Discipline and Melancholy: Understanding the Interior Effects of Racism in Japanese America, 1930-1941
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MA THESIS

Discipline and Melancholy: Understanding the Interior Effects of Racism in Japanese America, 1930-1941

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Introduction

> Racial self-hatred is seeing yourself the way the whites see you, which turns you into your own worst enemy. Your only defense is to be hard on yourself, which becomes compulsive, and therefore a comfort, to peck yourself to death. You don't like how you look, how you sound. You think your Asian features are undefined, like God started pinching out your features and then abandoned you. You hate that there are so many Asians in the room. *Who let in all the Asians?* you rant in your head. Instead of solidarity, you feel that you are *less than* around other Asians, the boundaries of yourself no longer distinct but congealed into a horde.[1]

Published on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cathy Hong's memoir *Minor Feelings* grapples with the psychological effects of racism and Asian Americans' positionality "in that [American racial] order either as the afflicted—*or* as the afflicter [emphasis in original]."[2] Today, these words read eerily prescient. Mere months after *Minor Feelings*' publication, Tou Thao, a Hmong American, was one of three Minnesota police officers involved in the murder of George Floyd in June 2020. His involvement elicited heated debate among Asian Americans concerning their community's complicity in upholding systemic racism and anti-blackness.[3]

The opening excerpt, while admittedly loaded, gets at the heart of the subject of this thesis. I am here referring to what is termed in the scholarly literature as internalized racism, which Karen Pyke defines as: "White racism that is internalized by the non-White group or individual and is directed inward toward the self or the group."[4] The internalization of racist perceptions and values by the colonized has been extensively described by post-colonial writers, the most well-known of them perhaps being the French Martiniquian psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, who observed a desire for

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[1] Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, (New York: One World [2020] 2021): p. 9
[2] Ibid., p. 75.
[3] Rachel Ramirez, "Asian Americans need to talk about anti-blackness in our communities," *Vox*, June 3rd, 2020, https://www.vox.com/first-person/2020/6/3/21279156/george-floyd-protests-police-brutality-tou-thao-asian-americans
[4] Karen D. Pyke, "What Is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don't We Study It? Acknowledging Racism's Hidden Injuries," *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 4 (2010): p. 567.

metropolitan whiteness among black French Antilleans.[5] Nearly 70 years later, internalized racism remains among the "least studied features of racism."[6] Pyke attributes this persistent academic inattention to valid concerns over faulting minority populations for their own marginalization, as well as the "theoretical hegemony of resistance" in race scholarship, which has inadvertently led to "the conflation of [subaltern] agency and resistance," pushing inquiries into "the reproductive and recuperative tendencies of domination"[7] to the background.

A similar dearth of scholarly attention can be found in Asian and Japanese American Studies. As the historian Eiichiro Azuma remarks: "Asian Americanists have generally presented Japanese immigrants as yet another group of racialized Americans who have been wrongly discriminated against under white supremacy."[8] In recent years, however, sociologists have started calling our attention to intraethnic discrimination among Asian Americans within the contemporary context, while transnationalist historians have begun looking into the more problematic dimensions of Japanese American identity formation in the flow and exchange of ideas, discourse and ideologies across the Pacific Ocean. Shiho Imai, for instance, has examined how engaging in consumer culture allowed Nisei in interwar Hawaii subtly resisted the islands' racial hierarchy by utilizing "whiteness as a cultural marker of difference,"[9] formulating a bicultural identity that offered social distance from coethnic peers and proximity to the ideals of the white urban middle class, a responsive strategy of resistance that—while expedient in the moment—ultimately reinforced white hegemony, as well as class and gender inequalities within the ethnic community.[10] Crucially, she attends to "the flow of cultural cues from Japan" that informed Nisei's reinterpretation of whiteness.[11]

Previous considerations of Japanese Americans' racial formation have largely focused on their forced internment and subsequent military service, characterizing the transwar years as a period of transformation for the Japanese community. Takashi Fujitani, who limits his discussion to the war years, argues that the particular geopolitical needs of the American government during

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[5] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Penguin Random House [1952] 2021): p. ix.
[6] Pyke, "Internalized Racial Oppression," p. 552.
[7] Ibid., pp. 561-62.
[8] Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan's Borderless Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019): p. 8.
[9] Shiho Imai, *Creating the Nisei Market: Race and Citizenship in Hawai'i's Japanese American Consumer Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010): p. 29.
[10] Ibid., pp. 12-13.
[11] Ibid., p. 38.

and after World War II caused a "distinct shift" from "'vulgar' to 'polite racism,'" allowing second-generation Japanese Americans, or Nisei, to serve in the US military, and signaled Japanese Americans' inclusion in the American nation as "self-reflexive and knowledgeable subjects."[12] However, his focus on wartime expediencies inheres the risk of over-privileging the trans- and postwar periods, thus obfuscating how even seemingly abrupt changes do not unfold "in a historical vacuum."[13] Instead, I argue that the wartime acceptance of Japanese Americans should be seen in connection with the interwar period, when Imperial Japan was locked in a state of competition with a United States that was itself looking westwards for its next frontier.[14] A wider temporal lens, then, allows us to bring into sharper relief the multidirectional complexities and interactional relationalities that informed the development of racial discourse in both nations. Indeed, the American "penetration into the Pacific region," David Palumbo-Liu postulates, necessitated the renegotiation and "management" of its own "interior, its deep psychic spaces [...] affected by that contact."[15] The position of Japanese America between American and Japanese languages of empire and race, then, necessitates a consideration of their formation as racial subjects within what Azuma calls an "inter-imperial framework."[16]

How Nikkei, or Americans of Japanese descent, responded to American racism has long been the subject of debate among Asian Americanists. According to Lon Kurashige, the scholarly dialogue can be divided between "retentionists" and "assimilationists," who locate Japanese American resistance to racism in either "the preservation" or "the abandonment of ethnic traditions." Kurashige challenges both views, arguing that community leaders reinterpreted Japanese American cultural identity "on the basis of perceived opportunities to gain broad-based acceptance, legitimacy, and class status" in order to push back against "external impositions of race." Nevertheless, the possibilities of such a new racial subjectivity were constrained by the preexisting "ideological themes and interests" in their social and political lives. Ostensibly a project of resistance, Nikkei "ethnic orthodoxy" also reinscribed patterns of inequality, marked as

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[12] Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During World War II*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011): pp. 25-26.
[13] Eiichiro Azuma, "Brokering Race, Culture, and Citizenship: Japanese Americans in Occupied Japan and Postwar National Inclusion," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 3 (2009): p. 210.
[14] David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): pp. 1-3.
[15] Ibid., pp. 17-19.
[16] Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier*, p. 10.

it was by American normative ideals of gender, race and class, as well as the "patriarchal and caste structures they had known in Japan."[17] Immigrant leaders' constant awareness of their stigmatized status as a racial minority, then, suggests that the Japanese American community was marked by a "double consciousness," that element of the African American condition which W.E.B. Du Bois defined as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[18] The words of one Japanese American, who proclaimed in 1935 that "Truly we are Japanese, but that is only our face. Our character is of Caucasian [*sic*],"[19] certainly reveal a claim to a white racial subject position that merits closer academic scrutiny.

The present study will explore the concept of internalized racism from a historical perspective by considering the interwar Japanese American immigrant press as a negotiatory and reproductive site of racialized feelings and forms of identification that sustained patterns of inequality. To that end, I ask the following question: Can we detect forms of internalized racism in the language used by the interwar Japanese American press, and (in what ways) did such language contribute to the formation of a specific racial subjectivity that internalized whiteness? In addition, I ask how we can situate internalized racism among Japanese Americans within the geopolitical context of the prewar era. Did the Japanese American community's transnational connections to Japan, both emotional and otherwise, inflect its understandings of whiteness and assimilation?

The limited number of sociological theorizations on internalized racism among Asian Americans—having been formulated within a contemporary context—do not attend to the historical specificities mentioned earlier, and thus have limited applicability for the historical perspective used in this study. For this reason, my main concern does not lie with simply detecting readily identifiable instances of internalized racism, but rather with the question whether we can find in the primary sources traces that hint to the underlying relationalities and ambiguities underpinning internalized racism. I wish to emphasize, however, that this study does not intend to pathologize Japanese Americans of that generation. Rather, by focusing on internalized racism

[17] Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): p. 6.
[18] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, [1903] 2015): p. 5.
[19] 'Cary,' "In Response: There Are No Racial Bars in U.S.: Regardless of Color, Creed Honors Given," *Nichibei Shinbun,* August 5th, 1935.

among the racialized from a historical perspective, I hope to better understand the dual position Asian Americans occupy in the American racial imaginary, and the psychological processes that subtend systemic racism, matters which remain salient to our lived experience in the present day.

This thesis consists of three chapters. In chapter one I will outline key theoretical concepts and attempt to formulate an expanded understanding of internalized racism as the point where the disciplinary and melancholy dimensions of race converge by bringing into dialogue two landmark sociological studies on internalized racism among Americans and Australians of Asian descent with Nadine Ehlers' concept of 'race as discipline' and Anne Anlin Cheng's work on 'racial melancholia'. The resulting conceptual frame will then aid me in my 'reading' of Japanese American racial history in chapter two, where I review the secondary literature to trace the dialectical relationship that has undergirded the racial subject formation of Japanese Americans within the context of the US-Japan encounter from the Meiji period to the 1930s. In its objective to examine "the history of the (racial) subject in relation to the subject matter of (racial) history"[20] this thesis is methodologically and theoretically indebted to David Eng and Shinhee Han, who conceptualize race "as a relation, as a process rather than a thing."[21] Chapter three will offer a close reading of articles and columns published in such newspapers as *The Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun* and the *Nichibei Shinbun* during the period 1930-1941. Using the analytic lens of internalized racism, I will attempt to elucidate the ways in which internalized racism manifested itself in the Japanese American language of resistance.

[20] David L. Eng and Shinhee Han. *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation: On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans* Chicago: Duke University Press, 2018): p. 4.
[21] Ibid., p. 12.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

The following chapter will first lay out the constructionist understanding of race that informs this study. I will then clarify Ehler and Cheng's theorizations on racial discipline and racial melancholy, after which I shall meditate on how these two concepts relate to intraracial discrimination among contemporary Asian Americans and Australians in order to unearth the underlying relational and emotional dynamics of internalized racism.

Making Sense of Race

In *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant provide a cogent socio-historical analysis of the ways that race has historically figured as a "master category" configuring the "history, polity, economic structure and culture of the United States." Rejecting earlier conceptions of race as a biological "essence" or an ideological "illusion," they propose racial formation theory as an alternative framework through which to understand race as a socially constructed concept.[22] Omi and Winant define racial formation "as the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed and destroyed,"[23] and explain that it can be bifurcated into two subcomponents, the first of which is racialization, or the act of imbuing outward, visually discernible physical differences with "social and symbolic meaning,"[24] and secondly, how the aggregate of those racial (acts of) significations coalesce in *racial projects*, where racial meanings are linked with, and subsequently determine, "the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized*"[emphasis in original].[25] Put differently, racial projects can be understood as "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines."[26]

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[22] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015): p. 106-110.
[23] Ibid. p. 109
[24] Ibid. p. 111
[25] Ibid. p.125.
[26] Ibid.

Racial Discipline and the Formation of the Racial Subject

How then are racial subjectivities formed? Phrased differently, where and how does the raced subject figure in the larger, collective racial projects of producing and maintaining racial meaning? Potential answers can be found in Nadine Ehlers' monograph *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity and Struggles Against Subjection,* which forwards the concept of "race as discipline." Ehlers combines Michel Foucault's concepts of discipline and power/knowledge with Judith Butler's theorizations on performativity to examine how race can be understood as a "disciplinary regime,"[27] in which the (American) racial subject is both discursively produced and compelled to continually (re)enact a racial subjectivity commensurate with the "normative and regulatory ideals" of the black-white racial binary.[28]

According to Ehlers, the non-white individual continually emerges as a racially marked body in and through the legacy of "racial truths, practices, value systems, beliefs and assumptions" produced by US socio-legal institutions that have historically sought to classify and subject the non-white body (and the black body in particular). The disciplinary dimensions of race, then, can be located in the demarcations imposed by such racial categorization, which not only differentiates the normal from the abnormal—privileging "certain racial bodies" over others—but also establishes a normative behavioral bandwidth within which a racial subject can be considered legible as either white or black. These processes of normalization force the racial subject to acquiesce to their imposed racialization if they are "to be recognized as a subject."[29]

Owing to the dispersed nature of power, this system of "racial discipline" not only subjects the individual into being raced, but through the "panoptic power of continual observation"[30] also imbues the racial subject with the self-discipline to behave "in line with the constraints of regulatory behavioral decrees," thereby reproducing "in themselves the power relation within which [...] they are at once the subjugator and the subjected."[31]

Drawing connections to Butler's work on gender normativity, Ehlers argues that racial identities in themselves do not precede behavior, but that the disciplinary norms of race precede and shape the racial subject's identity, relying on the "perpetual reiteration and reinscription of

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[27] Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity and Struggles Against Subjection* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: University of Illinois Press, 2012) p. 3.
[28] Ibid., p. 5.
[29] Ibid., pp. 19-22.
[30] Ibid., p. 8.
[31] Ibid., p. 54.

performative decrees of race" to retain their purported truthfulness. The interpellation of the racial subject in the social and legal spheres should thus be seen as a "command or an imperative" to the racial subject to present and carry themselves in ways reflecting "the regularized norms of that subject position [...] in order to survive as a discursively recognized and tenable racial subject."[32] Because racial power/knowledge works through the racial subject, "race as discipline" reveals the mechanisms that undergird racial projects, where race is produced and maintained through the interplay between the realms of the institutional and interpersonal.[33] Ehlers reminds us that racialized identities are not coerced into existence, but rather are negotiated, "produced and enabled through (a never completed) agonistic engagement with hegemonic powers which endeavor to constrain the individual."[34] To elucidate this identificatory negotiation, I will now turn to the concept of racial melancholia, which will help us uncover the underlying relations that sustain the racialized subject's awareness of their position in the racial hierarchy.

Desire and Incommensurability: Racial Melancholia

In their recent book *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation*, David Eng and Shinhee Han explain how the legal and social configurations of American society have historically forestalled Asian immigrants' ability to fully assimilate, or invest into, the object of American citizenship, and the white ideal it implies.[35] As a result, "the various unconscious psychic conflicts" that stem from the losses incurred through the process of immigration are left unresolved. In this way, Asian Americans must contend with "the relinquishing of lost but unspeakable Asian ideals" in addition to mourning the loss of a white ideality. This compounded loss then results in an "interminable grief and the internalization of loss as self-hatred" insofar as their exclusion from the body politic prevents them from letting go of that which they have lost, which is necessarily sustained through a "haunted, ghostly identification" with the absence it signifies.[36]

Eng and Han's study was preceded by Anne Anlin Cheng's groundbreaking work. In *The Melancholy of Race,* she draws on psychoanalytic theory to argue that "the psychical experience of grief" structures the ways that race in the United States has been negotiated by whites and non-

[32] Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 70.
[33] Ibid. p. 127
[34] Ibid., p. 165.
[35] Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia,* p. 48.
[36] Ibid., p. 25-37.

whites, who find themselves bound in a "dynamics that constitute their mutual definition through exclusion." Cheng calls this relational pattern "racial melancholia."[37] Similar to the melancholic's need to simultaneously deny the loss of the object in order to continue its "cannibalistic project," American whiteness has historically relied on a similar pattern of continual "exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others"[38] to maintain its own conceptual stability. In the dominant racial imaginary, the racial subject-as-object is thus neither completely lost, nor completely present.[39] It follows then that the marginalized individual, who is socialized within a racially melancholic society, is "both a melancholic object and a melancholic subject, the one lost and the one losing."[40] Indeed, their sense of self is formed around and by the "legislation of [racial] grief"[41] over the loss of Americanness as they are perpetually haunted by "a hypervigilance" of shortcoming in relation to the normative ideal of whiteness.

Interpreting Asian American literature through the analytic lens of the hypochondriac's anxiety over their "own bodily 'failures,'" Cheng conceptualizes the racial subject's assimilation process as "an intersubjective movement outward [between individuals] that may result in, but is in fact already conditioned by, the anticipation of some kind of intrasubjective failure [within the individual]." Within this "crisis of sociability," the melancholic racial subject preempts "the sickening effects of racial abjection" by engaging in an identificatory relationship with the very "power and health" to which they are (seen to be) unable to measure up to. However, the absorption of "an ideal other ego" also necessitates the "internalization of a 'failed bodily ego,'" the "denigrated self" that strays from the injunctive ideal of whiteness. Thus emerges "a paradoxical consciousness of desire and incommensurability," in which the pain of incommensurability is defused through a perpetual search for the source of that perceived failure.[42] According to Cheng, the Asian American subject can then be understood as "a body continuously plagued by questions of its own authenticity and etiology,"[43] and their hypochondrial responses to the self as a coping mechanism against "the absence of origin."[44]

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[37] Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): pp. x-xi.
[38] Ibid. p. 9-10.
[39] Ibid., p. xi.
[40] Ibid., p. 17.
[41] Ibid., p. 8.
[42] Ibid. pp. 72-80.
[43] Ibid. p. 69.
[44] Ibid., p. 83-89.

The Discipline and Melancholy of Internalized Racism

As stated earlier, Pyke defines internalized racism as "White racism that is internalized by the non-White group or individual and is directed inward toward the self or the group,"[45] which may result in "feelings of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one's race and/or oneself."[46] Internalized racism is also an important yet overlooked nexus in "the reproduction of racial inequality."[47] Pyke's definition draws on the work of Schwalbe et al., who observed that individuals can engage in disidentification from, and denigration of, members of the same marginalized group in an attempt to gain "membership in a dominant group" or "deflect the stigma they experience as members of a subordinate group."[48] Crucially, "defensive othering" is predicated on the marginalized subject's explicit or implicit acknowledgement of the "devalued identity" forced on them.[49]

Karen Pyke and Tran Dang have shown how the term "FOB" serves as a differential marker for the highly assimilated to avoid the stigma attached to "recently immigrated coethnics or ethnic traditionalists," whereas "Whitewashed" is used by Asian Americans who more strongly associate with their ancestral culture to castigate coethnic peers who have assimilated into the mainstream to the extent that they socialize almost exclusively with whites and are unable or unwilling to speak the language of the ethnic community. A disciplinary reading of the "ambiguity of the bicultural middle"[50] shows how internalized racism cannot be dichotomized into mere self-love and self-hate. Indeed, Pyke and Dang point out that Asian Americans who identify as bicultural not only use the aforementioned terms to differentiate themselves from the "acculturative extremes," but also to construct a normative "bicultural identity [...] that deflects stigma and defines the 'normals'" and reinscribes rather than contests the exclusionary fault lines that have historically barred Asians from full acceptance into the mainstream.[51] Here we see how the "normative and regulatory ideals"[52] of race that classify the Asian subject as perennially foreign structure their responses to

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45 Pyke, "Internalized Racial Oppression," p. 567.
46 Ibid., p. 553.
47 Ibid., p. 567.
48 Michael Schwalbe et al., "Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis," *Social Forces*, 79 no. 2 (2000): p. 425.
49 Ibid.
50 Karen Pyke and Tran Dang, ""FOB" and "Whitewashed": Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans," *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003): pp. 156-57.
51 Ibid., p. 157-58.
52 Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 5.

their racialization: insofar as biculturals strenuously avoid presenting themselves as "the typical Asian," this middle-of-the-road position requires them to simultaneously acknowledge the stigmatizing Otherness associated with "FOBs," and chastise "whitewashed" coethnic peers's fantasmatic desire to "join the white race."[53] Thus signifying behavioral deviation, the terms "FOB" and "Whitewashed" are instrumental in the disciplining of social engagements "across the divide."[54] Pointing out that "the construction of an individual identity depends greatly upon the identity of peers," Pyke and Dang show that Asian American subgroups are characterized by continuous observation and control of peer behavior.[55] As such, they reveal a complicated system of intraethnic surveillance and discipline that ensures the continued enactment and reproduction of "an assigned discursive position."[56]

Hence it becomes clear that the vocabulary of resistance against a "racially stigmatized status," is constructed in explicit reference to, and acknowledgement of, the "racial categories, meanings and stereotypes" imposed by the dominant white society, thus reifying "essential differences between whites and Asians."[57] In their conviction that "they can never join the white world,"[58] biculturals perform the disciplinary and reproductive operations of the racial injunctions they contest, insofar as the terms of their resistance to the dominant racism and the internalized racism on the part of "whitewashed" peers does not question racial categories, but sees them as "common sense."[59]

By considering the positionality of Asian Australians within the conceptual framework of Ghassan Hage's White nation fantasy, Adam Seet has further widened our understanding of internalized racism to include the racial subject's (sub)conscious investment in the existing racial power structure. In contrast to Pyke and Dang, Seet contends that the "positive and negative affect" of the racialized subject to their racialization insufficiently explains why they "continue to inhabit and participate in" a society in which they occupy a marginalized position, and argues that a desire for belonging to the white nation compels the racialized to perceive their relation to the white

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[53] Pyke and Dang, "'FOB' and 'Whitewashed'," pp. 157-58.
[54] Ibid. p. 167.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 56.
[57] Pyke and Dang, "'FOB' and 'Whitewashed'," pp. 151-68.
[58] Ibid., p. 157
[59] Ibid., p. 153.

nation "in terms of object-like functionality."[60] In other words, if the racialized subject conceives of themselves in terms of their usefulness and "general subordination to a white ideal," internalized racism also entails the inculcation of "a structuralized positioning of *Whites* as arbiters of acceptance, and the granters of belonging."[61] One of Seet's Chinese-Australian respondents, for instance, moved towards a more positive valuation of his ancestral language because of "the approval bestowed upon him by his 'White friends' because of his racialised difference."[62]

Seet's respondent thus engages in "self-discipline in accordance with discursive decrees."[63] Moreover, the "general subordination to [...] the White subject"[64] as a useful object echoes Foucault's description of how power seeks to achieve subjection by augmenting the "forces of the body (in terms of utility)" and decreasing "these same forces (in political terms of obedience)."[65] For their acknowledgement as a visible, existing subject is located in the utility of their racial difference, impelling the racial subject, whether consciously or unconsciously, to 'act out' the "naturalized 'truth'"[66] of their racialization as the exotic Other in an effort to remain discursively legible, in spite of, or precisely because of, the racial subject's latent desire to "pass into whiteness."[67]

While these two studies have immensely contributed to our understanding of the ways in which inequality affects, and is reproduced through, the Asian raced subject, they also overestimate the degree to which whiteness remains unaffected in the interactional process of interracial contact. Furthermore, the assumption of an immutable white subjectivity conjures the image of an unaltered subaltern essence, reifying the binary of oppositional subjectivities of 'whiteness' in contradistinction to 'Asianness.' Indeed, as Palumbo-Liu notes: "to understand the subject position of 'white' as absolutely apart from those of 'Asian' in the discursive interplay of nation formation"[68] is to reinscribe the very essentializing binary we seek to avoid. Also visible are patterns similar to Ehlers' theory of racial discipline, which requires racial subjects to submit

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[60] Adam Seet, "Serving the White Nation: Bringing Internalised Racism within a Sociological Understanding," J*ournal of Sociology* 57 no. 2 (2019): pp. 9-15.
[61] Seet, "Serving the White Nation," pp. 15-16.
[62] Ibid., p. 15.
[63] Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 56.
[64] Seet, "Serving the White Nation," p. 15.
[65] Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 55.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Hong, *Minor Feelings*, p. 29.
[68] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American* pp. 7-8.

to the discursive enjoinments promulgated by the dominant society so as to be read as "viable social subjects."[69] If we further recall Pyke's contention that both the white ideal and the rejected Other serve as points of reference for the way the racialized subject positions themselves in relation to racism, we can begin to see how internalized racism emerges as a site where racial discipline and racial melancholia converge.

Phrased differently, the Asian American racial subject is discursively coerced into the melancholic bind of rejecting the Other-as-self insofar as it is seen to impede their assimilation into the dominant society, while retaining it insofar as the legibility of whichever discursive position they occupy is predicated on, and refers to, the validity of that racial stigma. This then acts as an imperative for the racial subject to ensure that other similarly raced subjects behave in accordance with those normative ideals through surveillance and discipline, ensuring both the stability of the individual identity as well as the reproduction of that particular melancholically inflected racial formation. If racial melancholia structures the formation of the racial subject, internalized racism can be seen as the expression and the *regulation* of those racial formations safeguarding the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations. This regulation works through a triangulated, negotiatory and mutually constitutive "relationship between objectification and subjectification,"[70] of desire and abjection, which, as we will see, has also been a recurring theme in the longer history of the US-Japan encounter.

[69] Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives*, p. 7.
[70] Eng & Han, *Racial Melancholia*, p. 12.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To my knowledge there are few, if any, historical inquiries that explicitly engage the concept of internalized racism among Asian and Japanese Americans apart from the authors mentioned in the introduction. The emphasis of this literature review will thus lie on providing a historical context by 'reading' the Japanese American history of race using the concepts outlined in the previous chapter. As previously stated, this thesis heeds Eng and Han's call to remain attentive to the "ever-shifting social relations" that construct and modulate notions of race, as well as the limited agency of the individual. To fully grasp the import of what the racial subject says in response to the dominant racial ideology, we need to remember that they "can speak only in and through a long history [and hence language] of prior race relations."[71]

Soldiering On: Discursive Transformations in the Trans- and Postwar Period

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, the United States did everything in its power to exclude Asian and Japanese Americans from the body politic. However, over the course of the war it became increasingly clear that explicit forms of racism, or what Fujitani calls "vulgar racism" had become unsustainable as the United States started to envision its leadership position in the liberal post-war world order, in which Japan, and the larger Asian region, would come to play a fundamental role.[72] It is in this period that the discursive transformation of Japanese Americans from *objects* of racist animosity towards *subject* embodiments of American democratic ideals is most clearly foregrounded. Both in the ways that they were portrayed and perceived by white America, and the ways in which Nikkei saw themselves. The changed "representations of Japanese American military service and loyalty" in the American press and propaganda circulated by the federal government were instrumental to negate the contradictions that underpinned the utilization of Japanese "lives and bodies" to fight an American war.[73] Fujitani calls our attention to the care that was paid in government-produced propaganda pamphlets to depict Nisei soldiers "as a recognizable likeness of the white soldier."[74] Yet others, like Frank Capra in his film *Know Your Enemy-Japan* constructed an image of the All-American Nisei whose Japanese appearance belied the fact that, in the eyes of white Americans, they had traded the 'benighted' oppressiveness of

[71] Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia*, pp. 13-19.
[72] Fujitani, *Race for Empire,* p. 105.
[73] Ibid., p. 205-207.
[74] Ibid., p. 216.

"the 'Japs' over there" for the liberty and civilization bestowed upon him by American patriotism.[75] Despite their Japanese ancestry, the message seemed to be, the Nisei soldier was redeemed and transformed by his American "normality"—achieved by dint of his citizenship—and thus safe for induction into the American national body. Such understandings of Americanism, Fujitani points out, hinted at an unspoken collective understanding that even as the United States was articulating and embracing its racial liberalism, whiteness was considered coterminous with "the category of 'American'," including the democratic, liberal, and ostensibly post-racial values and meanings embedded in it.[76]

However, if this discursive transformation was largely driven by white policymakers' realization that the image of the Nisei soldier was ideally suited to signal to Japan and other "potential allies" within and without America's borders "that the United States did not countenance racial discrimination,"[77] it possibly also served as a vindication for Japanese Americans that they were indeed 'All American.' As Azuma points out, the affirmation that their citizenship signaled their belonging to the American body politic had important repercussions for the way Nisei serving as interpreters to the US military in Occupied Japan negotiated and rearticulated their Japanese American identity. Indeed, Nisei intelligence personnel harbored deep-seated anxieties regarding their precarious position in the US military's racial hierarchy and were keenly aware of "ambiguous boundaries of race and citizenship" in the racial landscape of the immediate postwar years. As such, Nisei pushback against racism was "contingent on the narrow notion of their citizenship-based rights, or the violation thereof," and avoided criticizing the larger, racial power structure.[78] Feeling they had to "overcompensate for the injuries of race-based exclusion via hyper-disidentification with foreign Japanese," Nisei soldiers demonstrated to their white counterparts the "intra-racial difference" that separated Japanese from Nisei by purposefully behaving "in an aggressive manner to illuminate their status as victors, and [...] their primary allegiance to the United States,"[79] thereby inadvertently positioning themselves as "colonial middleman," and reproducing colonial colonizer-subaltern dynamics.[80]

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[75] Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, p. 218.
[76] Ibid., pp. 214-220.
[77] Ibid., p. 222.
[78] Azuma, "Brokering Race," pp. 196-200.
[79] Ibid. pp. 200-203.
[80] Ibid., p. 209

The deployment of American citizenship in projects of "intra-racial boundary making"[81] was continued into the 1950s by stateside Japanese Americans involved in the chick sexing trade, or "the work of separating male chicks (cockerels) from females (pullets)."[82] While Japanese Americans emphasized how their Japaneseness made them supremely qualified as chick sexors, they vehemently protested the arrival of co-ethnic competitors from Japan. In order to retain their monopolistic hold on the trade, they stressed the American spiritedness that their citizenship granted them, relying on "essentialist thinking" to differentiate between Japanese born in the US and in Japan. By reifying "exclusionist politics against people of their own race," Nikkei chick sexors legitimized their position within the "liberal racial regime of postwar white America."[83] Cultural festivals were another locus where the simultaneous ambivalence towards, yet desire for, American whiteness—and the "exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others"[84] this balancing act required—were enacted. Kurashige relates how Nisei Week beauty pageants in the post-war era increasingly judged contestants against white beauty standards, leading some contest hopefuls to go as far as to receiving plastic surgery to appear more Caucasian.[85] Despite all this euphoria, Kurashige notes, Japanese war brides were largely shunned by Japanese Americans, as is apparent from the general absence of "the largest postwar migration of Japanese to the United States" in Nisei Week celebrations.[86]

While these postwar changes in Japanese Americans' relationality to the United States might be interpreted as the culmination of a process set in motion by the wartime federal government, these shifts in racial subjectivity, to reiterate Azuma's words, "did not take place in a historical vacuum."[87] Indeed, as Kurashige remarks, the valorization of "[Nisei] physical and cultural similarities with the majority of Americans" fits within a longer history of appealing to white middle class ideals.[88] The following sections will situate the particular configurations of post-war Japanese American identity within the *longue durée* of the US-Japan encounter.

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[81] Eiichiro Azuma, "Race, Citizenship, and the "Science of Chick Sexing": The Politics of Racial Identity among Japanese Americans." *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (2009): p. 268.
[82] Ibid., p. 242.
[83] Ibid., p. 275.
[84] Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*, p. 10.
[85] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict*, p. 147.
[86] Ibid., p. 148.
[87] Azuma, "Brokering Race," p. 210.
[88] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict*, pp. 146-47.

Imperial Visions: Meiji Japan and the New World

As Fuminori Minamikawa explains in his study of the Japanese American vernacular press in the opening decades of the twentieth century, first-generation, or Issei, immigrants often made sense of, and contested their racialization in the US "by drawing from the vocabulary they already had in their native, or vernacular, language."[89] In part, this language was rooted in the racial vocabulary that emerged from Meiji racial discourse, which was itself fraught with conceptual instability and marked by an uneasy relationship with the scientific racism they had selectively adopted from Western powers. Early Meiji intellectuals held widely divergent views of Japan's position in the global hierarchy, ranging from assertions of Japan's status as a civilized nation to the Japanese people's inherent racial inferiority which necessitated racial improvement by way of intermarriage between Japanese and whites.[90] This conceptual tension was compounded further as Japan sought to establish itself as a colonial power. Yuko Kawai and Tessa Morris-Suzuki have both described how the legitimacy of Japanese imperialism hinged on the equation of the terms *jinshu* (race) and *minzoku* (ethnos) to circumvent the former's biological condemnation of the Japanese people to "'the common fate of all people in Asia,'"[91] whereas the latter enabled the Japanese state to emphasize its civilizational equality to the West, legitimizing Japanese domination of other Asian peoples while also sufficiently differentiating the Japanese from those they dominated. Such discursive flexibility made possible "a continuous slippage backward and forward between different levels of justifications,"[92] placing the Japanese within and without Asia as geopolitical convenience dictated.

While the concept of *jinshu*-as-*minzoku* plastered over the cognitive dissonance of Japanese racialism vis-a-vis its Asian colonies, it also enabled Meiji thinkers to envisage Japan as an ideological heir to the European "historic project of global conquest and development."[93] The United States played an important role within these imperial visions. As Azuma explains in *In*

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[89] Fuminori Minamikawa. "Vernacular Representations of Race and the Making of a Japanese Ethnoracial Community in Los Angeles," in *Trans-Pacific Japanese American Studies*, pp. 107-132, ed. Yasuko Takezawa and Gary Y. Okihiro (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016): p. 107.
[90] Yuko Kawai, "Deracialised Race, Obscured Racism: Japaneseness, Western and Japanese Concepts of Race, and Modalities of Racism," *Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): pp. 28-30.
[91] Ibid., p. 31.
[92] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998): p. 87.
[93] Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier,* p. 31.

Search of Our Frontier, American Manifest Destiny influenced the Meiji belief in Japan's destiny to introduce "civilization and modernity to undeveloped lands and uncultured peoples around them and in the New World." Most notably, it was the Meiji intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi who deemed "transpacific emigration" and "Japanese-style settler colonialism" essential components in furthering national interests to "Enrich the nation, strengthen the military (*fukoku kyōhei*)," with North America being a specific territory of interest.[94] Fukuzawa's interest in the American West can be traced to his embrace of "a new spatially prescribed idea of Japanese expansion" as he advocated for Japan's psychic and physical abandonment of Asia, which he came to see as immutably benighted, and thus unsuitable as a site for "Japanese advancement." Crucially, Fukuzawa stipulated that the task of crossing the Pacific to establish new colonies should be the prerogative of the samurai class, whose "moral character" and, crucially, their subjectivity as "a loyal subject" of the empire eminently qualified them to act as representatives of "Japanese racial superiority," and enter into economic competition with white Americans.[95]

The "self-proclaimed frontiersmen" that heeded the call for "overseas development (*kaigai hatten*)" thus linked the furthering of Japan's national interests to their more local concerns of securing their livelihoods and existence as "imperial subjects in racially exclusive California."[96] The subsequent correspondence between stateside immigrants and intellectuals in Japan brought into existence a discursive space in which the distinction between "Japanese settler colonialism and American minority politics" became increasingly vague. While initial state-backed Japanese colonial ventures in California did not last in the face of rising American anti-Japanese sentiments, they did bring together the Pacific Coast and the Japanese archipelago in the "spatial identity of the [Japanese] nation."[97] The transnational practice of "the spatial politics of the Japanese Empire," which, as Kate McDonald argues, mirrored the convoluted trajectory of the *jinshu*/*minzoku* divide,[98] would inflect the later development of Japanese America in the following decades.

Indeed, Minamikawa points out that for first generation Japanese immigrants, or Issei, the imperial use of the terms *minzoku* and *Yamato Minzoku* in the Japanese-American press could signify both their connection to a greater Japanese Empire and people, as well as the stake by

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[94] Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier*, p. 31-35.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., p. 32-40.
[97] Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): p. 30.
[98] Ibid., p. 4.

which they claimed belonging in their "pluralistic interpretation of the United States," a dualistic positioning essential in the face of a growing anti-Japanese atmosphere.[99] Japan's rise as a colonial power, coupled with a growing number of Japanese immigrants, had aroused deep racial anxieties among white Americans, particularly after its victory in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905.[100] The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, which severely curtailed Japanese immigration, symbolized the confluence of the Japanese government's wish to maintain "state control over its populace,"[101] and the growing anti-Japanese exclusionist movement in the United States.[102]

In *Between Two Empires*, Azuma notes that "both [Japanese] diplomats and the immigrant elite" responded to white racial enmity by conceding that working-class immigrants, or *dekasegi*, displayed an inferiority similar to that of "the excluded Chinese." What followed was the racialized Othering of these undesirable internal elements, whose abject state betrayed "an 'alien,' not pure Japanese nature."[103] As such, anxieties over the threat that "Sinified Issei" posed to the 'whiteness' of the civilized, transpacific *minzoku* collective demanded the containment and reform of *dekasegi* immigrants. While these attitudes are indicative of the gender-inflected outlook of Japanese elites, one that envisaged a masculine Japanese metropole and immigrant society as a "feminine space in need of protection and governance,"[104] Azuma points out that such imperial worldviews dovetailed neatly with developments in the American public sphere. Supported by "funds, personnel and general guidelines from across the Pacific,"[105] Issei elites co-opted the moralist belief in the transformative potential of "white middle class cultural norms" touted by the ascendant American Progressive Movement.[106] They thus sought to curtail illicit activities such as gambling and prostitution while promoting conformity to American ways in dress and comportment in order "to discipline and control what they considered to be pre-modern, non-civilized, and un-American features."[107]

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[99] Minamikawa, "Vernacular Representations," p. 113.
[100] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict,* p. 16.
[101] Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): p. 19.
[102] Ibid., p. 30.
[103] Ibid., pp. 37-38.
[104] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict*, p. 7.
[105] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 47.
[106] Ibid., p. 39.
[107] Minamikawa, "Vernacular Representations," p. 122.

In this way, Progressive Era notions of "racial uplift," complemented Meiji conceptions of the Japanese *jinshu* as improveable through "raising living conditions, [...] better education and raising moral standards."[108] In contrast to white reformers, Issei did not see whiteness and Japaneseness as polar opposites, but as coeval metonyms for the ideal of modernity. Assimilation thus did not mean the complete relinquishment of Japaneseness, for to be Japanese was to be American.[109] Indeed, even for Japanese Protestants—whose religion should reasonably have predisposed them towards Americanism—their shared ethnic identity as Japanese took precedence over religious affiliations. Japanese Presbyterians, historian David Yoo writes, "often felt more connected to and invested in the Japanese Presbyterian Conference than their denomination."[110]

We have thus seen how questions regarding race and the demarcation of the Japanese *minzoku* and its territory in Meiji thought inflected the racial formation of early Japanese immigrants in the United States. More importantly, we can see how that language interacted with American political discourse, and inflected Issei internalization of a white ideality, giving rise to a process of simultaneous subjectification and objectification within the Japanese American psyche between the commensurate Self, and the abject Other. Just as the Japanese empire needed to preserve its "sense of homogeneity," so Japanese America had to contain and excise from the *minzoku* those they regarded as "backward *gumin*, or ignorant masses,"[111] whose incommensurability to the ideals of whiteness and modernity necessitated these groups' subjection to intense scrutiny and discipline.

Losing Whiteness: Realities of American Life

Even as Japanese racial discourses echoed across the Pacific and inflected Japanese immigrants' ideas of race and citizenship, the restricting realities of American racism precluded a seamless continuity of imperial orthodoxy in the United States. Azuma reminds us that Issei's "shared experience of being a racial Other in America" was a point of divergence from the homeland's "modernist belief that the Japanese should be able to become honorary whites through acculturation."[112] After Japanese agricultural expansion in the area aroused white anger, the threat

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[108] Kawai, "Deracialised Race," p. 29.
[109] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 47.
[110] David K. Yoo, Growing *Up Nisei: Race, Generation and Culture among Japanese Americans of California 1924-49* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000): p. 57.
[111] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 38.
[112] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

of white violence in Livingston, California pressured Issei members of the Yamato Colony—originally established as a Japanese pioneer farming outpost—into cooperating "with whites in forming the Livingston Anti-Japanese Committee." By acquiescing to white perceptions of fellow Issei as "low class" and unassimilable, Livingston Japanese were able to gain "from the white residents an affirmation of their presence there."[113]

Having been twice denied naturalization in 1914, Takao Ozawa, a first-generation immigrant originally from Kanagawa, Japan, argued to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1922 that his dedication to the American way of life, combined with his fair skin, should have qualified him as white, and therefore eligible for naturalization as a US citizen.[114] While historians such as Ronald Takaki and Erika Lee have mentioned this landmark court case, the more troubling aspects of Ozawa's arguments have generally been glossed over. Takaki, for instance, only tells us that Ozawa was branded as "not white," but omits his claims to whiteness.[115] However, a closer reading reveals not only his acceptance of American racism as commonsensical, but also class and racial prejudices as they had been articulated by intellectuals in the country of his youth.

Rejecting "the idea of white as a characteristic to be demonstrated 'by ocular inspection," Ozawa argued that the term "free white persons" in the Naturalization Act of 1790 referred not to phenotype, but to "personalities and the qualities of personalities."[116] As far as he was concerned, the Japanese were white insofar as they were not black, saying that the category of whiteness denoted "a superior class as against a lower class, or, to speak explicitly [...] the white man against the negro."[117] However, even as he referred to Japan as a civilized and modern nation, Ozawa specified that the qualifier white did not apply to *all* Japanese, arguing that: "The Japanese are 'free.' They, or at least the dominant strains, are 'white persons,' speaking an Aryan tongue and having Caucasian root stocks; a superior class, fit for citizenship. The Japanese are assimilable."[118] That the Court would eventually rule against Ozawa, was, of course, all but inevitable. In the Court opinion, Justice Sutherland emphatically stated that the Japanese, their "culture and enlightenment"

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[113] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 76-77.
[114] Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015): pp. 120-21.
[115] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1989): p. 208.
[116] *Ozawa v. United States*, 260 U.S. 178, p. 184 (1922).
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 185

notwithstanding, were not racially white in the sense as it was understood by US Congress, and thus "clearly ineligible for citizenship."[119]

The Immigration Act of 1924 extended the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to include Japanese immigrants.[120] For the Issei, this spelled the loss of the "much desired label of honorary white[s],"[121] and would elicit contradictory responses from the Japanese American press. Minamikawa observes how the "'Easternization' of the construction of the Japanese race"[122] in the Japanese American press mirrored Japanese academics' acknowledgement of the very "biological basis of differences"[123] which the US had used to justify Japanese exclusion. Frustrated by the American refusal to accept them as fellow 'white' people, Japanese-language discourse on both sides of the Pacific turned towards constructing a "self-oriented identity as the representative of the colored races."[124] Confirming this observation, Palumbo-Liu notes that the Japanese state, faced with America's repudiation of Japanese claims to whiteness, rearticulated its global position from a fellow, white empire to that of "leader of Asia and champion of equal rights."[125] Azuma, however, identifies a widespread sense of resignation among Issei to "the inescapable reality" of their "racially subordinate" status.[126] In addition, the departure of expansionist Issei to settler ventures in South America and the overseas territories of the Japanese Empire attenuated internal differences among those who stayed in the US, enabling them to envisage themselves no longer as a mere extension of the Japanese empire, but "as an American minority" in its own right.[127]

The above developments show how Japanese American negotiations of race and citizenship contended with changing geopolitical conditions in relation to the Japanese homeland as well as the shifting sands of whiteness, the definition of which was no longer decided on the grounds of civilizational or "ethnographic" standards, but instead became subject to the arbitrary

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[119] Ibid., p. 198.
[120] Lee, *Asian America*, pp. 85-87.
[121] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 82.
[122] Minamikawa, "Vernacular Representations," p. 117.
[123] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 84.
[124] Minamikawa, "Vernacular Representations," p. 118.
[125] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 33.
[126] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, pp. 78-79.
[127] Ibid., p. 82.

"will of Congress."[128] As Palumbo-Liu aptly remarks, whiteness had become intimately tied to "the internal, highly historicized interests of the United States."[129]

Disciplining the Next Generation

In the years following the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, Azuma notes, educated Issei took to writing their history with an eye on the future. Meant to shore up Nikkei self-confidence, the *Zaibei Nihonjinshi* (History of the Japanese in America) presented a new, albeit contrived reimagining of Japanese American history that drew on, and deliberately interjected Nikkei into, the history of white Anglo-Saxon settler colonialism in the United States, obfuscating their heterogeneous, working-class origins by portraying "all current Issei residents as authentic Japanese citizens: moral, civilized, progressive and modern."[130] The renarration of Japanese American identity also made possible the establishment of a teleological continuity with the second generation, whose American citizenship, in their parents' eyes, marked them as the torch bearers of the "resurrection of Japanese Americans as a race." Throughout the interwar period Issei hence retained a powerful hold over the lives of Nisei, as they actively intervened in "Nisei occupational patterns and demographic composition" by urging Nisei men in Japan to return to the United States to help further the development of Nikkei agriculture, and to marry Nisei women to preserve "the racial integrity of the Japanese in America." A critical requisite for the fulfillment of the Japanese American pioneer ideal, then, was Japanese education and its ability to inculcate "*Nippon seishin*, or Japanese spirit," which Issei regarded as the key to Nisei success as American citizens and a prophylactic against the threat of "defeat in the racial competition."[131]

Imai relates how Issei saw their worst fears confirmed in the case of Myles Yutaka Fukunaga of Honolulu, whose arrest and conviction for the murder of a local, upper-class white boy in 1928 jeopardized "the reputation of the entire Japanese American community." The community dissociated itself from Fukunaga, labelling his "insanity" as anathema to the Japanese American *minzoku*, and therefore thoroughly un-American.[132] Japanese Associations, prefecturally-oriented *kenjinkai* (prefectural organizations) and Issei parents across Japanese

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[128] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 39.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*., p. 101.
[131] Ibid., pp. 113-26.
[132] Imai, *Creating the Nisei Market*, pp. 93-94.

America subsequently took on “roles as police, court, and correction agency,” developing a system of intraethnic surveillance aimed at disciplining aberrant Nisei whose ”failure of moral development”[133] made them into a potential “liability to their native country”[134] and community. This linkage between “the responsibility of citizenship and racial attributes,”[135] coupled with affordable tuition rates in Japan, made it that overseas education was seen as a viable and effective way to counteract the negative effects of recent immigrants’ low-class “superficial materialism”[136] and Nisei's vulnerability to the “blind imitation of American ‘hedonism.”[137] Throughout the 1930s a significant number of Nisei were sent to Japan to receive their cultural and linguistic education.[138]

If the above might indicate, as Roger Daniels suggests, an intergenerational clash caused by Nisei’s accelerated assimilation,[139] it also confirms Brian Hayashi’s observation that intrafamilial relations were significant in Nisei’s cultural identification, thus alluding to a more complex reality of intergenerational interaction and ambivalence towards wholesale identification with either Japan or the US.[140] Kurashige remarks that Issei and Nisei elites were united by “a fear of common enemies within the ethnic community,”[141] as both groups used Anglo-Saxon norms to “determine the ethnic self” and weed out “internal others.”[142] The class-based enmity towards the overly ethnic was thus not just learned from the dominant society, but also passed on by “their parents’ generation.”[143]

These developments must finally be considered within the context of governmentally sanctioned waves of discrimination and violence in the US, which drove Japanese Americans into the arms of Japanese government bureaucrats. Noticing the potential of Nisei students for the advancement of imperial interests, they attempted to charm the community “toward identification with the homeland by stressing their importance to Japan.”[144] Subsequent official visits of

[133] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 126.
[134] Ibid., p. 140.
[135] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 141.
[136] Imai, *Creating the Nisei Market*, p. 95.
[137] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 126.
[138] Ibid., pp. 136-37.
[139] Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988): p. 172.
[140] Brian Masaru Hayashi, ‘For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren’: Assimilation, Nationalism and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): p. 111.
[141] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict*, p. 34.
[142] Ibid, p. 7.
[143] Ibid., p. 36.
[144] Hayashi, *Our Japanese Brethren*, p. 129.

members of the imperial family and other government officials to prewar Los Angeles can be seen to have both fed into and drawn on the rise of "Pacific era" discourse among Nikkei elites, which envisioned a shift in global power relations in favor of the transpacific, and the role of Nisei within this system as "ambassadors between the two nations."[145]

As powerful a presence Japan was, the Nikkei were still firmly grounded in American life, and remained attentive to domestic intellectual developments. The ideal of the transpacific bridge coincided with the rising prominence of assimilation theories forwarded by Chicago School sociologists,[146] who rejected the idea of race as a biological fact and instead asserted it was contingent on "the *awareness* of physical difference."[147] Given that the Chicago sociologists considered "racial conflict as the step that precedes accommodation and assimilation"—thus rendering Americanness (and whiteness) attainable—it stands to no surprise that their ideas resonated with Nikkei community elites.[148] Henry Yu relates how the school's founder Robert Park drew on the biographical accounts of young Asian Americans to formulate his Marginal Man Theory as a means of racial brokerage. For example, UCLA student Kazuo Kawai's "feelings of confusion and alienation" regarding his cultural belonging were resolved by rethinking his marginalized inbetweenness as the means through which he could act "as an interpreter of East to West."[149] However, Palumbo-Liu reminds us, the reformulation of marginality from liability to asset was also tethered to US expansionism, and should be understood as an intellectual response to what individuals like Robert Park saw as "America's unique destiny as a Pacific state."[150] Indeed, Yu says, to Chicago sociologists, America's Pacific expansion was coeval to the unfolding of "modern progress."[151] The western seaboard of the United States being "the zone of contact between a stagnant Orient and a modern, mobile Occident," Japanese Americans were now essential to the progress of the "global melting pot."[152] In this way, the marginalized Nisei was

[145] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 138.
[146] Ibid., p. 112.
[147] Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): p. 43.
[148] Minamikawa, "Vernacular Representations," p. 118.
[149] Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, pp. 106-107.
[150] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 33.
[151] Yu, *Thinking Orientals,* p. 50.
[152] Ibid.

able to gain proximity to whiteness through his corporeal exoticism, for the very cause and sign of "his history of being excluded was the very thing that made him useful."[153]

Thus we can begin to discern how the postwar move of Japanese Americans into the American body politic fits within, and was informed by, "a long history of prior race relations."[154] If Azuma urges us to attend to the local specificities of the Japanese American situation, he also points out that Nikkei never completely broke with the Japanese homeland. Their divergent experiences in the US thus cannot be considered separately from Imperial Japan's changing geopolitical status. Far from being an All-American narrative, Japanese American racial identity was informed by, and formulated through, the dialectical relationship of American and Japanese languages of race and empire, and the overlap of both powers' claim to the Asia Pacific. Conscious of their minority status in the US, as well as how their actions might reflect on their country of origin, the Japanese American community was highly vigilant to, as Kurashige terms it, "the enemy within."[155] To counteract racialized stigma, Japanese American communities engaged in surveillance and discipline in order to contain the ever-present threat of the undesirable. In doing so, however, they also acknowledged the validity of the racial categories that governed American life. Indeed, community elites formulated the civilized Japanese American by rejecting the purportedly uncivilized and un-American. These social dynamics were also reflected in the immigrant press, as the next chapter will show.

[153] Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, p. 108.
[154] Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia*, p. 19.
[155] Kurashige, *Celebration and Conflict*, p. 34.

Chapter Three: *Analysis*

I now turn to Japanese Americans' considerations of race and identity in the community's newspapers during the interwar period on the American West Coast. Yoo's earlier examination of Japanese American newspapers' English language sections geared towards the second generation shows how print media "reflected as well as influenced the process by which the Nisei defined themselves as individuals and as a generation." Nisei journalists, conscious of Nikkei's "racially subordinate position," generally avoided structural critiques of racism, instead redirecting "the burden of charge" to Nisei themselves in what Yoo describes as "a politics of deference" to white Americans. More significantly, Japanese American resistance to white racism was often couched in "language that excluded and divided along racial lines and privileged European Americans as normative."[156] It is this contradiction, which Pyke calls "the simultaneity of resistance and complicity,"[157] that this chapter will focus on. Given the strong intergenerational ties between Issei and Nisei (as established earlier), this analysis will also include sources from the newspapers' Japanese language sections.

In the introduction I asked: Can we detect forms of internalized racism in the language used by Japanese American press of the interwar period, and did such language contribute to the formation of a specific racial subjectivity that internalized whiteness? Using the lens of internalized racism as my guide to read the primary sources, I will first examine how the immigrant press deflected white racism by deploying Nikkei leaders' racialized notions of Japanese 'superiority' and white American testimonies of approval rendered racial difference simultaneously as a marker of admissibility and inadmissibility into the American body politic. I will then discuss how this double bind figured in Nisei discussions on race and identity. The last section will present an epistolary exchange between various second-generation Japanese Americans to demonstrate the contested nature of Nisei identity, as well as the melancholic and disciplinary undercurrents that marked their interaction.

[156] Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, pp. 68-78.
[157] Pyke, "Internalized Racial Oppression," p. 564.

Approbation and Denigration

What is the “Ideal Japanese American Citizen”? So asked Hanama Tasaki in a prize-winning essay printed in the *Nichibei Shinbun*, a Japanese American newspaper headquartered in San Francisco.[158] To Tasaki, the ideal Nisei was “first, a physical ideal. He is a masterpiece of Oriental nature. He possesses in his soul the artistry and tender sense of beauty of the Yamato race.” Proficient in both English and Japanese, this physical extension of ‘the Orient’ also “realizes the onward progress of the American race and feels himself an active member of it.” Tellingly, Tasaki’s ideal Japanese American did not inhabit the body of “the ideal American citizen” *tout court*, but remained forever a symbol of “the East,” an outsider within, a sibling “under the same flag.”[159]

It is no surprise that Tasaki was among the winners in the newspaper’s essay contest. Kyutaro Abiko, the owner of the *Nichibei Shinbun*,[160] was a well-known proponent of the Nisei’s “world mission” as cultural brokers amidst “Japan’s spiritual awakening and her material progress” and the supplanting of Europe by the United States, which had “come of age and emerged as the greatest power in the world.” According to Abiko, the Nisei were a product of, and had an almost divinely inspired duty towards, “the two greatest cultures ever evolved by the human race.”[161] Indeed, educator Takashi Terami wrote in 1933, such was “the mission of the second generation” (第二世の使命): “to pledge for the development of the Japanese race in their birthplace, which is these United States” (生地である此の米國にて、大和民族発展を期すること).[162]

The two preceding authors’ allusions to their country of origin suggest that, as mentioned earlier, community leaders’ visions for the second generation’s future were often premised on Japan’s geopolitical position. Lecturing on the legitimacy of Japanese involvement in Manchuria to the Japan-America Student Conference in Portland, Dr. Yamato Ichihashi emphasized that the Japanese were “a race not inferior to whites” (白人に劣らない人種), and that Japan was in fact

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[158] Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, pp. 34-35.
[159] Hanama Tasaki, “East and West Meet in Ideal Nisei Citizen,” *Nichibei Shinbun*, January 1st, 1934.
[160] Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 74.
[161] Kyutaro Abiko, “A Unique and Significant Role,” *Nichibei Shinbun* , January 1st, 1931.
[162] Takashi Terami, ”寺見博士の講演：第二世の使命ー河下學園の卒業式に’” *Nichibei Shinbun,* June 22nd, 1933.

"the only nation-like nation in the East" (東洋における唯一の國家らしき國家).[163] USC graduate student W.Y. Horinouchi,[164] for his part, fulminated against legislative exclusion of Japanese Americans using racialist claims similar to Takao Ozawa's roughly two decades earlier. In Horinouchi's opinion, not only did the Japanese have "very much white blood," it was their "Asiatic supremacy" which had elicited racial jealousy among white Americans.[165] Agreeing with such claims to parity to whites, an anonymous contribution in the English section of the *Nichibei* argued that the US "had learned her racial lessons in an unfortunate manner," having encountered the Japanese only after "experiences of contact with inferior race [*sic*]," referring to Native Americans and African Americans as "yet in a primitive state of culture," and "just up from slavery."[166] Thus, "in order to counteract racial handicap", journalist Kay Nishida concluded in 1935, the Nisei "should foster among themselves the achievements which have made the Jaapnese [*sic*] culturally a gentleman for the last two thousand years."[167]

The immigrant press also highly valued perceptions of white Americans. Whites both sympathetic and opposed to Japanese immigration were often invited to offer their views on the community's assimilatory progress. In 1934, the famously anti-Japanese Californian newspaper mogul Valentine McClatchy described having been "favorably impressed" by the assimilation of individual Nisei youth, who "compare[d] favorably [...] with their fellow citizens of Caucasian ancestry," and were even "generally superior" in their "self-discipline and earnestness of purpose." Pointing to "racial pride on both sides," McClatchy declared "absorption [of the Japanese] through intermarriage" an impossibility. At the same time, the "high degree of racial purity" among Japanese Americans was also compatible with his anti-immigrant visions of a pluralistic yet racially separated United States. Generalizing Japanese Americans as "through their policy, dutiful citizens of Japan [...] and prepared to do her bidding at any time," McClatchy praised the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) for its efforts to inculcate among Nikkei "the duties and

[163] Yamato Ichihashi, "市橋教授の講演：學生大いに感激ー日米関係の正しき批評を率直に遺憾なく披歴" *Taihoku Nippō*, August 2nd, 1935.
[164] "Introducing Contributors," *Kashū Mainichi Shinbun*, January 1st, 1940.
[165] W.Y. Horinouchi, "Arbitrary Classification As 'Ineligible Aliens' Held As Problem's Root," Nichibei *Shinbu*n January 1st, 1939.
[166] "A Deplorable Misconstruction," *Nichibei Shinbun*, April 14th, 1936.
[167] Kay Nishida, "Nisei in America Need Knowledge of Things Nipponese," *Nichibei Shinbun*, November 25th, 1935.

responsibilities of American citizenship," and encouraged them to further purge the foreigner within, for there was "room in this country for but one flag, the Stars and Stripes."[168]

Between late 1937 and early 1938, a white college student from Berkeley, known only as "Francoise," contributed a series of columns on the issues faced by Nisei entitled "Speaking from Experience," which appeared in such newspapers as the *Taihoku Nippō* and *Nichibei Shinbun*. Francoise's writing may strike the contemporary reader as surprisingly progressive, railing as it did against American Orientalism's "stupid originality of dime novelists,"[169] as well as white anti-Japanese sentiments targeting Nisei "for a war they did not instigate" as international tensions rose during the Sino-Japanese War.[170] In a later column, Francoise commended Nisei's efforts to become "more American than ever before," and portrayed Japanese Americans as spiritual heirs to "the essence of pioneer spirit" that had inspired the Mayflower pilgrims. Nevertheless, her defense of Japanese Americans was no less problematic than McClatchy's backhanded praise, as it was similarly predicated on the essential otherness of the Japanese as well as an alleged inferiority of other groups. Indeed, in the same article, the author challenges anti-Japanese sentiments by juxtaposing Japanese Americans' high degree of assimilation to the "unassimilated San Francisco village" of the Chinese community. Equally troubling in Francoise's praise are its eugenicist sentiments popular in 1930s America.[171] Feeding into the Nikkei elites' racialism, Francoise contemplated how intermarriage might counteract the "decline of the great white race," which she attributed to the fecundity of "American feeble-minded individuals" and the intelligentsia's lower birth rates. The Nikkei, not having exhibited the "race weaknesses of Americans," could therefore contribute to their country by producing "hybrid children [...] more brilliant than pureblood offspring."[172]

However, visible underneath all this approval is a conditional acceptance based on Nisei's continued assimilation away from the Issei, who in her opinion would remain forever "inscrutable" to the average American. Observing the mask-like quality of the Japanese face, a subconscious "race character" seen among the Issei conditioned by generations of life under feudal rule,

[168] Valentine S. McClatchy, "Californians Impressed By Career of Dai Nisei," *Nichibei Shinbun*, September 2nd, 1934.
[169] 'Francoise,' "Speaking from Experience," *Taihoku Nippō*, October 26th, 1937.
[170] 'Francoise,' "A Column About the Japanese by a Berkeley Co-ed," *Nichibei Shinbun*, November 29th, 1937.
[171] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, pp. 24-30.
[172] 'Francoise,' "The Spirit of the Japanese Pioneers Here Is Compared With That Of The Pilgrims," *Nichibei Shinbun*, November 15th, 1937.

Francoise was pleased to see that the second generation had largely abandoned their "'poker' face" masks, and instead were "with dexterity adapting themselves to the Western tongue, and acquiring a brand-new set of facial grimaces."[173]

Other, more prominent white progressives shared this linear, Orientalist conception of assimilation from a 'benighted 'Japanese past to an enlightened American future. On the invitation of Nisei magazine *Current Life*, the writer Louis Adamic, quoting from his book *A Young American with a Japanese Face,* euphemistically referred to Nisei's racial differences as "disadvantages." Speaking through the voice of his book's protagonist, he told young Nisei that signs of difference were "perfectly normal but their being normal does not mean we need to put up with them. In America it means the exact opposite. It means we must try to overcome them [...]"[174] Indeed, Adamic' praise for Nisei assimilation went hand in hand with "observations on the degradations of Japanese immigrant culture."[175]

Whether stated from their own or from white vantages, Japanese Americans' belonging to the United States was always articulated through the lens of their racial difference. Nikkei elites identified Japanese racial difference as a way of asserting their belonging through emphasizing their racial compatibility with, and utility to, the American nation. To white Americans, Japanese Americans' racial difference was beneficial insofar as it upheld the vision of a pluralistic America, yet detrimental insofar as it hindered Japanese Americans' development as genuine, loyal citizen-subjects. While sympathetic at first sight, their words of praise naturalized the desirability of assimilation and the abject Otherness of racial difference. In the overlap of these two competing visions, we see unfolding a discursive strategy that simultaneously highlighted and diminished Japanese Americans' distinctiveness from white America, along with a normative ideal that commanded Nisei to reject and retain their racialized identity.

Internalization and Negotiation

Columns authored by Nisei writer Mary Oyama, better known by her pseudonym "Deirdre,"[176] reflect how these notions of race and citizenship were internalized and discussed by Nisei

[173] 'Francoise,' "The Second Column by the American Co-ed Dealing with Japanese-American Problems" *Nichibei Shinbun*, October 12th, 1937
[174] Louis Adamic, "The Nisei's Problem is Difficult but Natural," *Current Life,* p. 5, January 1st, 1941.
[175] Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, pp. 156-57.
[176] Ibid., p. 82.

themselves—at times complementary, at times conflicting. Responding to Oyama's call for impressions of the "typical nisei [*sic*]", one reader described "the average Nisei" as "a self-conscious individual with an inferiority to the hakujins [white people] and also to the Issei elders who[m] he fears."[177] Two days later, Oyama characterized the response as "a rather stiff criticism, but true to a certain extent." If "Johnny Nisei is not very much interested in learning the Japanese language," she continued, "Mary Nisei is too busy to ape the superficial aspects of American society."[178]

In an effort to warm Nisei youth to "the quest of more knowledge on things oriental," Deirdre admits that although she too was once a "typical, dumb average Nisei" with a close to negligible interest "in all things Japanese," she had become aware of "the importance of the knowledge we lacked" through her contact with the white world, and "how MUCH the [*sic*] American friends expected of us!" Oyama later supported her argument by presenting letters penned by white Americans encouraging Nisei to not "become too Americanized," and retain their "own racial individuality."[179] The loss of racial distinctiveness, then, was to be strenuously avoided if Nisei were to face the white world with confidence. In ways reminiscent of the "whitewashed" Asian American, the psychic image of Oyama's 'typical Nisei' emerges as the denigrated-yet-retained self: too "Japanesey" to be American, yet too acculturated to be recognized as Japanese; a ghostly signpost marking off the bounds of acceptable, and thus legible, behavior. At the same time, Oyama displayed a distinct ambiguity towards Japaneseness widely shared among Nisei. Recounting how she had "repudiated 'Japtown'" she described herself as "an expatriate from the average Nisei group and from all nihonmachis in general" who was "lucky enough [...] to get away," for it was "only too easy 'to become like the rest of the bunch.'"[180] As important as racial distinctiveness was, its abjection inhered the possibility of contagion, thus demanding constant vigilance and self-discipline. Said Oyama: "It requires a Nisei youth of considerable nobility to be a PART of an average Japanese town yet at the same time ABOVE it!"

Hence, as much as Nisei were urged to retain "their racial individuality," insufficient Americanization was equally stigmatized, and oftentimes derided using stereotypes typically held by white Americans. Consider the following complaint of an anonymous Nisei bachelor: "The

[177] "One Conception of a 'Typical Nisei,'" *Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, October 18th, 1936,
[178] 'Deirdre,' "Deirdre Expounds on Typical Nisei," *Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, October 20th, 1936.
[179] 'Deirdre,' "A Summary of Letters From Americans," *Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, January 14th, 1937.
[180] 'Deirdre,' "Don't Be Affected By Gossip," *Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, May 3rd, 1936.

trouble with the Nisei girl is that they're mostly all sort of poker faced [...] They are also all just alike—like peas in a pod—no variety in type." Blaming their parents for raising excessively "'otonashii'[obedient]" offspring, the author exhorted Nisei girls to get rid of their Japanese artifice in favor of the more "natural" qualities of their white counterparts.[181]

The 'Miss Anonymous' Debate

Similar negative views towards 'excessive' racial difference were shared by a high school student from Central Oregon, who, styling herself as "Miss Anonymous," took to the papers in 1935 to criticize "the Nipponese Youth in America" for their diffidence and speaking Japanese in public spaces. "Perplexed" by her peers' behavior, the author described going "around with one crowd just for the experience of what *they* [emphasis mine] really do." The objects of her almost anthropological curiosity, however, spoke in Japanese and "'snubbed her in everything'." "It embarrassed me so much," she wrote, "that I never tried such a stunt again." Drawing a causal link between Nisei insularity and white perceptions of Nisei as a "retiring, timid type of people who are afraid to venture forth and conquer the unnamed," the author emphatically opined that Nisei had better keep "the native tongue" at home. Although not meant "to denounce the nisei[*sic*]," the lengths to which the author went to distance herself from her fellow Nisei are hard to ignore. Citing her monolingualism, outgoing character and predominantly white social environment, Miss Anonymous emphasized she was not the "sort of individual" to whom the stereotypes applied.[182]

The article did not fall on deaf ears, as it initiated what turned out to be a heated, months-long debate. A little less than a week later, the following words of praise rang in the response from a person styling herself as Miss Anonymous No. 2: "I'm all for her. If all nisei were like this young girl, there wouldn't be any such thing as anti-Japanese [*sic*]." Believing that anyone "living on American soil" should speak English, the commenter lauded the original author's "well educated parents who are broadminded enough to do away with the Japanese language." Unlike the Oregonian Nisei student and her family, Miss Anonymous No. 2 wrote, the majority of Nisei were "American citizens in name only," evidenced as much by their language preferences as their religion: "It seems to me almost all of them are Buddhists. If they were one hundred per cent

[181] 'Another Bachelor,' "Another Bachelor Writes In," *Shin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, May 3rd, 1935.
[182] 'Miss Anonymous,' "A Nisei Girl Looks at Her Generation," *Nichibei Shinbun*, June 17th, 1935.

Americans, they would choose the Christian religion and not the religion of their Japan-born parents."[183]

Not everyone agreed, as subsequent responses demonstrate. While Miss Anonymous No. 3 from Capital City, California conceded that the stereotype of Nisei diffidence was "true in a way," she claimed this was not due to insufficient Americanization, but rather an "ignorance of their worthy phases [*sic*] of Japanese character and culture."[184] To support her argument, she shared her own feelings of shame of having "nearly forgotten" Japanese, and her inability to connect with her "own nisei cousins." Previously unaware "of the great racial history of the Japanese race," the author was now enrolled in language classes, and encouraged Miss Anonymous No. 1 to do so too, for the Japanese language had a "genuine social utility in helping to retain solidarity and moral control." Invoking the popular notion of transpacific biculturalism, Miss Anonymous 3 stressed the indispensability of bilingualism in their role as mediators "between the East and the West." As a balanced bicultural who liked "dance and tennis" as much as "activities which are more typical of the Japanese girl, such as tea ceremony," Miss Anonymous No. 3 expressed her pity for those "nisei who are actually proud of the fact that they cannot speak [...] the Japanese language," whose lack of cultural knowledge the author construed as a disservice to America. "After all," she concluded, "we may act and feel like Americans inside, but our exterior will always remain that of an alien. We should then be naturally expected to know something of the country of our parents."[185]

To compensate for their corporeal shortcoming, the argument thus went, Nisei had to live up to the racial expectations that their face elicited if they wished to avoid being neither Japanese nor American. Similar feelings of incommensurability were voiced by one "Explosion":

> "At times I have been embarrassed when my white friends have asked me for an interpretation or explanation because I had not been more advanced in my knowledge. Even some of my best white friends have encouraged me in my study of Nihongo—they think it's rather necessary and that it is a good thing. [...] as a nisei, one ought to be ashamed of himself, born of

[183] 'Miss Anonymous No. 2,' "Miss Anonymous Takes the Stand," *Nichibei Shinbun*, June 24th, 1935.
[184] 'Miss Anonymous No. 3,' "The Nisei Should Strive to Learn More of Nippon," *Nichibei Shinbun*, July 1st, 1935.
[185] Ibid.

> Japanese parents and not knowing something about the language, while white people whom I have read about [...] can read and write better than some of us. Doesn't that make your face red?"[186]

A week later, "Cary" from Petaluma defended the original article that had sparked the debate and advanced Japanese tendencies towards "isolation and class breeding" as "another trait which the white people discuss and do not approve." Highlighting her own acceptance by the mainstream California Alumni Association, she essentially blamed her peers for their own marginalization, telling them to "show more cooperation to our Caucasian friends."[187]

Cary's sharp words returned to the *Nichibei*'s pages in August, this time in rebuke of another Nisei reader who argued in favor of the need for Japanese associations, whom she accused of being "a true Japanese alien who is just supposing he is a true Japanese-American" and avoids all contact with whites. As for real Japanese Americans, Cary wrote, "we have one handicap: [...] our Japanese face but if we are white in our heart we will get along without racial prejudice." According to the author, "racial bars" did not exist, for if one was talented enough, "an honor can be bestowed by white people." Referring to her white friends' criticism of "Nisei Reader II," one of whom opined that the likes of Nisei Reader II "should be deported" for the sake of "the rest of the Japanese," Cary urged her readers to "eliminate anything" that might jeopardize white goodwill.[188] The original Miss Anonymous made her last appearance on August 19th. Her opinion unchanged, she concluded: "We are Americans, living on American soil, and carrying on the (supposedly) civilized lives of this America."[189]

Recalling Pyke and Dang's study of contemporary Asian American intraracial relations, the standoff between assimilationists and retentionists in the pages of the *Nichibei* bears a remarkable resemblance to the hostility between contemporary "whitewashed" and bicultural Asian Americans. If Cary operated from a subject position that assumed she was, in a sense, already white, Miss Anonymous No. 3 had resigned herself to her lot as a perpetual Other. While these divergent positions might suggest a binary between acquiescence and resistance, they have more in common than one might initially assume. Indeed, even if Miss Anonymous No. 3 did not

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[186] Explosion' No. 3, "Average Youth Lacks Initiative Says 'Explosive'," *Nichibei Shinbun,* July 1st, 1935.
[187] Cary, "Petaluma Nisei Defends Article By Anonymous Girl," *Nichibei Shinbun*, July 8th 1935.
[188] Cary, "In Response."
[189] 'Miss Anonymous,' "One Rises in Rebuttal," *Nichibei Shinbun*, August 19th, 1935.

see Japaneseness as negative, her pity for Nisei that did not speak Japanese betrayed her fealty to white expectations that linked phenotype to behavior, as well as the larger categories of race that classified the Japanese as essentially Other. Additionally, her efforts to convince her fellow Nisei to learn the language can be understood as a way to discipline her peers into the legibility of a clearly defined racial category, and away from the existential limbo of a purported cultural No-Man's land. Moreover, in accepting the truthfulness and undesirability of the 'Japanesey' stereotype to at least some extent, both Nisei debaters kept the rejected Other in melancholic abeyance, for it was on the sustained validity and reiteration of that racial stigma that their racial subject positions became, to use Ehlers' terminology, viable. Given the racial inflection of the roles they took on, the disciplinary castigation that both factions subjected each other to can be read as a "reenactment of interracial anxiety on an essentially intraracial stage."[190]

Conclusion

In the introduction I asked whether we could find forms of internalized racism in the language of the interwar Japanese American immigrant press. The answer to that question would be an affirmative one. Highly aware of their position as a racial minority, Japanese Americans responded to their imposed racialization by deploying a blend of distinctly American and Japanese conceptions of race and citizenship that in their minds offered them psychic and sometimes physical proximity to whiteness, and, more importantly, the meanings and rights that whiteness entailed. In the pages of Japanese American newspapers, Japanese and white voices coalesced to give shape to a Japanese American racial subjectivity in accordance with hegemonic ideals of Anglo-Saxon whiteness. Viewed from the angle of internalized racism, the immigrant press emerges as a "collapsed intersubjective and intrasubjective"[191] space of racial negotiation and disciplinary action, where the intrasubjective negotiations of race and identity *within* the individual racial subject mirror the intersubjective communication and negotiation that occurs *between* individuals. By this I mean to say that the intersubjective 'dialogue,' located within the aggregate of individual columns, editorials and op-eds reveal an intrasubjective expression, projection, internalization and negotiation of racial expectations, emotions, values and meanings that together

[190] Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*, p. 50
[191] Ibid., p. 18.

formed, to borrow from Fanon, a collective "repository of [culturally acquired] prejudices, myths and collective attitudes" of the interwar Japanese American community. Indeed, if the Japanese immigrant press shaped "the community's vision of the world," they did so in shades of white.[192] However, Nikkei claims to whiteness were not so much an identification with its phenotypic qualities, but rather "the discourse of social power."[193] Indeed, far from simply wanting to become Caucasian, Issei and Nisei responded to shifting definitions of Americanness and whiteness by infusing and adapting—in other words, refracting—those ideals with compatible concepts from modern Japan.

The analysis of the primary sources has also unearthed the melancholic and disciplinary functions of internalized racism. While the definition of the ideal Japanese American remained diffuse and contested throughout the 'Miss Anonymous Debate', the image of the abject was clear for both parties. In this way, the language used to fight out this disagreement, coupled with the mutual disciplining and surveillance, sustained and reproduced a Japanese American racial formation that reaffirmed the discursive injunction of Japanese Otherness and the cogency of the racial categories underlying it. Indeed, the Ideal Japanese American, while itself never sharply defined, only became legible in its juxtaposition to the denigrated 'typical Nisei,' thus becoming the screen onto which both ideals of Americanism and Japaneseness could be projected. Dependent on the abject image of the "typical Nisei" to retain its own conceptual stability, Japanese American racial subjectivity was as melancholic as the society it was located in. Moreover, the prominence accorded to white American perceptions and expectations in Japanese American considerations of race suggests that both Issei and Nisei were subject to a "sensitizing action" resulting from "contact with the white world," in which the racial subject's " actions are destined for the Other (in the guise of the white man), since only the Other can enhance his status and give him self-esteem at the ethical level."[194] Though it is hard to quantify how these discursive representations of internalized racism translated into their lived experiences, we might infer from the available written evidence that, to some extent, Nisei had internalized the discipline of seeing themselves "through the revelation of the other world."[195] In 1941, for example, one Japanese educator noted

[192] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 165
[193] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 94.
[194] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 132.
[195] Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, p. 5.

that Nisei in Japan often took on an "attitude of superiority as if they were going from a civilized country into an uncivilized one," causing an atmosphere of "hostility from the Japanese society."[196]

Finally, this thesis has also shown that, rather than being the mere result of a *deus ex machina* intervention of the US federal government, the Nisei wartime induction into the US national fabric should be seen as part of a longer, interactional and multidirectional process whose glacial undercurrents were already in motion during the interwar period, a process of psychological negotiation in which Japanese Americans themselves actively took part. Indeed, as we have seen, throughout the 1930s Nisei contended with the compounded expectations of the Pacific bridge ideal which celebrated their racialized identity, and whites' desire for a clearly legible racial subject distinct from whiteness. By navigating this balancing act, interwar Japanese Americans were, in a way, "managing the modern" in a period characterized by the "mutual penetration" of the US and the Asia Pacific.[197] Unfolding at the center of a transnational nexus of imperial and racial histories, Japanese American racial formation reflected, and was itself reflected in, the rapidly changing world of the 1930s, and tells the story of the oftentimes ambiguous and messy interplay between the interior lives of ordinary people and the epic currents of global history.

[196] "Blames Nisei's Superiority Air For 'Problems,'" S*hin Sekai Asahi Shinbun*, May 5th, 1941.
[197] Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 17.

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