

Afro-Orientalism; An Exploration of the
Relationship Between African Americans and
the Japanese from the 18th to the 21st Century

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Abstract

The study of Afro-Asian relationships, often referred to as Afro-Orientalism, is a subject that is not widely discussed. This relationship is a cultural and often political interaction of two vastly different cultures, that have found a common identity and connectedness between themselves even across oceans. My honors thesis will specifically address the Afro-Asian relationship between African Americans in the United States and Japanese people. The benefit of the previous research that has been done in this study is that it sets the foundation for Afro-Orientalism. Additionally, those who have explored in this area have explicated the specific problems that fester as a manifestation of this Afro-Asian relationship such as the World Color Line. However, it fails address the development of the Afro-Asian relationship from 1902 in comparison to the 21th century.

It is important to understand how the dynamics between cultures and their interconnectedness with one another develop with changing cultural ideologies over time. This paper will extend beyond existing scholarship about cultural politics and the critical problem of World Color Line. It will address the relationship in the early 20th to early 21st century to explore how new frame works of cultural understanding has changed the dynamics between the two cultures. To do this I will primarily look at Bill Mullin's "Afro-Orientalism", Gerald Home's "Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan, and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity", Tze-Yue G. Hu's "Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building", and W.E.B. Du Bois's "Black Princess", as well as the anime "Afro-Samurai" by Takashi Okazaki.

Overview

The focal point of this paper will be centered around the relationship between African American culture and Japanese culture and its interrelatedness. It will be constructed in three

parts. The first is to set the foundation Afro-Orientalism, and this Afro-Asian relationship in order to understand how the relationship began between African Americans and Asian people, and their motivations. In the second part I will have a more of an attentive focus on where the specific relationship between African Americans and the Japanese culture manifest. Lastly, I will show how this relationship has changed or progressed to today's time using more modern fiction and platforms like the media and anime. The essay will explore both the perspective of Japanese and African Americans in the 20th century as well as, both perspectives in the 21th century.

The beginning of my essay will discuss the African American twentieth century writer, W.E.B. Du Boise and how they and both the Japanese and other black nationalist have seen each other as an ally in the face of western imperialism, and white supremacy. I am also particularly interested in the historical background of changing cultural alliances during the height and history of western imperialism through examining significant wars such as the Russo-Japanese war, World War I, and World War II. I will show how this Afro-Asian relationship is indicative of a national culturalism, where African Americans considered Asian people as colored and thus wanted to band together even across borders, geography, and politics in order to fight corrupting and corrosive powers such as western imperialism and white supremacy. Moreover, it will explore the development of the Afro-Asian relationship with Japan who was at the time seen as, to African Americans, a great example of a powerful colored nation. This will then lead me into the next part of my essay about African's Americans and their relationship with the Japanese merging as one nation.

The following research will pertain to a) The foundation of Afro-Orientalism, and the Afro-Asian relationship between the Japanese and African Americans through looking at the major wars and b) the development of this relationship in modern times by examining different

mediums reflective modern day art and media, such as anime, and how it reflects the development of their relationship. This essay explores the dynamics of the relationship between African Americans and Japanese people through the study of Afro-Orientalism to learn of the development of the two cultures from the 1900's to the 21st century and how they came together through politics, culture, race-nationalism, art, and entertainment.

The objective for this paper, and my hope, is to learn of the relationship between African Americans and the Japanese people. This project is one step closer to that goal and will inform people on how other cultures that can be worlds apart and vastly different come together. This relationship is a great example of the many close relationships that have been established across the world. It can show us that we can create more strong bonds with other cultures, and that language, nor culture, or color is a barrier when connecting with one another. I believe that learning about different cultures is one step into expanding one's mind. This project sparks interest in a topic that is not widely discussed and it explores not just one culture but the interactions between two vastly different cultures and how they interconnect.

Introduction to Afro-Asian relationship

Afro-Orientalism is a discourse on both race and nation whose focal point centers on the relationship between African American's and the Japanese and how it develops based on global politics. Afro-Orientalism is initially ground within the perspective and thought of the western world. According to Bill V. Mullen, the author of a book called *Afro-Orientalism*, "imperialism, colonialism, and the making of capitalist empire" dominate in the conversation of Afro-Orientalism. Although Afro-Orientalism may have originally centered on those conversations I will expand Afro-Orientalism through different area's such as Du Bois revised Marxist ideals on race instead of class, and how it relates to and effects discursion in Afro-Orientalism as well as

white supremacy. Additionally, this paper will not only address the experience of African Americans in the western world but also the Japanese perspective on African Americans. This is in order to get a more encompassing knowledge on this close bond developed through a shared experience of feeling like a second class citizens. Also how through this related identity we open up this discussion of Afro-Orientalism and race as becoming a nation. Afro-Orientalism is a movement that sparks conversation about the “race” question, The World Line, and the ideals that many black nationalists had of taking steps toward the development of an independent colored nation and making it reality.

Through the study of Afro-Orientalism one can explore the closeness of how this relationship between African Americans and the Japanese have prevailed across geographical borders, cultures, nations, war, and politics towards a mutual goal. However, it also opens up an essential question or arguments of how and why these two independent people’s decided to come together. As well as if they have the same goals or if these two independent cultures have different agendas that so happen to come together. This movement gained traction and continued by black nationalist, such as Du Bois, and Japanese supporters of the African American agenda. There are many features that distinguish this relationship in Afro-Orientalism, such as the parallelism that both Africa and Asia are losing power, land, and identity to, or because, of western imperialism. There is also the struggle for both black and Asians to not be fully accepted nor full integrated into western society but also as “global citizens” (Mullen, XVI). According to Mullen it is also the “experience of black Americans and Asian Americans as indentured servants and slaves in the United States”, the idea to build a nation outside of the “American empire,” and recently “the efforts of scholars of African and Asian diaspora to speak of synchronous, rather than discrete, histories, of Afro-Asian encounter and exchange” (Mullen, 6).

Intentions and Motivations: History and Emergence of Afro-Orientalism

Afro-Orientalism is a unique and powerful intellectual movement that encompasses two vastly different identities that come together as one. Even though my focus concentrates on the importance of Afro-Orientalism from 1904 until the 21 century, it has its own origin story before that time. Many like Thomas E.R. Maguire who wrote *The Islamic Simulacrum in Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s Into Africa*, believe that Afro-Orientalism is almost like a subunit that derives from Afro-centrism or Pan-Africanism (1). Maguire uses a different term called “Afro-centric Orientalism” to describe the relations between Africa and the Islamic middle east. Afro-Orientalism is similar to Afro-centrism in the way that it points out the inconsistencies and unbalanced nature between race and discrimination. However, even though Afro-Orientalism may have been developed from Afro-centrism the term acknowledges not only Africa but multiple Eastern cultures and their relationship with African Americans. Afro-Orientalism will not just address these race problems of selectively African Americans but the race problem of the world, that both black and part of the Eastern world have to cope with. However as Afro-Orientalism was developing many pick out inconsistencies within the latter half of the term “Orientalism.” Orientalism itself is a post-colonial theory (Mullen, 17). Also, my paper will most closely resemble ruminates of the Hybridity theory, which is basically a cultural mixing, and poly-culturalism, which Mullen describes as the “impetus for many Africans and Asians to seek mutuality” which further distinguishes Afro-Orientalism from Afro-centrism which thinks of race in a one-sided fashion.

According to Gates, the initial and foremost flaw is that Orientalism is typically a western perspective that groups all of Eastern culture as one identity, thus being highly stereotypical of all cultures that reside in the East (1). Orientalism is not to be confused with

Chinese Occidentalism, which is not just the western perspective on Asia, but a combination of Asia's perspective of the west; with both components "interacting and interpenetrating" each other (XVI). It does seem very similar to the construction of this paper to where I will also dive into the Japanese perspective of the West as well as the African Americans perspective from the West of the Japanese. The difference, according to Mullen, is that Chinese Occidentalism is specifically related to China and the various competing groups within Chinese society (7). One can see that the difference between the two and although I look at the perspective of multiple Eastern cultures including China my main focus will be Japan.

It is important to discuss the origins of Afro-Orientalism and the relationship that will specifically be focused on African Americans and the Japanese, it is also necessary to view these nations separately to truly get a sense of what it means when they come together. Eventually the Japanese and African Americans come together in unison to fight towards a common goal, but how mutual is this goal? As mentioned before, Orientalism centers around western impressions of Asia and even though it is the African American perspective it still holds the values and outlook of the West looking at Asia. Even if the goal is to completely separate themselves from western imperialism it is still mainly centered from a *western* African American perspective. One is compelled to wonder whether these two nations have the same intention? To understand the motivation behind each identity one has to look beyond Afro-Orientalism and into each separate identity. In other words, if we want to understand the nature of these two nations that have merged looking at each separately might give us insight on why they come together because one will have a better understanding of each individual identity. As many westerners will be the target of my audience it might easier to understand why African Americans wanted to join a growing colored nation in order to escape their own oppression. Although this paper will focus

on that perspective in the following chapters, it is first important to explore this discourse of agendas and motivation and whether both nations have the same goals. In turn this chapter will focus on how the Japanese developed their personal and national identity overtime that lead to influence their decision for joining African Americans in their fight against white supremacy and western imperialism.

Although my focus for discussing Afro-Orientalism will start in 1904, there are some key developments that build Japanese national character and identity before deciding to join African Americans. It starts all the way back to the ending of Japan's sakoku (鎖国) (closed-country) the end of a period after Japan had spent more than 200 years in isolation. It was ended by Mathew C. Perry and the following U.S. navy ships with him that forced Japan to open their borders and start trading with them (Horne, 25). The reason that this is important is because it is the beginning of Japan adapting the ways and ideals of the western world and slowly they become more and more imperialistic. This factor will also be a major point later in the paper Du Bois (a main advocate for Afro-Orientalism) abandons Japan for reason that they stay on this road of imperialism later.

After Japan was forced to open their borders and they began adapting Western values, it eventually leads into the Meiji restoration. The best way to describe this is as the industrialization of Japan. "The Meiji restoration placed the island on the road to capitalism then imperialism, which has become clear at least by the 1890's and Tokyo's military assault on China" (Horne, 25). Although this is referring to something much later it hints to something that was set up way before the 2nd Sino-Japanese war, and that is an attack on China called the First Sino-Japanese war. Why is this important? Japan always had a difficult time in the past establishing its individual identity as an independent nation separate from China since Japan was

considered a subset of China. This feeling of a lack of identity as separate culture and nation is shown from one of Japan's insecurities in establishing its own language away from Chinese but struggling with having Kanji (漢字) which is Chinese characters adapting into the Japanese language. According to Tze-Yue G. Hu

The lingering shadow of China and the rest of a colonized Asia formed a disconcerting schizophrenic dialectic with the newly found identity of the Japanese nation.” “to the growth of Japan's national language, it was plausible to conclude that the Japanese people's eventual highly enthusiastic embrace of this new visual language was due partly to the desire to represent itself as independent of its former Sino-centric cultural inclination and to display overtly the shaping of Japan on a Westernization path. (17-21)

This accentuates the fact that even in something as simple but as big as language has a profound impact in how Japanese choosing to represent themselves and their identity. To them the use of kanji might have been considered a losing battle. Here is where more than 220 years of isolations come into play. Japan has over 200 years in isolation which develops highly nationalist and xenophobic ideas after this they are exposed to and adapt imperialist ideas. Japan is feeling confident as a nation especially with their new found knowledge and ideologies still China is still seen to be a big overpowering nation that threatens the individuality and separation of Japan. With the fear of China as a threat and all of those ideals they have acquired from the West, Japan decided to conquer. With both nationalistic and imperialist views, and Japan feeling invigorated with both knowledge and power, they don't stop with just conquering China. By 1904, just ten years later Japan goes to war with Russia which is called the Russo-Japanese war. Japan had victory but why is this battle important? This is the first battle recognize by important black nationalist such as Du Bois, because it proved that a colored nation can beat a white or Ariyan

nation, which at the same time debunked white supremacy ideas. This attraction is what jump started this discourse of Afro-Orientalism or at least towards the more Eastern-Asian countries.

Du Bois said,

“For the first time in a thousand years a great white nation has measured arms with a colored nation and has been found wanting. The Russo-Japanese war has marked an epoch. The magic of the word ‘white’ is already broken, and the Color Line in civilization has been crossed in modern times as it was in the great past. The awakening of the yellow races is certain. That the awakening of the brown and black races will follow in time, no unprejudiced student of history can doubt.” (Mullen, 2)

This is going to be a reason of why African Americans want to join with Japan because to them they are the poster child for debunking white supremacy and proving that colored people can do and be so much more and are not inherently less than and subordinate to the white man. But not only did it light a fire to the discussion of Afro-Orientalism but it leads to my main question- where do Japan's intentions lie and do they land with mutual goals of African Americans. If Japan is coming from a nationalistic and imperialist ideas who is to say that they don't just cater to African-Americans in order to dissuade them from the west in order so they can conquer it themselves. Later Du Bois expresses some of his fears with this speculation as well as with Japanese imperialism that they clearly exhibit later on. However, there is a counter to that argument. Japan has had major insecurities with identifying themselves as their own nation and to find their own unique identity. For Japan to invite this conversation about merging and combining powers, not just as a nation but as one race an identity, that shows openness and willingness to accept and welcome African-Americans. Although the other question still holds merit my paper will continue to talk about Japanese acceptance and their bond with African-

Americans. The next chapter will have a specific focus on the African-American perspective of Japan and Afro-Orientalism as it pertains to Eastern Asia.

Afro-Orientalism – A Colored Nation

In the previous sections I discussed the background history of Afro-orientalism and how the relationship between African Americans and the Japanese started from the consequences of Japan's "identity crisis. This chapter will focus closely on answering the big question of the motivations of both African Americans and Japanese people alike. It will explore the possible reasons that African-Americans found Japan to be appealing and vice versa. It will also address this idea of building a race-nation between these two very different cultures and how they stick together through global politics, and war, towards a larger goal of building an individual colored nation that has successfully dismantled white supremacy and western imperialism. In sum, this chapter will address the foundation of Afro-Orientalism after 1904, the idea of race as a nation, sympathies and motivations on both sides, and the embodiment of Afro-orientalism by the merging of those two race nations.

Afro-Orientalism is a discourse that encompasses topics of race, class, and culture. African-American and Japanese people have joined together, almost forming an entirely new nation, that has emerged and developed out of the need to find a way to fight white supremacy and western imperialism. This Afro-Orientalistic relationship between Japan and African Americans starts to really develop as both see themselves as second-class citizens. Both have a deep awareness of their lowered status, it is understandable that their goal is to try and attack the pinnacle of all their problems. In this case it is white supremacy, western imperialism, and some might argue also that is capitalism as well. This addresses one of the features of my paper I

mentioned previously concerning the characterizations of Afro-Orientalism and it is the way that they bond over the oppression and second class citizenship that they both feel.

There are many different ways that African American's show they will support pro-tokyo sentiment (Japan) to achieve these mutual goals and Japan also exhibits a lot of these supporting behaviors towards African Americans. However, it was not just Eastern Asians that had issues with western domination. In fact, a lot of the oppression that Japanese people were mainly seen in the lives of Japanese Americans who had to suffer through racism and oppression as the World Wars carried on. As early as 1892, which is after American forced Japan doors open, at the same time a court rules that Washington could refuse entry of any who were of Japanese origin. (Horne, 26). However, this fostered understanding as Japanese and Japanese Americans truly empathized with the experience of African Americans. African Americans like W.E.B. Du Bois were invigorated and hopeful to know that there was another nation that had felt the sting of white supremacy and that this colored nation was also powerful enough to overthrow such a system. Du Bois "hoped for just such radically imaginative (if more healthily assertive) linkages between and among people of color in response to white Western domination" and "...to declare Asia the fraternal twin of Africa in the struggle to decolonize the modern world" (Mullen, XII). African Americans really depended on this idea that a colored nation that understood the plights of blacks in American was powerful, and by joining them they could create a much larger colored nation that is detached from Western imperialism.

However, it was not only African Americans who wanted to team up with Japan in a one-sided relationship, Japan also want to join African Americans. Understanding the plight of African American's gave them sympathy towards them but they also recognized that there was something to be gained from this relationship. In a time where Japan is struggling with its

identity, western imperialism that imposes western ideals is a brick in the road, and at the time of the war it was all hands on deck for anyone who could join them. It was not only their fight against white supremacy that made discrimination towards the Japanese even worse in America during the World Wars. There was also the idea of the Japanese that African Americans know that they are mistreated, and therefore would be more inclined to leave a country that did nothing but oppress, and to serve a country (Japan) that treated them with respect.

Japan tried to sound as appealing as possible and it was enough to scare many of the white supremacist who thought that the white race was being threaten. “Japan had made aggressive overtures to win over the beleaguered U.S. Negro community and the Japanese military had made startling advances in the Asia-Pacific theater” (Horne, 2). This shows that already there might be some variation in motivations. Japan does relate to African Americans, and its inclination to join with African American may, at large, have to do with winning over more people to protect themselves in war. However, their treatment African American is an exponentially different experience than the treatment they receive by white America. Along with that many African Americans did feel hard pressed about treatment in American towards African Americans.

White America asking African Americans to join a nation that has only constantly oppressed them is in fact pushing it. All the while the Japanese made their stance look appealing. According to Gerald Horne, author of *Facing The Rising Sun*, “In short, pro-Tokyo sentiment was perceived as widespread among U.S. Negroes; this perception was propelled by guilty fear that this oppressed group would seize the moment of war for retribution and retaliation” (2). This makes perfect sense for an oppressed people, and Japan capitalized on the opportunity making it crystal clear that if African Americans joined them that they would be treated with respect. The

Foreign Ministry of Tokyo ordered that all captains cater to any African Americans preferences and while the white people had to wait onboard at the dock, black people were allowed to disembark first. Along with this, in Japan many African Americans were welcomed in hotels and cafés where white people were banned and it was said that many wouldn't mess with African American during the war, meaning snippers might look the other way. (Horne, 4-5) "The Japanese military "said they had come to liberate the Asiatics from the 'white devils,'" invoking rhetoric that had become increasingly popular among Black Nationalists, in New Orleans not least" (Horne, 6). The Japanese even took step to embody the language of African Americans, not just completing actions to satisfy them but truly getting into their mindset.

This type of bond goes beyond war and politics, and it shows how on both sides this relationship was out of necessity but also was for a common goal to get rid of systematic oppression by whites at that time, and to start the process of elevating the colored community. Together these bonds and close understanding of one another was so strong that it turned this war of politics in a war of race, coining a term I would like to call a race-nation, which is a nation that is built on the coming together of many, in this case colored races, rather than just politics or culture. What one will start to see is the merging of these two peoples into one nation, with all eyes against white supremacy and imperialism.

After World War I many African Americans were apathetic towards white America. When they came back after the war they expected to be treated as a citizen, respected, and given more rights or at the very least, the rights and benefits of a soldier. They got none of that. Instead riots like the Red Summer of 1919 took its place, along with the resurgence of the KKK, and harsh Jim Crow laws. It was no wonder that looking at the brutal treatment of African Americans that pro-Tokyo sentiment would sound appealing. The idea that another colored nation could ban

together and take down their oppressors sounded almost too good to be true and the Japanese knew the option to join them was enticing as well. Many white supremacists were weary of African Americans switching sides and becoming spies for Japan as many thought that this oppressed group would “seize the moment of war for retribution and retaliation” (Horne, 2). Even one of the leaders of the NAACP, Walter White admitted to receive funds from the Japanese government (Horne, 2). Jim Crow laws became even stricter during this time, in part, because white supremacist feared that their rule as a white race was being threaten. However, the African Americans bonded, and found similarities in being treated as a second class citizens that they did more than just come together as two separate people but merge together as one in the same.

There is still the question if the Japanese took advantage of this state of mind or if they could really empathize with African Americans. However, there is more evidence that the Japanese got a taste of the same oppression as African Americans, because to a white supremacist eyes colored is colored whether Japanese or African American. For example, in during World War II over 120,000 of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans were put in internment camps (“Japanese Americans”). Part of the reason that internment camps might be deemed necessary because, not only was it speculated that the Japanese or even Japanese-Americans maybe spies themselves, but also if they could unite blacks to be on their side there is a fear that not only America would fall in defeat, but that white supremacy would. This was the fear behind WWII becoming a global race war. Therefore, not only did they understand oppression, but it was known they could also have the potential to turn the tides of war. By 1945, there were more than 1.2 million African Americans who served in the war (“African Americans in WWII”), and over 33,000 Japanese Americans that served in the war, imagine if the races

banned together and started a race-war within the country ("Japanese Americans"). My speculation is that with the loss of numbers in soldiers, the increase of enemies, and with fighting two different wars, one being inside the country, it is likely that America would fall, and so would white supremacy.

It may have seemed far-fetched at first, but with this perspective is it understandable that white supremacist would fear that their race, way of life, and privilege was coming under attack. This was the potential power of this Japanese and African American race-nation; they had the ability to take down an entire powerful nation, and build an entirely new colored nation after overthrowing white supremacy, and western imperialism. Du Bois can see the power of building what he calls a Colored World, that will later be discussed. Moving alone, one might be thinking why do the Japanese who live in the east care about *western* imperialism. For one, as we discussed before Japan had a long history of trying to distinguish itself as its own nation and separate culture. However, when Mathew Perry and his ships came so did western ideals. Many Japanese people felt that things were becoming westernized, and that it watered down their Japanese culture. Therefore, it makes sense that a nation trying to establish itself, insecure of western imperialism, and others, taking over their way of life, among other circumstances I have already mentioned it would make sense that Japan would be more than willing to join in this fight against Western Imperialism, especially during the war.

Additionally, the Japanese have joined with African Americans, because as stated before they understand their plight. Even before the internment camps the Japanese were forcefully segregated, and treated like second class citizens. In 1892 the U.S courts ruled that "Washington could refuse entry to those of Japanese origin," and Saburo Hayashi had warned that the Japanese would be just "hated and mistreated" quite like black people had been treated in

America (Horne, 26). Later on as the population of the Japanese grew in California, there was a call for segregation of Japanese migrant in California schools (Horne, 31). Both the Japanese and blacks bonded through a mutual understanding of how oppressive and harmful white supremacy can feel, as they also felt the effects of discrimination of their own people. Banning together the term “Asiatic black” was produced/coined as a trope by black nationalist, and Du Bois called the two peoples, “fraternal twins” (Horne, 30).

Du Bois's Colored World; Afro's, Asian's, Colored People Unite!

Du Bois had a vision of a colored world separate from colonialism, white supremacy, and western imperialism. W.E.B. Du Bois is a black scholar, and a black nationalist who had made such significant contributions into the study of Afro-Orientalism. Du Bois believe that Asia was the missing piece to the equation of black independence. According to Mullen, it was not only freedom of the colored world but that Du Bois conception of Asia [is] the solution to “the riddle of the universe” proposed Afro-Asian mutuality and recognition as a cornerstone of global liberation” (3).

Du Bois started to focus on Asia as a powerful colored nation that can unite with other colored nation in order to form an independent Colored World in 1904. This is when Russo-Japanese war ended and Japan had victory, from then Japan was a nation capable of defeating other white nations. When we talk about this idea of a race-nation, and the coming together of the two identities to fight a global race war, Du Bois World Color Line thesis cannot be ignored. The concept of the world color line is vital to the study of Afro-Orientalism as it addresses the “race problem” of not just America or Japan but the entire world. As one can probably tell even though Asian people do have melanin they are considerably lighter than African Americans, many today do not even consider them to be colored, so how are they able to come

together as one race? Well one explanation is because the one drop rule in America, to where if you have one drop of African blood you are considered black still remained in the minds of people throughout World War I, so treatment of both races are very similar as stated earlier. However, Du Bois talks about the world color line to debunk colorism, which is the differential treatment of colored people based on the lightness or darkness of their skin, and sometimes culture. Many different cultures argued that there were blacker than the other. For example, Egyptians may argue that they are “blacker” than Ethiopians because they are the “first” Africans are people of color which is called The World Problem of the colored line (Mullen, 2). Du Bois’s world colors line attempts to show how all colored people are one and form a nation as one people, despite their origin or color of their skin.

There are many examples in which we see how Du Bois has demonstrated that the world color line works towards the benefit of all colored people. One way is building a contemporary colored world one which overthrows white supremacy and western imperialism that has kept all colored people down. Du Bois thought of it like this; the colored race, tired of being colonized, treated like a second class citizen, or overthrown, will rise up against their oppression which is the mighty intrusive white nations. According to Bill Mullen, this is called Afrocentric Marxism (6). Although personally I do have some quarrels with the terminology, as it implies that this battle of the colored against the whites, assumes that those who are colored all originated in Africa. However, some do believe in those ideals, it does raise some concerns on The Problem of the World Color Line, as it would accommodate those who believe they are purer in their colored-ness because they are closer to Africa, and would thus exclude those who might be more far removed like Japan. Du Bois, however, does not indulge in who is the “purest” during *this* time, instead he praises Japan’s victory over Russia as a win for all colored people that

effectively shows the world that a colored nation can be more powerful than a white nation. This win for Japan was important to Du Bois as he believed it debunked ideals of white supremacy and the better Aryan race, as it proved that colored people were not inherently inferior. He said

“For the first time in a thousand years a great white nation has measured arms with a colored nation and has been found wanting. The Russo-Japanese war has marked an epoch. The magic of the word ‘white’ is already broken, and the Color Line in civilization has been crossed in modern times as it was in the great past. The awakening of the yellow races is certain. That the awakening of the brown and black races will follow in time, no unprejudiced student of history can doubt” (Mullen, 2).

He predicted that World War II would be “a great coming war of races” (Mullen, 2).

Du Bois contributed much more than just the world color line. A concept that Du Bois is widely praised for is his theory of the double consciousness. It is a theory that a people, usually an oppressed people, have split identities that only when they merge can they truly be unified and freed. For African Americans this split identity was typically seen as their African heritage side and African American culture split between the identity of being an American. However, along with the world color line, Du Bois combines his concept of double consciousness to the colored people of the world being split, and that only when they come together can they become one nation; specifically, a nation that has defeat the idea of white supremacy, and is beyond the reach of western imperialism and colonialism. This is seen with Ethiopia, which in 1930’s was one the few African nations that was not colonized that Japan came to give their aid to when the nation had a confrontation with Italy (Horne, 41-42). However, Du Bois idea was on a much bigger scale it didn’t include just Africans or African Americans, but the Japanese, Chinese, Indian etc. it was all colored people that needed to form together to find their true place and

identity within this world, and create their own. Du Bois was struggling after “not the fusion of two purified essences but rather a meeting of two heterogeneous multiplicities that in yielding themselves up to each other create something durable and entirely appropriate to anti-colonial times” (Mullen, 21). My interpretation of this meant that Du Bois was not trying to create something that was of two “pure” identities, but rather to merge two “heterogeneous multiplicities” to create a new unified identity composed of colored people whose bond would be sufficient in ending white colonialism, supremacy, and western imperialism. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois talks more about the double consciousness and the idea of “one dark body” in the section of “Unreconciled Strivings” (Mullen, 21). However, on novel in which this idea of the double consciousness and a World Colored Nation is really exemplified is in Du Bois novel “Dark Princess”.

In the Du Bois novel *The Dark Princess* Du Bois addresses the creation of his dream of a powerful Colored Nation, the Problem of the World Color Line, and his thesis of the double consciousness. The main character greatly resembles Du Bois life story, how he was educated, where he was educated in Atlanta, and the values he had in education as a formal institution, but also in the study, and knowledge of cultures. Therefore, he ventures overseas to Linden, Berlin and there he finds a circle or secret organization of people with origins from China, India, Japan, and Egypt. Their goal is to coordinate all the darker races of the world, but it is not always as simple as that. According to Mullen, “one thrust of the group’s deliberation is to unite “Pan-Africa . . . with Pan-Asia” as a response to “dominating Europe which has Xung this challenge of the color line” (Mullen, 14). It is clear from the very beginning that the Black Princess will really hone in on, and address the problematic color line and the “cultural synthesis of peoples of color” (Du Bois, xviii).

Some of the most notable things that occurred throughout the novel was that when Mathew, the main character got off of the boat, after traveling to this not yet known destination, he said he was longing for brown skin, and seeing Lampur, and Indian women, is enough to “quench his thirst”, and he goes on talking about how her brown skin is so beautiful, “... came, suddenly, a glow of golden brown skin. It was darker than sunlight and gold; it was lighter and livelier than brown. It was living, glowing crimson, veiled beneath brown flesh” (Du Bois, 88). This goes to show that the main character does not distinguish dark skin only to African Americanism, but that darker skin can be a part of any race, and can be just as beautiful and captivating.

Even though Mathew embraces this idea of all the colored races coming together, this group that he meets has some contingences with the African American race joining their cause to create a powerful Colored World. One scene that is especially notable is when the two Chinese, Japanese, two Indian, and Egyptian people get together there is immediately an argument about who is actually “blacker”. The Egyptian man exclaims that he is the darker one, but the princess dispels those beliefs, and so does Mathew by saying it is about heart and soul that matter. Even then he does say if anyone is worthy it would be the oppressed American negro. “...whether we be bound by oppression or by color, surely we Negroes belong in the foremost ranks” (Du Bois, 21). I assume his logic is that African Americans are “blacker” because they have been oppressed by their race, thus causes them to have to embrace and bond over their race against the white races even more. However, shedding some light on the situation the Chinese lady says that “it is the dominating Europe which has flung this challenge of the color line, and we cannot avoid it.” I believe this is some of Du Bois voice coming in to where like this woman it is feeble to have the argument of who is black, yet it is still a problem that tends to be unavoidable.

Mathew goes through this struggle of feeling like he has to prove himself the blackness out of them. One scene when this occurs is when he feels a compulsion to start singing slaves hymns as if it was out of his control, but subconsciously it was a way to feel connected to his culture while proving himself and his culture to be worthy. He felt embarrassed at his compulsive outburst but even the guests were impressed by his hymns. ““It was an American slave song! I know it. How— how wonderful.” A chorus of approval poured out, led by the Egyptian” (26). Although, he does feel the need to prove himself he still feels like he is with his people, and feels hope that they can create this black empire.

Later on all the international colored people gang up on him threatening him to scheme against the princess from sending a note to America to consult with the black people there to join their cause. They say that even Mathew has to admit that his race is weak and that it is not their fault but they have been oppressed and enslaved for too long and that they were a losing hope and a losing battle. The Japanese person says “You know that your people are cowards... I am not blaming them, poor things, they were slaves and children of slaves. They cannot even begin to rise in a century” (Du Bois, 30). This address Du Bois’s Problem of the World Color Line as even though they are all colored there is still this culturalism, and colorism that is going on that one race culture is purer than the other. Along with addresses the world color line, and said problems the novel also incorporates Du Bois’s idea of double consciousness. According to Mullen, the princess and Mathew, commitment to the international proletariat also adds the specter of class consciousness to double racial consciousness. “Can we accomplish this double end in one movement?” asks the princess of their joint efforts to liberate black workers and achieve Indian home rule. “Brain and Brawn must unite in one body. But where shall the work begin?” asks Matthew (Mullen, 21). Black Princess was a poster book that present a nation

where all colored people can come together towards a common goal just as he wanted for his reality. Du Bois believed all colored people should merge together to create one body, and one true Colored Nation, and that only then could people of color find their place in this world separate from white supremacy and nationalism.

Since 1904 when the Japanese took their victory over Russia Du Bois was in support of the Japanese, as they represented a colored empire that debunked the notions of white supremacy and the superior Aryan race. However, there were multiple changes in Du Bois's opinion of Japan as the second war between China and Japan and WWII ensued. The beginning of the next war between China and Japan happened in 1937; it was called the 2nd Sino Japanese War.

What Japan has done is to take the European imperialism and use it in Asia against Europe. This is of course contrary to all the rules of the game... In the meantime, the thing that must impress us as colored people is that the chance for economic reform under Japanese imperialism is infinitely greater than any chances which colored people would have under the most advanced white leaders of Western reform, except in Russia.

(Mullen, 24).

Du Bois does not think imperialism is the way in fact he does say that in the future Japan will have to get rid of and "change the older imperialism learned from the West" (Mullen, 24). It is not as though he approves of imperialism rather he makes this exception of it for Japan in order to justify that it serves the greater good for all colored people. This quotes exemplifies that Du Boise believe Japanese Imperialism to be the lesser of two evils, but not only that it possibly sees it as a necessary evil in order to fight western imperialism. In other words, he fights fire with fire also stating that if they don't like this imperialism, and Japan taking over places maybe it will force them to look at themselves and leave some of the places they have colonized. Also, if

they don't open up some of the boarder Japan has closed off maybe they will think about the places and countries like Australia, and New Zealand that they have closed off to colored people (Mullen, 24). Even though Du Bois stance may sound wonderful then within a few months his opinion completely took a turn as he felt like Japan was becoming toxic in the way they exhibited some of the same sort of imperialistic behaviors of the west. During the war Du Bois has strong feeling that Japan's role in the war was twisted with the fate of all colored people. Therefore, in the after math of the war Du Bois has strong feelings to what he predicted for Japan and the observation of their imperialistic ways.

To me, the tragedy of this epoch was that Japan learned Western ways too soon and too well, and turned from Asia to Europe... The Japanese clan was an effective social organ and her art of expression was unsurpassed... But her headstrong leaders chose to apply Western imperialism to her domination of the East... If she had succeeded, it might have happened that she would indeed have spread her culture and achieved a co-prosperity sphere with freedom of soul. Perhaps! (Mullen, 27)

Du Bois also blamed Japan for being like the West in term of how it chooses to boost its economy on the back of Chinese's cheap labor just like the West did with slaves, and that "Western profit-making replaces Eastern idealism" (Mullen, 27). Like the quote above Du Bois blames the outcome of the war on how great nations suffer because of Western Imperial. He does somewhat blame Japan for being naïve in thinking they could use any form of imperialism for good and falling into its trap. However, he also does a full circle and centrally blames the root of this problem and *all* problems, which is in part western imperialism. In the after math of the war under "Chicago Defender column "The Winds of Time,"" and under the headline "Negro's War Gains and Losses," Du Bois wrote, "The defeat and humiliation of Japan marks the tragedy of

the greatest colored nation which has risen to leadership in modern times.”” (Mullen, 28).

Throughout all of this Du Bois never discards the idea of a Great Colored Nation nor the coming together of all colored people as one. Instead, he shares Japan’s tragedy as a loss for all colored people. To Du Bois, Japan and colored people rose as one and failed as one, but the damage had still been done.

After WWII the ideas of Afro-Orientalism mostly fade and disappear from the memories of most. Many will forget how African Americans, Asians banded together as one, and according to Gerald Horne, “After the defeat of Japan, many of the Black Nationalists who previously had proclaimed from the rooftops that they were “Asiatic” switched seamlessly to declaiming that actually they were not only “African” but more “African” than thou” (19). However, all is not forgotten. Many works that discuss the topic Afro-Orientalism fail to continue on to its effect on Modern society, or even if there is a lack of its presence. The next section of my essay will focus on Afro-Orientalism in the 21st century, where and how it appears in a newer form called anime rather than its sentiments being written in columns, as well as where we can see how it no longer influence through this medium called anime.

Afro-Orientalism: The 21st Century

Overview of A New Medium Called Anime

Japan is a powerful nation one imbued and blessed with unique and beautiful art and advanced technology. As Du Bois said “She had a fine culture, an exquisite art, and an industrial technique miraculous in workmanship and adaptability” (Mullen, 27). However, it is also a nation that was born struggling to find its culture and identity as a single nation separate from China. Japan has also felt pressure to separate itself from China in order to form a new identity. As mentioned before Kanji are used in the Japanese language but are derived from Chinese. According to Tze-Yue G. Hu, who wrote “Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building”, some

are critical as to whether Kanji causes “psychological cultural trauma” and has obstructed the original path in forming their language, and in their search for culture (18). One does not know if “kanji problem” as Hu refers it, is real, or “whether it is a constructed manifestation of the national identity issue among the Japanese.” (18). I believe this problem might have been in the minds of the people who struggle to find their identity, however, what matters is what the Japanese believe to be true to them at the time. At the time it was China who seem to stand in the way of cultural progress of Japan. The path to find Japan’s identity started with their 200 years of isolation, and it continued with the next two wars between the two countries as Japan became more imperialistic, and nationalistic. Japan had fought to establish their culture since the beginning, but with Japan’s growing technology they found a new form of language, and way of communicating that is distinctly for them. This new medium is called anime, a Japanese animated show. Today the word “anime” is highly associated with Japan, actually many argue that if it is not made in Japan it cannot be considered anime. However, even anime was not exempt from the effects of westernization, it is simply that Japan did not put up much resistance against it in the 21st century. According to Hu, “America’s imminent involvement in the Pacific warfront doubly intensified Japanese animators’ interest in the Disney model” (75). Anime studios like Toei animation even tried to imitate west by attempting to do more frames per second and embody the movements of western animation.

I believe that anime is an important visual medium to explore because it shows the progression of where Afro-Orientalism stands today. This section will be divided into two parts, one that represents how and where the Afro-Asian bond has stood strong, and the other where the peoples have become separated. The anime I will centrally be focused on is Afro-Samurai as I believe it is a good representation of how the relationship between African American and the

Japanese still remains. However, there is another side to Afro- Orientalism in the modern age, and that is that there has been a significant disconnect that also must be address and anime is a good way to explore how this distance manifest itself. I believe that both races moved away and started to get idea's that both were trading in their culture and staying content with westernization. To explore this, I will be referencing the public opinion, as well as the representation of African Americans in multiple anime and my interpretation of the possible stereotypes seen in anime.

The popularity of Afro-Orientalism might have fallen over the decades after WWII, but it is not dead. The relationship specifically between African Americans, and the Japanese has not died, although it might have a very different look than before. While the Afro-Asian relationship before was bonded with deep political undertones, and culture, in the modern age this relationship bond more over the arts, and culture, rather than politics. A medium in which the relationship between African Americans and Japanese people are exemplified is anime. Throughout the following pages I will show how anime becomes the connector between the people's. Moreover, I will start with how anime draws out the love and attention that African Americans show for part of Japanese art and culture. Then I will focus on the anime Afro-Samurai starring Samuel L. Jackson, as a means to shows how prevalent the Afro-Asian relationship is in modern times through the medium of anime, and what this reveals about Japanese respect and perception of African American in the 21st century.

A new bond over anime

Japan is considered a highly homogenized society, this is most likely and effect of closing their boarders for 200 years and keeping the same mindset of having to preserve its

culture by not letting in too many foreigners. For that reason, it may be thought by most that because African Americans are not highly represented in anime that they would not watch it, however in my opinion that could not be further from the truth. In America, anime is popular, and in my experience it is very popular among African American men. It is no surprise that African Americans would not be the majority of those who watch anime or go to anime cons, but there is still a good size audience that does entertain anime. Although there are no statistics out there that give the percent of African American people who watch anime (at the very least none I could find) there are still indications, other than my person experience, that show that anime is very popular among this population.

There are many examples that show anime widespread popularity. My examples will focus on the fact that many stars like anime as well, and have been open about it such as Chris Brown, who has two tattoos dedicated to characters in the anime “Dragon Ball Z”, and “Astro Boy”, as well as having been seen with a shirt from the manga and anime series “One Piece” (Maybe, 1). Other stars include upcoming star, Megan Stallion, and hip-hop artist Kanye West, whose music video “Stronger” was heavily influenced by the anime “Akira” (Barder, 1). Kanye West who also argued “No way Spirited Away is better than Akira... NOOO WAAAY...sorry was just looking at a youtube of top 10 anime films,” (as a way to prove his point) (Gordon, 1). And of course Samuel L. Jackson is yet another star who has had multiple huge roles in movie films based of comic books like the Avengers movies, “Iron Man”, “Captain America”, and so on, and has more relatedly played one of the main characters in the anime “Afro- Samurai” which I will be interpreting. As you can see these are mainly African American men, still it is important to show how widespread the idea anime has gotten in the African American community. Vice, a large scale media company that targets the young-adult audience, wrote an

article called “What Black Anime Fans Can Teach Us About Race in America” written by Cecilia D’Anastasio. The article talks about how SouljaBoy, a rap artist, dropped a song called “Anime”, and said “B*tch, I look like Goku”. Which he does not because the character is not black, however, “black fans breathed life into "black Goku," using Photoshop to darken the anime character's skin,” (Anastasio, 1). This goes to show a likeness for anime, but also, as I will discuss later, a want for a proper representation of black people in anime. The next few pages will focus solely on how Afro-Samurai is the perfect picture anime for showing what it looks like when the African American and Japanese person truly merge.

Afro-Samurai

Anime, and Japanese culture are intertwined, so many of the things that are shown in anime represent a lot about the culture, and its ways of thinking. Afro-Samurai is an anime that shows the merging of the two people’s. It is the poster boy of Du Bois thinking where two darker nations merge and create one pure identity, this is even shown with in the title “Afro-Samurai”. It should also be known that Afro-Samurai was written by a Japanese man, Takashi Okazaki, (“Afro-Samurai”). Afro-samurai is a popular anime, that is a completed five-episode series, along with a movie adaption, but I will focus solely on the series portion of the anime, in its relation to the study of Afro-Orientalism.

Buddhism is a popular religion in Japan. In the first episode and many episodes to come there is a congruency between the Buddha statue and the samurai, both Afro-samurai and his father. The camera would flash to a Buddha statue then to the samurai, to show the connection of it with the samurai. Even though the samurai are black, in this anime there is no discrimination, and this is an example that the dark samurai are a representation of sacred Japanese ideals and religion. Another thing one will notice fairly quickly is that Afro-samurai does not speak a lot,

however, according to Hu, Chan (Zen) Buddhism is where “the “unspoken” or that which is “understood” could be transmitted and contemplated under non-verbal and non-written circumstances” (Hu, 15). Typically, what these means it that the meaning of things is understood not by words, but by action. Many of the things that Afro-Samurai does is in silence, however, through his actions you can tell what he strives to do throughout his journey, which is yet another example of his sacred connection to Buddhism. Additionally, the first thing one will notice is that the current number one samurai is wearing the Japanese flag head band/ ribbon, and in connection to the Buddhist aspects that is connected to, it appears as if he is not only the representation of Japan itself not only by its flag but even embodies the whole of Japan and its belief system. The ribbons of the head band are very long; it almost reminds one of an extension of hair which long ago, having long hair was a symbol of the samurai’s honor- this idea might have originated in China but as I said before Japan started off as a subculture before expanding, and kept many of the same ideals. In many battles to come Afro-Samurai’s hair becomes his protector, which is not only the representation of Japanese honor, but is also symbolic of his ethnicity, meaning the symbol of his ethnicity is something in the anime that is praised. Moving along, both Afro-samurai and his dad hold traditional katana as further representation of the traditional Japanese samurai, along with traditional Japanese clothes called Hakama (袴).

The Enemy. There is no distinction between black and Japanese, they are one in the same, merged for a greater goal, and in this case the villain is a man trying to take the headband and rule for all eternity, however, he also represents the evils of the West, in other words westernization. The enemy has the same band as Afro-samurai, but it almost like a perversion of it since he is the enemy. The highlighted features of the man are his mutilated pale skin, blue eyes, cigar, and western style tattered cowboy hat. The enemy instead of using a traditional

katana sword he uses two revolver guns, and he has on cowboy riding boots with a metal object on the back called a spur, with flared pants at the bottom the type that country people/ and western riders are known to wear. When the enemy chops Afro-samurai's head off it is the hair and the Japanese banner, not the head but the representation of everything that symbolized him as Japanese and his honor, was flying in the air, reflected in the enemy's eyes. The child lay watching as the enemy picks up the decapitated head and steals the Japanese flag/head band. This symbolizes how the West has intruded, and stolen things that are important to the Japanese culture. Based on the guns, which we later see in a Japanese person's hand, this also shows how the West and its imperialistic ideals have manifested itself into Japan.

A different enemy, that worked for the main antagonist whom we just took a look at, even introduces himself by saying "I come from the land of the great weapon masters of the west." However, it is established that he is not from here and his headband had red Chinese characters on it which is indicative of Chinese who Japan also thought was a threat, and of course as the symbol of Japan, the Afro-samurai defeats him. Other enemies include those with heavy country accents, one which mimics an evangelical western preacher. They are the minions, and they listen to music with head phones, have robots, and computers, an indication of the modernization of westernization. These villains try to plan how to take Afro-samurai down by suggesting they send a great Russian warrior, indicative of the Russo-Japanese War that ended in 1905. One other man says "Rubbish! The one to defeat number Two (Afro- samurai) can only be Foo, the trickster assassin from China.", which is very telling of some left over distain of China, and is the most racist/ stereotyped saying out of the whole anime. Oddly enough one guy says that both warrior may be great but that they cannot trust foreigners as they might try to steal the headband for themselves. They create Afro-droid. His master tries to teach him to use his

essence to battle his opponent, this is reminiscent of Buddhist teachings. Also enemies have a Buddhist statue but it is all dress up in jewelry and gold almost like a mockery of the sacred religion (contrast to the sacred Buddha paired with Afro-samurai and his dad).

In the beginning there were blues songs playing in the background. When Samuel L. Jackson (Afro-samurai's "friend") shows up hip hop tones of music follow along. This is like the shift in what popular in music overtime from the blues to hip hop in African American music, to use this type of music shows a close look at African American music and culture, as well as privileges part of that culture as well, in fact the entire intro to the anime has tones of hip hop. To further extend the fact that there is no discrimination and that there is an appreciation of African American people a Japanese woman takes care of the wounded afro-samurai after a battle. She treats him with respect as she knows what title he holds and she doesn't seem fearful at all, even in America black men are feared. They have sex, which is huge because typically cultures exclaim they are for equality and don't mind the other until comes to interracial sex, but in this anime it is done as though they were both equals. In way this could represent a bond between both the Japanese and African American culture. A book which explores this world of this interracial marriage, specifically between a Japanese woman and a black man is *Bedtime Eyes* written by a Japanese author Amy Yamada. She gives up her own life by choosing to protect afro-samurai in the end.

Another place where we can clearly see that Afro-samurai is one with the Japanese people is in his dojo. As a kid he joined a dojo and his master told him "Do not worry young Afro in my dojo we are all wounded orphans. You are among friends," then demands his students to treat him well. His master has no quarrels about his race, but he specifically says they are all equal in their "woundedness" and that he is welcomed. This is just like how the Japanese

would welcome African Americans into their communities and country. Under the guidance of his master did Afro-samurai grow and according to Ho, "... Zen [Buddhism] stressed the value of intuitive enlightenment and prolonged guidance of a Zen master," (Hu, 30). Only under his master did Afro-samurai learn the art of the dojo, how to fight, and what honorable warrior ideals look like. What makes the afro-samurai character unique in the students and master's eyes (all of which are Japanese) is that he has an afro. He is defined by that unique characteristic, which is how he get his name, but it is a symbol of who his character is, and not in any derogatory way, or as a way to separate him from the crowd as he makes many friends whom treat him like their own family. It is also afro-samurai chooses to identify himself as well, he even gets mad when his companion says that he tries to imagine him without the 'fro'. This is the first time we see any expression from him as an adult (results from enduring a gory life). This is very telling, the Afro samurai it must feel like a jab to his identity, what makes him unique, and a symbol of his identity. In the end Afro's witty friend (Samuel L. Jackson) that was along his journey the whole time was actually Afro-samurai's subconscious. He was torn apart from him and Afro-samurai now has to embrace his full self in order to defeat his enemy. His ultimate says "It's time for a man to use absolute power for the cause of ultimate peace." This reminds me of something he also said in the beginning "I will rule this world as God himself," this reminds me of how Christian Americans would dominate and take land under the guise of religion, and that they were doing it in the name of God. Of course in the end Afro-Samurai kills the enemy, but he even in the end he never leaves the life of a samurai, as that is connection to his father and to the Japanese headband.

Even after WWII Afro-Orientalism, and it supporters never full burned out, it burns bright even today. We can see this in many public declarations for anime which is a huge part of

Japanese culture, and usually leads people into becoming more interested in the culture itself. For African Americans, the connection with Japan stays prevalent, and as shown in Afro-Samurai the connection with African Americans as well. Vice conducted an interview of the black attendees of an anime convention. When asked the question “To you, are there parallels between samurai culture and African-American culture? ,” the attendee, Aaron Taylor, told them “There's a lot of honor in both. Samurai culture and African-American culture. You put your family before everything. With Bushido [martial art], you don't go out and kill for random reasons. You use your sword to protect. You don't do random, vicious, violent crimes for yourself in African-American culture. If you do, you have to do it for your family.” (D’Anastasio).

A change in Afro-Orientalism

The connection of Afro-Orientalism may exist today, but one has to admit that it may not be as prevalent as it used to be. The belief is that after the war things just died out as the dream of a Colored Nation faded away. However, I believe there are some underlying issues after WWII that haven’t been discussed. I believe that both cultures believe that the other was becoming too westernized, or at least complacent in it. For the Japanese, it may have been seen that African Americans went into their old ways by being complacent with Western Imperialism. To African Americans it may seem like the Japanese adapted the western ways, as per the opinion already announced and feared by Du Bois mentioned early in this text. To some extent this is true, in the club that I attend, called “Japanese cultural and language club”, there are multiple panels that go into the extent into which Japanese was westernized, through anime, or through clothes, culture, politics etc. However, even beyond my experience we can explicitly see some of the western views and even racism, and stereotypes come through in anime. According to Vice, “the only black character in Dragonball Z was a puffy-lipped slave named Mr. Popo (later recolored blue

for American television)” (D’Anastasio,1). Many believe that the characters in anime are white-washed, and that “Japanese characters used to be drawn with more “Asian features” until “contact with the West”” (Consuming anime,1). Many also blame, as I mentioned before, the bad view on foreigners watering down the Japanese culture, as a reason to why they are underrepresented in things like anime. ““There just isn’t a lot of ethnic diversity in Japan because of their traditional views on immigration and foreigners. We don’t usually see many black, brown or red characters, unless they’re minor or are villains...” (Consuming anime, 1) This comment shows how stereotyped anime can be and even where and how it originated. It connects to that point that because of isolation Japan has homogenized views and thus does not think to represent more variety in cultures and race. I have also watched anime that is highly stereotypical of African Americans. Fairy Tale, a popular anime that was released in 2011, is probably more diverse than most, however, out of the eight black characters that appear only one of them is not a villain. Additionally, seven out of the eight are side characters, and the one that is not is one of the main villains in the plot line. I sat uncomfortably as one of the black characters was so stereotyped it hurt to watch. A black man dressed in disco attire who was over exaggerated, and could not stop dancing throughout the entire time. These are only the black character I remember only to do some research and find there were a few more, but all were unmemorable and of course villains. Many other anime follows this troupe. However, all hope is not all loss, anime has some promising aspects as well as have its own misgivings like many other things. It is important to understand that this is not indicative of all anime or can show the complete scale of the relationship that Japan has with African Americans. I felt that it was important to address, a side of this relationship that was not so pretty, if we bury it under the ground we can never then address it, in order to stop it or move past it. Just because there is this unfortunate situation exist

in anime does not mean the same things don't happen in the African American community, although it is much harder to prove because like the Japanese, African American television shows also tend to be homogenous. Like every relationship, it has its ups and downs, its pros and cons, we should not forget how deep this relationship actually goes, as the connection between them has grown through many decades.

Conclusion

We can see the deep and rich roots in which the relationship between African Americans and the Japanese runs deep. Together the two people have found a way to connect oceans away. They both found similarities in their ways of life and their treatment. They bonded together over mutual trust, and understanding. They understand each other and their second-class citizenship imposed from the west to classify them as such. They fought those notions, and together they fought against white supremacy and western imperialism. They bonded over cultural politics, created a race-nation, and shared a common dream of building a large colored nation, that included all colored people, and were separate from western imperialism and notions of white supremacy. They addressed the Problem of the World Color Line, and even though it still exists the two nations brought it into the forefront of people's minds, and it the question of colorism still exist today and is still widely being discussed. There is a past of interwoven fates, and intertwined histories. The topic of Afro-Orientalism still exist today, is embedded in the minds of those who explore its history and who want to discovery how the cultures of the west Africans American and the Eastern Asians intertwine. However, it mainly exists today through a different medium. It is not tied to politics, or written in columns, but instead it shows up on the screens, and tweets for millions of people to see. In the modern age the medium has switched to anime, a culture staple of the Japanese culture. Although it only one part in the vast exploration of

Japanese art it is important one and one that is very popular. This paper not only travels across time, but it travels across perspective. In this essay I not only get into the perspective of Western African Americans but the Eastern Japanese and partially Western Japanese perspectives as well. One may ask if this if this paper a work of Occidentalism? This is a question I have debated while writing my work. On one hand this Occidentalism only has had reference to Chinese Occidentalism. However, on the other hand this is not tied down to only Afro-Orientalism, as this paper will not just pertain to African American perspectives of the West, but also what Asian (more specifically Japan perceives the West to be). I don't have a yes or no that can be stated so bluntly, however, my goal in writing this essay was to embody both perspectives so we could truly get a sense of how they come together but most of all why they come together. I wanted to know what were the motivations behind both people's as I explored in the beginning of my work. The history of the relationship between African Americans and the Japanese run deep and I can't wait to see where it continues to go from here.

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