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Book Review: Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa*, by Chris Dixon

Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa by Yuichiro Onishi

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moved after the Manzanar riot. He became a model prisoner by endearing himself to camp administrators and outside researchers; and after quietly renouncing his U.S. citizenship, he preoccupied himself with studying Japanese. Such model behavior forces Tamura in the chapters after Kurihara leaves Manzanar to rely on him more as an observer of, rather than participant in, a series of clashes at Moab, Leupp, and especially Tule Lake.

In the end, Tamura's book fills a gap in the literatures on camp resistance and transpacific Japanese American studies that raises intriguing questions about the role played by Hawai'i-born Japanese Americans on the mainland, and about the experience of Japanese Americans in post-war Japan.

University of Southern California

LON KURASHIGE

Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa. By Yuichiro Onishi. (New York, N.Y., New York University Press, 2013. xi + 243 pp. \$45 cloth)

During the mid-1930s, W.E.B. Du Bois enjoined scholars to consider the links between black America and Japan. With a keen eye on the international connections that were of such significance to Du Bois, Yuichiro Onishi has delivered a sophisticated analysis of the ways in which African Americans and Japanese—radicals, scholars, and others—perceived each other and the ways in which they exchanged ideas and challenged racism and imperialism. Informed by a deep understanding of both Japanese history and U.S. history, and based on a close reading of an impressive array of sources, *Transpacific Antiracism* is an excellent example of transnational history.

Du Bois, as Onishi explains, was not the only African American who regarded Japan as a potentially important force in the global struggle against colonial authority. The first chapter of *Transpacific Racism* describes the ideas and efforts of a number of African American intellectual-activists, during the era of World War I, to forge an unlikely alliance with imperialist Japan. Impressed by Japan's defiance against the international white polity, the coterie of African American leaders who are the focus of Chapter 1 sought to exploit that defiance in their quest for a black ideology of self-determination. Onishi's attention then turns to the 1930s and Du Bois's sustained defense of Japan. While Du Bois's analysis of Japan was flawed, his continuing determination to blend African American

activism with Japan's status as a bulwark against the white powers reflected his perception of the possibilities of the power of collective, race-based power, which transcended national borders. Du Bois's quest ultimately foundered, thwarted partly by Japanese bureaucracy but also by his inability, Onishi contends, to give appropriate weight to the ongoing power of ideas of nation—and to the attendant machinery of the modern nation state.

The next two chapters of *Transpacific Antiracism* deal with the postwar period. Onishi's third chapter focuses on the efforts of a group of Japanese scholars whose interest in diverse aspects of African American history and culture was imbued with political purpose. Striving to translate the language and rhetoric of black radicalism into an idiom ("colored internationalism") that was comprehensible and relevant in post-war Japan, the members of the "Association of Negro Studies" paid specific attention to the views of Robert F. Williams, whose activism was viewed with increasing alarm by U.S. authorities during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and who in 1962 fled the United States for Cuba. Onishi's final chapter analyzes the convergence between Okinawans and American service personnel—white, as well as black—that developed during the late 1960s. Encouraged by the anti-racism and anti-imperialism of the Vietnam War era, and fueled by the broader insights emerging from the New Left's struggles in the United States, Japan, and elsewhere, Americans and Okinawans forged an informal network that served both groups' agendas and which was a clear example of the depth of transnational radicalism during the 1960s and 1970s.

Onishi's politics are never far from the surface, but that in no way detracts from the quality of his endeavor. Ever-attentive to the cultural dimensions of political action, and to the global implications of local activism, *Transpacific Antiracism* is a fine study of international reformism and radicalism.

University of Queensland

CHRIS DIXON

Before L.A.: Race, Space, and Municipal Power in Los Angeles, 1781–1894. By David Samuel Torres-Rouff. (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2013. xiii + 361 pp. \$65 cloth)

David Torres-Rouff has composed a splendid work about the early history of Los Angeles. Although he addresses many topics—among them the founding of Los Angeles in 1781 and the establishment of a Chinese community after the Gold Rush—Torres-Rouff