

"No Certain Way to Tell Japanese From Chinese": Racist Statements and the Marking of Difference

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After the 1941 Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, a series of articles appeared simultaneously in American magazines. A 22 December 1941 article in *Time* gives advice to its Caucasian readers on "How To Tell Your Friends From the Japs," as does an article in *Life* magazine entitled "How To Tell Japs From the Chinese." From the perspective of the late twentieth century, the racism of these texts seems obvious. At the time of their appearance, how did this racism remain unmarked? This paper has two purposes: the first, examining the way racist statements about people of Japanese descent become established, as well as the way those statements become connected to pre-existing racist statements about people of Chinese descent; the second, examining how articles and photographs in magazines such as *Time* and *Life* negotiate this pre-existing "network of statements."

In the aftermath of the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, a series of articles appeared simultaneously in American magazines. A 22 December 1941 article in *Time* gives advice to its Caucasian readers on "How To Tell Your Friends From the Japs."¹ The article provides photographs of Japanese and Chinese men and discusses their differing characteristics, as does a 22 December 1941 article in *Life* magazine entitled "How To Tell Japs From the Chinese."² The 20 December 1941 issue of *Science News Letter* offers advice from "one of America's best known anthropologists," Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, a man known for his assertions that cranial measurements could establish the genetic superiority of members of the white race.³ According to Hrdlicka (and his assertions are similar to those found in *Life* and *Time*):

You cannot tell the Oriental peoples in this country apart reliably and consistently by scrutinizing their faces. . . . [Hrdlicka] explains that when you pick out a Japanese or Chinese readily, as you can in perhaps 30% of cases, it may be the manner, or psychological expression that aids your judgment. Japanese have a clever, smarter expression, the reflection of materialistic and commercial interests. Chinese have faces that the anthropologist finds "mild and friendly and interesting." This reflects their philosophic and intellectual background.⁴

From the perspective of the late twentieth century, the racism of these texts seems obvious, manifest rather than latent. How, then, at the time of their appearance, did this racism remain unmarked?

We might argue that these articles and their accompanying photographs form what Foucault calls a statement (or, perhaps, we should regard them as two statements, one photographic, the other linguistic, that are joined together to serve one purpose).⁵ As Foucault writes, "a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them."⁶ A series of signs (a sentence, a photograph, a paragraph, an entire book) becomes a statement only when we can demonstrate that it enjoys a specific relationship to other statements, a relationship not based on the materiality of the series of signs (written, drawn, photographed), but on a shared filiation between elements in an enunciative field. Two sentences, even if they contain the same series of signs, can make different statements. Conversely, a photograph and a sentence, while materially different can still make the same statement: "a given piece of information may be retransmitted with other words [or other signs]. . . . If the information content and the uses to which it could be put are the same, one can say that it is the same statement in each case."⁷

As Barrett notes, Foucault's concept of the statement "enables us to understand how *what* is said fits into a network that has its own history and conditions of existence," a history that reveals, not the "truth" of those statements, but the way those statements were *constructed as true*.⁸ Foucault goes on to state:

Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated. . . . It constitutes its own past, defines, in what precedes it, its own filiation, redefines what makes it possible or necessary, excludes what it cannot find compatible with it. *And it poses this enunciative past as an acquired truth*, as an event that has occurred, as a form that can be modified, as material to be transformed, or as an object that can be spoken about.⁹

This conglomeration of statements, each of which supports and depends upon the other statements *for* support, forms a discursive field, a network of statements, that posits itself as a "discourse of truth," with each statement working to establish the truth value of itself and the other statements in the enunciative field. This paper has two purposes: the first, briefly examining the way racist statements about people of Japanese descent become established, as well as the way those statements become connected to pre-existing racist statements about people of Chinese descent; the second, examining how articles in magazines such as *Time* and *Life* enter into and negotiate this particular "network of statements."

And, I want to ask also, how do these particular statements employ photographs? As Tagg states, "we cannot understand photographic meaning as an abstract system, as a *langue*, but only as a social practice involving specific institutional currencies, determining the way photographs circulate as social discourse."¹⁰ Photographs are statements which depend on their filiation with other statements for their meaning and their status as "evidence" or "truth." Tagg goes on to state, "photographs do not and could not validate their meanings within themselves. The photographs' compelling weight is not phenomenological but discursive."¹¹ Photographs can manifest discursive effects, can exert "a force only within a much more extensive argument,"¹² only within "a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated,"¹³ and which by that situatedness, may affect other elements in that field.

"Japanese Taking Place of Chinese": Pre-World War II Marking of Racial Difference

One group asked to describe the principal traits of the Japanese reported these most frequently as "sneakiness" and "intelligence"; in another study the great majority of respondents described the Japanese as "dishonest, tricky, treacherous," and accused them of being "ruinous, hard or unfair competitors". . . The response also recalled, in its emphasis on trickery and treachery, the nineteenth-century outcry against the Chinese. . . . Half a century of agitation and antipathy directed against Japanese Americans, following almost fifty years of anti-Chinese and anti-foreign activity, had by 1941 diffused among the West Coast population a rigidly stereotyped set of attitudes toward Orientals which centered on suspicion and distrust. This hostility reached maturity in the early twenties with the passage of the Alien Land Law and the Oriental Exclusion Act, and although thereafter it became relatively inactive it

was kept alive during the thirties by the stimuli of Japanese aggression and economic depression.¹⁴

In *Elements of Semiology*, Roland Barthes writes that "a privative opposition means any opposition in which the signifier of a term is characterized by the presence of a significant element, or *mark*, which is missing in the signifier of the other."¹⁵ Barthes continues, "some linguists have identified the mark with the exceptional. . . . according to them, the *unmarked* is what is frequent or banal."¹⁶ The unmarked functions as a ground for the marked term, operating as the norm against which the other term becomes marked as abnormal. For example, the phrase "healthy skin" is the unmarked term that determines the significance, the "exceptional" status of "unhealthy skin." Or, we might state that, in the context of late 1930s and 1940s in the United States, "Caucasian skin" functions as an unmarked term (the norm) in opposition to which other skin colors and races are marked (the other). This marking, rather than being merely linguistic (the difference being *only between linguistic signifiers*), produces political and social effects such as segregation, racial violence, exclusion of certain races from immigration, privileging of certain races for land ownership, while excluding other races from such ownership, etc.

Of course, we should not regard this sort of marking of another race as different from or in opposition to Caucasians as a "natural" or even consistent occurrence. Such marking had to be negotiated, fought for and won, as well as supported by numbers of statements and discourses that worked to establish the "truth" of that marking. In regard to immigration from Japan, Roger Daniels notes:

Despite the fact that California was, by the end of the 1860's, already violently anti-Chinese, it is interesting to note that these early colonists from Japan were received with great favor. A typical newspaper editorial pointed out that "the objections raised against the Chinese . . . cannot be alleged against the Japanese."¹⁷

In the late nineteenth century, people of Chinese descent sent their children to segregated schools for "orientals," while the children of Japanese immigrants went to the regular public schools. These children were not marked as different from the Caucasian majority (they shared the same public space) in the same way that the Chinese American children were; that is, they were not marked *in opposition to* the Caucasian race; neither were they marked as "oriental." However, we should note, that even at this point, the stage was set for the negative stereotypes attached to the Chinese to be transferred to the Japanese. The initiative for encouraging Japanese immigration to Hawaii came from a white power

structure that had begun to regard the Chinese as "troublesome."¹⁸ The Japanese were intended to function as a less "troublesome" labor force.

By the turn of the century, the marked difference between the Japanese and the Chinese began to be steadily effaced. In the 1890s headlines such as "Japanese Taking Place of Chinese" appear in San Francisco newspapers. As Daniels states, "the newspaper warned that, 'like the Chinese they come in contact with our white girls. . . . and many a family that would disdain to employ a Chinaman now see nothing wrong in hiring Japanese.'"¹⁹ On 10 June 1893 the San Francisco Board of Education ordered all persons of Japanese descent "to attend the Chinese school."²⁰ However, at this point in time, the elision of difference that equated the Japanese with the Chinese was not well established enough for this order to be a success. In fact, this decision was reversed, by a seven to two vote, after "Board President F. A. Hyde said that 'to exclude [Japanese] from the public schools was an unjustifiable and unwarranted insult of the Japanese race.'"²¹

If people of Japanese descent were marked as "Caucasian enough" to attend public schools in 1893, the next few years would reveal extreme changes in attitude toward this group as "the nation generally and the West Coast in particular [began to develop] an attitude of suspicion and apprehension which was effectively exploited by the agitators for exclusion."²² Collapsing the distinction between the Japanese and the Chinese allowed the same negative stereotypes to be applied to the Japanese and enabled the series of statements that made up the anti-Chinese discourse to become affiliated with the Japanese. Since these racial stereotypes had been successfully employed to exclude the Chinese, the anti-Asian activists hoped to use earlier anti-Chinese legal decisions as a basis for excluding people of Japanese descent from immigration to the United States.

As tenBroek, et al. note, "speeches, resolutions, and articles coupling the two races were so frequent that California Japanese were led in 1901 to distribute leaflets requesting that they be differentiated from the Chinese."²³ In 1905, San Franciscans formed the "Asiatic Exclusion League," the first of many anti-Japanese organizations. The combination of politicians, pressure groups, and anti-Asian newspaper reports served to create an environment in which, not only could the Japanese be marked in *opposition* to Caucasians, but which repeatedly asserted the *necessity* of marking just such an opposition. These groups also worked to establish a discursive field, an accumulation of materials, issuing from various authoritative sources, that supported each other in such a way as to begin to emerge as "truth." The (lack of) validity of these assertions was unchallenged, and "the reiteration of the charge in the daily news convinced large numbers of Californians of its truth."²⁴

By 1905, the growing power of Japan, and, in particular, the Russo-Japanese War (February 1904--September 1905), sparked the fear and suspicion that Japanese immigrants were the first leg of a "peaceful" invasion (during which the Japanese would propagate in such a number as to crowd the Caucasian race out), which would be followed by a military invasion that would see the resident Japanese join with the invading forces to together defeat the Caucasian race (the so-called "yellow peril"). An article from *Organized Labor* states that "a characteristic among the Japanese . . . is their propensity for spying", thus beginning to justify the necessity of anti-Japanese activity (to keep from being spied upon).²⁵ This stereotype became widespread, and, unlike the anti-Chinese propaganda, new technologies of mass reproduction enabled the image to be propagated through a variety of media, thus disseminating further statements to support and be supported by a growing anti-Japanese discourse, ranging from pamphlets to motion pictures. The existence of the "spying" stereotype, the various statements in circulation about the trickiness of and spying of the Japanese, provided an "enunciative past" which could then be posited as "an acquired truth" on which exclusion arguments as well as post-Pearl Harbor anti-Japanese-American arguments could be based.²⁶ The "yellow peril" argument (without the same emphasis on military invasion) had earlier been posited against the Chinese and had effectively worked to exclude the Chinese from immigration by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the case of the relation between the Japanese and the Chinese in America, we can think of these groups as being represented by two separate signifiers which, through a century long process of negotiation, come to refer to the same signifieds, the difference between these signifiers becoming slowly and steadily unmarked. What was once a privative opposition ["the objections raised against the Chinese cannot be alleged against the Japanese"] "in which the signifier of a term is characterized by the presence of a significant element, or *mark*, which is missing in the signifier of the other" becomes effaced, while that which is initially missing in the signifier Japanese eventually becomes *marked* or *present* in that very signifier in which it was previously absent.²⁷ Concepts such as "treachery" and "trickery," or such as "the yellow peril," formerly attached to the Chinese, now become attached to both groups.

In 1906, the Japanese (and Koreans as well this time) in San Francisco were ordered to attend the Chinese school, an action that was rescinded only on the order of President Roosevelt, although the school board demanded a compromise decision this time around, a promise to limit Japanese immigration at the price of allowing Japanese children to continue to attend regular public schools.²⁸ In 1913, the Alien Land Act "forbade land ownership only by 'aliens ineligible to citizenship,'" and both first generation Japanese and Chinese immigrants were ineligible to citizenship, using as a precedent a 1790 statute which re-

stricted naturalization to "free white persons."²⁹ The Alien Land Act of 1913 represents *legislation* that links together people of Japanese descent and people of Chinese descent, and does so for the purpose of excluding both these groups of people from owning land in the United States, an exclusion that elides any difference between the two groups and, at the same time, marks them in opposition to other racial groups. Other legislation and court rulings would follow, including the 1922 Tadeo Ozawa case, in which "the court decided that white meant 'Caucasian' and that Ozawa, although 'well qualified by character and education for citizenship,' was not a Caucasian. He was therefore ineligible under terms of the naturalization statute."³⁰ The U. S. Congress used this court case as a precedent by which they could pass the Immigration Act of 1924, which, without naming the Japanese, barred from immigration "aliens ineligible for citizenship," effectively cutting off any Japanese immigration in the same way that the Chinese were excluded fifty years earlier.

In the period of years between 1890 and the World War II era, we can see extreme changes in the marking of Japanese America, and we might posit several causes for this change: racial prejudice, commercial success by Japanese immigrants, the military and economic success of the Japanese nation, and perceived "insurmountable" religious and cultural barriers between Japan and the United States. The end of the nineteenth century saw an increase in the Japanese immigrant population, and, at the same time, an increase in financial success in various fields that had been predominately Caucasian, particularly farming. As Daniels notes, in Seattle by 1914 Japanese immigrants "dominated the public market, operating some three hundred of the four hundred stalls and stores."³¹ By 1919, Japanese immigrant farmers accounted for about "10 percent of the total value of all California agricultural production."³² This success transformed people of Japanese descent from being a cheap labor force to being (perceived as) a competitor in the marketplace. Although "Japanese agriculture in California--and elsewhere in the West--did not displace existing farmers," the visibility of the success led to claims "that Japanese farmers were driving out whites."³³ The political power and prejudice of white Americans in California and elsewhere led to legislative attempts to "inhibit the growth of agricultural entrepreneurship by Japanese Americans," and contributed further to singling out and marking Japanese Americans as a racial group to be agitated against.³⁴

The actions of the Japanese nation would also influence the way Japanese America would be marked. The rise of Japanese military power threatened the economic system of European and American colonialism, a threat that found form as well in white America's attitude toward Japanese Americans. As John W. Dower notes, "Japan did not invade independent countries in southern Asia. It invaded colonial outposts which the Westerners had dominated for generations, taking ab-

solutely for granted their racial and cultural superiority over their Asian subjects."³⁵ Japan's emergence as an economic and military rival to the United States was reflected in white attitudes toward Japanese America. That rivalry led to an increasing number of statements from politicians and from the popular press that emphasized the existence of an "insurmountable barrier between Oriental and Occidental peoples."³⁶ American newspapers articulated this economic rivalry in terms of declaring Japan--and people of Japanese descent--a "racial menace" as well as a cultural and religious one."³⁷

American propoganda films of the World War II era picked up on and emphasized existing stereotypes of the Japanese as racially, culturally, and religiously different. Such propoganda portrayed the "Japanese Mind" as "being imprisoned in an ideological cage built of two unique elements: the Shinto religion . . . and belief in a divine emperor whose role was both sacred and secular."³⁸ As Daniels notes, even though "Christianity had made significant inroads among the immigrants from Japan and their children" by the beginning of World War II, this developing discourse concerning the "regimentation" and the religious "fanaticism" inherent to the "Japanese Mind" attached those stereotypes to Japanese Americans as well--mere immigration could not free the mind from its "ideological cage" or from its religious devotion and loyalty to the emperor.³⁹

As Foucault notes, if a series of signs can be called a statement, "it is because the position of the subject can be assigned," and because that subject position can lend its authority to those statements, they can thus begin to implement power, and thus connect the statement not only to other statements in its enunciative field but also to relations outside that field--the manifold relations of power.⁴⁰ Legal statements such as the Alien Land Act of 1913 and the Tadeo Ozawa decision represent an implementation of power which would have real effects on people of Japanese descent, a production of truth which would authorize the exercise of power. Important here is the *position* occupied by the subject of enunciation. The subject speaking a particular statement "should not be regarded as identical with the author of the formulation--either in substance, or in function. He is not in fact the cause, origin, or starting-point of the phenomenon."⁴¹ Rather the position of the subject of the statement "is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals."⁴² This place may be occupied by the press, by the court, by various individuals, each of whom speaks from a position endowed with differing authority, all of whom are involved in the production of truth--a production which enables the exercise of power.

An initiative proposed in California seven years after the passage of the Alien Land Act of 1913, a new law intended to "plug loop-holes in the 1913 law," demonstrates how a coalition of statements "spoken" from various positions could effectively implement legal power

against Japanese America.⁴³ Sponsored by "a broad anti-Japanese coalition including representatives of labor, farmers, and middle-class patriotic and fraternal organizations" such as the Native Sons of the Golden West and the American Legion, California voters approved this proposition by a three to one vote after an "intensive, high-powered campaign" that included "unabashed support" from the state government and both political parties.⁴⁴ In this case, as in other legal actions, the economic, military, cultural, and religious tensions described previously caused increased circulation of statements about people of Japanese descent in the press, in scientific discourse, in right wing pamphlets, and in countless other places. Adding to this accumulation of statements were legislative and legal statements "spoken" from positions of power that served to validate the authority of this discourse on Japanese America, and that culminated in the implementation of power through the production of law.

"How To Tell Your Friends From the Japs": The World War II Marking of Racial Difference

[After Pearl Harbor, the Japanese-American] community quickly discovered that the legal distinction between citizen and alien was not nearly as important as the distinction between white and yellow, especially if yellow happened to be Japanese. Chinese Americans ... became aware of the difference. Many took to wearing buttons that proclaimed positively: "I'm Chinese." Some joined the white persecution with buttons that added: "I Hate Japs Worse than You Do."⁴⁵

The existence of a racist discourse that links the Japanese to the Chinese and links both groups to negative stereotypes necessitates the appearance of such Post-Pearl Harbor articles as the ones in *Life* and *Time* in order to undo some of their own work. China becomes an ally, Japan an enemy, and the discourse must find a way to mark them as such. *Time's* 22 December 1941 article, "How To Tell Your Friends From the Japs," despite the promise of its title, informs us that "there is no infallible way of telling them apart."⁴⁶ Worse, even the ordering eye of the scientist has troubles: "even an anthropologist, with calipers and plenty of time to measure heads, noses, shoulders, hips, is sometimes stumped."⁴⁷ To ease our anxiety at such a statement, however, the article provides "a few rules of thumb," and is accompanied by four photographs, one of a "young Chinese," which is paired with a photograph of a "young Japanese," one of a "middle-aged Chinese," which is, of course, paired with a photograph of a "middle-aged Japanese."⁴⁸

As Tagg states, "the transparency of the photograph is its most powerful rhetorical device."⁴⁹ That "transparency" often works to efface the socially constructed status of photographic images and presents them as "the direct rendering of actuality."⁵⁰ However, even such seemingly innocuous photographs as the four portraits that illustrate this article, rather than being transparent, are highly coded in order to carry certain messages to their audience. The two Chinese men are softly lit, clearly illuminating their entire faces, and each figure smiles slightly. The two Japanese men seem to be frowning (whatever the facial gesture, frown or not, it does serve to clench the muscles of the face, in opposition to the relaxed facial features of the Chinese men).

Importantly, the portraits of the Japanese Men are *partially* and *harshly* lit. Large sections of their faces are left in shadow--the type of lighting often used in Hollywood horror films to signify "villain." The construction (and the selection) of these images reinforces and is reinforced by the accompanying text, which states that "those who know them best often rely on facial expression to tell them apart: the Chinese expression is likely to be more placid, kindly, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant," and we can certainly read dogmatism and arrogance in the clenched facial muscles of the Japanese men, and placidity in the relaxed, softly lit images of the Chinese men.⁵¹ Each statement reinforces the truth of the other (although both statements tell us more about Caucasian stereotyping than about the objects of the discourse), a kind of tautology in which the same statement, presented in different materials (one linguistic, the other photographic), simply repeats itself as proof of its own validity.⁵² At the same time, this statement refers to a network of statements which extends beyond it and which also supports the truth value of this particular text. Of course, the Japanese are dogmatic, arrogant, villainous, the very opposite of Caucasian, because an entire history of legal and popular press statements makes the very same point.

In this discourse, the Japanese and the Chinese have been traditionally associated as the same. By the late 1930s, a re-marking was well underway, necessitated partially by the Japanese war against China, which posited Japan as a nation to be feared and China as a potential ally. World War II solidified this re-marking, with the Japanese marked as enemy, and the Chinese marked as allies. At this point in time, the Caucasian majority suddenly found it necessary to distinguish between two groups that had long been regarded as the same (thus, the publication of such articles). Both groups, however, are so invested with a signified content that effaces the difference between signifiers that positing distinctions between the two groups is problematic.

Time's "How To Tell Your Friends From the Japs" tells us that some Chinese are taller than the Japanese, although the next "rule of thumb", somewhat contradictorily, tells us that "Japanese are likely to

be stockier and broader-hipped than *short Chinese*."⁵³ However, the stocky, broad-hipped Japanese becomes, in the next rule, thin: "Japanese--except for wrestlers--are seldom fat; they often dry up and grow lean as they age. The Chinese often put on weight."⁵⁴ We are also told that the "Japanese are hesitant, nervous in conversation, laugh loudly at the wrong time," and that the "Japanese walk stiffly, erect, hard-heeled. Chinese, more relaxed, have an easy gait, sometimes shuffle."⁵⁵

For these descriptions, *Time* magazine relies on already existing stereotypes of Asians. As Elaine Kim writes:

There are two basic kinds of stereotypes of Asians in Anglo-American literature [and in other types of discourses as well]: the "bad" Asian and the "good" Asian. The "bad" Asians are the sinister villains and brute hordes, neither of which can be controlled by the Anglos and both of which therefore must be destroyed. The "good" Asians are the helpless heathens to be saved by Anglo heroes or the loyal and loveable allies, side-kicks, and servants.⁵⁶

Time magazine, rather than providing any evidence for distinguishing between the Japanese and Chinese, simply plugs into these existing stereotypes, positing one group as the "Good Asian" (the placid, smiling, shuffling Chinese) and the other as the "Bad Asian" (the villainous Japanese).

As Foucault states in *Power/Knowledge*, "each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true."⁵⁷ The type of anthropological discourse illustrated by Ales Hrdlicka's article in *Science News Letter*, stating that "you cannot tell the Oriental peoples in this country apart by scrutinizing their faces," certainly functions as one of those ordered procedures for distributing "scientifically true" statements, although it certainly is not alone.⁵⁸ Daniels writes, "by the 1880's a respectable intellectual basis for an American racism was being developed by the curiously interacting labors of workers in various academic disciplines," who discovered that Anglo-Saxon peoples had "superior innate characteristics."⁵⁹

The assumed superiority of the Caucasian race can perhaps be best demonstrated by an article ("Has Food Influenced the Stature of the Japanese People?") and photograph that appear in the January-December 1936 issue of *Hygeia: The Health Magazine*, published by the American Medical Association.⁶⁰ We should note that height, like the size of the cranium, was often used to demonstrate Caucasian superiority, with height signifying "Civilization," "Evidence of Racial Superiority," the taller races, of course, being considered as more evolution-

arily advanced. Virginia Smith, a sixth grade teacher, and the author of this article, writes that "at the end of a class period in which the sixth grade had been studying about the effect of various foods on the growth of people, one of the pupils happened to ask whether the food of the Japanese had been responsible for their short stature."⁶¹ Her students noted the height difference in "ancient" Japanese (an average height for a male was found to be 61.4 inches) and the "modern" Japanese (average male: 63.11 inches). The height of the modern "American" (Caucasian) male, we are told, is 67.67 inches (and we should note that the modern American male seems to have sprung fully grown to his towering height--as the article provides no indication that Caucasians have undergone changes in average height). The students found that "children of Japanese parentage born in America are larger at all ages than are Japanese born and reared in Japan."⁶²

The class concluded that eating practices had determined the various statures, and put on a play to demonstrate their findings. A photographed scene from this play accompanies the article:

A small girl was chosen to represent the ancient Japanese. She carried a tray containing rice and tea. A larger girl was selected for the modern Japanese. She carried a modern Japanese dinner consisting of fish, rice, sweet potato vine leaves and tea. A *still taller* girl was selected for the American. She carried a *good dinner* of steak, baked potato, string beans, lettuce and tomato salad, bread and butter and milk. ... Rice kept the Japanese alive but did not help her to grow much, while green leafy vegetables helped her grow taller. The American ate green leafy vegetables and also drank milk, and so she was the tallest of the three.⁶³

The accompanying image (which the above text seems to explicate) functions to chart out the evolution of the human races, showing progression from the ancient (the short) to the modern (the tall), with the "American" (read: Caucasian) at the end of the evolutionary chain, and the "modern Japanese" somewhere in the middle. Articles too numerous to count refer to Japan as a "medieval" or "feudal" society, and this photograph seems to equate their stature with their cultural advancement--somewhere in the middle ages, and still needing a *good dinner* of meat and potatoes to set them on the path to evolutionary superiority.

If *Time* magazine appeals to the existing stereotypes of the Good and Bad Asian, if *Science News Letter* appeals to a dubious anthropological discourse (as does *Hygeia*), the 22 December 1941 issue of *Life* magazine in an article (accompanied by photographs) entitled "How To Tell Japs From The Chinese," takes a slightly different approach, al-

though it also incorporates elements from those other articles. As does *Time*, *Life* posits a good and a bad, but that dichotomy is rendered in terms of the modern and the primitive, much like *Hygeia*. *Life* associates the "modern" with Caucasian physical characteristics, and the "primitive" with physical characteristics that could be described as "simian." Thus, the Chinese are represented as examples of "modern man," and are described in terms of characteristics associated with whites. The "primitive Japanese" are described in *simian* terms. According to *Life*:

The typical Northern Chinese, represented by Ong Wenhao, Chungking's Minister of Economic Affairs . . . is relatively *tall* and *slenderly* built. His complexion . . . is parchment yellow, *his face long* and delicately boned, his nose more finely bridged. Representative of the Japanese people as a whole is Premier and General Hideki Tojo . . . who betrays *aboriginal antecedents* in a *squat, long-torsoed build*, a broader, more massively boned head and face, flat, often pug, nose, yellow-ocher skin and heavier beard.⁶⁴

Sundquist notes "the American propensity to depict the Japanese as simian creatures or vermin that could not be defeated but only obliterated," stating that "by the end of the war, the enemy had in some ways ceased to be human at all. Polls in the summer of 1945 indicated that up to 15 percent of Americans wished to 'exterminate' the Japanese."⁶⁵ Cartoons often depict the Japanese in simian terms, as a Japanese Ape with a "long torso," "short, squat legs," "flat nose," "massive cheek and jawbone," and "heavy beard."⁶⁶ Using the evidential status of photographs, *Life* attempts to have its audience read the accompanying images as *proof* of Japanese primitiveness (or primateness).

Four main images accompany the article, two facial portraits, and two full-length photographs of bodies. In all four photographs, *Life* has *written directly on the images*, a move that would normally disrupt the truth-value of the photograph--would indicate its mediation, that the image had been doctored. However, the writing here has the opposite effect, and I will come back to this point. The first photograph is identified as "Chinese public servant, Ong Wen-hao," from North China. *Life* notes that the North Chinese have Caucasian-like features, with their "longer, narrower face," although the Southern Chinese (who are not pictured) have "round, broad faces." The words written on the image, have lines drawn from them to particular areas of the photograph, and tell us that the Chinese have a "parchment yellow complexion," "more frequent epicanthic fold," "higher bridge," "lighter facial bones," "longer, narrower face," and a "scant beard." We should note that scientific sounding phrases such as "epicanthic fold" function to reinforce the truth value

of these statements by implying a relation between them and a "discourse of truth"--science. The photograph named as "Japanese warrior, General Hideki Tojo" bears the following descriptions: "earthy yellow complexion," "less frequent epicanthic fold," "flatter nose," "heavy beard," "broader, shorter face," and "massive cheek and jawbone."⁶⁷ Most of these terms fit the stereotyped image of the Japanese as a lower being on the evolutionary scale, as apelike.

The third photograph represents three "tall Chinese brothers." The writing on the image points out that these Chinese are "tall and slender" with "long legs," although the caption does note that "when middle-aged and fat, they look more like Japs."⁶⁸ We should note that the Chinese have grown substantially since their description in *Time*, which asserts an average height of 5 foot, 5 inches. *Life* states that the Chinese average 5 foot, 7 inches, and sometimes go over 6 feet. The fourth picture depicts two "Short Japanese admirals," who are described as "short and squat" with "shorter legs" and a "longer torso." Again, the description here could easily be applied to the various drawings of the Japanese as apes.

In his discussion of photographs produced for the Leeds City Council in 1896 and 1901, and used as evidence by advocates of slum clearance, John Tagg writes, "if the apparatus here was proposed to operate as a controlled extension and aid to the trained and expert eye, the photographs it produced function as a kind of *mouth*," but a disembodied mouth unattached to a subject, "a mouth that spoke for itself ... wordlessly enunciating its incontrovertible evidence; yet a mouth that had to be given a voice by the public health experts who imputed that they alone could read its lips . . . [and who produced] the patient translation of what ought to be already evident."⁶⁹ Similarly, what would normally be considered a disruption of the evidentiary status of the photograph, tampering with the image by writing on it, becomes in the case of the *Life* photos "the patient translation of what ought to be already evident," the photos and captions working to wordlessly enunciate a series of statements that serve as incontrovertible evidence for each other.

Within and between these particular articles, we find a number of contradictions, which indicates the establishment of a new discursive field, one that marks and asserts the difference between people of Japanese descent and Chinese descent. These statements appropriate from already existing discourses (Good Asian/Bad Asian, endowing the Chinese with characteristics normally reserved for Caucasians) in an attempt to change filiation with some statements in order to re-align themselves in relation to *other statements*, as a way of positing a new "enunciative past." The contradictions also indicate that these statements find it necessary (and difficult) to work against the already established enunciative field that marks the Japanese and Chinese as the same, and these articles reveal the struggle to undo that marking.

Notes

¹ “How to Tell Your Friends From the Japs,” *Time*, 22 December 1941: 33.

² “How to Tell Japs From the Chinese,” *Life*, 22 December 1941: 81-2.

³ “No Certain Way to Tell Japanese From Chinese,” *Science News Letter*, 20 December 1941: 394. Hrdlicka’s influence extends beyond the audience of *Science News Letter*, for he also worked as an official advisor to Franklin Roosevelt. Eric Sunquist writes, “he advised the President, with Roosevelt seeming encouraged, that Japanese perfidy and brutality had a specific racial basis measurable in such phenomena as skull size.” [Eric J. Sundquist, “Japanese-American Internment: A Reappraisal,” *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1988): 529-547.]

⁴ *Science News Letter*, 394.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

⁶ Foucault, 99.

⁷ Foucault, 104.

⁸ Michele Barret, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, (Stanford University Press, 1991), 126.

⁹ Foucault, 124, [emphasis mine].

¹⁰ John Tagg, *Grounds of Dispute: Art History, Culture Politics and the Discursive Field* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 85.

¹¹ Tagg, 103.

¹² Tagg, 103.

¹³ Foucault, 124.

¹⁴ Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, *Prejudice, War and the Constitution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 62.

¹⁵ Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 76.

¹⁶Barthes, 76.

¹⁷Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962),3.

¹⁸Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988) , 101.

¹⁹Daniels, 1988, 111.

²⁰Daniels, 1988, 101.

²¹Daniels, 1988, 111-112.

²²tenBroek, et al.

²³tenBroek, et al.,23.

²⁴tenBroek, et al., 62.

²⁵As quoted in tenBroek, et al., 26.

²⁶Foucault, 124.

²⁷Barthes, 76.

²⁸Daniels, 1962 ,42.

²⁹Daniels, 1988, 139.

³⁰Daniels, 1988,151.

³¹Daniels, 1988, 134.

³²Daniels, 1988, 144.

³³Daniels, 1988, 144.

³⁴Daniels, 1988, 137.

³⁵John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Random House, 1986), 5.

³⁶Dower, 7.

³⁷Dower, 7.

³⁸Dower, 20.

³⁹Daniels, 1988, 170.

⁴⁰Foucault, 95.

⁴¹Foucault, 95.

⁴²Foucault, 95, [emphasis mine]

⁴³Daniels, 1988, 145.

⁴⁴Daniels, 1988

⁴⁵Daniels, 1988, 145.

⁴⁶*Time*, 33.

⁴⁷*Time*, 33.

⁴⁸*Time*, 33.

⁴⁹John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 35.

⁵⁰William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 77.

⁵¹*Time*, 33.

⁵²In regard to the evidential status of the photograph, or its capacity to depict the “real” see, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 77. Bourdieu writes, “But at a deeper level, only in the name of a naive realism can one see as a realist a representation of the real which owes its objective appearance not to its agreement with the very reality of things (since this is only ever conveyed through socially conditioned forms of perception) but rather to a conformity with rules which define its syntax within its social use, to the social definition of the objective vision of the world; in conferring upon photography a guarantee of realism, society is merely confirming itself in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective.”

⁵³*Time*, 33, [emphasis mine].

⁵⁴*Time*, 33.

⁵⁵*Time*, 33.

⁵⁶Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 4.

⁵⁷Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 131.

⁵⁸*Science News Letter*, 394

⁵⁹Daniels, 1962, 66.

⁶⁰Virginia E. Smith, "Has Food Influenced the Stature of the Japanese People?" *Hygeia: The Health Magazine* (January-December 1936): 555-56; See also H.L. Shapiro, "Certain Aspects of Race," *Asia* (June 1940): 323-26.

⁶¹Smith, 555.

⁶²Smith, 556

⁶³Smith, 556, [emphasis mine].

⁶⁴*Life*, 81, [emphasis mine].

⁶⁵Sundquist, 537.

⁶⁶For an examination of the animalization of people of Japanese descent (and of Japan's depiction of Americans); see also Dower, especially pp. 77-93 and 182-87.

⁶⁷*Life*, 81-82.

⁶⁸*Life*, 82.

⁶⁹Tagg, 1992, 105.