

**“Cold War Black Orientalism”: Race, Gender,  
and African American Representations of  
Japanese Women during the Early 1950s**  
(「冷戦期の黒人オリエンタリズム」: 1950年代  
初期のアフリカ系アメリカ人による日本人  
女性の表象における人種とジェンダー)

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**SUMMARY IN JAPANESE:** 占領期の日本におけるアフリカ系アメリカ人男性兵士と日本人女性との親密かつ性的な関係は、「冷戦期の黒人オリエンタリズム」(Cold War Black Orientalism)の言説において中心的なテーマとなった。本稿は、1950年代初期の占領下の日本とアメリカ本国という太平洋を横断するアフリカ系アメリカ人コミュニティにおける、日本人女性の表象をめぐる言説形成のポリティクスを、主に人種とジェンダーの観点から分析するものである。黒人兵士と日本人女性との関係をめぐるアメリカ黒人社会の論争は、冷戦初期の占領、軍事化、反共産主義、「封じ込め」の文化を背景に、アフリカ系アメリカ人が人種関係、ジェンダー規範、性的行動、アジア人のエスニシティ、国際関係などの諸問題を議論し、アイデンティティの政治を再編成していく契機となった。

占領下の日本に駐留していたアフリカ系アメリカ人男性および女性は、日本人女性との関係をめぐるジェンダー摩擦の中で、「従順」かつ「性的に奔放」な日本人女性というアメリカのオリエンタリズムにおける伝統的な表象をそれぞれ異なる形で援用しながら、エンパワメントを達成しようとした。また、黒人兵士と結婚した日本人花嫁に関するアメリカ本国の言説は、異人種間結婚をめぐる人種とジェンダーのポリティクスや、日米間の友好関係の樹立を基調とする冷戦期のオリエンタリズムの展開の中で、日本人花嫁のアメリカ黒人社会への統合を促進するものであった。さらに、「従順」な日本人花嫁像は、家庭性や伝

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統的な性別役割を重視する冷戦初期の保守的な性的規範や、黒人社会の家父長的な伝統の枠組みにおいて、アフリカ系アメリカ人のジェンダー意識・役割を強化するものであった。

## Introduction

In September 1950, a newspaper article published in *Baltimore Afro-American* attracted attention of African American communities on both sides of the Pacific over the intimate, sexual relationships between black male soldiers and Japanese women in Japan under U.S. military occupation.<sup>1</sup> Under the sensational title “GI’s in Tokyo Lavish Gifts on Jap Girls, Shun Own Clubs,” *Afro-American* correspondent James Hicks revealed that gender conflicts existed between African American men and women in Japan over the issue of black GIs who were dating Japanese women. Hicks reported: “Colored women in civilian duty in occupied Japan are being ignored by colored soldiers stationed here to the point that many of the women swear that once they get ‘stateside’ again, they will never so much as speak to a colored soldier who has been stationed in Japan.”<sup>2</sup> This article fueled a series of controversies over black-Japanese romance, sexual relations, and marriage in African American communities across the Pacific during the early 1950s.

This paper aims to reconsider the U.S. Orientalist discourse of Japanese women in general, and those in relationships with U.S. Army soldiers in particular, during the early Cold War period from the perspective of African Americans. The current research on this topic has centered on the mainstream U.S. media and cultural representations of GI-Japanese marriage, which has focused mostly on white-Japanese couples, and the Japanese American press’s coverage of marriages between Nisei soldiers and Japanese women.<sup>3</sup> Japanese women who were in intimate relationships with African American soldiers were central to the postwar African American discursive investment in Japan, which I call “Cold War Black Orientalism,” in the changing international relationship between the U.S. and Japan, and the domestic transformations in racial and gender regimes in the U.S. This paper examines the postwar African American representations of Japanese women, whose international, interracial relationships with black GIs took the forms of romance, marriage, and even prostitution, in major black newspapers and magazines during and immediately after the U.S. military occupation

of mainland Japan (1945-1952). This study stresses the “trans-Pacific” dimension in the discursive formation of “Cold War Black Orientalism” in the two different but interconnected contexts of occupied Japan and the U.S. home front. It also focuses on the “gendered” and “racialized” agencies of African American men and women who engaged in the debate over black GI-Japanese women intimacy and sexuality from both sides of the Pacific as major actors in shaping the postwar U.S.-Japanese and black-Japanese relationships.

This paper argues that African American men and women employed, and even exploited, the dominant sexual and gender images of Japanese women in the contemporary U.S. Orientalist discourse in racial and gendered terms in the cross-national discursive spheres in occupied Japan and in the U.S., through which they grappled with the issues of race relations, gender convention, sexual practice, Asian ethnicity, and global politics within the Cold War imperatives of occupation, militarization, international integration, and the cultures of “containment” as well as the postwar African American politics of race, gender, class, sex, and intimacy. In occupied Japan, African American men and women resorted to U.S. Orientalist representations of Japanese femininity from the opposite sides to achieve the gendered form of empowerment within the specific “militarized” context of their encounter and interaction with Japanese women. On the state-side, African Americans invested in the U.S. Orientalist discourse of “U.S.-Asian integration,” which historian Christina Klein calls “Cold War Orientalism,” in racialized and gendered ways to reconstitute the image of the Japanese brides of black GIs, or the women of the former “enemy” nation, as new members of their racial and national communities in the U.S., within the boundaries of the postwar black politics of interracial marriage, the cultures of domestic “containment,” and anti-Communism in U.S. foreign relations during the early Cold War period.<sup>4</sup>

### Literature Review

The major purpose of this paper is to critically revisit the thesis in Alex Lubin’s *In Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (2005), one of the few works of scholarship focusing on African American representations of black GI-Japanese women intimacy and sexuality in the context of the U.S. occupation of Japan.<sup>5</sup> His comparative analysis of the black newspaper

and magazine representations of GI interracial intimacy in Europe and Asia suggests that “while the politics of interracial intimacy in Europe posited white women as the appropriate judges of black masculine desirability, the same politics in Japan posited Japanese women as engendering black patriarchy.”<sup>6</sup> As Lubin correctly points out, the black press was instrumental in sustaining the “patriarchal” privileges of African American GIs with respect to Japanese women by rearticulating the influential U.S. representations of Asian female sexuality and “docility.” However, Lubin’s discussion of the black press representations of black-Japanese intimacy narrowly focuses on the stereotypical reformation of Japanese women within the traditional framework of Orientalism, and its implications on black patriarchy. First, he fails to capture the “gendered” dynamics in the discursive formation process in which African American women, as well as men, contested over the notions of Japanese femininity in the larger international, domestic political contexts of militarization, occupation, the cultures of “containment,” and U.S.-Japanese integration during the early Cold War period. Secondly, Lubin overlooks the “trans-Pacific” dimension in the politics of black-Japanese intimacy, paying exclusive attention to the romantic, sexual relationships between black men and Japanese women on the side of occupied Japan. He does not take the black representations of Japanese brides on the American side into consideration at all, although his broad definition of “interracial intimacy” includes interracial sex, marriage, and romance.<sup>7</sup> Next, Lubin’s narrow attention to the “intimate” spheres of black-Japanese relationships in occupied Japan ignores another, but more exploitative form of the GI-Japanese sexual interaction which affected the construction of the “militarized” sense of masculinity among black soldiers: prostitution. Finally, Lubin does not consider the specific historical experience of African American men and women in occupied Japan, who achieved a racialized sense of empowerment in gender-specific ways, as a material context for the productions of the gendered discourses about Japanese women.

This paper is built upon, and aims to contribute to, recent developments in interdisciplinary, international scholarship in the following three fields: U.S. Orientalism, the U.S. military occupation of Japan, and the black-Asian relationship. First, more scholars have been engaged in the project to complicate the still-influential Edward Said’s model of Orientalism by historicizing, racializing, and gendering the discursive formation of the ontological/epistemological difference between the West and the East in U.S. politics and culture across time.<sup>8</sup> In *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (2003), Christina

Klein examines the popular U.S. representations of Asia and the Pacific within the specific historical context of postwar U.S. global expansion, Cold War culture, and Asian decolonization. She argues that middlebrow intellectuals and Washington policymakers were instrumental in the cultural productions of the “sentimental” discourse of “U.S.-Asian integration,” both at international and domestic levels, which was predicated on such values as interdependence, sympathy, and hybridity.<sup>9</sup> More specifically on the postwar U.S.-Japanese relationship, historian Naoko Shibusawa, in *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (2006), traces the “remarkable reversal” in the American public discourse of the Japanese from “hated racial enemy to valuable ally” within the intersecting ideologies of race, gender, and maturity during the two decades after WWII.<sup>10</sup> However, these authors conceptualize the U.S. Orientalist views of Asia in general, and of Japan in particular, during the early Cold War period as a monolithic, rather than heterogeneous, discourse. Their exclusive attention to the coverage of Asians and the Japanese in the mainstream U.S. media leaves unexamined how the black press, among the minority media, negotiated the U.S. “Cold War Orientalist” discourse in racialized terms in its representations of Japanese women.

Next, a growing amount of scholarship on the U.S. military occupation of mainland Japan and Okinawa addresses the issues of race, gender, and sexuality in the encounters between American GIs and Japanese citizens by exploring such topics as interracial intimacy, military prostitution, international marriage, and mixed-race children.<sup>11</sup> The existence of African American GIs, among the occupation troops, further complicated the racial landscape of the U.S.-Japanese fraternization, because of the institutional racism in the U.S. Army and in American society at large as well as the existence of racial stigma against blacks in Japanese society. Some scholars have examined the social and cultural implications of the racial visibility of African American GIs on the discursive process in which the Japanese reinforced, reconfigured, and complicated their perception of African Americans as well as their own racial and national identities.<sup>12</sup> The current research on African Americans in occupied Japan, however, focuses mostly on Japanese literary and popular representations of black soldiers, Japanese warbrides of black GIs, and their mixed-race children, while diminishing the agency of African Americans, who were living either in Japan or in the U.S., as major actors in shaping the contours of the postwar black-Japanese relationship. In particular, the presence of African American women, who were stationed in Japan with

various social statuses during that period, has been completely ignored in both academic and popular discourses of the U.S.-Japanese encounter in occupied Japan, with more attention given to the “masculine” aspect of the U.S. military engagement and fraternization there.

Finally, there is an emerging body of scholarship on the “black-Asian” relationship which explores the interracial and international encounters, either in material or imaginary terms, between peoples of the African and Asian diasporas across time and space.<sup>13</sup> In *Afro-Orientalism* (2004), literary critic Bill V. Mullen reconsiders Paul Gilroy’s influential framework of “black Atlantic” in the field of Black Diaspora Studies, arguing that his “narrow attention to a decidedly Westernized triangle of influence—Europe/Africa/North America—occludes significant areas of the diasporic world and black experience.”<sup>14</sup> Mullen configures “Afro-Orientalism” as an alternative discursive site on race, nation, and global politics for the “dialectic” formation of Afro-Asian solidarities beyond the temptations of cultural and racial essentialism. But, Mullen’s materialist criticism of the Afro-Asian connections in the U.S. narrowly focuses on the interracial formation in radical and revolutionary terms along the nexus of race, class, and nation, with some attention to gender. He fails to fully consider other critical dimensions of Afro-Asian interaction and imagination, especially the intimate and sexual aspects of their relationships, including interracial dating, marriage, and reproduction, in the overlapping diasporas of Africans and Asians within and beyond the U.S. context.

More specifically, most historical studies on the black-Japanese relationship have focused on how African American intellectual and political leaders forged an internationalist sense of solidarity with the Japanese as racial allies, or critiqued Japan’s imperialist aggression and colonial projects in Asia, within the global political dynamics of their struggle against racism, colonialism, and imperialism, as well as the changing international context of the U.S.-Japanese relationship in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> The fact that there were few face-to-face encounters and interactions between blacks and the Japanese before WWII partly explains that the prewar black-Japanese relationship was mainly represented by historians as a male-dominant, internationalist discursive site of cross-racial affiliations and unities. But, the centrality of race and nation as analytical categories in the precedent studies on the black-Japanese relationship has failed to reveal the gender and sexual dynamics of the “trans-Pacific” encounters between African

American and Japanese men and women through the period of the U.S. military occupation of Japan.<sup>16</sup>

### **Black Orientalist Representations of Japanese Women in Occupied Japan**

The controversy over the romantic, sexual relationships between black soldiers and Japanese women in Japan became an international discursive terrain, in which African American men and women contested over the issues of black masculinity, femininity, gender relations, and interracial intimacy within the historical context of the U.S. military occupation of Japan. African American soldiers in Japan, like other American GIs, asserted the “militarized” sense of masculinity in their claim on sexual and patriarchal privileges vis-à-vis Japanese women in general, and sex workers in particular, as members of the U.S. occupation forces. As feminist political scientist Cynthia Enloe theoretically elaborates, the process of “militarization” in international politics depended on the gendered “maneuvers” to control women and the notions of femininity, as well as masculinity, by military and civilian policy makers.<sup>17</sup> African American GIs appropriated the highly sexualized and gendered images of Japanese femininity in the contemporary U.S. Orientalist discourse for their “masculinized” sense of empowerment within the specific “militarized” context of their encounter and interaction with Japanese women in occupied Japan. Black soldiers also employed the dominant U.S. Orientalist representation of “submissive” Japanese women as exemplars of womanhood to contain the gender empowerment of African American women, who were stationed in Japan either for military or civilian duty, within the cultural boundaries of black patriarchy and domestic ideology in the larger society of Cold War America. African American women, in response, confronted the “masculinist” backlash against black womanhood by criticizing black GIs’ interracial sexual behavior and the conservative gender attitude of Japanese women. How did African American men and women deploy the mainstream U.S. Orientalist representations of Japanese women in gender-specific ways to achieve their own masculine/feminine empowerment in occupied Japan, either by conforming to or subverting the gender and sexual ideology and practice in the U.S. military, in black communities, and in American society at large during that period?

In occupied Japan, African American soldiers were placed in privileged positions and held considerable power and prerogative in their relation to Japanese citizens as members of the U.S. occupation troops, while they continued serving in segregated units and being discriminated against in the U.S. Army.<sup>18</sup> For the African American GIs who experienced greater racial acceptance among the local people, their encounters with Japanese men and women were influential in the reconfiguration of their racial perception beyond the social context of racial oppression and the narrow black-white dichotomy in the U.S.<sup>19</sup> Their intimate, sexual interactions with Japanese women became crucial for black GIs to achieve the “masculinized” sense of empowerment within the specific racial and sexual politics in Japan. Compared with the European women whose sexual relationships with black GIs in occupied Germany caused racial conflicts among both white American GIs and German citizens, due to the existence of social taboos against black-white interracial sexuality on both sides of the Atlantic, Japanese women were more sexually accessible for African American soldiers not only because of the absence of such taboos, but also because of the availability of the highly sexualized image of Japanese women in U.S. Orientalism.<sup>20</sup>

African Americans reappropriated and reinforced the preexisting image of “promiscuous” Japanese women in the long tradition of Western Orientalism within the specific historical context of the U.S. military occupation of Japan.<sup>21</sup> Pvt. Frank A. Topsail, an *Ebony* magazine reader from Nurnberg, Germany, questioned the sexual morals and behavior on the part of Japanese women: “If you will check on the birth and sex rate in Japan, you will find that most of the girls of Japan are very sexually over-trained. The birth rate is one of the highest in the world. I really cannot believe that most of those rape cases, if so, are on the soldiers’ part.”<sup>22</sup> Topsail invoked the dominant sexualized Orientalist representation of “lewd” Japanese women when he blamed the widespread interracial sexual relations, either intimate or violent, in Japan on the alleged sexual “promiscuity” of Japanese women and Japanese sexual culture, without any consideration of the sexual morals of American GIs. The black press was instrumental in the resexualization of Japanese culture, as well as Japanese women, by observing the various forms of sexual encounters between American soldiers and Japanese women in occupied Japan. Several articles reported on the Japanese sexual businesses catering to American GIs, including cabarets, brothels, and geisha houses, and expressed concern about the negative implications of such “promiscuous” Japanese culture on the morals of black soldiers.<sup>23</sup>

Combined with the traditional sexual image of Japanese women in U.S. Orientalism, African American GIs committed to the “masculinist” sexual ideology and culture in the U.S. military in their expression of sexual attitudes toward Japanese women.<sup>24</sup> James Hicks of the *Baltimore Afro-American* elaborated explicitly on the implications of the alleged sexual “immorality” of Japanese women on shaping the “militarized” sexual behavior of black GIs in Japan:

Boiled down to plain bare facts, the soldiers out on the loose in Japan have found that the morals of the Japanese girls coupled with the fact that he is here as a conqueror of the Japanese people, make it far more easy for him to have a “good time” by dating Japanese girls than going around with his own girls who are here under government regulations and subjected to rigid moral discipline.<sup>25</sup>

Hicks suggested that black soldiers invested in the traditional Orientalist image of “promiscuous” Japanese women, combined with their “conqueror’s” sense of American masculinity, in the formation of their sexual attitude toward Japanese women. In response to the Hicks’ accusation, some African American GIs explained their own sexual behavior in Japan as male sexual nature, driving men across racial and national boundaries to pursue heterosexual relationships with native women in the areas under military domination. One black GI defended his association with Japanese women as a universal sexual phenomenon shared by all military men without considering its political and social implications: “This is both flattering and extremely well liked by all men and whether it is good or not, the GI’s in Japan have simply been doing what other men do everywhere else—going for the women who appeal to them most. . . . And boy, do these Japanese girls have appeal.”<sup>26</sup> Another black soldier asserted that Hicks should have pointed out in his article that the “white soldiers are doing the same thing.”<sup>27</sup> Those black GIs unwittingly invested in the hegemonic discourse of “militarized” heterosexual masculinity when they consolidated a “victor’s” sense of sexual privileges, which they shared with white American GIs and other male soldiers across time and space, with respect to Japanese women.

Other African American GIs revealed a more highly exploitative dimension of their sexual morals and behavior in occupied Japan, which degraded Japanese women as mere sex objects, in their attitude toward Japanese prostitutes. In his defense against the allegation of Ralph Matthews of the *Baltimore Afro-American*

that black male GIs were not asking black female soldiers in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) for dates in favor of Japanese prostitutes, one black officer stationed in Yokohama admitted that the WACs who "invariably travel in pairs" were inconvenient for an easy pick up, because a "guy on short-term leave hasn't got a lot of time to waste jockeying for position."<sup>28</sup> According to him, the black WACs, who "expect to be pampered just as if they were at home under their mama's apron strings," were not suitable for a more casual sexual life which some black soldiers were expecting to pursue in Japan. In contrast, the Japanese street walkers called "pom poms," who were not only wandering alone, but not begging for dates, long courtships, or promises to marry, were more appropriate companions for black GIs to "make a fast play."<sup>29</sup> The remark of only one black officer might not fully substantiate the hypothesis that African American GIs, whether consciously or not, resorted to the dominant Orientalist discourse of Japanese female sexuality in their "militarized" sexual behavior toward Japanese prostitutes. But as Cynthia Enloe elaborates on the U.S. military and prostitution in Asia, "without myths of Asian women's compliant sexuality would many American men be able to sustain their own identities of themselves as manly enough to act as soldiers?"<sup>30</sup>

The black press also rearticulated the mainstream U.S. Orientalist discourse which represented Japanese women as victims of male-dominant militarism and traditional gender relations in Japanese society, and emphasized the "chivalrous" role of Americans to liberate Japanese women from patriarchal domination in the context of U.S. Cold War propaganda.<sup>31</sup> Franklin Whisonant, the war correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, explained why Japanese women captured the hearts of black GIs: the "woman, since time immemorial has been taught to be submissive and servile to the men folk. She is supposed to cater to his every whim, be at his beck and call at all times and forever be ready, willing and able to work as much, if not more, than the man in any project undertaken by them."<sup>32</sup> Ralph Matthews stressed, too, the long history of Japanese patriarchy which characterized the subservient attitude among Japanese women, stating that they "have been taught for centuries that the man is boss and they accept this without question."<sup>33</sup> Matthews indicated with his illustration how attentively Japanese women were catering to the various wishes and needs of her man by cooking his favorite dishes, sewing his clothes, and washing his body in a steaming bath every night (see Figure 1).<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 1. Japanese Woman Attending to an African American Man at Home**  
*Source: Baltimore Afro-American, September 22, 1951*

Regardless of their rank within the U.S. Army, African American GIs asserted their patriarchal privileges vis-à-vis Japanese women by embracing the influential U.S. Orientalist image of “subservient” Japanese women as a virtue catering to their masculine pride and desires for power. One black enlisted man stationed in South Korea praised Japanese women’s traditionally-nurtured obedience toward their men as their major charming point. He declared that the “whole thing is that the women of the Eastern world have been conditioned to the fact that a man is head of the house and when one falls in love with a guy she simply gets behind him and lets him lead the way.”<sup>35</sup> Lt. Clinton Moorman of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment associated loyalty, devotion, thriftiness, and domesticity, the characteristics which reflected the traditional gender roles in patriarchal societies, with Japanese women.<sup>36</sup> Another black sergeant stressed the maternal nature of Japanese women as a distinctive characteristic of their sexual appeal. He noted, “When my Japanese girl friend embraces me, I feel that nothing in the world can harm me—she makes me feel just that secure.”<sup>37</sup>

Some African American soldiers invoked the dominant U.S. discourse of “submissive” Japanese women as models of domestic womanhood for African American women. One black GI deployed such an image as a point of reference for criticizing black womanhood: “They never saw the day they could hold a light to a Japanese girl when it comes to treating a man like he should be treated. Let them howl. Maybe it will wake them up and they will stop taking men for granted.”<sup>38</sup> As Naoko Shibusawa points out, Japanese women were “held up as exemplars of femininity” by both men and women in the mainstream American public discourse within the shifting gender roles of American women during and after WWII.<sup>39</sup> The celebration of “submissive” Japanese women by this black soldier as appropriate models for black womanhood reflected the traditional patriarchal culture in African American society at large.<sup>40</sup> The problem of intraracial gender conflicts within black communities, especially the patriarchal privileges, misogyny, and sexism on the part of black men, had been marginalized for a long time in the African American struggle for racial equality. Racial solidarity had been privileged over gender identity in the male-dominant leadership structure of the mainstream black activist organizations.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the elevation of Japanese women as exemplars of black womanhood by black soldiers should be considered within the specific historical context of the tension-filled intraracial gender relations which occurred between African American men and women in occupied Japan. The black “masculinist” represen-

tations of Japanese women functioned as a disciplinary discourse to police the gender behavior of the black women stationed in Japan, who were exploring alternative gender identities and roles within the boundaries of their political privileges, improved economic conditions, and elevated social status in occupied Japan.<sup>42</sup> The African American women who were serving in the civilian branch of the U.S. Army in Japan, whom GIs called “DACs” as the abbreviation for “Department of Army Civilians,” became the major target of criticism by black GIs, especially for their higher rank than most black enlisted men enjoyed within the racialized class hierarchies of the U.S. Army. According to some African American officers in Japan, those civilian black women were not supposed to socialize with enlisted personnel as “equals” and demanded that enlisted men, even if they were years senior, reply to them with “Yes, Ma’am,” because they believed that they held the “simulated rank of an officer” in the Army. The black enlisted men who were asking for dates were mostly turned down by the African American DACs, who preferred associating with officers in pursuit of the numerous privileges that they were supposed to enjoy.<sup>43</sup> These black officers blamed the elite civilian black women, who were claiming their sense of superiority and class privilege vis-à-vis black enlisted men, for violating the masculine pride and patriarchal privilege of black GIs, whose chance of promotion was limited due to the persistence of discrimination within the U.S. Army.

African American soldiers also pathologized the black single women, either civilian or military, who were engaged in the “unfeminine” U.S. military project of occupation in peace time, as deviant from the gender roles and sexual standards in terms of Cold War domesticity as well as black patriarchy.<sup>44</sup> African American officers claimed that black DACs and those in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), who could not attract men stateside, applied for military service in Japan, looking for opportunities to meet American men in uniforms. Some of them even suggested that those women who came so far to Japan without marrying were “not interested in men anyway.”<sup>45</sup> These black officers rearticulated and reinforced the pathological discourse of the “militarized” women, by invoking the association between women’s sexual independence, female masculinity, and lesbianism in the popular discourse of the Women’s Army Corps, in their criticism of the African American DACs and WACs who highly enhanced their sense of femininity in Japan.<sup>46</sup> African American soldiers resorted to the Orientalist representation of “submissive” Japanese women to contain the gender empowerment of those black women as a threat to the conservative gender and sexual regime of the

period. Furthermore, African American men in Japan, who were embracing the dominant “masculinized” racial consciousness and gender ideology of the black society at large, took their patriarchal privileges for granted and did not hesitate to impose them on their women, whether they were black or Japanese.

In response to the black “masculinist” discursive denigration of their womanhood, African American women who were stationed in occupied Japan confronted the charge of their gender deviancy by targeting the gender attitude of both Japanese women and the black men who were dating them. Ethel Payne, who was then serving as a director of Army Services Club in Yokohama, was the civilian African American woman who most vocally opposed interracial dating and marriage between black GIs and Japanese women. On the one hand, Payne critically challenged Japanese women’s “subservient” attitude, the gender characteristic which black men admired so greatly, as just a conventional cultural pattern of behavior in Japanese patriarchy. Payne declared, “By tradition, the Japanese woman is submissive. To the man of her choice or the one who wins her attention she presents a convincing superficial respectfulness and affection.”<sup>47</sup> She further charged Japanese women with exploiting their “helplessness” as a “powerful weapon and asset” so that they could win the hearts of black GIs.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Payne observed that black GIs found their masculine pride and ego more satisfied by Japanese than American women. Compared with “too independent” American women, she claimed, Japanese women “fetch your shoes, wash, cook, iron, and sew. ‘Keep quiet’ when you want her to. Never talk back, laugh when you want her to.”<sup>49</sup> Their “feminist” sense of criticism of “submissive” Japanese women, combined with their apparent competition and rivalry with Japanese women, became a focal point among black women in Japan for opposing interracial romance and marriage between black men and Japanese women.

African American women also criticized the “militarized” sexual behavior of African American men in their relation to Japanese women in general, and prostitutes in particular. One black WAC stationed in Yokohama clearly revealed her classist disdain for the degraded womanhood of Japanese prostitutes. She insisted that they “get away with murder, because, to a girl who never had but one kimono in her life, even a \$2 dress is a windfall.”<sup>50</sup> However, she expressed more bitter contempt for the black GIs who were sexually pursuing such prostitutes on the streets by ignoring black women. She stated: “Some of these fools from the backwoods, who perhaps never had a girl in their lives, think they are living great with a little *straight-haired* girl fawning all over them. Some of them spend all

their earnings on their girls and their families while their own relatives back home are suffering (*italics mine*).”<sup>51</sup> In her eyes, these black soldiers, who could not sexually attract women on the American side, approached Japanese sex workers with the economic privilege which they were able to attain through power disparities in occupied Japan. Furthermore, such men violated the familial ideal of Cold War domesticity by lavishing money and gifts on Japanese women for sexual favors at the expense of the economic well-being of their families in the U.S.

The discursive exchanges between African American women and men over black GIs’ interracial relationships in Japan further revealed the complex issues of color, femininity, and beauty in the black politics of interracial intimacy in occupied Japan. The WAC’s statement quoted above indicates clearly the importance of the physical features of race and its implications for the definition of femininity in the black women’s discourse against black-Japanese intimacy. Her explicit reference to the “straight-hair” of Japanese women suggests that hair texture served significantly in the African American sexual politics during that period. Ethel Payne declared, too, that skin color mattered in the shaping of interracial romance between black men and Japanese women. Invoking strategically the historical myth of black men sexually seeking white women, she claimed, “the hue of the girls range from very fair to a nut brown. Hence it can be easily understood why our boys fall for them.”<sup>52</sup> The relationships between black men and Japanese women, who assumed an ambiguous position in the bipolar racial spectrum between black and white in terms of the dominant sexual politics of interracial intimacy, complicated the gendered problem of racial loyalty in Japan. Moreover, the double standards in the black sexual politics of interracial intimacy and in the “masculinist” sexual culture of American society at large, which functioned to police the sexual behavior of black women while encouraging black men to enhance their racial and masculine empowerment through their pursuit of interracial relationships with Japanese women, made intraracial gender antagonism between African American women and men more explosive in Japan.<sup>53</sup>

African American women actively participated in the counter-hegemonic discursive formation of Japanese women in occupied Japan, when they defended their womanhood by resisting the black “masculinist” backlash against their gender empowerment. African American women, particularly those living on the

American side, played more visible roles in the black representations of Japanese women, as more Japanese brides of African American GIs migrated to the U.S., and the major issue in the controversy on black-Japanese intimacy shifted to their marital lives in the U.S. rather than their romance and sexual relations in Japan.

### **On the Home Front: the Integration of Japanese Brides into African American Communities**

The international, interracial marriage between American GIs and Japanese women attracted more attention from those on the American side during the 1950s, as the amendment to the War Brides Act in 1947, its extension in 1950, and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 finally permitted a large number of Japanese brides to enter the U.S. to live with their husbands and children.<sup>54</sup> Naoko Shibusawa contends that the U.S. mainstream media and popular culture emphasized the intimate relationships between “Euroamerican” men and Japanese women despite the fact that the Nisei and African Americans constituted one-fourth of the American GIs who married a Japanese woman during the decade after WWII. Shibusawa explains that this racially-skewed U.S. representation of GI-Japanese marriage as white-Japanese couples served as a metonym for the postwar U.S.-Japanese relationship as the relation of the “predominantly white” United States with Japan. She further suggests that white-Japanese couples allowed Americans to approve such interracial relations as less socially taboo than white-black ones during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>55</sup> However, the Japanese brides who married African American GIs and migrated to the U.S. were often featured in major black newspapers and magazines, which Shibusawa did not consult at all in her study, during the same period. In the controversy on Japanese warbrides, African Americans negotiated the boundaries of racial acceptance and national integration of Japanese women in racial and gendered terms within the specific historical contexts of the black politics of interracial marriage, U.S.-Japanese integration, and the cultural politics of domestic “containment” on the U.S. home front during the early Cold War years.

First, the postwar black politics of interracial marriage, as well as the larger U.S. history of interracial intimacy and sexuality, shaped how African Americans represented the Japanese women who married black GIs. The controversy on interracial marriage became a contested discursive terrain through which African

Americans attempted to reframe in the “public” sphere the issues of romance and sexuality, which the postwar U.S. courts and popular culture attempted to “contain” as “private” matters within the boundaries of the nuclear family, until the U.S. Supreme Court finally declared as unconstitutional the bans on interracial marriage in the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* decision. Black newspapers and magazines played a central role in publicizing the interracial marriage between black men and white women both at home and abroad as victories for civil rights and black masculinity. Black leaders and activists in such civil rights organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were reluctant to defend publicly the right to intermarriage on the home front, in spite of their strong support of black GIs’ right to intermarriage abroad. They were careful not to reproduce the segregationist’s argument, which conflated civil rights with racial amalgamation, in their legal struggle for integration.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to the strong opposition among African American women to black GIs’ intimate relationships with Japanese women in occupied Japan, the black press’s coverage of black-Japanese couples focused on the generally positive reactions to them from the larger black society on the American side. The debate over black-Japanese intermarriage in black communities functioned in some ways as a touchstone for African Americans to test their racial tolerance toward the Japanese, at both domestic and international levels, within the postwar transformations in the U.S.-Japanese relationship, while complicating the traditional black politics of interracial intimacy which operated within the central nexus of black-white sexual relations. Carey Noaldin, a *Chicago Defender* reader from Philadelphia, expressed her total approval of black-Japanese intermarriage with the following statement: “I am just about convinced now that inter-marriage is about the only solution to most of our problems—domestic and international. How else can a real understanding of people be obtained except through so intimate a thing as marriage?” She considered black-Japanese marriage as less controversial because the “color” perspective was subordinated in the intermarriage between the groups of “dark” people.<sup>57</sup> Distinguishing black-Japanese intermarriage clearly from black-white within the historical context of interracial intimacy in the U.S., she celebrated black-Japanese couples as symbol of the international, interracial understanding between African Americans and the people of Japanese descent beyond wartime hostilities.

The reactions to black-Japanese intermarriage in the stateside African American communities took some different forms in terms of gender, class, and region.

One newspaper article highlighted, in November 1950, the generally tolerant attitude toward black-Japanese intermarriage among African American women. It reported that “if our boys find love and romance in far off Japan, let them have it, is the consensus,” although there was some regional variation in their responses. According to the article, the strongest opposition to their marriage was found among those living in Atlanta, one of the Southern states with the most oppressive history of interracial sexual relations. The majority of black women there thought it was “terrible” and “awful” that African American men wanted permission to marry Japanese girls. The article further revealed the existence of ambivalence among black women in their expression of racial tolerance toward such interracial marriage. It stated that “tolerance is rapidly taking the place of the former resentful attitude toward overseas girls, even though the foreign girls are taking away the scarcest commodity in the U.S. market, MEN.”<sup>58</sup> African American women, especially single ones, considered black-Japanese intermarriage from a more gendered perspective as an issue of interracial competition with Japanese women over black men as intimate and sexual partners.<sup>59</sup>

In the same article, the *Pittsburgh Courier* featured the following comment of Nannie Burroughs, the president of the Women’s Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, as a representative view of black-Japanese marriage among middle-class African American women in the nation’s capital, although it reflected her individual sensitivity to gender and women’s issues in the black politics of interracial intimacy:<sup>60</sup>

What would be the objection? It’s up to the couple; marriage is a personal matter. If it is not forbidden by law in Japan, and the soldiers entered the Army without knowledge of any restrictions on marriages of this kind, then the question should not be raised at all. The world’s on fire . . . better that that fire be put out first; then the race question will settle itself.<sup>61</sup>

Burroughs’ remark about black-Japanese intermarriage was noteworthy, because she was more critical of black-white interracial marriage as a form of assimilation into the dominant white American society and a lack of racial pride, asserting that blacks “should pitch in and make the race worth belonging to instead of escaping into a race that is already made.”<sup>62</sup> Among many African Americans who were “ambivalent” about their acceptance of interracial marriage in practice while supporting the right to intermarry in principle during the 1940s and 1950s, those in

the middle-class were most critical of interracial marriage because of their class-specific investment in the politics of respectability and racial unity.<sup>63</sup> Burroughs did not consider African American GIs marrying Japanese women as racial betrayal, because their interracial marriage was less explosive and disrespectful than black-white ones in light of the U.S. history of interracial sexuality, and did not promise them upward social mobility within the racial hierarchies in contemporary white-dominant American society. In addition, Burroughs privatized the issue of black-Japanese intermarriage instead of politicizing it, when she considered marriage as a “personal” matter, or the problem of an individual’s choice of partner. This was the major strategy of African American civil rights leaders in their treatment of the issue of interracial marriage, especially between blacks and whites during that period.<sup>64</sup>

Next, the controversy over black-Japanese intermarriage in black newspapers and magazines became a discursive strategy for African Americans to reshape the image of Japanese brides, or the women of the former “enemy” race and “unassimilable” aliens, as their national and racial allies by articulating the mainstream U.S. discourse of “Cold War Orientalism” within the postwar transformations in the U.S.-Japanese relationship and the U.S. fight against Communism during the early 1950s.<sup>65</sup> During WWII, the black press played a crucial role in raising among black people their patriotic support for the American war effort against Japan. Black editors and journalists invested in the dominant U.S. representation of the Japanese as an “enemy” race in their appeal for a “double victory” over fascism abroad and racism at home, while they continued perceiving the war in the Pacific from a racial perspective without explicit identification with Japan as a leader of the “colored” people.<sup>66</sup> The postwar black press representations of Japanese brides revealed that African Americans discursively negotiated the boundaries of Americanization, or the integration and assimilation of Japanese women into American society at large, and black communities in particular, from their specific racial, as well as national, ethnic, and gendered points of view.

The black press appealed to its readers for their support for the U.S. legal sanction of international marriage between African American GIs and Japanese women by highlighting the instability of such unions. It revealed that black-Japanese couples in Japan did not receive official approval from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Consulate, and their marriage was only religiously sanctioned in Shinto services without any recognition by the U.S. government.<sup>67</sup> It also focused on the “ethnic” identity of the Japanese brides of black soldiers, and emphasized

their acculturation into the American way of life. Under the subheading “Japanese War Brides Adjust Very Easily to Western Civilization,” an *Ebony* magazine article reported in March 1952 that “in a wedding involving so many vastly different cultures, a great number of adjustments have to be made and the Japanese bride does most of the adjusting.”<sup>68</sup> Occasionally, black newspapers and magazines elaborated on the racial prejudice which Japanese people expressed in their attitude toward the Japanese women who married black soldiers, either in Japan or in the U.S.<sup>69</sup>

The black press paid special attention to the reactions among African Americans to the Japanese brides of black soldiers who came to live in their communities. Several articles highlighted the cordial welcomes which they received from black families and relatives.<sup>70</sup> Still, adjustment for Japanese brides could prove difficult, such as the social isolation they experienced in black communities and in American society at large. Under the dramatic title, “The Loneliest Brides in America,” an *Ebony* article in January 1953 revealed that the Japanese brides of black soldiers living in Indianapolis found it hard to make friendships in a “new, strange world in U.S.” where they had “not yet been freely accepted in Negro communities” and were also avoided in white communities as the “wives of Negroes.”<sup>71</sup> It reported that those Japanese brides socialized only in a small world of Japanese girls married to black Americans and had few social interactions with the Japanese girls married to white Americans living there. Many factors contributed to the social isolation of Japanese brides within African American communities. The article pointed out that “one of the most baffling barriers between the Japanese wives and the Negro women of America is that of language. Few of these most lonesome brides have become glib in English. Most speak a soft-voiced but weird omelette of basic English peppered with GI slang.”<sup>72</sup> In its treatment of the isolation problem of the Japanese brides in black communities, the *Ebony* magazine stressed cultural barriers, rather than racial difference, as the major factor which prevented the formation of interracial friendships between Japanese brides and African American women, in order to reduce racial tensions over the presence of such interracial couples.

This *Ebony* magazine article elicited many reactions from readers throughout the nation, most of whom were sympathetic to the loneliness of Japanese brides in the U.S. from a more racialized point of view. Some African American women expressed their sympathetic view toward Japanese brides and even suggested making friends with them as pen pals, by drawing on the shared experience of

social isolation which they experienced in their relationships with their neighbors or as wives of Army career men.<sup>73</sup> Gladys Durham, a reader from Augusta, Georgia wrote as her advice to the Japanese warbrides: “Keep your chin up and face this thing bravely for we often are shunned by in-laws and friends of our husbands and *we are of the same race* (italics mine).”<sup>74</sup> Durham expressed her sincere acceptance of the racial membership of Japanese brides in black communities as wives of African American men, with whom she found commonality in terms of their racial and gendered experience in the U.S.

In contrast with the de-racialized treatment of the issue in the *Ebony* magazine, some readers were more critical of the racial attitude toward Japanese brides on the part of African Americans. R. D. Pitman, Jr., a reader from Altoona, Pennsylvania called for African American people to be “patient” and “understanding” toward the Japanese brides who were learning American ways. He bluntly declared that the “Negroes should be the last persons to look down on anyone.”<sup>75</sup> Edward A. Coble, who had been previously stationed for two and a half years in Japan as a member of the U.S. Navy, harshly criticized the “intolerant” and “unfriendly” treatment of Japanese brides by African Americans as “un-American.” Coble was concerned about the effect of their “cool reception” from the stateside black communities on the black-Japanese couples in Japan, where many people believed that “Negroes would be the last to discriminate against Japanese warbrides.”<sup>76</sup> The diverse opinions shown in these letters to the editor revealed that African Americans appropriated the integrationist discourse of the U.S. “Cold War Orientalism” in highly racialized as well as gendered terms in their reactions to Japanese brides, while the *Ebony* magazine editor discussed the issue in terms of their ethnicity to downplay the racial dimension of black-Japanese intermarriage.

Finally, more gendered reactions among African Americans to the living of Japanese brides in their communities were shown in the ways the black press continually articulated its Orientalist interest in the gender attitude of Japanese women toward their black husbands in light of the conservative gender ideology during that period. As historian Elaine Tyler May notes, “domestic” ideology and culture, which reinforced the traditional gender roles of men as “breadwinners” and women as “homemakers,” and contained sexuality within the institution of heterosexual marriage, emerged as a hegemonic gender and sexual norm within the larger political parameters of anticommunism, conformity, and “containment” in Cold War America during the 1940s and the 1950s.<sup>77</sup> In African

American society, the dominant ideology of “domestic” womanhood was influential in shaping racial activism and sexual politics, especially among middle-class women who defined their claim on the postwar state for equal citizenship within a “traditional gendered” sphere, while it contradicted the realities of most working-class black women.<sup>78</sup> Through their gendered engagement in the controversy on “submissive” Japanese brides, African Americans grappled with the terms of black womanhood, manhood, and gender relations within the specific cultural politics of domestic “containment” on the U.S. home front.

*Ebony* magazine’s 1952 article “The Truth About Japanese War Brides” focused on the “legendary qualities of attractive Nippon women,” by quoting the following remark as representative of African American soldiers in Japan: “Man, try to find a girl on Seventh Avenue that is as kind and sweet and appreciative as these little mooses. They appreciate the least little thing you do for them.”<sup>79</sup> In response to this article which implicitly critiqued black womanhood in comparison with the more “appreciative” Japanese women, some African American women, like Nellie Hand, a married reader from Milwaukee, agreed and confessed that she considered it as a “plain admission of guilt on the part of the Negro women neglecting to be good wives and companions to their husbands.”<sup>80</sup> Other African American women, especially single ones, rejected the black “masculinist” bias in its idealized representations of Japanese women. Ethel Jones, a reader from Vallejo, California countered that “there are some of us that are more kind and considerate than those Japanese girls . . . a lot of American girls that could make good wives to service men, but you’ll only know by giving them a chance.”<sup>81</sup> Sara A. Trower, another black single woman from Pittsburgh, blamed African American GIs, instead of Japanese women, for their preference for interracial marriage in Japan: “I have nothing against the Japanese girls. But I do think that our fellows should give us a chance . . . try looking around you with your eyes open and respect and decency in your heart.”<sup>82</sup> Rather than targetting the “submissiveness” of Japanese women, those women questioned the attitude on the part of African American men, who idealized Japanese women just for their “appreciative” characters while devaluating black women without any sincere concern about the virtue of their womanhood.

For the African American women living in the U.S., who were more tolerant of the gender attitude of Japanese women than those stationed in Japan, their participation in the debate over Japanese brides gave them a chance to renegotiate their own gender consciousness in relation to the much lauded Japanese feminin-

ity within the confinements of a conservative gender norm in Cold War America. Under the subheading “Japanese Girls Treat Husbands like Their ‘Masters’ in Home,” an *Ebony* article in January 1953 highlighted the antagonism between black women and Japanese brides over the latter’s subservient attitude toward black husbands in the U.S., arguing that “some U.S. Negro women accuse the Japanese brides of ‘spoiling our men’ and are hostile to them.”<sup>83</sup> According to the article, one Japanese bride, who was discovered in sight of her neighbors greeting her husband on “bended knees” to welcome him home just as her mother had been doing to her father in Japan, “embarrassed her husband and made her Negro women neighbors accuse her of ‘spoiling our men.’”<sup>84</sup>

Over the issue of whether Japanese brides were “spoiling” their black husbands through their excessive show of deference and devotion to them, some black female readers of *Ebony* magazine emphasized their cultural difference. One reader from Columbus, South Carolina stated that “as for the customs towards their husband—these women were taught this just as we were taught many American customs. If more of our women would try ‘spoiling’ their husbands, they, too, will be happy as these women are.”<sup>85</sup> Even more positively, Letha M. Wade, a reader from Philadelphia confessed, “I felt neither envy nor hostility toward these young women—rather I envied their husbands!”<sup>86</sup> Other black women even praised the Japanese brides’ devotion to their black husbands as an exemplar of womanhood which black wives, too, could emulate in their marital relationships. Janie C. Butts, a reader from Philadelphia claimed: “I am a Negro woman myself, and I have a deep feeling of admiration for these women who have the spirit and courage to defy the world in letting it know of their deep love and devotion they have for their husbands.”<sup>87</sup> These generally positive responses of black women to such an attitude of Japanese brides toward their black husbands indicated how African American women accommodated the dominant U.S. representation of “subservient” Japanese women in gendered ways so that they could reinforce and reconfigure their gender identity and roles within the confinements of the “domestic” imperatives during the early Cold War period. But, those black women were unwittingly complicit in the maintenance of patriarchal privileges among black men when they praised the “submissive” Japanese brides as exemplary womanhood, leaving the history of Japanese patriarchy unexamined as a critical pretext for their gender attitude.

## Conclusion

In the controversy over the international, interracial relationships between African American GIs and Japanese women in the “trans-Pacific” black communities in occupied Japan and in the U.S. during the early 1950s, African American men and women contested over the dominant U.S. Orientalist representations of Japanese women in racial and gendered terms to grapple with the terms of race consciousness, gender convention, and international and interethnic relations within the larger Cold War parameters of occupation, militarization, U.S.-Asian integration, and the cultures of “containment.” In occupied Japan, African American men and women employed the highly sexualized and gendered images of Japanese femininity in the contemporary U.S. Orientalism for their own masculine/feminine empowerment within the specific “militarized” context of their encounter and interaction with Japanese women, as well as the gender and sexual dynamics in black communities and in American society at large. In *Romance and Rights*, Alex Lubin argues that black newspapers and magazines deployed “racist” stereotypes about Asian women’s sexuality and their “docility” so that they could confirm the status of black men in Japan as “deserving patriarchs.”<sup>88</sup> The critical point that Lubin overlooks here is the specific gendered, as well as racialized, context of “militarization” in which African Americans negotiated and contested over the notions of Japanese femininity in occupied Japan. African American soldiers reappropriated, whether consciously or not, the prevailing U.S. Orientalist representations of Japanese women when they asserted their “victor’s” sense of sexual and patriarchal privileges vis-à-vis Japanese women. In contrast, African American women deployed such images more critically so that they could challenge the conservative gender norm of the period, and defend against the black “masculinist” backlash the alternative possibilities of black womanhood which they were exploring in Japan.

In the debate over black-Japanese intermarriage on the U.S. home front, African American women, as well as men, rearticulated the dominant U.S. discourse of “Cold War Orientalism” in racialized and gendered ways to reimagine Japanese women as possible partners in black GIs’ interracial marriage, new members in their national and racial communities, and appropriate models for black womanhood within the boundaries of the black politics of interracial marriage, U.S.-Japanese integration, and the cultures of domestic “containment” during the early Cold War period. Lubin stresses the “limits” of the black politics of

interracial intimacy as a “civil rights” matter, which “derided” black GI-Asian romance and sexuality, while it “celebrated” black GI-European ones as a “champion of black masculinity” and “racial progress.” As he correctly notes, Japanese women were marginalized in terms of the racial hierarchies of womanhood in the black politics of interracial intimacy which “privileged” white women as the judges of black men’s “desirability.”<sup>89</sup> Without any consideration of the black representations of Japanese brides on the American side, Lubin fails to capture the larger international political dynamics in which the black politics of interracial marriage discursively invested in Japanese brides, who migrated across the Pacific to the U.S., as mediators in the postwar U.S.-Japanese and black-Japanese relationships.

Compared with traditional “Black Orientalism” as a male-dominant, internationalist discourse of interracial solidarity, based on their “nonwhiteness,” between African Americans and the Japanese before WWII, the “Cold War Black Orientalism” was a highly gendered sphere in which African American men and women invested in the mainstream U.S. Orientalist discourse of Japanese women to negotiate in their own terms the intersecting issues of race, sex, intimacy, class and global politics in the larger political context of postwar U.S. foreign relations. Alex Lubin contends that “nonwhite” women were excluded from the black press representations of black GIs’ intimate relationships with occupied women in Europe and Asia. He explains that the black politics of GI interracial intimacy “privileged” European women over “nonwhite” women, and black men over black women.<sup>90</sup> The fact that there was little coverage of the intimate relationships between black women and Japanese men in black newspapers and magazines only partly supports his argument that African American women were marginalized in the black representations of interracial intimacy in Japan, as in Europe. However, African American women were not passive objects in the black press’s exclusive coverage of the black men-Japanese women intimacy and sexuality in Japan. Rather, they were major actors in the “trans-Pacific” discursive formation of “Cold War Black Orientalism” as the critics of the “militarized” masculinity of black GIs in occupied Japan, and active discussants in the debate over Japanese brides on the home front. Moreover, African American women were instrumental in reconfiguring the power alignment in the traditional model of black-Japanese solidarity, which had been constructed around the central nexus of race and nation, along the lines of gender and sexuality through their gendered engagement with “Cold War Black Orientalism.” As some African American

WACs criticized the black GIs' engagement in prostitution in Japan, the problem of sexual subjugation of native women by American male soldiers in the areas of the U.S. military presence might have created the conditions for the possibility of an international, interracial formation of a women's alliance against not only the "militarized" masculine sexual cultures, but also globalized patriarchal institutions and sexist regimes beyond the context of the U.S. military occupation of Japan.

### Notes

- 1 It was not until the outbreak of the Korean War that the news of the international, interracial relationships between African American soldiers and Japanese women in occupied Japan were disclosed to the larger black community by the war correspondents who were dispatched to East Asia by major black newspapers. In addition to their coverage of the military activities of black troops in Korea, some black journalists reported on the garrison life of African American GIs in Japan, who were scattered all over mainland Japan and Okinawa and under intensive preparations for combat missions in Korea.
- 2 James L. Hicks, "GI's in Tokyo Lavish Gifts on Jap Girls, Shun Own Clubs," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 September 1950.
- 3 Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 49-50. On the representations of Japanese warbrides in the Japanese American media, see Shigeyoshi Yasutomi, "Amerika no sensō hanayome heno manazashi: sōshutsu sareru hyōshō wo megutte [Views on the War Brides in the U.S.: Over the Production of Their Representations] in *Shashin hanayome, sensō hanayome no tadotta michi: josei imin-shi no hakkutsu* [Crossing the Ocean: A New Look at the History of Japanese Picture Brides and War Brides], ed. Noriko Shimada (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2009), 151-83; Shigeyoshi Yasutomi and Kazuko Umezu Stout, *Amerika ni watatta sensō hanayome: nichibei kokusai kekkon no paionia no kiroku* [War Brides Who Migrated to America: Records on Pioneers in the Japanese-U.S. International Marriage] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2005), esp. chap. 4.
- 4 Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- 5 The other scholarship which refer, although briefly, to African American representations of Japanese warbrides include Yasutomi, "Amerika no sensō hanayome heno manazashi," 155-56; Yasutomi and Stout, *Amerika ni watatta sensō hanayome*, 109-10.
- 6 Alex Lubin, *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 116.
- 7 *Ibid.*, xx.
- 8 Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl Buck, Anna Way Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Bill

- V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*; Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert G. Lee, *Orientalists: Asians in American Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1999); Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Sakue Ogawa, *Orientalizumu to jendâ: "chôchô fujin" no keifu* [Orientalism and Gender: Genealogy of "Madame Butterfly"] (Tokyo: Hôsei Daigaku Shuppanyoku, 2007).
- 9 Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*.
- 10 Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 4.
- 11 For the major general studies on U.S. military occupation of Japan in this tradition, see Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*; Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Michael S. Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1999); John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999); Mire Koikari, "Rethinking Gender and Power in the US Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952," *Gender and History* 11, no. 2 (July 1999): 313-35. More extensive bibliographical information on each specific topic will be given in the following discussion.
- 12 Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, chap. 3; Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan*, esp. chap. 5; Hiromi Furukawa and Tetsushi Furukawa, *Nihonjin to afurika-kei amerikaijin: nichî-bei kankeishi ni okeru sono shosô* [Japanese and African Americans: Historical Aspects of Their Relations] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2004), part 3, chaps. 1-3, 9; John G. Russell, *Nihonjin no kokujin-kan: mondai wa "chibikuro sambo" dake dewa nai* [Japanese Perceptions of Blacks: The Problem Is More than "Little Black Sambo"] (Tokyo: Shinhyôron, 1991), esp. chap. 2.
- 13 The recent general scholarship on Afro-Asian encounters include the following: Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, eds., *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, eds., *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Hazel M. McFerson, ed., *Blacks and Asians: Crossings, Conflict and Commonality* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2006); Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*; *The Afro-Asian Century: A special issue of positions* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
- 14 Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*, xxix.
- 15 Mark Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japanese and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); and "The Pro-Japanese Utterances of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Contribu-*

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- 31 Lisa Yoneyama, "Liberation under Siege: U.S. Military Occupation and Japanese Women's Enfranchisement," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (September 2005): 885-910; Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 44-45.
- 32 Frank Whisonant, "'Moosey Mae' Wins Hearts of Negro GIs," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 December 1950.
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- 39 Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 41-47.
- 40 For the historical background of black patriarchy, see, for example, bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), chap.3.
- 41 Historian Deborah Gray White argues that "for women to put gender consciousness ahead of race consciousness was judged inherently selfish, divisive, and inimical to the race" in the struggle of African American women's national associations for defending black womanhood in the mid-twentieth century. African American women in the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters did not challenge "black patriarchy" or "black male leadership" for the cause of "black female autonomy," in spite of the persistence of the gender tensions in the life of African Americans, during the period from the 1930s through the 1960s. It was in the early 1970s that African American women in the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) began to confront sexism and misogyny within African American communities in their anti-racist agendas, in response to the emergence of chauvinistic black nationalism as well as the rise of the national feminist movement in the late 1960s through the early 1970s. Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 174, and chaps. 4-7.
- 42 Regardless of their social backgrounds in the U.S., African American women achieved the feminine sense of empowerment by exploring alternative racial identities, gender roles, and class positions in occupied Japan, where they enjoyed considerable political prerogatives and economic advantages vis-à-vis Japanese citizens as members of the U.S. occupation forces. Some black women,

- especially the civilian personnel who highly advanced their rank within the U.S. Army, enjoyed the luxurious lifestyles attendant to their privileged position to hire Japanese maids as well as their access to extensive leisure and shopping activities. They developed an appreciation for the sense of interracialism and internationalism through their daily encounter with the Japanese as well as their exchange with white Americans in the integrated and multiracial settings. Okada, "Gendering the 'Black Pacific,'" chap. 5.
- 43 James L. Hicks, "Officer Says Our Girls in Japan Not Attractive," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 November 1950; "Japanese or American Girls."
- 44 Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), esp. introduction and chap. 1.
- 45 Hicks, "Officer Says Our Girls in Japan Not Attractive"; "Japanese or American Girls."
- 46 In her study of the Women's Army Corps during WWII, historian Leisa D. Meyer argues that a series of sexual images of American female soldiers, which were consolidated and resisted through the slander campaign targeting the women's corps during the war, were influential in shaping popular perceptions of the WAC during and after the war. The pervasive suspicion on the part of black soldiers about black women's sexual motives for joining the Army or the Department of Army was established upon the popular representation of the WAC as the "morale booster" to male soldiers as well as their alleged "sexual independence" and "sexual immorality." Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), esp. chap. 2.
- 47 Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls."
- 48 Ethel Payne, "Says Japanese Girls Playing GIs For Suckers: 'Chocolate Joe' Used, Amused, Confused," *Chicago Defender*, 18 November 1950.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Matthews, "Wacs and Pom Poms Wage War in Yokohama."
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls."
- 53 Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins argues that double standards in the black sexual politics of interracial intimacy, especially interracial marriage, operated differently for black men and women. Collins writes: "Any expansion of the pool of female sexual partners enhances African American men's standing within the existing system of hierarchical masculinities. Thus, within Black civil society, African American women in interracial love relationships face the stigma of being accused of being race traitors and whores, where African American men engaged in similar relationships can find their status as men raised." Although Collins discusses mainly the case of black-white interracial intimacy, her theoretical view of sexual double standards in black sexual politics can be applied to the explanation of black-Japanese intimacy, but with careful attention to the specificity of such interracial relationships in the historical context of the U.S. military occupation of Japan. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 262.
- 54 It is estimated that about 40,000 to 50,000 Japanese brides who married American GIs migrated to

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- the U.S. by the end of the 1950s. Yasutomi, "Amerika no sensô hanayome heno manazashi," 151. On the legal aspect of Japanese warbrides, see Yasutomi and Stout, *Amerika ni watatta sensô hanayome*, 94-96; Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan*, 156-58. For other major scholarship on Japanese warbrides, see other articles in Shimada ed., *Shashin hanayome, sensô hanayome no tadotta michi*; Kaori Hayashi, Keiko Tamura, and Fumiko Takatsu, *Sensô hanayome: kokkyô wo koeta onnatachi no hanseiki* [War Brides: Half-Century Record of the Women Who Crossed the National Border] (Tokyo: Fuyô Shobô Shuppan, 2002); Regina Frances Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations: Marriages between Japanese Women and American GIs, 1945 to Present" (PhD. diss., University of Southern California, 1999); Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), esp. chaps. 12-14.
- 55 Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 49-50.
- 56 Lubin, *Romance and Rights*, esp. chaps. 2-4; Renee C. Romano, *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America* (2003; reprint, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), chap. 3. On the recent major scholarship on the U.S. history of interracial intimacy and sexuality, see Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Phyl Newbeck, *Virginia Hasn't Always Been for Lovers: Interracial marriage Bans and the case of Richard and Mildred Loving* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Randall Kennedy, *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); Elise Lemire, "*Miscegenation*": *Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Rachel F. Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race and Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Peter Wallenstein, *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law: An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
- 57 Letter to the Editor, *Chicago Defender*, 11 November 1950.
- 58 "Most American Women Say: 'Let GIs Wed Japanese Girls,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 November 1950.
- 59 On the postwar African American discourse of black-white interracial marriage, see Romano, *Race Mixing*, esp. prologue and chap. 3; Lubin, *Romance and Right*, esp. chaps. 3-5.
- 60 Born in Culpepper, Virginia in 1879, Nannie Burroughs assumed a leadership role in the Women's Auxiliary since its foundation in 1900 and raised gender issues within the male-dominated black denomination. Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham writes: "Burroughs, more than anyone else, embodied the Baptist women's independent spirit. Determined to maintain women's autonomy, she led the convention over a number of symbolic and real obstacles during the first two decades of its existence." Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 158-59.

- 61 “Most American Women Say: ‘Let GIs Wed Japanese Girls.’”
- 62 Nannie Burroughs, “Church Leader Argues against Mixed Marriage,” *Ebony* 6, no. 1 (November 1950): 51; Romano, *Race Mixing*, 88.
- 63 Historian Renee Romano argues that African American reactions to the interracial marriage between black and white took class-and gender-specific forms in the 1940s and 1950s, and it was frowned upon especially among the middle-class African Americans. In light of the politics of respectability, blacks in the middle class saw the interracial relationships, especially black female-white male relationships, as “disrespectable” or “immoral” for their historically sexualized connotations. They perceived such relationships as a lack of black racial pride, while they cautioned themselves not to reproduce the racist thinking in the whites’ intolerance of interracial marriage in their oppositions. Romano, *Race Mixing*, chap. 3.
- 64 Prominent African American leaders, by the late 1940s, took a public position to “divorce the issue of interracial marriage from the larger civil rights agenda,” so that they could reconcile their interest to support the individual’s right to intermarry with their need to refute their opponent’s charges that they were advocating intermarriage. Romano, *Race Mixing*, 95-96.
- 65 Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 47-50; Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*. On racial demonization in the wartime U.S. imagination of the Japanese, see John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), esp. part 1 and 2. For the legal construction of the racial “unassimilability” of the Japanese, see, for example, Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. chap. 1; Ian F. Haney López, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
- 66 On African American views of the Japanese during WWII, see Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japanese and China*, chaps. 6-7; Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*, chap. 6; Gerald Horne, *Race War!: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), esp. chap. 5; George Lipsitz, “‘Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army’: Black Soldiers and Civilians Confront the Asia-Pacific War,” ed. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 347-77.
- 67 Lois Austin, “Missing Yank’s Mother Begs U.S. For His Children, Japanese Wife,” *Chicago Defender*, 2 December 1950; “GI’s Mother Wants Tots, Japanese Wife in America,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 9 December 1950; Ralph Matthews, “Shinto Ceremony Very Popular: Mixed Marriages Thrive in GI-Occupied Japan,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 August 1951; “The Truth about Japanese War Brides: Negro Soldiers Learn to Admire Legendary Qualities of Attractive Nippon Women,” *Ebony* 7, no. 5 (March 1952): 20; “With Little Daughter: Japanese Bride, GI Win Home,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 March 1952.
- 68 “The Truth about Japanese War Brides,” 24. See also, W. A. Reed Jr., “WO, Japanese Bride Spend Yule in U.S.: International Nuptial Knot Sparks Nashville, Tenn., Family Reunion,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 January 1952; “3-Year Courtship in Japan: Baltimore GI, Tokyo Bride Find Love Is All Languages,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 April 1952; “The Loneliest Brides in

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- America: Japanese Brides of Negro Soldiers Find Friendships Hard to Make in New, Strange World in U.S.," *Ebony* 8, no. 3 (January 1953): 20.
- 69 Some articles referred to the conflicts, ruptures, and tensions that occurred between Japanese brides and their families who opposed marriage with American GIs in general, and with black soldiers in particular. Others attested to the existence of racial distance between Japanese brides living in the U.S. according to the race of their American husbands. An *Ebony* article in January 1953 reported that there was "no mixing" between the Japanese brides who married black soldiers and those who married white soldiers in Indianapolis, Indiana in accordance with the existing color line. "3-Year Courtship in Japan"; "The Loneliest Brides in America," 17-18.
- 70 Ethel Payne, "New Year's Holds Sad Memories for Japanese Bride in Chicago," *Chicago Defender*, 29 December 1951; and "Sgt. Japanese Wife Given Warm Welcome," *Chicago Defender*, 15 March 1952; Reed, "WO, Japanese Bride Spend Yule in U.S."
- 71 "The Loneliest Brides in America," 19.
- 72 *Ibid.*
- 73 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 5 (March 1953): 6-7; *Ebony* 8, no. 6 (April 1953): 9.
- 74 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 6 (April 1953): 9.
- 75 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 5 (March 1953): 6.
- 76 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 6 (April 1953): 8-9.
- 77 May, *Homeward Bound*, esp. introduction and chap. 1. On gender politics in Cold War America, see also K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Joanne Meyerowitz, "Gender, Sex, and the Cold War Language of Reform," and Jane Sherron De Hart, "Containment at Home: Gender, Sexuality, and National Identity in Cold War America," ed. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 2001); Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver, Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
- 78 Megan Taylor Shockley, "*We, Too, Are Americans*": *African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940-54* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), chap. 3.
- 79 "The Truth About Japanese War Brides," 17.
- 80 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 7, no. 9 (July 1952): 11.
- 81 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 7, no. 7 (May 1952): 6-7.
- 82 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 7, no. 8 (June 1952): 8.
- 83 "The Loneliest Brides in America," 23.
- 84 *Ibid.*
- 85 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 5 (March 1953): 6.
- 86 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 6 (April 1953): 8.
- 87 Letters to the Editor, *Ebony* 8, no. 5 (March 1953): 7.

88 Lubin, *Romance and Rights*, 114-18.

89 *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

90 *Ibid.*, 118.