

think about the poor little girls! They'll suffer from male dominance and sexploitation. The fact is, we live in a dynamic, fluid, paradoxical, violent, and oppressive world. Different groups of people have not only survived many centuries of oppression, but *inspite of their conditions*, they have contributed to the growth of this society and enriched all of lives.

What about the children? I think rather than making false or uneducated assumptions about "mixed-race" children, people should ask the children themselves, "What has it been like for you?" A complex question like this one requires a complex, situational, multidimensional, evolutionary and even contradictory answer. If we don't listen to the voices of multi-racial people themselves, we will fall into the trap of understanding the "Natives" through the accounts of white anthropologists. It is the members' meanings that we are trying to understand, not what OTHERS say about them. Let's preserve the diverse, authentic voices of multi-racial/multi-cultural peoples.

In a recent *JET* article, biracial actor Mario Van Peebles's African American father stated that if his son were to try and catch a taxi, he would be treated as any African American, implying that taxi cabs wouldn't stop for him.** The article concludes by quoting Melvin Van Peebles (father of Mario) that it really isn't up to multi-racial people to decide who they are, but "The cab driver will decide."

THE CAB DRIVER? I was stunned by Peeble's unenlightened, ultra-conservative and reac-

tionary position. If we allowed society to dictate to us who and what we should be, African Americans would still be legally enslaved. What we need to fight against is not whether peoples of multiple backgrounds legitimately claim their heritages or not, but rather against ideologies and institutions that lie, cheat, and steal from those with little or no power --- including their heritage(s). We must be dedicated to teaching multi-racial/multi-cultural children that their heritages are all very valuable. African is not inferior and European is not superior! We must teach the young generation the truth, even if it's ugly and painful. That's what great leaders like W.E.B. Dubois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and many others did for us. We must cleanse ourselves from the old race relations' paradigms of colonial America (while never forgetting them) so we can stand up against ideological systems that attempt to destroy our humanity and our racial/cultural dignity. We should have more pride in ourselves and our parents than to allow others to define who we are and to direct us on how we should live our lives. Unlike Peebles's defeat to societal designations, the cab driver will NOT define who I am. My parents did that for me when they married thirty years ago. I'm organically a part of both of them and yet my very own authentic self -- an Amerasian of European and Japanese ancestries, respectively.

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Defining Race: A View of Biological Truth for Multi-racial Persons

by
Velina Hasu Houston

What is "race"? Firstly, it is a manufactured term meant to describe a group of people who are united or classified together on the bases of common history, nationality, genetic traits, cultural customs and (historically) geographic distribution. As our society becomes more politically complex and as traditional mono-racial groups struggle to maintain a foothold amid the social injustices they perceive to be levied against them by the American power class, "race" becomes a politic itself. It becomes a measure of economic due and perception of caste. In using "race" in such a way, traditional mono-racial groups appear to be thinking of it in the sense of a contest or pursuit of socio-economic and political supremacy. They employ the term and all the people it may or may not represent as a way of trying to make their respective groups appear larger and powerful. It goes without saying that the individual identity is left fighting for its right to life amid the falsehoods of race perpetuated by the desperate power struggle of recognized mono-racial races, such as those found on institutional or government forms: Asian/Pacific descent, African descent, Latin descent, Native American Indian, Caucasian.

There is a long-oppressed category of human beings which have been pushed and pulled by the various traditional races. That is the "others," the multi-racial persons who are now finally making a stand and letting mono-racials know that they do not belong to any traditional group. They are a new group of multi-racial (and often multi-cultural) beings who are demanding the right of their birth. Mono-racial groups have a difficult time understanding or even listening to the rather staunchly logical philosophy of the more outspoken in the multi-racial community. The concept of biological truth baffles them. Even religious

** I don't advocate that a person who identifies as biracial should get special privilege over a person who identifies as an African-American

perspective seems to (pardon the pun) go way over their heads when it comes to understanding a multi-racial identity.

Biological Truth

Philosophically speaking, it is quite simple. Biological truth easily defines any multi-racial being. For instance, someone who is born half native Japanese and half African is neither Japanese or African. That person is biologically Japanese *and* African. To understand the basics of this, one can think back on early lessons of color. As a child, if one mixed the primary colors of blue and red, one came up with purple. The new color was no longer blue or red. Indeed, it was so different that it was given a new name and was not given membership in the group of primary colors because of its distinctive difference. Not only did it look different, but it was different. It even caused different reactions in people who looked at it.

The other philosophy regarding multi-racial identity is based in religion. God as the maker created human beings. Had God wanted a multi-racial being to be just one race or to belong to just one racial category, then God would have made that person just one race. Hybrid creatures were obviously part of the plan. Take, for instance, the example of the Japanese-African multi-racial. God put that person on the earth as multi-racial. If God would have meant for that person to be African or to be Japanese, God would have put that person on the earth as a mono-racial being. Many traditional mono-racial groups attempt to put themselves in the shoes of God and define the racial identity of multi-racials as if they had some divine ownership of the multi-racial community. Such sacrilegious pride is reminiscent of the Book of Genesis and the Tower of Babel. When a group feels that they build the structure that makes their

power tantamount to that of God, God chooses to confuse their tongues. Then they can no longer understand one another very well, if at all, and much time is wasted on destructive argument rather than on constructive fellowship. God defined multi-racials by putting them on this earth as multi-racials. Their very biological essence defines their racial identity. It is not the task or right of mono-racials to re-define -- through socio-political oppression -- what God has created.

Fear: A Four-letter Word

The reason that traditional mono-racial groups -- especially African Americans -- fight to build their strength in numbers by clutching at the throats of multi-racial persons is a four-letter word. Fear. This fear is based on loss of economic power as the size of a given mono-racial community diminishes through out-marriage into other racial groups and also the fear that multi-racials become a "favored caste" (if you will), a group preferred over traditional mono-racial groups of color when it comes to the meting out of socio-economic privileges or political power.

Such a fear is perfectly understandable. As a multi-racial, I sympathize with it. However, mono-racials must endeavor to halt their oppression of multi-racials because of this fear. Destructive argument and oppression has never won any favors in this country. It did not wed the conflicts of slave masters and African slaves. It did not wed the differences between Japanese Americans, and the American government that robbed them of their constitutional rights during World War II and imprisoned them in concentration camps. It did not restore the dignity of Chinese American laborers or of Native American Indians. It also certainly will not create understanding or fellowship between mono-racials and multi-racials. Mono-

racials (particularly mono-racial groups of color) must learn to tend their own acres. If they want the support of multi-racial communities who may share common races with them, then they must learn to respect the birth rights of multi-racials. A multi-racial person who is allowed the right of his or her biological truth in terms of racial identity is far more apt to want to contribute to the various racial groups of which he or she is composed. However, when that multi-racial is forced to defend his or her biological truth in the face of fearful, power-hungry mono-racials, his or her desire or ability to relate to that group is drastically diminished.

For instance, say our example of the Japanese-African multi-racial wanted to be able to contribute to both the Japanese American community and the African American community. Let us say that this multi-racial found acceptance in the Japanese American community. Most likely, that community would find the multi-racial to be a racial and cultural novelty. Furthermore, the multi-racial would probably suffer some degree of prejudice from the community. But persons of Japanese descent are not one to force their own racial definitions upon another group. They are consumed in their own hubris, but are not arrogant enough to propose to write a dictionary of race. On the other hand, African Americans have, for decades, tried to write not a, but the dictionary of race. They have done so with a God-like demeanor. Their vehement definitions usually target multi-racials who have one or more drops of African blood in them. They contend an ownership over these multi-racials, and demand that these multi-racials deny any other races in their composition and identify solely as being African American. They base their demands on what they call history or custom for

defining who is or is not African American. Let us take a look at historical and customary definitions of race.

Governmental Definitions of Race

The U.S. government, by Executive Order 9066, states that any person who is one-eighth or more of Japanese ancestry is Japanese American. Similarly, the U.S. government defines any person who is one-quarter or more Native American Indian as being Native American Indian. There are no other federal governmental definitions of race. In the past, Southern states listed miscegenation as a criminal offense. The dictionary definition of miscegenation is as follows: "The inter-breeding of what are presumed to be distinct human races, especially marriage or cohabitation between white and non-white persons." African Americans like to use these anti-miscegenation laws as governmental definitions of who is or is not African American. In reality, however, these state laws have nothing to do with such definitions. If anything, the laws imply an understanding of the grey areas when it comes to distinguishing human races ("what are *presumed* to be distinct human races"). The definition also disassociates itself from the idea that interracial marriage is a "black-white" affair, as many Euro-Americans and African Americans seem to obsess upon in the media. Miscegenation means not only the joining of European blood with African blood; but also with Asian, Latin, Native American Indian, or Middle Eastern blood, etc..

Clearly then, African Americans must turn to what they call "history" and "custom" in order to lay claim to multi-racial persons who have some African blood in their composition. This view, however, only further weakens the African American position. The history and custom to

which they refer goes back to the days of slavery. Historically and customarily, it was slave masters who created the definition that anyone who was one smidgeon African was African American. Slave owners did this to maintain social, economic, political, territorial and psychological control over the African slaves. Multi-racial slaves created by either inter-marriage or sexual relations between slave masters and/or other Euro-Americans and African slaves were victimized not only by racist Euro-Americans because they were people of color, but also by African Americans who resented them their lighter skin tones and also for the more favorable treatment they often received from slave masters. Relying on such history and custom is a rather demeaning view of group self-esteem. I would no more allow my race to be defined by a slave master than I would accept other "historical and customary" stereotypical definitions of African Americans that have been passed down through the ages (such as "all blacks are intellectually inferior to whites" or "all blacks have rhythm" or "all black men have large penises"). I reject the slave master's definition of race as adamantly as I reject racial stereotypes of African Americans. If African Americans are desperate enough for economic power in numbers to adhere to slave masters definitions of race, then they may as well dust off Step-n-Fetchit and Aunt Jemima and let them be the editors of the dictionary of race. Furthermore, while they are at it, they should also consider the statistical theory that states that one out of every five Euro-American families has African blood. By their definitions of race, that means that possibly over fifty percent of Americans are "African Americans." That might be news to the nation's president.

The Challenge of Multi-racial Identity

I am a multi-racial person. I am happy to live my biological truth. I am satisfied to live as the multi-racial being that God made me. I will not attempt to re-define someone else's race for them. I will not allow anyone to re-define my race for me to suit their needs or desires. I am half native Japanese, one quarter Blackfoot Pikuni Indian, and one quarter African American. I was raised by a native Japanese mother and my cultural training is firmly entrenched in a pre-World War II Kansai ethic. Over the years, my artistic expression has led me to be involved in the Japanese community, the Japanese American community, and the African American community. My political sympathies relate to both groups. However, I am often an uncomfortable presence for both groups because I force them to look at the demons within themselves. While they are fighting the racism practiced against them by Euro-Americans, I remind them of their own racism -- the racism they practice against each other as people of color and the racism they practice against multi-racial persons. This mission embroils me in a fierce challenge. But I am not afraid. I feel that it is part of the reason that I was put on this earth as a multi-racial person of my particular heritages.

When one mixes red and blue, one gets purple. Will one call it red because one wants to do so? Will another call it blue? Is this color-blindedness? No one seems to have a problem calling people who have operations to change their sex "transsexuals." These people often are no longer seen as women or as men, and prefer the term "transsexual" to distinguish themselves. What must multi-racials do? Call themselves "trans-racials"?

I know the temptation of foisting one's opinion about race

on another. Forget biological truth and fact, right? Race is complex, right? Lines blur, but you know what's right -- right? I have been tempted. I have seen tan-toned people who identify as being African American. I know they are multi-racial, perhaps mulatto or even octaroon. I know they are "passing for black" just as surely as others will tell them that they are "passing for white." That is part of the oppression of the multi-racial. Every mono-racial group will turn to you and tell you that you are passing for one color or another. The concept of "purple" or "trans-racial" appears too difficult for them to absorb or even to grasp in one fleeting moment.

There is no solution. We live in a society of conflict and the decibel level grows louder every minute. As mono-racial groups continue to struggle with maintaining their communities, arguments about race will persist. Inevitably, multi-racial persons will be dragged into these arenas and stoned with the arrogance of the dictionary of race. I urge multi-racial persons to hold on to all that they are, to not allow anyone to diminish the importance of any of their races and/or cultures. For no one has the right to threaten or mutilate a multi-racial person's racial identity in such a way. Their racial identity is no one's property but their own. As a multi-racial person who daily musters the courage to live with racial honesty and to challenge mono-racial oppression, I say to my fellow multi-racial human beings: "Don't let people destroy your private property. Protect the biological truth with which you were born."

It is my hope that mono-racials of color looking to preserve their culture and identity continue to do just that. However, I hope that they will not malign or impugn the culture and identity of multi-racial peoples in the process. In doing so, traditional

mono-racial groups of color become guilty of practicing the same prejudice and oppression against multi-racials that Euro-Americans often practice against them.

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**Members of the Multi-racial /Multi-cultural Community Taking Social Responsibility: Toward a Multi-racial/Multi-cultural Consciousness**

**The Voice of A Japanese/Euro-American Person**

by

Teresa Kay Williams

I have enjoyed the professional and personal writings of Dr. Francis Wardle over the years. His works have been positive, educational, and inspirational, while also pushing forward the needs of the multi-racial family. However, his defense of being a European-American male in an interracial relationship ignited all of my concerns regarding the multi-racial/multi-cultural issue. Although I am in agreement with Dr. Wardle's conclusion that we should expend our creative energies for the elimination of oppression rather than on feeling guilty about our heritage, I think we need to acknowledge that some cultures and heritages have thrived precisely *because of* their domination over others.

My uncomfortable reactions to the thread of Dr. Wardle's article may be that first of all, I find the psychological approach, often promoted by multi-racial theorists, to understand the development of interracial families and

their children to be limiting and insufficient. We must understand our place in the world as we interact with individuals, groups, institutions, governments, and nations. We must understand the larger historical, social and political contexts in which the concept of "race" emerged and continues to persist. And secondly, all peoples must realize that there exists an international hierarchy of peoples based on race, culture, religion, language, and country of origin. And thirdly, we must recognize our individual, as well as group, position within this hierarchy. If we do not, we will be unnecessarily trying to defend our racial and cultural integrity. This is a futile and absurd defense. Moreover, if we do not understand how the world operates, we will not be able to bring about positive change for peoples of multiple backgrounds, as well as to our fellow human beings.

Growing up with a European-American father and a Japanese mother, I have received verbal abuse and even physical attacks by American minority groups, Japanese nationals, and Euro-American people. People of color in America often claim my father is "the white enemy" and insist that my loyalties be with them. Asian-Americans in line with the Third World Movement claim that my white father, an innate racist because of his European ancestry, only married my mother for her exotic subservience. Euro-Americans assert that my father couldn't find a beautiful blonde and succumbed to the alluring Asiatic woman. Many Koreans and Southeast Asians, who still suffer from Japan's WWII colonialism, have told me my mother escaped "the evil Japanese race" to lead a blissful life with an American. And of course, the Japanese and Japanese-Americans alike put forth that my mother contributed to the genocide of Japanese purity by giving birth to her



*kon'ketsuji* (mixed-blood) Amerasian children. My father is blamed for Hiroshima and my mother is blamed for Pearl Harbor. I am often told by non-Japanese and non-European-Americans that I am a product of the two most "racist" peoples ever in the history of humankind. On the other hand, the Japanese and European-Americans alike have asserted that I am a product of the two "master races" of the east and west.

How does a Eurasian person of Japanese and Euro-American racial, cultural, and national backgrounds comprehend such dynamic forces such as war, racism, supremacy, colonialism, cultural hegemony, and even biological genocide? Afterall, I'm just one measly ole' person trying to work for my life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Am I supposed to be feel ashamed of my parents for being members of societies that have perpetrated horrible acts upon others and triumphed as powerful nations because of such unjust, inhumane actions? Should my parents feel guilty for having benefited from their respective societies' oppressive actions? Should my Anglo father favorably view White South Africa? Should my Japanese mother support Japan's multinational corporations that use Third World countries as their waste dumps and continue to oppress its minority groups such as the *Zainichi Kan'kokujin* (Korean residents in Japan), *Ainu*, Okinawans, *Burakumin*, etc.? OF COURSE NOT! Although these questions are pointless, I raise them because many people (who are for and against intermarriage) have raised them for me. Since we live in a real world, my emphasis here is that we must be aware of this real world to which we belong, while advocating progressive change.

As international, interracial, intercultural peoples, my family

and those like mine must be aware of these larger forces. My family, like many multi-racial/multi-cultural families, condemns both Japanese and European/Euro-American systems of oppression that have manifested themselves in the forms of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and so forth. And thus, the central issue is that those of us who advocate multi-raciality, multi-culturalism, and internationalism in this day and age can not individualistically (i.e. irresponsibly) promote multi-raciality. We must first be aware of the impact they would have in a society (or societies) where "race" and "culture" have functioned (and continue to function) as mechanisms to rank peoples into imaginary categories and to allocate resources according to their so-called socioeconomic and racial worth.

Multi-racial/multi-cultural peoples, who have been blessed with multiple consciousness by virtue of our complex upbringing and background, should be the ones to stand up against *the parent societies of power* because we are inextricably a part of those worlds and have access to their power base—even if our status is only temporary or honorary in nature. I don't want to defend any forms of oppression, especially those exercised by my parent societies. Being both insiders and outsiders, we should be the ones fervently denouncing systems of oppression practiced by them.

If we understand the international/interracial family within the context of the world, I don't think we would feel guilty or ashamed. Guilt and shame are for those who have the time and luxury to sulk in them. Furthermore, we wouldn't feel the need to justify being European or being Japanese. I am proud of Europe and European culture. I am proud of my Euro-American background.

Does that translate into, I am therefore proud of European and Euro-American colonial histories and what they have done? Absolutely not! And I speak from the perspective of a person who claims European-American heritage. I shall say the same for the Japanese. I am proud of my Japanese culture and Japanese history, but Japanese militarism, imperialism, and economic expansionism? Emphatically not! And I speak from the perspective of a person who claims Japanese heritage. All of this should be understood.

It seems rather absurd that I have to make these distinctions. However, many members of the various groups in power get "personally" offended when their identification group is being pointed out as "racists" or "oppressors." Many of my unenlightened European-American and Japanese friends just can't seem to understand when I critically analyze the dominant ideologies and social structures of Japanese and American societies. Rather, they take my analyses as personal insults. Then, of course, there are honorable people from all walks of Japanese and American societies respectively, who would risk their prestigious positions to stand up for the rights of oppressed peoples everywhere.

Often times, minority peoples go through their own personal 1960's consciousness-raising period when they begin to study their histories and understand their conditions. I think this is a healthy process, considering the ugly and violent world in which we live. I think everyone, regardless of color(s) or national origin(s), should be angry after learning about the plight of Native Americans, African Americans, Native Hawaiians, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Jews, poor people, the homeless, the working class, women, multi-racial people and so forth.



Therefore, when Malcolm X described the Euro-American man as "the walking talking blue-eyed devil", I didn't take that as a personal assault on my father's appearance and/or my Euro-American parentage. Malcolm X, who should be honored as an international hero, stood up to what was and still is a system controlled and manipulated by wealthy Euro-American males.

My father's beautiful blue eyes and proud Appalachian-American background do not contradict or retard "Third World Consciousness" politics. In fact, Euro-American males should be at the forefront denouncing *White Racism and Euro-American Ethnocentrism* as they dance their way through our institutions and our minds. Japanese males should also be the strongest opponents of *Japanese Ethnocentrism and Racism* as they are exported with their cars and stereotypes.

I believe, as members of the new multi-racial consciousness movement so-to-speak, we need to look beyond the myopic psychological approach on what is suppose to make us feel like whole (i.e. mentally healthy) human beings and start understanding the complexities of the world and our place in it. The psychological approach in itself is Eurocentric, as well as close-minded in the Japanese *shimaguni kon'jo*\* sense.

\* *Shimaguni kon'jo* literally means "island-country fortitude" which denotes a kind of "we the Japanese of an island nation" against "them the outsiders/foreigners." Being an island-country (geographically separated by oceans from other countries, peninsulas, and continents), Japan has a history of isolationism. Japan has long held isolationist ideologies and

We are responsible and accountable to our human family, not only to our individual selves. What does it mean to be "part Euro-American" in a world that places value on European-ness at the expense of other cultures. What does it mean to be "part Japanese" in a world that glorifies a tiny 4-island country at the expense of its internally colonized peoples and Third World nations? And moreover, why is it so surprising that various groups of color feel threatened by the notion of multi-racality when many multi-racial communities (particularly in the U.S.) have often been the most aggressive supporters of White Racism against their cousins of darker color?

We should be asking ourselves these questions and re-examining the state of contemporary international race relations, rather than condemning communities of color (like those of the African American and Asian-American) for vehemently opposing a new multi-racial identity and category. We, as multi-racial peoples, need to see ourselves as part of the larger socio-political dynamics of the world, not just as individuals operating in a vacuum. We have a historical context from which we must work. We have the potential to serve as cultural interpreters, rather than being naive cheerleaders of multi-racial identity or worse, duplicators of old race relations' paradigms. Let's educate ourselves!

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### AMERASIAN PATS ON THE BACK

exclusionist policies which carry over into modern-day Japanese society.

Amerasian athlete, JAY WILLIAMS, who was nominated for the Pacific Stars and Stripes' 1990 ATHLETE OF THE DECADE award is being aggressively pursued by California State and University of California swim teams. Williams was on a full swimming scholarship at the University of New Mexico from 1987-1989 in Division I swimming after being heavily recruited from Kaiser High School in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Williams just finished his red-shirt year, nursing an injured shoulder. He is now making the tough decision of which California school offer to accept. While Amerasians have been seen excelling in academic, artistic, and entertainment fields, they are still significantly under-represented in the world of collegiate and professional sports. Good Luck to Jay!

Happy Birthday to KIYOSHI HOUSTON, the cosmopolitan Amerasian birthday boy! Kiyoshi -- who is German, Scottish Canadian, African American, Blackfoot Pikuni Indian, and native Japanese -- will be celebrating his fourth birthday on August 3, 1990. Otan'joobi Omedetoo!

Congratulations to part Vietnamese and part American MARY XINH NGUYEN for being selected Revlon's Most Unforgettable Woman of the Year in 1989. Mary is currently an honors' student majoring in political science at Boston University.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AMERASIAN LEAGUE

History of The Amerasian League



The Amerasian League was conceived in 1981 as an organization dedicated to enriched understanding of multi-racial and/or multi-cultural Asians by Velina Hasu Houston, an award-winning playwright and poet. In 1984, she joined forces with activist, attorney, educator and journalist Philip Tajitsu Nash to found the organization. In 1988, Houston and Nash added to their efforts writer and scholar Teresa Kay Williams. In October, 1989, the organization was officially incorporated in the State of California as a non-profit public benefit corporation. The organization's mission is to create greater awareness and understanding of multi-racial and/or multi-cultural Asian culture through socio-educational means.

#### Program Objectives

The Amerasian League is initiating a biannual newsletter, The Multi-racial Asian Times, and plans to hold educational forums (the 1990 forum being the first). Over the long term, the organization hopes to continue to promote socio-educational awareness of multi-racial and/or multi-cultural Asian culture.

#### Statement on Terminology

The Amerasian League employs the term "Amerasian" as a universal term that includes all persons of multi-racial and/or multi-cultural Asian ancestry. The Amerasian League recognizes the difficulty of having an umbrella term that reaches out to a community whose members are of a plethora of races, cultures and nationalities. Therefore, the organization focuses not only on multi-racial Asians, but also on persons who are mono-racial Asian, but whose parents are of different Asian ancestries, i.e. Japanese-Chinese, Korean American-Korean. The term

"Amerasian," as employed by The Amerasian League, also encompasses Asians who are mixed with Russian, Indian, African, Australian, Canadian, American (i.e. Latin American, African American, Euro-American, etc.) or Latin ancestry as well.

#### Information

The Amerasian League, 3250 West Olympic Boulevard, No. 113, Santa Monica, California 90404. (213) 478-6141. Please make your tax-deductible membership donations payable to The Amerasian League. Stay on our mailing list to receive news of group events and to receive the organization's newsletter, The Multi-racial Asian Times.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

##### Biographical Information on The Amerasian League's Board Members and Officers (in alphabetical order)

*Christine C. Iijima Hall* (Board member) Christine received her Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1980. Christine wrote the pioneering academic work on multi-racials. Her dissertation was entitled, "Ethnic Identity of Racially Mixed Individuals." Christine has appeared on numerous television shows, written articles, and delivered speeches on this issue. Currently, she is the Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Arizona State University - West Campus, responsible for hiring, promotion, and tenure coordination for faculty. Prior to this, she was the Director of Ethnic Minority Affairs for the American Psychological Association. Christine is a licensed psychologist in

Arizona and California. Her honors include the Outstanding Alumna for California State University-Long Beach; Outstanding Young Women in America, and the American Psychological Association's Outstanding Minority Fellowship Program recipient.

*Velina Hasu Houston* (Co-founder, president and chief executive officer; board member) Houston is an award-winning poet and playwright whose mother is a native Japanese, and whose father was half Native American Indian and half African American. Twice-named a Rockefeller Foundation playwriting fellow, she is the recipient of numerous writing awards including Best Ten Plays of 1988 by Los Angeles Times' drama critic Sylvie Drake and Top Ten Plays written worldwide by women by The Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Inc., of London (for "Tea"). "Tea," dramatizes the lives of five native Japanese women who married Americans at the end of World War II and came with them to live in the American Midwest. The play premiered at Manhattan Theatre Club, New York, and has had numerous subsequent productions including one by the Old Globe Theatre and by Olympia Dukakis at Whole Theatre. It will be produced for television by PBS, and has stage productions in London and Washington, D.C., planned. It also has been selected to tour the Hawaiian islands. Houston's play, "Asa Ga Kimashita" is the recipient of National 1st Prize in the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Awards, National 1st Prize in the David Library of the American Revolution Playwriting Awards for the best new play about American freedom, and the recipient of five DramaLogue Outstanding Achievement in Theatre



Awards. Houston's new plays include "The Melting Plot" (about the multi-racial Japanese experience), "Albatross," "Kokoro Kara," "Necessities" and a musical entitled "The Legend of Bobbi Chicago." Her poetry collection is entitled, "Green Tea Girl in Orange Pekoe Country." Currently, she is writing "Hishoku," a screenplay adaptation of acclaimed writer Sawako Ariyoshi's novel to be directed by Ms. Lee Grant, and "The Tale of the Beautiful Princess Kalito," an American Film Institute project about foot-binding. An academic, Houston lectures internationally and contributes to *Pacific Citizen*. A Managing Artist of Pacific Asian American Women Writers--West, Houston is a member of PEN and The Dramatists Guild, Inc. She is a theatre evaluator for the California Arts Council and on the Board of Directors of the Japanese American Citizens' League's SCAN chapter. The National Japanese American Historical Society chose Houston as one of the women to profile in its 1990 exhibit, "Japanese American Women, 1890s-1990s." A Phi Beta Kappa, she holds a Master of Fine Arts from U.C.L.A. Her son Kiyoshi is Japanese/African/Indian/German-Scottish Canadian.

*Amy Iwasaki Mass* (Board member.) A clinical social worker in private practice, Amy has a D.S.W. from the University of California at Los Angeles and an M.S.W. from the University of Southern California. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at Whittier College. In 1989, she was the Institute of American Cultures Post-doctoral Scholar at U.C.L.A. Her other awards and

honors include a Three Nails Fellowship from Obirin University (Japan); recipient of a Faculty Research Grant, Whittier College, 1989-'90; recipient of an Institute of American Cultures Research Grant, 1988-'89; Hirose Family Foundation Fellowship, U.C.L.A.; Institute of American Cultures Fellow, U.C.L.A., 1979 and 1980. A Phi Beta Kappa, Amy's research study was entitled, "Ethnic Identity Development in Interracial Japanese Americans," a comparative study of Euro-Japanese and mono-racial Japanese Americans. She is the author of numerous publications, including "Asians as Individuals: The Japanese Community," "Socio-Psychological Effects of the Concentration Camp Experience on Japanese Americans," "Psychological Effects of the Camps," *Asian Pacific Children and Families*. Amy lectures widely on various aspects of the Japanese American, Asian Pacific, or multi-racial/multi-cultural experience as well as being involved in various community services projects and events. A licensed clinical social worker and licensed marriage, family, child counselor in California, Amy is a member of the National Association of Social Workers, the Clinical Social Work Society of California, and Asian Pacific Social Workers. Her husband, Howard Mass, is Euro-American. She is the mother of two bi-racial children.

*Philip Tajitsu Nash* (Co-founder, executive vice president and chief financial officer; board member.) Phil is a New York-based educator, journalist, activist and attorney who currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Law at the City University of New York School of Law. He is on the Board of

Directors of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Supreme Court Watch, and the Pacifica (Public Radio) Foundation. He also writes frequently for *New York Nichibei*, *New Asian Times*, and other Asian American publications; and has given over 200 speeches and workshops on issues related to racial justice and intercultural understanding at schools, community groups and corporations throughout the United States and in Europe. He is the son of Irish/English and Japanese American parents.

*Sabrena Michiko Taylor* (Board member.) Sabrena is a poet, artist and an advocate for "at risk" youth. She has worked with programs which serve "disadvantaged" multi-cultural populations. She has worked for a refugee resettlement program which served Vietnamese and Amerasian unaccompanied minors, an Asian youth substance abuse prevention/ intervention project, basic literacy programs in the African American communities, and college preparatory and employment programs which served a multi-cultural youth population. She currently is working as an administrative assistant for The Family School, which provides educational and social services to young welfare mothers and their children. She explains her art as follows: "I use symbolism in my art to convey human feelings which are universal to all men, women and children. I hope that my art will help to bridge the gap between people and that it will present some of the deepest of human feelings which transcends the barriers of race, class and nationality." Taylor has worked with the Japanese Community Youth Council; and the Catholic Social Services Tha Huong Program. She has a M.A. in



sociology/anthropology. She is a member of the Japanese Art and Media Workshop, and a board member of Nobiru-Kai, Japanese Newcomers association. She is the daughter of a native Japanese mother and African American father.

*Michael C. Thornton* (Board member) Michael was born in Kobe, Japan, when his father was stationed in Korea during America's brief "skirmish" there. He lived in Japan until he was eight months old, at which time his family moved to Boston. By the time he was 18 years old, he had lived in ten states and three countries outside of the U.S. He is a self-proclaimed BJA (Black Japanese American). Says Michael, "Although I am clear about the mixture, I remain less so about how one combines them." A sociologist by training, Michael is now at the University of Wisconsin at Madison teaching in Afro-American Studies. At Wisconsin, he is on the advisory committee for the Asian American Studies Program now being established. Additionally, Michael was recently elected to the Executive Council for the Association of Asian American Studies. Much of his research reflects who he is as a person. His primary focus is on issues of identity. Three research projects in particular highlight Michael's background. One revolves around the issue of similarities between Asian American and African American group identity. The second project examines how African Americans feel about several groups of color, among whom are Asian, Native and Hispanic Americans. Michael also is beginning to examine Amerasians, both here and in Asia. A future project will highlight interracial families and particularly the processes through which children

of these relationships are socialized to a racial identity. Unlike previous works, this endeavor would highlight both the strengths and problems involve in multi-racial status. Michael's mother is native Japanese and his father is African American and Cherokee Indian.

*Teresa Kay Williams* (Co-founder, second vice president and recording secretary; board member.) Williams' mother is native Japanese (from Tokyo, Japan) and her father is Irish/Welsh-American (from Beckley, West Virginia). Raised in the Kanto area of Japan, Williams holds a Bachelor of Arts in Japanese Studies from the University of Hawaii with a Certificate in Ethnic Studies. A Phi Beta Kappa, she also holds a Master of Arts in Asian American Studies from U.C.L.A. Her thesis is entitled, "International Amerasian Identity: Comparative Study of Third Culture Afroasian and Eurasian Americans in Japan." In 1989, she began her Ph.D. program in Sociology at U.C.L.A. She has appeared in the docu-drama, "Half-Beings: A Beautiful Race" and also in KJH-TV's "Youth and the Issues: Interracial Dating and Marriage." She is a member of Multi-racial Americans of Southern California.

#### DATES TO REMEMBER!

8/3 & 8/4 Reading of "Tea" in L.A. at the Doizaki Gallery, Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, 8 p.m.

8/23 (Tentative) "The Amerasian Voice" reading at Cafe Rutts in Los Angeles.

9/15 End-of-Summer Picnic.

Will Rogers State Park, L.A.

Fall '90 Reading of "Tea" at Columbia University's Center for American Cultural Studies, NYC.



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