



Trans-Pacific Japanese American Studies: Conversations on Race and Racializations

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Trans-Pacific Japanese American Studies is a unique collection of essays derived from a series of dialogues held in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Los Angeles on the issues of racializations, gender, communities, and the positionalities of scholars involved in Japanese American studies. The book brings together some of the most renowned scholars of the discipline in Japan and North America. It seeks to overcome past constraints of dialogues between Japan- and U.S.-based scholars by providing opportunities for candid, extended conversations among its contributors.

While each contribution focuses on the field of “Japanese American” studies, approaches to the subject vary, ranging from national and village archives, community newspapers, personal letters, visual art, and personal interviews. Research papers are divided into six sections: Racializations, Communities, Intersections, Borderlands, Reorientations, and Teaching. Papers by one or two Japan-based scholar(s) are paired with a U.S.-based scholar, reflecting the book’s intention to promote dialogue and mutuality across national formations. The collection is also notable for featuring underrepresented communities in Japanese American studies, such as Okinawan “war brides,” Koreans, women, and multiracials.

Essays on subject positions raise fundamental questions: Is it possible to engage in a truly equal dialogue when English is the language used in the conversation and in a field where English-language texts predominate? How can scholars foster a mutual respect when U.S.-centrism prevails in the subject matter and in the field’s scholarly hierarchy? Understanding foundational questions that are now frequently unstated assumptions will help to disrupt hierarchies in scholarship and work toward more equal engagements across national divides. Although the study of Japanese Americans has reached a stage of maturity, contributors to this volume recognize important historical and contemporary neglects in that historiography and literature. Japanese America and its scholarly representations, they declare, are much too deep, rich, and varied to contain in a singular narrative or subject position.

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