

The National Association for Ethnic Studies

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Abstracts

**Pedagogies of Race: The Politics of Whiteness in an African
American Studies Course**

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This paper evaluates students' arguments for a color-blind society to avoid discussions related to the continued existence of racism in USA culture. Relatedly, this writer finds that as a black woman her status as facilitator in the classroom is directly challenged, on occasion, and that race and gender play a primary role in students' perception of classroom material and how she is perceived. Classroom discussions related to historical texts reveal that structures of domination have slanted perception of black and white people in U.S. culture. Finally, a key to open dialogue about race and racism, primarily for white students, is to explain and demonstrate the invisibility of whiteness or white privilege in American society.

Social Distances of Whites to Racial or Ethnic Minorities

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And

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Prior research on social distance between racial or ethnic groups in the United States has focused mainly on attitudes of white Americans toward African Americans. Extending previous research, this study analyzes social distances of whites to racial or ethnic minority groups by investigating how whites feel about blacks, Asians, and Hispanics. The main hypothesis is that whites feel coolest toward blacks, warmest toward Asians, and somewhat in between toward Hispanics. The 2002 General Social Survey and ordinary least squares regression are used to test the hypothesis. The results indicate that contrary to our hypothesis, whites feel coolest toward Asians, warmest toward Hispanics, and somewhat in between toward blacks. Nativity, religious similarity/dissimilarity, racial hierarchy and tension, proximity of the country of origin, and group diversity may offer plausible explanations for the unexpected result. This study also examines which types of whites are

more likely to maintain a greater or smaller social distance with the three minority groups. Implications of the findings for race and ethnic relations today are addressed.

Key words: Social distance, whites, minorities, blacks, Hispanics, Asians

**Identity and the Legislative Decision Making Process:
A Case Study of the Maryland State Legislature**

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Both politicians and the mass public believe that identity influences political behavior yet, political scientists have failed to fully detail how identity is salient for all political actors not just minorities and women legislators. To what extent do racial, gendered, and race/gendered identities affect the legislation decision process? To test this proposition, I examine how race and gender based identities shape the legislative decisions of Black women in comparison to White men, White women, and Black men. I find that Black men and women legislators interviewed believe that racial identity is relevant in their decision making processes, while White men and women members of the Maryland state legislature had difficulty deciding whether their identities mattered and had even more trouble articulating how or why they did. African American women legislators in Maryland articulate or describe an intersectional identity as a meaningful and significant component of their work as representatives. More specifically, Black women legislators use their identity to interpret legislation differently due to their race/gender identities.

**The *Dear Diane* Letters and the *Bintel Brief*: The Experiences of
Chinese and Jewish Immigrant Women in Encountering America**

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University of Kansas**

This paper employs assimilation theory to examine the experiences of Chinese and Jewish immigrant women at similar stages of their encounters with America. By focusing on the letters in *Dear Diane: Letters from Our Daughters* (1983), and *Dear Diane: Questions and Answers for Asian American Women* (1983), and earlier in the century, the letters translated and printed in *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward* (1971), this paper compares and contrasts the experiences of Chinese and Jewish women in America. It concludes that, though they have their own unique

characteristics, both Chinese and Jewish women shared many common experiences, such as mother-daughter conflict and identity crisis, and both of them faced a difficult challenge in assimilating into American life.

“For Heart, Patriotism, and National Dignity”: The Italian Language Press in New York City and Constructions of Africa, Race, and Civilization

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“For Heart, Patriotism, and National Dignity”: The Italian Language Press in New York City and Constructions of Africa, Race, and Civilization” examines how mainstream and radical newspapers employed Africa as a trope for savage behavior by analyzing their discussion of wage slavery, imperialism, lynching, and colonialism, in particular Italian imperialist ventures into northern Africa in the 1890s and Libya in 1911-1912. The Italian language press constructed Africa as a *sinister, dark*, continent, representing the lowest rung of the racial hierarchy. In expressing moral outrage over American violence and discrimination against Italians, the press utilized this image of Africa to emphatically convey its shock and disgust. In particular, Italian *prominenti* newspapers capitalized on this racial imagery to construct a narrative of *Italianness* and Italian superiority in order to combat unflattering depictions of Italian immigrants arriving in the United States.

Exchange, Conflict and Coercion: The Ritual Dynamics of the Notting Hill Carnival Past and Present

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And

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This study investigates patterns of social relationships involving the Notting Hill Carnival. Two theoretical approaches are employed – elementary relations theory and structural ritualization theory – to explain how the carnival has been strategically used in very different ways by various groups to accomplish their objectives. We suggest the Notting Hill Carnival is a special collective ritual event that has played a

crucial role in three quite different structured arrangements involving coercion, conflict, and exchange since its beginning in Trinidad and subsequently in London. Four time periods where distinct changes in the nature of these relationships have occurred are examined: (1) 1800s Trinidad; (2) the Notting Hill Carnival from 1965-1970; (3) the Notting Hill Carnival from 1971-1989; and (4) the Notting Hill Carnival from 1990-present. This study contributes to the existing literature by focusing on how ritual and these types of relationships are intertwined in the production of the carnival. Implications of this research and possible directions for future research are also discussed.

**“We Are Joined Together Temporarily” The Tragic Mulatto,
Fusion Monster in Lee Frost’s *The Thing with Two Heads***

**Justin Ponder
Marian University**

In Lee Frost’s 1972 film *The Thing with Two Heads*, a white bigot unknowingly has his head surgically grafted onto the body of a black man. From that moment on, these two personalities compete for control of their shared body with ridiculous results. Somewhere between horror and comedy, this Blaxploitation film occupies a strange place in interracial discourse. Throughout American literature, the subgenre of tragic mulatto fiction has critiqued segregation by focusing on the melodramatic lives of those divided by the color line. Most tragic mulatto scholarship has analyzed overtly political novels written by African American writers from the Reconstruction Era or Harlem Renaissance, and examining these overtly political texts has produced valuable ways to understand American racism’s harsh reality. Beyond this focus on reality, however, *The Thing with Two Heads* is a valuable contribution to the field of tragic mulatto studies because its focus on the fantastic plot of a black/white conjoined twin provides opportunities to theorize race in ways that more reality-bound works cannot. This article explores how this horror-comedy articulates different discourses regarding interracialism, conjoined twins, and monstrosity in ways that reveal much about American ideas about race, selfhood, and identity.

The Possibilities of Asian American Citizenship: A Critical Race and Gender Analysis

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Conventionally, citizenship is understood as a legal category of membership in a national polity that ensures equal rights among its citizens. This conventional understanding, however, begs disruption when the histories and experiences of marginalized groups are brought to the fore. Equal citizenship in all its forms for marginalized populations has yet to be realized. For Asian Americans, rights presumably accorded to the legal status of citizenship have proven tenuous across different historical and political moments. Throughout U.S. history, “Asian American” or “Oriental” men and women have been designated aliens against whom white male and female citizenships have been legitimized. These categories of inclusion and exclusion—“citizen” and “alien”—are mutually constitutive; members are legitimate only when defined against the exclusion of “others.” Citizenship must be conceptualized as a broader set of social and cultural memberships and exclusions beyond political rights and legal status. This article examines how scholarly works engage citizenship formations of “Asian American” women and men. It also asks: Are there modes of citizenship, other than legal status and rights, to explain the experiences and histories of Asian American men and women, as well as provide anti-racist, feminist sites of resistance in the struggle for equality? Four patterns emerge in the analysis of racialized and gendered citizenship discourses with respect to Asian American women and men. First, many scholarly inquiries do *not* complicate meanings of citizenship beyond *legal status* or the universal male referent. Second, examinations in critical race studies and immigration history confront assumptions of citizenship *as legal status* and *rights* through a lens of racialization. Third, works on citizenship that either center women and/or engender its subjects examine culture as a space of *identity* formation and *political activity* and analyze both race and gender. Culture, as either a productive or debilitating site of resistance for Asian American women and men, is also contested. The final theme addresses language education as a realm of citizenship and national *identity* formations with racialized, but not explicitly gendered, implications.

Dressed to Cross: Narratives of Resistance and Integration in Sei Shônagon's *The Pillow Book* and Yone Noguchi's *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl*

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The Pillow Book by Sei Shônagon, Empress Sadako's lady in waiting from about 993-1000, offers rich detail about the meaning and power of dress during the Heian period [794-1185]. Throughout Yone Noguchi's novel *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl* (1902), Morning Glory, a newly arrived Japanese immigrant to the U.S., experiments with a multitude of different identities through clothes. Both narratives appropriate (cross-) dressing as a means of overcoming gender, cultural, and class borders. Shônagon and Noguchi engage in "authorial cross-dressing" to inhabit a social, cultural, and national space onto which they only have a precarious hold. It is especially the portrayal of what Marjorie Garber has delineated as a "category crisis" that links Japanese medieval writing and early fictional accounts by Japanese American authors. This article demonstrates that cross-dressing originates in moments of personal crisis and that its practice is sustained by the anxiety of cultural dislocation. The parallel identified between *The Pillow Book* and *The American Diary*—both texts largely ignored by academia—promises to clarify further early Japanese immigrants' experimentation with their bodies, citizenship, and other markers of identity to create a Japanese American subjectivity.

Keywords: Asian American Literature, Women and Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Cross-Dressing, Immigration, Medieval Japan

Economic Development at the Cost of Indigenous Land

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The notion of economic development has affected the general welfare of indigenous groups worldwide. The major conflict has been on land ownership claims on which they have occupied for many years and government quest to bring about economic development. The indigenous groups have struggled to retain their lands despite appealing to both customary and international laws. The paper argues as to whether customary law and international law are vital sources for indigenous land claims. It also presents empirical cases to land claims while making these arguments within the context of economic development.

Keywords: Economic development, indigenous groups, land rights, law.

Ethnicity and Financial Exclusion: How Fringe Banking has taken hold in Ethnic and Immigrant Neighborhoods

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The latest FDIC survey (2012) on Americans excluded from regular banking services reported that between 8% and 20% of American households have either little or no relationship with a bank, savings institution, credit union, or other mainstream financial service providers. The only option for these customers, many of whom are ethnic minorities and immigrant communities, is to turn to AFS – Alternative Financial Services—the official name of fringe banking. Fringe banks like Ace Cash Express, EZLoans, or Mr. Payroll deliberately target the low- to moderate-income inner-city residents, often because these neighborhoods have become deserted by regular banks, making it difficult for these groups to apply for loans, credit cards, and mortgages. The American banking industry has indeed become polarized between banks in the top tier of the system who cater to the wealthier and less risky customers located in the affluent suburbs, and a market of second and third tier outlets, ranging from pawnshops and payday lenders to check-cashing outlets and cash-and-carry agencies. These outlets practice usurious interest rates and are booming today in the wake of the recent financial meltdown.

Keywords: credit, fringe banking, payday lending, pawnshop, ethnicity, financial exclusion, discrimination, redlining

Aesthetic and Social Community: Multicultural Poetry and the Anthologizing of Poems

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Scholars from various disciplines have explored the concept of multiculturalism from the perspectives of citizenship, recognition, representation, tokenism, constitutionalism, and other vantage points, with politics and education receiving most of the attention.¹ While many efforts have been made to explore these aspects of multiculturalism, its significance in poetry, particularly in poetry's composition and critique, has not been duly taken into account. Multicultural poetry designates a critical abstraction in which poetry is classified by relation to a communal culture, history, or customs. In this definition, multicultural poetry is therefore inclusive of poetry written by ethnic minorities, women, non-mainstream religious practitioners, and members of other communities. To maintain a focus, this article delimits its discussion to poetry's relationship with ethnicity

and probes the interplay between aesthetic and ethnicity in three sections—Mainstream Poetry Anthologies: Tastes, Schools, and the Issue of History, Multicultural Poetry Anthologies: Situated Poetry and Group Poetics, and Ethnopoetics as a Choice. This article suggests that ethnopoetics, or ethnic group poetics, is a choice of the literary and social communities engaged in artistic creation. Moreover, this article argues that multicultural poetry makes revolutionary changes to the definitions of “aesthetic” and of “poetry.”

Keywords: multicultural poetry, aesthetic, community, Asian American poetry, American poetry, ethnopoetics, poetry anthologies, multiculturalism