gonzalez, Colin Powell, John Yu, and Viet Dinh—all architects of U.S. global militarism and hegemony. However, I do not want to conflate the political and cultural developments of multiculturalism as singular. Because the martial arts buddy genre has mass audience appeal, I emphasize the ways in which contestations and coalitions between Asian and Black bodies in visual film culture seem to organize the contours of citizenship and national belonging through reconfigurations of race/culture/visual axis. Thus, I want to borrow from bell hook's idea of a critical spectatorship where experiencing visual pleasure is also an oppositional gaze about contestation and confrontation, "to see if images were seen as complicit with dominant cinematic practices."²⁰² This chapter theorizes the relationship between Asian-Black spectatorship and screen image, fictional representation and social movement politics, and the function of racialized suture and the transpacific production and consumption of the martial arts buddy films.

In *The Subject of Semiotics*, Kaja Silverman insightfully explains that suture is the process in which cinematic texts bestow subjectivity upon the viewer.²⁰³ In addition, suture is the process by which the spectator becomes aware of the camera's intrusive gaze and the presence of a 'third look,' a controlling look that reminds the spectator of his/her lack of control. It is how we think of ourselves as exceptional, not unlike the exceptionalism found in narratives of U.S. liberalism, what we might call

the Henry Luce syndrome. More specifically, the operation of suture covers up and reveals the camera work through the process of identification with the screen image and distance from it. What I term cinematic citizenship is the complex identifications that suture audiences of color to the buddies in martial arts films so that representations of the Asian-Black interface allows for a common ground of intercultural exchange and intercultural respect. In this configuration, the mapping of suture in martial arts buddy films creates interracial identifications, where the category of racial difference is interrogated and deconstructed, thus allowing for a politics of reflexivity. When I invoke the politics of reflexivity, I am articulating the ability of audiences of color to interpret visually the markers of race and racialization through seeing their subjectivity about racialized images and in a manner that addresses scenes of interracial conflict, coalitions, and romance.

Current theorizations of race, gender, and film spectatorship have not addressed Asian American film spectatorship or the influence of Black spectatorship and Black images upon this racialized process and construction. Although race is always a subtext in national cinemas, the rise of Asian and Black lead actors in major Hollywood productions of popular film asks us what the implications of this visual and box office presence are within the politics of global multiculturalism. Cinematic citizenship addresses the political and racial dynamics of the cinematic gaze as well as the function of suture as a racialized process. Therefore, we see today the production of transpacific visual cultures that interweave into a Pacific Rim tapestry, Hong Kong cinema, Hollywood production codes, and the comparative racialization of Asian

American and African American communities. Film construction in this genre then, can be an allegory of the mechanisms of liberalism and its incessant project to individualize communal sociality, to reduce structural considerations of power to unlinked individuals, and to mask the institutional power of post-civil rights white supremacy.

Through cinematic citizenship, the martial arts buddy genre reveals the contradictions in liberal individualism, its property relations, self-enclosed alienation, and racial distinctions based upon the politics of skin, bone, and sex. In this way, cinematic citizenship addresses what Manthia Diawara calls “resisting spectatorship.” Concerning the intersection of race and spectatorship, he says, “Every narration places the spectator in a position of agency; and race, class, and sexual relations influence the way in which this subjecthood is filled by the spectator. Returning to bell hooks, she reminds us that, “Within the Southern, Black, working-class home of my growing up, in a racially segregated neighborhood, watching television was one way to develop critical spectatorship.”²⁰⁴ Further, Stuart Hall describes critical practices that maintain that identity is “constituted ‘not outside but within representation.’”²⁰⁵ This chapter seeks to address the types of critical identities constituted in Asian-Black representations in martial arts buddy films. Insofar as film culture produces sets of ideas and representations based upon race and masculinity, I ask these questions: do the racialized men have subjectivity and agency within an Asian-Black transpacific spectatorship? Is the audience allowed to have identification with them through the cinematic apparatus and critical, oppositional gazes? How do Asian and Black

coalitions create points of representational crisis or identities of alterity within the martial arts buddy genre?

A History of the Martial Arts Buddy Genre

In many 1980s action films like *Rambo*, *Terminator*, and the *Die Hard* series, the white action hero is damaged grotesquely in some physical and psychological manner.²⁰⁶ Likewise, the martial arts hero keeps on his journey for ethical revenge as well as reconciliation through bodily agency. In the process, he highlights the tension between individualism and communitarian principles albeit in a postcolonial and transpacific context. Whereas the Greek tragic hero is central to locations of power, typically an aristocratic or royal persona, the martial arts hero is a personage on the margins, delegitimated from power and mainstream society in some way, gliding through the rigid boundaries of society, a hero situated on the borders.²⁰⁷ Before we turn to a history of the martial arts hero, some comments explaining major characteristics of the ethical/border identity of the martial arts hero would seem necessary.

As an activist for the community, the martial arts hero has more in common with the border ballad hero. In *With his pistol in his hand* by Americo Paredes, we learn about the border ballad hero in the “Corrido of Gregorio Cortez.” The border hero confronts the dominant folklore of the Texas Rangers and the mythology of a homogenous national identity. Ever the ethical and common man, the border hero must wear many hats including the characteristics of a supernatural force, everyday laborer, a warrior ethos, and trickster. The ballad in its many variants has a leitmotif

that is useful for us to see the tensions between the individual and community:

Decia Gregorio Cortez con su pistola en la mano: ---!Ah, cuanto rinche cobarde para un solo mexicano!	Then said Gregorio Cortez With his pistol in his hand, “Ah, how many cowardly rangers, Against one lone Mexican!” ²⁰⁸
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Like the martial arts hero, he must fight against anti-miscegenation taboos and corrupt state officials. Moreover, he fights against multiple interpellations from the church, law, family, and media, but his armor is limited, and he carries a lone pistol in his hand. Trying to resist such forces, the border hero does not act impulsively, but when he moves, he moves decisively and courageously, defending his rights, where the border was once part of Mexico and artificially Anglicized through the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo in 1848. Along this inquiry, the martial arts hero is racially marked as outside, an inauthentic subject who is in opposition to the mythology of imperial masculinities. Both heroes challenge the collective myth of origins in how the nation imagines itself.²⁰⁹ The borders of the nation-state have been the liminal space for signification, especially in terms of how the citizenry is modulated through the state apparatuses and cultural mythologies. As Roberto Alexandro reminds us,

Citizenship, in short, belongs to the realm of the symbolic; that is, a space of symbols that previous generations constructed as well as a domain which is always in a process of reconstitution, and whose meaning the state seeks to define. The citizen, by contrast, is not a member of the symbolic. He inhabits everyday life, which is full of symbols, but which cannot be reduced to a sphere of symbols.²¹⁰

A move for a symbolic collective memory, the corrido's intervention reinscribes a history that the racial state has erased. Underlining the role of folklore, the corrido repositions the man on the border into the national mythology. Similarly, the martial

arts hero has an ethical category for identification, a border identity that shows the power of individual action without community resources, and the centrality of the body as the means for social transformation.

Since its inception, the physicality and fight choreography of the martial arts genre has its genesis in the Beijing Opera, an aesthetic art form dating from the Song Dynasty (960-1280 ce)²¹¹ Through rigorous bodily gymnastics and craft apprenticeship, Peking Opera had forged actors, performers, and singers who could master several disciplines in theatricality. Elaborate face painting, costumes, and modest staging set the environment where “stylized celluloid fighting scenes” were the precursor to the modern rapid-fire kung-fu scenes.²¹² The stories derived from folklore, historical happenings, popular novels, and mythology. Stars including Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung trained from an early age to take the mantle of future performers, whether on the stage or the silver screen.

From these grand origins, the modern martial arts hero came filmically embodied in a lone figure from Chinese history. His history is not unlike Gregorio Cortez. Called Wong Fei-Hung, he was a defender of the weak as well as a proponent of justice.²¹³ A Chinese nationalist and champion of Confucian values, Wong Fei-Hung was also an herb doctor and martial arts instructor specializing in the tiger-crane style with a fighting technique, known as the nine-special fists.²¹⁴ Much like the power of the corrido, his mythology spread like a cultural wild fire, eventually establishing the groundwork for ninety-nine Black-and-white films during 1949-1970.²¹⁵

Films such as *Drunken Master* and *Once Upon a Time in China*, action films that coincidentally launched the careers of Jackie Chan and Jet Li respectively, represent the mythology of Wong Fei-Hung in modern Hong Kong cinema. Before his arrival in Hollywood, the Hong Kong hero revived many of Wong's attributed qualities including a proud Chinese cultural identity and humanistic ideals including defending the weak, promoting justice, and redressing past wrongs. In Hong Kong, the perception concerning an understanding of Westernization and modernization is ambivalent at best. In the Wong-inspired Jet Li, the martial arts hero wants to preserve those traditions that galvanize a sense of Chineseness within the community, but on the other hand, he wants to help the nation to equalize itself to the level of Western imperialists. The attempt to remedy his problem creates a dual anxiety on the part of the martial arts hero. For example, because guns and dynamite displace kung-fu as the predominate form of self-defense, the lamented introduction of Western technology contrasts against the nationalist doctrine for world parity through adopting Western science and war technologies. Therefore, the issue of British colonialism and its effects on the socio-political landscape of China established the hallmark of pre-Hollywood martial arts films.

Developed from Wong Fei-Hung films, Hong Kong cinema incorporated Bruce Lee's kung-fu style, Jeet Kune Do, into kung-fu classics such as *The Big Boss*, *Fists of Fury*, and *The Way of the Dragon*.²¹⁶ In "The Kung Fu Craze," David Desser illustrates the wide impact of the martial arts genre as a top box office draw. At the forefront of the wave of kung-fu films coming into U.S. markets was Warner Brothers

Pictures. Documenting the role of Warner Brothers in producing *Enter the Dragon*, Desser documents the tension between producing films to capitalize on an emergent bankable product and negotiating the complex web of consumer identity politics in order to appeal to several racial demographics. Thus, John Saxon was added to the project, in hopes of securing white mainstream crossover appeal and also Jim Kelley, now a legend as an African American action hero.²¹⁷ These films had been popular in largely urban and working-class neighborhoods, where on Saturday afternoons, “kung-fu theater” enabled urban youths without bankrolls or fancy gadgetry to gain empowerment through cultural fantasy. Not having access to the Terminator’s robotics or *Mission Impossible* technology, audiences knew that the martial arts hero could use only his body to kick or punch his way out of a cornered situation. As one of the central appeals of consumer desire, this approach was a staple from which audiences received pleasure and temporary empowerment through racial fantasy. In one way, the construction of racial fantasy by communities of color was indirect opposition to Moynihan’s frantic production of racial apocalypse. According to recent scholarship on Black cultural appropriation of Asian orientalia, sometimes bodies are the only things that really matter.²¹⁸ Because these populations were experientially and literally beaten by institutional racism, material poverty, and surveillance by the police state, audience members gravitated towards “virtue lost and found, individual determination, righteous vengeance, and community struggle against all odds.”²¹⁹ Thus, as Amy Ongiri puts it, “African American attraction to Asian culture via martial arts films provides a telling moment of slippage and indeterminacy in which notions of

totalitarian nature of power and western notions of aesthetics, culture, and dominance are undone.”²²⁰ The oppositional gaze of communities of color often times represented a negation of whiteness “by any means necessary,” which meant forming Asian-Black spectatorship that refused Hollywood’s hegemonic pressure to assimilate into white spectatorship.

Through his epic and farcical improvisations, Lee embodies the underdog of third world peoples, where as Dead Prez raps, “karate meant empty hands, so that it was then perfect for the poor man.” In this sense, theorizations of the body, the woman of color, the invert, the octoroon, or transgender subject to name a few, have forcefully critiqued binary thinking and allowed for agency through disidentification.²²¹ Youths of color identified with Lee’s iconography of class empowerment, making interracial identifications that simply ignored the dominant imperatives of film culture as the visual fetishism of white bodies. Often after watching the matinee, youths of color went to the streets to mimic what they had just seen on the movie screen. Symbolizing the power of a lone hero able to fight for the needs of the community, youths of color felt empowered and free for a fleeting moment when dropping flying dragon kicks or making exaggerated “kung-fu” sounds. Therefore, interracial mimesis in the public sphere of urban streets opened up their imaginations and produced emergent conceptions of cross-cultural exchange that linked the politics of social movements with kung-fu matinee leisure practices. Despite these early formations of kung-fu subcultures, today’s martial arts buddy films are still responding to the contradictions of liberalism’s diverse symptoms: the Watts

Riots, L.A. Rebellion, the dismantling of affirmative action programs, the Gulf War, and the men's movement of the early 1990s. Finally, they also reveal a certain anxiety over how white masculinity imagines itself in the global context of U.S. militarism and addresses the ways white racial superiority, predicated within the logic of multiculturalism, is no longer located in visual hegemony, but rather in institutional and military power *tout court*.

***Romeo Must Die* and *Rush Hour*: Popular Cinema and Racialized Suture**

Set in the waterfront district of Oakland, California, Andrzej Bartowiak's *Romeo Must Die* is a martial arts action film centered on a territorial turf war between an Asian American and African American crime families both vying for control of a four square mile low-rent property area. From the opening shot, the introduction of the cityscape of San Francisco juxtaposed with large Chinese ideograms and dubbed over with the hypnotic beats of a hip-hop soundtrack, establishes from the very get-go the key markers of race are established in the narrative. Showcasing the martial arts of Hong Kong hero Jet Li and the acting debut of the late hip-hop diva Aaliyah, the modern day interpretation of Shakespeare's love tragedy makes on an interesting departure from the original by incorporating the admixture of race and romance (or lack thereof).

In contrast, *Rush Hour*, directed by Brett Ratner (known for his buddy film bonanzas in the Lethal Weapon series), opens in a more dissonant manner than does *Romeo Must Die*. A helicopter shot zooms from a skyline that could be Everycity, to a seaport dock, bustling with workers, commerce and trade, a location where departures

and arrivals from destinations unknown load and unload capital goods for transport along the Pacific Rim circuit. It is at this precise moment the audience deciphers the visual and aural markers of race—the orientalized music consisting of tympanis and gongs, Chinese ideograms scripted on shops signs, and the harbor boats with large unfolding sails worked by a nameless and faceless mass. Signifying that the location is Hong Kong, the spectator is placed in an exotic and mysterious land awaiting the handover from British colonialism to mainland China. Not before, the cultural artifacts of the Chinese nation-state, its collective historical and cultural memory, become looted and commodified, however. *Rush Hour* then is premised on this theft of Chinese cultural heirlooms, its Ming vases, Tang artwork, and Ch’ing bronze statues, by an old British diplomat, who prior to the handover, conscripts an Asian gang to transport the rare items from their indigenous resting place. Enter Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker, playing Inspector Lee and Detective Carter respectively, two police officers from opposite sides of the cultural globe who team up to solve a murder-kidnapping caper involving Counsel Han’s daughter in Los Angeles, a crucial racial and capitalist epicenter for the Hong Kong film circuit.

Whereas *Rush Hour* follows a generic formula with a male/male buddy pair, *Romeo Must Die* uniquely teams a male/female partnership. As an intersection of gender and race, the Asian-Black interface of *Romeo Must Die* lends a crucial and important corrective to the homosocial world of the standard buddy format and allows audiences to grapple with Asian-Black visual images that set and subvert representational boundaries of prescribed Hollywood production codes. In “Visual

Pleasure and Narrative,” Laura Mulvey sees the construction of gender relations in classic Hollywood cinema through binaries of male/female, active/passive, subject/object.²²² I would like to use this framework of dialectical oppositions to situate the racialized gaze in martial arts buddy cinema as Asian male/Black female, Asian male/Black male, and racial insider/racial outsider. Yet the dialectical oppositions of active/passive and subject/object are not coherently tied to one identity at the exclusion of another. It is this fluidity and blurred distinction of power relations that differentiates this genre from the usual suspects of white hero/Black buddy films. Also, through the operations of the cinematic apparatus and racialized suture, the regulation of race and sexuality in these buddy films instantiates a language of violence and humor that marks the Asian-Black male body distinct from their martial arts and Blaxploitation predecessors.

In *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die*, the function of Asian-Black buddies is different than the traditional Hollywood team of a white hero and Black sidekick. Representations of Asian-Black buddies breakdown master/slave power differentials because of their shared history of racialization under white supremacy. The Black buddy, as in the *Lethal Weapon* series (also directed by Ratner), embodies the traits of the white female—the “comforter, nurturer, and partner,” what I playfully term as the Danny Glover syndrome.²²³ In order to reestablish the ethos for a white male savior in protecting white femininity and the nuclear family from racial or national evil, for instance, the evil butt-kicking Jet Li in *Lethal Weapon IV*, the racialized buddy functions to support white manhood which ultimately negates the subjectivity of

women of color.²²⁴ In contrast, the Asian-Black buddy team parallels equal partnerships between Asians and Blacks who had historically formed alliances to produce more powerful political blocs including coalitions like the Non-Alignment Movement and Black/Yellow Power. But more than this, certain issues and ideas concerning Asian immigration, U.S. military intervention in Asia, and the power of Black cultural resistance enters the narrative structure of these films that forms a politics of cultural engagement and mutual respect for each other's specific racialization. The disjuncture of immigration and violence of war displaces the body of the Asian male hero from U.S. national culture, while in *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die*, the Black buddy reinscripts the palimpsest body of the Asian male hero with an understanding of Asian American male racialization. Certain narrative devices are used to accomplish this reinscription through the binoculars of an Asian-Black perspective that specifies the differentiation of the Asian/Asian American dichotomy. One such example is found in *Romeo Must Die* when Han's brother is lynched from a tree, which does not need explanation to connect to the history of Black men hanging as "strange fruit" during the era of Jim Crow South. This scene replays visually the history of violence and lynching directed at Black men by the most popular voluntary organization in U.S. history, the Ku Klux Klan. That history is coded through the Asian male body. Graphically enjoining the Asian male body with U.S. racial terrorism, this scene frames the process of assimilation as injury onto foreign bodies outside the body politic of the U.S. nation-state.

In scenes of first contact between Lee and Carter in *Rush Hour* and Han and

Trish in *Romeo Must Die*, misrecognition by the Black buddy occurs because the body of the martial arts hero performs class and gender mimesis of Asian American men's racialization and stereotypes. This type of racial/gender mimesis engenders questioning the axis of assimilation/racial difference within the architecture of U.S. racial hierarchy and Asian-Black competition for economic, cultural, and political entitlements. The performance of racial and class mimesis by the martial arts hero situates himself on the borders of social categories, exposing how the cinematic apparatus inscribes variegated citizenship.²²⁵ There is an exhibition value for unraveling the messiness tied to citizen formation from the performance of racial and class mimesis in the martial arts genre. Racial and class mimesis performs the function of assimilation gone awry. Insofar as the nation-state regulates racial assimilation through national culture, racial and class mimesis allows for political mobility. Because of his physicality and ingenuity, the figure of the martial arts hero is boundless, mobile, and fluid across rigid distinctions. In so doing, the martial arts hero documents the immigrant experience of Asian American representability and subjectivity.²²⁶ In *Rush Hour*, the entire comedic performance is premised upon the clash of cultures between African Americans and Asian foreigners. The latter is marked in Asian American communities as broken-English speaking, fashion-challenged immigrants who remind those Asians in the United States of their "Asianness" by connecting the traumatic history of U.S. imperialism in Asia to the present. The construction then of "Asianness" illustrates a displacement of historical time for present time. "Asianness" sets up clearly the assimilationist/nativist binary,

illustrating those loyal subjects who assimilate into the national citizenry and those suspect individuals who cannot. Detective Carter functions as a hip, highly sexualized, street-wise buddy who makes the audience laugh through misrecognizing, presupposing, and translating U.S. mainstream culture as detrimental and African American culture as resistance to Lee. As such, interracial communication and dialogic racialization produces Asian-Black buddies unwilling to conform to masculinities of intercultural war, contestation, and militarism.

Although the camera zooms to Lee at the entrance of the newly arrived airplane from Hong Kong, the angle from the tarmac represents Carter's perspective. Subsequently, the spectator hears the sound of an orientaling gong, supposedly a common sense aural marker of his outside status in terms of race, nationality, and sexuality. The foreign status of Inspector Lee represents the hypersexualized yet non-heteronormative Asian multitude, what cultural critic Robert Lee terms as a "third sex location," a term referencing the dominant threat of Yellow Peril hysteria. Therefore, in the role that Angel Island served previously, the airport represents a social space of entry and transgression, a space that is a locus of cultural, racial, and sexual definitions of insider and outsider, and this is where most of the humor derives initially. But instead of the gaze of the immigration state, via the eyes and medical instruments of white officials, Detective Carter establishes the gaze of Black manhood and culture which has encoded American orientalism onto the Asian male body.

When Inspector Lee meets Carter, the latter does not say a word, thus seemingly reproducing Asian American racialization as the silent minority.

Responding to the silent space, Carter constitutes onto the Asian male body stereotypes of Asian accents through and Black performance of Yellowface. Carter misrecognizes Lee as such (this is significant), and ensues to produce his comic effect by performing Black mimesis of Yellowface, stating in exaggerated and obnoxious terms, “Do you speakuh English...Do you understand the words coming outta my mouth?” Positioning the spectator in the viewpoint of an objective eye, the camera zooms to Lee just smiling, and the two-shot records Detective Carter physically turning his back on Lee. This refusal represents the negations of interracial identification or even an acknowledgement of Lee’s humanity and mirrors the kind of liberal discourse used to explain such interracial cultural misrecognition between Koreans and Blacks in L.A. Carter clearly stakes out the subjectivity of the insider, where his interracial mimesis of Yellowface produces the boundaries of comedic performance, affect culture, and national belonging.²²⁷ As situated in opposition to newly arrived immigrants, he operates as a racialized policeman of U.S. national identity and culture, much like the Shaq-Yao media battle. In this manner, the camera does not ask the spectator, through the classic shot-reverse shot, to identify with the two men of color, thus an oppositional gaze is non-existent. Therefore, the camera work, dialogue, and comedic performance produces a form of racialized suture that creates interracial difference as flippant and hyperreal through Black excess and patriotic policing.

In *Romeo Must Die*, the entertainment value found in the engine of the plot and dialogue centers primarily on the sublimated sexual tension between Han and Trish

through the kung-fu action scenes. However, along with imitating a stereotypical South Asian taxi-driver named Achebar, Han performs instances of interracial mimesis including a foreign Chinese delivery boy. Trish functions marginally as a support buddy, but she does perform this role similarly to Detective Carter though her sexuality and good looks act as an object for the scopophilic male gaze. This function is demonstrated when Trish gets into a cab driven by Han: the camera frames a full shot of her, then cuts to the rearview mirror showing Han looking at Trish. The spectator is in the scene looking at Han gazing at Trish through the rearview mirror, so that his gaze is the active center of this scene by the visual representations. Adding a unique gendered dimension to the buddy picture format, she performs the function of the classic fetish.²²⁸ By negating Trish's gaze, the Black female body becomes marginalized as merely an object and the racialized gazes from Han to Trish secure this reading initially. Cinematic citizenship in this particular scene designates a political, class, and sexual subjectivity found in Asian-Black spectatorship. Maintained by the political gaze regulating cinematic citizenship, the romantic subjectivity given to most action hero leads is cut off in this scene by the operation of the racialized and sexualized suture.

In *Rush Hour* and *Romeo Must Die*, the martial arts hero is a palimpsest figure in the kung-fu buddy picture because he is erased of the typical leading man sexuality or for that matter a romantic kiss, a standard for the white male action hero. Beneath the overt visual economy of sexuality, the martial arts hero is reinscribed with violence par excellence. As Chris Straayer states in "Redressing the 'Natural,'" the

classic kiss in Hollywood cinema represents sexuality. The symbolic power of the kiss “derives from its dual metaphoric and metonymic function. It both stands in for sexual activity and begins it.”²²⁹ Similar to the erasure of the homosexual kiss in classic cinema, the disavowal of a romantic subjectivity for the martial arts hero is what Judith Halberstam describes as a sanitized subjectivity. Underlining this erasure, this process is a sexual bleaching and signals the anxiety of producers for the overdetermined sexuality of the hero.

The genre sanitizes all connotations of libido in the figure of the martial arts hero except as expressed through racialized violence. We see this exemplified in *Romeo Must Die*, in which, the only physical contact that simulates intimacy of touch is in a fight scene. The fight scene that teams Han and Trish against an Asian female reinscribes violence and sexual miscegenation for the reproduction of Hollywood production codes in kung-fu cinema. Thus, this fight scene maps the parameters, not only of Asian American male sexual regulation, but also of Asian-Black anti-miscegenation, and routes this taboo through choreographed violence. In *Rush Hour*, most of the explicit sexual energy is in Detective Carter, who manages to perform a stereotypical representation of Black heterosexuality, one consisting of an overdetermined status and masculine bravado. However, in contrast with Bruce Lee, whose humor was inadvertent or minimalist at best, Jackie Chan uses his bodily violence for comic affect, often narrowly escaping mortal wounds through last minute heroics that do not illustrate his invincibility but rather his vulnerability. In “The Construction of Black Sexuality,” Jacquie Jones offers the idea that the buddy picture,

films that portray a white male hero and Black sidekick, represents Black male sexuality in the form of violence. She evinces the idea that “violent differentiation” is a substitute for Black heterosexuality.²³⁰ Her idea suggests that violence and race represent coded sexuality. As such, violence and gender mimesis produces Black male subjectivity in the diegetic, or the narrative structure of film texts.

In *Romeo Must Die*, Trish teases Han with sexual innuendo—“I like the yellow one,” “Is it true what they say about Asian men?”—as a measured barometer for the incessant anti-miscegenation rule dictating the racial romance in the film. She functions as an Black female, delegitimizing Black male heterosexuality, in that her refusal of the romantic advances of Black male characters (Maurice and Mac) represents the denial of Black male sexuality. In both cases the racial differentiation involved in the martial arts buddy genre engenders a masculine homosocial world mostly in negation of racialized femininity because in the end, critical representations should not only have functionality but also creativity and agency. If liberalism “entails the gradual emergence of civil society and the citizen-subject of the state out of the barbaric prehistory of human society,” then the martial arts genre, much like the developmental narrative found in liberal assumptions of freedom and individual agency, reworks standardized tropes in more white-washed buddy pictures, but still relegates other “forms of opposition or sociality” to the margins of the diegetic.²³¹

In her article “Avenging women in Indian cinema,” Lalitha Gopalan provides a useful mapping of how genre functions in order for the spectator to identify with the visceral images. This act then provides an opportunity for a critical understanding of

why certain genres reproduce themselves repeatedly. It penetrates to the heart of consumer desire and material anticipation. Gopalan writes, “only genre simultaneously addresses the industry’s investment in standardized narratives for commercial success on the one hand, and the spectator’s pleasure in genre films with their stock narratives structured around repetition and difference on the other.”²³² She links the ideological and production investments in the workings of genres, but her definition omits how genres transform over time and mutate into different forms through processes in constant renegotiation with the political and economic circumstances of cultural productions. We see this process in motion by locating Jackie Chan and Jet Li as two distinct martial arts heroes; the former invokes a different kind of kung-fu, namely complex fight scenes using set pieces and slapstick humor as a means to produce desire and affect in Asian-Black spectatorship, whereas the latter follows the tradition set by Bruce Lee in using his body as a narcissistic vehicle for spectatorial identification.²³³

The mortal combat between Han and his Black counterparts and the suppression of a romantic relationship between Han and Trish, is a measured critique of the economy of masculinity and femininity circulating in the film. Interracial fighting and interracial sanitization unveils the white-Black-Asian triangulation including Han’s unnamed relationship with the white developers. Establishing citizenship as property ownership, this triangulation reveals the set of property relations narrated by the film which exposes the contradictions of urban blight and white financial capital. The critical evaluation of the masculinist investment with

private property is the film's attempt to conceal the contradictions located within liberal individualism, its possessive assumptions concerning land accumulation versus communal ownership.

Early in *Romeo Must Die*, Mr. Roth, who represents elite white developers, meets Isaac O'Day, head of a Black crime organization. They negotiate their plans to secure the property deeds over a round of golf at a neatly manicured golf course. Responding to Roth's pressure to complete the transfer of low-rent property to secure land for building a multimillion-dollar sports stadium for NFL football, O'Day states that he "knows" the streets and thus will be able to get the remaining holdouts that have previously refused to sell their property. We see a full shot framing all the men together in the same homosocial space, and by the content of the dialogue, fighting over limited land issues. Thereafter, O'Day comes up to swing his golf shot and subsequently his ball lands in a sand bunker. In a two-shot with O'Day, the camera centers on Roth. Now his knowledge and not his body is on display, while telling O'Day that golf are a "game of finesse and not power." Later, Roth breaks down the intricacies of the golf swing including the alignment of the wrist and hips, the stance for better posture, and the balance of the feet. With the white male body swinging a fluid golf stroke, then a quick cut to his golf ball landing close to the hole, knowledge and power are sutured to the white male body.

Although Roth represents the stereotype of the unscrupulous Jew, the film does not focus on this dynamic as much as it does the Asian-Black racial battle for limited property rights. Throughout the scene, many convergent layers of meaning circulate

in the discourse of private property including Social Darwinism, 19th Century raciology, and Jewish incorporation into the category of whiteness.²³⁴ Moreover, the editing of this scene ties the spectator to the accuracy of Roth's explanations describing masculinity in coded language, where white men ultimately have the knowledge and power to maneuver street "thugs" like O'Day. Legal scholar Cheryl Harris explains that the capacity for ownership of private property has always been constitutive of a social, economic, and cultural construction of a white identity. That is, a person has subjectivity, agency, and ultimately citizenship only when the equation—whiteness equals property—is realized.²³⁵ When the camera has a close-up shot on O'Day's demoralized face after his failure, it represents that the "game" is based upon rules over which he has little control.

As this golf game is an allegory for the "game" of propertied masculinity, Roth has the intricate knowledge needed for the mental and bodily wherewithal to mastermind, like a puppet master, crime bosses and corporate financial scams. Not only does he condescendingly teach O'Day the mental aspects of the game, the word "finesse" connotes the ability of white national manhood to master the bourgeois game of golf through sports knowledge gained from the application of Enlightenment science rationality. Yet also, the regime of knowledge Roth holds enables him to feel a sense of security and modern personhood, a self-imposed assuredness in property ownership and Western epistemologies of cognition that sees little threat from the construction of O'Day as a symbol of colonial discourses of biological inferiority, the trace of his all brawn-no brains masculinity. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick illustrates in

her text *Epistemology of the Closet*, for any modern questioning of homosocial and homoerotic spaces, “knowledge/ignorance is more than merely one in a metonymic chain of such binarisms [so that] knowledge meaning in the first place sexual knowledge; ignorance, sexual ignorance.”²³⁶

Thus, O’Day can be read as legitimating and reproducing this hierarchy of white knowledge. His position as an outsider to bourgeois leisure activities leaves no choice but to evaluate his masculinity in the terms set forth by Roth. That is, the homosocial quid pro quo exchange between Roth and O’Day reinstates the logic of how masculinity is prefigured upon the movement from structural considerations of power to the biologicistic-cultural paradigm. O’Day can be read as both refusing the uneven relations of power existing between he and Roth by asserting his “excessive” masculinity in terms of a “powerful unknowing as unknowing” and consenting to the hegemonic and reproductive framework set by Roth in rearticulating an essentialist binary of finesse/power.²³⁷ Even later in the film, when Isaac O’Day tries to become “legit” by getting into the “owner’s box” of the stadium development plan, he is shot and thus disciplined by his lieutenant Mac for his ambitions. Black-on-Black crime becomes the dominant policing mechanism to admonish “uppity” Black men who, in popular sport, perform entertainment labor while being denied access to ownership, head coaching, and broadcasting positions. While deploying a familiar trope in a familiar genre as a vehicle for circumscribing the plethora of maleness seen in the film (notice the lack of women such as mothers, wives, and romantic partners), the system upheld by the film justifies this occupational barrier for Black assertions for propertied

inclusion and decision-making power.

Resituating white masculinity in relation to cinematic citizenship, the narrative of whiteness in the martial arts buddy films has to reimagine a universal, modern subject that is still white, but also on the criminal margins. In this sense, whiteness in mainstream film culture seems to need a white misfit that can be discounted. Much of the martial arts genre then uses the match-up between white criminals and racialized men as cops. White corporate crime represents whiteness as anachronistic, out-of-step with modern liberal progress based upon law and order. This portrayal includes white men such as Roth, the pseudo-aristocratic land developer in *Romeo Must Die*, or even the British ex-colonial official in *Rush Hour*. As such, they do not represent the benevolent, enlightened heterosexual white male liberal. What we see in recent mainstream productions with racialized men is a troubled dualism constitutive of identification and disidentification. The genre requires the martial arts hero to punish other racialized men, who in the filmic narrative must be represented as the real threat, in front of the camera, committing the violence and off-limit transgressions. In this way, the sinister work of white supremacy is then hidden in the films, like a negative photographic imprint that is mostly invisible and forgotten.

As many critics of multiculturalism have stated, the new multicultural era has instituted more representations of people of color, but at the same time conceals the lack of actual political and economic power engendered to those groups. Conveying political correctness without real motivation for social transformation, the politics of racial visibility hides the culpability of white power in both cinematic form and

narrative.²³⁸ In particular, one function of film culture sets up points of identification for the audience in staking out divisions between citizen and outsider based upon race and thus those to whom the cinematic apparatus sutures the audience, and those it does not.

Nevertheless, audience identification or disidentification is also predicated upon the spectator's position in relation to social categories of differentiation. Due to the rhetoric of meritocracy and equal opportunity through standardized testing, multicultural liberalism must conceal the material privileges hidden within the category of whiteness; it must also sublimate and assuage, by the mediation of national culture, the guilt, anxieties, and hostilities of "angry white men," who in post-civil rights, have been named as injured subjects of the reconstitution of white supremacy. Displacing culpability and responsibility onto other racialized men or white corporate crime, the visual culture of popular film regulates the dialogic racialization of Asian and Black communities in cultural revolutions and counterrevolutions. When the Asian-Black interface goes astray from presumed liberal goals of equal opportunity and self-sustained achievement, the buddies as racial cops help secure the promise of the U.S. nation-state by subduing white criminals. Yet the racialized men as cops are violent and stereotypical caricatures so that incisive critiques upon white supremacy are ignored except in the end, through interracial solidarity. These cops stand for law and order, but they somehow always remain outside modern society. In this sense, they enforce the law, but they are not self-disciplining citizen-subjects.

In *Rush Hour*, the clash of national cultures and the deployment of Black culture as a critical site for critiquing U.S. imperialism abroad and the police state domestically are worked through the buddy team. Establishing the role of the police state and foreigner status, Counsel Han tells the FBI, “I am not an American. My daughter is not an American.” In not so subtle terms, this statement sets the stage for Chinese nationals and U.S. police powers to engage within the political field of U.S. national belonging and transpacific migration. In a scene depicting Inspector Lee coming to the U.S. to help Counsel Han, FBI agent Russ says to Agent Whiting, “That’s all I need is a foreign national getting his head blown off and turning this into an international incident.” As a sexual connotation in literary and filmic analysis, the reference to decapitation in the dialogue presages the romantic castration of the martial arts hero. Equalizing violence with sexuality, the representative of the racist state, the FBI, foreshadows the regulation of cinematic citizenship through the specter of symbolic castration. In the ensuing dialogue between the agents, a classic shot-reverse shot sutures the spectator to the point-of-view of the FBI. In past encounters, the FBI has a history of counterinsurgency measures, including its infamous COINTEL program, as a means to disunite social and racial classes. More specifically, the spectator is sutured to the nation-state’s police powers that disparage, in their words, “Chung King” cops and to recruit LAPD keystone cops.

Showing Lee Mann’s Chinese Theater, Detective Carter drives to downtown Los Angeles. In the car ride to the tourist site, the camera moves side to side in the two shot frame and thus reinforces identification for a racialized gaze. Depending on

the spectator's worldview, the racialized gaze can be oppositional and critical, but it can also be mimetic and conciliatory. When the two arrive, the camera is positioned street-level, framing the two buddies in a single frame looking up, with Mann's Chinese Theater in the background. Carter says, "But I want to show you something," and functions as the buddy who shows, translates, and confirms what the audience is soon expecting: the inauthentic representation of "Chineseness," Mann's Chinese theater, collides with the martial arts hero, who is supposedly the authentic personification of "Chineseness." In this hyperreal collision between simulacra and authenticity, the Black buddy functions to show just how incompatible the martial arts hero is to the collective U.S. national mythology that incorporates Hollywood cultural imperialism. Therefore, when Carter exclaims, "just like home ain't it," his hand widespread showcasing the monument in all its glory, the spectator through the process of suture is cued to laugh at this incongruence. In true Hollywood caricature, the humor derives from two sources: both Carter's overdetermined ignorance, "ain't never been to China, but I bet it looks just like this, don't it," and Lee's overdetermined sense of loss in seemingly his own world of "Chineseness." Through the full shot of Mann's Chinese Theater, Lee's naiveté and Carter's ignorance produces the desired effect. As such, the racialization of both men is disabled, Han culturally and Carter intellectually. Both ignite the humor and pleasure the spectator is asked to enjoy at their expense.

Showcasing the collective cultural memory of white national manhood, the Asian-Black buddies encounter the sidewalk footprints of John Wayne. For so many,

Wayne is the ubiquitous icon and embodiment of the Western hero—or simply put, the representative cultural imperialist par excellence. After portraying throughout his extensive movie career, the genocide of Native Americans, the repulsion of Santa Anna, the defeat of the Japanese in WWII, the “Duke” gets immortalized with his footprints in concrete. Insofar as the “Duke” represents a heroic embodiment of the U.S. imperial power, his presence in the frame concretizes literally classic Hollywood cinema’s exclusion of Asians in the U.S. from cultural representability. The camera work brings alive the cultural myth of the “Duke,” his grandiose persona that is framed in a close-up shot of his larger-than-life feet at a tourist attraction symbolizing U.S. cultural power.

In this defining scene of cultural crisis, the camera works in the classic shot-reverse shot, moving from the gazes of the racialized men and from, unbelievably, the gaze of the footprints! Finally, as the spectator, we are sutured to identify with the racialized men, but it is in relation to the Duke, whose feet are literally and figuratively too large for the martial arts hero to fill. Inspector Lee’s first words in English, “John Wayne,” are telling because it represents the collision between two kinds of hero traditions outlined earlier in this essay. Symbolically, Carter informs the martial arts hero that his feet are not big enough to fit into the collective memory of the nation-state. The scene depicts the exclusion for Asian men from “standing in” as a representative for U.S. masculinity by reminding the nation of its collective memory in wars against Japan in WWII, China and Korea during the Korean “conflict,” and the Viet Cong in Vietnam. Thus the logics in the scene show how masculinity works

within this homosocial world including idealizing white subjectivity, making invisible Chineseness, and negating women of color from representation.

Because of this incommensurability between assimilation and racial exclusion, the Asian-Black buddy team constructs an alliance based upon common ground of racial oppression and thus forms alternative sites of disidentification for citizenship. More specifically, the Asian-Black team route this inclusion through African American culture and history. However, this trajectory refuses to emphasize the places where Asian American culture and history have resisted cultural erasure or where Asian-Black shared history has formed subversive forms of alternative social relations. In this way, a mural on a background brick wall depicting African American blues musicians and singers foreshadows later scenes where Tucker functions to construct citizenship through the perspective of Black history, trauma, and culture.

Framed by a consistent two shot, Lee requests a ride to Counsel Han's location, thereafter, Carter responds, "Man, just sit there and shut up, this ain't no democracy." In "'Something's Missing Here!' Homosexuality and Film Reviews during the Production Code Era, 1934-1962," Chon Noriega suggests that the Production Code Administration censored homosexuality in all filmmaking. Critical reviews along with audience responses influenced the reception of homoerotic films and muted the homosexual content within.²³⁹ Likewise, the martial arts buddy picture contains certain Hollywood production codes which sanitizes its political and homoerotic content to a more individualized and thematic paradigm. Lee urgently

responds to Carter's declaration, "Yes, it is," whereby Carter admonishes, "I'm Michael Jackson, you Tito." Inspector Lee ignores the power dynamic infused in the remark and queries "why wouldn't they want my help?" Finally, Carter lays it all on the line, referencing literally the FBI, but more generally the United States: "because they don't give a damn about you."

The two shot frames the homosociality in this scene, positioning the racialized gaze as an outsider/insider binary representing citizenship. The cinematic apparatus does not suture the spectator to the racialized buddies, and the spectator is not asked by the cinematic shots to identify as "that's me," but instead to listen in, to eavesdrop in on the conversation. Afterwards, the buddies are seated in the car again, listening to the radio and discussing the politics of national culture. Inspector Lee hears the Beach Boys as an interpellative form of U.S. national culture, in this case the popular music of U.S. cultural imperialism to all parts of the globe. He says, "Ah, Beach Boys great American music" whereby Carter abruptly switches the radio station to hip-hop while saying, "don't ever touch a Black man's radio."

Reworking Althusser's classic formulation of interpellation, the state hails Lee through "great American music."²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, while Lee begins to misrecognize the promises of the state as the real promissor of political embodiment, Carter watches the intoxicating powers of the U.S. national culture mesmerizing his partner. Thereafter, he disrupts Lee's subjection to the state/cultural power axis. As a technological arm of cultural expression, the radio signifies the cultural space in which African Americans have an ability to resist the silencing of their voice.²⁴¹ Carter's

warning, “Beach Boy’s going get you a great ass whipping,” reflects the history of white violence and terror directed towards African American men. Realizing the missteps for Blacks caught up with racial uplift without a critique of whiteness and democracy, Carter continues his commentary, “You can do that in China, but you get yourself killed over here man. I’ll show you some real music. Hear.” The camera finally utilizes the classic shot-reverse shot between Lee and Carter, that begins the process of identification suturing the spectator to the buddy team, while Carter says, “now that’s music.” This is by no means a coincidence. While Beach Boys music represents a demographic audience of largely white listeners, hip-hop has its origins in African American and Caribbean traditions of blues, reggae, and be-bop, pressure-cooked under urban renewal that called attention to racism, poverty, and the police state.²⁴²

Some may argue that hip-hop has been co-opted by the homogenizing influence of capital, yet *Rush Hour* represents this cultural expression as a critique of equating U.S national culture with whiteness. Once Althusser’s ideological state apparatuses have been systematically broken down, the coalition-building begins for an interracial alliance, through an Asian-Black interface of cultural translation and politicized unity. Carter moves in a break dance style, showcasing the “snake” move, and shouts, “Can you do that to the Beach Boys?” He rhetorically asks and then answers emphatically, “Hell, nah.” As a subtext using certain production codes, the looks between Carter and Lee intersect with various racialized gazes from the audience, and construct an oppositional gaze through cultural translation and

collective historical remembrance.

The quintessential “bonding scene” between Lee and Carter breaks down the pillar of U.S. cultural imperialism through a communal, critical kind of interracial social engagement within a transpacific interracial conversation based upon a shared history of dialogic racialization. The lone martial arts hero, no longer rooted in self-alienation, forges political bonds with members of other excluded groups. Before encountering the Asian gang keeping Counsel Han’s daughter kidnapped for ransom, Lee and Carter are at Foo Chow restaurant in a two shot, waiting outside for the right opportunity to “bum rush” the Asian gang. While sitting in the car, the camera positions a shot-reverse shot, suturing the spectator to Lee when he hears on the radio Bruce Springsteen’s rendition of “War.” Still in that frame, Lee sings verbatim the song’s lyrics, “War! Huh! / What is it good for?/ Absolutely nothing.” In this pivotal scene for cinematic citizenship, the song’s lyrics suture the audience to interracial solidarity through the soundtrack and corresponding singing.

On one level, the song’s lyrics function to call into question the role of U.S. imperialism abroad in Asian geo-political spheres of influence as well as highlighting the return of the martial arts hero to the imperial center. His ventriloquism of an anti-war song performed in the wake of the Viet Nam and Persian Gulf War calls to question the twin ideological fences of liberalism and militarism spread throughout the world that culminated in various wars in the “Far” and “Middle” East.²⁴³ In many ways, the refusal of the Asian male body, as the discursive site where U.S. cultural imperialism and militarism are etched, denies complicity in such systems of violence

and global hegemony and also challenges unreflective patriotism. On another level, the song's lyrics are used to underline thematically the tensions between Asian American and African American cultures, a conflict-ridden history with its volcanic eruption of the L.A. Rebellion in 1992. Following this, Detective Carter adds his own flavor, recoding the song through Black cultural expressions. Showcasing hip-hop dance moves, this response is a dialogic engagement with Lee's implicit extension for friendship. War in the form of social division is definitely not the answer in order to respond to racial divisions. The camera works to suture the audience in this scene, using the comedic energy in framing a two-shot then the all-important shot-reverse shot. Through racialized suture, Carter works off of Lee's humorous rendition and adds a performance of hip-hop moves with the martial arts hero. Elevating the humor through mutual teamwork and Asian-Black codes of affect culture, Carter's performance stabilizes the homosocial space by educating and translating the politics of culture and citizenship for the martial arts hero through the active body of Black racialization. Thus, this maneuver produces a more egalitarian equation to the standard buddy format seen in Hollywood. This creates a common bond based upon common exclusions, and constructs their race and masculinity based upon mutual respect for each other. In the end of this scene, the members of the buddy team teach each other their respective cultural traditions, kung-fu and hip-hop moves, as a mean to unearth the compromises and knowledge needed to be culturally engaged and mutually respectful of each other.

Forming a politics of reflexivity, interracial alliance engenders a critique of the

social and cultural structures keeping buddies marginal. Through the process of cultural exchange, the shot-reverse shot affirms this newfound cohesion. The buddy picture genre, then, is reworked by a move towards egalitarian traditions, one evoking civic republicanism and the need for community-based solidarity. At the end of the hilarious scene, after teaching each other hip-hop and kung-fu moves, the two mockingly point guns at each other in order to snatch the guns away. As an oppositional gaze about power, the two shot here works to produce spectatorial identification with the buddies' newfound friendship. While boisterously laughing with each other, Carter and Lee point guns at each other's throats and see the foolishness in "war." Dancing in synchronicity, the audience sees both moving down the sidewalk, arms pumping up and down in unison. From the third eye, with their backs turned to the audience, the political gaze is racialized, disrupted and destabilized.

This "rule of equality" is represented, once again, through the incorporation of the "dozens," an oral tradition in Black folk culture that is also an antecedent to the raps of hip-hop MCs. This oral form consists of participants creating lyrical lists back and forth in order to masculinize their verbal messages with punch lines, dramatic effect, wit, and humor. Realizing that both their fathers were police officers, Carter and Lee try to "outdo" each other through hyperbole by narrating their fathers' exploits. The shot-reverse shot works to suture the audience into the space of fantasy and wish-fulfillment: "my Daddy arrested fifteen people," "my Father arrested twenty-five people," "my Daddy saved five crack heads from a burning building," "my Father

caught a bullet with his own hand,” my Daddy kick your daddy’s ass.” Aside from the Oedipal subtext with all this talk about fathers, the playful quid pro quo exchange finalizes Lee’s ability to comprehend and take part in U.S. national culture. Using Black folk culture and verbal assaults, this exchange is much like a poetry slam. While on an equal footing with Carter, Lee can definitely “speakuh English,” and thus has gained the Carter’s respect and admiration. Carter formalizes this interracial alliance by exclaiming in the ensuing fight with the Asian gang: “I’m Blackanese.” As the buddies talk together, dance together, and now fight side by side, Carter instantiates a linguistic and symbolic hybridity that underlines the meaningful cultural exchange in Asian-Black spectatorship.

This relationship is not as well determined in *Romeo Must Die* as a result of the different dynamics between Han and Trish, but their symbolic union can have empowering connotations in relation to state power, property relations, and interracial romance. The first major fight scene between Han and his Black counterparts demonstrates the utilization of interracial mimesis as a means to create a sense of solidarity. Between the fight scenes are suggestive interracial looks through the shot-reverse shot technique, in suturing the audience to both Han and Trish. The martial arts hero’s individualism, his lone trek to solve his brother’s lynching, transforms with an interracial alliance with Trish O’Day, the crime boss’s daughter. Here, sexuality and violence intertwine with Hollywood production codes of anti-miscegenation in containing the overdetermined bodily agency of the martial arts hero.

On the one hand, the deployment of model minority masculinity is evident by

the ways in which Han Sing defeats the O'Day gang through specific strategies and techniques of the state apparatus. Reflecting the problems of racial profiling today, the police have incorporated more sophisticated surveillance techniques and tried-and-true methods of apprehending Black males for the prison-industrial complex.²⁴⁴ In this scene, Han enters the private space of Trish when he goes unannounced into her apartment. Trish does not feel threatened from his presence, but instead she offers to aid him. After a discussion about the tracing of his brother's last telephone call, Han has secured aid from Trish in finding out the telephone calls were to her clothing shop. As though a romantic gaze is in place, they then smile at one another when the O'Day gang drives up headed by the comic figure of Maurice. Han then racially masquerades as a foreign Chinese delivery boy, as Maurice and his associates come into the front doorway. Maurice apprehends that Han was not a delivery boy because there is a lack of an "Oriental" aroma in the air. Obviously, we then have the much anticipated martial arts fight scene.

From the vantage point of Han, his gaze is the one the audience sutures to, especially in being the recipient of Maurice's wisecracks such as calling him "dim sum." While performing the flying crane position made famous in *Karate Kid*, the representation of Maurice's masculinity as excessive and overdetermined is the main engine of humor and clownish behavior. Through his racial mimesis of Ralph Machio's famous climactic moment in whitewashed martial films, Maurice racializes Han as a Chinatown caricature. Therefore, the overdetermined ignorance, much like Carter, elicits some form of punishment and retribution. Han transforms into a

fighting dynamo, and we enter the space/time of the martial arts fight scene. The excessive masculinity of Maurice, his large body size and even larger verbosity, is in contrast to Han's small frame and few words. In this way, the misrecognition of Blacks of the law and police authority is routed through the heavy-handedness of the Asian martial arts disciplinarian. As distinctly opposite to the Black masculinity of Maurice, we are asked to marvel at Han's somersault over the stairwell and subsequent flying low kick because the camera is positioned from the vantage point of a third eye. Each punch from the gang is reciprocated with a block, synchronized at a predictable pattern of force-counterforce. Accordingly, the martial arts sequences serve to suture the spectator to the hero but their "unreality" also reminds the spectator that he/she is in the realm of the imaginary. Indeed, the sheer athleticism and production values of the shots might cause the viewer to ask, "How they do that?" thereby taking the spectator out of the reverie of visual pleasure.²⁴⁵ As dialogue is non-existent, facial expressions of awe and dismay, frustration and pain are the main visual cues in the martial arts fight scenes. Similar to the pornography genre, the visual culture of martial arts fights is embellished with facial contortions, close-ups, and exaggerations, which adds humor and spectator effect to the physical acrobatics.²⁴⁶ In this case, the next round of fighting down the staircase showcases the police tactics of apprehending criminals that Black males continue to be subjected to in the prison system. Such an apprehension is in an overdetermined manner, and this state highlights the absolute, extraterritorial force and dominance of militarized state power.

The camera follows Han's gaze as he unleashes plastic hand restraints on his combatants and then goes about whipping them like an animal. This treatment had been popular among slave owners and overseers during the slave trade and plantation life, thus showing the unique coupling of an Asian male hero and Black "whipping boys." When Han undresses one of the gang members, hog-ties him, and exposes his gold bikini underwear, the figure of the Asian martial arts hero emasculates Black men for their excessive virility. Later, when Han apprehends the black gun from Maurice, unclips the ammunition, and drives off in a black sports utility vehicle, his containment of Blackness via African American bodies is total and complete. Through color symbolism, he takes away their virile firepower; he drives off in their ride; and he does all this without breaking a sweat. Trish smiles, and Han's performance of disciplinarian and racial policeman is complete.

In *White Screens, Black Images*, James Snead outlines three mastercodes that provide foundational logics for the production of Black representation in classic cinema. From D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* to Shirley Temple's Blackface, Snead argues that mythification, marking, and omission were constitutive components for the production codes.²⁴⁷ Mythification is the phantasmatic relationship constructed in the white imaginary, marking is construction of Blackness through costume, lighting, and contrast, and omission is a reversal, distortion, or some other form of censorship, of the racialization of the Black body in cinema. In this sense, these processes use the camera as the liminal spatial and temporal mediator between the image and spectator in designating racialized gazes. In such a construction, it

produces the gaze as political through cinematic citizenship.²⁴⁸ As such, right before the line of credits, the moment in mainstream cinema where the nuclear white family is consolidated through the classic Hollywood kiss, we see a hug between Han and Trish. The camera then marks the two buddies, walking together over a bridge. This image is significant in reformulating how a major Hollywood production can end. Han takes Trish's hand and gives her a hug that subverts media representations of Asian-Black conflict. As a new political gaze, Asian-Black spectatorship, among spectator and screen images, redefines the meaning associated with crossing over, transcending the liminal spaces of symbolic bridges.

**Voices from Afro-Asian Rhythms and Rhymes:
The Spoken Word and Hip-Hop Lyricists of
I Was Born With Two Tongues and the Mountain Brothers**

“Shaolin shadow boxing, and the Wu-Tang sword style. If what u say is true, the Shaolin and the Wu-Tang could be dangerous. Do you think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat me?” Wu-Tang Clan, “Bring Da Ruckus.”

“The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it had experienced.” Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

“Cultural work and the arts. We need to be constantly creative in all the many visual, spoken word, musical and theatrical expressions and forms to promote revolutionary consciousness.” Fred Ho, *Legacy to Liberation*.

Denizen Kane

In November 2001, the University of California at San Diego’s Porter’s Pub, a usually sleepy hangout for hungry and thirsty students, housed a spectacular live performance by pan-Asian spoken word group I Was Born With Two Tongues. On their nation-wide tour, sponsored by internet website AsianAvenue.com, the Chicago-based wordsmiths occupied the imaginations and heartstrings of a captivated audience famished for voices different from post-9-11 patriotism and exceptionalism. With a standing-room-only crowd of mostly Asian Americans, the performance by I Was Born With Two Tongues offered students of color an alternative space for exploring issues of identity, stereotypes, gender relations, and U.S. imperialism through recognizing their lives performed on stage.

Enter Dennis Kim, a.k.a. Denizen Kane—a Korean American twentysomething,

with shaved head, hooded athletic jersey, and a gifted powerhouse voice. Sharing the stage with him was the rest of his crew, Anida Yoeu Esguerra, a Cambodian Muslim immigrant; Marlon Esguerra, a second-generation Filipino American; and Darius Savage, an African American who often accompanies 2Tongues, as they are affectionately known. Prior to this performance, Jessica Hagedorn had praised the release of their debut album, *Broken Speak*, with the following review: "2Tongues is about brains, poems, beauty, wit and a powerhouse performance style that breathes fire and kicks ass." What distinguished Kim was his spectacular fusion of freestyle hip-hop, rastaman chants of third world reggae, Korean folk music, and traditional poetic free verse, accompanied by Savage's upright jazz bass. Passionately unique, Denizen Kane represented the dynamism of race, the Asian male body, and the performance of Afro-Asian cultural expression on the live stage.

Outside of the lecture halls or classrooms, the coffee houses, pubs, and college venues for spoken word poetry capture, even beyond the theatrical stage, the possibilities of political activism and dissemination of knowledge through the power of the speech act as being what Saul Williams calls "incantations." Additionally, new identities and social consciousness emerge from the dialectical engagement between artist and audience when poetry, sound, and political thought reverberate the moments of history. For instance, Kim's spoken word performance of masculinity and race, using "the spells laced into poetry," challenged white supremacist history and dispelled myths of culturally invisible Asian American men.²⁴⁹ But he did so by crafting a passionate desire for self-determination for both men and women, culturally

and politically, using his body and voice as a canvas for expressing the contradictions of imperialism, capitalism, and ethnocentrism, to borrow from bell hooks, in a white supremacist heteropatriarchal capitalist society. In such an enactment of artistic expression and political critique, Kim's performance of the Asian male body in the public space of Porter's Pub can reveal the power of what Walter Benjamin calls "the shock effect." In "A Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin evinces the power of cultural production to create the propulsion of contemplation and critical self-reflection, to enlarge the social function of critical inquiry and awareness, to have "presence of mind" or in today's hip-hop parlance—to know what time it is and where you're at. Keeping this need in mind, the "shock effect" of spoken word is its voices speaking forth from the underbelly of capitalist and imperialist life as we know it, one audience and present moment at a time.

As such, this chapter addresses the conductive intersection of live performance by Asian American men in hip-hop music and spoken word and links the possibilities of Asian-Black cultural fusions and internet productions as their main medium of communication. It calls attention to the role of public intellectuals, such as Dennis Kim, and the role of art, activism, and culture intertwined with Asian American cultural production and Black musical expressions. Importantly, this chapter focuses on little understood, yet highly significant cultural practices taking place in Asian American communities, especially youth and internet cultures. All together, it emphasizes the Asian-Black interface of spoken word and hip-hop as a revolutionary practice as the practitioners claim, one that disrupts the constancy of racial magnetism

in matters of social policy and public discourse. Dennis Kim's alias in his hip-hop crew Typical Cats is Denizen Kane; the term denizen connotes someone who has taken up permanent residence in a foreign country and who is given some rights there. His name marks the characterization of Asian Americans in theater, film, and music as habitual outsiders—the ways Asian Americans are excluded from mainstream U.S. visual culture. Denizen Kane, much like its filmic specter, haunts the North American racial imaginary, one stage and one audience at a time, each ephemeral moment abolishing history and space, what Karen Shimakawa exposes as the “phantasms of orientalism through and against which an Asian American performer must struggle to be seen.”²⁵⁰

The Asian Male Body on Stage

Circa August 2005, in Tampa, Florida, more than twelve thousand curious museum voyeurs attended a four-day exhibit of cadavers and body parts of preserved Chinese men and women. Called “Bodies, the Exhibition,” twenty cadavers and two hundred sixty body parts were preserved at Dalian Medical University of Pathology Laboratories in China. The Museum of Science and Industry had procured the rights to display the dead, but not without creating a controversy, as permission had not been granted by the deceased or their families. Breaking an attendance record set by the 2003 *Titanic* exhibition, the excavation and preservation of Chineseness from their morbid death produced widespread interest, as CNN reported “similar exhibitions have drawn millions of visitors around the world.”²⁵¹ This perverse fascination to see the Asian male body as spectacle, detached from his humanity and personhood, has

been a trademark of white supremacy's narcissistic impulse to construct "the Oriental" in circus sideshows, vaudeville acts, minstrelsy comedies, popular film, mass literature, and most recently, the Broadway stage.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Chang and Eng, conjoined twins from Siam (now Thailand), were main showstoppers for Barnum and Bailey's Circus because of their rare "freak" entertainment value for white audiences. Like Afong Moy, the "Chinese Lady," Chang and Eng toured throughout North America and Europe, displaying their bodies as oddities for spectator consumption and pleasure.²⁵² Indeed, the term "Siamese twin" originates from the spectacle of Chang and Eng's Asian male bodies that became constituted by a white imperial gaze. What James Moy calls "the panoptic empire of the gaze," this visual representation of Asianness as fixed, immutable, and often as living, breathing *dramatis personae*, had centralized the power to look as part of U.S. Manifest Destiny, from the Eastern seaboard to the Western Frontier, to an imagined East full of mystery and monstrosity. Moy asserts:

By the middle of the nineteenth century two forms of the empowering gaze became clear, the serial and voyeuristic. The popular form of the serial, or survey, offered amusements which brought together, apparently authoritative series and collocations of objects to create the *potential* for meaning.²⁵³

Indeed, the potential on stage for the creation of meaning over and beyond the humanity of the Asian male body often encompassed viewing white men pretending to be Asian men. In this sense, minstrelsy shows first began to appear after the novelty and spectacle of museum dioramas became a relic of consumptive pastimes. Robert Lee illumines, "many minstrel shows had made 'Siamese twins' part of their comedy

routines...[where] minstrelsy was a powerful vehicle for constructing the Chinaman as a polluting racial Other in the popular imagination” including such wildly popular shows as Charley Fox’s *Minstrel Songster*.²⁵⁴ Often discussed in terms of Blackface, minstrelsy had been much more complex and expansive in its construction of racialized bodies including stock characters such as Zip Coon, Indians, and John Chinaman in yellowface. Unlike the consumption of Asianness in museums for middle-class white gazes, the performance of yellowface began as entertainment for white working-class audiences, who had recently emerged during the expansion of U.S. industrial capitalism. Through songs, comedy skits, and stump speeches that distorted accents and dialects, yellowface in minstrelsy allowed for Anglo-Americans to represent Asian American masculinity. As Alexander Saxton and George Rawick have explained, minstrelsy functioned to contain the racial crisis of immigration, slavery, industrial capitalism, and Manifest Destiny by consolidating a white supremacist whole, which continually needed reassurance of its moral and racial certitude.²⁵⁵

These representations of white supremacy dressed in the garments of orientalism continued to be expressed in popular film and literature. Films such as D.W. Griffith’s *Broken Blossoms*, originally titled *The Chink and the Child* in 1919, *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* in 1932, *7 Faces of Dr. Lao* in 1964, and the 1961 classic by Blake Edwards *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, represent this obsessive desire through yellowface to contain visually the threat of Asianness. For example, popular visual representations of the Asian male body for white spectatorial pleasure had been the evil figure of Fu

Man Chu and the comic figure of Charlie Chan. Denied self-representation in performance, production, and creative expression, Asian American men were represented through the mediated body of Werner Oland, a white male actor who played the world conquerer Fu and the bumbling eunuch Chan. Mary Douglas states, “the body becomes a particularly salient symbolic referent in the context of boundary crisis, the physical body mirroring the boundaries of the social body.”²⁵⁶ As such, the visual containment of Asian masculinity through the spatial containment of the representational field (e.g. the stage, diorama, movie screen, or cropped photograph) is indicative of the invisibility of Asian American men in U.S. national culture. This invisibility references the dehumanization of the Asian male body and thus the metonymic function required of U.S. empire to objectify and marginalize Asianness in order to reconstitute itself as whole, coherent, and modern. Thus, like the “Bodies, the Exhibition,” the historical racialization of Asian male bodies, knowable by the gaze of white supremacy, shows the development of consumption patterns and racial hierarchies that conjoin race and space, all for the exclusion of Asianness from self-representation, and ultimately self-determination.

Asian American Performance and Asian American Studies

In Asian American studies, the study of race, performance, and the body has allowed for rigorous and continued examination of Asian Americans excluded from national culture and citizenship. One of the most important recent studies in the emerging field of Asian American performance is Karen Shimakawa’s *National Abjection*. As named in the title of her monograph, abjection characterizes the

politically situated repulsion of Asianness from the U.S. national body, the “collapsing of nationality, race, ethnicity, and bodily identity...”²⁵⁷ Borrowing from Julia Kresteva’s theorization, Shimakawa traces through Frank Chin’s character Tam in *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, the process of abjection, “an attempt to circumscribe and radically differentiate something that, although deemed repulsively *other* is, paradoxically, at some fundamental level, an undifferentiated part of the whole.”²⁵⁸ Looking at Asian American theater, her work enables us to understand abjection as a constitutive process of white supremacy (although she euphemizes white power, like many Asian Americanist, as the “dominant group”). In particular, her ethnographic work at interviewing Asian American theatre artists and companies, especially Mako Iwamatsu and the East West Players, reveals the persistent institutional obstacles for Asian American drama and roles that do not fall prey to exoticism, stereotypes, and mythification. As Iwamatsu narrates, “the older generation [of Asian American actors] had been used to getting disciplined or being taught by non-Asians, white men...It was very difficult to...break them away from what they were used to [racists stereotypes of orientalism]...”²⁵⁹

In addition, Shimakawa’s work on live performance distinguishes theater from other cultural practices because it focuses on understanding the relationship between artists, audience, and performance within a specific temporality and space. She proposes, “live theater—even at its most seamlessly realist/naturalist—cannot help but flaunt its presentational qualities: a live audience unavoidably participates in the artifice onstage to a degree greater than in perhaps any other artistic medium.”²⁶⁰ For

Shimakawa, live theater is a powerful medium for thespians to play a fictional role, with artifice as a tool, to expand the senses of reception, perceiving movements, voices, emotions, and spectacles that are not mediated by the director's camera or producer's sound recording. How do we then conceptualize the live performance of spoken word or hip-hop artists who supposedly are trying to "keep it real?" What are the differences in live performativity that must be differentiated, based upon questions of authenticity, theatricality, and place? In one sense, Walter Benjamin's theory of "shock effect" allows us to think about the concept of critical engagement and its elevation of *the political* in spoken word and hip-hop.

In Speak It Louder, Deborah Wong observes in the primacy of rebellion and performance that, "scholars working in postindustrial, postmodern contexts look intently for signs of *revolt*, and performance has been identified by some as a means for locating agency."²⁶¹ On the spoken word and hip-hop stage, racialized bodies and revolt are interconnected, maintaining a direct link between audience and artists to the political. In contrast to live theater, the separation between artifice and suspension of disbelief is not asked. In fact, elevation of belief or a quality of non-fiction is maintained, in order for the audience to respond to the perceived genuineness of thought, expression, and persona. To exhibit artifice, not to say performance, is seen by audience members as contrivance, of trying too hard to appeal to the audience, without heartfelt depth and vulnerability. The performative, raced body becomes transparent for the audience, each thought critically evaluated at different temporal speeds, each whimsical joke collectively enjoyed or rejected, each moment of

emotional catharsis delimiting time and place. The performance of live performance is the production of a different reality, a process of estrangement that counters the normalizing process of alienation of social life and daily existence under transnational capitalism and U.S. empire. Whereas realist theater incorporates properties which reproduce the effects of the real, “these props index the failure of representation to reproduce the real [...] The real inhabits the space that representation cannot reproduce.”²⁶²

Walter Benjamin’s idea of the aura helps us understand the centrality of history, art, and representational realness. For Benjamin in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” the aura is the uniqueness of artistic expression in a particular moment of time and place, “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”²⁶³ Furthermore, he explains “the adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.”²⁶⁴ With the visceral aspects of live performance, the spectator is not limited to the visual sense of perception, and this critical lens is not confined by a two-dimensional space. Unlike film spectatorship, the audience actively views each other, gauging the reception and emotional barometer of the event through smell, touch, and unrestricted visual movement—all ensconced in ephemerality. In this sense, Benjamin conjectures a powerful connection between aura, live presence, and active perception: “if while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which cast its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those

mountains, of the branch.”²⁶⁵ However, when he says “mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual [...] instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics,” he fails to acknowledge the full possibilities of live performance, that its uniqueness in artistic ritual could be a politicized space.

Conversely, Wong’s and Shimakawa’s ethnographic work on Asian American hip-hop and repertory theater imagines new political possibilities rooted in challenging the hegemony of racial stereotypes and white spectatorship. Indeed, as Dorinne Kondo suggests, “it matters centrally who is writing, who is performing in what venue for what audience.”²⁶⁶ Narrating the performative function of home, community, and identity the production of *Doughball* in 1991, Kondo illumines, “Asian Americans never laugh the laughter of recognition because we are systematically erased from view. We never see ourselves portrayed the way *we* see ourselves.”²⁶⁷ Furthermore, Kondo’s explication of Asian American recognition in live performance is in stark contrast to Josephine Lee’s pathologizing of Asian American masculinity and preference to highlight, “any Asian American enjoyment of plays that employ exaggerated, stereotypical, or exotic Asia or Asian American characters.”²⁶⁸ Lee’s work ignores the pervasiveness of white spectatorial supremacy and totally obliterates the need to examine and emphasize a politics of spectatorship and production that have self-determined Asian American writers, actors, and producers. As such, the intersection of Asian American and performance studies have produced paradigms of cultural ethnography that link politics and present temporalities, and that actively

engage with questions of cultural autonomy and revolutionary practice. Resisting poststructuralist suspicions of authenticity and authorship, I want to privilege and explore what Kondo calls “the effects of authenticity or verisimilitude.” What is it about the aura of live performance that produces a politics of recognition from audiences? How can Asian American men in hip-hop and spoken word create new possibilities of masculinity that produce shock, contemplation, and critical inquiry? My readings of *I Was Born With Two Tongues* and *the Mountain Brothers* challenges Asian American performance studies that have predominately constructed the idea of Asian American live performance as “primarily Chinese and Japanese American, upper-middle class, and English-speaking.”²⁶⁹

Korean American Masculinity and Spoken Word

In the North Side of Chicago, away from the glamour and traditions of Air Jordan, the Daley political machine, and Harpo Productions, Dennis Kim was an introverted teenager, navigating his way through the emerging spoken word scene during the mid-1990s. At the age of seventeen, he started attending the predominately African American open-mic events around Chicago, including famed spots such as The Mad Bar, Another Level, and X. One night, at a live performance, serendipity came along. Kim saw Seattle spoken word group Isangmahal perform, their name being a Tagalog word referencing Bob Marley’s third world anthem of “One Love.” Describing his moment of inner transformation, Kim recalls the night he saw Isangmahal:

I saw some of them perform and they were just fucking sick. My friends and I, we were writing too. We were part of the hip-hop

generation, and we were writing our little raps, thinking we were fresh. But I went to check these guys and they were fucking sick [...] There was self-love there.²⁷⁰

After enrolling at the University of Chicago, Kim met Marlon Esguerra, Anida Esguerra, and Emily Chang; all passionate about spoken word, they kept bumping into each other at performances and frequented the same hangouts. Soon, the group formed a collective pan-Asian spoken word troupe of their own, calling themselves *I Was Born With Two Tongues*.

With its blend of hip-hop culture, political activism, and the powerful oral performance, spoken word had been an underground art form for socially, culturally, or politically voiceless people to express their discontent with the Ivory Tower protectionism of text-based poetry, the corporatization of artistic expression, and the right-wing turn in U.S. national politics.²⁷¹ But more than this, spoken word allows many “to be seen,” and “to be who they want to be.”²⁷² Emerging from this politicized and racialized context, Asian American spoken word artists and groups such as 2Tongues, Ishle Yi Park, Beau Sia, Eighth Wonder, Staceyann Chin, Yellow Fist, and Freedom Writers, to name a few, have used spoken word to challenge the contradiction of white supremacist heteropatriarchal capitalist domination. Moreover, the fusion of hip-hop music and spoken word has been literally conjoined through HBO’s *Def Jam Poetry Slam*, films such as *Love Jones* and *Slam*, and television shows like *Oz* and MTV’s *Lyricist Lounge*. Indeed, for 2Tongues, their “Yellow Technicolor Tour” had facilitated their popularity and widespread critical acclaim with Asian American hip-hop group The Pacifics, another Chicago-based hip-hop

collective.

Sponsored by Asian Avenue.com, an internet site geared towards Asian American youths and young professionals, the Yellow Technicolor Tour created a whirlwind word-of-mouth reputation during 2002, due to their standing-room-only audiences and raw visceral performances. Across college campuses, sponsored primarily by Asian American student organizations and fraternities, the Yellow Technicolor Tour brought up issues affecting Asian American communities, as EM magazine announced, to “educate the masses on the plight of the Asian person in the midst of a pseudo-equal rights-for-all millennial dream.”²⁷³ College tour stops included a wide array of public, private, liberal arts, and science-oriented institutions of higher learning including Lawrence University, Columbia College, Arizona State University, University of Pittsburgh, Wellesley College, and University of California, Riverside. Most remarkable about the tour is that much of the publicity and press had been disseminated through the internet.

Several internet websites devoted extensive coverage of both 2Tongues and The Pacifics, showcasing upcoming tour dates, printing interviews with the performers, and presenting forums to discuss blogger initiated comments and reviews about the Yellow Technicolor Tour. From more mainstream Asian American websites such as AsianWeek.com, Goldsea.com, and AsianAvenue.com to more niche oriented websites like newcitychicago.com, evilmonito.com, and nichibeitimes.com, the effectiveness of internet web productions to create buzz, hype, and critical evaluation for Asian American cultural practices, stands as a new era for a decentralized media

machinery. This event represents the cyber distribution patterns of today's youth subcultures, which is reminiscent of hip-hop's early days of fliers, posters, and word-of-mouth. Suggestively, even though Asian American websites were the main engine for the success of the Yellow Technicolor Tour, the audiences that turned out were definitely more racially diverse. Marlon remarks about the composition of audience members, "It's about the struggle [...] the majority of our audience are mixed crowds [...] the Asian, Black, Esas [sic] struggle [...] we're all different but the struggle is the same."²⁷⁴

Throughout their national and international tour, members of 2Tongues performed many pieces from their 1999 debut album *Broken Speak*. Asian Improv Records, a non-profit record label based out of San Francisco, recorded and distributed *Broken Speak*. Started by Mark Izu, Jon Jang, Anthony Brown, and Francis Wong—all jazz musicians—Asian Improv initially formed to "bring the African American tradition of improvised music and jazz together with our Asian roots."²⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, this fusion of Afro-Asian aesthetic forms to fashion new Asian American music had reflected the experiences of all the founding members who were active during the Asian American Movement. Indeed, Asian Improv seeks to develop and nurture "Asian American arts and performance," and its landmark recording of 2Tongues expanded its predominant audience base of jazz and blues towards hip-hip culture.

As a result, *Broken Speak* is a musical and poetic testament to nurture and develop Asian American self-love and self-expression. Composed of seventeen

tracks, *Broken Speak's* astonishing array of musical influence, from hip-hop scratch DJ mixes, jazz instrumentals, to reggae inflected spoken word, creates a form of cultural communication that blends political activism and art. Pieces such as “Not Your Fetish” showcase Anida Yoeu Esguerra’s and Emily Chang’s talent to remake Asian American femininity that refuses sexual objectification and exoticism within U.S. popular culture. In addition, Yoeu Esguerra’s performance of “Alag” (i.e. “a little asian girl”) is a showstopper due to its wit, humor, and criticism of stereotypes of a demure Asian woman, who then reinvents herself as “that Asian girl, the one who speaks with sharpened instincts and responds with intentional rage.”²⁷⁶ Speaking about her use of rage to express her racial trauma, Yoeu Esguerra explains, “I think people underestimate the power of art as activism. We are political poetry. We are just telling the shit we feel and telling our stories. Actively participating in trying to create a better world and trying to create change, which starts within yourself.”²⁷⁷ Quite remarkably, the performance of Asian American gender and sexuality in *Broken Speak* works to create emergent and different kinds of femininity and masculinity. While this chapter does not have the scope to devote needed attention to the many facets of 2Tongue’s oeuvre, the lens of race and masculinity may shed some illumination on some of the creative and political processes and energies in perpetual motion in their collective endeavor.

In this sense, at the 2001 performance of 2Tongues at UCSD, Dennis Kim presented a piece entitled “Han,” which incorporates Korean *pansoori* and *punk-ak* folk music, jazz basslines, and hip-hop rhyme schemes. Routing his Korean American

masculinity through the Korean term *han*, Kim's invocation of a word that means deep, lasting trauma in the Korean language reworks traditional ways in which Korean men are expected to express their wounds, pains, and fears. The concept of *han* had been pivotal for the comfort women, *chongshindae*, of Korea to narrate and expunge their historical legacy of silence and shame; and in a Korean American context, the documentary film *Sa-I-Gu*, chronicles the concept of *han* when Korean American women dealt with loss of Koreatown property, and even more dramatically, immigrant idealization of the American Dream after the Rodney King verdicts. In this way, it is important to note that Korean American women and not Korean American men have been the inspirational and courageous voices to narrate the contradictions of Japanese militarism and U.S. racialization. Therefore, Kim's special performance of "Han" reimagines the possibility of a kind of Korean American manhood that gains dignity and voice through talking about the suffering of Korean people within a transpacific diaspora. Specifically, he responds to the impact of U.S. empire, patriarchy, and white supremacy over Korean American identity by weaving a critical tapestry of *han* through Asian-Black musical forms.

On the CD recording, "Han" initiates the sonic experience of 2Tongues in track one, framing the opening hip-hop poetic verses of "Han" in the Korean folk music of *pansoori* storytelling and *punk ak* drum circles, both traditional Korean folk singing and drumming with roots in shamanism and narrative ritual. The employment of Korean folk music and the spoken word medium allows Kim to reconstruct his Korean American masculinity *sans* borders, akin to Gloria Anzaldúa's "sans fronteras" of

mestiza consciousness. As one critic comments, Kim's body becomes the corporal instrument to mediate sound, word, and diasporic fusions through his "grimace of concentration," "his right hand twist[ing] the bill of his baseball cap back and forth," "left index finger point[ing] to the sky" and "deep and sorrow" voice.²⁷⁸ Significantly, the power of agency in remaking the Korean American body contests the coercive forces that shape Korean American bodies in the first place. The audience sees, hears, and touches (through sonic vibrations) the rising crescendo of words:

There is a word—*Han*
 That squirms behind the vacuum glass of old photographs—*Han*
 Is the hungry scent of sorrow on the skin of my people—*Han*/
 Is the sound of a tongue plucked out of a young child's mouth—and
 my *Han*
 Is the sound of my crooked feet, searching for the footprints of my
 grandfather.²⁷⁹

In weaving Korean American identity through *han*, Kim discovers the process of memory, language, and lineage caused by the violence of immigration enacted through bodily displacement and disfigurement. As Ishle Yi Park comments, Kim challenges audiences to change "the way they see the world by urging them to question identity, history, and roots."²⁸⁰ Without pretense, Kim employs Korean vernacular in his spoken word.

Not even his "broken speak" can dissuade Kim from singing passionately in the next movement of "Han," wailing the lament of identity, homeland, and U.S. militarism through *pansoori* singing and percussion. Commenting on using Korean *hangul* language, Kim maintains, "there is something about those works in my mouth, even in my broken speak, that communicates something important to me, and I am

hungry to participate in an art where every shade of me is visible.”²⁸¹ For 2Tongues, the “broken speak,” as their CD title suggests, is a vivid reminder of how language and identity are affected by global and political migrations of people due to war and racial trauma, especially in the Korean context of “how the DMZ becomes the barbed line that traces thee/ military.” Linking the U.S. military presence in the Korean peninsular to the Cold War Korean Diaspora *within* post-civil rights race relations, Kim relates, “I get a face full of tchim boy/ if you don’t off my mic with that assimilate and distort/ghim becomes kim/ and chei becomes choi/ and I become the foreigner assimtism [sic] employ.” Kim’s construction of Korean immigrant identity to the U.S. nation-state challenges wholesale gratitude for homeland visas, especially when the process of assimilation is a misguided request to center white identity. Rather, he identifies the difference between diasporas of war and diasporas of flight, so much so that he breaks Khachig Tololyan’s definitional rule that “diasporas may criticize their homelands but not chastise them.”²⁸² Indeed, Kim’s performance of Korean American masculinity, as constructed within the Korean Diaspora, critiques the post-civil rights “glitter” of the American Dream and mirages of “Gold Mountain” that at once, peels “my skin back from the madness of my heart.” There seems to be, less a critique, than a radical rejection of U.S. citizenship that erases his humanity while Kim does not wait “for the culture to embrace me yo.” Thus, immigration and assimilation are nodal points of cultural disruption and state violence with the upright bass of Darius Savage, as the formal backdrop that gives rhythm to Kim’s rhymes.

In this way, “Han” establishes firm roots in Black musical traditions that enable a radical critique of the U.S. nation-state and imperialism. Blending Savage’s basslines and including a sampling of a song by Louis Armstrong near the end, “Han” forms a sense of shared racial trauma with Black music while at the same time keeping the specificity of Korean American experiences intact. Not only do the jazz and hip-hip forms mesh with Korean folk music, but even more, Kim reimagines, using Afro-Asian musical fusion, broader conceptions of diasporic identity that confront, as Stuart Hall relates, “the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes of cinematic and visual representation of the West.”²⁸³ As a result, working off of Gayatri Gopinath’s contribution that the nation is but one location within diasporic cultural circuits, the Asian-Black cultural crossings of “Han” offer an example of spoken word’s multiple exchanges within and without the nation-state itself.²⁸⁴

What we receive in the end stanzas of the piece is intersectional dimensions of Korean American identity and gender politics. Continuing with a quicker, up-tempo jazz bassline, Kim questions the construction of gender and race for men and women. Discussing Korean American masculinity and femininity, he remarks, “can I hold my brother up if his manhood must be defended? / Can I see my sister’s face clouded make transcendent/ To mend I/ wipe her eye of surgeries/ foundation can’t be drawn on/ and on your skin I see my *Han*/ Dancing.” As a means to connect bodies and assimilation, Kim routes *han* through the impact of white supremacy in U.S national culture, its pop culture of desirable white bodies and persistent stereotyping of Asian

men and women. But in the end, Kim seeks to “paint my freedom with the bruises on my heart/ I start by speaking peace,” and thus utters the mantra of overcoming racialized personhood and the abjection of Asianness through live performance, of using the stage and microphone as crafted responses to dehumanization and trauma. As such, *han* is the centralizing concept of displacement and gender formation, transplanted from traditionally Korean women’s trauma, and reinvented to link both Asian American men and women’s racialization, under the umbrella of U.S. militarism and in the “1/2 peninsula.”

Because the tracks on *Broken Speak* cannot adequately portray the live dynamism of 2Tongues, the live-recorded “Tree City Anthem” is an important track to represent Kim’s homegrown persona as a live performer in Chicago. Not coincidentally, Kim is the featured member to showcase his ability and talent to generate audience appeal and dialectical critical engagement through his improbable musical and poetic repertoire including KRS-One inspired reggae chants, free-flow hip-hop rhymes, and the heartache found in rhythm and blues. This particular piece showcases the ability of Asian male performer and audience to create new spaces and ways of social awareness and critical interaction that break away from the traditional rigidity of patriarchal, non-reflective Asian masculinities.

Although not his most political piece, “Tree City Anthem” might be Kim’s most personal. Addressing the death of his younger brother, the anthem is a centerpiece to Kim’s aura of spirituality that, at once, acknowledges and critiques his Christian background through the incorporation of “Jah” and “Allah” as legitimate

names. At the beginning of his live set, Kim beckons the audience: “This show is for my baby last child, when I say last, you say child/ you say last.” Thereafter, the crowd responds to his call and the noise level is clearly at a fever pitch; the audience is ready to be transported or dare I say, “shocked.” “My baby brother flew away from a world that’s cold and hostile/ left me in this place to preach terrible gospels [audience: come on!].” Singing acapella, Kim’s voice is resonant and full, displaying his range as a musician and artist as the audience encourages him to continue. Throughout the entire piece, audience members can be heard yelling, “come with it!” and screaming when Kim switches from acapella to reggae to hip-hop. As such, there are some breathtaking moments in “Tree City Anthem.” On the one hand, we hear third world reggae flows of “we choose death as the kindest/ shelter from the teeth of the timeless/ now hide this,” that hypnotize the audience to bobbed their heads. On the other hand, the track features the hip-hop inspired poetry of “slow a boppin’/ tangibles-and-tangos/ gold tangles and reasoning unravels/and nervous micro-babbles/ I’m traveling a path without definite end,” that mesmerizes hip-hop connoisseurs with its linguistic acrobatics. Remarking about genres, Kim relates,

As young artists, there are pressures to obey the conventions of the form that you’re working in. But the further I travel and the more I become myself, I realize that it’s an impossibility to stay so within the confines of some genre. I only have this lifetime to be who I am. I can’t waste time waiting for people to catch up, or waiting for them to agree that what I’m doing is hip-hop.²⁸⁵

As a risky gambit, all of this form switching allows the audience to appreciate the Asian male body as a refusal of pretense, as not appropriating but rather employing Black forms to speak truth to power. And this lack of pretense and inspiration of

genuineness offers a collective audience appreciation of the Asian male body as “real,” a real-time performer able to transcend the racialized borders that create racial division and mistrust.

Other pieces like “In America,” continue Kim’s consideration of U.S. citizenship and Korean immigration through his examination of the ways his mother or *omma* faced hardships both economically and culturally. By redeploying the familiar mother-daughter trope in Asian American literature through the relationship between mothers and sons, Kim’s sensitive treatment of how “women must cry many times to be heard,” refashions the traditional focus of men’s studies on fathers and sons. Finally, in “Race and I’m Running” and “Pillars,” Kim works with Marlon Esguerra to question, as Esguerra speaks, “the ill still longing and cursing for belonging to a place of home, of Greystone, of uptown, of industrial corridors, census bureaus, neglected like ghetto stillborns.” Using imageries of urban decay and economic destitution, “Pillars” incorporates Islamic prayer chants and the hip-hop turntablism of DJs, to create untraditional sonic cross-fertilizations that express the kind of experimentation taking place in *Broken Speak*. As Esguerra reminds us, “we teach the remember like pop quiz, and pass songs by way of hip-hop.” To some degree, all these pieces as well as others 2Tongue members, ask audiences, especially Asian Americans, to rethink where Asian America positions itself in relation to other racial minorities. This may allow for cultural belonging and agency through a shared determination to formulate new and innovative paradigms of revolutionary cultural practice. In an interview, Kim conveys, “the real story of it is that you can’t qualify

the experience we're having here. There really isn't a model for what we're doing."²⁸⁶ Indeed, the spoken word phenomenon has ambassadors such as 2Tongues who are reconceptualizing not only Asian American performance cultures on the live stage and internet productions but also the meaning of cultural self-determination and personal actualization.

The Mountain Brothers and Underground Hip-Hop

With common ground between hip-hop and spoken word, I conclude my discussion of Asian American performance cultures by considering underground hip-hop and Asian American masculinity. Old-school Asian American crews like the Seoul Brothers, Yellow Peril, and Fists of Fury laid down demo tracks and gave live performances that used the medium of an emergent hip-hop cultural revolution, during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Their cultural works embody a form of political empowerment and cultural expression to call out the contradictions of racial magnetism in post-civil rights. Working off of these oft-maligned pioneers, new school artists and groups like Jin, Typical Cats (with Denizen Kane), Boo Ya T.R.I.B.E, Key Kool, Rono Ise, In-Cite, and Pacifics have elevated the prominence of Asian Americans in hip-hop, often called "GenerAsian hip-hop" in cyberspace. Nevertheless, no other crew can claim to have legitimized the talent, hard work, and persistence of Asian Americans in hip-hop than a Philadelphia-based crew calling themselves the Mountain Brothers.

Coming from the Chinese "Water Margin" legend, the original Mountain Brothers were ancient mountain bandits who contested wealthy landowners,

committing corrupt forms of injustice upon poor people. Etched in underground hip-hop mythology, the current-day Mountain Brothers were the first Asian American hip-hop crew signed by a major label, namely Columbia Records/Ruffhouse Records, the home of Cypress Hill and the Fugees. As vanguards in the GenerAsian movement, the Mountain Brothers consist of Scott Jung (Chops), Steve Wei (Styles), and Chris Wang (Peril-L), a trio of former Penn State college students who added the MC to Asian America's presence in hip-hop. Soon after forming, the crew gained street credibility and notoriety because of their mixture of "scratching, themed rhymes, and story telling."²⁸⁷ In 1999, the release of their full-length LP *Self: Volume 1* was a watershed for Asian American hip-hop, as it signaled the first major critical and underground work appreciated by mainstream music connoisseurs. Here, I am concerned with interracial crossover appeal and the marketing of Asian American hip-hop music in mainstream music and internet cultures.

A remarkable aspect of the Mountain Brothers is that their fan base is comprised of mostly non-Asian people. Appealing to Black, Latina/o, and white crowds at their performances, the Mountain Brothers have diverse audiences all across the United States, who appreciate their organic Philly based sound and link them with other Philly groups like the Roots and Bahamadia. Nevertheless, in an interview about Asian American fan apathy, Styles remarks, "I'm sure the majority of our fans are non-Asian. Although we're completely happy with that, it's kind of unsettling to have non-Asian people support your music and be all hype at shows, and then do a show for certain populations of Asian people and have them just not get it at all."²⁸⁸ Relating

their experiences in front of largely African American crowds, the Mountain Brothers have had to overcome white supremacy's stereotyping of Asian American men and cooptation of African American music. Moreover, as Deborah Wong informs us, "identifying African American musics as a source for Asian American expression becomes a way for Asian American musicians to rescue certain possibilities made so difficult by racializations that muffle and silence them."²⁸⁹

For African American hip-hop audiences, the success of interracial crossover appeal by non-African American artists is fraught with the understandable booby-traps of suspicion and animosity (think: Vanilla Ice). Yet, even though the Mountain Brothers have "felt the odd stares and glares when signifying before a predominately Black crowd back east," Chops confidently relates, "we've found that any stereotyping ends in the first ten seconds. Once they hear us, everything's cool."²⁹⁰ Signifying an Asian American hip-hop sound to African American audiences encompasses an understanding of cultural respect and authentic passion for musical integrity. As George Lipsitz illumines, "intercultural rap music" builds upon a base of "'prestige from below' originating in African-American culture [...]"²⁹¹ In this respect, the Mountain Brothers in published interviews have repeatedly honored African American hip-hop pioneers like Pete Rock, Diamond D, Timbo, Large Professor, Jazze Pha, and Manny Fresh.²⁹² Drawing inspiration from African American pioneers, the Mountain Brothers have faced mounting challenges from industry executives, both white and Black, to create their own musical path while still keeping respect for hip-hop.

The marketing of the Mountain Brothers reveals the tension between artist self-determination and commercial industry. Being Asian American has its disadvantages in the rap game. One big-name music executive praised their music and then bluntly surmised: ““There’s only one problem: you’re Asian.”” Another music representative “suggested they liven up their stage act with kung-fu kicks, chanting and gongs.”²⁹³ After their campaign against music industry orientalism, the Mountain Brothers secured a record deal with Ruffhouse/Columbia Records and released the 12" "Paperchase" backed with "5 Elements" in 1997. The single garnered much underground praise and broke into the CMJ Top 40 rap charts, but the relationship between the group and their label soured and ended in 1998. Commenting on their historic partnership and divorce, Styles says,

It was creative stuff. We basically signed with them, recorded our whole album and then they wanted to change some stuff to make it more commercial...with Ruffhouse you have to fight through the system in order to do what you want to do and now we’re free of those constraints so its really cool.²⁹⁴

Strategies for cultural participation by Asian American men include self-marketing their music before their ethnicity. As part of their goal for hip-hop acceptance on their terms, the Mountain Brothers “have found repeatedly that listeners hear them differently depending on whether they’re already known to be Asian American. Indeed, they have found repeatedly that listeners who know they are Asian American beforehand take them much less seriously than when given racial clues at all...”²⁹⁵ Thus, the conscious marketing of the Mountain Brother has had to privilege musicality

over and beyond racial identification due to the lack of Asian American men in U.S. popular culture.

Rather than relying on mainstream avenues for commercial success, the Mountain Brothers signed with Pimpstrut Records to record and distribute their 1998 album *Self: Volume 1* and relied upon internet websites and performance word-of-mouth to promote their explosive and successful entry into underground hip-hop legitimacy and legendary status. *Self: Volume 1* contains nineteen tracks, constituting a variety of Chop's signature production of no samples, original beats, and the unique rhyme structure that all the Mountain Brothers employ. Part of what constitutes the Mountain Brothers' appeal to an underground audience is their staunch desire to maintain control over their sound, to avoid the trappings of commercialism and musical dilution. Indeed, this is what separates commercial hip-hop from underground productions. In fact, Nelson George in *Hip-Hop America* relates how commercialism and record company hopes for profitable crossover acts has historically weakened hip-hop: "hoping for crossover, producers artificially reshaped and usually diluted the sound of records recorded and released. In many instances, singles were released only with potential crossover paramount in the label's mind."²⁹⁶ Once again, marketing and sound were in hypertension, and for the Mountain Brothers several tracks including "Paperchase," "Brand Names," "Day Jobs," and "Whiplash," intelligently and sonically shed light on the effects of corporatization on Asian American self-representation.

In “Paperchase,” the Mountain Brothers critique the ubiquitous centrality of post-civil rights materialism. When they rhetorically ask, “why must everything revolve around the penny?” they not only question the turn in mainstream hip-hop to commodification but also the corporate reality of hip-hop that attempts to divest its historical and political origins in subcultural disidentification with capitalist alienation. Peril-L raps with expert delivery and original word play, “Lemme state my case about the paperchase/ I know it’s hard trying’ to escape the pace/ of the fast lane situated in gold-plated Camry, Lex, or Benz/ But what about some perk-related family checks for friends.”²⁹⁷ Challenging the ideology of liberal individualism, Peril-L situates his masculinity not on the superficiality of material objects but rather on a sense of shared community where everyone benefits from individual gains. Moreover, commenting on the hip-hop recording industry, Peril-L criticizes the underlying logic of the profit-motive:

The fall of hip-hop it’s gonna be/
 fucking ceo’s don’t see what it means to be original/
 seems to me they fiend to see residual/
 I reckon smash flow’s getting’ payed for half-assed shows/
 Most are too concerned about collecting cash flows/
 You get burned on down but they see dash hoes on your set/
 Well, all I need is food on the table/
 Those that got my back despite the fact, dude, from the label/
 means I’m financially able, we still maintain hip-hop and keep it
 stable.²⁹⁸

While trying to break into the business of hip-hop, many observers have noted “they represent a principled attempt to enter the mainstream music industry on their own terms.”²⁹⁹ For Peril-L, the mainstream trappings of “selling out” is one of musical death, of not remaining true to underground hip-hop’s spirit of dismissing or rather

dissin', the cultural logic of transnational capitalism. Nevertheless, because the Mountain Brothers are Asian American pioneers in hip-hop, they have the added responsibility to refuse orientalist gimmicks and instead uphold more control of their sound. As they remark, “if we don’t have a big say—if not final say—it could really hurt, not just us, but other Asian groups that might come along in the future. So that’s really important to us.”³⁰⁰

Continuing, Chops, his voice deep and rich, offers a distinctive way to understand how hip-hop’s paperpurchase of greenbacks and fetishistic materialism affects the social relations of people within transnational capitalism. At its incipient moments of germination, when hip-hop was not a mass-market commodity or career advancement, hip-hop formed block parties and free concerts that attempted, as Trisha Rose explains, “to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community.”³⁰¹ Of course, many of the Jamaican bass and drum beats that were crucial to the genesis of hip-hop had been created by Chinese Jamaican producers. In this way, the Mountain Brothers are only continuing the Afro-Caribbean-Asian roots of hip-hop, when cross-racial relationships trumped crossover appeal. Using original internal rhyme schemes and distinctive one-line punchlines, Chops relates the superficiality of so-called friends who “rob and leech tryin’ livin’ life somethin’ rich and famous, you’re making me sick/ because you’re shameless, plus you see me like pomegranates.”³⁰² Considering that Asian Americans have not had a significant impact on the U.S. recording industry, and that hip-hop is

the cultural language of transnational social life, the tour de force of the Mountain Brothers to fashion their own sonic experience and to maintain their own commitment to Asian American identity is quite remarkable. Chops and his crew ride the beat in a certain way, distinct from other hip-hop MCs; the Mountain Brothers incorporate creative word play and unusual diction; finally the MBs, as they are affectionately called, know the importance of giving respect to African American hip-hop while at the same time promoting an Asian American sensibility. To be sure, the Asian male body (or, in this case, trio) on the grandest stage of global culture gives legitimacy to Asian American culture in general. And to fashion that identity on progressive underground politics of community, respect, and loyalty ensures the continuation of Asian American cultural integrity and self-representation without appropriating African American history and culture.

The conclusion of “Paperchase” depicts Styles commenting on the global character of the paperchase. He insightfully comments, “it’s true that gold rules the whole globe, diamond no close/ well, there were art of inlays with gold fixtures/ ‘til I remain a bitch to the dollar.../ Rockin’ dashin’ fashions and stashin’ cash hits, but what is this am I a business man or just a heavy spendage?”³⁰³ Refusing to act as creative labor for financial markets, Styles performs the Asian male body as anti-materialist. This approach contrasts with Asian American entrepreneurship or middle-class (white) acculturation. Indeed, Styles remarks, “we just rap about things that are important to us or that we feel strongly about. We don’t like to write about things that aren’t true to us.”³⁰⁴ Materialistic braggadocio and hip-hop have always gone

together, often towards remasculinist absurdity (we need only think of the evolution of bling-bling). Yet, the entry of Asian American MCs who portray the rap game as deeply penetrated by transnational corporations finds common ground with underground pioneers the Wu-Tang Clan, who assert in *36 Chambers of Shaolin* that “cash rulz everything around me.”

Other tracks on *Self: Volume 1* have memorable references to African American history. In “Ain’t Nuthin’,” Chops raps, “Not with a noose and an apple tree/ you wouldn’t have juice enough to hang with me.” His allegory of white supremacist lynch mobs to his superior ability as an MC showcases his respect for African American racial trauma. However, perhaps to their detriment, the Mountain Brothers limit their engagement of interracialism without a revolutionary politics of Black liberation. Kara Keeling reminds us that today’s iconography of hip-hop’s race rebels, most notably the “star text” of Tupac Shakur, is embedded in the logic of transnational commodification, as a general trend, “highlighting the ways in which recent business literature and marketing schemes have adopted much of the rhetoric and strategies of 1960s-style rebellion not only in order to sell products, but also as a means by which to ensure the consolidation of already existing structures of power.”³⁰⁵ It is this relationship between hip-hop and social movements, the leverage sustaining the anti-establishment credibility from its street base, which is often ignored even in the underground movement. In many published interviews, the MBs pay homage to African American hip-hop pioneers, from Scott La Rock to KRS-One to Public Enemy; they elevate the discussion of Asian American appropriation of a

presumably authentic Black cultural form. Yet, they lack more imaginative and revolutionary theorization.

One such aspect of the Mountain Brother's music is their performance of heterosexual boasts of sexual conquests. On the one hand, the employment of hip-hop's tradition of sexual boasting is perhaps a normalized industry marker of manhood and masculinity, especially for Black male MCs. On the other hand, as Asian American men, the Mountain Brothers occupy a different racial/sexual identity in U.S. racial hierarchy than do their Black counterparts. Thus, I want to analyze the ways in which the Mountain Brothers reproduce heterosexist representations while simultaneously sexualizing the Asian male body. Complicating reductive binarisms in political discussions about hip-hop, Trisha Rose maintains, "male rappers' sexual discourse is not consistently sexist, and female sexual discourse is not consistently feminist."³⁰⁶ In addition, bell hooks teaches, "the sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gansta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Clearly, judgments of sexual boasts in Mountain Brother tracks such as "Love Poetry," "Things to Do," and "Whiplash" are not complete without what George Lipsitz calls "dialogic criticism":

Popular music is nothing if not dialogic, the product of an ongoing historical conversation in which no one has the first or last word. The traces of the past that pervade the popular music of the present amount to more than mere chance: they are not simply juxtapositions of incomparable realities. They reflect a dialogic process, one embedded in the collective history and nurtured by the ingenuity of artists interested in fashioning icons of opposition.³⁰⁷

In this way, the project of remasculinization in Mountain Brothers' music reflects the historical erasure of Asian American male sexuality, especially in popular culture. Indeed, the knot of white supremacist U.S. national culture/sexism of hip-hop, and the Mountain Brothers is intricate and interrelated.

Three central themes dominate the work of sexism in the Mountain Brothers music: the importance of sexual conquest, mastery of punchlines, and employment of humor. In "Whiplash," scratching and funky beats, inspired from early African American hip-hop, opens the MBs' most explicit track of sexual boasting. All three MCs take their turns to dismiss the state of hip-hop (a popular theme) by sexual allegory. Styles taunts other MCs,

I slide your girl just cause you're bothering me/
 While you're bangin' on the door she talking/
 "How 'bout some privacy?"/
 I'm quite humorous, women bag numerous/
 Arrogant rapper with a bad case of hubris/
 Don't lose my gist, vocab illuminous/
 Girl you takin' out while doing it, if you insist/
 Relax I'm just mackin' it for practice/
 Yo she playin' hard to get but she ain't that good an actress.³⁰⁸

Styles raps about stealing another MC's girlfriend, even admitting his arrogance of the theft. All the while, he applauds his own intellectual verbal skills and sense of humor in a perceived game of masculinity in which women are the spoils of men who battle as MCs.

As a master of punchlines, Chops distinguishes his use of boasts to proclaim sexual prowess in quantity and ability. He incorporates innovative uses of metaphors and imagery that promote a "hardcore" masculinity. Under funk beats and scratch

synthesizers, he brags, “Cats don’t want to see no part of Chops/ I get more trim than barbershops/ Tag your ass like I was a graph-head.../All up in there, spreading, just like a yeast infection/ Had it rough, now we in the house and laugh it up/ I’m like a sumo getting’ the drawers, because I’m fat as fuck.”³⁰⁹ For Asian American MCs, tales of sexual domination, like their Black counterparts, are an industry mainstay. When the television channel *BET* sponsored the show, “106 & Park” freestyle battles, millions of rap fans saw another influential Asian American rapper, Jin, “telling another kid on rap’s marquee channel to ask his girl how “she had my egg roll and my dumplings in her mouth?”³¹⁰ The ability of the MBs to use a sharp wit and confident delivery contains the paradox of sexism and sexuality, especially for mainstream audiences who rely upon certain codes of signification and receive pleasure from such lines.

Peril-L steps up to the mic to offer an unusual admixture of gender bending in which the listener hears fears of same-sex relations and even asexual hip-hop subjects. The finality of “Whiplash” leaves little doubt about the remasculinization of the MBs through a heteropatriarchal framework: “Great enough to bless/ since the erogenous/ The misogynous, I wouldn’t have to step up on virgin MCs, androgynous, They don’t have sex, dodge my fist, came to reclaim my properties.”³¹¹ Here, Peril-L symbolizes inept MCs through sexual naiveté or worse, gender confusion where feminine qualities corrupt the masculinity of violent prone and propertied MCs.

That the MBs have a paradox of sexism/sexuality cannot be ignored. But tracks such as “Love Poetry,” and “Things to Do” show elements of humor, romance,

and storytelling that attenuates their macho role as battle MCs. Satirizing the voice of Barry White (another R&B influence in old school hip-hop), “Love Poetry” is a syrupy hip-hop ballad dedicated to women (again heterosexual motif) but emphasizes the MBs ability not to take themselves too seriously:

Girl if you were a newspaper/
 Then I would be your ink (that sounds nice)/
 If you were a piece of doo doo/ then I would be your stink/
 We go together like Abbott and Costello/
 Bill Cosby and Jello (j-e-l-l-o).³¹²

Not many MCs employ humor to construct masculinities of playfulness and sharp wit effectively. By doting “I wanna dig you like a mole and hump you like a camel/ And then commence to suckin out all your tooth enamel,” the MBs contradict their previous invocation of hypermasculinity in “Whiplash.” As sexual boasting turns to hip-hop’s version of stand-up comedy, “Love Poetry” illustrates the complex Asian American masculinity of the Mountain Brothers to show that, indeed, part of rap’s game is to perform masculinity, to give audiences what they want—all of which has been produced within a heteropatriarchal reality.

Finally, within such a reality, the ability of Asian American MCs to forge new as well as old masculinities signals Asian American men entering national and global dialogues about race and masculinity. While spoken word artists are certainly more mindful of sexism and homophobia (perhaps because more women and queers are in such spaces), hip-hop is the dominant cultural language of our youth. I think it is always important to question the dialogues, performances, and trajectories in which these daily practices are occurring, while also not dismissing too quickly any *one*

practice. Thus, the close kinship between spoken word and hip-hop has been a powerful and influential relationship for Asian American men to question their current reality as marginal men and to assert their rightful ability to self-determine, however flawed and misguided, their understandings of themselves.

**Conclusion:
Critical Reflections on Race, Class, Empire,
and the “Pains of Modernity”**

“It is time for Asian Americans to open up our universe, to reveal our limitless energy and unbounded dreams, our hopes as well as our fears.” Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams*.

“A wholesale critical inventory of ourselves and our communities of struggle is neither self-indulgent autobiography nor self-righteous reminiscence. Rather, it is a historical situation and locating of our choices, sufferings, anxieties and efforts in light of the circumscribed options and alternatives available to us.” Cornel West, “The Making of an American Radical Democrat of African Descent.”

“The experience of separateness arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety.” Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*.

Broadcast all over the world, from CNN to Al-Jazeera, the scene of Saddam Hussein’s statue tumbling down in Baghdad's Firdos Square was a symbol of U.S. military “shock and awe.” As the image of Iraqi citizens and U.S. soldiers collectively toppling the remnants of the Bathist regime was shown in media outlets repeatedly ad nauseum, little attention was given to Corporal Edward Chin, a Chinese American soldier who physically tied the noose around Saddam’s neck. Chin climbed the outstretched cannon of an M88 Tank to fasten a cable around the statue's neck, and while he was there, briefly covered its face with an American flag. Representing the exemplar citizen-soldier, Cpl. Chin’s service dutifully mirrors Roland Barthes famous account of an Algerian soldier saluting the colonial French flag. Cpl. Chin, his body and service, sutures the Western expansion of U.S. imperialism across the Pacific and Atlantic, the archipelagos, peninsulas, and Asian and European continents themselves.

While the post-civil rights era is a contradictory period of U.S. racialization between notions of *de jure* freedom and *de facto* racial hierarchy, this dissertation has argued that its temporality is simultaneous with the global phenomena of U.S. imperialism and transnational capitalism. In this sense, Cpl. Chin's service also mirrors the subaltern silence of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri and her familial legacy, whose present day relative now works for a transnational corporation and thus "can speak" the tongue of the free market.

The parable of racial magnetism is the story of where Asian Americans fit into the logic of white supremacy in relation to class relations within and between racial minorities, and how it constitutes the subjectification and denial of Black liberation. The editors of *Aiiiiieee!* challenge this density of post-civil rights racial ideology that would make them "feel better off than blacks"; representations of Yao Ming and Ichiro Suzuki cannot be separated from the Black male body and its liberation; Denizen Kane and the Mountain Brothers find manhood and cultural self-determination in Black musical forms of hip-hop and reggae, saying "never let the oppressor take away your peace," in this instance, the ability to make magnificent words and sounds of musical incantations and live audience spells; and Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker discover that "war" is definitely not the answer among Asian-Black political and cultural interactions. Rather, Jackie Chan understands the history of U.S. racial trauma and cultural integrity through the lens of Black U.S. history.

This reality of Black racial subjectification forms the basis for Asian American citizenship in post-civil rights, and Cpl. Chin's body and service exemplifies the

complex interconnections of proper national manhood and racial exclusion, and to what extent the Asian male body consents to the reproduction of imperial aspirations, wittingly or unwittingly. Just as the Irish and Italians had claimed their entitlements of U.S. citizenship through the adoption of the ideology of white supremacy, the logic of racial magnetism seeks constituent Asian and Black communities to identify with the project of post-civil rights imperial and market-based supremacy through the refusal to identify with and to promote Black liberation in all areas of U.S. political and material life. Simply put, in the spirit of Kanye West, the discourse of racial magnetism asks Asian Americans to not care about Black people; but instead, in order to constitute a unified Asian American whole, to see Black communities as what they are not, weighed by a density of ideology that forms the blindness and deafness to the dehumanization of class exploitation and racial hierarchy that is seemingly not all around us. This condition, in and of itself, constitutes the whole system of hegemony that relies upon racial hierarchy, in such a form as racial magnetism, in order to maintain cross-racial hostilities and cross-racial alienation and ultimately the “pains of modernity”—the alienation of modernity’s underbelly—the working-class peoples and peasants who show the anger, resentment, hunger, shame, and guilt associated with poverty, dispossession, and invisibility.

Out of sight and out of mind does not constitute a meaning out of modernity, although many would have us follow this blackhole of disavowal. Rather, race and class seems to have organized in fundamental ways, American life and the American fictions of material opportunity and equality of the property system. Take for

instance, the headlines of 2006: Hurricane Katrina, Duke Rape Scandal, Iraq War, and Immigration Reform. As we initially immerse ourselves into the twenty-first century, the contradictions of modernity, the spiral of race and class divisions, have seemingly combusted all together, explosively and decisively, both on an international and domestic scale. How then do we take first baby steps, and hopefully later leaps outside of this volatile concoction of the “pains of modernity?” Of course, there are no easy answers, but I do think the multiplicity of voices shared in this dissertation can add something valuable to this conversation. And it is another voice, John Okada’s, that I’d like to end this study.

Although first published in 1957, John Okada’s first and only novel *No-No Boy* did not gain notoriety until its introduction in *Aiiiiieee!* Okada deals with important social relations in critical Asian-Black social spaces inhabited by Black and Asian men. In *No-No Boy*, Okada describes a scene, in which Ichiro and Tommy attend a predominately white church in the Idaho town adjacent to their internment camp. By the sixth or seventh Sunday, the congregation made Ichiro feel at home, asking him questions and “conversing endlessly.” However, Ichiro experiences a pivotal moment of clarity, one that showed him the limits of U.S. citizenship, one that showed him how his welcome came at the expense of Black people:

He [Ichiro] saw the white-haired Negro standing in the back. He wondered then why the usher hadn’t gotten out one of the folding chairs which were often used when bench space ran out...There was no whispering, no craning as there had been in the other church. Yet, everyone seemed to know of the colored man’s presence. The service concluded, the minister stood silent and motionless on the stage. The congregation remained seated instead of disintegrating impatiently as usual into a dozen separate chattering groups. Very distinctly through

the hollowness of the small church echoed the slow, lonely footsteps of the intruder across the back, down the stairs, and out into the hot sun. As suddenly, the people came back to life like actors on a screen who had momentarily been rendered inanimate by some mechanical failure of the projector.³¹³

For me, this passage represents Okada's most memorable national allegory; Ichiro's refusal to accept the invitation of the white congregation, as he is imprisoned in a wartime relocation camp, underscores his refusal of Asian ethnic assimilation that is given through the exclusion and dehumanization of a "white-haired Negro." His identification with the old Black man, seemingly when the white congregation wants to make the unwelcomed stranger invisible, illustrates an Asian American masculinity that is cognizant of social relations—who sits where, who ignores who—and the superficiality of false overtures of inclusion not informed on a consistent and equal distribution of democracy for all. The metaphor of the "slow, lonely footsteps" symbolizes the historical development of racialized modernity, the "pains of modernity," one in which the emergence of citizenship and manhood has occurred differently for Black and Asian men and often in conflict with each another. The congregation can be seen as the post-civil rights congregation of white supremacy in general, often seeking Asian American complicity and silence when matters of race and class emerge; the silence of the congregation is the silence of those who lack all conviction, when the moment arises to speak against racial domination, when the worst have such passionate intensity. Okada underscores our national amnesia and the silences that fill the hollow of our everyday spaces, the loss of our old racial skins and

the forward vision of true social justice, the best of what humanities has to offer—requiring knowledge and skill.

There is no easy way out in Okada's text, only situational and relational representations of race and masculinity in the social milieu. Yet, Ichiro meets a person who shows him something different than the Idaho church congregation, a person named Gary, a fellow No-No boy, at the Christian Rehabilitation Center where jobs are available for ex-convicts and poor men. Gary represents the No-No boy that Ichiro is not, somewhat well adjusted and most importantly, not bitter and angry. He narrates to Ichiro a story about his friendship with a Black co-worker named Birdie:

There were a number of vets in the same shop, even a couple I'd known pretty well at one time. They steered clear of me. Made it plain that I wasn't welcome. But, hell, I have to eat too. I guess they spread the word around because, pretty soon, the white guys weren't talking to me either. Birdie knew about it too, but it didn't seem to matter to him. Birdie's a colored fellow. He took a liking to me. He let everybody know that anyone wanting to give me a rough time would have to deal through him. I heard he used to spar with Joe Louis some years back. I had plenty of protection.³¹⁴

The figure of Birdie is an inspiration for all because he, under the sedimented pressure of Black racialization, steps outside of racial magnetism's force, and decisively supports Gary's anti-imperialist masculinity. Birdie refuses to reproduce capital's division of racialized labor by protecting Gary from men who mimic and seek the approval of proper national manhood. In fact, we can say there is a third "no" to the double No-No of anti-war Japanese American men who answered in the negative to the Loyalty Oath questions. It comes from the outside, from someone we might not expect—Black men saying "no" as well. For this kind act, the men at the work camp

punish Birdie by sabotaging his car, making it roll over. Yet, Birdie's heroism is not forgotten, told to Ichiro, who finds optimism from his modern spiral of melancholia and disbelief. There comes belief in the project of democracy, belief in closing the separateness of modernity; and Okada illustrates for any interracial dialogue, the power relations involved, the mistakes made, and mutual empowerments instilled. In so doing, the novel reimagines alternative forms of social life and collectivity as much as understanding the processes of racial formation that route through constellations of masculinity as different as the social spaces they inhabit.

As an Asian American male, whose scholarly work is situated in institutions of knowledge that often remain silent or invisible in U.S. mainstream political discourse, I am awe-struck by the courage and conviction of voices of disidentification from the national imperial project such as Birdie and Ichiro. Hopefully, these voices found in cultural work can have something meaningful to teach those of us in and outside the academy. If we are truly committed to the project of decolonizing the mind and fulfilling the promise of modernity's social contract of liberty and freedom, then we must become flexible in our approaches and daily commitments. For Asian American studies, what this means is that we must do more—we must stay relevant. For we live in the face of Empire everyday, but it is as Joseph Conrad said in *The Heart of Darkness*: we refuse to see the reflection of the mirror staring in front of us, without pause and without patience.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, Dir. Renee Tajima-Pena and Christine Choy, Film News Now Foundation and Detroit Educational Television Foundation Production, 1988.

² See Russell Leong, *The Country of Dreams and Dust*, (Boston: West End Press, 1993).

³ In *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, an unnamed witness testifies to this account but does not explain how Ebens knew that Chin was Chinese. Of course, this complicates Eben's crisis of masculinity because his conflation of Chineseness and Japaneseness into a racial other shows the violence of Asian ethnic assimilation.

⁴ Wayne County Circuit Judge Charles Kaufman was quoted as saying, "These weren't the kind of men you send to jail ... You don't make the punishment fit the crime; you make the punishment fit the criminal." See *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, Dir. Renee Tajima-Pena and Christine Choy, Film News Now Foundation and Detroit Educational Television Foundation Production, 1988.

⁵ See *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, Dir. Renee Tajima-Pena and Christine Choy, Film News Now Foundation and Detroit Educational Television Foundation Production, 1988.

⁶ See Yuri Kochiyama, "Shades of Power: Newsletter of the Institute for Multi-Racial Justice," Spring 1998, <http://modelminority.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=156>.

⁷ See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁸ See R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995): 3-42.

⁹ See Dana Nelson, *National Manhood*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998): 23.

¹⁰ See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 23.

¹¹ See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (London and New York: Verso, 1990): 66.

¹² See Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 19-20.

¹³ See Susan Jeffords, "The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties," in *Film Theory Goes to Hollywood*, Edited by Jim Collins et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁴ See Richard Dyer, "White Man's Muscles," In *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, Edited by Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 286-314.

¹⁵ He remarks, "stage by stage, we have seen the revolution and the counterrevolution develop in Europe over the centuries" where "at each new stage of development, both the revolution and the counterrevolution assume a new quality with the new quality of the social development." See C.L.R. James, "Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity" in *Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings*, (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1980): 76.

¹⁶ See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁷ See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

¹⁸ See Stefi San Buenaventura, "The Colors of Manifest Destiny in the Philippines," In *Major Problems in Asian American History*. Edited by Lon Kurashige and Alice Yang Murray, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003): 167.

¹⁹ See David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/America: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999): 156.

²⁰ See Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, (London: Panaf Books Ltd., 1970): 17.

²¹ See Sheldon Ungar, "Moral Panics, the Military-Industrial Complex, and the Arms Race," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 31.2 (1990): 166.

²² Jim Lee has shown the historical genealogy between the UC Master Plan and S.F. State student strikes, where many immigrant Asian Americans refused such labor and political induction to the U.S. nation-state's broad project of global economic imperialism. See Jim Lee, *Urban Triage: Race and the Fictions of Multiculturalism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 1-30.

²³ See David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): 82.

²⁴ See Derrick Bell, "Brown v Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review*, 93 (1980): 518.

²⁵ See Mary L. Dudziak, "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative," *Stanford Law Review*, 41.1 (1988): 61-120.

²⁶ See John M. Liu, "The Contours of Asian Profession, Technical and Kindred Work Immigration, 1965-1988," *Sociological Perspectives*, 35.4 (1992): 673.

²⁷ Because nation-states such as South Korea, Taiwan, India, and the Philippines could not absorb their surplus of technocratic elite due to structural imbalances created by manufacturing and production economies, underemployment, and credential inflation, these countries sent the majority of Asian technocratic labor. See Liu, "Contours," 665-667.

²⁸ See Paul Ong and John M Liu, "Immigration Policies and Asian Migration," *The New Asian Migration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1994): 58.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁰ See Reimers, *Still*, 95.

³¹ See Illsoo Kim, *New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community in New York City*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981): 59-61.

³² State selection choreographed the texture of Asian American cultural and racial formation. In the latter half of the twentieth century, it emphasized an educated yet politically foreign workforce not fully aware or appreciative of progressive politics, especially the Asian American Movement. Vijay Prashad says in regards to Indian "techno-migrants," "The middle passage for desis is comfortable and even profitable, but it is a transit into indenture nonetheless. Regardless of our commitment to reside in the United States, we will be seen as forever immigrants [...] But we are good immigrants. We have advanced degrees." Here, Prashad hints at how state selection created a fracture along class lines between Asian immigrants with valued skills and the predominately working-class and poor Asian immigrants. However, both social classes were politically pliant, as legal aliens (and many illegal) outside of the political process who were unable to mount any forceful influence on electoral politics, let alone a heard voice. For these reasons, Asian American immigrants expressed gratitude for their visas and did not complain about their lack of political voice or their cultural invisibility. See Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 82.

³³ See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996): 12.

³⁴ See Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian American Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993): 117.

³⁵ This newly emerging global economy needed the leverage of racial magnetism, and the changes that were derivative from it; what Harvey calls "flexible accumulation," Jameson names "postmodern logic of late capitalism." Harvey explains flexible accumulation as the answer by management to the rigidities of Fordism. Labor processes, markets, products, and consumerism, these marked factors have expedited the 'flexibility' in which capital accumulation operates today. Retooling capital has meant the retooling of commercial, organization, and technological innovations needed for the competitive marketplace. As such, technology plays a central role; managerial and technocratic elites are key parts, in shaping the structure of labor processes, to its innovative force. Flexibility in the labor market is the ability to satisfy the specific needs of a firm. Whether this has meant the push for more flexible work schedules, subcontracting labor, or creating pools of surplus labor, the shift in disciplining organized labor, from full-time permanent status to part-time, temporary groups with less security, is a defining characteristic of a post-Fordist economy. No longer are firms bounded by national allegiance. Robert Reich, the former Secretary of the Labor, says about the future, "we are living through a transformation that will rearrange the politics and economies of the coming century. There will be no *national*

products or technologies, no national corporations, no national industries. There will no longer be national economies, as least as we have come to understand the concept.” By beginning my discussion in the year 1965, I question why the year 1973 only receives special attention in these conversations of globalization. The OPEC Crisis, Watergate scandal, domestic economic stagflation, and worldwide depression of capitalism, these events narrate a singular historic shift in processes of globalization. Many suggestive works presuppose this year as an important temporal marker of transnational modernity with Harvey as the preeminent expositor of such claims, the sharp recession of 1973, exacerbated by the oil shock evidently shook the capitalist work out of the suffocating torpor of ‘stagflation’ (stagnant output of goods and high inflation of prices), and set in motion a whole set of processes that undermined the Fordist compromise.” See Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations*, (New York: Albert A Knopf, 1991): 3; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993): 145.

³⁶ In *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, Sasia Sassen proposes an interesting link between state immigration policies of 1965 and the formation of high finance and service economies in select world cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Beijing, London, and Mexico City. She argues, “the consolidation of such global centers generates a restructuring of labor demand...the evidence shows that the result is an expansion of very high-income professional and technical jobs, a shrinking of middle income blue- and white-collar jobs, and a vast expansion of low-wage jobs.”³⁶ Her work illustrates the vital connection between state selection and urban financial centers where racially marked flows of immigrants, refugees, domestic workers, and global capitalists construct transnationalism through rigid class difference and struggle. Politicizing labor and the growing competitiveness of Japanese and German capital changed the traditional power base of U.S. economic dominance. As a chief mechanism constructing the demographics and depoliticization of labor, the 1965 Immigration Act enabled highly skilled *and* low skilled labor to enter the United States. In this sense, Asian immigration and the reshaping of urban geographies constituted the changing industrial base in America. See Sasia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 22. See also, Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

³⁷ See Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1982): 54.

³⁸ Bluestone, *Deindustrialization*, 54.

³⁹ Examining Oakland’s deindustrialization and urban poverty, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo investigates African American urban communities in the San Francisco Bay Area where declining manufacturing jobs caused additional harm to the injury of prior capital flight to suburban neighborhoods. More recent shifts to a service economy have also reduced chances for upward class mobility. For example, in the East Bay, the changing global economy has produced “pockets of poverty during a period of general prosperity” that have fragmented African American communities.

Despite labor unionization, the new imperatives of the labor market gravitated towards transnational labor pools from nation-states that have had either direct or indirect contact with the U.S. militarism. See Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, "Deindustrialization, Urban Poverty, and African American Community Mobilization, 1945 through the 1990s," *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, edited by Lawrence De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001): 346-356.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴¹ 96th Congress *Hearings before the Committee on Labor and Human Resources United States Senate*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 17-18, 1980.

⁴² *Shutdown: Economic Dislocation and Equal Opportunity* report prepared by Illinois Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, June 1981: 31.

⁴³ African American male workers faced growing competition in the labor sector that transformed from production to service oriented labor. In general, economic dislocation in Illinois and across the Frostbelt and even Sunbelt regions disrupted the steady gains Black families made during the initial years following the Civil Rights Movement. Jobs increased as well as standard of living. Yet, the realignment of the economy produced differential outcomes for many working populations. For example, more jobs in the South created a large demand for labor ordinarily left over for communities of color, where because of the labor market, whites have moved in to take the overwhelming majority of them. Affecting the industrial urban centers, national firms opened 966 branches within the state, employing 97,513 people from 1975 to 1978. Meanwhile, Illinois based firms opened 2,487 branches, employing 305,340 people in other states. Clearly, the export of industrial jobs from urban centers, disproportionately affected African American workers, especially laboring men as heads-of-households. *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁴ See Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York: Free Press, 1994): 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2

⁴⁶ See Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," U.S. *Department of Labor Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy*, March 1965. www.dol.gov/asp.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸ See Lois Parkinson Zamora, Ed., *The Apocalyptic Vision of America*, (Bowling Green, KY: Bowling Green University Press, 1982): 4.

⁴⁹ See Roderick Ferguson. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 122.

⁵⁰ See Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985): 23.

⁵¹ See William Peterson, "Success Story: Japanese-American Style," *New York Time Magazine*, January 9, 1966, 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵³ See Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982): 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁵ See Cited in Lee, *Orientalists*, 151.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁷ See Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): viii.

⁵⁸ Quoted in David Yamane, *Student Movements for Multiculturalism: Challenging the Curricular Color Line in Higher Education*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000): 3.

⁵⁹ Huntington says, "Rejection of the Creed and of Western civilization means the end of the United States of America as we have known it. It also means effectively the end of Western civilization." Quoted in Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/America*, 211.

⁶⁰ See Angela Davis, "Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism: Rethinking "Race" Politics," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 48.

⁶¹ See Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 76-115

⁶² See Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 78.

⁶³ For a good discussion on these student movements for multiculturalism, see David Yamane, *Student Movements for Multiculturalism: Challenging the Curricular Color Line in Higher Education*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁶⁴ In *University of California Regents v. Bakke*, the complainant Allen Bakke was denied admissions to the University of California at Davis medical school. Because the special admissions program allocated sixteen slots to "disadvantaged" students, Bakke, a white male, argued that this process was unconstitutional based upon Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The majority opinion uses the language of multiculturalism in weighing its decision, "No admissions program for disadvantaged or minority students existed when the school opened, and the first class contained three Asians but no Blacks, no Mexican-Americans, and no American Indians." *Bakke* expresses the assault on white masculinity by racial minorities who seek opportunities and guarantees henceforth denied. Further, it introduces the notion of white injury using the language of civil rights equality and conceptualizes racial hierarchy through democratic pluralism found in multicultural discourses. Asian Americans in this landmark decision received protections from affirmative action. Of course, in the 1980s to the *Hopwood v. University of Texas* decision, many Asian Americans rejected other communities of color and joined well-organized demagogues led by neoconservative think tanks. If *Bakke* in 1978, lumped Asian American and African American educational success into a category of racial uplift, the explosion of Asian American educational advances, curiously called "overachievement," had shown the rapid suturing of Asian American identity to the neoconservative project

attached to its shoestrings. See, *University of California Regents v. Bakke*, No. 76-811, United States Supreme Court, 28 June 1978.

⁶⁵ See Cedric Robinson, "Manichaeism and Multiculturalism," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 120.

⁶⁶ Quoted in George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity-Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998): 132.

⁶⁷ See Waineema Lubiano, "Like Being Mugged by a Metaphor," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 71.

⁶⁸ A definitive teen comedy, *Sixteen Candles* established the bar for the teen film genre. John Hughes directed and wrote this box-office hit, featuring girl-next-door Molly Ringwald as Samantha Baker. When Samantha wakes up on her sixteenth birthday, to find that her family has forgotten her special day in favor of her older sister's anticipated wedding, she regresses to examine her physical endowments (or lack thereof) and demonstrates her signature teen angst pout. Yet, for all its realism, *Sixteen Candles* relies on a character named Long Duk Dong, played by Gedde Watanabe, for much of its affective humor culture. Long Duk Dong is a foreign exchange student from China, marked by a thick foreign accent, living with Samantha's family for the school year. Everything about the "The Donger," from his name to his clothes, effectively represents the ways in which Asian American men act as comedic technocratic geeks whose sexuality and masculinity are perversions excluded from sexual subjectivity. At a fraternity party, Dong encounters a buxom white female, an Omega Moo sorority girl, who instantiates miscegenation and desire in Dong. Saying the line that has become the signature of the film, he caricatures Asian male desire for white womanhood: "What's a happenin' hot stuff?" Of course, the accented English marks him as an immigrant foreigner. Moreover, his objectification of white femininity further highlights his alien status. Physically, the woman towers over him; his diminutive body signifies feminization while she takes on a dominant masculine role. The camera frames them in a classic two-shot, when in a dance sequence, his head rests on her chest, thus infantilizing him and ensuring that he will be unable to secure Samantha's affection. *Sixteen Candles* is a Bildungsroman narrative of a white teenage girl finding her place in family and society, with race and masculinity featured as central components of this film's orientalist humor. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on the Asian nerd for the comic element of the film reveals the imperatives of film culture to transform the meanings of state selection to the realm of caricature. This type of mediation secures the boundaries of whiteness and desire, and attempts to normalize post-civil rights manhood through the domestication of foreign technocratic threats.

⁶⁹ *Menace II Society* introduces the notion that the Black gangbanger can be murderous and still retain his humanity. Written and directed by Albert and Allen Hughes, *Menace II Society* follows the life of Caine, played by Tyrin Turner, a Black

teen living in the city. Cain has just graduated from high school and does not have plans or many prospects for one. His best friend, O-Dog, well-cast in Larentz Tate, is in Caine's words "America's nightmare, young, Black, and didn't give a fuck." Caine spends the summer partying with his friends and getting into trouble with O-Dog. Surveilled by video camera and storeowners, O-Dog enters a Korean liquor store and without a second of conscience, kills the cashier. Later on, O-Dog replays his crime repeatedly for himself and others to marvel, his manhood constructed through laissez-faire urban morality. Thus, that scene constructs racial violence and terror as routed through Black primitive cultural values and Korean American non-existence. Controversy followed in reviews and media reports when critics argued that the level of violence in *Menace* reproduced caricatures of gang violence. Yet the news media failed to report on the interracial fantasy of Asian American homicide. I do not want to classify *Menace* as a stereotypical gangbanger film because it and *Boyz 'N The Hood* represent the finest films portraying gang social life because of its depiction of urban crisis and human survival.

⁷⁰ See Karel Von Wolferen, *The Japanese Enigma: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation*, (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁷¹ One critical experience of racial trauma is the pervasiveness of internal racism within Asian American communities. As an ideological disability that impedes political radicalism and cultural self-determination, internalized racism is a part of the lives of Asian American women and men. For example, as the most accepted feminine Other for white imperial masculinity, Asian American women have an exceptional relationship to white patriarchal supremacy, as opposed to, say, African American women. Ironically, Asian American men and other men of color have invested themselves in the schema of sexism and materialism in order to achieve white patriarchal capitalist standards of manhood. Appositionally, Asian Americans need to affirm a politics of self-esteem that refuses white supremacist stands of beauty and sexual desirability, as circulated through the monopolistic white media and Hollywood institutions that sell neoliberalism and its progeny of commodities. In this way, the publication of *Aiiieeeee!* opened the channels of communication to engage with such issues. Challenging white supremacy and shaping a political consciousness is central to *Aiiieeeee!*'s political identity of manhood; and a limitation of this project of remasculinization is their sexism towards Asian American women writers (which, in their desire to achieve Asian American women's success, only validates white publishing standards of literature).

⁷² See for example, King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" in *Conflicts in Feminism*, eds. Marianne Hirsh and Evelyn Fox, (New York: Routledge, 1990): 234-251.

⁷³ Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Wong Eds., *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974)

⁷⁴ See Gary Okihiro, "Is Yellow Black or White?" in *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

⁷⁵ See Unnamed Author, *Newsweek*, "Japanese Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites," Jun 21, 1971, 24-25.

⁷⁶ See Shirley Hune, "Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Boundaries and Borderlands of Ethnic Studies and Area Studies," in *Color-Line to Borderlines: The Matrix of American Ethnic Studies*, eds. Johnella E. Butler. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001): 236

⁷⁷ Raymond Williams describes "mediated" as an active process that is a "necessary of the making of meanings and values, in the necessary form of general social process of signification and communication." See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977): 95-100. See Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*, (Chicago: Third World Press, 1993).

⁷⁸ Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference," in *Becoming National*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 339-349.

⁷⁹ Looking at the construction of emergent Asian American identities, Glen Omatsu states that Asian American neoconservatives are "new because they are creatures born from Reagan-Bush era of supply-side economics, class and racial polarization, and the emphasis on elitism and individual advancement." This definition describes ideological processes that produce Asian Americans who do not understand the legacy of African American politics, which has, ironically, enabled Asian American legal entry and subsequent economic success. In contrast, the editors had theorized previously the importance of Black America for any understanding of Asian America's precarious relationship to whiteness and the nation-state. They interrogated the range of racial pathways Asian American communities choose to citizenship and national belonging. In our post-civil rights moment, Asian America, a political construct that the editors critique in their preface, has diverged into the 'country' and the 'city', two worlds in which poor and professional, urban and suburban, and English deficient and English proficient have created politically distinct communities. This has greatly affected the neighborhoods in which we live, who we associate with as friends and colleagues, and who we find commonality with in our "politics of everyday oppression." Unfortunately, neoconservative and professional Asian Americans have aligned themselves with those who are most privileged in society, and have eschewed their political responsibility to sympathize with those who do not have opportunities and life chances. This pathway has immense racial implications for imagining a socially conscious community. See Glen Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation," in *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, (Boston: South End Press, 1994): 42-43.

⁸⁰ See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Routledge, 1994): 55-60.

⁸¹ See Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*, (London: Verso, 1997): 3-50.

⁸² See George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968*, (Boston: South End Press, 1987): 29-82.

⁸³ See issues from *Gidra* published by UCLA and *Gidra* Inc. Vols. 1969-1974; also see *Getting Together* published by I Wor Kuen, Vol2. No6.

⁸⁴ See Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu eds, *The Movement and the Moment*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001); also see Amy Tachiki, Eddie Wong, Franklin Odo with Buck Wong eds, *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, (Los Angeles, UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971).

⁸⁵ See Alan Nishio, "The Oriental as a 'Middleman Minority,'" in *Gidra*, April 1969:3.

⁸⁶ Louie and Omatsu eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, 7.

⁸⁷ See, Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Edited by John B. Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

⁸⁸ See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995): 45.

⁸⁹ See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., (New York: Penguin Books, 2002): 394.

⁹⁰ See Richard Wright, "How 'Bigger' Was Born," in *Native Son*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993): 438.

⁹¹ See Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (New York: Grove Press, 1965): 176-177.

⁹² See Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, (New York: Random House, 1968): 79.

⁹³ Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, 211.

⁹⁴ Chin et al., xvi.

⁹⁵ See Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence," in *Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963): 35-106.

⁹⁶ Chin et al., xxvii.

⁹⁷ See George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998) 1.

⁹⁸ See Russell Leong, "Lived Theory," *Amerasia Journal* 21:1 & 2 (1995): v-x.

⁹⁹ Chin et al., xlviii.

¹⁰⁰ See Danny Kim, "Do I, Too, Sing America?" *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 6:3 (2004): 232.

¹⁰¹ *Aiiiiiiii!* was published in 1974, at a moment of immense upheaval and social change in the economic, political, and cultural order of both domestic and global landscapes. We must interrogate the divergence of these radical ethnics from the theoretical vision of their grass-roots political arm. During the early 1970s, third world liberation had conjoined the *global* and *political*. Such a limitation to their political horizon illustrates not only an unfaithful departure from the superstructure of third world liberation but also a communicative alienation from their material, community base. Geographer David Harvey states in *Conditions of Postmodernity* that 1973 signaled a crisis in Fordist capitalism, when corporations rapidly transformed their

productions modes to “flexible accumulation.” “Flexible accumulation” transformed, among many other things, the labor pool of factory production from working-class men to third world women of color. Post-Fordist capital created a crisis within the labor pool, from factory production jobs in domestic cities, mainly held by men, to the outsourcing of those jobs to deregulated production zones in Asia and Latin America. Because corporations sought greater profits, national boundaries eroded in the economic sphere simultaneously when racial minorities were invoking cultural nationalism in the political and cultural spheres. This illustrates some limitations and contradictions in a radical democratic project evinced by cultural nationalism. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

¹⁰² See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995): 97.

¹⁰³ See Brown, *States of Injury*, 98.

¹⁰⁴ See Stephen Sumida, “The More Things Change: Paradigm Shifts in Asian American Studies,” in *American Studies International*, 38 (2000): 97.

¹⁰⁵ Chin et al., xxv-xxvi.

¹⁰⁶ See Karen Su, “Jade Snow Wong’s Badge of Distinction in the 1990s,” *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Criticism*, 2:1 Winter 1994: 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

¹⁰⁸ Chin et al., xxv.

¹⁰⁹ See Sau-Ling Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads,” *Amerasia Journal* 21, nos 1-2 (winter-spring 1995): 4.

¹¹⁰ See Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1983): 171.

¹¹¹ See Aimé Cesaire, “Notebooks of a Return to the Nativeland,” in *The Collected Poetry*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983): 61

¹¹² See I Wor Kuen, *Getting Together*, July 1971: 1a.

¹¹³ Chin et al., xxvi.

¹¹⁴ See Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, “Introduction,” in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 26.

¹¹⁵ See Frank Chin et al., xxxviii.

¹¹⁶ Chin et al., xxvi.

¹¹⁷ I want to thank Lisa Lowe for her assistance in helping me mark this idea in our Asian American Literature course, Spring 2003.

¹¹⁸ Rogin states that Blackface freed white audiences from their communities of origin. He emphasizes the ritual discarding of identity markers by whites who chose accoutrements directly opposite of their own. Further, he analyzes the making of an audiences’ racial identity, formed through collective distancing in the cultural imaginary that reflected the harsh Jim Crow segregation in material life. Just as minstrelsy freed Jewish communities from designations as nonwhite, performing

Blackface allows the editors mobility to move from categories designated by the state and knowledge industries. See Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 125.

¹¹⁹ Chin et al., xxi.

¹²⁰ See bell hooks, *killing rage*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995).

¹²¹ See Lee, *Urban Triage*, 2.

¹²² See Mia Penta, "Ichibobs Invade Seattle," *The Morning News*, 26 Jul 2001:2B.

¹²³ See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998): 2.

¹²⁴ See Gail Bederman *Manliness and Civilization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 7.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 7-8.

¹²⁶ See Brian Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990): 19.

¹²⁷ See Michael Messner and Donald Sabo, eds., *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, (Champaign: Human Kinetics Books, 1990): 1-13.

¹²⁸ See Jim McKay, Michael Messner, Don Sabo Eds., *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000): 6.

¹²⁹ Toby Miller, Geoffrey Lawrence, Jim McKay, and David Rowe eds., *Globalization and Sport*, (London: Sage Publication, 2001): 1-5.

¹³⁰ See Alfred Chandler, *Scale and Scope*, (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1990).

¹³¹ See Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978): 73.

¹³² See Susan Faludi, *Stiffed*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999).

¹³³ I use the term feminization to express the trepidation of white men, specifically their sense of becoming like women. The gendering of women as weak, passive, irrational, feeble, and hysteric subjects dialectically produced meanings of what manhood was not.

¹³⁴ Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health Fitness, Sport, and American Society*, (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

¹³⁵ See Michael S. Kimmel, "Consuming Manhood," in *The Male Body*, ed. Laurence Goldstein, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): 26.

¹³⁶ Boxing as America's newest sports craze was a cultural site married to race and class. John L. Sullivan symbolized perhaps "the greatest American hero of the late 19th century." His muscled body and other accoutrements of manhood like his famous well-waxed mustache signified "the growing desire to smash through the fluff of bourgeois gentility and the tangle of corporate ensnarements to the throbbing heart of life." Sullivan's fame shaped the cultural identity of the emergent working-class where one could hear daily conversations about his exploits in workplaces, saloons, and public discourse. His successor, Jim Jeffries as the protector of white manhood, had to negotiate the difficult road of America's newfound doctrine of "separate but equal" sanctioned by the 1898 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case. At this turbulent era of de facto segregation and the spectacle of public lynching in the Deep South, Jefferies fought

one of the most remarkable championship fights in boxing history. Of course to Jeffries's Iago there was his Othello—Jack Johnson. Johnson was the first African American heavyweight champion of the world who dethroned Jeffries in a media event sending shockwaves throughout the nation. His sport body as public spectacle produced an alternative cultural formation to the lynched bodies of the Jim Crow South, and thus represented a masculinized body that physically and symbolically defeated their white enslavers within a critical public space. Johnson caroused with white prostitutes, openly flaunted his Black sexuality, and enjoyed performing the figure of the Black brute. His assault on white manhood aroused the African American community to celebrate into the streets when he defeated Jeffries, “the Great White Hope,” and drew the ire of white supremacist for his racial transgressions. For his racialized Black body was the embodiment of racial and sexual mobility and represented the impact of popular sport to challenge rigid anti-miscegenation laws and codes of racial hierarchy. Through the entrenchment of popular sport in America, pugilism came to represent the dynamics of color line that Du Bois commented would be the quagmire of the twentieth century.

¹³⁷ See Elliot Gorn, *The Manly Art*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986).

¹³⁸ See Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, (New York: Modern Library, 1911).

¹³⁹ See C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993): 66.

¹⁴⁰ See Richard Wright, "Joe Louis Uncovers Dynamite," *New Masses*, October 8, 1935, 18-19.

¹⁴¹ See Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997): 150.

¹⁴² White masculinity, assaulted by several communities including feminist, queer, and ethnic groups, had an identity crisis. It failed to benefit from multiculturalism's “ethnic pride” and feminisms’ “gender pride” which the White Men's Movement along with white supremacy¹⁴² responded in virulent ways. Primal screams in the woods met Nazi tattoos, where whiteness no longer held the dominant prestige it once did. To add insult to the injury, Black male athletes commanded center stage, dominated their white counterparts, and became the identity that signified legitimate styles, language, and masculine performance. All these different movements helped shape national masculinity. See Michael Omi, “Racialization in the Post-Civil Rights Era,” in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds. Avery Gordon Christopher Newfield, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 181.

¹⁴³ Rather than dismissing wholesale white masculinity's role, I argue against the *centrality* afforded to white masculinity in cultural production and ideological work. Insofar as white masculinity is a crucial position of power and domination, minority masculinities in global sport have developed playing styles, iconic symbols, and interracial teamwork that resist the dominance of whiteness as the ideological core of American life. See Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ See Harry Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*, (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1973): 202. The conservative backlash co-opted multiculturalism's emphasis on diversity but

responded by producing “racelessness,” a colorblind politics that ignored institutional and cultural forms of racism. Thus, the wholesale contraction of civil society channeled African American men into racialized institutional and cultural spaces that were relatively open and acceptable. Additionally, Toni Negri has aptly named the rise of the warfare state in post-Keynesian nation-states with increased domestic militarization of urban space. See Angela Davis, “Race and Criminalization,” in *The House That Race Built*, Edited by Waineema Lubiano, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997); A weak multiculturalism failed miserably up to the 1990s and will need to go further in its discussions, maybe towards Waineema Lubiano’s idea of “transformative multiculturalism,” a discursive practice that begins to dismantle state power and institutional inequities. See Waineema Lubiano, “Like Being Mugged by a Metaphor: Multiculturalism and State Narratives,” *Mapping Multiculturalism*, Edited by Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 64-75; See Toni Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects (1967-83)*, (London: Red Notes, 1988).

¹⁴⁵ See Richard Majors, “Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sports,” in *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, Eds. Michael Messner and Donald Sabo, (Champaign: Human Kinetics Books, 1990): 109.

¹⁴⁶ See Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000): 21.

¹⁴⁷ Gilroy, *Against Race*: 7.

¹⁴⁸ See Mercer, *Welcome To The Jungle*, 133.

¹⁴⁹ Popular sport has inherited this legacy of colonial typologies of the body that still function in dominant and powerful means. In his classic work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon explains that the Black man in any white society is not simply perceived as merely racially different. His “darkness” represents the savagery of the jungle; he becomes an “uncontrollable beast,” or the embodiment of lustful hypersexuality: “One is no longer aware of the Negro, but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis.” In composing a narrative of how race and sexuality hinge upon bodily synecdoche, conflating anatomy and symbols offers Fanon a powerful lens to understand the racializing physicality as well as civilization and the figure of the Negro rapist. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Mask*, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1952): 170.

¹⁵⁰ See George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

¹⁵¹ See J. Philippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995): 19.

¹⁵² See Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: theorizing race and gender*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1995).

¹⁵³ Schematizing the body, predicated upon quantifying individual traits such as “aggressiveness,” “strength of sex drive,” “anxiety,” and “rule-following,” he tries to legitimate the relative characteristics of “Orientals,” “whites,” and “Blacks.” Rushton correlates his data on these character traits and then asks *only* “Orientals” and “whites” (it seems Blacks were not qualified to participate in this “research” study”) to assess

themselves and their “opposite number,” and Blacks. Relying on specious data gathering from study participants already subject to interpellation by state logics, values, and traits correlate to a cultural-biologicistic individuation, a reductive process marred by subjective polling. His methodology focused matters of race, intelligence, and sexuality the ‘Great Chain of Being’. He depends on the nonequivalence of “white” from “non-white” and “Blacks” from “Orientals” and the equivalence of “Oriental” masculinity to “lack” and Black masculinity to “overdetermined.” In the end, this triangulation services a perverse common sense that establishes citizenship based upon sexualized definitions of classed and racialized bodies.

¹⁵⁴ See Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, (New York: Dell, 1968): 171.

¹⁵⁵ See Richard Fung, “Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Male Porn,” in *Q&A: Queer in Asian America*, Edited by David Eng and Alice Hom, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998): 115-134.

¹⁵⁶ See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome To The Jungle*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 178

¹⁵⁷ Mercer, *Welcome To The Jungle*, 178.

¹⁵⁸ See Mercer, *Welcome To The Jungle*, 176.

¹⁵⁹ Messner, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 23.

¹⁶⁰ In other words, the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subjects, rather than how a subject formulates the necessary and inevitable thoughts of an ideology at its specificities; it empowers them to begin to apprehend some sense or intelligibility of their historical positioning without subjecting them to reductive class or socio-economic categories. See Stuart Hall, *Interviews with Stuart Hall*, (New York: Vintage, 1996).

¹⁶¹ See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1979): 18.

¹⁶² See *Outside the Lines*, ESPN Television, 1 Jul 2001.

¹⁶³ See A.J. Spalding, *America’s National Game*, (New York: American Sports Publishing Co., 1911): 4. Indeed, baseball’s rules and competition perfectly embodied the social organization of American modernity by reproducing ideologies of consumption, obedience, hard work, and nationalism. In this way, the game of baseball contained the contradictions of American modernity with its racial hierarchy, gender divisions, and focus on capitalist sociality that are the bedrock of U.S. liberal democracy.

¹⁶⁴ *All-Star Game*, Fox Television, 8 July 2001.

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of fandom and leisure using class analysis, see Pierre Bourdieu, “How can one be a sports fan?” In *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Edited by Simon During, (New York: Routledge, 1993): 339-356.

¹⁶⁶ See S.L. Price, “The Ichiro Paradox,” *Time*, 15 July 2002.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁶⁸ See Robert Falkoff, “Same Scenario, Different Outcome,” *MLB.com*, 2 Feb 2003, <http://www.mlb.com>.

¹⁶⁹ See “Major League Baseball International 2001 Annual Report,” 2-3.

¹⁷⁰ *Baseball Tonight*, Advertisement, ESPN, 3 August 2001.

¹⁷¹ Stuart Elliot, "A Sales Pitch Tries to Connect Fans as Baseball Season Starts," *New York Times*, 28 March 2001: C6.

¹⁷² See Jeffrey Denberg, "Q&A with David Stern," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 2 2003.

¹⁷³ ESPN. Advertisement. *Sports Illustrated*, Oct. 2002: n. pag.

¹⁷⁴ In linking the important congruence of "Asian" to "American," it is through Asian male bodies that the collective naming of Asian American men can be made culturally embodied, institutionally represented, and sexually regulated. Likewise, it is over and against Asian American men's bodies that Asian masculinities can be understood as formally equivalent to one another. Asian manhood has been historically and discursively equivalent to Asian American men. Each have signaled in differential ways a shift in Asian American masculinity, nation and citizenship; it is the landscape where the transition from "Asian foreigner" to "Asian immigrant" to "Asian American male citizen" must be understood in the context of African American masculinity, racialization and nationalisms.

¹⁷⁵ See Todd Boyd and Kenneth L. Shropshire eds., *Basketball Jones*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000): 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Best Damn Sports Show Period*. Host Tom Arnold, John Salley, John Kruk, Fox Sports Television, 28 June 2002.

¹⁷⁷ See Robert Lee, *Orientalism*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1999).

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Feigen, "Shaq dismisses Yaomania," *Houston Chronicle*, 21 June 2002.

¹⁷⁹ Ric Butler, "Yao knows how to strike a pose with media," *ESPN the Magazine*, 3 Dec 2002.

¹⁸⁰ The issue of nationalism is the predominate mode of analysis in sport theory, but this particularity of nationalism has different parameters and points of difference than studies dealing with, for example, British identity in soccer or Australian fandom in rugby. See Alan Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁸² For an interesting discussion on masochism and sadomasochism and its implication for the construction of masculinity, see David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹⁸³ See Irwin Tang, "APA Community Should Tell Shaquille O'Neal to 'Come down to Chinatown,'" *AsianWeek*, 3 Jan 2003.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ L.A. Chung, "Media looked the other way on Shaq's slur," *The Mercury News*, 17 Jan 2003.

¹⁸⁷ See *Talk Back Live*, Moderator Arthel Neville, CNN, Atlanta, 23 Jan 2003. *The Tavis Smiley Show*, Host Tavis Smiley, NPR Radio, 24 Jan 2003.

¹⁸⁸ See Toby Miller, Geoffrey Lawrence, Jim McKay, and David Rowe, *Globalization and Sport*, (London: Sage Publications, 2001): 16.

¹⁸⁹ See Stefan Fatsis, Peter Wonacott, and Maureen Tkacik, "Chinese Basketball Star is Big Business for NBA," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 Oct 2002.

¹⁹⁰ To offer Yao to the NBA meant a symbolic gesture for China to open Asian continent to unrestricted transnationalism. What this means in the figure of Yao is that he could potentially create a billion dollar industry in China and worldwide, thus, producing a node in the transnational circuit different than Ichiro, and potentially much more spectacular. Yao stands at a crossroads of the insular past that created superb athletes for nationalist glory and stark future that cannot smile without seeing 7' 5" dollar signs: the Communist legacy of Mao and the impending future of China immersed in capitalist sociality.

¹⁹¹ See Mercury Service Wire Services, "Yao wins showdown with Shaq," *The Mercury News*, 18 Jan 2003.

¹⁹² See C.L.R. James, *American Civilization*, Eds. Anna Grimshaw and Keith Hart, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993): 27-29.

¹⁹³ See David Desser, "Kung Fu Craze," in *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, Edited by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 19-44.

¹⁹⁴ See Yvonne Tasker, "Fists of Fury," In *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, Edited by Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 317-320.

¹⁹⁵ See Blake French, "Rush Hour Review," *FilmCritic.Com*. 1 Mar 2005, <http://filmcritic.com>; Simon O'Ryan, "Rush Hour Review," *Boxoffice.com*, 28 Feb 2005, <http://www.boxoffice.com>; Anthony Leong, "Rush Hour Movie Review," *Mediacircus.net*, 28 Feb 2005, <http://www.meidacircus.net>.

¹⁹⁶ See Janet Maslin, "Kicks, Swivels and Wisecracks on Hollywood Boulevard," in *The New York Times*, Sept 18, 2001.

<http://movies2.nytimes.com/mem/movies/review.html>.

¹⁹⁷ See Bob Graham, "'Rush Hour' Speeds Right Along: Chan, Tucker star in action comedy," in *San Francisco Examiner*, 29 Jan 1999: D12.

¹⁹⁸ See Maitland McDonagh, "On the Waterfront," *Tvguide.com*, 28 Feb 2005, <http://www.tvguide.com>.

¹⁹⁹ See Wesley Morris, "'Romeo' Just Dies at End," *Examiner Film*, 22 Mar 2000: C-3.

²⁰⁰ See Dennis Lim, "Demographic Violence," *The Village Voice*, 22 March 2000, <http://www.villagevoice.com>.

²⁰¹ I want to specify for my argument that the two martial arts heroes in my analysis are designated as male, but there are female martial arts heroines who follow parallel trajectories yet, diverge in their gender performance. See for instance *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Dir. Ang Lee, Perf. Michelle Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi (Miramax, 2000).

²⁰² bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993): 290

²⁰³ See Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

- ²⁰⁴ bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993): 300-302.
- ²⁰⁵ Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference," in *Becoming National*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 339-349.
- ²⁰⁶ See David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- ²⁰⁷ The tragic hero of Greek drama, in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, through no obvious fault of his own, the hero found him in conflict with the principles of a particular society, not one based upon good and evil, but man and community. The Greek word *demos* signifies the linguistic roots that were foundations for the influence of democratic ideals, an ethic within the community consisting of active participation and dialogue in all facets of daily life.
- ²⁰⁸ See Americo Paredes, *With his pistol in his hand*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958): 169.
- ²⁰⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso Press, 1991).
- ²¹⁰ See Roberto Alexandro, *Hermeneutics, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993): 1-5.
- ²¹¹ See Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire*, (London: Verso Press, 1999): 90.
- ²¹² See *Ibid.*, p.90.
- ²¹³ See Bey Logan, *Hong Kong Action Cinema*, (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1995): 10.
- ²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.
- ²¹⁶ See Stephen Teo, "The 1970s" in *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, Edited by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 98.
- ²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-25.
- ²¹⁸ I am thinking of a panel at 2004 ASA Convention with scholars such as Deborah Whaley.
- ²¹⁹ See Amy Ongiri, "'He Wanted to Be Just Like Bruce Lee': African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margins," in *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5:1 (2002): 25.
- ²²⁰ See Amy Ongiri, "'He Wanted to Be Just Like Bruce Lee': African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margins," 39.
- ²²¹ See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"*, (New York: Routledge, 1993); Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2000); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Colonial Education of Desire*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
- ²²² See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
- ²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²²⁴ In most buddy pictures, women are relegated to the margins in the diegetic. Especially in the martial arts genre in Hollywood, one asks: where are the representations of strong Asian women and why are white women excluded from these films entirely? Obviously anti-miscegenation taboos concerning sexuality still regulate discourses about racialized men and white femininity in film as well as making invisible even same race romance through the workings of the martial arts buddy genre. This male dominated genre, which has prescribed through homosociality a range of models of manhood including active, violent agents, sets the stage for an evaluation of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

²²⁵ See Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

²²⁶ Lisa Lowe suggests that immigration thus can be seen as the single most important site of the Asian American collective memory, a discursive and historical terrain, where the economic, cultural, and legal confrontation with American capital and racial ideology informs us of the global and national narratives, which form the immigrant subject. The form takes on a racialized configuration, where inclusion and exclusion expressed through legislation is the discursive and ideological formation by the nation state. This complicated and contradictory dynamic of American culture, a desire and repulsion of the immigrant alien, and the processes of disciplining the immigrant citizen as a subject to ameliorate ambivalence through specific immigration acts tells the history of our racial intersection with globalism and our needs to modulate our economy in the wake of last the century and a half of economic expansion. See Lowe, *Ibid.*, pg.2-20.

²²⁷ Rising anti-Korean sentiments within the African American community because of declining Black economic power and cultural misunderstandings led to prominent rap artists, most notably Ice Cube, to castigate Korean American grocers with their standoffish business practices in a song entitled "Black Korea." Jeff Chang says the conflict was turned into a Black against Korean conflict though the relative lack of power by the African Americans and Korean Americans was a non-issue by the white media institutions. In other words, the strife between the two marginalized groups negated any meaningful critique of the larger economic and ideological structures that give rise to inter-ethnic conflicts. Instead of an alliance between African Americans and Korean Americans from engaging in a cross-cultural stance of unity against white material oppression, in the African and Korean American binary axis of dialogue, the African Americans assumed the position of whites, and the Korean Americans took the position of Blacks in relative social-political power. Thus what ensued in the boycott by the Korean American Grocers Association (KAGRO) of St. Ides Malt Liquor, which Ice Cube was a prominent endorser, showcased the power of economic pressure to obstruct the political-social agenda of a prominent African American voice. See Jeff Chang, "Race, Class, Conflict and Empowerment: On Ice Cube's Black Korea," *Amerasia Journal*, 19:2 (1993): 87-107.

²²⁸ However, racializing the function of fetish, she acts as both object and subject in the scene. The fetishistic deployment of Trish's face is the formal backdrop to Han's

foreign status. As an individual marked as foreign, his mimesis as a South Asian cab driver expresses this contrast. Ironically, the South Asian figure is someone earlier in the plot who scolds him for not reading the “off duty” sign posted when the real “Achebar” remarks to Han, “understand English?” From the inception of the scene, Han performs limitations, linguistically and culturally, to his incorporation into citizenship by being pitted against Achebar, someone who occupies a South Asian working-class position. Whereby in the end of the scene, found out by Trish as an imposter, he enacts a libidinal look at her, through the male gaze of an over-the-shoulder two shot. From this shot, the audience is aware of his racialized gaze. It is overextended, positioning both sets of looks as exclusive from the viewpoint of film and spectator gazes.

²²⁹ See Chris Straayer, “Redressing the Natural: The Temporary Transvestite Film,” in *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Reorientation in Film and Video*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 56.

²³⁰ See Jacquie Jones, “The Construction of Black Sexuality” in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993): 251.

²³¹ See Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 3.

²³² See Lalitha Gopalan, “Avenging Women in Indian Cinema,” in *Screen*, Vol. 38, No.1 (Spring 1997): 42-59.

²³³ See Tasker, *Ibid.*, p.315-317.

²³⁴ See Vijay Prashad, *everybody was kung fu fighting*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001): 42-47. See also George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

²³⁵ Harris rightly sees the racialized conception of property from a historical and legal analysis. In the text, she examines the emergence of whiteness as property and traces the evolution of whiteness from color to race to status to property as a progression historically rooted in white supremacy and economic hegemony. See Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” In *Harvard Law Review*, v. 106 no 8 (June 1993): 1710-1791. See also, Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White By Law*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

²³⁶ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990): 254.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.77.

²³⁸ See Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: theorizing race and gender*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

²³⁹ See Chon Noriega, “‘Something’s Missing Here!’ Homosexuality and Film Reviews during the Production Code Era, 1934-1962” in *Cinema Journal* 30, No.1 (Fall 1990): 21-39.

²⁴⁰ Louis Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)” found slippages in orthodox Marxism that he wanted to rework in terms of repression and subjugation. He rejected the idea of ideology as false

consciousness, and instead Althusser firmly held the role of ideology as a social reality; that it structures social relationships; that it raises the importance of the 'real'. What Althusser revolutionized in the field of orthodox class analysis regarding the impact of ideology upon social institutions and subjects was his elucidation of the concept of ideological hailing. He attempts to formulate that "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject" (174). What hailing entails is formation of citizens into subjects through the acts or functions of ideology. Althusser espouses that ideology recruits subjects among the individuals (where there are no individuals who are not hailed) and that it transforms the individuals into subjects (where there are no individuals who are not transformed). The precise operation of ideological hailing is analogically compared to the hailings by everyday policemen when they yell, "hey, you there!" The hailed individual will turn around---and it is "this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, [that] he becomes a subject" (174). The subject turns around because he or she realizes the fact that it was him or her who was really being addressed, and that it was really him or her being hailed. Moreover, Althusser argues the primary functioning power of ideology is its capacity to veil its very true character as Ideology, "ideology never says, 'I am ideological'" (174). See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," In *Lenin and Philosophy*, (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971): 127-186.

²⁴¹ Gilroy, *Ibid.*, 72-110. Gilroy maintains there has always been a politics of utopia in all Black cultural expression, especially in the musical forms of blues and spirituals.

²⁴² See Trisha Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Boston: University of New England Press, 1994).

²⁴³ The wars in the Philippines, Korea, Viet Nam, and Cambodia all tell of a history deeply rooted with outside influences and also destabilize the assumption that all immigrants come from stable societies or that those societies are simply impoverished due to their own conduct. This repressed memory from the national polity comes full circle when the emigrants from the colonized periphery transmigrate to the imperial center. Therefore, the history of Asian Americans traverses across the history of racial formation and the imperial and colonial engagements in the Asia. As Amy Kaplan says the absence of empire in the collective pedagogy, memory, and stories of genesis in such fields as American Studies shows the erasure of America's penetration into Asian culture both on a systemic and cultural terrain. See Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone With America: the Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, (Durham, NC: NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁴⁴ See for instance Angela Davis, "Race and Criminalization" in *The House That Race Built*, Edited by Waineema Lubiano, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997). She addresses the discussions by those who are leading the call for more prisons and employ statistics in the same fetishistic and misleading way as Malthus did more than two centuries ago. The rising enterprise of the prison industrial complex and the use

of transnational corporation (TNC) capital in some sweet heart deals conceptualize the fusion of flexible modes of accumulation and the racialization of a super-surplus labor. Deindustrialization accelerated this process that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent explosion of the informal drug economy where many Blacks were displaced.

²⁴⁵ I want to thank Judith Halberstam for conversations concerning this idea.

²⁴⁶ See Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Male Porn," in *Q&A: Queer in Asian America*, Edited by David Eng and Alice Hom, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998): 115-134.

²⁴⁷ See Snead, *Ibid.*, p.3-25.

²⁴⁸ See bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," 288-290.

²⁴⁹ See Saul Williams, "The Future of Language," in *The Spoken Word Revolution*, Edited by Mark Eleveld, (Naperville: Source Books Inc., 2003): 58-59.

²⁵⁰ See Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002): 17.

²⁵¹ CNN, "Human cadaver exhibit," Aug 23, 2005, <http://www.cnn.com>.

²⁵² See Lee, *Orientalism*, 30.

²⁵³ See James Moy, *Marginal Sights*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993): 8.

²⁵⁴ See Lee, *Orientalism*, 32.

²⁵⁵ See George Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*, (Westport: Greenwood, 1972); Saxton, *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Qtd. in Lee, *Orientalism*, 32.

²⁵⁷ See Shimakawa, *National Abjection*, 2.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵⁹ Qtd. in *ibid.*, 59.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁶¹ My emphasis. See Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder*, (New York: Routledge, 2004): 164.

²⁶² Qtd. in Shimakawa, *National Abjection*, 70.

²⁶³ See Walter Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, Edited by Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): 220.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

²⁶⁶ See Kondo, *About Face*, (New York: Routledge, 1997):16.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁶⁸ See Lee, *Performing Asian America*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997): 41.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁷⁰ Interview Author, "Poet Interview," *HBO Def Poetry*, 29 Aug 2005, <http://www.hbo.com/defpoetry/interviews/season5/episode10.html>

²⁷¹ See Author Unknown, "Introduction," *The Spoken Word Revolution*, 10-12.

²⁷² See Author Interview with Denizen Kane, 18 Sept 2005.

- ²⁷³ See Rickey Kim, "Speaking in Tongues," *EM magazine*, 29 Aug 2005, <http://www.evilmonto.com/007/yellow-t/yellow-t.htm>.
- ²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ²⁷⁵ Qtd. in Wong, *Speak It Louder*, 240.
- ²⁷⁶ See "Alag," *Broken Speak*, 1999.
- ²⁷⁷ Qtd. in Neela Banerjee, "Slam Poets Mix Words and Music and Mojo and Intellect into Political Performance Art," *AsianWeek.com*, 29 Aug 2005, <http://www.asianweek.com>.
- ²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ²⁷⁹ I Was Born With Two Tongues, *Broken Speak*, AsianImprov Records, 1999.
- ²⁸⁰ See Ishle Yi Park, "Asian Word Warriors," *A Gathering of Tribes*, 31 May 2005, <http://www.tribes.org>.
- ²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ²⁸² See Khachig Tololyan, "Rethinking Diapora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment," in *Diaspora*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (Spring 1996): 7.
- ²⁸³ See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, Edited by Williams Chrisman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 194.
- ²⁸⁴ See Gayatri Gopinath, "'Bombay, U.K, Yuba City': Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora," in *Diaspora*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (Spring 1995).
- ²⁸⁵ Qtd. in David Jakubiak, "Denizen Kane returns from the West a Changed Man," in *Chicago Sun-Times.com*, 29 Aug 2005, <http://www.suntimes.com>.
- ²⁸⁶ Qtd. in Interview Author, "Poet Interview, *HBO Def Poetry*.
- ²⁸⁷ See Author Unknown, "Mountain Brothers Interview," *Asiatic Theory Project*, 19 Jun 2003, <http://www.asiatictheoryproject.com>.
- ²⁸⁸ See Dennis Smith, "Asian Pacific Review Interviews the Mountain Brothers," *Asian Pacific Review*, 6 Sept 2005, <http://www.asianpacifreview.com>.
- ²⁸⁹ See Wong, *Speak It Louder*, 179.
- ²⁹⁰ See Todd Inoue, "Mountain Grown: Asian American Rappers the Mountain Brothers Step Out from the Speakers and Turntables," *MetroActive*, 6 Sept 2005, <http://www.metroactive.com>.
- ²⁹¹ George Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is: Race, Class and Youth Culture in the Nineties," in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music & Youth Culture*, Edited by Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 17-70.
- ²⁹² See FD, "Interview with Super-Producer Chops of Mountain Brothers," *Aznraps.com*, 28 Jan 2004, www.aznraps.com.
- ²⁹³ Qtd. Koenig, "The Dope Slope," in *Philadelphia citypaper.net*. 5 Sept 2005, <http://citypaper.net>.
- ²⁹⁴ See Qwest, "Mountain Brothers," *Elements*, 9 Sept 2005, <http://www.hiphop-elements.com>.
- ²⁹⁵ See Wong, *Speak It Louder*, 252.
- ²⁹⁶ See Nelson George, *Hip-Hop America*, 4.
- ²⁹⁷ See "Paperchase," Mountain Brothers, *Self-Volume: 1*, Pimpstrut Records, 1998.

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- ²⁹⁸ See “Paperchase,” 1998.
- ²⁹⁹ See Wong, *Speak It Louder*, 235.
- ³⁰⁰ Qtd in *Ibid.*, 236.
- ³⁰¹ See Trisha Rose, “All Board the Night Train,” *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (New York: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).
- ³⁰² See “Paperchase,” 1998.
- ³⁰³ See “Paperchase,” 1998.
- ³⁰⁴ See Author Unknown, “Mountain Brother Interview,” *Philadelphia City Paper*, 29 Aug 2005, <http://www.philadelphiacitypaper.com>
- ³⁰⁵ See Kara Keeling, “‘A Homegrown Revolutionary’?: Tupac Shakur and the Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol.29 No. 2/3, (1999): 59-63.
- ³⁰⁶ Rose, *All Board the Night Train*, 150.
- ³⁰⁷ Qtd in *Ibid.*, 149.
- ³⁰⁸ See “Whiplash,” 1998.
- ³⁰⁹ See “Whiplash,” 1998.
- ³¹⁰ See Kevin Kim, “Repping Chinatown,” *Colorlines*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Winter, (2004-2005).
- ³¹¹ See “Whiplash,” 1998.
- ³¹² See “Love Poetry,” 1998.
- ³¹³ Okada, *No-No Boy*, 231.
- ³¹⁴ See John Okada, *No-No Boy*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976): 225-226.

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