

JOURNAL *of*

**ASIAN
AMERICAN
STUDIES**

OCTOBER 1999

VOLUME TWO NUMBER THREE

EDITORS

Gary Y. Okihiro

Columbia University

John M. Liu

University of California, Irvine

REVIEWS EDITOR

Yen Le Espiritu

University of California, San Diego

EDITORIAL BOARD

Karin Aguilar-San Juan

Brown University

Soo-Young Chin

University of Southern California

Peter Feng

University of Delaware

Dorothy Fujita Rony

University of California, Irvine

Shirley Hune

University of California, Los Angeles

Nazli Kibria

Boston University

Elaine H. Kim

University of California, Berkeley

Josephine Lee

University of Minnesota

Davianna McGregor

University of Hawai'i, Manoa

Martin Manalansan

University of Illinois

George Lipsitz

University of California, San Diego

Phil T. Nash

University of Maryland, College Park

Gail M. Nomura

University of Washington

JOURNAL | of

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

JAAS

•

The *Journal of Asian American Studies* (JAAS) is an official publication of the Association for Asian American Studies. Three-times a year, JAAS publishes original articles articulating the multidimensional experiences of the diverse communities that comprise Asian America and the Asian diaspora. The journal seeks to define Asian American studies as a distinct, interdisciplinary scholarly pursuit and to integrate Asian American perspectives into various disciplines that will contribute to the further development of the field. See inside back cover for manuscript submission guidelines.

A NEW AMERICAN DILEMMA?:

*Asian Americans and Latinos
in Race Theorizing*¹

edward j.w. park and john s.w. park

WITHIN THE LAST two decades, the racial composition of the nation has undergone a profound change. Immigration reforms originally intended to favor Europeans have resulted, ironically, in the influx of over 15 million Asian and Latino immigrants.² The newcomers have settled in neighborhoods, both Black and White, and they are now part of the national economy, culture, and politics. More so than ever before, they are central participants in American race relations, often by appearing in the spectacular social breakdowns that unfortunately constitute much of American race relations: riots in Miami in 1980 and Los Angeles in 1992, punctuate these changes.³ Moreover, they are intertwined in a host of racial issues, like affirmative action and immigration, and their larger presence indicates a move toward a much more complicated multi-racial society.⁴

Yet, while American society confronts multiracial realities, much of recent American race theory either dismisses the significance of Asian Americans and Latinos altogether, or subsumes them into traditional biracial models. The newcomers are neither "Black" nor "White," but they are still characterized in those terms, and this tendency impedes the development of new and compelling ways to examine current race relations. We live in a multiracial society, but we seem stuck in biracial

thinking. To help remedy this problem, the purpose of this article is three fold: first, to review, and then critique, several contemporary theories on issues of race; second, to discuss how the new influx of Asian Americans and Latinos now complicate those same issues; and third, to propose a number of steps that can serve as starting points toward effectively theorizing race relations in a changing, multiracial America.

CONTEMPORARY RACE THEORY AND MULTIRACIAL COMPLEXITIES

In many contemporary theories of race, Asian Americans and Latinos lose their distinctive racial positions. For instance, Asian Americans are sometimes described as "White," sometimes "Black," either in the way they act politically as a group, or in their demographic characteristics, or in their historical oppression. Similarly, Latinos are sometimes physiologically "White," although some are "Black," and to one theorist, they are demographically "Black," while to another, they are nevertheless capable of becoming "White." Oftentimes, race theorists conceive the role of Asian Americans and Latinos in a way that tends to marginalize their impact on the "core" of American race relations. The idea seems to be that while these groups are present in ever greater numbers, their presence doesn't change American race relations overall.

In the preface to his book, hailed as one of the most accurate, insightful, and realistic statements on contemporary race relations to date, Andrew Hacker says that he focuses on black and white Americans "[because] other groups find themselves sitting as spectators, while the other two prominent players try to work out how or whether they can coexist with one another."⁵ In this account, one of the "spectators," Asian Americans, if not already "literally White," have the requisite class background and "technical and organizational skills" to assimilate with Whites. In addition, increasing rates of intermarriage between Asian American and Whites are another sign of assimilation, and the children of those unions will become a "new variant of White."⁶ The other "spectator," Latinos, "are already 'White' [in large numbers]," and those who fail the phenotype test can nonetheless "claim a strong European heritage, which eases their absorption into the 'White' middle class."⁷ A

large part of this particular race theory posits that the very concept of Whiteness will change, as the inclusion of Asian Americans and Latinos will expand the category of Whites.⁸

In another, similar version of race theory, Stephen Steinberg suggests that Asian Americans and Latinos are like Whites chiefly because of their role in the economy and their impact upon African Americans.⁹ Here, Steinberg argues that the presence of Asian Americans and Latinos undermines the chances that African Americans will integrate more fully into the mainstream economy, because the former groups are used by white capital to undercut both the employment base and the wage structure for African Americans in the urban economy. In this understanding of race in America, immigrant workers are portrayed as having taken over—or as "populat[ing] almost entirely"—the core sectors of the urban economy, and they are said to displace African American workers, and not simply by taking the "super-exploited jobs" that native workers do not want.¹⁰ Asian Americans also help white capitalists uphold the official myth of the American dream, and both Asian Americans and Latinos frustrate attempts at a more radical critique of a racist capitalist system.¹¹ Because the theory conceives the structural integration of Asian Americans and Latinos in this way, the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 can be taken as a product of the economic exclusion of African Americans, due in large measure to the influx of Asian and Latino immigrants.¹² To underscore the suggestion that Asian Americans and Latinos contribute to the racial oppression of African Americans, commentators like Steinberg call for the "tear[ing] down of racist barriers" against African Americans in Asian American and Latino ethnic economies.¹³ Moreover, to protect African Americans, proponents of this view defend efforts to curtail immigration, because the current immigration policy hurts African Americans the most: "to state the matter bluntly, immigration policy amounts to a form of disinvestment in native workers."¹⁴

While the theories above simply subsume Asian Americans and Latinos into the "white" racial category to dismiss the multiracial complexities of American race relations altogether, other accounts take a more complex approach. The theories discussed below rely largely on

instead of burning and looting one another, "people of color," together with white progressives, should form a unified front to rally against white racists and corporate capital, both of whom exploit divisions within communities of color to perpetuate the conditions of institutionalized racism and capitalist exploitation.²⁸ This makes sense because Asian Americans and Latinos share a long history of racial oppression, as well as many contemporary barriers to economic mobility and political empowerment: phenomena like "red-lining," unequal educational opportunities, and neglect by both Republican and Democratic parties. "Narrow" black nationalism would impede racial progress, but an effort to "redefine 'Blackness' to be more inclusive" would further it.²⁹ But even within this radical critique of American society, and even with an expansive understanding of American racial history, Asian Americans and Latinos are ultimately subsumed with African Americans: together, they are the divided victims of American racism and, at the same time, potentially united agents for progressive social change.

In all of the theoretical formulations discussed above, Asian Americans and Latinos lose their distinctiveness by being compared to, and finally equated to, either Whites or African Americans. To be fair, some theories attempt to offer nuances suggestive of differences, but these remain in the backdrop, without ever becoming foregrounded enough to show that Asian Americans and Latinos should have fully differentiated positions—or "positionalities"—within the theoretical discourse on American race relations. Yet, these groups are clearly more than "spectators" whose experiences can simply be subsumed within an older biracial model. To say, for example, that Asian Americans and Latinos will become "White" simply ignores the strict legal and social regulations that have narrowly protected white privilege in American racial history, and forgets the history of racism directed against Asian Americans and Latinos specifically, and neglects the complexity of multiracial identities in contemporary American society.³⁰ On the other hand, "to redefine 'Blackness' to be more inclusive" might make for desirable political strategy, but it still ignores the substantial differences between Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans.

The tendency to think in biracial terms is unfortunate because so much work already suggests the limits of that way of thinking. For instance, one theory insists that there have always existed multiple ways in which African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and other racial groups have been "oppressed" and "disciplined." To say that Asian Americans are "White" denies Asian Americans their own subjectivity, which can serve as a basis for resistance and empowerment.³¹ Among Chicano and Latino scholars, many would agree with the call for Chicanos and Latinos to define their own "political space" within American society, without forever being rendered foreigners, or becoming subsumed into the familiar black and white categories still prevalent in contemporary race theory.³²

But despite these observations and assertions, many prominent contemporary theories of race in recent years, even those that explicitly take into account the experiences of Asian Americans and Latinos, tend not to take multiracial realities into account. Instead, Asian Americans or Latinos appear in two rigid categories: works sympathetic to the assimilationist perspective usually equate them with European ethnics; those rejecting that perspective group them with African Americans.³³ Within race relations literature, it seems as though the 15 million new Asian and Latino immigrants—along with the several million already here—can simply be absorbed.

MULTI-RACIAL POLITICS

In 1992, Los Angeles erupted in flames in one of the most costly and devastating racial disturbance in American history. After nearly a week, between April 29 to May 5, the protests, looting, and burning ended with 52 deaths, 16,291 arrests, and nearly a billion dollars in property loss.³⁴ Latinos constituted the majority of those arrested, and Korean Americans alone sustained half of all property damage.³⁵ For days after, the national news media beamed images of armed Korean American merchants and their Latino employees standing guard against the mostly Latino and African American looters. In the haze of the civil unrest, it seemed that in this one spectacular fit of fury and violence, the "spectators" showed that they were, perhaps unfortunately, central play-

ers in American race relations.³⁶

While the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 was perhaps the most stunning multiracial race riot, it was hardly the first time that Asian Americans or Latinos occupied a dubious spotlight in recent years. In Miami, in 1980, African Americans took to the streets to protest police brutality, and the subsequent neglect by Cuban politicians. In Washington, D.C., in 1988, Latinos protested police brutality, and the same type of neglect by African American political leaders.³⁷ Also, from New York to Chicago to Los Angeles, the so-called Black-Korean conflict has become a constant source of racial tension, escalating into major conflicts in New York's Red Apple Boycott in 1990, and in the response to the shooting of Latasha Harlins by Soon Ja Du, in Los Angeles in 1991.³⁸ The Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 did, however, release simmering tensions, and in its aftermath, Asian Americans and Latinos were pushed to the top of the national political agenda.

In California, massive political support for Proposition 187 followed in the wake of the civil unrest. Passed in 1994, the controversial measure called for the denial of public education and public health services for undocumented immigrants, and required all state agencies to report those "suspected" of being in the country illegally.³⁹ Although the wording of the proposition was specifically aimed at the presence of—or more accurately, the consumption of public services by—undocumented immigrants, the political debate quickly implicated the broader Latino and, to a lesser extent, Asian American communities. In campaign advertisements and in various public debates, proponents questioned the political loyalties, economic contributions, and cultural allegiance of newer immigrant groups. For a great many voters, it did not matter that the law would be challenged, or rendered unconstitutional; they favored Proposition 187 because they could send a "message" about the appropriate terms, or perhaps even the desirability, of becoming an increasingly multiracial nation. In the November elections, voters sent their "message" by a two-thirds margin.⁴⁰

Politicians in Washington got that message. From 1996 to 1998, Congress initiated a new round of immigration "reforms." Supported by a bi-partisan Presidential Commission on Immigration headed by the

late Barbara Jordan, political leaders called for strict limits on further immigration, and in the process, brought the presence of Latinos and Asian Americans to national attention.⁴¹ Not since 1882 or 1917 have there been such unanimous, vehement attempts to curtail immigration, and not since 1965 have the proposed changes been so profound. In the political advertisements run by then California Governor Pete Wilson, and in the speeches of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, there was extreme hostility clearly directed at those from Asia, Mexico, and Central America.⁴² As the "reforms" in immigration law and procedure have under the Clinton administration resulted in record numbers of deportation and exclusion cases, the debate will no doubt continue in Washington and elsewhere.⁴³ Overall, the issue reflects the centrality of Asian Americans and Latinos in national politics that is only paralleled by similar debates during the turn of this century, when exclusionary laws effectively halted immigrants from non-Western European countries, and in turn, stopped forces that would have transformed the nation into a multiracial one a century ago.⁴⁴ Once again, the reforms effectively function as a national race policy, because they intend to restrict groups who would otherwise have a greater impact on current race relations in America.

The participation of African Americans in these debates adds to the multiracial complexities of immigration "reform." In California, while proponents of Proposition 187 recruited Asian American and Latino conservatives, they also reached out broadly to the African American community. On the one hand, African American support protected white exclusionists from charges that they acted with racist motives; on the other, the success of Proposition 187 depended on the notion that undocumented aliens took away jobs from existing in communities of color, especially African American communities, that are deeply affected by profound demographic changes.⁴⁵ At the election, close to half of all African American voters supported Proposition 187. In response, African American leaders across the nation engaged in major political struggles over their collective position on immigration. Some major African American political figures and academics across the political spectrum have lobbied for restricting immigration, so that "Americans

can care for their own first," while others, including the Congressional Black Caucus, have led the defense of current immigration policy, fearing for the separation of Asian American and Latino families, and for the other types of "reforms" that a rising tide of immigrant bashing might produce.⁴⁶ As Americans in general debate immigration reform, the differences between African American leaders on this issue have demonstrated the profound impact of multiracial complexities on defining African American political identity in the post-civil rights era.⁴⁷

In addition, the centrality of Asian Americans and Latinos in American racial politics goes far beyond debates about immigration policies, or the racial composition of urban riots. In other areas, Asian Americans and Latinos add multiracial complexities that redefine traditional relationships between race and power in diverse and surprising ways. This is precisely the case in the current debate on affirmative action.

Again, in California, the passage of the so-called California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) threatens to ban race-conscious affirmative action policies in all state agencies. Like Proposition 187 in 1994, debates about the CCRI played a major part in shaping the elections of 1996. It is, in all respects, a defining issue, and the opponents of affirmative action placed Asian Americans and Latinos at the center of their arguments, the former as the new victim of "reverse discrimination" and the latter as the "unfair beneficiaries." By claiming that Asian Americans—who have suffered discrimination in the past—were now being forced to pay the price of "preferential treatment," and by saying that newly-arrived Latinos were reaping the benefits of that treatment, the opponents of affirmative action used both groups to further their attacks, while defending themselves from charges of racism. By pointing to Asian Americans, they insisted that not all opponents of affirmative action were defending white privilege; by pointing to new Latino communities, they said that not all beneficiaries of affirmative action were those who had suffered historical wrongs. In addition, through this multiracial configuration, opponents of affirmative action could exploit tensions among Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latinos: in Maryland, for instance, it was a young Latino man who challenged in federal courts the constitutionality of an all-black scholarship at the

University of Maryland; and in San Francisco, it was a coalition of Chinese parents that ultimately over-turned race-conscious admissions policies at Lowell High School, thereby destabilizing over twenty years of federally supervised desegregation orders for the public schools of San Francisco.⁴⁸ Across the country, the debates over affirmative action promise to bring forth even more acrimony in an already uneasy political environment.

More importantly, however, these legal and political challenges indicate that issues of race—which for a long time had been phrased in Black and White—can no longer be meaningfully understood in that way. And as serious as immigration "reform" and affirmative action are now, they constitute only a fraction of the multiracial problems that we face as a nation. Today, neighborhood transitions occur much more often due to the influx of Asian Americans and Latinos. As Asian Americans transform Queens, New York, Latinos now outnumber African Americans in Compton and South Central Los Angeles. Also, multiracial complexities can no longer be contained in those cities that have had an historically high concentration of Asian Americans and Latinos. In diverse metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Phoenix, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Dallas, there are significant numbers of Asian Americans and Latinos located in various commercial and residential areas.⁴⁹ Some of these cities celebrate their new-found diversity, while all of them struggle to manage multiracial conflicts. Only a generation ago, white resistance to school desegregation and to busing marked the typical racial conflict in America; now, that image is often replaced with African American boycotts of Korean merchants. As armed Klansmen volunteer in "citizens patrols" to protect the border, undocumented Latino workers and their children now appear as the biggest and the most convenient bogeyman in American racial discourse, largely because they themselves cannot talk back.⁵⁰

THEORIZING MULTIRACIAL REALITIES

When American race relations were largely conceived as biracial, they were still, nevertheless, very complicated. With the addition of new

groups, whose presence is already felt and steadily growing, race relations will be even more complex than before, and perhaps this is where the tendency to simplify might seem attractive. But the entrenched habit of theorizing American race relations in binary terms does not help us confront more directly our multiracial problems. In this section, we argue for several steps toward new race relations theories to help cope with those problems. Some of these steps address the emergence of multiracial realities directly, while others focus on the practice of race relations theorizing itself. Elements for all of them already exist in the race relations theory literature, but theorists should become more conscious about the changing tenor of American race relations, and more reflective about how these changes are confronted in our theoretical analyses.

First, theorists of race should be more careful about using the concept "race" in race theorizing itself. For instance, Andrew Hacker suggests that Asian Americans and Latinos are problematic in race relations discourse because "Asian American" and "Latino" do not specify racial groups in the full sense that "Whites" and "African Americans" do.⁵¹ They are instead, he says, externally imposed labels that conflate phenotypically distinct groups: an "Asian American" can be anyone from an Asian Indian to a Chinese, according to this account. In contrast, a racial category like "Black" is said to coincide with a single racial and cultural meaning that is distinct, and that can be, and has been, institutionalized to further the racial oppression of that group.⁵² Yet, many social constructionist statements and much of the ethnic studies literature already refutes that thinking: they show persuasively that "White" and "Black" conflate just as many phenotypically and culturally divergent groups as "Asian American" or "Latino."⁵³ "Race" can refer to culture, or to biology, or to color, to all of these and to some of them. The slippery meaning of race is inevitably imbedded in much of race theory, and that requires race theorists to be more careful with the very concept of race itself.

Overall, the problem of defining, of institutionalizing, or of simply using racial categories in any manner has always been fraught with pitfalls, errors, and gross over-generalization. Perhaps, in light of these problems, the U.S. Supreme Court's Justice Antonin Scalia has gone so

far as to declare that "in the eyes of government, we are just one race here. It is American."⁵⁴ As much as that statement seems odd to many race theorists as one particularly gross and maybe disingenuous over-generalization, the example is intended to illustrate a point: frustration over the new cacophony of race can lead to a general confusion about race, or even a willingness to abandon the concept altogether. But to dismiss certain groups as racial groups based on phenotypic or cultural characteristics can lead to too much oversimplification and a lack of consistency about what we mean when we talk about race. Just as much as it is peculiar to think of Americans as "one race" and thereby deny the power of race entirely, it is no less strange to think of Korean immigrants as "White" or "Black" in other contexts.

Second, to reiterate a suggestion earlier in this essay, we should realize that Asian Americans and Latinos have distinct histories as racial groups in America as well as a separate subjectivity in contemporary American race relations. After all, they are not really "the new kids on the block" as one legal scholar has suggested, although their numbers have increased dramatically in recent decades.⁵⁵ As Tomás Almaguer has shown, in the American West, where the presence of Asian immigrants and Mexican Americans has had a long history, white settlers and policy-makers have wondered what to make of both groups for over a century and a half.⁵⁶ We can not simply subsume their past experiences or their present participation in a familiar, but ultimately out-dated, binary view of race, for such a move would miss too much. As we have attempted to demonstrate, the inclusion of Asian Americans and Latinos is important not only because of their recent demographic growth, but because of their impact on redefining and on challenging the fundamental features of American racial discourse. They are participants distinct from "Whites" or "African Americans," and race theorists should account for this by providing (or at least provide the possibility for) a separate and distinct epistemological space for them in their theoretical works about American race relations. We already have a ground-breaking example of how this might be done, where we can witness an attempt toward a comprehensive race theory in a sustained and comparative fashion, and account for the unique ways in which all of the

major racial groups have become racialized.⁵⁷ That political movements and other social practices re-articulate the meaning and significance of certain racial categories and that these continue to shape the political consciousness and the participation of specific racial groups are powerful ideas that deserve greater attention.

Third, a major difference between Asian Americans, Latinos, and Blacks and Whites has just recently gained attention, and race theorists should examine the subject in greater detail. Many theorists have already explored the impact of transnational dynamics in shaping American race relations, but mostly in a way that traces the "push" factors of international migration, or the impact of international relations on American ethnic groups. Now, though, a broader understanding of transnational dynamics in the "globalization of U.S. race relations" can begin to account for economic restructuring and new geopolitical alignments, and the emergence of a transnational culture that has had a profound impact on shaping the political and economic integration of Asian Americans and Latinos.⁵⁸ A recent book by Nancy Abelmann and John Lie provides a compelling analysis of the transnational elements of Korean American political subjectivity.⁵⁹ A central part of their argument is that Korean Americans rely on Korea's rich, but troubled, political history and Korea's present circumstances to make sense of their place in American society, as well as what happened to their community during the Los Angeles civil unrest. And even as Asian Americans and Latinos rely on their "home" culture and history to decipher their place in American society, they often come to America already familiar with the nation's culture through exported images that suggest a racial hierarchy, contain racial stereotypes, and otherwise present a variety of indicators for the immigrants to sort their way through the United States.⁶⁰

These transnational dynamics suggest one of the strongest areas of difference between Asian American and Latino immigrants and the growing number of European immigrants. Through television and movies, the latter know that they will become "White" in America, while Asian and Latino immigrants know that they cannot. Yet, the specific ways in which transnational dynamics impact American race relations, and in particular, their role in shaping the political and cultural sub-

activities of Asian Americans and Latinos remain largely unexplored in race theory.

Finally, whether being more careful with race, or documenting distinct racial histories, or exploring transnational dynamics, American race relations theorists should try to look beyond the political appeal of any one theory, and rather discuss honestly the errors and mistakes in many contemporary works. These works often contain a powerful and important central argument—that African Americans face gross and continuing social inequalities in a nation that sometimes seems intent on turning back the clock on issues of race. Still, the political appeal of that message should not be a prophylactic against criticism for major conceptual and empirical flaws in works that happen to contain that message. By ignoring claims that Asian Americans and Latinos are "just like Whites," or that they further the racial oppression of African Americans, or that they are not even bona fide racial groups at all, theorists overlook much of the literature in their own field since the 1970s.

That literature collectively describes the racial formation of Asian Americans and Latinos, the role and scope of relatively newer ethnic economies in the American urban economy, and the unique ways in which Asian Americans and Latinos have tried to struggle against the different forms of racial oppression directed against them.⁶¹ Despite the best efforts to exclude them in the past, they are now here in greater numbers, and their participation in American race relations forces us to re-think familiar, but inaccurate generalizations. While it might be impossible, perhaps, to remove politics from race-theorizing entirely, it certainly isn't impossible to foster, not frustrate, theoretical efforts that are both politically and conceptually appealing. Two recent works, the first by Leland Saito, and a more recent work by Eric Yamamoto attempt to record and show the possibilities for progressive, multi-racial theories that explicitly account for multi-racial histories and circumstances.⁶²

The several steps we suggest here are intended to continue work toward understanding Asian Americans and Latinos as distinct racial groups that cannot be subsumed into either "White" nor "Black" racial categories. They are also intended to point out and to criticize an unfortunate trend in more recent theories—the renewed tendency to sub-

sume Asian Americans and Latinos into a binary vision of race, either as the new threats to racial equality or as its new victims. In an ever-complicated nation that sometimes seems bent on greater, more hostile displays of racial violence and tension, the tendency to simplify can work against generating effective political resistance.

CONCLUSION

Over the past three decades, the increasing presence of Asian Americans and Latinos raises both new problems of race in contemporary America and complicates older, existing ones. In the first category, issues like immigration "reform," whether accomplished by the individual states or by the federal government, targets Latino and Asian American communities directly. It questions the very desirability of a multiracial nation with a vehemence that has not been seen in about a century of American history. In the second category, issues like affirmative action draw in the new participants, and the opponents of government-sponsored race-consciousness reformulate their tactics to account for the changing demographics. While immigration reform and affirmative action are not, however, the only two issues that now force us to account for Asian Americans and Latinos more explicitly, they indicate a compelling need for such work. As these and other contentious issues gain more attention, we risk losing too much of their multiracial dimensions by simply expanding the category of "White," to include Asian Americans and Latinos or by expanding the category of "Black" to include the same groups.⁶³

Across the nation, we encounter problems that are truly multiracial, and that appear hopelessly complicated in the new rubric of race in America. In a state like California, where Asian Americans and Latinos now outnumber African Americans, and where Whites will soon be outnumbered altogether, anxieties about the rapid changes toward a multiracial nation spawn ever more virulent political clashes and draconian public policy proposals. The participants of these debates and the racial groups for whom the new public policies are targeted are neither Black nor White, despite the theoretical attempts to make them "fit" somehow into an American racial discourse that has, for most part, featured only

two major players. As their numbers and political presence grow every year, the unique subjectivities of Asian Americans and Latinos should be analyzed more closely to account for the different ways in which they participate as racialized agents in American society. This is a difficult task, but elements for it already exist, and abandoning that work now will mean an even larger gap between how race is theorized and how race is lived.

NOTES

1. The authors dedicate this piece to the memory of their mother, Soo Boon Kim, and acknowledge the financial support of the Southern California Studies Center (Michael Dear, director) at the University of Southern California.
2. See Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and Silvia Pedraza and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1996).
3. Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepnik, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
4. Rodolfo Acuña, *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1996); Edward J.W. Park, "Our L.A.: Korean Americans in Los Angeles After the Civil Unrest," in *Rethinking Los Angeles* edited by Michael Dear, H. Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996), 153-168; John S. W. Park, "Undocumented Persons and the Liberal State," *Harvard Review of Philosophy* 6 (1996): 16-30; and Dana Takagi, *The Retreat From Race: Asian American Admissions and Racial Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
5. Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Scribner's, 1992), xii.
6. *Ibid.*, 10.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat From Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).
10. *Ibid.*, 187.
11. *Ibid.* On this point, see also, Leon Bouvier, *Peaceful Invasions: Immigration and Changing America* (New York: University Press of America, 1992).
12. Steinberg, *Turning Back*, 192.
13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 193.
15. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
16. *Ibid.*, 141.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 179-180.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, 149-157.
21. See, for example, Melvin Oliver, James Johnson, and Walter Farrell, "Anatomy of a Rebellion," in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, edited by Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 117-41.
22. *Ibid.*, 132.
23. Edward Chang, "Jewish and Korean Merchants in African American Neighborhoods," *Amerasia* 19:2 (1993): 5-21; Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); and Ivan Light and Edna Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Koreans in Los Angeles, 1965-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
24. Mike Davis, "Uprising and Repression in Los Angeles," in Gooding-Williams, *Reading Rodney King*, 142-54.
25. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).
26. Manning Marable, *Beyond Black and White: Rethinking Race in American Politics* (London: Verso, 1995). The suggestion appears also in Harlon Dalton, *Racial Healing: Confronting the Fear Between Blacks and Whites* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).
27. *Ibid.*, 180.
28. *Ibid.*, 178-79.
29. *Ibid.*, 199-200.
30. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York, Routledge, 1994); Maria Root, *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Border as the New Frontier* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996); and Takagi, *Retreat From Race*.
31. Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).
32. See, Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*.
33. The assimilationist perspective has been most notably articulated in Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in America Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Examples of works sympathetic to that perspective and that theorize Asian Americans and Latinos as though their experiences were similar to white ethnics, include: Linda Chavez, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Peter Skerry, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority* (New York: Free Press, 1993); Harry Kitano, *The Japanese Americans* (New York, Chelsea House, 1987); and Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Examples of works critical of the assimilationist perspective that group Asian Americans and Latinos with African Americans, include: Mario Barera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown* (New York: Noonday Press, 1987).
34. See Oliver, Johnson, and Farrell, "Anatomy."
35. Edward Chang, "America's First Multiethnic 'Riots,'" in *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, edited by Karin Aguilar-San Juan (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 101-18.
36. Park, "Our L.A.?"
37. See, Portes and Stepnik, *City on the Edge*; and Michael Smith and Joe Feagin, "Putting 'Race' in Its Place," in *The Bubbling Cauldron: Race, Ethnicity, and the Urban Crisis*, edited by Michael Smith and Joe Feagin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 3-27.
38. See, Smith and Feagin, "Putting 'Race'"; and Moon Jo, "Korean Merchants in the Black Community: Prejudice Among the Victims of Prejudice," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15:3 (1992): 395-411.
39. Park, "Undocumented Persons," 16-17; and John S. W. Park, "Race Discourse and Proposition 187," *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 2:1 (1996): 175-204.
40. Park, "Race Discourse," 185.
41. Nester Rodriguez, "The Real 'New World Order': The Globalization of Racial and Ethnic Relations in the Late Twentieth Century," in Smith and Feagin, *Bubbling Cauldron*, 211-25.
42. Park, "Race Discourse," 176-79. For general background on contemporary debates about immigration, see *The State of Asian Pacific America: Reframing the Immigration Debate*, edited by Bill Hing and Ronald Lee (Los Angeles: LEAP and the Center for Asian American Studies, UCLA, 1996).
43. Under the Clinton administration, the Justice Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have undertaken steps to "stream-line" deportation and exclusion proceedings. Although these steps have dramatically accelerated the rate at which undocumented and unlawful migrants have been expelled from the country, they have also divided the federal judiciary, and in several jurisdictions, they have been rendered unconstitutional. For a brief description of both the new aggressiveness of federal

- immigration policy, as well as the legal challenges involved, see, "Criminal Immigrants Allowed to Appeal: High Court Leaves Protections Intact," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 1999, A3.
44. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*; Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigration and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Charles McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
 45. Rodriguez, "Real 'New World Order,'" 215-17.
 46. Steinberg, *Turning Back*, 191-92.
 47. During the debate on Proposition 187, a sampling of opinions among African American leaders and citizens on issues of immigration could be found in: Kevin Ross, "Is Black-Latino Friction a Voting Booth Issue? Yes," *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 1994, B5; John Mack, "Is Black-Latino Friction a Voting Booth Issue? No," *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 1994, B7; Joe Hicks and Constance Rice, "Pioneers in the Civil Rights Movement Would Find Common Cause with Latinos in Today's California," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1994, B7; and Evelyn White, "Immigration a Tough Call for Blacks," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 10, 1994, A1.
 48. The case from Maryland is *Podberesky v. Kirwin*, 38 F.3d 147 (1994). For the controversy surrounding Lowell High School, see *Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District*, 965 F. Supp. 1316 (1997); and Mary Curtius, "Schools Drop Race Factor in Admissions: Lawsuit Settlement Avoids Diverse Trial While Leaving Some Elements of Desegregation System Intact," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1999, A3.
 49. See generally, Smith and Feagin, "Putting 'Race' in Its Place."
 50. Park, "Undocumented Persons," 18; and Park, "Race Discourse," 190-95.
 51. Hacker, *Two Nations*, 7.
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*; Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Ian Haney-Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
 54. The remark occurred in a case concerning the constitutionality of race-conscious policies in federally-funded construction project, *Adarand v. Peña*, 115 S.Ct. 2097 (1995), on 2119.
 55. The phrase is from Dalton, *Racial Healing*, "What Black Folk Must Do: Welcome the New Kids on the Block," 206-10.
 56. Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*.
 57. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formations*.
 58. See, Rodriguez, "Real 'New World Order.'"
 59. Abelmann and Lie, *Blue Dreams*.
 60. *Ibid.*, chapter 3. The same types of transnational dynamics are relevant for Latinos, and may also serve as bases for theorizing Latino racial experiences. See, for instance, Francisco Valdes, "Under Construction: LitCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory," *California Law Review* 85:5 (1997): 1089-1142.
 61. On the theory of racial formation applied to Asians and Latinos, see Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*; Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*; Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Ideologies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). On the rising developments in urban economies in the United States, see Light and Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs*; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "Self-Employment and the Earnings of Immigrants," *American Sociological Review* 61:2 (1996): 219-30; and Jimmy Sanders and Victor Nee, "Immigrant Self-Employment: The Family as Social Capital and the Value of Human Capital," *American Sociological Review* 61:2 (1997): 231-49. On the ways Asian immigrants have tried to adjust to the United States, see Abelmann and Lie, *Blue Dreams*; and Takagi, *Retreat From Race*. On the way Latinos have attempted similar adjustments, see Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*; and Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York, Verso, 1989).
 62. Leland Saito, *Race and Politics: Asian Americans, Latinos, and Whites in a Los Angeles Suburb* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); and Eric Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
 63. Hacker, *Two Nations*, 10; and Marable, *Beyond Black and White*, 199-200. Consider the following passage from Robert Chang and Keith Aoki, "Centering the Immigrant in the Inter/National Imagination," *California Law Review* 85:5 (1997): 1395-1447: "The long and short of it is that Asian Americans and Latina/os are neither Black nor White. We will not settle down into the Black/White binary. Most important, we are here—and we are not going away."