

Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Japanese Major:
Black *Hafu*: The Foreign “Other” Within Their Own Ethnicity

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Mina Mori

mm8qzz@virginia.edu

I. Introduction

“To be hybrid anticipates the future” (1). This assertion from Isamu Noguchi no doubt reflects the sentiment that is at the core of many multiethnic people’s pride. Indeed, in our ever-globalizing world, individuals who are able to navigate the boundaries between several different cultures, languages, and identities are highly desirable and admired. Of course, this is no different for Japan...or is it? While this may be the case when it comes to its workforce, when it comes to conversations pertaining to the “Japanese identity”, the Japanese government and people are perhaps more reluctant in including those who are not considered “pure blooded” Japanese. Those who are not “pure blooded” include the *burakumin* (the historical underclass caste), the Ainu and Okinawan indigenous peoples, Zainichi Koreans (ethnically Korean individuals whose families have lived in Japan for generations), and *hafu* (individuals who are ethnically half Japanese and half non-Japanese) to name a few. Within this group, Black hafu (individuals who are half Japanese, half African/African-American) in particular occupy a space in Japanese society that is unique to other ethnic minorities in Japan, including other hafu.

In examining historical films such as *Kiku to Isamu*, documentaries depicting the contemporary Black hafu experience in Japan, and news articles discussing relevant Black hafu figures in media, several things are made clear: in Japanese society, Black hafu are unable to be separated from the foreign “other”, their “Japaneseness” is highly conditional, and their social status is considered beneath their Asian hafu and White hafu counterparts.

II. Historical Background

Before delving into the Black hafu identity in Japan, “Japaneseness” as a concept must first be discussed. Historically, the term “Japaneseness” comes from the distinct Japanese essentialist genre called *Nihonjinron* (日本人論), or “theories of the Japanese people” (Kimura,

257). Discussions surrounding “Japaneseness” initially appeared from 17th and 18th century works of *kokugaku* (国学), or “national study” in order to “(re)emphasize the uniqueness of Japanese culture and to make a clear contrast with the Chinese culture” (Kimura, 257). In Natsuko Akagawa’s book *Heritage Conservation and Japan’s Cultural Diplomacy: Heritage, National Identity and National Interest* (2014), she asserts that *Nihonjinron* contains “the belief in the purity of Japanese culture,” (126) meaning that the notion of racial homogeneity existed at the core of “Japaneseness” (as cited in Kimura, 257). She further claims that because of this notion, “Japaneseness” upholds a specific racial logic that celebrates nationalistic purity (i.e. homogeneity) of the Japanese as “normal,” while disavowing and “othering” any peoples that cannot be included in that purity (as cited in Kimura, 257). Because *Nihonjinron* logic defines Japanese culture in racially monoethnic terms, it “plays down the empirical reality that Japan is a complex and highly differentiated society” (Sugimoto, 83). In other words, by placing heavy emphasis on nationalism and pride, “Japaneseness” fostered a racial superiority complex and created a distinct divide in people’s minds in which “pure” Japanese are on one side, and the non-Japanese “other” are on the other, leading to the perpetuation of an us/them mentality.

It is interesting to see this sentiment reflected in the works of one of the most influential intellectual leaders of the Meiji Era, Yukichi Fukuzawa. In his work *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku*; 文明論之概略, 1875)), he states that “societies composed of ‘persons of white skin’ (i.e., the United States and Europe) were at the highest stage of fully-developed ‘civilization,’ followed by Asian countries (‘semi-civilized’ (hankai), e.g., Turkey, China, and Japan, with Japan ranked highest), and at the bottom (‘barbaric’ (yaban)) were people of dark skin, such as Africans or Australian aborigines” (Arudou, 711). Although he

considered Japan to be below the United States and Europe at the time, he still drew distinct lines to separate Japan from the “other”, going so far as to create a Westernized hierarchy of the races.

Around the same time, the concept of being “pure blooded” as a “criterion of authentic Japaneseness began circulating in public discourse by the 1880s in many venues and media” (Robertson, 194). The discourse of eugenics centered around two distinct positions concerning blood: the *junketsu*, or “pure blood” position, and the *konketsu*, or “mixed blood” position (Robertson, 197). Advocates for the *junketsu* position claimed that mixing blood “would result in race transformation and not race betterment, and would, over the course of several generations, seriously dilute the pure blood—or racial and cultural essence—of the Japanese” (Robertson, 198).

It is within this context that the hafu emerged. Hafu have no doubt existed since Japan first opened its borders to foreigners, but it was particularly after World War II that their population noticeably increased and their existence needed to be addressed. During this postwar era, mixed individuals were racialized as *konketsuji* (“mixed-blood children”) or *ainoko* (“mixed-breed children”), both terms carrying negative connotations (Törngren and Sato, 3). The Japanese government and society “treated the relatively small number of children who were born to Japanese women and military men as a moral, practical, political issue and a social problem, particularly, the black Japanese children” (Törngren and Sato, 3). It is no surprise that Black hafu were especially seen as a problem; in a country that had only hosted white-skinned individuals up until that point, Black hafu were a sudden “visible minority,” or “residents of Japan who are visually identified as not ‘looking Japanese’...and are thus treated as ‘not Japanese’” (Arudou, 702). Additionally, because of the social hierarchy outlined by Fukuzawa above with dark-skinned peoples at the bottom, Black hafu were far from being considered Japanese.

III. Black *Hafu* in Postwar Japan

Literature or works of art depicting the Black hafu experience in post-WWII Japan is relatively nonexistent, but the film *Kiku to Isamu* (1959) is a rare exception. The film was directed by Tadashi Imai (January 8, 1912 - November 22, 1991) a Showa period film director who created social films that represented leftist humanism in Japanese cinema after World War II (“Imai Tadashi”).

His film *Kiku to Isamu* tells the story of two Black hafu siblings (Kiku, the older sister and Isamu, her younger brother) who live in a rural town with their grandmother. Both are strong-willed and mischievous children, and although they are teased by other children for their dark skin, they are largely unaware of their non-Japanese identity due to being relatively accepted by their community. It is only after a series of encounters with outsiders that Kiku especially begins to feel constrained by her identity.

Although Kiku and Isamu consider themselves to be completely Japanese, others’ words and actions reveal how Black hafu can never be separated from the foreign “other” in their minds, even if they grew up in Japanese society and can speak the language. Kiku and Isamu are completely justified in believing they are 100% Japanese; they were born in and grew up in that rural community, and it is revealed that their grandmother lied to them by telling them their dark skin is due to sunburn (20:42) and that eating rice would make their skin whiter (1:14:46). Thus, they get frustrated and angry when throughout the film, the school children that they grew up with call them derogatory names like “female gorilla,” “black crow,” and “*kuronbo*” (the Japanese equivalent of the n-word (Lopez)).

The other examples of the siblings being “othered” are the times when they are intensely stared at by outsiders. In the beginning of the film, we see that Kiku notices the stares from

strangers and their comments such as “Wow! She can speak Japanese!” (12:41) when she goes into town, but she appears largely unbothered by them and ignores them. Later, when they go to a festival (by which time she has been made aware of her hafu identity) and stop at the “*Mikazuki Musume*” attraction where the woman on display is half bear, the peddler tells Kiku to go away because everyone is staring at her instead of the bear-woman (57:23). When Isamu makes a spectacle of himself by falling from a tightrope, and onlookers gather around and make discriminatory remarks such as “they’re rougher than Japanese kids” (1:01:03), “just think what they’ll be like when they’re adults” (1:01:09), and “smuggling and gangs, all kinds of trouble” (1:01:10), Kiku reaches a breaking point and yells to the crowd, “stop with the ‘*kuronbo*, *kuronbo*’! You *kiironbo* (a wordplay on ‘*kuronbo*’ that replaces ‘*kuro*,’ or ‘black,’ with ‘*kiro*,’ or ‘yellow,’ to refer to the Japanese)!” (1:02:11).

The idea that Black hafu’s “Japaneseness” is conditional is exemplified when Kiku accidentally places a neighbor’s baby in the back of a truck, and it drives off without her knowing. Although Kiku is Japanese in every aspect, that “right” is stripped away when she makes a mistake; she gets racially profiled and they do not believe her when she says it was an accident. The policeman that comes by says, “they say you did it deliberately...this case is a bit too strange to be put down as a coincidence” (1:39:20~1:39:28) and assures her grandmother that “if she gets out of control we can have her put into a facility [for *konketsuji*]” (1:40:51).

While this film depicts the overt racism and discrimination Black hafu undoubtedly experienced during that era, it also portrays supportive characters who love Kiku and Isamu, and who were ahead of their time in that they deeply sympathize with the complexities that come with being biracial. Additionally, it does an excellent job of unveiling the subtle emotional turmoil, anger, and confusion that comes with being rejected by the country the hafu identifies

with; most times, Kiku appears rebellious and stubborn, but there are several sombering moments when she reveals her inner conflict by asking, “I am Japanese...so why am I black?” (1:28:40), and “Why are some people white and some black?” (1:29:24). The climax of the movie occurs when Kiku unsuccessfully attempts to commit suicide, but the movie ends on a hopeful note with Kiku finding a purpose in life, and telling her bullies that she’s “too old to mess around with [them] like that any more” (1:55:13).

IV. **Black *Hafu* in Contemporary Japan**

While it is indeed true that Japanese society is now much more accepting, discrimination against Black hafu is still very much prevalent today, and many people still have doubts as to whether they are “truly Japanese.”

Let us first examine Ariana Miyamoto, the winner of the 2015 Miss Japan beauty pageant. Miyamoto was born to a Japanese mother and an African American father, and “even though she [was] raised in Japan and her first language is Japanese, as a mixed-race Japanese person, her body [fractures] the national singular racial imagination in Japan” (Kimura, 254). In her childhood years, “her classmates refused to hold hands with her, threw garbage at her, and even called her *kuronbo*” (Lopez). When she was 13, she reconnected with her father and moved to Arkansas to complete her final two years of high school (Lopez). After returning to Nagasaki to work, Miyamoto decided to enter the Miss Japan pageant after “one of her friends, a fellow *hafu*, committed suicide just days after they had shared their struggles around being mixed race in Japan” (Lopez). Even though she knew that many people would not be accepting of her even entering the pageant, she wanted to represent “the new face of Japan,” one that included hafu. Although there was a huge wave of support after she won, the number of those who were critical

was not small either. Japanese websites such as *Navor Matome* and *Yukawanet* compiled negative reactions to Miyamoto such as:

「すごい美人なんだけどさ、日本代表って顔じゃないよね。」
Sugoi bijin nandakedosa, nihondaihyou tte kao jyanaiyone.
 “She’s really pretty, but it’s not a face that represents Japan.” --yukawanet¹

「ミスユニバースジャパンなのに、ハーフとかダメだろ。」
Miss Universe Japan nanoni, hafu toka damedaro.
 “It’s Miss Universe Japan, hafus shouldn’t be allowed.” --yukawanet²

This rejection of Miyamoto as a valid representative of Japan “demonstrates the positionality of mixed-race identity as ‘less Japanese’ than others who are not mixed-race Japanese,” and how “being mixed race in Japanese society continues to be a site of struggle by being framed as not Japanese enough” (Kimura, 255).

Similarly, Naomi Osaka, a professional tennis player, is regarded as “not Japanese enough”, although in her case, people are able to attribute it to the fact that she grew up abroad and how she is not fully fluent in Japanese. Osaka was born to a Japanese mother and Haitian father, and lived and trained in South Florida for most of her life (Denyer). The four-time Grand Slam champion and former world No.1 announced in 2019 that she would be giving up her U.S. citizenship to represent Japan in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Denyer). Although this makes her “officially Japanese,” many people continue to regard her as a foreigner, and were surprised to find that she exhibits characteristics of “Japaneseness”:

「日本のメディアでは頻繁に大坂選手の『日本人』の面に焦点を当てた報道が繰り返されていました。『抹茶アイスが食べたい』という発言を大きく扱ったり、セリーナ・ウィリアムズを破った後に彼女が発した『こんな終わり方ですみません。ただ、試合を見てくださってありがとうございます。(中略)セリーナと全米の決勝で対戦するのが夢でした。プレーしてくれてありがとうございます』というコメントを、『勝ったのに恐縮している。謙虚で日本人っぽい』と絶賛したり。」

Nihon no media dewa hinpan ni Osaka senshu no “nihonjin” no men ni shouten wo ateta houdou ga kurikaesarete imashita. “Matcha aisu ga tabetai” to

¹Yukawanet. 「日本ミスユニバースにハーフの「宮本エリアナ」さん疑問の声」

²Ibid.

iu hatsugen wo ookiku atsukattari, Serena Williams wo yabutta nochi ni kanojyo ga hasshita “konna owarikata de sumimasen. Tada, shiai wo mitekudasatte arigatougozaimsu...Serena to zenbei no kesshou de taisen surunoga yume deshita. Play shite kurete arigatou” to iu komento wo, “katta no ni kyoushuku shiteiru. Kenkyo de nihonjin ppoi” to zessan shitari.

“In the Japanese media, there were several reports that frequently focused on Osaka’s ‘Japanese’ side. They mainly covered her statement, ‘I want to eat matcha ice cream,’ and praised the comment she made after defeating Serena Williams, ‘I’m sorry it had to end like this. But I just want to say thank you for watching the match...it was always my dream to play Serena in the U.S. Open Final. I’m really grateful I was able to play with [her], thank you’ by saying ‘even though she won she’s apologetic. That’s humble and very Japanese.’” --Haefelin³

The fact that Japanese media are quick to claim her “admirable” qualities as quintessentially “Japanese” is made doubly interesting when one considers the fact that her “Japaneseness” is constantly in a precarious position; the moment she falls out of line with Japanese norms, it is called into question:

『人を持ち上げて大騒ぎした後に、ドーンと突き落とす』ということも、日本のマスコミではよく見られる現象だからです。(中略)外国にもルーツのある日本人つまりハーフの人々は平時も有事も『日本側に100パーセント同意していることを常にアピールしないと、「外国人」「裏切り者」だとみなされる』不安と常に隣りあわせなのです。』

“Hito wo mochiagete oosawagi shita nochi ni, do-n to tsukiotosu” to iukotomo, nihon no masukomi dewa yoku mirareru genshou dakara desu... gaikoku nimo roots no aru nihonjin tsumari hafu no hitobito ha heiji mo yuuji mo “nihongawa ni hyaku percent doui shiteiru koto wo tsuneni appeal shinaito, ‘gaikokujin’ ‘uragirimono’ dato minasareru” fuan to tsuneni tonari awase nanodesu.

“‘After building up someone and making a fuss about them, they watch them fall’: this is a commonly observed phenomenon in Japanese mass media. Unless people who have roots in foreign countries, i.e. hafu, ‘constantly appeal that they 100 percent agree with their Japanese side, they are regarded as “*gaijin* (foreigners)” or “traitors,” and constantly live with that fear.” --Haefelin⁴

Indeed, when Osaka advocated for the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020, an issue that many Japanese people believe has nothing to do with them, some saw that as a betrayal to her Japanese side, going as far as calling her a “terrorist” (Denyer).

³Haefelin. 「大坂なおみの報道であなたが感じたモヤモヤ、それは『ハーフあるある』です」

⁴Ibid.

The Youtube documentary 「半分黒人と半分日本人のドキュメンタリー(2020): Half Black Half Japanese Documentary (2020)」(*hanbun kokujin to hanbun nihonjin no documentary*) tells the stories of 5 different Black hafu who currently live in Japan, and although they are not on the same scale as Miyamoto and Osaka, many of their experiences share the same themes. For example, Akira Givens, someone who mainly grew up in America and whose first language is English, laments how in Japan, “[he’ll] never be Japanese... someone will see [his name] on [his] license or any paperwork, but as soon as they see [his] last name, Givens, they’ll instantly dismiss [him]... even though [he’s] living here because of [his] Japanese blood, [he’ll] just be *gaijin*” (12:08). Abel Nakao, a model who grew up in Japan, reveals the reasoning behind this, and the overall current sentiment towards hafu:

「ハーフとしてもものすごく日本で大変なことは、やっぱり『ハーフ文化』っていうのをそこまで日本人は理解していないので、見た目だけでかなり自分自身っていうのを判断されてしまうっていうのは多いですね。性格じゃなくて、僕がこういう顔だから、『君はこういう人だね』っていう風に思われるのがハーフとして生きてく上で大変な部分ではありますね」

Hafu to shite monosugoku nihon de taihen na koto ha, yappari “hafu bunka” tte iunowo sokomade nihonjin wa rikai shite inai node, mitame dake de kanari jibun jishin tte iunowo handan sarete shimau tte iunowa ooidesune. Seikaku jyanakute, boku ga kouiu kao dakara, “kimi wa kouiu hito dane” tte iu fuu ni omowareru noga hafu to shite ikiteku ue de taihen na bubun dewa arimasune

“As a hafu in Japan, something that is very difficult is that many Japanese people do not understand ‘hafu culture,’ so they often judge me based on appearance alone. Instead of my personality, because my face is like this, having people think ‘you must be this type of person’ is a difficult part of being hafu” --(“半分黒人と半分日本人...”, 15:10)⁵

Although the Japanese public’s awareness on hafu issues remains relatively low, that is not to say Black hafu in contemporary Japan face constant discrimination: Both Nakao and Raimu Kaminashi, a then-22 year-old model, recognize that their looks and the fact that they stand out made it easier for them to break into the modeling industry. But at the same time, there

⁵半分黒人と半分日本人のドキュメンタリー (2020) | Half Black Half Japanese Documentary (2020).”

are more subtle implications when, for example, they are being asked to portray foreigners in their own country (43:44), when hair and make-up artists do not know how to do their hair or do not carry their foundation shade (45:41), or when White hafu are generally preferred over Black hafu when there are open calls for hafu models (44:32).

It is also important to note that many Black hafu do not believe Japanese people are being intentionally racist or malicious; they understand that many negative interactions are due to curiosity and a general lack of awareness. For example, Kaminashi details how it is great that there are more people (especially in the younger generation) who admire Black culture and hip hop, but because that is all they see of Black culture in the media, it limits their perceptions and they implicitly place all Black people into that box. Thus, when they meet a Black hafu, they automatically assume that they are all the same, and tend to reduce them to the stereotypes associated with their Black side. Kaminashi (and other Black hafu no doubt) believe that:

「知らないのは仕方がないし、教えて、知って、わかるものだけど、無意識にかける言葉がどれだけそういう状況の人たちを傷つけるのかってのは、一応発言する前にはちょっと考えて言ってほしいな」

Shiranai nowa shikatanai shi, oshiete, shitte, wakaruru mono dakedo, muishiki ni kakeru kotoba ga doredake sou iu joukyou no hitotachi wo kizu zuseruka tte nowa, ichiou hatsugen suru mae ni wa chotto kangaete itte hoshii na

“Not knowing cannot be helped, and it is something that can be taught, and learned, and understood, but I’d like for people to think about how much their heedless words may hurt the person in that situation before they say anything”

--(“半分黒人と半分日本人...”, 42:12)⁶

Thus, although part of the contemporary Black hafu experience can be characterized by overt racism similar to that in the postwar era, perhaps most discrimination takes place in more subtle interactions predicated on implicit biases and microaggressions. Although the situation has improved, these interactions continue to make Black hafu feel “othered” and like their “Japaneseness” is being called into question.

⁶半分黒人と半分日本人のドキュメンタリー (2020) | Half Black Half Japanese Documentary (2020).”

All in all, the overall tone of the documentary is extremely positive, and none of the individuals feel like victims of the system; even though many of them have faced hardships, they remain optimistic and hopeful about the trajectory Japanese society is taking in terms of understanding hafu and their experiences.

V. Differences within *Hafu* Identifies

It is perhaps not too surprising to learn that even within the hafu identity, there is a social hierarchy in which Black hafu are at the bottom. Indeed, “the diversity within the groups remains unarticulated” in most literature, and “to what extent these groups actually exist as communities also often goes unquestioned” (Murphy-Shigematsu, 285).

In her book *Race and racism in modern East Asia* (pp. 368–388), Yuko Kawai explains how historically, as Western concepts of race with color terms (e.g. White, Yellow, and Black) were introduced and normalized in Japan in the late 18th century, this racial categorization by color created a hierarchy in which Whites were the superior race (as cited in Kimura, 258). This is further reflected in the cosmetics industry, where according to Mikiko Ashikari’s *Cultivating Japanese Whiteness: The ‘Whitening’ Cosmetics Boom and the Japanese Identity*, “skin is an avenue for conveying ‘Japaneseness,’ because Japan’s middle class believes that ‘Japanese as a race share the same skin tone, and the notion of Japanese skin works as one medium to express and represent Japaneseness’”(as cited in Arudou, 707). Further, “being ‘white’ is a common symbol of culturally-valued ‘purity’ and ‘cleanliness,’ thus lighter skin is preferable to darker as it looks ‘cleaner,’ meaning darker skin is considered ‘less Japanese’” (as cited in Arudou, 707).

Thus, one can see how within the hafu community, White hafus are placed at the top, Asian hafus, i.e. the “invisible minorities” who are able to “pass” as Japanese, are placed next, and Black and other dark skinned hafus are placed at the bottom. While all hafus are undeniably

“othered,” White hafus “in everyday Japan and in the media are ‘othered’ in this celebratory, curious way,” while darker-skinned hafus are met more often with racism and racist stereotypes (Lopez). The image that hafus are multilingual and attractive has increased dramatically, and this is especially the case for White hafus who are also more often “assumed to hail from cosmopolitan, upper-middle class families” (Lopez).

In comparison, Black hafu are seen in a different light. When it comes to athletics, “Japan welcomes Blackanese athletes not because Japan is open to diversity, but because the Blackanese are seen as blessed with a ‘naturally athletic physique,’ the quintessential ‘super athletes’” (Lopez). This is not the only stereotype associated with Black people that is perpetuated: Hideki Johnson, a black hafu who grew up in Japan, observed that ““Japanese don't have a good image of black people. They think Blacks are only good for dancing and music, or playing basketball or boxing. Japanese can't really see blacks as equals who are intelligent doctors or lawyers”” (Murphy-Shigematsu, 294). While Johnson’s words may be harsh, it is indeed a sentiment shared by many Black hafu to some extent; Raimu Kaminashi (from the Youtube documentary discussed in the previous section) has observed how:

「『ハーフ』っていう日本であるイメージの中で、『ハーフ美女＝白人の血が入ったハーフの子たち』とか(中略)『いいな、ハーフに生まれたかった！』っていう彼女らのイメージは果たしてブラックの血のハーフの子たちなのだろうかって思ったら、そこはちょっと変わってくるかなって思います。(中略)で、『その子たちになりたい、その子たちに生まれたかった、憧れてる』っていうのと、黒人ハーフに対する『スポーツができてすごいよね！歌がうまそうですすごいよね！』っていうのは、また違う『すごい』とか『憧れ』なのかなって思います。」

“Hafu” tte iu nihon de aru image no naka de, “hafu bijo = hakujin no chi ga haitta hafu no ko tachi” toka... “iina, hafu ni umareta katta!” tte iu kanojyo ra no image wa hatashite Black no chi no hafu no ko tachi nano darou ka tte omottara, sokowa chotto kawatte kuru kana tte omoimasu...de, “sono kotachi ni nari tai, sono kotachi ni umareta katta, akogareteru” tte iu no to, kokujin hafu ni taisuru

“sports ga dekite sugoi yone! Uta ga umasou de sugoi yone!” tte iu no wa, mata chigau “sugoi” toka “akogare” nano kana tte omoimasu.

“Within the ‘hafu’ image in Japan, when they say ‘hafu beauty’, it usually refers to White hafu...or when people say ‘Lucky, I wish I was born as a hafu!’ are they actually referring to Black hafu as well? I think that’s where things begin to differ...And saying, ‘I want to be hafu, I wish I was born hafu, I admire them’ about White hafu vs. saying ‘It’s amazing you’re good at sports! You seem like you’re good at singing!’ about Black hafu are different types of ‘amazing’ and ‘admiration’” --(“半分黒人と半分日本人...”, 28:04))⁷

Thus, even well-meaning compliments carry vastly different connotations within them that make it clear how Black hafu are viewed.

To sum, while all “mixed race people are The Other,” it is apparent that “mixed race people of African descent are The Other’s Other” (Houston, 23).

VI. Conclusion

Narratives surrounding the Black hafu experience have long been wrought with discrimination, uncertainty, and exclusion by members of their own ethnicity. Racialization processes in Japan have been normalized “to the point of hegemony within Japanese identity,” and “to the point where one must ‘look Japanese’ in order to be treated as one” (Arudou, 723). However, the world is changing. Although some might deny it, there is no longer a place in which hafu and other ethnic minorities in Japan can be excluded from conversations about the “Japanese identity.” Indeed, the future of Japan as a “young, dynamic society” is in jeopardy if it “cannot create ‘new Japanese’ through legal and social processes without phenotype voiding their equal treatment” (Arudou, 723). Acknowledging that both visible minorities and racism exists in Japan is a crucial first step towards positive change (Arudou, 723).

Another theme within hafu narratives has been that of ignorance. Many Japanese people grow up, find a job, and create a family all within the same region and without ever leaving Japan, so understanding that racism or complex multiethnic identities can exist within their own

⁷ 半分黒人と半分日本人のドキュメンタリー (2020) | Half Black Half Japanese Documentary (2020).”

society can be unfathomable. Thus, the presence of Black hafu such as Ariana Miyamoto and Naomi Osaka has been crucial in showing the general public how “someone [can] appear to be less phenotypically Asian, but [still] be culturally Asian” (Tamai, 183). The future of Japan as a diverse nation is bright, but only if it is willing to embrace the foreign “other” as its own.

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