

University of San Diego

Digital USD

---

Ethnic Studies Student Zines

Department of Ethnic Studies

---

Fall 2020

## A Brief Journey through Asian American History

Jordan Rahe

*University of San Diego*

Julian-Ross Fernandez

*University of San Diego*

Jefferson Kiyasu

*University of San Diego*

Dylan Latham

*University of San Diego*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/ethn-zines>



Part of the [Asian American Studies Commons](#), and the [Ethnic Studies Commons](#)

---

### Digital USD Citation

Rahe, Jordan; Fernandez, Julian-Ross; Kiyasu, Jefferson; and Latham, Dylan, "A Brief Journey through Asian American History" (2020). *Ethnic Studies Student Zines*. 13.

<https://digital.sandiego.edu/ethn-zines/13>

This Zine is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Ethnic Studies at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethnic Studies Student Zines by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact [digital@sandiego.edu](mailto:digital@sandiego.edu).

# **A Brief Journey Through Asian American History**



By Jordan Rahe, Julian-Ross Fernandez, Jefferson Kiyasu, and  
Dylan Latham

## Introduction:

In order to understand the complexities of the Asian American experience, readers must be able to comprehend how the past has built a foundation for the treatment of individuals both inside and outside of the Asian community. Based on various academic editorials and books, we have analyzed<sup>2</sup> what we believe to be the most valuable historical facts, stories, and ideas and presented them in a way that provides the most important information along with our perceptions of each topic.

This compilation of articles looks to bring largely unknown issues to the forefront of reader's minds, in a pursuit to create a better understanding of what it means to be Asian American today. The importance of historical events in how they affect modern society, social norms, and race relations is more important now more than ever. Beginning with a commentary on the history of Chinese exclusion in California during the late 1800's, the pieces that follow touch upon multiple historical events related to various races within the Asian community including Japanese internment, the Revolutionary War in the Philippines, the treatment of Korean immigrants following the Korean War, and much more.

The existence of intersectionalities between the Asian American identity and numerous other identities cannot be overlooked. All of the issues presented have an influence on both the African American and LGBTQ+

communities. We kindly ask readers to not only keep in mind how these articles have shaped their own lives, but also to remember how these acts of injustice have changed the perception of all other minorities.

The main theme of this project can be encapsulated in a quote from legendary Japanese clothing designer Yohji Yamamoto:

“With one eye on the past, I walk backwards into the future”

## Table of Contents:

Title page.....	1
Introduction .....	2
Introduction (continued) .....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
Deep Rooted Racism in California.....	5
Filipino Bodies, Lynching, and the Language of Empire.....	6
Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-Century	
Black America, Japan, and Okinawa.....	8
Japanese American Patriotism .....	9
Save the Date!.....	10
Aloha Vietnam: Race and Empire in Hawaii's Vietnam War.....	11
Contradiction in the Pacific Basin.....	13
On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous .....	14
The Model Minority Myth.....	15
The Citizen and The Terrorist.....	16
The Export of Filipino Labor.....	17

# DEEP ROOTED RACISM IN CALIFORNIA

When Chinese immigrants initially began to settle in California their lifestyle, cheap labor, and sexualized stereotypes turned them into a threat to the “real Americans” living there. This fearful mentality quickly turned into action by way of unjust laws that banned Chinese citizens from entering the country, and took away the rights of those already in the US. These laws were set in place early in the history of the country and set the tone for how Asian Americans would be seen for hundreds of years after. Below are various examples of the early laws that lead to the unjust treatment of Asian Americans.

In 1850 a California state law initiated a foreign miner’s tax. This affected the lives of all foreigners, but had an especially large impact on Chinese miners. By 1870, the state of California collected 5 million dollars in taxes from the Chinese alone which equaled a quarter to half of California’s entire revenue. The Chinese contributed heavily to the state yet were still seen as unequal. The Chinese were then blamed for the scarcity of jobs during the depression at the time.

In 1854, Chinese were officially granted unequal status along with other racial minorities when the California Supreme court ruled that Chinese immigrants, African Americans, and native Americans were prohibited from giving testimony in cases involving a white person. This was one of the starting points for systematic racism towards the Asian population as well as further building upon the foundation of systematic racism towards other minority groups as well.

February 28, 1882 Senator John F. Miller of California introduced into the US Congress a bill to exclude Chinese Immigrant laborers from the country.

The alienation of the Chinese on U.S. soil grew violent among the white community in one instance in 1871 where 500 LA citizens attacked and dragged the Chinese suspects out of their homes and lynched them in retaliation for a policeman being shot by a Chinese Suspect.

Due to laws granting unequal rights, a divide was created among U.S. racial populations. The foundation in which the U.S. built the country upon, created stigmas and biases towards certain racial groups, not just Asians, but especially African Americans as well. These early laws and behaviors set an everlasting stigma on these certain groups which are unfortunately still present today.

By Jordan Rahe, Julian Fernandez, Jefferson Kiyasu, and Dylan Latham

---

# “FILIPINO BODIES, LYNCHING, AND THE LANGUAGE OF EMPIRE”

---

NERISSA BALCE

---



## In a Nutshell...

With the Filipino- American war, increasing Filipino immigration into the US led to a long period of anti-filipino attitudes. White Americans viewed Filipino farm workers as economic threats to the white man and sexual threats to the white woman.

Black journalists during the war knew that the lynchings of blacks in the south would be the same sort of violence inflicted on Filipinos. This speaks to what the author introduces as a sort of ‘reciprocity’ of racism and violence. Many journalists saw the war as a push for the whites to subjugate, racialize, and control another dark race. All in all, the racism and lynchings of blacks in America fully parallel the racism against the Filipinos.

Anti Filipino attitudes in the US during the war showed themselves as viewing Filipinos as a backwards group of people almost like savages. They were seen as a people that needed some sort of fixing. The imperialist



approach by the US to christianize and democratize the Filipinos they colonized their area.

Balce uses other authors' writings to demonstrate the extent in which Filipinos were brutally beaten down by whites and how this sort of treatment to a dark race is not a new idea to white Americans by any means. Right now is obviously a very fragile time as Americans are beginning to recognize that this same sort of racism and brutality that Balce speaks is not gone. She seems to have hit the nail on the head when she talks about "the presence of the past."

Dylan Latham, Jordan Rahe, Julian-Ross K Fernandez, Jefferson Kiyasu



## Significance of Onishi's Text

This text is invaluable in its key outlining of the events crucial to evolution of transpacific antiracism. Onishi evaluates Du Bois's writing and the importance of his challenge. There are countless examples of how the communities of post-war Japan, Black America, and Okinawa are connected. These connections and similarities and in both thought and experience helped shaped Afro-Asian solidarity.

## Relevance Today

In the 1900's Du Bois strived to provide arguments convincing enough to expose and critique white supremacy. White supremacy has surely been exposed today, but it persists. Many of the problems being faced in our country originate from the systematic systems of oppression that have been built into our country from historical ties of white supremacy. Du Bois's argument, while flawed brings out certain points that can be utilized in our current environment surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement. Realizing the similarities that minorities share with each other in regard to their struggles and aspirations could play an important role in mobilizing



## Key points regarding the interconnectedness between Black radicalism and postwar Japan and Okinawa

- The similarities between these three communities super common thoughts and social practice.

- There is a commonality between Black Americans and imperialist Japan in both social struggles and political thought.

- Black American's acknowledging Japan's race-conscious defiance is an important start to further common ground.

- Du Bois's pro-Japan defense is a critical origin of Afro-Asian solidarity

- Du Boi's pro-japan ultimately failed to capture a successful criticism that brought light to the the potential interconnectedness of race and empire in attempts to critique white supremacy.

However, after years of his challenge being partially ignored due to the conceptual limits of others all the way into the 1940's, his argument gained some traction. In August of 1945 when the two atomic bombs were dropped Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Du Bois's challenge began to resonate with those in Japan and Okinawa.

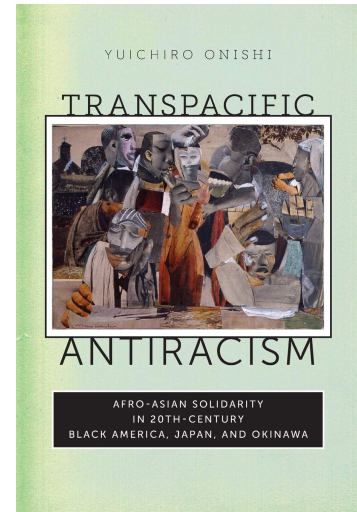
- Kokujin Kenkyu no Kai (Association of Negro Studies) swathe possibilities that could emanate with the current climate under Du Bois's challenge. They analyzed the consequences and ramifications of responding to Du Bois's challenge. What would be needed to create an enhance egalitarian society that emphasizes human and just actions. These thought provoking origins helped to spark the discourse of Black radicalism throughout post-war Japan.

- Colored Internationalism relied on efforts of communication to appeal Black radicalism to postwar Japan. These efforts include reproduction of texts critical to appeals of Black radicalism, translated into Japanese.

- Chapters together serve to bring light to the "culture of liberation"

- This demonstrates how Afro-Asian solidarity efforts revealed similarities in both communities. Namely, striving for common humanity for all within the reality of emancipation. During this time period (twentieth century), the culture of liberation persisted across all three communities (Black America, Japan, and Okinawa). Anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and antiracist ideologies shared across all three communities held tremendous support

- Importance of transpacific strivings as it relates to its role in the reshaping of Black radicalism by emphasizing the initial promise and need to guarantee human liberation.





# Japanese

# American Patriotism

Despite being forced out of their homes and placed into Internment Camps, Japanese Americans remained some of the most loyal and patriotic American citizens. With positive attitudes and a desire to assimilate to American culture, they dealt with unfair treatment and questioning with the dream of acceptance.

## **Internment**

On February 19, 1942 president Franklin D Roosevelt signed executive order 9066 that placed Japanese Americans in internment camps. The majority of them went peacefully and remained optimistic during the initial days of internment. These hopes quickly faded as the harsh conditions eventually killed 1,862 prisoners due to disease and suicide.

## **Loyalty Questions**

In 1943, the War Department and the War Relocation Authority joined forces to create a bureaucratic means of assessing the loyalty of Nikkei, or Japanese emigrants and their descendants living outside Japan. These questions were to gage the Nikkei patriotism towards America; however, the questionnaire raised ethical questions as it was designed to aid the War department in recruiting Nisei into an all-Nisei combat unit. This put the Nikkei in a tough position because the WRA gave an ultimatum in the form of this "Loyalty Questionnaire." This ultimatum being: join the armed forces to prove your loyalty to America, or don't, and let the government assume you have no loyalty towards America. To make this questionnaire the only means of proving loyalty would cause a completely skewed interpretation on the Japanese's actual loyalty to the U.S.

## **Japanese American Soldiers**

Over 600 Nisei soldiers were given honorable discharges because of strong distrust from their commanders. Those who remained in the army were primarily sent to Camp Robinson in Arkansas and given very low level jobs. Their guns were taken, and only menial non-threatening tasks were assigned to them. Many of these soldiers remained loyal to the United States army through this unjust treatment and the aura of mistrust from other soldiers.



# Save the Date!

**DISCLAIMER:** Due to the militarization and chrononormative framing of Korean American immigrants and long lasting cold war policies, we cannot currently provide a date for when the effects of the Korean War will discontinue impacting the lives of Korean American and the global political landscape.

**ADDITIONALLY:** All non-white plus one's must fit within the model minority frame, meaning they must be anticommunist, hardworking, passive, and obedient. All others will not be welcomed, and will likely face scrutiny for not fitting into the traditional American cellular family model.

## *How We Met:*

With between 23,000 American Soldiers occupying the 83 designated military bases in Korea in the mid 1900s, this allowed the intermingling of U.S troops and female Korean civilians. There were many opportunities for the U.S soldiers and Koreans to meet each other as evolving commercial districts know as camp-towns or “gijichons,” in Korean, crystallized around U.S military districts. These entertainment businesses allowed spaces for gathering and leisure for U.S soldiers in which some recognize as Korea’s red light district. During the 1960s, approximately 30,000 female Korean entertainment workers were licensed with health certificates to be permitted to work in the camp-towns. This; however, wasn’t the only way for U.S and female Koreans to meet. In many other cases, civilian employment on U.S bases for Korean women consisted of translators, teachers, secretaries, accountants, and cooks. Because of such close quarters, this allowed space for intimate relationships to begin. When all was said and done, 84% of the 14 thousand Koreans who entered the U.S between 1951 and 1964 were spouses or “GI” children. Additionally, between 1950 and 2000, nearly 100,000 Korean women came to the U.S as wives or fiancés. This militarized migration of Korean culture to the U.S between the mid 1900s and today had significant impact when one considers the making of a contemporary Korean diasporic presence in the United States.

# ALOHA, VIETNAM: RACE AND EMPIRE IN HAWAII'S VIETNAM WAR

SIMEON MAN

## Effects of Hawaiian militarization:

Military land use on O'ahu grew rapidly and in 1958 people began to notice that it would start encroaching on plans for urban development so the solution was to build a collaborative environment in which military and civilian peoples can both prosper. In decades following, massive construction projects went under way (ie. wakiki beach) that would allow for the rapidly growing industry of military tourism. This prompted U.S. military training to be brought into question



## Kara Village

- Difficult terrain within the training grounds helped prepare troops for Vietnam as the terrain they trained on was far more difficult than any terrain in Vietnam.
- In order to further prepare, the army constructed replica villages to prepare soldiers. These series of villages included huts with natives inhabitants and together formed Kara village.
- Kara village and other villages alike proved to be crucial in soldiers preparation for jungle and Guerrilla warfare.
- The replicas prepared soldiers by putting them in the right mindset. This mindset included racializing their enemy, approaching their whole surrounding as a target of violence, and affirming the unknowability of war.
- Kara Village represented the colonial violence at the heart of Hawai'i's liberal modernity

## Importance of Hawaii to the U.S. war in Vietnam

Hawaii played a significant role as the staging ground for US especially when it came to securing the rest of the world from communism. Kara village served as site for advanced infantry training for soldiers prior to being deployed into war. The Idea of Hawaii's addition to the united states did not come as a result of wwII, but it was much older. Hawaii had always linked the US to Asian markets via trade routes. In the 1960's following the declaration of war (the Vietnam war) reaffirmed Hawai'i's national purpose as a bastion of US military power in the Pacific

## U.S. Military Racialized Practices

Members of Hawai'i's National Guard, consisting of a large proportion of Natives and Asians from Hawai'i proved to be imperative to the military's racialized training practices. These members were often asked to play roles of both sides of the war games. U.S. military capitalized on these members value pertaining to their perceived racial differences. It was simply the presence of racial difference that allowed them to stand in for the "native" body as a target of violence. Asian and Hawaiian soldiers served a dual function during this time. They were a symbol of liberal inclusion, but at the same time they also represented the embodied site of violence.

### Operation Helping Hand:

Operated on the idea that if statehood had secured Hawai'i's "freedom" for the age of decolonization by incorporating its subjects into the nation-state, then the soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth could help do the same for the Vietnamese. It was an idea that the Vietnamese could be won over through the practice of civic action which include acts from the Twenty-Fifth such as putting stake in the hand of the people of Hawaii. The operation used Hawaiian core beliefs and ideals to motivate Hawaiians to lend support via collecting donations for soldiers in Hau Nghia (referred to as "an extension of ur aloha") The drive raised over \$800,000 worth of goods. These gifts were truly an instrument of pacification that had impact in changing "villagers" attitudes towards the South Vietnamese government in a negative direction. Simultaneously, Operation Helping Hand made a racialized war of aggression against the Vietnamese seem an impossible reality to Hawai'i's citizens. In reality Operation Helping Hand served as a cape to hide the fact that the US Army had cultivated Hawai'i's own "jungles" to prepare soldiers for their unruly encounters in Vietnam.



### My Lai Massacre

The same troops who used Kara Village to prepare for deployment saw a different reality in their objective in 1968. Soldiers were given order unlike what they expected and were told to "lay waste to the entire area". On March 16, 1968, Charlie Company killed anybody and anything in sight. Men, women, children, and livestock included. An estimated three hundred to five hundred civilians were murdered which sparked the U.S. antiwar movement. This event brought controversy to racialized dimensions of US military violence and eventually opened the window for public officials to condemn U.S. policy. Despite the violence and inhuman acts direct ties to Hawaii, Hawai'i's role in the incident was obscured entirely in public discourse. However, activists in Hawai'i used this information to spark a political insurgency.



Dylan Latham, Jordan Rahe, Julian Ross Fernandez, Jefferson Kiyasu





# Contradiction in the Pacific Basin

Despite the nation's origins of anti colonial sentiment from the Revolutionary War to supporting the Philippines in their fight for independence, the United States quickly did a full 180 degree turn and became the very empire it sought to rid the world of. Asian Pacific islands were seen as opportunities for the United States to capitalize on their location for both military and economic interests. As most colonial endeavors go, local communities were overpowered and their recourse were drained to benefit the oppressor.

The unjust dynamics of US imperialism took two different forms through the treatment of locals on the islands, and through the treatment of refugees in the US. Since the Spanish-American war in 1898 the U.S had colonized Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, Eastern Samoa, Wake Island, Hawaii, and the Philippines in efforts to convert these lands into strategic sites for advancing American economic and military interests. These colonies were imperative for the U.S to not only establish military presence but to project the power of the U.S in the entire Pacific Basin. Within these colonies, the U.S had established coal stations, communication lines, and naval harbors, wreaking havoc on the local population, economy, and ecology in the process. The U.S. passed the Land Acquisition act, authorizing the Navy to acquire private land needed for permanent military installations on Guam. This resulted in the U.S controlling 60% of the island and still 33% to this day. On the Philippine Islands, the U.S also produced the largest overseas air force and naval bases which were not always welcomed by Filipinos. With no regard for humanitarianism for the local population, the U.S once again exerts it's force and power for their own economic and military gain.

The refugee staging in the colonized lands in the Pacific Basin was a seemingly humanitarian act by the United States; however, the displacement of these people caused by military expansion, contradicts the movements seemingly righteous intentions. In reality, when refugees arrived in the United States, they were faced with discrimination and oppression.

---

# ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS OCEAN VUONG

## Symbols

---

**Buffalo:** Little dog often brings up the herd of buffalo that fall off the edge of the cliff one after another. This can be seen as a parallel to the opioid epidemic occurring at the time. The buffalos are just following the actions of their family and the people around them just as those who are caught in the epidemic.

**Monarch Butterflies:** Also often brought up by little dog and can be seen as a parallel to the story of little dog and Rose's immigration to the US as war refugees. Monarch butterflies exist in so many numbers, but their existence is very tenuous as they have to leave at a certain time and be in a certain place.

## Main Points

Little Dog= main character... Writes a letter to his mother Rose

Letter consists of life memories and stories told to him by others

Born in Vietnam, but moves to Hartford, CT after fleeing to the Philippines

Rose has a lot of PTSD from living through the Vietnam war, and it shows through abuse on Little Dog

Rose is illiterate, and this is the reason he is able to be so open in his letter.

Rose worked in a nail salon while raising Little Dog, and he recalls numerous moments from inside the salon.

Little dog meets Trevor, his friend and lover, at his first job on the tobacco farm in 2003.

Their relationship develops and ultimately they begin getting intimate.

Trevor also comes from abuse, with an alcoholic father.... He even has substance abuse problems himself as it's noted there are drugs all over his room.

They get more into sex and little dog discovers he is stimulated by violence

Trevor makes it clear that he didn't want to be seen as the girl in the relationship.

Little Dog goes to New York and abruptly finds out there has been an accident with Trevor while he was gone and later finds that he had overdosed.

# THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH

The Model Minority myth refers to the idea that Asian American's are inherently better off in American society because of the hardworking and intelligent stereotypes that have been placed upon their ethnicity. These ideas came to fruition during the Cold War, and have had lasting effects on not only the Asian community, but also African Americans and other minorities, as well as the LGBTQ+ community.

The evolution of the Model Minority myth is just as important as understanding the concept itself. Which demographic within the Asian community this myth applied to adjusted to the motives of white people based on the current political landscape. Despite the world having recently gone through the atrocities of the second world war, an article in *Life* magazine appeared that provided a guide to readers on how to tell the difference between Chinese and Japanese individuals. This extremely racist and insensitive article even featured instructions on distinguishing the differences in facial structure, a practice used by Nazi's during their rise to power.

Inserting the idea that all Asians have found success in the United States puts into question why other minorities have not been able to achieve the same. It is used as a weak excuse for the systematic oppression of all other minorities, and places Asian Americans above them through a false benchmark of success while portraying an unrealistic even playing field, opening the floodgates for further criticism and reinforced stereotypes. This narrative additionally perpetuated the structure of the nuclear family, excluding the LGBTQ population from dominant culture.

In truth, the perception of the model minority concept promotes an unfair bias for groups of minorities to be compared to and, or in the case of Asians, to feel an uncomfortable obligation to chase and fulfill. These groups of people are prevented the freedom of truly paving a path of their own, without the repercussion of feeling displaced by others.



# The Citizen and The Terrorist

---



Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, violence against Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Arab citizens rose drastically. While the majority of the nation was attempting to come together in times of trouble, this community was not included in the patriotism of the fight against terrorism.

As new stereotypes began to emerge, the general population's mentality toward these citizens continued to worsen. This eventually led to these individuals being seen as terrorists and social pariahs.

It can be clearly seen looking back that the language used by President George Bush during this time did not aid in protecting these citizens. Unfortunately, anti Middle Eastern mentalities continue to persist in America today. This can be seen in the actions taken by President Donald Trump. In 2017, he implemented a "Muslim Ban" that bans all immigrants from seven substantially Muslim countries.



The nature of the ban is blatantly discriminative. It groups people of a certain religion and certain countries into a single group deemed unworthy of stepping on U.S. soil. It also fails to acknowledge that these people are individuals not defined by their nationality or religion. To assume a person's nature or intentions based on where they come from or what they believe in is one of the purest forms of ignorance. To be an American is to be fully accepting of different beliefs, cultures, and individuals.

# The Export of Filipino Labor

While the facilitation of labor abroad may sound like an amazing opportunity in the eyes of hopeful Filipino immigrants, a happy ending is not achieved once these hard working individuals are able to send money back to their families. Because of the open market system known as Neoliberalism in the Philippines, the large amounts of money being sent back from the United States has had devastating consequences.

The development of Neoliberalism has caused the Filipino economy to plummet. The currency that is fed back into the Filipino economy has caused the devaluation of their own currency. When individuals leave the Philippines, they find work in places such as the United States, Western Europe, the Middle East, and East Asian countries. They then send money back to their families in the Philippines which has reduced incomes in the country, making it more and more difficult for people to achieve the standard rates of living. As money from other countries keeps getting pumped into the Filipino economy, the more labor and indigenous currency is devalued. This creates a cycle in which individuals keep leaving to work in other countries to gain more wealth and send it back, but keeps devaluating the economy simultaneously.

Not only are the lives of those still living in the Philippines negatively affected, the folks who are sending the money back are constantly being taken advantage of for their cheap labor. Their willingness to work has enforced the stereotype that asian laborers are productive and efficient machines. The most common job taken by these exported workers are in the construction, domestic, and service industries.