

Blacks and Asians on the Move:
A Comparative Study of the Great Black Migration
and Asian Immigration from a Social History Perspective

Yukari TAKAI

南部黒人の「大移動」と
アジア系アメリカ人移民に関する比較研究
——社会史研究の視点から——

高 井 由香理

要 旨

20世紀をとおして、アメリカ合衆国を目指したアジアからの移民たちは、合衆国南部から北部や西部の都市へと移動した「大移動」(the Great Black Migration)を構成したアフリカ系アメリカ人の移民とその子孫たちに労働市場、住居、公民権闘争など様々な場で遭遇した。しかし、これまでのアメリカ史研究においては、アジア系移民と「大移動」に参加した黒人たちを比較研究する試みはほとんどみられなかった。その背景には、異なる人種範疇に分類された人々についての独立・孤立した研究が主流をしめてきたエスニック・スタディーズの状況と、合衆国国内における移動と、太平洋（あるいは大西洋）を渡ってアメリカに移民した人々の移動を切り離して語る従来の移民史研究の傾向を指摘することができる。しかし、「異なる研究者」によって生み出された「孤立した先行研究」(Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh De Wind, 1999)は、20世紀アメリカ合衆国で起きた複数の移民という現象を一体化あるいは相対化して捕らえることなく、多くの場合分断された形でしか理解し得ない現状につながっているといえるだろう。

本稿は、アフリカ系アメリカ人とアジア系アメリカ人に関する、それぞれ膨大な先行研究の一端に依拠しながら、アフリカ系アメリカ人の「大移動」とアジア系移民の移動という二つの移動について比較・検討を開始するためささやかな試みである。1900年から1970年にかけての「大移動」と19世紀後半から20世紀を通じて現在まで続くアジア系移民の流れの原動力は、どこに

あり、どのような共通点と相違点がみられるのか。ジェンダーは、南部黒人とアジア系の人々が描いた移動の軌跡と移民経験にどのような影響を与えたのか。「大移動」の構成者と黒人指導者たち、そしてアジア系移民とその子孫の二「人種」間の関係は、どのような変遷をたどったのか。本稿では、以上の三つの問いを社会史の視点から考察することによって、合衆国における国内移動と国際移動、異「人種」の移動に関する切り離された知識を結びつけ、より体系化した移動の歴史理解を促すための一步を記すことを目的とするものである。

The lives of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans intersected with those of Black southern migrants at work, in the neighbourhood, and during the struggle for civil rights and equality. Collaborating in ways both cooperative and competitive, activists and other citizens of Asian descent complicated, and at times strengthened, the white versus black binary categorization that has shaped the social, economic, and political lives of all Americans. Despite the obvious importance of these two groups as they interacted, the dearth of historical studies on the issue makes it difficult to draw meaningful comparisons between the migration experiences of the two groups, or to paint a historical portrait of their relationships. True, scholars have begun to examine the encounter between Asian immigrants and African Americans in the twentieth century, but they tend to discuss the subject as part of the larger encounter between Asia (especially Japan) and African Americans.¹ Assigned racial categories into which migrants are classified have for a long time blinded scholars to the importance of addressing the two major migrations from a comparative perspective. More importantly, scholarly indifference to linking the transnational migration of Asians and other transoceanic migrants on the one hand, and to the U.S. internal migration of black and other Americans and immigrants, on the other hand, has helped to solidify the separate development of these two fields of inquiry until recently. As Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh De Wind have noted, "U.S. internal migration and immigration studies now constitute different 'literatures' and are pursued, for the most part, by different sets of scholars."²

Within the limitations of existing studies, this essay explores the

movements of members of two major ethnic/racial groups—the Great Migration of African Americans and Asian migration to the United States—juxtaposed against each another.³ In what ways do the migration processes of Asians compare, or contrast, with the Great Black Migration, which is largely defined to last from 1900 to 1970? How did gender shape the experiences of each group? And what interactions did Asians and black migrants create as they came to live and work alongside one another? An exploration of these questions presents a unique opportunity to help bridge disparate bodies of knowledge about people on the move, internally and transnationally, and who made up a fundamental part of American life in the twentieth century.

Decisions to Move: The Legacies of Slavery, Imperialism, and More

A brief look at Asian and African American migration brings to light the divergence of the two movements in scale and constituency. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Jim Crow system held sway in the reconstructed South. The spread of white supremacist ideas and social practices (such as institutional segregation, sharecropping, and disfranchisement) eroded the promise of political and economic emancipation for African Americans. As a result, more than 1.5 million African Americans left the rural South, manifesting their discontent with Southern rural life and racial treatment between 1900 and 1920. Chicago's black population grew by more than 65,000 from 1910 to 1920; New York's by more than 60,000, Detroit by more than 30,000, or astonishing 611 percent, during the same period.⁴ More than two times that number left between 1940 and 1960. All together, between 1910 and 1970, six and a half million black American men and women moved from the South to Northern cities such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Kansas City.⁵

The creation and enlargement of job markets in California and other states of the Far West lulled black Southerners to move further west. In the years immediately before World War II, about 35,000 African Americans, or a half of the estimated 700,000 who took part in the second massive wave of

the Great Migration, poured into California, mostly into urban centers such as Richmond, Oakland, and San Francisco, which had wooed a significant portion of the black population at the turn of the twentieth century. The largest number came from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas to take up employment opportunities in the bustling war-related industry in the Bay Area and beyond.⁶

The scale of Asian immigration pales when compared to the Great Migration of African Americans. Asians made up less than one million of the 40 million immigrants who entered the country during the entire period of massive transnational migration through the nineteenth to the early twentieth century.⁷ Moreover, immigration from Asia to the U.S. was undertaken by a population diverse in ethnic, national, and geographic origin. The extensive migration of labourers from Asia to the U.S. began in the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of Chinese indentured labourers in the then independent kingdom of Hawai'i, as well as fortune seekers who went to Gold Rush-era California. Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Indians came after them, first to Hawai'i and then the mainland U.S., starting in the latter part of the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth century. Asian migration continues today, undertaken by women and men who hail largely, but not exclusively, from the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The very heterogeneity of Asian immigrants stands in sharp contrast to the Great Migration of African Americans, whose geographic origin and itineraries fell within the boundaries of the U.S., and whose physical movement took place either by train or by foot and on a far greater scale.

Over-emphasizing this distinction, however, glosses over the fundamental ways in which these two major migrations are comparable. These groups were, and indeed still are, faced with economic, political, and social dislocation in their respective homelands; they were affected by the powerful economic "pull" of American industrial development; and they both encountered varying levels of deception, prejudice, and hostility when they arrived at their destinations. Members of these migrating populations also demonstrated a willingness to create lives of their own, as well as the capability to do so, in

a new land that had hitherto been predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. The significance of these similarities notwithstanding, the fact remains that imperialism, citizenship, and legally sanctioned discrimination created important variations and contrasts between and within Asian and African American experiences of migration.⁸

The industrial demand for labour, whether found in cities and fields to the north and west, Hawai'ian plantations, or the Rockies, ranked as an important factor for the movement of African American and Asian migrants. However, differences between the political economies of the societies of departure led to different starting points for residents of the Southern U.S. and immigrants leaving various parts of Asia. Whereas slavery, emancipation, and the Jim Crow system precipitated the departure of black Southerners, Asian migration, with the exception of the Japanese, emerged against the backdrop of European, Asian, and U.S. imperialism in their homeland.⁹ South China, which was the departure point for most Chinese migrants, was the main contact point in Asia for the British government, which "opened" China to European and U.S. trade following the first Opium War (1839–42). In addition, a long tradition of political rebellion such as the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64) devastated the Pearl River Delta, making life precarious for the Cantonese men and women in the region. Emigration thus became not just a way to attain a better life for them, but a necessary means for survival.¹⁰

Colonial rule also affected the lives of Koreans. While economic incentives were among important factors, thousands left the peninsula in response to the recruiting efforts of Christian missionaries and the Hawai'ian Sugar Planters Association, who had difficulties with increasingly militant Japanese workers at the turn of the century. Emigration came to a sudden end in 1905 in the midst of the Japanese-Russian War (1904–1905) when Japanese representatives in Korea banned departures of Koreans in an attempt to protect Japanese labourers in Hawai'i. Korean nationalists, reacting to tightened control under Japanese colonial rule—such as secret police, control and censorship of the media, the surveillance of religion and the imposition of Japanese language—since the Japanese annexation of the Korea in 1910, either went underground or fled abroad. The Korean communities around

the world—in Russia, Manchuria, and China; Europe; and Hawai'i and the continental U.S.—thus provided nationalists with shelters and financial support for their struggle against Japanese colonial rule.

Both Asian and African American migrants entered new lands where their limited economic resources and racial status sparked more hostility than support. Yet legally sanctioned discrimination on the basis of citizenship set the intolerance of exclusionary laws that affected Asian immigrants apart from the segregation imposed on African Americans. A series of immigration laws (the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882, followed by the Acts of Immigration in 1917, 1921, and 1924—the last culminating in the total ban of Asian immigration) restricted the geographic mobility of Asian immigrants. Furthermore, alien land laws and court rulings on citizenship (*Takao Ozawa v. U.S.* in 1922 and *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* in 1923) limited their social mobility at the federal, state, and municipal levels.¹¹ Because these statutes and decisions hinged on the federal status of Asian immigrants, rather than arbitrary xenophobia, exclusionists argued that they were fair and justifiable.

Asian immigrants were confronted with a U.S. state apparatus that denied them the means to attain a livelihood or political power through the extended application of the logic of “separate but equal.” But racial discrimination did not undermine the strength of the target groups. Rather, it created a culture of resistance and instigated a fight for the justice denied to them—in ways comparable to a history of African American’s fight for justice and freedom—that can be seen manifested at the O’ahu sugar plantations (1920) and in Salinas, California (1932).¹² The internment of approximately 120,000 Japanese immigrants and U.S. citizens of Japanese origin during World War II was one of the most serious breaches to civil liberty in U.S. history.¹³ After the war, the Japanese American community, led by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), struggled for redress and reparations in order to obtain apology and compensation from the U.S. government for its wrongdoing. It was more than four decades after the relocation that President Ronald Reagan finally signed the redress bill in August 1988.

Gender Made a Difference: Who Moved, Who Stayed, and Why?

Gender was a factor in the migration of both Southern black and Asian women that differentiated them from both each other and their male counterparts. The number of African American men far exceeded the number of women who migrated throughout the World War I period. But geographic proximity made it relatively easy for them to visit home or to bring a wife and child to where they worked and lived. Thousands of African American women also left the South alone. Many men migrated in stages, leaving the rural South, settling in Southern cities, and moving to the North or Midwest. On the other hand, single black women usually traveled the entire distance in one trip.¹⁴ They met, as a rule, an uncle, a sister, a cousin, or fictive kin waiting for them at their destination.¹⁵ The different patterns of migration for black men and women stemmed largely from gender conventions in the larger society. Being black and female, unaccompanied women *en route* alone were at greater risk than men.¹⁶

Like their husbands, fathers, uncles, and male cousins, female Southerners left the rural South out of economic necessity; they also did so out of non-economic motives that differed from their male counterparts.¹⁷ A desire to flee from sexual exploitation, in conjunction with domestic violence and economic oppression, weighed heavily on the decision of black women to quit the South. A large proportion of female migrants were divorced, separated, or widowed, whose act of migration made them "absentee mothers," leaving their children in the care of their parents, other relatives, or friends in the South. That those children the women left in the South represented "part of women themselves," in turn, contributed to the endurance and tenacity of the migration chain.¹⁸

One needs to underline that the focus on the personal and sexual motivations for migration does not dismiss or diminish the importance of economic incentives. Rather, as scholars in migration history and African American migration have cautioned elsewhere,¹⁹ such focus helps us to avoid the risk of overstressing the economic factors so that migrant women, either black Southerners or Asians, are viewed simply as victims of larger forces

beyond their control as opposed to actors in their own lives.

Like African American women from the South, a significant number of Asian women expressed a desire for greater personal freedom. Rural poverty was certainly among the important factors that spurred the departure of a significant number of so-called picture brides from southwestern part of Japan in the years between 1907 and 1924.²⁰ Nevertheless, an economic explanation alone accounts only partially for the complexity of gendered mores and social conventions behind these and other women's departures. A sense of adventure, or even liberation, spurred many Japanese picture brides to look abroad in search of a better future. Once they reached the other side of the Pacific, however, many encountered the harsh reality of back-breaking work in the fields, in logging camps, and at homes where there were frequently practically nothing more than shacks. Many began their days before dawn and worked well after the dark, often in isolated rural environments cut off from contact with any other Japanese women.

Vietnamese women, who arrived as refugees in the U.S. in the 1970s after their departure from the war-torn homeland, also met great difficulties adapting to life in America. But after varying periods of initial hardship, many fared better as they gained relative power vis-à-vis their male counterparts. This was because as husbands and fathers, adult male Vietnamese, as a rule, underwent great difficulty in finding a job that allowed them to be the breadwinner in the family, a status that had previously provided them with both an income that supported a middle-class lifestyle and a privileged position from which to deal with governmental institutions in Vietnam. In Philadelphia in the 1980s, they lost this position of relative privilege along with their income. Many had to face losses in the power and patriarchal status granted to them in their homeland, losses which created in them a profound sense of alienation from the social institutions outside the ethnic community. The privation of middle-class status and privilege that these men suffered also affected women, since they too had derived status and benefit from the occupational position of their husbands or male relatives in Vietnam. In the U.S., however, Vietnamese wives and mothers played a key role in managing their family lives. In addition to earning wages as waitresses and garment

workers, many women also mediated the economic and social needs of their households and the various governmental resources available—such as the Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance programs, as well as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children and Supplemental Security Income programs. After their eligibility for these types of cash assistance expired, they managed their families' receipt of Medicaid, food stamps and other general assistance, which was provided through the federal refugee aid and resettlement system and other programs.²¹

More recently, female professional migrants from Kerala, India, to California have exemplified a greater complexity between wage-earning power and gender identification in the context of migration.²² Full-time professional wages that nurses from Kerala earned in turn of the twenty-first-century California—as against secondary and supplementary wages, if none at all, that their husband brought home—did not automatically lead to the reversal of traditional gender roles. While some couples adjusted by re-defining division of labour at home, many pointed to a common dynamic that resisted at least partially such adjustments in the share of domestic work (such as cooking and cleaning), child care, and financial decision making.

Unlike black Southerners, whose migration north met with little legal restriction, Asian men and women had to face the direct consequences of exclusionary laws. One of the most salient consequences was a skewed gender ratio. Miscegenation laws forbidding the marriage between white persons and “Negroes, mulattoes, and Mongolians” added to the difficulties faced by Asian men attempting to find marriage partners in the early twentieth century. Japanese men addressed these difficulties by relying on the so-called “picture marriage” system, a trans-Pacific version of marriage by proxy that was widely practiced at the time whereby a man in the U.S. wrote to his family, relatives, or acquaintances in Japan to find a wife for him. After exchanging photographs with his prospective bride, he sent for her to cross the ocean to join him.²³ More than 20,000 Japanese women, mostly picture brides, landed on American shores between 1909 and 1921. Their arrival radically transformed the Japanese community in the U.S., which had hitherto been a society of bachelor sojourners. The emergence of a more vibrant Japanese

community that began to include both women and men, as well as U.S.-born children who were consequently U.S. citizens, in turn evoked violent hostility that spread up the West Coast from San Francisco to Vancouver.

In the case of Indian men living in the U.S., who were mostly Punjabis, more than half were married, but the 1911 report of the Immigration Commission makes clear that many had left their wives “abroad.” As their stays in the U.S. lengthened, many ended up forming unions with Mexican American women, a practice that further complicated racial categories.²⁴

Filipinos presented another problem for the white American establishment due to their courtship of white women, which sometimes led to marriage.²⁵ In 1933, Salvador Roldans won his petition at California’s Court of Appeals to marry a white woman because Filipinos were considered Malay, not Mongolian. The state legislature quickly amended this legal loophole by modifying the anti-miscegenation law to include Malays as well, and Oregon, Nevada, and Washington soon followed suit.²⁶

Conflict and Coalition: Inter-Racial Relations between African Americans and Asian Americans and Immigrants

More than any “essential” characteristic arising from either the race or colour of the two groups, the vicissitudes in the U.S.’s industrial demand for labour, the legacy of segregation in the U.S., and the racialized nature of U.S. wars in Asia were among the factors that facilitated relations between African Americans and Asian Americans and immigrants. The lack of widespread ethnic conflict notwithstanding, black leaders expressed strong prejudice against Chinese and other immigrants as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Their opposition stood in sharp contrast to the attitudes of white large-scale ranchers and farmers in the South, who initially endorsed the immigration of Chinese and Europeans in order to help build a New South. The complaint made by Frederick Douglass illustrates one of the earliest examples of such black antagonism, as he states in 1853 that “every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived immigrant whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place.”²⁷

Just as a trickle of black Southerners began to leave for Northern and Western cities, Booker T. Washington expressed his deep concern about the influx of foreign workers into the U.S. He was aware that white owners of railroad companies, plantations, mines, and factories took little notice of black migrants because of the abundant pool of cheaply employable foreign workers from Asia and Europe arriving on American shores. In an 1895 speech he gave in Atlanta, he warned his mostly white audience not to “look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South,” but instead to “cast down your bucket [...] among the eight million negroes whose habits you know.”²⁸ His admonition echoed a deep-rooted bias among black leaders towards immigrants in general as Douglass stated earlier.

As the century turned, black animosity toward Asian immigrants grew sharper. The stigmatization of Asian immigrants took some of the most extreme forms during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Washington argued that not only would immigrants take jobs from African Americans, but that Asians, in particular, “lacked moral standards” and thus “could never assimilate to occidental civilization.” A 1928 article in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* concurred, claiming that immigrants were “crude, illiterate, and hopelessly unsympathetic with American institutions and ideals,” and were “used to press us further down the economic ladder.”²⁹ Such invectives served to strengthen racial hierarchies and the logic of white supremacy as constructed by white workers, racial scientists, and policy makers in the early twentieth century. They also legitimized the notion that the core of American identity was not only white, but also urban, industrial, and Northern,³⁰ thus relegating both black Southern migrants and Asian immigrants and their descendents to a real or symbolic status as second-class citizens.

Black leaders' opposition to Asian workers stemmed from multiple sources. For one thing, white employers favoured Asian workers, who were deemed cheap and disposable, over African Americans. Since the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882—a federal statute vigorously defended by the African-American press—industrialists, railroad companies, mine

owners, along with ranchers, vineyard and orchard holders found among Japanese immigrants a convenient labour source to replace now-unavailable Chinese workers. After the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement limiting the number of Japanese immigrants, white employers looked to Korean, Filipino, and Mexican workers. Such practices infuriated the Black press and leadership who held, as *Washington Colored America* stated in 1902, that "Negro labour is native labor and should be preferred to that of the offscourings of Europe and Asia." Another reason for employers' preference for Asian workers laid in what white America deemed the alien nature of Asians and the temporary status of their residence. Such alleged characteristics of Asian labourers rendered them the most exploitable type of worker, comparable to Mexicans. The Pullman Company, for example, hired Filipinos as scabs partly in an attempt to undermine A. Philip Randolph's efforts to organize black workers in the 1920s.³¹ Furthermore, the Great Depression dampened the job prospects of black men and women. A large proportion of these black workers were Southern migrants, and they were the first to be laid off from the industrial jobs they had acquired during the WWI era and after. The strategic use of Asian labourers—as scabs and scapegoats—is nothing new. But this practice strengthened existing anti-immigrant feelings among both black leaders and the rank-and-file, who largely endorsed the restrictions that culminated in the federal laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924 that placed a total ban on Asian immigration.

Asian immigrants, on their part, learned quickly the existing racial order in the U.S. by which becoming white and becoming American were tightly interwoven. As a result, Asians workers and students—with exception of those from India³²—while aware of their non-white, non-Caucasian status, sought to distance themselves from black Americans. Japanese were particularly concerned with where they and their U.S.-born children, in particular, stood within the racial hierarchy of America. In 1925, a Los Angeles-based Japanese language newspaper, *Hokubei Jiji* (『北米時事』), stated that the greatest concern for *issei* parents was that their "*nisei*," U.S.-born offspring "might become the second Blacks"³³ who lacked full recognition of their citizenship in the U.S. polity and were denied equal

treatment in American industrial democracy. Such fears were realized in the bleakest way possible as the outbreak of the Pacific War led to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision to remove the entire Japanese community to the West Coast, including immigrants and U.S. citizens of Japanese descent alike, and incarcerate them in internment camps hundreds, if not thousands miles away from their former homes, such as Tule Lake and Manzanar in California, Minidoka in Idaho, and Heart Mountain in Wyoming.³⁴

It is little wonder that a Japanese community, on its part, sought to distance from African Americans, rather than searching for a potential for a common ground. An L.A. Japanese-language newspaper report illustrates perhaps best an instance of self-proclaimed exceptionalism (among non-whites) within the Japanese community.³⁵ The 1940 sale of real estate in a recently developed section of Adams, part of a white middle-class neighbourhood in L.A., set off anti-Japanese movement among white residents. They argued not only that the influx of Japanese would bring down the value of their housing but also that Japanese newcomers would open the way for the arrival of other non-desirables, including Mexicans and African Americans. Such accusations brought home to L.A. Japanese that white residents made no distinction between Japanese and other non-white groups. Deeply rooted to the white-black dichotomy familiar to white residents, such perceptions nonetheless betrayed a distinction that Japanese community leaders attempted to promote. *Dôhō* (『同胞』), the leading Japanese-language paper, sought to breach the perception that Adams' white residents held towards Japanese when it reported a "secret pact" between white residents and Japanese newcomers. According to this pact that *Dôhō* described, residents of Adams agreed that Japanese would move into the neighbourhood on the condition that blacks and Mexicans be excluded. The paper provided no evidence to support the secret pact, however, putting the veracity of this claim, but one thing is clear: the report served as a vehicle of the distinction, drawn and promoted by the Japanese community, setting the Japanese apart from other racialized minority of colour.

Japanese exceptionalism was not limited to discrimination against African American and Mexican neighbours, but also came into play in relation to other

Asian groups. The Chinese in Los Angeles often ran gambling houses where Japanese labourers bet with Filipinos, Europeans, and African Americans.³⁶ The exact dynamic generated from such multi-racial/-ethnic contact remains unknown, but what we do know is that Japanese journalists, successful agriculturalists, and the consulate corps saw nothing but viciousness in the contact taking place at such sites. The difficulty of living and working conditions—the flip side of gambling, which attracted the working poor from Japan and other countries—did not generate as much concern among these Japanese leaders. What mattered most to them was that the labouring class who made up the majority of the Japanese immigrant population, risked dishonouring their national pride as they mingled with workers of other nationalities deemed uncivilized due to either race or class. Thus, Japanese leaders condemned the working class Japanese who frequented such dens of vice, saying that they were betraying their obligations as members of a superior race. Unlike the Chinese or Filipinos, Japanese leaders argued, Japanese were hardworking and highly moral people, on the right track towards Americanization. Such admonitions reflected once again the desire on the part of Japanese community leaders to project the image of Japanese immigrants as exceptions to the white discourse of “inassimilable” Asians. It also helped to counter, at least in part, the ideology of white supremacy. But as *Rôdô Shinbun* (『労働新聞』) cogently pointed out, that very argument stood on the assumption of Japanese supremacy over other people of colour but not white Americans. As a result, such a distinction at best reiterated, and at worst reinforced, the racial stereotypes constructed by white America and black leaders.³⁷

While black Americans and Asian immigrants and U.S. citizens of Asian descent each held onto their separate interests and identities, with internal divisions along ethnic, national, and increasingly class lines, cross-racial identification and pan-ethnic solidarity grew among people who underwent similar experiences of racism during WWII and the years that followed. The internment of Japanese Americans provoked deep concern in the black community, for example, and NAACP Branch Director Closter Current noted that black Americans throughout the country felt a sense of alarm familiar to

all people living under oppression: "Today them, tomorrow us."³⁸ In 1945, representatives from the African American community, together with their Filipino and Korean counterparts, met with federal, state, and local delegates in San Francisco to establish the Pacific Coast Fair Play Committee. They agreed on one point that "any attempt to make capital for their own racial groups at the expense of the Japanese would be sawing off the limbs on which they themselves sat."³⁹

The postwar era fostered further cross-racial and cross-ethnic alliances among African American and Asian activists. Martin Luther King Jr., Vernon Jordan, and Benjamin Hooks expressed a humanitarian point of view, strongly supporting admission into the U.S. of Indochinese refugees as "an embattled minority."⁴⁰ Black leaders did not turn a blind eye to economic difficulties, a principal source of tension and competition between African Americans and refugees as they struggled to maintain employment, housing, and access to government and corporate services in Los Angeles, Seattle and San Francisco. But a humanitarian perspective, nurtured in the struggle for civil rights, led black leaders to see their "struggle for economic and political freedom" as a "moral obligation" that was "inextricably linked to the struggle of Indochinese refugees."⁴¹

The postwar militancy of African Americans was also important in creating a common ground from which Asian American students and grassroots activists, as well as Native Americans and Chicana/os, could articulate their grievances relating to discrimination at home and to the U.S. war in Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia.⁴² "We followed what blacks did,"⁴³ as one Asian American student put it.

This cosmopolitan perspective emphasizing coalition building was not shared by all or even most of the women and men making up either group, however.⁴⁴ Their interests were increasingly divided along class lines within and across their respective groups. Newcomers such as Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians and, to a lesser extent, Hmongs, competed with urban African Americans—many of whom had migrated from the South—for jobs, housing, bank loans, and public programs. Settled groups, including U.S. citizens of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean descent, followed paths closely

resembling those of European origin. More recent arrivals from Hong Kong and university-educated Indian computer engineers, for their part, had and have little trouble building their institutions and networks with little or no funding from the U.S. government.⁴⁵ The economic success of the latter two groups has strengthened the stereotype of Asians as the “model minority,” while glossing over the difficulties faced by the first group. It also highlights another racial stereotype, that of urban African Americans as a “ghetto minority.” Real and imagined antagonism between the two minorities came to a head during the 1992 L.A. riots, leading pundits to seize on the alleged centrality of interracial competition.⁴⁶

Real and imagined antagonism between the two minorities came to a head during the 1992 Rodney King riots. Immediately after all-white jury’s verdict, acquitting four white L.A. police officers charged with assault of Rodney King, it set off a circle of anger and violence in Los Angeles. Starting in South Central L.A., some of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods, countless acts of destruction, ranging from looting and arson, including numbers of Korean businesses in South Central, to injuring and even killing spread throughout the city. The nation was in the midst of the recession, the unemployment rates in African-American and Latino neighborhoods ran to the level of the Depression-era, and many blacks purportedly resented the way Korean shop owners treated them, whose small businesses served for, and benefited from, largely black communities. Although the exact causes and impact of ethnic tensions in the L.A. riot remains to be debated, the alleged problem of the black-Korean conflict in particular, and the black-Asian conflict in general have surged since then as one of the most pressing concerns for the media and intellectuals alike.

Conclusion

This essay has been my first attempt to bridge the gap between two fields of inquiry, one investigating the internal migration of black southerners, the other focusing on the transnational migration of women and men of Asian descent between 1900 and 1970. The above pages have shed light on several

interlocking issues—the forces that drove migrants to move from one place to another (or to stay), the gender dynamics that marked the two human movements, and the reactions of African Americans (mostly black leaders) and Asians towards each other, responses that changed significantly over the period under study. Various parallels—in the motives for departure, the gender imbalance within migrating populations, and hostility and prejudice each met in the land of destination—have emerged from this comparison. More importantly, however, the legally sanctioned nature of Asian migration, compared against the lack of such in the Great Migration, has created contrasts that shaped the contours of the two major movements.

As far as inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations between Southern African American migrants and Asian immigrants and Americans are concerned, the temptation is strong to write the drama of achievement—the optimism of overcoming mutual hostility and building multi-racial coalitions among the oppressed. John Lie and Scott Kurashige have cautioned the danger of replacing the conflict thesis with assertions of black-Asian racial harmony.⁴⁷ One may extend such reservations drawn from historical and contemporary studies of black-Asian relations in general to the study of Southern black migration and Asian immigration in particular. It is important to avoid an easy abstraction of colour/identity politics, and I will conclude this essay by suggesting two ways that can help us do so.

First, a comparative study of migration needs to enlarge its scope by including communities of colour other than the two groups examined in this essay—such as Latinos, Native Americans, and Arab Americans—and to pay greater attention to interactions among them and with African and Asian Americans. Joe W. Trotter has begun such an enterprise in his historiographic study of the relations between African American migrants and immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Mexico.⁴⁸ More is yet to come that explores the meaning and the very dynamics of such interactions between people on the move.

Second, closely linked to the first point, the research agenda for the issue needs to address more fully the gendered dimensions of migration. Although this essay has begun this attempt, the experiences of both the women who

moved *and* the women who stayed need to be examined more fully. Also, the migration paths of women and men belonging to the same community has to be explored with greater depth in comparison to their male counterparts, not in isolation from them. We know, for example, that Chinese women whose husbands traveled back and forth across the Pacific, together with their in-laws, contributed to the growth and sustenance of transnational networks of family and kin. We also know that when African American women moved alone or to join their husbands in Northern cities, they brought with them elements of Southern culture that subsequently resulted in the establishment of African-American churches and mutual aid organizations, culinary tradition, songs, and language. How did processes of migration and settlement enacted by these and other women resemble, or differ from, the migration paths of male migrants? In what ways did migration strengthen, or modify, gender roles? How did life cycles and gendered division of work at home shape social and geographic trajectories of women of colour? Questions abound. Tackling these and other lines of inquiry will hopefully help us to discern hitherto under explored issues of gender in its fuller complexity and its impact shaping the migration of women and men of colour in the U.S.

Notes

- 1 An important exception to this general tendency can be found in Trotter, Joe W. "The Great Migration, African Americans, and Immigrants in the Industrial City," in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed., Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 82–99; Lawrence H. Fuchs, "The Reactions of Black Americans to Immigration," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed., Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 293–314. For an African American critique of late nineteenth-century anti-Chinese agitation, see Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asian Americans in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994). For U.S. policymakers' fear of black support for Japan during World War II, see George Lipsitz, "'Frantic to Join ... the Japanese Army': The Asia Pacific War in the Lives of African American Soldiers and Civilians," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capitalism*, ed., Lisa Lowe and David

- Lloyd (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997), 324–353. Scott Kurashige explores the nascent formation of multiracial coalitions during the World War II and the decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in Scott Kurashige, “The Many Facets of Brown: Integration in a Multiracial Society,” *The Journal of American History* (2004), 90, 1, 56–68.
- 2 Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh De Wind, *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 20.
 - 3 A large body of literature exists on each subject. Research on black urban migration has deep roots in *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (reprint; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996; orig. pub., 1899). The Chicago School gave growing attention to the movement of Southern blacks into Northern cities. Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue, *W.E.B. Dubois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993); Vernon J. Williams, Jr., *From a Caste to a Minority: Changing Attitudes of American Sociologists Toward Afro-Americans, 1896–1945* (New York: Greenwood, 1989). New social history and Black Power movements inspired a new area of studies on the subject. Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916–30* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Darlene Clark Hine, *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Hine, “Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimensions, 1915–1945,” in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class and Gender*, ed., Joe W. Trotter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Earl Lewis, “Race,” in *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century*, vol. I, ed., Stanley Kutler (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996); Joe W. Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Trotter, “African Americans in the City: The Industrial Era, 1900–1950,” in *The New African American Urban History*, ed. by Kenneth M. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996); Trotter, *The African American Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000). In Japanese, see Hiromi Higuchi, *Amerika Kokujin to Hokubu Sangyo: Senkanki ni okeru Jinshu Ishiki no Keisei*, (*American Blacks and*

the Northern Industry: Formation of Racial Consciousness Between the Two Wars) (Tokyo: Sairyû sha, 1997); Jun Furuya, "Introduction," in *Amerikanizumu to Jinshu—Sono Gento to Genzai (Americanism and "Race"—Their Origins and Present)* ed., Masaki Kawashima (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2005), 1–34, esp. 24; Kôtarô Nakano, chap. 5 "Shin-imin to Whiteness—20-seiki Shotou no 'Jinshu' to 'Karâ'," ("New Immigrants and Whiteness—Race and Colour in the Early Twentieth Century,") in *Americanism and "Race,"* 140–163, 154–157.

For one of the earliest studies on Asian American migration, see Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988). For the first comprehensive history of Asian Americans, see Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991). For an excellent review on the subject, including more recent studies, see Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

- 4 Lewis, "Race," 146.
- 5 Richard K. Scher, *Politics in the New South: Republicanism, Race and Leadership in the Twentieth Century* (Paragon House, 1992), 31; Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books 1992, c 1991), 6–7.
- 6 Trotter, "The Great Migration, African Americans, and Immigrants," 94. Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There: African American Migration to Richmond, California, 1910–1945," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, ed., Joe W. Trotter, 106–125.
- 7 Trotter, "The Great Migration, African Americans, and Immigrants," 91.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 92.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 91–92.
- 10 Sucheng Chan, "European and Asian Immigration into the United States in Comparative Perspective, 1820s to 1920s," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed., Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, 37–75; Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 5–9.
- 11 Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide*, 21–22; Lewis, "Race," 141.
- 12 Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865–1945*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).
- 13 Voluminous literature exists on the incarceration of Japanese. Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977); Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War*

- II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); Mae Ngai, *Illegal Aliens and Alien Citizens: United States Immigration Policy and Racial Formation, 1924–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Eiichiro Azuma, “The Politics of Transnational History Making: Japanese Immigrants on the Western ‘Frontier,’ 1927–1941,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 89, no. 4 (March 2003), 1401–1430.
- 14 Hine, “Black Migration to the Urban Midwest,” 131.
- 15 Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*, 46–49; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 159–160.
- 16 Hine, “Black Migration to the Urban Midwest,” 131.
- 17 *Ibid.* 132–133.
- 18 *Ibid.* For the centrality of women in building churches and mutual aid organizations that gave life in Northern cities a “Southern flavor,” see Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestic Workers in Washington D.C., 1910–1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).
- 19 Dirk Hoerder, “Segmented Macrosystems and Networking Individuals: The Balancing Functions of Migration Processes,” *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, ed. by Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (2., rev. ed., Bern: Peter Lang AG, 1999), 73–84, esp. 74–78; Hine, “Black Migration to the Urban Midwest,” 131.
- 20 For literature on picture marriage, see Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988), chap. 5; Alice Yun Chai, “Picture Brides: Feminist Analysis of the Life Histories of Hawai’i’s Early Immigrant Women from Japan, Okinawa, and Korea,” in Donna Gabaccia, ed., *Seeking Common Ground: Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992); Eileen Sunada Sarasohn, *Issei Women: Echoes from Another Frontier* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1998); Eithen Lubugeud, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), chap. 3; Rumiko Masubuchi, “1910–Nendai no Hainichi to ‘Shashin Kekkō’” (“Anti-Japanese sentiment during the 1910s and ‘picture marriage’”), in Soken Togami, ed., *Japanizu Amerikan: Iju kara Jiritsu e no Ayumi (Japanese American: the Path from Emigration to Independence)* (Kyoto: Minerva Shobo, 1986); Kei Tanaka, “Japanese Picture Marriage and the Image of Immigrant Women in Early Twentieth-Century California,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* no. 15 (2004), 115–138.
- 21 Nazli Kibria, *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), chaps. 4 and 5.

- 22 Sheba Mariam George, *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).
- 23 See footnote 20.
- 24 Lewis, "Race," 153.
- 25 Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, Chap. 3 "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration in the Invisible Empire." Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: Personal History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973, c1946).
- 26 Chan, *Asian Americans*, 60–61.
- 27 Quoted in Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 205.
- 28 *Selected Speeches of Booker T. Washington*, ed., E. Davidson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1932), 38.
- 29 Arnold Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends: Afro-Americans View the Immigrant* (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 50. See also Fuchs, "The Reactions of Black Americans."
- 30 Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- 31 Susan Eleanor Hirsch, *After the Strike: A Century of Labor Struggle at Pullman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
- 32 Asian Indians fought to hold on to their Caucasian status. In 1917, the U.S. Supreme Court granted them Caucasian status but excluded them from immigration on geographical grounds. In *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923), the Supreme Court continued to allow Asian Indians Caucasian status but ruled out their claims for whiteness. Thus, their claim for U.S. citizenship was denied on the basis of race.
- 33 Yoichi Fujiga, "Zaibeikoku Nihonjin Hattenshi Yo" (『在米国日本人発展史要』 1927); reprint in "Hokubei Imin-shi" (『北米移民史』) 1 (Nihon Tosho Center, 1991), 288–290. Cited by Yuko Matsumoto, "Naizai suru 'Tasha' to 'Kokuminka'," (「内在する '他者' と国民」, "'Nationalization' and 'Others': Japanese Immigrants and Americanization in Los Angeles before World War II,") *Journal of the Faculty of the Literature* (Department of History, Chuo University) vol. CLXXII, no. 45 (February 2002), 1–62, esp. 44.
- 34 Extensive literature on the internment of the Japanese exists. For a review, see Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, chap. 5 "America's Concentration Camps." For an overview, Alice Yang Murray, ed., *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000).

- 35 Matsumoto, "Nationalization," 43–44.
- 36 Jim H. Matsuoka, "Little Tokyo, Searching the Past and Analyzing the Future," in Amy Tachiki et al., eds., *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1971), 325; August 6, 1935, *Kashû Mainichi* (『加州毎日』); August 15, 1935, *Rafu Shinpo* (『羅府新報』), cited in Matsumoto, "Nationalization," 46.
- 37 September 25, 1945, *Rôdô Shinbun* (『労働新聞』). Cited by Matsumoto, "Nationalization," 44–45.
- 38 George Lipsitz, "Frantic to Join...", 336.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 340.
- 40 Cited by Fuchs, "The Reactions of Black Americans," 298.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 298.
- 42 For the impact of the Black Power movement on the Asian American ("yellow power") movement in the 1960s, see William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).
- 43 Lipsitz, "Frantic to Join...", 344.
- 44 Fuchs, "The Reactions of Black Americans," 298–299.
- 45 For a discussion of the emergence of new Asian Americans, either as diasporic populations or a trans-Pacific professional-managerial class, see Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, "The Political Economy of Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian Immigration," in *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, ed., Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Chang (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Arif Dirlik, "Asians on the Rim: Transnational Capital and Local Community in the Making of Contemporary Asian America," in *Across the Pacific: Asian Americans and Globalization*, ed., Evelyn Hu-Dehart (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 29–60, esp. 40–41.
- 46 Lie, "The Black-Asian Conflict?" 309–311.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 311; Kurashige, "The Many Facets of Brown."
- 48 Trotter, "The Great Migration, African Americans, and Immigrants in the Industrial City."