

Beyond an Alliance of Color: The African American Impact on Modern Japan

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Few people realize the extent to which Japanese people have interacted with and been influenced by African Americans and their history. Japanese high school students today at least read excerpts from original works by Booker T. Washington, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Martin Luther King Jr., and Marian Anderson in Ministry of Education–approved English textbooks.¹ Yet no Japanese history book pays homage to those African Americans who have played a substantial role in U.S.-Japanese relations since their earliest phase: Pyrrus Concer, a former slave who came to Japan before Commodore Perry;² Carrie Wilson, the daughter of a former slave from Missouri, who married Masumizu Kuninosuke, an early Japanese settler in the famed Wakamatsu Colony in Sacramento, California, together with whom she heralded a history of Japanese immigrants of African American heritage;³ or the Philadelphia Royal Giants of the Negro League who

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visited Japan in 1927, four years earlier than the (all-white) All Star American Major League baseball team.⁴

Ever since the American media played up derogatory remarks on African Americans by Japan's Liberal Democratic Party politicians in the 1980s, the public seems to refuse to think any further, but take it for granted that all Japanese are racists who avoid contacts with African American people. It is time to bring to light long-ignored Japanese readings of African American history, literature, and struggle and investigate why the story of Japanese interactions with African Americans has been muted rather than celebrated.⁵

There are some reasons for the silence. Since the early twentieth century, the unity of the "people of color," Japanese and African Americans, posed a menace to Washington and also a threat to U.S.-Japanese friendship. The U.S. State Department had suspected and looked hard for evidence that African Americans and Japanese immigrants were forming a racial (antiwhite) conspiracy to stage a revolt against Washington.⁶ In fact, as Tokyo-Washington diplomacy became estranged in the 1930s, Japanese propaganda called for a trans-Pacific racial alliance between Japanese and African Americans as an anti-American (antiwhite) gesture.

Regardless, it is undeniable that Japanese views of and interactions with African Americans have affected the discourse of Japan's own identity in more than one way. Throughout the twentieth century, African American struggles for freedom and equality have inspired Japanese people far beyond the doomed rhetoric of alliance under the Japanese banner of Pan-Asianism. Those Japanese who attempted to build different kinds of trans-Pacific relations with African American people in fact dissented from the troublesome race ideology of the nation, challenged it, and envisioned a better Japan. By recognizing the complexity, contradiction, and potential of Japanese relations with African Americans, it becomes possible to construct a narrative in which African Americans receive due place in mainstream Japanese history. Only then does it also become possible to reclaim the trans-Pacific Afro-Asian century and look beyond.

To predetermine that skin color dictated the definition of Japanese attitudes toward African and African American peoples demands extreme caution.⁷ As Japan's full-scale Westernization began in the latter nineteenth

century, the nation's leaders and intellectuals tried to escape the fateful notion of innate racial inferiority, a pet "scientific" notion of the time, and struggled to advance their status in the white-ruled world. Japanese people developed different images of African Americans from the images of African people, because African Americans were colored *yet* modern and westernized.⁸ The Japanese displayed a mixture of curiosity and admiration regarding African American political struggles in the so-called land of democracy. In spite of their African origin, history of slavery, and skin color, African American people were westernized, that is, thoroughly versed in the American traditions of democracy and capitalism. The Japanese leaders were inclined to view African Americans as a model for young Japan in its endeavors to reach a "higher" level of civilization and become a member of the Western world.

The official record of the Iwakura Mission of 1871–1873 shows an early example of such elite Japanese high opinion of African Americans. The investigative mission traveled the world and observed conditions of different cultures and civilizations of North America, Europe, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia and regarded the people in Africa as innately backward. Once in the United States, the mission was impressed by the advancement of African American congressmen and businessmen during the Reconstruction period. In Washington, D.C., the mission visited a school for some four thousand freedmen administered by African Americans themselves and thought highly of the classic European education the school offered its students. The report states: "It is obvious that skin color has no bearing on one's intellect. Therefore, those ambitious blacks who saw the importance of education strove to learn and work harder and became great intellectuals, for whom uneducated whites were no match."⁹ Japanese leaders, while still insecure about racial differences between Europeans and non-Europeans, nonetheless affirmed their hope and belief that the good act of learning could eventually help them catch up with the "superior" white race. Thus, at the turn of the century, Japanese students were studying not only at Ivy League schools, but also at Howard University, Fisk University, Tuskegee Institute, and Hampton Institute.

African American literature provided an earlier medium through which Japanese people learned about the black struggle in the United States. After *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first translated and published in Japanese in 1896,

readers demanded to hear the voice of African Americans themselves, not that of white authors.¹⁰ Booker T. Washington's life story was introduced to Japan in 1908 in a book entitled *Ijin no seinen jidai* [Younger days of the great men]. In 1919 and 1939, his autobiography *Up from Slavery* was translated and published with a Japanese title, *Koku ijin* [Great man of the black race].¹¹

The Japanese perception of African Americans through the lens of skin color grew warped, however, as they gained confidence in their ability to "modernize" themselves and progress to a "higher" level of civilization along with white westerners. The Japanese conveniently exempted themselves from the fateful category of colored races and demanded to be treated as an "honorary" white race with a series of accomplishments in military and industrial growth and colonial projects. They downplayed the importance of their physical identity as an Asian race and emphasized their psychological identity as a European race. Modern Japan's dualistic racial identity developed as a tool for its imperialism, as it served to legitimize Japan's status as a colonial power in the eyes of Asians as well as westerners.¹² With such a twisted racial rhetoric in the background, the Japanese early praise for African Americans turned questionable in its sincerity, and the call for their alliance became mere propaganda.

It is well known that some African American leaders were attracted to Japan's Pan-Asianism for its promise to liberate all the colored races from the yoke of white rule. After Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), Richard Theodore Greener, an African American consul at Vladivostok, came to regard Japan as a hope for the colored people.¹³ With the rise of Pan-Africanism among African Americans, some even explored the possibility of directly negotiating with Japanese politicians and leaders so as to promote their presumed mutual interests otherwise ignored in regular Washington diplomacy (e.g., the universal advancement of the status of the colored races). After World War I, when the Japanese delegation sojourned in New York City on its way to the Paris Peace Conference, Ida Wells-Barnett, Monroe Trotter, and William C. J. Walker—all of the African American delegation to the conference—paid it a courtesy call.¹⁴

Some African American leaders were cautious about an alliance precisely due to Japan's dualistic race identity. In 1929, James Weldon Johnson, the official for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP), participated in the third conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations held in Kyoto and also became the first African American to be invited to the Japanese emperor's garden party. He knew that the topic of racism was a taboo at this conference and even sympathized with the fact that the Japanese side could not possibly raise the issue. He felt that in light of the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924, the two nations' diplomacy was dangerously treading on thin ice. Indeed, Japan's commitment to people of color proved flimsy, as it depended largely on the outcome of such dealings with the United States.¹⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, a key figure in the evolution of Pan-Africanism, visited Japan and received a celebrity treatment in December 1936 after a tour through Manchuria. He maintained that Japan's Pan-Asianism at least posed a serious challenge to white supremacy, a catalyst for liberation of the colored people in the world. Even after Pearl Harbor, he held onto such a view. At the same time, he was too aware of Japanese atrocities to believe in Japan's propaganda. Thus, throughout the war, he remained ambivalent about Japan's cause.¹⁶

Japanese imperialists took interest in an alliance with African Americans only as a fancy to envision nonwhite racial blocks in the world. There were those Japanese who supported Pan-Africanism because of its seeming consonance with Pan-Asianism—"Return Asia to Asians" under the banner of Japanese imperialism. In 1925, Mitsukawa Kametarō, a journalist and professor of colonial studies, published *Kokujin mondai* [Problems confronting black people], the first scholarly reference to the issue, which surveyed racism in American society and the corrosion of black civilization in Africa by the European powers. Mitsukawa was also a founding member of Yūzonsha (Society of Those Who Hope to Survive), along with Kita Ikki and Ōkawa Shūmei, the so-called revolutionary ultranationalists who called for Japan's leadership in "liberating" Asia from the West. To Mitsukawa, Marcus Garvey's call "return Africa to the Africans" was a powerful reminder that Japanese and African Americans should work together toward the similar goal of "restoring" their respective racial empires.

Mitsukawa was especially resentful at the Western powers' denial of the racial equality clause proposed by the Japanese delegate at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. Asians, Africans, and African Americans were all oppressed by the West, he argued. Yet, while Asians (except for the

Japanese) and Africans were not ready to stand up against white imperialism on their own, African Americans should be capable of organizing and carrying out a revolutionary scheme due to the fact that they had already tried that within the American system. Therefore a unity between the Japanese (leaders of the yellow race) and African Americans (leaders of the black race) should be able to overcome white supremacy. Mitsukawa did not forget to clarify one point, however: the Japanese, the race radiating like the sun, were to nurture the young seed, African Americans, for a racial revolution. In this way, he effectively relegated Pan-Africanism to merely one branch of Japan's Pan-Asianism.¹⁷

Most Japanese imperialists did not believe that a racial alliance with African Americans would promote Japan's vital interests. Perhaps the only strategic value the Japanese government saw in African Americans was the possibility to deploy them in a propaganda campaign against white racism.¹⁸ Once the Pacific War broke out, the Japanese foreign ministry published a series of pamphlets on dismal living conditions of African Americans to expose the brutality of white America. For example, a sociological analysis of urban discrimination affecting African American living, the first of its kind conducted by a Japanese scholar, Kawamura Tadao, was published in 1943 posthumously, with his scholarly analysis turned into mere anti-American propaganda.¹⁹ In collaboration with the army, the foreign ministry also planned on featuring African American POWs in Japan's radio propaganda programs broadcast in English such as *Hinomaru Hour* and *Humanity Calls* so they would talk about discrimination in American society. There was even a plan to recruit and "Japanize" African American POWs by teaching them Japanese culture, spirit, and ethics so as to prove the superiority of Japan's humanity.²⁰

In spite of such willingness to use African Americans to criticize the United States, the wartime Japanese government did not hope or plan for African Americans to gain power and status should Japan's Pan-Asianism triumph. On the contrary, the wartime Japanese government secretly believed in American (white/Western) notions of racial hierarchy. After all, Japan's Pan-Asianism merely constituted an attempt to escape from the cul-de-sac of Japanese modernization bound to a Western paradigm of racial hierarchy. Japan's Pan-Asianism was well nested within the Western version

of a worldwide racial hierarchy. The Western attitude of elevating the Japanese to the status of honorary westerners was patronizing, as the West still saw Japan as a unique exception in Asia, one not quite equal to the West. Yet modern Japan's dualistic racial identity needed the validity of white supremacy, because only on it could Japan build its own superiority in Asia.²¹

In fact, the actual Japanese wartime view of future relations with the whites/Westerners proved neither as monolithic nor as hostile as Japanese propaganda. Nowhere in the rhetoric of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere did Japan propose a concrete framework for a future relationship with the white race (on an equal basis or not). Neither did it rank the white race on the same plateau as the Koreans and Formosans, who were described as suitable merely for carrying out menial labor. Most wartime planning by the Japanese government simply suggested the wisdom of coexistence, or partnership, with the white Western world after the war's end, be it regional or global.²² Imperial Japan's interest in an alliance with African Americans was a mere facade.

On the other hand, there were Japanese Marxists who imagined and defined a different kind of alliance with African Americans in their anti-imperialist and anticolonialist fight. Since the 1890s, Japanese Marxists had constituted a strong force in Japan's democratization movement. In fact, early contacts between Japanese émigré Marxists and African Americans began in the turn-of-the-century United States. Though race was definitely a point of reference for their interest in African Americans, these Japanese Marxists stood above Japan's dualistic identity, as they were not bound by the imperatives of statecraft. Their efforts often challenged the so-called national interest as defined and pursued by state agencies. As such, their history of interactions with African Americans does not easily conform to the conventional frame of U.S.-Japanese relations. This, of course, does not suggest their activities as merely peripheral. On the contrary, their little-known history deserves to expand the trans-Pacific imagination beyond the better-known Pan-Asianistic enterprise.

Fundamentally speaking, Japanese Marxists' interest in an alliance with African Americans reflects the same principle held by American socialists

and communists. From its founding in 1901, the American Socialist Party allowed African American membership since that group, too, formed part of the working class. Then some socialist factions shifted to ally themselves with more radical communist factions. In 1922, when the fourth world congress of the Communist International emphasized the importance of African Americans as a revolutionary resource, their racial struggle at home assumed international significance in promoting anti-imperialistic campaigns in Asia and Africa.²³ In this vein, Japanese Marxists regarded African Americans as the vanguard of the world's proletarian movement.

Katayama Sen (1860–1933), a pioneering Japanese communist and the only Asian (in his lifetime) to be appointed to the presidium of the third Communist International, regarded the United States' race relations as a reflection of capitalistic contradiction. Typical of Japanese intellectuals in the late nineteenth century, he came to the United States at the age twenty-four and became a Christian socialist while studying at Yale's divinity school. After participating in a failed socialist movement in Japan, he returned to the United States in 1914 and two years later in New York City adopted bolshevism. He became involved in the founding of the American Communist Party and cultivated working relations with radical African Americans and Caribbean émigrés in the city, and later with Japanese immigrants across the continent as well. Katayama became acquainted with Claude McKay, a Jamaican-born poet, through his involvement in publishing *The Liberator*, a radical journal.²⁴ It was in this journal that McKay published his famous sonnet "If We Must Die," which defended black rights.

After Katayama's departure for Moscow in 1921, Ishigaki Eitarō, a proletarian artist, took over Katayama's leadership among Japanese émigrés in New York City. Ishigaki expressed in his art works his empathy for the African American fight for freedom. His painting *The Noose (or, Lynching)* (1931) commemorates the Scottsboro case in Alabama, a sensational arrest of nine African American men, aged thirteen to twenty-one, on a questionable charge of the gang rape of two white women. *Bonus March* (1932) commemorates the march of World War I veterans and their families in Washington, D.C., demanding long-overdue war service bonuses, only to be brutally crushed by the federal troops. The painting depicts a proud African American man carrying a wounded white man in his arms and gazing forward

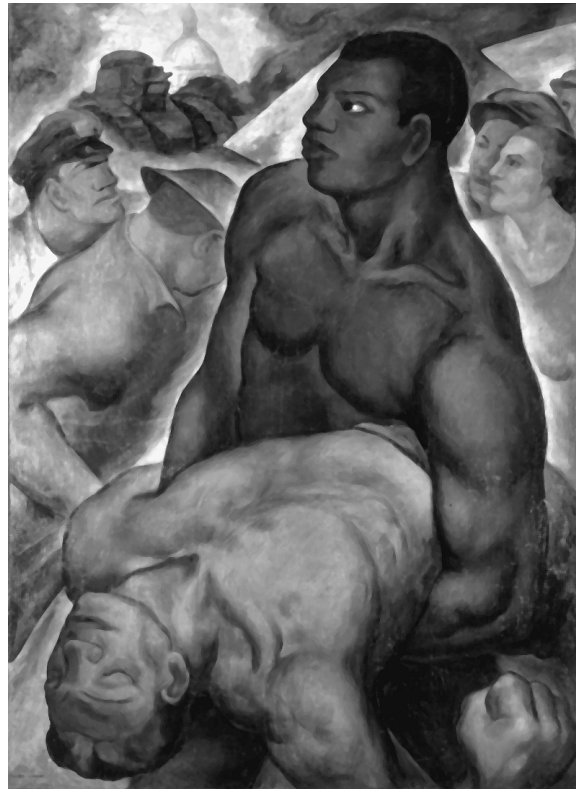


Figure 1 *Bonus March* (1932). Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama

with determination (see fig. 1). *K.K.K.* (1936) highlights one African American man, amid a Ku Klux Klan assault, reaching for his attacker's white hood and trying to remove it—a moment of triumph when the assailant's mystical superiority is about to be stripped off (see fig. 2). Together with his wife Ayako, who also wrote and spoke out against the war and Japanese military propaganda, he became acquainted with NAACP leaders such as James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and Arthur Schomburg, among others.²⁵

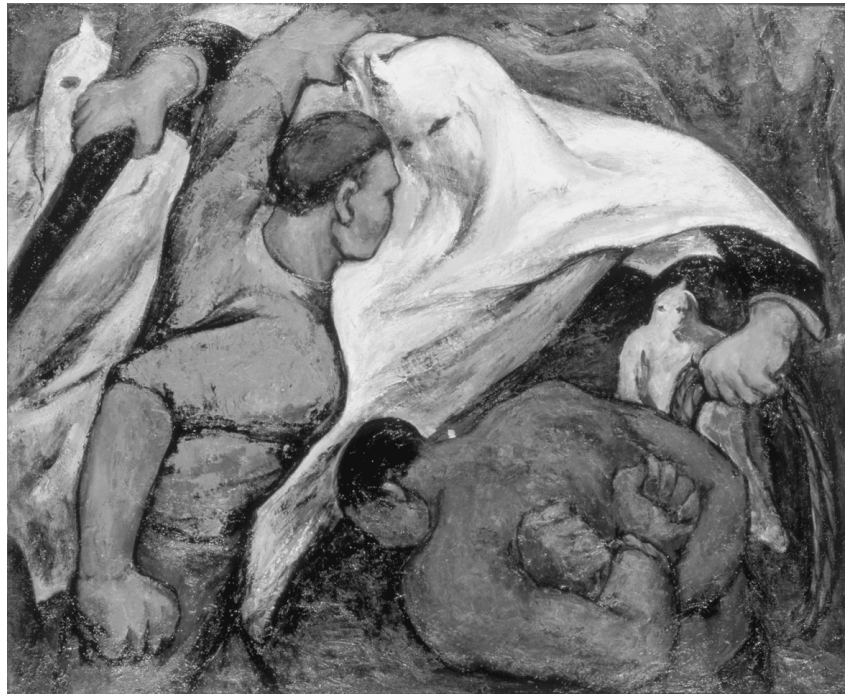


Figure 2 K.K.K. (1936). Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama

Interestingly, Marxists in Japan also affirmed their ties with African Americans and did so with a pro-American stance. In 1923, critic Akamatsu Katsumaro predicted in *Kaizō* [Reconstruction], Japan's leading intellectual journal, that African Americans would eventually help overthrow Japan's Pan-Asianism as part of their racial-proletarian movement. Nationalistic struggles in the contemporary world were by nature racial, he argued. Because Japan's Pan-Asianism was a mere disguise for Japan's dogma of its own racial supremacy, he claimed, it was time for Asia to wage its true racial fight—one both anti-imperial and proletarian. To do so, according to Akamatsu, the alliance with African Americans was indispensable.

Though Akamatsu was in no way optimistic about racial tolerance among labor unionists in the United States, he nonetheless believed that Moscow's

Comintern would eventually convince Americans that it was class, not race, that mattered. Only then would the United States stand up as a champion of all workers of the world (regardless of race) and join Asia's fight against Japan's imperialism. In this context, African Americans would exercise invaluable leadership, argued Akamatsu. In stark contrast to the aforementioned Mitsukawa, however, Akamatsu dismissed Marcus Garvey's separatist movement as "chauvinistic," "escapist," and even "racist." Rather, Akamatsu dreamed that Japanese people would join all Americans, both black and white, Asians, Africans, and Europeans to win an ultimate victory of social, political, and economic freedom and equality.²⁶

By the 1930s, an image of African Americans as revolutionaries had been firmly established among leftist Japanese intellectuals. In 1930, *Kaizō* printed an article "Kokujin hakugai monogatari" [A story of persecutions of black people] by Maedagawa Kōichirō, a proletarian writer who had lived in New York City in the 1920s. The article introduced to Japanese readers a series of revolts of the early nineteenth century as an expression of the African American racial (nationalistic) awakening—from Gabriel's Uprising of 1800, the Louisiana uprising of 1811, the Vesey uprising of 1822, to Nat Turner's revolt in 1831.²⁷ In 1937, Hirayama Yonezō translated a story on Toussaint-Louverture, a leader of Haiti's independence movement, who greatly inspired the African American emancipation movement. In the translator's afterword, Hirayama wrote: "For example, in the case of America's black people, to view them as the scions of Toussaint is fundamentally different from viewing them as a descendent of (passive and powerless) slaves emancipated by Lincoln." Thus, he reiterated the importance of evaluating historic events according to a yardstick of the oppressed yet proud colored races.²⁸

In the field of literature, too, those who introduced African American works often did so with a proletarian sense of mission. In 1930, *Amerika sentan bungaku sōsho* [A collection of avant-garde American literature] included a book *Sentan tanpen shū* [An anthology of avant-garde short stories], which introduced works by Sherwood Anderson, Michael Gold, Jim Tally, and Theodore Dreiser. It also included three African American works: "Fern" from *Cane* (1923) by Jean Toomer, *Dark Princess* (1928) by W. E. B. Du Bois, and *The Fire in the Flint* (1924) by Walter White, all as a beacon

signaling that African American racial emancipation was taking place as part of the world proletarian struggle.²⁹

Langston Hughes, though never a member of the Communist Party, was one of the African Americans who cultivated close ties with Japanese leftists. In 1933, during a tour of Moscow, Hughes met Sano Seki, a communist exile from Japan, a renowned theatrical producer, and also a friend of Ishigaki Eitarō. Sano arranged Hughes's visit to Japan on his way from Moscow to Beijing. Once in Japan, Hughes was overwhelmed by the welcome given by Sano's former colleagues at the Tsukiji Mini Theater, then a center for leftist avant-garde performances, and also by Japan's leftist intellectual artists, writers, and journalists. To his surprise, Hughes found his portrait featured on the cover of the September 1932 issue of *shin ei-bei bungaku* [the newer spirit in british and american literature] (the original title featured all lowercase letters), the Japanese proletarian literary journal, which had placed such literary laureates as James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, and Sinclair Lewis on its cover.³⁰

Unlike Du Bois, Hughes flatly rejected Japan's Pan-Asianism. Hughes was disturbed that Japanese media reports on crimes committed by Koreans placed an unnecessary emphasis on their racial character, just like the American media's treatment of African Americans.³¹ He recognized Japanese racism against other Asians as a fueling force for their aggression. Due to his insights into the nature of Japan's Pan-Asianism, Hughes did not receive the Japanese government's welcome extended to Du Bois. On the contrary, on his second visit to Japan after a several-week sojourn in China, Hughes was detained by the Japanese police and questioned about the purpose of his visits to China and Japan and also his relationship with Japanese leftists. Until his departure from Japan two days later, two plainclothes police officers followed him everywhere. One Japanese was also arrested for his contact with Hughes during his first stay in Japan.³²

Like Hughes, Japanese Marxists reiterated the need for Japanese people to become aware of their own racism toward other Asians. Among them was Hayasaka Jirō, a proletarian critic who wrote introductions on the African American writers featured in *Sentan tanpen shū*. Hayasaka criticized that the so-called *Sen-jin bungaku* and *Taiwan-jin bungaku*, a contemporary genre of literary works by Korean and Taiwanese colonial subjects written in

Japanese, constituted a fake symbol of the benevolent Japanization of Asia, as such proving no match for African American literature. Hayasaka felt that Japan stood far behind the United States because Japanese people remained unwilling to hear and understand the voice of the oppressed Asians under Japan's aggression.³³ Just like Akamatsu, Hayasaka regarded American society as ready for both the proletarian revolution and for overcoming the racial barrier.

The aforementioned artist Ishigaki Eitarō also chose the Chinese struggle against Japanese oppression as much as a favorite theme for his paintings as the African American fight for freedom. His painting *Man on the Horse* (1932), depicting a plain-clothed Chinese guerrilla confronting the Japanese army, heavily equipped with airplanes and warships, became the cover for *New Masses*, an American communist journal, and is exhibited today at the Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia. Then, in 1937, on the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, he painted *Flight*, a haunting portrayal of two Chinese women escaping Japanese bombing, running with three children past one man lying dead on the ground.³⁴ In the same year, Ishigaki completed under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Art Project two murals (inspired by his Mexican artist friends) for the Harlem court house on the theme of American history. These murals—one entitled *American Independence*, the other *Emancipation*—perhaps expressed his hope that American democracy would eventually emancipate Asian people from Japan's fascism as well. It was therefore both ironic and tragic that in 1938, the New York City Council found it offensive that a Japanese not only took it on himself to interpret American history, but also publicly gave African Americans a heroic appearance. Worse, the council also condemned Ishigaki of painting Abraham Lincoln “with Negroid features.” The council subsequently removed and destroyed these murals.³⁵ Only several study pieces for the murals remain: they are exhibited today at a modern art museum in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, where Ishigaki's native whaling town is located. (See fig. 3.)

Japan's defeat in World War II, the collapse of Japan's empire, and the cold war in Asia brought to Japanese people a renewed vision of racialized

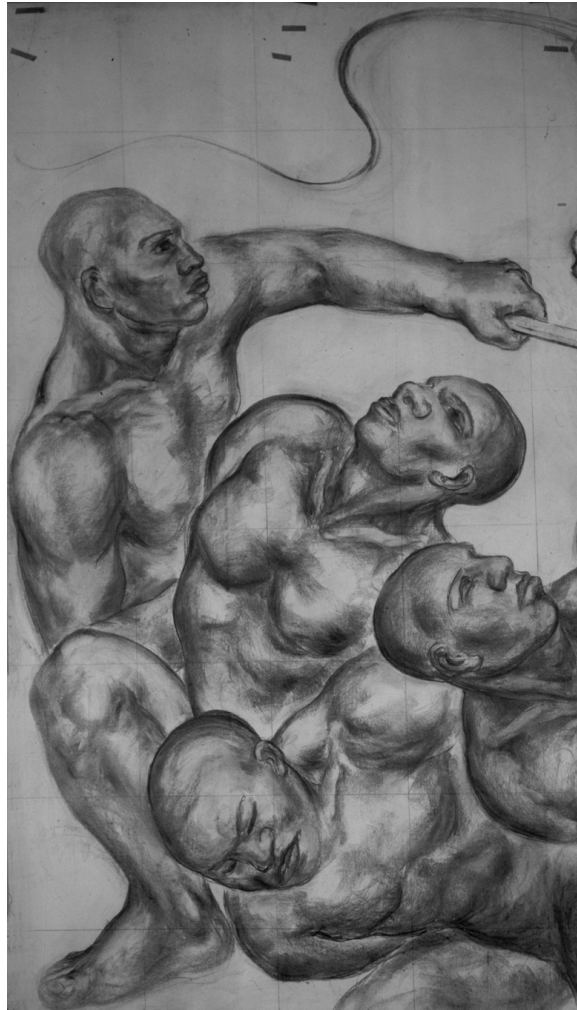


Figure 3 Study for the murals *American Independence and Emancipation* (ca. 1938). Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama

world politics, in which African Americans reemerged in different ways. In an attempt to restore the Japanese power status side by side with the Western (white and capitalistic) nations, the postwar Japanese government quickly restored its dualistic racial identity of being an honorary white nation standing above other people of color. The U.S. government, for its part, tried to keep Japan as a strategic and ideological ally and even praised Japan's distinctive "non-Asian" traits. After all, in the cold war, the non-Western world became a hotbed of revolutions, especially with communist forces, against Western rule. The postwar Japanese government willingly complied with the so-called reverse course in the occupation, reviving the army and military industry to assist Washington in fighting the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Korean War. When the PRC called for a new version of Pan-Asianism, "Asia for Asians," the U.S. government, through various cultural exchange programs and other gestures, hastily conferred on Japan the same label of "honorary white nation." Thus, in January 1951, John Foster Dulles, as he prepared a peace treaty with Japan, confessed to a British politician: "The Western world would allow Japan 'access to an elite Anglo-Saxon club.'"³⁶

With the century-long dream thus fulfilled even partially, the Japanese government no longer needed the rhetoric of Pan-Asianism to entice those people presumably inferior to Anglo-Americans in the racial hierarchy. Japan's wartime attempt at courting African Americans in the name of Pan-Asianism came to be viewed as a shameful memory, an aberration, and a mistake. In postwar Japan's renewed slogan, "Escape from Asia and Join the West," which was now vigorously supported by the U.S. occupation, even a rhetorical friendship with African Americans quickly vanished.

In 1955, the Japanese government participated in the Bandung Conference, but maintained a low profile, as if to sooth Washington's suspicion that the conference would form an "exclusive grouping of the colored races" scheming to threaten the world order under Western leadership. At Bandung, the Japanese delegation served as a proxy of the United States and patronized the young Asian nations as their "big brother" who coordinated their rapport with the (capitalistic-democratic) West. Japan's postwar version of Pan-Asianism was quietly revived, embraced by Washington. Since becoming a member of the United Nations in 1956, the Japanese delegates

from time to time adopted the “racial justice” approach to the remote and abstract issue of apartheid in Africa. As Japan was accepted at the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1964, however, the South African government treated Japan as a member of the “honorary whites,” and Japan began investment and technological transfer into the nation. During the Vietnam War, the Japanese government, an Asian proxy of Washington under the security alliance, assisted with “fighting” the same Asian people as in World War II.³⁷

To Japanese Marxists, therefore, the post–World War II era provided in no way a happy conclusion to Japan’s war: it now collapsed into a continuing episode of World War II, in which the “evil” old system of Japan—militarism, the emperor’s system, and the *zaibatsu* monopoly—survived and thrived as a prop of American imperialism. They were also frustrated that the conservative Japanese government used the dependency on the United States to promote its own interests in Asia. After the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, Japanese Marxists, leftists, and pacifists vehemently opposed the U.S.-Japanese security alliance and the prospect of hot wars across Asia under their neo-imperialism.³⁸

Against such a background, postwar Japanese Marxists rediscovered African Americans and redefined them as their ally in the revived fight for revolution.³⁹ This time, however, they had no illusions about the glory of American democracy. Marxist historian Kikuchi Ken’ichi was one of the early postwar Japanese intellectuals who argued that a common root for postwar Japanese and African American sufferings resided in American imperialism. As long as the legacy of slavery remained under capitalism itself, African American misery would continue. So would Japanese people’s sufferings keep on as long as the exploitation of Japan continued under the yoke of American imperialism.⁴⁰ The search for postwar Japan’s identity and *raison d’être* thus began, while it also looked for African American actions, signals, and messages.

In October 1956, Nukina Yoshitaka, a scholar of American literature and a renowned Esperantist, founded *Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai* (Black Studies Association) with eight members from interdisciplinary fields and began publishing the journal *Kokujin kenkyū* [Journal of black studies]. Nukina was motivated by a sense that the Japanese under U.S. military control had

much in common with African Americans, for both of them were being deprived of nationalistic/racial (*minzoku-teki na*) pride by America's monopolistic capitalism and imperialism. Nukina thus believed in the Japanese need to learn and analyze issues and tasks confronting African American people, be they historic, political, ideological, or cultural. The association gradually attracted a diverse membership from society: a public official, a librarian, a housewife, a night school student, a labor unionist, a small company owner, and so on. Inquiries about membership even came from African American GIs stationed in Japan as well.⁴¹

At first, the Marxists' antiwar argument indeed had a considerable public appeal, especially since the Japanese had been sensitive toward the issue of a just war, not to mention the prospect of using nuclear weapons. By the 1960s, the Marxist current had engendered a powerful antigovernment and anti-Vietnam protest movement. Just as the Black Panthers idolized Mao Tse-tung, Fidel Castro, and Ho Chi Minh, Japanese leftists were inclined to believe that Moscow and Beijing stood for the cause of racial equality. In the 1960s, the journal *Kokujin kenkyū* frequently published reports of Mao Tse-tung's denouncement of American racism and the offer of the Chinese people's support for African American liberty and freedom from the oppression of capitalism and imperialism. The journal also devoted space to independent and cultural movements in Africa and the Caribbean.⁴²

The postwar popularity of Marxism in Japan, however, did not necessarily help burgeoning African American studies to grow. Precisely due to the view of African Americans as radicals and revolutionaries, Japan's African American studies confronted multiple obstacles, while other "mainstream" subjects in American studies received support and encouragement from the U.S. government through various cultural exchange programs. In the mid-1950s, the American Cultural Center in Japan (under the auspices of the U.S. State Department) more than once asked *Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai* for a list of its members and its journal subscribers, also approached some of them directly, and inquired about the association's activities.⁴³ Around that time, the U.S. government also suspected anti-Americanism in Korean commitment to African American studies. For example, one Korean member of *Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai*, residing in Pusan, expressed interest in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and asked the association's members to loan him the

original copy. When his Korean translation was ready for publication, the U.S. Department of State intervened and recommended against it, saying that it was “beautifully written, but [it contains] too much violence.”⁴⁴

In the early 1970s, Japanese Marxists found themselves growingly alienated from the general public in the middle of the increasingly violent anti-Vietnam, antisecurity protest movements across the nation. Marxist and communist riots on university campuses escalated because of their factional rivalries and paralyzed their political, intellectual, and cultural activities. In 1969, *Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai* had to move its activities off campus. Between 1964 and 1975, perhaps reflecting the general sense of aversion to the issue of ideology, the journal *Kokujin Kenkyū* published only seven articles analyzing the political and economic nature of discrimination. The remaining fifty-six articles were all in the field of culture and literature.⁴⁵

Beyond the ideological boundaries, however, a Japanese intellectual bond with African American people continued and grew. There were also Japan’s own racial and ethnic minorities who drew inspiration from the black power movement and organized a civil rights movement to gain what postwar democratization had not recognized. In both cases, the black power movement undeniably stirred the Japanese imagination and desire for a change.

The Japanese public, weary of entrenching American control of Japan, was drawn to a philosophical and psychological, if not Marxist, theme of African American survival in white America. Postwar Japanese writers translated and introduced Ann Petry’s *The Street* (1946) in 1950 and short stories and poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar, Alice Ruth Moore Dunbar Nelson, Rudolph Fisher, Jupiter Hammon, George Moses Houghton, and so on. Perhaps because of their interest in Richard Wright’s renunciation of communism during World War II, Japanese literary critics paid more attention to ever-diversifying meanings of freedom and equality among postwar African Americans.

As the civil rights movement promoted African American people’s integration into American society, some Japanese noted that a similar theme of dualistic identity emerged among them as well—modern men, yet neither white (in skin color) nor colored (in the Third World sense). Ōhashi Kenzaburō, postwar Japan’s leading critic of American literature, was especially intrigued by the conflicting theme of African American effort at

acculturation into (white) America and simultaneous resistance against it. Ōhashi confessed how he was mesmerized by the complexity of such historic African American endeavors.⁴⁶ In fact, other Japanese scholars of African American studies also expressed their desire to identify the mutual sense of alienation and powerlessness facing both Japanese and African Americans in the Western-centered world. One scholar confessed that he often saw African Americas' destiny overlapped with that of the Japanese themselves. Another said he had been drawn to African American studies because he felt compelled to overhaul the psychology of the Japanese, the colored race committing themselves to (white) Western democracy. In other words, Japanese people in the postwar period should first examine the nature of the African American struggle for freedom and equality against the background of the (white) Western notion of liberty.⁴⁷ In 1961, in response to the growing demand to learn about African American culture and philosophy, a thirteen-volume *Kokujin bungaku zenshū* [Anthology of black literature] came out from a major publisher to critical acclaim.⁴⁸

James Meredith, the first African American to integrate the then all-white University of Mississippi in 1962, once wrote of an episode in Japan, where he was reenlisted and served between 1957 and 1960:

Being in Japan was an amazing experience. I was surprised that the Japanese people were so aware of the racial situation in America. For instance, I met a boy—I don't suppose he was more than 12 or 13 and he knew more about Little Rock than most American kids that age. He was amazed when I told him I was from Mississippi and that I intended to go back. This kind of reaction further convinced me that I would go back to Mississippi and try to improve these conditions.⁴⁹

Perhaps Meredith did not exaggerate much. The Japanese media, for its part, reported African American struggles on a regular basis so the Japanese public could keep abreast with their efforts. Even during the occupation, they published translated biographies of Mary Bethune and Ralph Bunche. New works on the black power movement were now being translated into Japanese and published by major publishers as well: Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Stride toward Freedom* (1958) in 1959, James Purdy's *Malcolm X* (1959) in 1966, Stokely Carmichael's *Black Power* (1967) in 1968, Lee Lockwood's

Conversation with Eldridge Cleaver (1970) in 1970. A book on thoughts of Huey Newton, a founder of the Black Panther Party, was translated and published in 1975 as well.⁵⁰

Another kind of crucial intellectual discourse between the Japanese and African Americans emerged beyond the mainstream of Japanese society, forcing the nation to reexamine its troubled self-identity in the world. The problematic theme of Japan's racial and ethnic homogeneity, along with the dualistic identity, cemented modern Japan's pride as an exceptional nation of a "purebred" people and excluded the minorities who constituted the dissonance in the streamlined narrative of a proud, modern, and uniform nation-state. After World War II, the Japanese minorities, both racial and ethnic, stood up to challenge the notion of Japan as the land of a homogeneous population. Their postwar movement looked at the African American experience as a lesson and a model, and it hoped to eventually find a solution for a universal pattern of discrimination.

In 1961, Hashimoto Fukuo, translator of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, juxtaposed a contemporary Japanese incident—a murder of two Japanese women by a Korean teenager—with this work's plot and encouraged readers to reexamine the horrendous nature of Japanese relations with the former colonial subjects of Korea.⁵¹ Yoshida Ruiko, a photojournalist specializing in documenting African American lives in Harlem in the 1960s, insisted in her prizewinning essay that Japanese should see through African Americans their own crimes against their ethnic and racial minorities including the Ainu, Korean, and Okinawan peoples.⁵² When Julius Lester's historical work *To Be a Slave* was translated and published in the prestigious Iwanami series in 1968, In-Soo Hwang, a cotranslator and a Korean immigrant in Japan, emphasized the significance for both the Japanese and minorities in Japan to together learn a precious lesson from African American experiences. Hwang quoted the Japanese notion of "good colonialism that benefited Korea," equated it to the American view of "good slavery that benefited the Africans," and brought to light the oppressor's hypocrisy. If the Japanese are indignant at white America's discrimination against African Americans, he argued, they should first look into the hardships of minorities in their own society. Hwang confessed that both his sense of loss of a mother nation and a

sense of alienation from Korea inevitably compelled him to plea for Japanese understanding of both Korean and African American hardships.⁵³

The *burakumin* (a people of a segregated village), or *hisabetsusha* (the discriminated)—a hereditary group of socioeconomic outcasts in Japan—took active interest in the African American fight for equality. Even before World War II, the Suiheisha (Leveling Society), their antidiscrimination organization founded in 1922, printed articles in their newspaper, *Suihei Shimbun*, on the history of African Americans.⁵⁴ After the war, when the U.S. occupation failed to realize equality for them and other minorities in Japan,⁵⁵ the *burakumin* emancipation movement grew to integrate itself into the context of world politics under the initiative of Matsumoto Jiichirō, their charismatic leader and a congressman since the prewar period. Matsumoto was purged by the U.S. occupation authority due to his socialist background and reelected to the Diet only in May 1953, after the official end of the occupation. Matsumoto began world tours through Asia, Africa, and Europe, and he participated in international conferences denouncing all forms of racism including anti-Semitism.⁵⁶ In December 1954, he met Josephine Baker in Japan when she gave charity performances to help solve the problem of racially mixed orphans born between Japanese and Americans, both white and black. Matsumoto and Baker empathized with each other's mission, claiming that fighting against one kind of discrimination was to fight against all kinds of it. Matsumoto's international campaign merged into the universal human rights movement.⁵⁷

The universal fight for equality regardless of differing backgrounds was not easy, though the universalist attempt at least successfully challenged "exceptionalist" notions of discrimination. For example, as the Marxists claimed, both the African American and *burakumin* problems might in essence constitute an economic issue, in which they had been exploited as a source of cheap labor under the capitalist system.⁵⁸ At the same time, the *burakumin* movement did not deal with the question of skin color. Neither did it question how and why physical and physiological differences could lead human beings to fatal confrontations against one another.

Honda Sōzō, a Marxist scholar of African American history, called for the need to investigate the nature of race (*jinsu*, e.g., the Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid) as a third factor of discrimination in addition to

class and nationalism (*minzoku*, e.g., Africanism, as antithesis to neocolonialism). African Americans differ from “oppressed white people” within American society, and because of this, Honda argued, it is crucial to clarify both the universality and the uniqueness of the nature of their oppression.⁵⁹ At the same time, Honda was not satisfied with a “humanistic” view that the problem of “hearts and minds” (*kokoro no mondai*) weighed more in the solution of racial problems. He urged an approach that analyzes the issue of discrimination as a convergence of all societal contradictions in the world. This approach, claimed Honda, would be the first step toward the comprehensive understanding of both the *burakumin* and African American struggles. Only after that could the issue of race be understood as ad hoc.⁶⁰

In 1963, the journal *Buraku* featured a dialogue between Dr. Ira Reid, a renowned African American sociologist and educator, and Naramoto Tatsuya, a Japanese scholar specializing in the *burakumin* issue. The dialogue brought to light the fundamental question of what possibly triggered discrimination. In discussing African American issues, Reid, the Danforth Distinguished Visiting Professor of Sociology at the International Christian University, Tokyo, focused on the legacy of slavery and insisted on skin color as an obstinate barrier, from which he said the *burakumin* were thoroughly free. Reid asked Naramoto whether *burakumin*, given their solid Japanese appearance, would want to erase their heritage or would proudly live with it. To Reid, the *burakumin*'s fate perhaps seemed far more manageable than his people's, due to the absence of a color barrier and a decision to assimilate into the mainstream that seemed completely theirs. Naramoto could not explain successfully why the *burakumin* remained physically segregated regardless of their appearance. Neither did they clarify to each other what intermarriage would mean and achieve, especially regarding its long-term effect on discrimination. In the end, however, the two agreed that only humanity would conquer all forms of discrimination.⁶¹

Asada Zen'nosuke, a distinguished Marxist leader in the *burakumin* emancipation movement, did not agree with that argument. He claimed in 1968 that his people's movement had a more sophisticated theoretical foundation than that of African Americans. Asada conceded that black power had generated a fierce cultural trend, most notably in literary works, while the

burakumin movement had not yet produced a distinctive cultural genre. Yet, according to Asada, the African American movement seemed increasingly preoccupied with “abstract” claims against social discrimination in marriage and fraternization, losing a truly revolutionary sentiment. Asada hoped that his people’s movement would remain a drive toward a proletarian revolution that would eventually take care of skin color.⁶²

In spite of such divided views, the *burakumin* civil rights movement reached its peak in the 1970s, amid the so-called miracle of economic growth. By then, *Buraku kaihō* [*Buraku* emancipation], *Buraku: Buraku mondai kenkyū* [*Buraku: Studies of buraku issues*], and other leading journals dedicated to *burakumin* liberation, regularly printed up-to-date news and analyses on the African American movement, some translated from English originals. Their perspectives expanded both outwardly and inwardly, featuring issues related to Jews, Palestinians, Japanese Americans, and Native Americans, and also Okinawans, Koreans, Ainu, and people of interracial origins in Japan. Into the 1980s, under the notion of universal human rights, their consciousness expanded to include the discrimination against women and physically disabled people as well.⁶³

Toward the 1980s, works of African American women writers helped stimulate Japan’s feminist movement. Translations of Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) in 1979 and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970) in 1981 created an unprecedented boom in feminist narratives. Works by Ellese Southerland, Gayl Jones, Alice Walker, Mari Evans, Mary Helen Washington, and others followed. *Mayonaka no tori tachi—on’na tachi no dōjidai: HokuBei kōkujin josei sakka sen* [Midnight birds—women who share now: An anthology of best works by North American black woman writers] came out along with other anthologies and analyses and reviews on their works, all edited, translated, and written by Japanese women themselves.⁶⁴ As the so-called bubble economy of the 1980s accelerated Japan’s material globalization, it became natural to relate to such human experiences that transcended racial, ethnic, and national boundaries. Ordinary Japanese women discovered through the experience of the African American woman the mutual fate of womanhood in their works (at least half of their messages): such subjects as beauty, marriage and family, and, above all, sexual discrimination.

It was just about around that time, as Japan seemingly ascended to the status of an economic superpower in the world, that the Japanese governmental officials blurted out racist slurs against African Americans and other nonwhites in the United States, calling them socioeconomic losers. The Japanese “racism” of these cases perhaps constituted a deviant expression of euphoria about the “triumph” of the dualistic racial status (awarded to them by the United States), which made the nation’s prosperity possible as a quasi-Western nation. Though their gibes actually cost these politicians their careers, there were also those in Japanese society who agreed with their statements. But, at about the same time, there emerged a short-lived but very powerful infatuation with blackness among Japanese youths in the early 1990s as well.⁶⁵

The fundamental problem here was the tenacious vision of a racial hierarchy. To those Japanese who want to adhere to the century-old dualistic identity in order to keep Japan an “honorary white” nation, the United States also has to remain a white nation in order for it to confer on Japan a comparative value of superiority. In their view of such useful U.S.-Japanese relations, African Americans and other nonwhite Americans simply play no role. Obviously they are unaware of how African American people have inspired the nation’s search for identity.

In Japan’s relations with the United States, the presence of African Americans waxed and waned like a parallax vision, reflecting various angles of race, ideology, and strategy from which to view them. As this survey demonstrates, the catalysts for visibility of African Americans almost always formed dissonant elements in formal Washington-Tokyo diplomatic relations, be they racial or ideological: Pan-Asianism (an aberration), white racism (a taboo), Marxism (an official mutual enemy), and then Japan’s minorities (a dissent). This explains why the story of Japanese interactions with African Americans has been submerged for the sake of two nations’ traditional alliance.

This should not mean, however, that the African American presence will remain peripheral to “mainstream” U.S.-Japanese relations. Neither should it infer that U.S.-Japanese relations will continue exclusively as an alliance in the “Anglo-Saxon Lake” (Douglas MacArthur’s dubbing of the Pacific Ocean), adhering to the Wilsonian (Eurocentric and anticommunist) order of the world. The racial hierarchy that has characterized U.S.-Japanese

relations throughout the twentieth century is losing ground today. American society is becoming multicultural and multiracial, nullifying the concept of racial superiority and inferiority. Japan's racial dualism is also losing its meaning and efficacy.

By incorporating into a mainstream history these interactions formerly neglected and dismissed as irrelevant, it is possible to widen the realm of trans-Pacific discourse, thus making it more receptive to and inclusive of diverse members of the communities on both sides. Potentials are abundant. By translating African American impacts on Japanese history not as a dissenting narrative but as a central theme in Japanese history, we see a powerful testimony emerging, suggesting that trans-Pacific relations have been and will be full of hope and visions for the Afro-Asian century.

Notes

Professor Eric Foner's presentation, "American Exceptionalism, American Freedom," at the 1999 Joint NYU-OAH conference on "Internationalizing the Study of American History," inspired me to conceive the basic concept for this project. Professors George T. (Sam) Crane and Peter Frost, both at Williams College, gave me their insightful comments on the manuscript. I am most indebted to *Kokujin kenkyū*, an invaluable source of information on African American studies in Japan. Throughout this essay, Japanese names are given in traditional form—that is, the family name precedes the given name. Although most Japanese sources quoted in this article use the term *kokujin* (black people), I adopt the English term *African Americans* in my translations because Japanese authors in their differing contexts did not necessarily focus on the color "black" itself. It is after the late 1980s that Japanese society began to use *Afurika-kei Amerikajin* or *Afurikan Amerikan*, both meaning the same as "African Americans."

- 1 Ishibashi Yukimasu, "Kōkō Eigo kyōkasho no naka no 'kokujin'" ["African Americans' in high school English textbooks], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 49 (December 1978): 8–10.
- 2 Furukawa Hiromi, *Burakku e no tabiji* [A journey to blackness] (Osaka: Saseragi Shuppan, 1996), 105–108. Pyrrus Concer was a former slave and then helmsman who arrived in Japan on board the *Manhattan* in 1845 and conducted successful communication with the Japanese officials eight years before Commodore Perry's expedition. Also see Matsumura Masayoshi, "Nihon ni kita saisho no Amerika kokujin" [The first African American in Japan], *Gaijō jihō* [Revue diplomatique], no. 1185 (July 1981): 18–26. Matsumura, then-officer of the Japan Foundation, Tokyo, writes that he first learned about Concer from Arthur P. Davis, who wrote and published *A Black Diamond in the Queen's Tiara* (n.p., 1974), a biography of this heroic

whaler from East Southampton, New York. Davis, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in English from Columbia University and a pioneer critic of African American literature, contacted Matsumura while the latter worked at the Japanese consulate in New York and asked about Japanese sources on Concer. Though Matsumura was not aware of Davis's prominence, his inquiry led Matsumura to conduct his own search.

- 3 Furukawa Hiromi, "Nichi-Bei kankei ni okeru kokujin sonzai" [African American presence in U.S.-Japanese relations], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 64 (December 1994): 20. Furukawa's article was presented at the international conference in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai (Black Studies Association of Japan), held in Kobe, Japan, June 1994. The original speech was given in English and the English text also appears in the same issue of *Kokujin kenkyū*, 10–19. For a detailed story of Masumizu Kuninosuke and his American descendants, see Yamamoto Kazuhiro, *Wakamatsu Koronī no ato o tazunete* [A journey to the memory of the Wakamatsu Colony] (Aizu Wakamatsu: n.p., 1985). Also see John E. Van Sant, *Pacific Pioneers: Japanese Journeys to America and Hawaii, 1850–80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 128.
- 4 Sayama Kazuo, *Kokujin yakyū no hīrō tachi: 'Niguro rīgu' no kōbō* [Black baseball heroes: The rise and fall of the 'negro league'] (Tokyo: Chūō Shinsho, 1994), especially chapters 11 and 12 on their tours in Japan. Unlike the widely publicized All-American team that was invited by the Yomiuri newspaper company, the Philadelphia Royals came to Japan on the team's own budget, on recommendation by a certain Japanese American entrepreneur in California. Japanese players and spectators knew about the racial segregation in professional sports in America and understood that, although they could not play in the Major League, they were as good as, or even better than, the major league players. Yokozawa Saburō, a Japanese player, later said how they played each game gentlemanly, with warm pedagogical thoughtfulness to the inexperienced Japanese players, while the All-American team sometimes treated the Japanese players with entertaining contempt during the actual games. See *ibid.*, 123–124.
- 5 As the role of race in international affairs receives serious scholarly attention lately, more diplomatic historians analyze African American impacts on U.S. foreign relations. In this burgeoning genre, African American influence in U.S.-Japanese relations has been examined by Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), and, most recently Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). In Japanese, American anthropologist John G. Russell's *Nihonjin no kokujin-kan: Mondai wa 'Chibikuro Sambo' dakedewa nai* [Japanese views of the black people: "Little Black Sambo" is only the tip of the iceberg] (Tokyo: Shin Hyōron, 1991) is a pioneering work that shows how Japanese racist views of African Americans will in the long run damage Japan's place in the world.
- 6 Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897–1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 159.

- 7 As for peoples of Africa, during the so-called Age of Great Voyages in the sixteenth century, Japanese samurai and merchants already had some contact with slaves from Africa. After one Portuguese trader brought with him several Africans to Japan in 1546, some hundred Africans came to Japan as sailors, slaves, and servants of European traders and missionaries. The first account on the arrival of one African, accompanied by an Italian missionary, is recorded by Ōta Gyūichi in 1600. He wrote: “A black fellow has come from the Christian world. He seems sixteen to seventeen of age. He is as lustrous black as an ox; he is finely built and handsome. He is as powerful as ten strong men combined.” He was given a Japanese name, Yasuke, and became a confidential attendant to Lord Oda Nobunaga, a great unifier of the nation. Okuno Takahiro and Iwasawa Yoshihiko, eds., *Nobunaga Kōki* [Official records of Lord Oda Nobunaga] (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1969). As for Japanese “contact” with the African continent, in 1580, when the first Japanese Catholic envoy consisting of four teenage boys reached Mozambique en route to the Vatican, they sent back to Japan perhaps the first negative report on living conditions of peoples in Africa. For early views of Japanese on the people of Africa, see Fujita Midori, “Nihonshi ni okeru ‘kuronbo’ no tōjō—Afurika ōrai kotohajime” [A historical survey of early Japanese contacts with black people of Africa], *Hikaku bungaku kenkyū* [Studies of comparative literature], no. 51 (April 1987): 28–51.
- 8 In the eighteenth century, the European notion of a racial hierarchy—the white on top, the yellow in the middle, and the black at the lowest rung in terms of intelligence and other traits—already influenced the Japanese view of the world. For example, Arai Hakuseki, a leading scholar of the time, writes in *Seiyō kibun* [Record of the Western matters] in 1715 that people in Africa were unintelligent and more like “birds and animals,” based on interrogations of one Italian Jesuit missionary. Arai Hakuseki, *Seiyō kibun* (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1980), 46.
- 9 Kume Kunitake, *Tokumei zenken taishi Bei-Ō kairan jikkō* [A true account of the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary’s journey of observation through the United States of America and Europe], ed. Tanaka Akira, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1982), 419. The English translation of Kume’s whole account is also available from Princeton University Press. In comparison, note that Masao Miyoshi’s *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States* (New York: Kodansha America, 1994) discusses Japanese officials’ negative attitude toward Africans and African Americans in the mission that took place in 1860 (see 59–63).
- 10 Furukawa Hiromi, “Nihon ni okeru ‘Kokujin kenkyū’ no ayumi—(1) Senzen hen” [History of ‘black studies’ in Japan—(1) The pre–World War II era], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 54 (December 1984): 43, 46.
- 11 Satō Hiroko, “Nihonjin no jinshu-kan to kokujin mondai—Taishō-ki o chūshin to shite” [The racial view of Japanese people and their understanding of the black problem in the Taisho period], *Tokyo Joshi Daigaku Fuzoku Hikaku Bunka Kenkyū-jo Kiyō* [Publications of the Institute for Comparative Studies of Culture, Tokyo Woman’s Christian College], no. 34

- (March 1973): 31–32. The early work referring to Booker T. Washington is Ōkouchi Midori, *Ijin no seinen jidai* (Tokyo: Ariake Kan, 1908). His autobiography is translated by Sasaki Shūichi and published twice as *Koku ijin* (Tokyo: Meguro Shoten, 1919; Tokyo: Koyama Shoten, 1939).
- 12 For the argument on Japan's dualistic identity and its impact on U.S.-Japanese relations, see Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), especially the introduction. Chapter 5, "The Problem of Miscegenation," discusses Japanese racial thinking, especially views of black skin color.
- 13 Furukawa, "Nichi-Bei kankei ni okeru," 12–13, 20; Kearney, *African American Views*, 27–28.
- 14 Kearney, *African American Views*, 54–71.
- 15 James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 1933). See chap. 37 on his trip to Japan, esp. 398–399.
- 16 Kearney, *African American Views*, 72, 87–91, 117; Gallicchio, *African American Encounter*, 204–205.
- 17 Mitsukawa Kametarō, *Kokujin mondai* (Tokyo: Niyū meicho kankō-kai, 1925), 311. For an analysis of Mitsukawa's view, see Suda Minoru, "Nihon no sensō to Amerika kokujin—Gaines, Du Bois and Hughes no baai" [American blacks' views of Japan's war—cases of Gaines, Du Bois, and Hughes], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 54 (December 1984): 40; Satō Hiroko, "Nihonjin no jinshu-kan to kokujin mondai," 32–35.
- 18 Satō Masaharu, "Senji-ka Nihon no taigai senden ni okeru 'Kokujin kōsaku'" [The 'black operation' as the Japanese government's propaganda in World War II], *Masu komyunikēshon kenkyū* [The journal of mass communication studies], no. 46 (January 1995): 157–170.
- 19 Kawamura Tadao, *Beikoku kokujin no kenkyū* [Studies on American blacks] (Tokyo: Fujii shoten, 1943). The ministry of foreign affairs made several research reports on conditions of African Americans to be used for propaganda campaign: Gaimu-shō chōsa-ka dai 6-ka, *Sensō to kokujin—NichiBei kaisen igo no kokujin no dōkō oyobi sono haikei* [The war and the blacks—Thoughts and activities of blacks since the outbreak of the U.S.-Japanese war and some considerations on the background of such a trend], October 1942; Gaimu-shō chōsa-kyoku dai 3-ka, *Beikoku kokujin to Dai-Ichiji-Taisen* [American blacks and World War II], February 1943. Both documents are in Japanese Foreign Ministry Record 4-6-0 1-3, National Archives, Tokyo.
- 20 Satō Masaharu, "Senji-ka Nihon no," 166.
- 21 Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 12.
- 22 Ibid., 11–12.
- 23 See, for example, Wilson Record, *Race and Radicalism: The NAACP and the Communist Party in Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), 23–31.
- 24 Ishigaki Ayako, *Umi o watatta ai no gaka—Ishigaki Eitarō no shōgai* [A life of Ishigaki Eitarō, an artist who crossed the sea] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 1988), 69–74.

- 25 Ibid., 132, 152–155, 164–167. For the image of the painting *The Moose*, see 133. For other paintings, see the following collection: Kojō Kazuaki, ed., *Ishigaki Eitarō* (Tokyo: Tōbi Design, 1991).
- 26 Akamatsu Katsumaro, “Kokujinshu kaihō-undō no gensei to sono keikō—Jinshu tōsō to kaikyū tōsō” [The current status and trend of the black liberation movement—A race struggle and a class struggle], *Kaizō* 5, no. 8 (August 1923): 76–85.
- 27 Maedagawa Kōichirō, “Kokujin hakugai monogatari,” *Kaizō* 12, no. 11 (November 1930): 142–154.
- 28 Hikida Yasuichi [Hirayama Yonezō], *Haichi dokuritsu undō no tōshō Tusanto Rubuachua* [Toussaint-Louverture: A military hero of the Haitian independence movement] (Tokyo: Kyōbunkan, 1937), 15. Hikida, once working at the Japanese consulate in New York as a part-time translator, also translated novels by Walter White, which condemned lynching and other forms of violence against African Americans. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, Hikida returned to Japan and worked for the foreign ministry, supplying information on the condition of African Americans for the aforementioned propaganda purpose. See Furukawa, “Nichi-Bei kankei ni okeru kokujin sonzai,” 16 (the English version).
- 29 Hayasaka Jirō, “Kokujin sakka san’nin shū” [A collection of three black writers], in *Sentan tanpen shū—(Fu) kokujin bungaku shū* [An anthology of avant-garde short stories—Special feature: A collection of black literature] (Tokyo: Shincho Sha, 1930), 8–10.
- 30 Langston Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), 240–243. Saitō Tadatoshi, “Nihon ni okeru Langston Hughes—Sono shōkai no keii ni tsuite” [Langston Hughes in Japan—How he was introduced to the Japanese readers], in *Amerika kokujin bungaku to sono shūhen* [American black literature and its surroundings], ed. Sekiguchi Isao kyōju tainin kinen ronbun-shū henshū iinkai [The Editorial Committee for Theses Submitted in Honor of Professor Emeritus Sekiguchi Isao] (Tokyo: Nan’undō Phoenix, 1997), 72–75.
- 31 Saitō, “Nihon ni okeru Langston Hughes,” 82–84. Also see Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander*, 278. While in China, Hughes met a young man engaged in translating his *Not without Laughter* into Chinese. Hughes also met the celebrated writer Lu Hsin, who had been placed on the Chinese authority’s “black list” for his “dangerous thought.” Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander*, 255–256. Also see Faith Barry, ed., *Good Morning Revolution* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1973), 98, 118–119.
- 32 Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander*, 259–76; Saitō, “Nihon ni okeru,” 80. See also Kimura Takeshi, “Kokujin shijin Hughes-kun” [Mr. Hughes, a black poet], *Kaizō* 15, no. 7 (September 1933): 90–91. Kimura, the literary scholar and translator, went to see Hughes in detention and pleaded Hughes’s innocence, saying that he had nothing to do with leftist plots.
- 33 Hayasaka, “Kokujin sakka san’nin shū,” 8.
- 34 Ishigaki, *Umi o watatta ai no gaka*, 142, 168. The image of the painting *Man on the Horse* is reprinted in the section of color illustrations. The image of *Flight* is reprinted on 169.

- 35 For the image of the murals before being removed, see “Patriotic Mural Painted by WPA Artist for Harlem Court,” *New York Times*, 17 February 1937, 9. Also see Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 110–112, for a different image of the mural and also accounts surrounding New York City’s interference.
- 36 Qtd. in Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 41–42.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 203–206.
- 38 For an analysis of the continuing impact of Japanese Marxists on postwar Japanese views of world affairs, see Yukiko Koshiro, “Japan’s World and World War II,” *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 3 (summer 2001): 429–434.
- 39 For reference to such Japanese leftist writers and intellectuals including Oda Makoto and Honda Katsu’ichi, see John Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” *positions* 6, no. 1 (spring 1998): 120–121.
- 40 Kikuchi Ken’ichi, *Amerika ni okeru zen-shihon-sei isan: Nan’bu no purantēshon seido* [The plantation system in the South as the precapitalist legacy of the United States] (Tokyo: Mirai Sha, 1954). For a review article on Kikuchi’s works, including his wartime writings on the Marxist interpretation of the slavery system, see Okabe Hiroji, “Kokujin mondai—Kikuchi Ken’ichi shi no kingyō o chūshin to shite” [The problem facing black Americans—A review of recent works by Kikuchi Ken’ichi], *Rekūshigaku kenkyū* [The journal of historical studies], no. 188 (October 1955): 31–36.
- 41 Nukina Yoshitaka, “‘Kokujin Kenkyūkai’ no koto” [On the ‘Black Studies Association’], *Gendai to shisō* [Contemporary thought], no. 25 (September 1976), rpt. in *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 56 (June 1986): 4–9. Also see Furukawa Hiromi, “Sōritsu 40—shūnen ni mukete—Kaiko to kadai” [Toward the fortieth anniversary of our association—Reflections on the past and tasks in the future], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 63 (November 1993): 3.
- 42 See as examples the following news stories appearing in the journal *Kokujin kenkyū* throughout the 1960s: “Mō Takutō no jinshu sabetsu hantai seimei” [Chairman Mao declaring a fight against racism], no. 20 (December 1963): 28–30; “Soren no kagaku-sha geijutsu-ka Bei no kokujin dan’atsu ni kōgi” [Soviet scientists and artists protesting against America’s oppression of the black people], no. 27 (September 1965): 28; “Mō Takutō dōshi no Amerika kokujin no kōbō tōsō o shiji suru seimei” [Chairman Mao declaring his support for pacifist movement by the black Americans], no. 35 (1968): 35–36. One 1964 article reported a spirit of hope and comradeship among participants of all colors at an international conference where Mao Tse-tung condemned global racism against blacks. It was held in Beijing in August 1964. See Ōshiba Takashi, “Pekin no kokujin tachi” [Black peoples in Beijing], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 23 (September 1964): 35–36.
- 43 Furukawa, “Sōritsu 40—shūnen ni mukete,” 3.
- 44 “Tenbō: Kankoku de no aru hon’yaku no hanashi” [Perspectives (editorial): A case on a failed Korean translation effort], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 19 (September 1963): 35. Two years later,

- however, the same translator, Soo-Kwang Lee, reported to the journal that he had succeeded in translating and publishing not only Ellison's work but also a five-volume series on African American literature in Korean, which all of Korea's three major newspapers publicized in a full-page advertisement. See "Kaihō" [News on membership activities], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 25 (March 1965): 42–43.
- 45 Kobayashi Shinjirō, "Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai no 25 nen-kan o kaiko shite" [Reflecting on the twenty-five years of history of Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 52 (June 1982): 25. Akamatsu Mitsuo, "Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai 36 nen no ayumi to tomo ni" [My thirty-six years of history with Kokujin Kenkyū no Kai], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 61 (December 1991): 5.
- 46 Ōhashi Kenzaburō, "Kokujin bungaku to Amerika bungaku" [African American literature and American literature], in *Kokujin bungaku kenkyū* [Japanese studies of black literature], ed. Hashimoto Fukuo (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō, 1963), 9.
- 47 See "Ankēto" [Questionnaire] in the tenth-anniversary issue of *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 22 (June 1964): 23–25. This section introduces letters from readers in reply to the question, "What is the most important issue in your understanding of the black people?"
- 48 The anthology consists of thirteen volumes, and works included in this series are as follows: vols. 1–2, *Amerika no musuko* [Native son] (Richard Wright; trans. Hashimoto Fukuo); vol. 3, *Yama ni noborite tsugeyo* [Go tell it on the mountain] (James Baldwin; trans. Saitō Kazue); vol. 4, *Satō kibi* [Cane] (Jean Toomer; trans. Kijima Hajime); vol. 5, *Warai naki ni arazu* [Not without laughter] (Langston Hughes; trans. Hamamoto Takeo); vol. 6, *Madobe no shōnen* [Boy at the Window] (Owen Dodson; trans. Yamamuro Shizuka); vol. 7, *Bitorukuriiku* [Beetlecreek] (William Demby; trans. Minagawa Sōichi); vol. 8, *Kokujin sakka tanpen shū* [Black short stories] (eds. Hashimoto and Hamamoto); vols. 9–10, *Mienai ningen* [Invisible Man] (Ralph Ellison, trans. Hashimoto Fukuo); vol. 11, *Niguro essei shū* [Collection of negro essays] (eds. Hashimoto and Minagawa); vol. 12, *Shi min'yō minwa* [Poems, folk songs, and folklore] (eds., Kijima and Minagawa); vol. 13., *Kokujin bungaku kenkyū* (ed. Hashimoto).
- 49 James Meredith, "I'll Know Victory or Defeat," *Saturday Evening Post*, 10 November 1962, 14–17.
- 50 Japanese translations are as follows: For King's work, Yukiya Yoshimasa, trans., *Jiyū e no ōi naru ayumi: Hi-bōryoku de tatakatta kokujin tachi* [Stride toward freedom: African Americans who fought without violence] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1959); for Malcolm X's work, Suzuki Kenzō, trans., *Marukomu no henreki* [Journey of Malcolm X] (Tokyo: Hokusui sha, 1966); for Carmichael's work, Nagata Mamoru, trans., *Burakku pawā* [Black power] (Tokyo: Gōdō shuppan, 1968); for Cleaver's work, Suzuki Chikara, trans., *Kurohyō Tō: Kuribā wa kataru* [The Black Panther Party: Cleaver speaks out] (Tokyo: Gōdō shuppan, 1970); for Newton's work, Kondō Kunio, trans., *Erikuson vs. Nyūton: Aidentitī to kakumei o meguru tōron* [Conversations with Eric Erikson and Huey Newton on identity and revolution] (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1975).

- 51 Hashimoto Fukuo, “Atogaki” [Afterword], in Wright, *Amerika no musuko*, 264.
- 52 Yoshida Ruiko, *Hāremu no atsui hibi* [Hot days in Harlem], 49th ed. (1979; Tokyo: Kōdansha Bunko, 2000), 217.
- 53 In-Soo Hwang, “Yakusha atogaki” [Translators’ afterword], in *Dorei to wa* [To be a slave], by Julius Lester, trans. Kijima Hajime and Hwang (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1970), 211–215.
- 54 Nukina, “‘Kokujin Kenkyūkai’ no koto,” 4. For example, between 15 January and 1 May 1926, Ayakawa Takeji printed a four-part series, “Beikoku kokujin rinchi shi” [A history of the lynching of black Americans] in *Jiyū Shimbun* [Freedom press], a *burakumin* paper published in Saitama Prefecture. See *Fukko-ban shoki Suihei undō shiryō-shū* [Reprinted series: Sources on early Suiheisha movement], vol. 5, appendix 1 (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1989).
- 55 According to Beate Sirota, a member of the civil rights committee of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), she was keen on correcting the particular types of Japanese “racism” against *burakumin* and supported the so-called nonracial discrimination clause in the new constitution. Such attention within SCAP did not, however, improve the group’s status. Neither did the Ainu, Korean, or Chinese permanent residents gain recognition for their civil rights under the U.S. occupation. See Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 107.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 109–110.
- 57 Matsumoto Jiichirō, “Jinshu sabsesu hantai Yudaya-jin haiseki hantai kokusai kaigi ni shusseki shite” [A report from the international conference to condemn racism and anti-Semitism], *Buraku* 8, no. 4 (1956): 13–17; Buraku Kaihō Dōmei Chūō Honbu (Buraku Emancipation League Central Committee), ed., *Kaihō no chichi Matsumoto Jiichirō* [Matsumoto Jiichirō, the father of emancipation] (Osaka: Buraku Kaihō Dōmei Chūō Honbu, 1972), 113–117, 276–287. Also note that at the sixth lecture series on the issue of *burakumin* and human rights held in Kyoto in December 1963, Yamamoto Mikio claimed that Japan’s *buraku* issue and America’s black issue confronted the same fundamental issue of discrimination. See “Tenbō: Nihonjin to kokujin mondai to no setten” [Perspectives (editorial): Convergence of Japanese and black problems], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 21 (March 1964): 35.
- 58 Kitahara Taisaku, “Ronri no hiyaku to hihan no konran—Takakuwa shi ni kotou” [Reply to Mr. Takakuwa—A leap in logic and confusion in criticism], in *Kitahara Taisaku buraku mondai chosaku-shū* [Essays by Kitahara Taisaku on the *buraku* issues], ed. Buraku Mondai Kenkyū-jo [Institute of Buraku Studies] (Kyoto: Buraku Mondai Kenkyū-jo Shuppan, 1982), 29–33; Inoue Kiyoshi, “Buraku kaihō riron to buraku-shi no kadai” [Theory on *buraku* emancipation and historical issues confronting the *buraku* history], *Buraku mondai* [Buraku problems], no. 18 (October 1950): 2–10.
- 59 Honda Sōzō, “Amerika kokujin mondai to wa nanika” [What is the black problem in the United States?], *Kokujin kenkyū*, no. 30 (March 1967): 1–3.
- 60 Honda Sōzō, *America shakai to kokujin* [American society and black people] (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1972), 202–210.

- 61 Ira Reid and Naramoto Tatsuya, “Taidan: Kokujin sabetsu to buraku mondai” [Discussion: Racism against the blacks and burakumin], *Buraku*, no. 164 (August 1963): 44–48.
- 62 Noma Hiroshi, Asada Zen’nosuke, and Yukiya Yoshimasa, “Zadankai: Kome sōdō to burakku pawā: Buraku kaihō kokujin kaihō to bunka [Roundtable: The Rice Riot and *buraku* power: *Buraku* emancipation and black emancipation in a cultural context], *Asahi jānaru* [Asahi journal], 24 November 1968, 82–89.
- 63 Since the late 1950s, the journal *Buraku*, for example, regularly prints articles on the Ainu, mixed-racial children, Korean immigrants in Japan, and so on. After the February 1968 issue of *Buraku* (2, no. 2), which included an article on the basic human rights for physically handicapped people (22–30), the journal has been committed to cover this category of discrimination for its regular analysis and discussion.
- 64 Kawachi Kazuko, ed., *Watashi tachi no Alice Walker* [Alice Walker: Our friend and mirror] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 1990), includes essays by Yoshida Ruiko, the aforementioned photographer, Kim Kazumi, a Korean Japanese feminist activist, and Chikappu Mieko, an Ainu essayist, activist, and folk artist, all of which skillfully weave Alice Walker’s world of African American women into their own and relate their pains and struggles to those of African American women.
- 65 John Russell, in his “Consuming Passions,” lays out the “fetishized” blackness in consuming culture among Japanese youths in the early 1990s and harshly criticizes such commercial imaginary as merely self-colonizing. It is thus necessary to trace where Japan’s youth culture has headed since then. By the mid-1990s, Japanese youths, both male and female, began dying their hair in all hues, as if to defy the established image of existing racial categories. Then, at the turn of the twenty-first century, they moved on to take a passionate interest in Asian pop culture. We need further examinations into the “protean” attitude among these Japanese youths toward race and culture in order to investigate whether they have a potential to challenge the century-old Japanese notion of racial and cultural hierarchy in the world.