

PREFACE

We are bombarded today by celebratory discourses of multiculturalism and diversity in the face of intensifying racial discord and violence. In our putatively colorblind age we lack sufficient critical resources to analyze and explore the social and psychic conditions that give rise to such contradictions. In particular, we have few conceptual frameworks to understand their social and psychic effects on Asian Americans. *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation* attempts to provide a theoretical account of these paradoxes of race.

The numerous case histories and commentaries on Asian American adolescents and young adults that comprise this book were written over twenty years. The present volume is the culmination of a comprehensive rethinking and rewriting of our various ideas about the social and psychic lives of Asian American students and patients we have encountered in the classroom and clinic across two generations—from Generation X to Generation Y. As a Chinese American humanities professor and Korean American psychotherapist, we have worked together to reconceptualize psychoanalytic theory in relation to specific historical moments and times—that is, to consider the shifting history of the Asian American subject in relation to the evolving subject of Asian American history. From the wake of the Cold War and civil rights movements to our current colorblind age under neoliberalism and globalization, we consider how psychic processes of racial melancholia and racial dissociation track and name the various ways by which Asian Americans in particular and other people of color in general are assimilated into, as well as excluded from, the social and political domains.

Having composed this book over the course of two decades, we have accumulated numerous debts of gratitude for the insights, friendships, and support we received along the way. First and foremost, we would like

to thank Calvin Chin, María-Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Karen Shimakawa, and Michelle Stephens for their brilliance and generosity. These four wonderful friends and colleagues participated in a manuscript workshop in 2016 that, along with the laser-beam insights of the magnificent Hirokazu Yoshikawa, transformed the theoretical structure and overall framing of this book at a crucial moment of its conceptualization.

Over many years, Hiro, Josie, and Calvin, as well as Ed Cohen, Neve Gordon, Janice Gump, Jack Halberstam, Amy Kaplan, Suvir Kaul, David Kazanjian, Homay King, Ania Loomba, Susette Min, the late José Esteban Muñoz, Mae Ngai, A. Naomi Paik, Ann Pellegrini, Camille Robcis, Catherine Rottenberg, Melissa Sanchez, Shuang Shen, Shu-mei Shih, Melanie Suchet, Joan Scott, Kaja Silverman, Serena Volpp, Priscilla Wald, Dorothy Wang, and Chi-ming Yang served as delightful and steadfast interlocutors for this project. Dylan Verner-Christ provided exemplary support with research, as did Derek Gottlieb with indexing. As always, Teemu Ruskola was consistently present to think, support, cajole, and edit. The late Muriel Dimen's intellectual vision as embodied in the journal she helped to found, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality: Psychoanalysis, Cultural Studies, Treatment, Research*, has been an invaluable source of inspiration for us across theoretical and clinical domains. An earlier version of chapter 2 appeared in *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, and an earlier version of chapter 1 appeared in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. We are grateful to these journals for providing an early home for our work.

At an important juncture in the writing of the last half of this project, Danielle Allen facilitated an excellent reading group at the Institute for Advanced Study in 2013 on what eventually became part 2 and the final couple chapters exploring the topic of racial dissociation. In conjunction, we would like to acknowledge the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research in New York City and, in particular, Michael Moskowitz and Ben Kafka for their invitation in 2015 to reflect on the collaborations we have published over the years concerning psychoanalysis, race, and Asian Americans. Indeed, the warm welcome and encouragement we received at IPTAR motivated us to complete this book. In this context, Patricia Gherovici has been an especially thoughtful and stimulating interlocutor.

Over the two decades in which these case histories and commentaries were written, we have given numerous presentations and workshops—

together and singly—at various universities, institutes, conferences, clinics, and community-based organizations. They are too numerous to name here separately, but we would like to express our deep gratitude to the multiple organizers and audiences whose serious engagement with the lives recounted and analyzed here has made our thinking all the better.

To our knowledge, *Racial Melancholia*, *Racial Dissociation* is the first monograph to bring together psychoanalytic theory and case histories with critical race studies and law. Moreover, it is the first coauthored book written across the domain of the clinic and the field of the humanities deploying as its primary source materials original case histories and commentaries on Asian Americans in a comparative racial context. That is, while the book is a timely and necessary expansion of psychoanalysis in relation to race, and vice versa, the project also insistently triangulates polarized black-white binaries of race and racism that often exclude Asian Americans and other people of color from critical analysis altogether.

Most of all, then, we would like to thank our students and patients for sharing with us their invaluable experiences and their courageous admissions of vulnerability, which are at the heart of this book and without which the project would simply not exist. We have been careful to disguise their identities: we have changed names, family backgrounds, hometowns, majors, and schools for the people described and discussed here. When at all possible, consent was received from those students and patients we were able to contact. Nonetheless, each case study incorporates aspects of not only one particular student or patient but also at times other students and patients who share similar experiences and dilemmas.

In chapter 1, case histories of Elaine and Nelson are composites of various students that we counseled (both in private practice and in the university clinic) and taught in our various Asian American lectures and seminars at the beginning of our careers. In chapter 2, the case history of Mina, a transnational adoptee from Korea, was written and published with her consent, as were the two case histories of Christopher and Neel, gay parachute children from China and India, in chapter 4. The case histories on Yuna and Yung, two other parachute children from Korea and China, composing chapter 3, are masked descriptions. Both Yuna and Yung were treated in university settings for brief periods,

and it was impossible to locate either of them to obtain their consent, as their two case histories were composed long after their school files were sealed. All the students who agreed to be included in this book expressed a common hope that the pain underlying their distinctive social and psychic predicaments might somehow help other Asian Americans struggling in silence with similar troubles and crises. This, of course, is our hope as well.

Many thanks to Kusama Studio and the David Zwirner Gallery for permitting the use of our striking cover image. Yayoi Kasuma's art and her life as an Asian (im)migrant in New York City—she arrived in 1957 at age 27 and returned to Tokyo in 1973—anticipate in provocative ways many of the themes of this book. Last but proverbially not least, we would like to offer deep thanks to our longtime editor Ken Wissoker, and to Julianne Alexander, Elizabeth Ault, Mary Hoch, Sara Leone, and the other staff members at Duke University Press for their inveterate support of emerging, necessary, and difficult new scholarship in both psychoanalysis and critical race studies. We could not imagine publishing this book with anyone—or anywhere—else.