

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Black Transnationalism and Japan: Concepts and Contours

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Abstract

Black American-Japanese transnational encounters occurred primarily on the nonstate level across two new competing empires, the United States and Japan. Those involved sought to overcome imperial politics of inclusion and exclusion, concepts of “civilized and uncivilized,” and other dichotomized orders of knowledge. Articulating each chapter’s originality and interconnectivities with other chapters, this introduction situates Black transnationalism and Japan in global historical context, and identifies fresh methodological, conceptual and theoretical implications for modern history writing.

Keywords: Black transnationalism, Afro-Asian solidarity, transwar perspective

Black Transnationalism and Japan introduces to classroom and scholarly audiences more than a century of cultural activity and intellectual movements, created, shaped, and led by Japanese and Black people. Black and Japanese transnational encounters and cultural productions have challenged hierarchies of gender, race, class, culture, and imperialism throughout history. The lens of Black transnationalism reveals diverse meanings of the concept of “Japan” for different groups of Black and Japanese people who interacted with one another. For these groups, the meaning of “Black” and “Blackness” were simultaneously concepts and categories in perpetual motion, within and vis-à-vis Japan. The sites in which they operated and the geographies they imagined were non-imperial, anti-imperial, and alternative cultural spaces, and their coalescent productions and practices can be discovered in both ordinary and extraordinary historical spaces and times. The study of transnational activity can reveal not only heretofore hidden historical actors, mutual learning and collaboration, friendships and solidarities, but also discourses of knowledge connected to race, gender, and culture that challenged the Western, modern, civilization discourse. The hierarchies naturalized by this discourse have so far defined our historical understanding of racialized encounters in relation to Japan.

While some Pan-Asianisms and Pan-Africanisms urged a uniting of colonized spaces against the colonizer, and were expressed in the form of decolonization

movements, the chapters in this volume introduce various transnational phenomena that transcended such dichotomies. Black American-Japanese transnational encounters often occurred at the non-state level from within the two new competing empires of America and Japan. Their transnational encounters are reducible to neither anti-Westernism, nor the “countergaze” of the West, nor even being anti-“white.” It was their nuanced relations and the subtle historical context for doing transnational intellectual and cultural history in which they interacted that interested us from the outset. As a nuanced phenomenon, the history of Black-Japanese relations certainly has been difficult to uncover.

This volume sheds new light on Black transnationalism by means of a focused look at the Black-Japanese nexus. How did the distinctive context of empire generate different forms of knowledge and expressions? What methods and concepts do we apply and use to make sense of these expressions? How did a discourse on knowledge and its intellectual and cultural expressions generated both transnationally and by people of color unsettle the settler colonial knowledge/sciences for which race was an integral part? How did Black-Japanese transnational encounters reinforce or defy existing categories of race, gender, and civilization? This volume attempts to better understand these distinctive transnational phenomena in the context of modern global history on the one hand, and, on the other, to use such transnationality as an approach to better understand “Japanese” intellectual and cultural history.

As with other transnational encounters in modern global history, these encounters were complex and often competing. Of particular interest to us was that historical actors in their variegated transnational encounters often altered their empires’ hierarchical politics of inclusion and exclusion, without violence. Political alterations were unavoidable, as Western modernity and its discourse on civilization excluded these very historical actors as uncivilized or less civilized. Indeed, the reader may already be familiar with the notion whereby the concept of race became a powerful tool to map out imperial geographical knowledge by the mid-nineteenth century in a utopian imagination of empires. In such a context, it is not only *what* was said and practiced by Black and Japanese historical actors that interests us, but also *how* they did this.

Imperial sciences generated and legitimized a knowledge system which perpetuated the process of homologation in modern imperial universities in both America and in Japan. We have studies on the intellectual and cultural history of white settler colonial sciences, in which race played a critical part in ordering and classifying the hierarchy of peoples around the world.¹ Certainly, the editors of this volume would not disagree that this has been and continues to be an important line of inquiry. Japan’s leading cultural internationalists at the turn of the last century, such as Arishima Takeo and Nitobe Inazō, took great pains to write Japanese

history in English to demonstrate the self-assigned privilege of Japanese whiteness by narrating Japan's Aryan descent and to justify Japan's imperial expansion.²

Yet we are much less familiar with ideas and practices that did *not* follow the logic of the imperial sciences and the cultural internationalisms of the state, in which the idea of race was almost indistinguishable from that of culture and the cultured. The Esperanto language movement in Japan, for instance, started from “below” as one of the most popular fads around the same time, at the turn of the last century, and, in particular, immediately after the Russo-Japanese War. Esperantism did not fit the logic of the state's modernity then, and therefore never appeared in our historical memory. Those who advocated this language movement consciously sought to share a language without the imperial meaning of culture and the cultured. Instead, Esperantists advocated a “language without culture (and cultured).”³ Divorcing the imperial science of culture and language, Esperanto was promoted to link Japan with the wider world outside the imperial order of borders. It is hardly a coincidence that it was two Esperantists who later created the Japan Black Studies Association in postwar Japan (Chapters Two and Six), when Black Studies was well outside the academic discourse of formal universities. The association has since grown, and has made interventions in many places both in and outside academia. In the final chapter, we have included an interview with one of the most important figures in the history of this association, whose personal life has been intertwined with the establishment of this association.

Another transnational cultural and intellectual phenomenon in modern Japan—jazz—has been given comparatively scant attention. Japan has become the largest market for jazz in the world outside America. Once again, we are faced with the sharp contrast between the prominent presence of jazz in Japanese cultural scenes, and the lack of attention that historians have given to this transnational cultural and intellectual phenomenon in modern Japan (Chapter Three). The contrast between the presence of such cultural phenomena in the past and their absence in our historiography suggests a historiographical pattern, which has become ever clearer as this volume developed. Filling that gap is important, but that alone is not our aim. *How* to fill the gap is our primary purpose. To fill the gap, we have to understand what sort of lens, approach, and perspective have led to such a lacuna, and what perspectives might help us remedy it. The overarching conceptual framework and perspective of this book offers an excellent starting point. It is comprised of relatively horizontal, primarily non-state, transnational approaches and methodological strategies to examine Black American-Japanese encounters in the midst of a hierarchically ordered imperial world. The lens of “Black transnationalism and Japan” illuminates their distinctive transnationality and connectivity.

As a nation, Japan has historically been seen as both a symbol of and a transgressor against the pursuit of racial equality. This may seem contradictory at first

glance, but these two characteristics were interconnected and fit fairly logically with the defensive pursuit of equality by non-Western nation states, by seeking entrance to and recognition by the international community of nation states in the era of imperialism and colonialism. Seen from another angle, the oligarchs of the Meiji government and the intellectuals who operated within the same intellectual universe developed imperial and colonial thought that was essentially a form of self-colonization. And yet, we have found that they were not quite successful in colonizing themselves by using the weapons of biopolitics. This volume looks at the aspects of transnational cultural and intellectual life that escaped this self-colonization. While imperial biological theory manifested itself in “Social Darwinism,” which made their claim of a white-centric racial hierarchy “universal,” actors in the Black-Japanese nexus of cultural encounters often viewed such evolutionary theory as irrelevant. Their cultural practices manifested themselves in innovative ways. Not only did they not adhere to social Darwinist theory, but they often contributed to the generation of a competing idea of world order and civilization that was alternative to Western, modern, natural, and social sciences and corresponding ideas of peace and a hierarchical world order.

Our historical actors did so from within and from underneath the very empires in which they were situated. The situatedness of our historical actors was at times manifested in nuanced cultural practices, making it challenging for historians to identify and excavate sources, and also difficult to develop the nuanced interpretive lens, concepts, and language to elaborate them. And yet that is what the authors in this volume have achieved. The resulting cultural and intellectual phenomena served to nurture theories that were distinct from the received official ideologies of the state. See the chapters on “Civilization” (Chapter One), “Music” (Chapter Two), “Identity” (Chapter Three), “Intimacy” (Chapter Four), “Social Science” (Chapter Five), and the practice of “Oneself” (Chapter Six), each of which have drawn different pictures of the world for futures alternative to the ones that their empires’ imperial politics of knowledge promoted. This volume explores the depth and creativity of their coproduction of various discourses that offered alternative future imaginations and possibilities in the past. Of course, these Black-Japanese imaginings may not appear as “alternative” to us today as they were to the historical actors involved. However, if the future we are yet to know has the possibility to change, dependent on how we frame our own history, then this volume could be seen as a small contribution to that process of historical dialectic.

Scholarship in the field of Afro-Asian studies brings much-needed attention to the diverse histories, relationships, and cultural products inspired by the exchange between and influence of people of African and Asian descent.⁴ Activist and saxophonist Fred Ho wrote about interracial collaboration, inspiration, and activism against racism and imperialism, and that “Afro-Asian unity isn’t simply learning

to appreciate one another's cultures and experiences, but a historical outgrowth of the need for alternative political paradigms that are independent from U.S. white-settler colonial integration and Western European hegemony."⁵ Paul Gilroy challenged Eurocentric conceptions of modernity in *The Black Atlantic*, demonstrating the influence of people of African descent and the transatlantic slave trade on movements and ideas surrounding race, nationalism, culture, identity, tradition, and modernity. Scholars, such as Nitasha Tamar Sharma and Etsuko Taketani, have turned to explore the conceptualized space of the Black Pacific and its complicated relationship with racial politics and solidarity.⁶ Vijay Prashad has examined Afro-Asian interactions and exchange across multiple centuries, and against colonialism, imperialism, and racism.⁷ Afro-Asian solidarities have sought to fight colonialism and imperialism, and, in the words of Gary Okihiro, this space "must not reproduce the white or Black Atlantic and their embeddedness in European modernity."⁸ These solidarities have taken place both within and outside the continental U.S. in imagining connections beyond geographic or national borders.

There have been several excellent studies of the global efforts and influence of Black cultural internationalists and of Black-Japan historical and cultural exchange, such as those by Marc Gallicchio, Gerald Horne, Reginald Kearney, and John Russell.⁹ One such work exploring the power of Black-Japanese connection, *Traveling Texts and the Work of Afro-Japanese Cultural Production: Two Haiku and a Microphone*, edited by William H. Bridges IV and Nina Cornyetz, examined the power of cultural production and identity formation connected to Afro-Japanese transnationalism, as well as the danger of surface-level representation studies and the identity formation involved in representations of Blackness in Japanese literature.¹⁰ Scholars around the world continue to bring attention to the rich history and influence of Black people in connection to Japan. For example, historian Keisha N. Blain has disclosed the grassroots, national, and international activity of Black women, such as Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, who were deeply involved in Black political and activist organizations.¹¹ These leaders and their politics of Black nationalism are a bit different than the "everyday" people from below that this volume celebrates as its main historical actors, many of whom lacked education, organization, or even names that have survived in historical memory. Sharma, in critiquing the dominant narrative of Black history in Hawai'i, writes of the dangers of "developing a progress story of accomplishment and respectability," a history that erases many "who do not fit this narrative or choose not to."¹²

Black transnationalism is our chosen approach and perspective to this study in African American and Japanese history, not just to bring attention to individuals whose contributions may have been overlooked in the history of Japan, but because it is only through the lens of Black transnationalism that a new "Japan" is disclosed. Historians of modern Japan have largely operated from within the

logic of the territorial nation state in the international relations of the West. Viewing Japan from a Western, modern, state-centric lens has led to the absence in our historical narratives of Japanese-Black American transnational relations at the non-state level. It also points to the flourishing of competing modern urges in Japanese cultural and intellectual life that could be revealed only from these particular transnational approaches and perspectives (as seen in Chapters Two, Three, Five, and Six). The intertwined transnational history of Black Americans and people in and from Japan reshapes our understanding of modern Japanese history, of Black history, and of the global circulation of discourses of civilization, race, and personhood.

This volume presents another attempt at creating transnational approaches to Japan's intellectual history, or the modern intellectual history of Japan as *itself* transnational history. *Black Transnationalism and Japan* seeks to make clear how and why Black transnationalists and the cultural products of Black-Japan transnational encounters were embraced and developed in Japan and became part of Japanese history. This is a perspective that requires the combined efforts of both Americanists and Japan specialists to reveal a history not entirely visible from the sole perspective of American history or cultural internationalism. In disclosing the power and potential of African American and Japanese historical encounters, the contributors to this volume seek to provide a new intervention in cultural and intellectual history. Cohesive in their diversity, the chapters in this volume emphasize non-state transnational approaches and perspectives and corresponding methodological strategies in order to disclose the intellectual and cultural production that resulted from Japanese-Black American relations. The international relations of sovereign nation states and their imperial history have largely constituted "global history," and the cultural diplomacies of empires have been conceptualized as "cultural internationalism." Their ideas of peace and world order constitute what is moral and good. In contrast with this trend in the historiography, this volume reveals competing transnationalisms, not surrounding the idea of empire, but within empire. The historical actors featured within the following pages compete, disrupt, intervene, and often *reconstruct* cultural diplomacies of empire, from the perspective of Black-Japanese non-state transnationalism.

Many of the contributors to this volume encountered methodological challenges to their efforts to disclose this history. As you will see in the following pages, the concepts and expressions of Black American-Japanese transnationalism manifested themselves on a variety of cultural scenes and in multiple manners. We have observed the making of iconic Black heroes and popular idols in Japan, mutual inspiration and learning, the creation of representations and mirrors of each other, and the divorcing of race from civilization discourse to remodel the idea of progress toward a more inclusive, less unjust future emerging from an unjust past.

The cultural productions discussed in this volume were varied and quite rich, with each phenomenon we disclose necessitating different approaches and methods to capture this rich transnational intellectual life from a new perspective.

We take this complexity as an opportunity to introduce various non-state, transnational approaches to cultural and intellectual history. Employing a methodological framework emphasizing transnational encounters not only diversifies the cast of characters who appear in modern historiography, but also the diversity of historiographical practice itself. This volume, in addition to expanding the “who” in the history of Black transnationalism and Japan, and the “why” in regards to focusing on the transnational, has also sought to provide a sample “how” for students and scholars interested in exploring the multivarious history of Black transnationalism and Japan. We make visible non-state historical actors and concepts in order to make sense of their encounters, and our sources and interpretations elucidate such dynamics. In this sense, non-state “Black transnationalism and Japan” serves not only as a lens and site of investigation, but also as a method to disclose and understand little discussed yet distinctive intellectual and cultural phenomena, some which were popularly embraced in modern Japan and America (Chapters One, Two, and Three). Even as Chapter One examines Japan’s first official diplomatic mission to the United States, it sheds light on transnational intellectual encounters in unofficial spaces and times outside the white, male diplomatic table.

The methodological strategy of transnational history requires novel and often unexpected sources to study US-Japanese relations. *Black Transnationalism and Japan* connects thousands of sources that have never before been brought together for the study of Black American and Japanese history, with each chapter employing a different historiographical approach using different types of historical materials. These materials range from written sources, such as Black newspapers and private journals, to aural musical compositions, to oral histories never before translated into English. By employing a methodological framework emphasizing transnational encounters as experienced and expressed through a variety of media, this volume introduces new transnational histories and also demonstrates diverse methods of historical inquiry that bring attention to previously neglected or dismissed historical actors and sources. It is our hope that those beginning their journeys as historians will feel inspired to expand the interpretative lens of Black transnationalism and Japan presented here, and will pursue, in their own research, new and much-needed histories of interracial encounters in the pursuit of positive change.

The volume is loosely, chronologically organized. We place the 1860 Japanese encounter with African Americans as the beginning of this volume—rather than 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry’s arrival in Japan, or 1868, the year of the establishment of the modern Japanese nation state and the beginning of modern Japanese foreign policy. It is not because Black-Japanese encounters did not exist before

that time, but, rather, that the interactions that followed occurred largely in the intellectual context of Western civilization discourse, forming a thread throughout the chapters of this volume. The encounter of 1860 suggests the co-production of competing meanings of civilization discourse and of Japan itself from this very beginning of modern Black-Japanese non-state transnational relations.

Altering the historiographic “beginning” of these encounters from the diplomatic to the transnational narrative highlights that the people featured in *Black Transnationalism and Japan* often operated outside the timeline and definition of Western capitalist modernity. The lens of Black transnationalism, though far from being the only theoretical framework in which to view these encounters, seeks to suggest a challenge to the narrative of Western modernity that has, for too long, defined much historical writing concerning Japan. The different historical actors described in the following chapters ascribed different meanings to the modern and to progress, though not necessarily using those specific words to define the futures they envisioned. The editors hope this volume may inspire further developments in the exploration of the non-state approach from below and transnational solidarities in pursuit of a brighter future, however so defined.

Another significant point regarding this volume’s chronology is the collective and dual transwar perspective—transwar, as occurring between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War, and also transwar in reference to the Asia-Pacific War. The interactions uncovered in the chapters cut across both the Russo-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War, without being confined by these events. Black and Japanese relations persisted, rather than being terminated or disrupted by wars. This was true even at the height of war, as in the case of the two girls in Chapter Four. Trans Asia-Pacific War perspectives are demonstrated throughout this volume, but in particular, Chapter Five reflects this transwar perspective. It is important to note there that the historical meaning given to the devastating event of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, has often been viewed as Japan’s entry into the civilized elite Western nation states of the white Christian West. *Black Transnationalism and Japan* seeks to depart from the focus on the clash of Japanese and US imperialist ambitions to, instead, reveal a continuous urge to racial equality both because of and *despite* the fact that Japan was accepted as a civilized Western nation state.

The chapters in this volume offer us fascinating variations of thought on inclusiveness. We find echoes of early twentieth-century Japanese Esperanto supporters, who supported the idea of symbiotic evolution and progress, and thus uprooted the core intellectual foundation of survival of the fittest and a civilizational discourse centered on white Christian Europeans. Japanese and their Black counterparts co-produced culture and ideas in a rich variety of ways and sites. They expressed an inclusive sociality and subjectivity, and often assumed coexistence with white

people, rather than against them, and with all people in theory, without violence, sometimes even playfully through sports, music and private letters.

Chapter One, “**Solidarity with Samurai: The Antebellum African American Press, Transnational Racial Equality, and the 1860 Japanese Embassy to the United States,**” our beginning point, examines the very first Japanese diplomatic mission to the United States. The starting point for this volume on Japanese-American relations is not Commodore Matthew Perry’s arrival in Japan and his gunboat diplomacy. This “opening” of Japan has long colored subsequent state-centric historical narratives that have followed from this “beginning.” Instead of Perry, this book begins with the first arrival of Japanese diplomats in America, and their “opening” of the discourse on civilization in America. To uncover this history, Natalia Doan scoured African American and abolitionist newspapers, instead of official accounts from Edo officials or from Washington. She uncovers the beginning of modern African American-Japanese encounters, and the imaginings of transnational solidarity between them. A peculiar intellectual phenomenon inspired by the Japanese arrival emerged in this encounter: the divorcing of “race” from the concept of “civilization,” and their opening of a new civilization for the equality of all races. Doan’s uncovering of a discourse on civilization *with racial equality* continues as a thread throughout subsequent chapters in *Black Transnationalism and Japan*.

If African Americans were inspired by the Japanese arrival to America, the reverse seemed to have been on the rise as well. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century historical context of the two new empires of Japan and the US was rather different, and this nuanced difference is something Yukiko Koshiro detects and draws her attention to in Chapter Two, “**From Peripheries to Transnational: African Americans in Japan’s Identity Formation, 1872–1940,**” Koshiro reveals the double consciousness of African American and Japanese counterparts and indeed their convergence in trinational encounters. It is in this nuanced context, outside formal diplomatic relations with (white) America, that Koshiro finds ordinary Japanese were so inspired by African American “arrivals” in Japan through various circuits, from the children’s study lessons of Booker T. Washington, to the making of popular heroes in popular discourse, from music to sports. Thus, taking a challenging *longue durée* perspective, Koshiro aptly traces the richness and complexity of their relationality in detail, “beyond the alliance of color” that was not reducible to being anti-white. Through the complexity of these intellectual phenomena, readers will find that the notion of being “colored but civilized” initiated by the first Japanese arrival in America persisted, and further promoted African American transnational engagement. Koshiro reveals the presence of a divide between the prewar presence of African American heroes in Japan and the postwar absence of these heroes in Japanese historiography and cultural consciousness, challenging us to reconsider the history of cultural exchange with the wider world.

Chapter Three, **“Playing Changes: Music as Mediator between Japanese and Black Americans,”** focuses on one of the expressions discussed in Chapter Two: jazz. E. Taylor Atkins offers here the double consciousness in nuanced historical context discussed in Chapter Two, on another level and depth in his exploration of “grassroots globalization” through Afrological musicking in Japan. Indeed, music played a vital role in Black-Japanese relations in the early twentieth century, and Japanese have never let go of it to this day. In this sense, those readers who are interested in further investigating and developing this theme in Black transnationalism and Japan can read this chapter as the pivotal moment in that long and rich transnational cultural and intellectual history of music between them that becomes a more global phenomenon in multi-directional manners as the twentieth century moves on. Atkins observes that it was “far more effective for promoting interracial dialogue and understanding than efforts in the early 1900s to foster an alliance against white supremacy and imperialism.” Atkins convincingly discloses how and why Afrological music spoke more relevantly to Japanese experience than Eurological music did. We are reminded of the richness of intellectual life of Black transnationalism and Japan, and the significance of the overall concepts and contours of the volume, only through which such intellectual encounters can be exposed, let alone understood.

We then travel back to the United States, and turn to the midst of war between the US and Japan, an extreme time in which, from the point of view of the American state, “Japanese American” meant “Japanese,” which meant “enemy.” As the US government put literal borders of barbed wire around its people of Japanese ancestry, deeming them dangerous enemies in a foreign land, from the non-state perspective, we can see a different framing of identity. In Chapter Four, **“Interracial Friendship Across Barbed Wire: Mollie Wilson and Lillian Igasaki,”** Sonia Gomez focuses on a private space within the controlled space of the empire—internment camps surrounded by barbed wire. We meet two local, teenage girls, Mollie and Lillian, writing to cherish their intimate bond transcending the borders of ideological and physical barbed wire. Here, instead of a historiographical focus on empires’ state policies in wartime regimes, we focus on two ordinary girls who were separated by the state’s policy of inclusion and exclusion. Gomez provides a microhistorical examination of the practice of private letter writing, employing the transnational lens of this volume to examine a relationship overcoming physical and ideological borders of brutality and difference and its significance to Afro-Asian solidarity and feminist practice.

With transwar perspectives in mind, Yuichiro Onishi and Toru Shinoda then treat the postwar through their collaborative transnational effort to write transnational intellectual history in Chapter Five, **“The Transpacific Reworking of Race and Marxist Theory: The Case of Harry Haywood’s Lifework.”** This chapter

unpacks Harry Haywood's lifework, on ideas about the relationship between Black liberation and the Communist project of world revolution, and explores how it helped articulate unexpected connections across class, race, and Marxism among Japanese Marxist economists in the 1950s. Here, the authors highlight how Haywood's lifework, in and of itself is very much tied to the articulation of the transwar, as are all the historical contexts covered up to this chapter from 1860. Onishi and Shinoda reveal how the book became a touchstone for 1950s Japanese Marxists to engage in the longstanding debate on Japanese capitalism that began in the prewar. The essay unpacks the generative potential of Black Communist critique and its reworking in 1950s Japan, and highlights advances made by unexpected connection-making across class, race, and Marxism. Historians have long understood Marxist thought among Japanese intellectuals to have been the product of bilateral influence studies of Russia on Japan, constructed in the narrative of a Russian Revolution-centric world view. Instead of echoing the notion of institutionalized knowledge of Soviet internationalism in Soviet Russia that has, until now, constituted our understanding, the authors of Chapter Five decouple these relations from the Soviet Union and triangulate them by incorporating Black transnational non-state encounters with Japan into this history.

Finally, the last chapter of the volume, Chapter Six, is an oral history, in the form of an interview with Furukawa Tetsushi, whose life has been completely intertwined with the foundation of the Japanese Black Studies Association (JBSA) and its development. Furukawa calls this interview piece "A Journey into Black/Africana Studies: Discovering that 'Knowledge Should Be Power to Unite Us'." Approaching transnational history from a unique, historical autoethnographical perspective, this chapter presents Furukawa's own account of his intellectual life as a leading Black Studies scholar in Japan. Furukawa self-reflectively examines his four decades of commitment to Black Studies, from his encounter with Japanese sex workers in Zanzibar, to his teaching of multi-racial and cultural classes to Ohio state prison inmates. He recounts his intellectual struggle to decolonize the mind and the academy, an integral part of the development of Japan's Black Studies. Discussing the struggles of his own personal life experiences and those JBSA has faced, his intellectual journey calls for knowledge-making that serves to unite us, not divide us as humans.

Black Transnationalism and Japan demonstrates how transnational actors sought out, intellectually engaged with, and celebrated each other in different cultural productions and historical time periods. There are undoubtedly many more stories, both known and unknown, that explore the powerful and intricate connections between African American and Japanese people, as well as Japanese and Black people across the globe. The activities and messages of Black transnationalism and Japan are significant to Japanese and African American history,

and have also influenced global intellectual history and discourses of civilization, race, and personhood in the production of knowledge and cultural movements. In the contemporary context, what new meanings of “diversity” can Black-Japanese transnationalism offer us? West-centric cultural internationalisms and Western cosmopolitanisms looked counter-productive from the lens of Black transnationalism and Japan. Today, this departure is particularly pertinent, when new notions and practices of diversity are urgently needed. Critical of and defiant of authority and its institutionalized knowledge and practice, these Black-Japanese transnational imaginings and deeds may well suggest a new form of resistance, solidarity, and strength in the pursuit of a more just future.

Notes

- ¹ For an excellent example of recent work done in this field, see Maile Arvin, *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai‘i and Oceania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
- ² See Chapter 4, “The History Slide,” in Sho Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 209–57.
- ³ Sho Konishi, “Translingual World Order: Language Without Culture in Post-Russo-Japanese War Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 1 (2013): 91–114. For the most recent discussion of Esperanto in modern Japan, see also Ian Rapley, “Sekaigo: Esperanto, International Language, and the Transnational Dimension to Japan’s Linguistic Modernity,” *Japan Forum* 32, no. 4 (2020): 511–30.
- ⁴ The history of Afro-Asian Studies and Afro-Asian encounters has been explored elsewhere. For an excellent bibliography of recent materials, see Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, “Introduction: AfroAsian Encounters—Culture, History, Politics,” in *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1–16, n.1, 13–14. For a brief historical overview of African American and Japanese encounters and exchange, see Natalia Doan, “African America and Japan,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Oxford University Press, 23 March 2022, doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.671.
- ⁵ Fred Wei-han Ho, “An Asian American Tribute to the Black Arts Movement,” in *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader*, ed. Fred Wei-han Ho and Diane Carol Fujino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 161–210, 205.
- ⁶ Different scholars define the Black Pacific in different ways. Sharma defines the Black Pacific as “the movements of African-descended people, aesthetics, and politics across Oceania.” Taketani defines the Black Pacific as a space “manufactured by the performance of black narratives that invent a shared history, one that African Americans imagine they share with the colored peoples of the Pacific Rim, especially in Asia”. Nitasha Tamar Sharma, *Hawai‘i is My Haven: Race and Indigeneity in the Black Pacific* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 17; Etsuko Taketani, *The Black Pacific Narrative: Geographic Imaginings of Race and Empire Between the World Wars* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2014), 27, 7.
- ⁷ Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

- ⁸ Sharma, *Hawai'i is My Haven*, 18; Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Gary Okihiro, "Afterword: Toward a Black Pacific," in *AfroAsian Encounters*, 313–34, 315.
- ⁹ Marc S. Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan 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); Gerald Horne, *Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan, and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Gerald Horne, *Race War!: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); John G. Russell, "Excluded Presence: Shoguns, Minstrels, Bodyguards, and Japan's Encounters with the Black Other," *Zinbun* 40 (March 2008), doi: 10.14989/71097; John Russell, "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1991), 3–25.
- ¹⁰ The introduction provides an excellent overview of Black-Japanese historical exchange. William H. Bridges IV and Nina Cornyetz, "Work It: Traveling Texts and the Work of Reading Afro-Japanese Cultural Exchange," in *Traveling Texts and the Work of Afro-Japanese Cultural Production*, ed. William H. Bridges IV and Nina Cornyetz (Lanham: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2015), 1–28, 4–14.
- ¹¹ Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
- ¹² Sharma, *Hawai'i is My Haven*, 59.