

RE-MIX: RETHINKING THE USE OF 'HAPA' IN MIXEDRACE ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

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ABSTRACT

The term Hapa is Hawaiian in origin and roughly means 'half'. Recently, many mixedrace Asian/Pacific Islanders on the mainland began identifying with and using the term Hapa to create organizations specific to their needs. Largely recognized as a "California phenomenon," the number of Asian-descent multiracials identifying as Hapa is ever increasing. Here I investigate the use of the term Hapa historically, as well as its current use in California. I then discuss the potential political implications of Mixedrace Asian/Pacific Islanders coalescing under the term.

INTRODUCTION

When I was a younger, I knew very few people like me. Yet, I did not have the language to describe my differences. As I matured the differences coalesced into a clear line that indicated my "otherness." My otherness was rooted in my ethnicity. In college, I learned that, for many upper-classmen, college was a place to rediscover and redefine who they were in terms of race, class, gender, and all of their other social indicators. Inspired by these individuals, and their commitment to their ethnic communities, I became a university activist. I worked alongside students who encouraged me to develop my own understanding about where I fit into these identities. In that setting, I began to research multiracial organizations and movements in California.

I changed my major so I could use my studies as a tool for personal and community empowerment. Slowly, I began to identify with the word "Hapa," a Hawaiian word, literally meaning "half" or "part," rather than the all-too-common "tragic mulatto" stereotype that often dominates discussions surrounding mixedrace identity.¹ To be honest, I identified with this word without knowing its history. I was just happy to have the Hapa box to check.

¹ Terminology: Williams- León and Nakashima (2001:10) write in their introduction to the anthology, *The Sum of Our Parts; Mixed Heritage Asian Americans*: "As the difference in terms suggests, mixedrace peoples of Asian descent can have histories, social locations, and therefore identifications that differ from those of others with Asian ancestry as well as from those of their multiracial counterparts who are not of Asian heritage... However, a person who uses the term 'Asian-descent multiracial' is likely to be centering his or her identity within his or her multiraciality, while acknowledging his or her Asian ancestry as a descriptive." Here, I use the labels APA-descent multiracial, mixedrace APAs, or multiracial Asian Americans, interchangeably to symbolize an acknowledgement of an incorporated Asian/Pacific Islander-descent multiracial identity. Further, it should be noted that mixedrace Pacific Islanders, South Asians, and so-called "Asian Americans" may have different ways of identifying. Pacific Islander demographics are notably different from what we know as "Asian Americans" and "South Asians." This could be because of the migratory patterns of varying nationalities or it could be cultural differences among the 52 countries represented by the Asian/Pacific Islander census category. This particular study may not be generalized to all mixedrace APAs.

I began to question my affiliation with the term “Hapa” after my attendance at the 2003 MAVIN Conference on the Mixedrace Experience. Through several conversations with upper-classmen mentors, I began to wonder why some people identify with this term and some do not. Why does it appear that the only people who say they are Hapa are White-Asian mixed? Why is people's definition of this term so vague? Who is Hapa? It is the latter question that made me realize the potential rigidity of the term.

This study examines the evolutionary pattern of the “Hapa” identity label, and concludes with an examination of contemporary meaning of this term in college-based mixedrace organizations. Mixedrace individuals navigate within a monoracial Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander/Pacific Islander American (APA) framework to create a place for themselves. Naming is an important part of this process because naming validates and solidifies identity. Weisman (1996:154) argues that:

The discourse of race does not simply reflect racial ideology; rather, the very construction- or deconstruction- of race can be affected and effected through the use of language. Whether on an individual or on a group level, speaking one's name is an act of self-validation; choosing that name even more so.

This may have been the case for California Hapas.

This research is important for several reasons. First, according to Williams-León and Nakashima (2001:6): “because many Asian American communities have outmarriage rates of thirty to sixty percent, a significant portion of the multiracial population in the United States is of Asian descent.” The statistics from the 2000 Census, suggest that in the next decade the population of mixedrace APAs will make up a large proportion of the larger college-age APA population. Because racial identity is an essential part of locating oneself in relation to the social world, the naming process of mixedrace APAs will be an important factor in determining their affiliation with the Asian and Pacific Islander American group identity.

The second reason why this research is important is that it will demonstrate the fluid (or rigid) nature of mixedrace identity in conjunction with the growing population of APAs. As the community grows and expands, it is probable that it will develop variations in its definition of “authenticity.” If we understand the changes our communities are undergoing, Asian/Pacific Islander racial borders may become more inclusive of mixedrace APAs. Finally, this research will provide important information about the popular rhetoric that surrounds the word “Hapa” as a label for an APA mixedrace pan-ethnicity.

Arguably, the most widely published author on multiracial identity development is Maria Root (1992; 1996). As a psychologist, her studies tend to focus on the mental stability and development of mixedrace individuals. Paul Spickard (see, 1989) a sociology professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is also widely published. However, his studies focus on intermarriage and half-white Asian descent multiracials. Cynthia Nakashima and Teresa Williams-León are members of a younger cohort of researchers. While Root and Spickard come from traditional disciplines such as sociology and counseling, Nakashima (1996:475) and Williams-León (1996:480) come from non-traditional interdisciplinary fields such as Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies.

More importantly, the younger cohort of mixedrace scholars frequently engaged in Hapa club organizing during their undergraduate and graduate careers have first-hand experience with the multiracial movement. While both Nakashima and Williams-León have written articles on the multiracial movement, Nakashima focuses on the application of racial theory to multiracial identity politics, and Williams-León's work deals more exclusively with comparative multiracial

APA identities. These researchers all use the term Hapa in their work without discussing its historical context or importance in multiracial identity or organizing.²

METHODOLOGY

This study was interdisciplinary and rooted in Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. It was primarily qualitative and ethnographic. There were three main approaches used when gathering data for this research. The first was a historical excavation of Asian descent multiracial identity development in Hawaii and California. Using limited texts I map out timelines for both areas in order to examine where the term Hapa came from, how it was originally used, and how it migrated. I used a survey to help understand why and how people use Hapa in California today.

The survey was based, in part, on Edles' (2003) study of "local identity" in Hawai'i, and used open-ended questions to account for the various factors influencing mixedrace identity development. Unfortunately, only two individuals responded to the survey. Thus the questions were restated as a series of interview questions. I traveled to Los Angeles, California to conduct six semi-structured interviews. In this study, only the data taken from the interviews were analyzed due to sample reliability. The informants ranged in age from 20-23 years old. All were of mixedrace Asian and White descent, and all were members of Hapa clubs at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

HISTORY AND DEBATE

The history of Hapa begins with Indigenous Hawaiians. It is first documented as Hapa Haole—a term used to describe the children of Hawaiian Royalty (or Ali'i) and some of the islands' first white inhabitants in 1790. In the mid-1800s, massive fleets of Asian laborers were imported to Hawaii to work the sugar plantations. This immigration is reflected in the racial demography of Hawaii today. The laborers intermarried with the Indigenous Hawaiians and one another. The practice of intermarriage was condoned in most communities because of the adoption of the 'Aloha spirit' encouraging climates of welcome and love (Edles, 2003:238). Because many different languages were spoken in the labor camps, a slang speech emerged. Pigeon English was based on Hawaiian and English, but incorporated words from the various populations of the islands (Takaki, 1998). Currently, Hawaiian locals use Hapa to refer to any individual who is racially mixed. The development of Pigeon may have been the reason why most people in Hawaii today define Hapa this way. Haole, on the other hand, has taken on race and class connotations. It now means white.

Paralleling the number of Asian laborers to the Islands, were those heading to California in search of jobs and gold. Mixedrace APAs in California have a history that is significantly different from those in Hawaii. Prior to the 1960s, if mixedrace APAs were bi-minority they lived in the other ethnic community, and if they were half-white then they were tolerated on the outskirts of white communities (Spickard, 2000:260). There are no documents of exact numbers of multiracial APAs but, because of post-WWII legislation restricting Asian immigration, historians hypothesize that there were very few (Thornton, 1992). The post-WWII immigration Asian/Pacific Islander immigration began a shift in the racial geography of the United States. The Asian/Pacific Islander population that came to the US in the '50s and '60s were largely female and most were wives of American servicemen.

Many of the children from these marriages came of age during the Civil Rights movement. There is no evidence to suggest that multiracial APAs took part in the Yellow Power movement.

² Laura Desfor Edles (2003) should be recognized as an important contributor to this study. She does not focus on multiracial identity, but her study on "local identity" in Hawaii provided critical tools necessary to conduct my analysis.

Historians note only that there was no room for them or their issues (Spickard, 1997:49). Nevertheless, in 1967, as a part of the larger movement, *Loving v. Virginia* (Fernandez, 1996:23) declared all anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. The aftermath of this decision combined with the suburbanization of people of color produced what is now known as the “multiracial baby boom.” The cohort of Asian descent multiracial individuals born literally out of the Civil Rights movement began to organize their communities. However, it wasn’t until 1992 that organizations emerged specifically to represent mixedrace APAs. These organizations used the term Hapa to symbolize shared experiences. Prominent figures in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, such as the Trask sisters, have spoken out against the co-optation of the Hawaiian language by Hapa organizations and other “inappropriate” uses of the term. Debates on this topic have raged over online forums and website discussions (see RealHapas.com, www.halvsie.com, and www.uclahapas.com).

The Hawaiian Foundation’s website, www.RealHapas.com, provides a summation of some of the sentiments expressed by Hawaiian peoples. The website states that “California wanna-be Hapas and elite mixed Eurasians” are “hijacking and raping the term ‘Hapa’ from the Hawaiian language” (see RealHapas.com).³ In the forum pages, individuals of Hawaiian descent have discussed how they used the term Hapa. Many of the postings insisted that they had used the term Hapa in relation to individuals of partial-Hawaiian descent. They state that they “may have to take legal means to achieve their aims “of stopping mixed Asians from using their “cultural term.”The message of the Hawaiian Foundation Inc.’s website is that non-Hawaiians should stop using their term:

By raping the Hawaiian language the once-colonized mixed Asians are now colonizing part of the Hawaiian language and part of the Hawaiian culture. This MUST stop. They can start by calling themselves ‘Japanese,’ ‘Americans of Japanese ancestry,’ ‘Haafu,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Korean,’ or just ‘Mixed.’ They do not have to choose a Hawaiian word (www.RealHapas.com, last paragraph).

Posted mixedrace APA responses argue that language is fluid, and that language evolves. But the important question is: How will these debates affect community organizing?

ANALYSIS

According to Root (1992:7): “...to name oneself is to validate one’s existence and declare visibility.” Examples of this validation were found in organizing for the Black and Chicano power movements. These movements expressed solidarity in a shared identity and a shared experience, which they utilized as the driving force behind their community activism. The subjects that I interviewed expressed similar sentiments of shared experiences among “Hapas.” They came together in organizations and presented themselves as Hapas and, it seemed, they were most impressed by the number of individuals who claimed this similar identity. Before attending Hapa club meetings, many students had never seen such numbers - a majority - of multiracial individuals in one room. Combined with the fact that they all identified as Hapa (and/or mixedrace APA), the members reached the conclusion that Asian descent multiracials were not alone in their experiences. Reaching such a conclusion empowered them by uncovering an untapped well of power through identity.

³ It is my understanding that some of the informants, not only knew about this website, but also posted responses themselves. One informant said that after he posted a response, an individual e-mailed him back and “tried to curse” him. It should also be noted that conflict was indicated between the UCLA Hapa club and the UCLA Hawaii club. This could be related to the Hapa terminology debate.

The interviews reflected the common ideologies surrounding the term Hapa, as defined in California Hapa clubs. In California, individuals recognized the term as meaning mixed Asian/Pacific Islander or, more popularly, part Asian. Hapa clubs were attempting to bring the new definition of this term into the mainstream. They tried to accomplish redefinition by holding discussions and inviting speakers to talk about mixedrace APAs. Many guests used the term Hapa as the organizations did; they defined it to mean multiracial Asian descent. By indoctrinating others with the newly constructed meaning, Hapa clubs encouraged other Asian descent multiracials to identify in the same way to easily identify one-another.

The term Hapa empowered these individuals, yet the employment of Hapa for mixedrace APA labeling remained problematic. The organization attempted to build a community of multiracials, but it too was exclusive. Hapa clubs became the basis of community building efforts, and by using the redefined Hapa label members excluded many multiracial individuals. Hapa clubs identified the meaning of Hapa as “mixedrace APA,” but respondents indicated that there was an unspoken second-half of the definition. The interviews revealed that the most common definition of Hapa is half-white/half-Asian. Thus, organizing under this label encourages the formation of a community of specific Asian descent multiracials.

It’s the Bi-way or the High-way: Self and Group Definitions. Although many did not attach the same ideologies about community to each label, the informants often used Hapa and Asian descent multiracial interchangeably. For example, some subjects maintained that the community they represented was Asian/white self-identified Hapas. Kim and Eric defined Hapa differently, and thus, their definition of what a multiracial community would look like was also different. These subjects felt that Hapa’s definition could evolve or extend to various racial mixes even though the demographics of the Hapa organizations did not reflect these sentiments. Perhaps the potential for expansive definitions of Hapa are examples of its fluidity (Dang and Ma, 2000).

Kim: I suppose that in a strict sense it was originally half-Japanese/half Haole, and now it’s mixed Asian/Haole. But I call everyone who is mixed Hapa. Even my friends who are half Mexican and Haole- I call them Hapa.

Eric: I define Hapa as somebody who’s of partial Asian or Pacific Islander descent... I think the term, for me, encompasses the sense of being bicultural, and so people who are only like an eighth Chinese are still Hapa. It’s part of their culture- you know, how they identify.

Jan R. Weisman (1992:156-7) argues that: “Many researchers have noted that the adoption of a ‘mixed race’ reference group indicates of a healthy mixed-race identity.” Perhaps, then, the adoption of Hapa is indicative of a healthy internalization of a mixedrace Asian identity. Despite claims of its ambiguity, the term Hapa is restricted by traditional definitions of Asian/Pacific Islanders. Hapa has been described as a label with a fluid nature, but has taken on characteristics of a reference group that has been rigidly defined. Some subjects felt the term Hapa was too strict to be inclusive because of its unspoken criteria.

Chris: When you look at the people in Hapa club, pretty much all of them are half-white/half-Asian. I don’t feel Hapa because I don’t feel like I look Asian enough. The way the Hapa club defines it... in their mission statement... is being part Asian, but... underneath the surface there’s, like, other meanings. So it’s either you’re half or you damn well look more Asian.

The sentiments expressed by Chris might be indicative of newly formed racial borders. In this regard, Weisman (1992:160) hypothesizes:

Perhaps because mixed-race individuals are only now beginning to realize the liberation of identifying as other than the prescribed boxes, many are anxious to guard their new embraced identities. In doing so, they may apply the same hurtful and exclusionary tactics that have been used to keep racially mixed people at the margins

Exclusivity among individuals who identify as Hapa created new racial epistemologies and boundaries. The rhetoric surrounding authenticity for other APA ethnicities also surfaced under the Hapa label. These criteria for racial authenticity utilized real or perceived racial characteristics that often resembled stereotypes.

One is the Loneliest Number: Group vs. Individual Empowerment Michael Omi (1996:179) asserts that: "...despite legal guarantees of formal equality and access, race continues to be a fundamental organizing principal of individual identity and collective action." Individual respondents asserted that identifying as a Hapa collective allowed them to create the foundation of a community. Subjects expressed feelings of solidarity with their organizational peers, and while perceived solidarity produced large list servers and attendance at events consistent membership remained a problem. The lack of active participants could be due to the fact that college-based organizations tend to reflect the goals of the leadership within, but it may also be a lack of strategic goal setting among the organizational leaders.

The goals of Hapa clubs are manifested in the groups' sponsored/hosted events and activities. For example, one Hapa club hosted a "Mixedrace Day" to celebrate their commonalities and shared experiences. Others hosted bone marrow drives to test people for matches with other multiracials who suffer from terminal diseases. Community service activities were designed to build solidarity among the members, by showing them, and other Hapa-identified individuals, that there was a large community of people with similar racial backgrounds.

Kim: [At meetings] it was really exciting to see a bunch of Hapas all in the same room. It was like- a bunch of people like me and we were all really excited about being there. It was nice to be with people who kind of know what you went through... Like, lots of us have Asian moms so we joke about what it was like growing up like that.

Chris: It was sort of nice to see that issues I have in myself, or identity things that have always been running through my mind- other people could relate to [it]. You know, I had never heard this before... never heard the topics that had been brought up... I thought that I was the only one.

Gabriel: What makes me feel Hapa is when I'm with other Hapas- or with my Hapa friends. I guess we feel like more of a common connection... Maybe we grew up with similar family backgrounds and that makes us have similar personality traits or ways of dealing with people.

Notions of community served as a social setting in which club members felt comfortable and had a sense of ownership in its ideals. Events are meant for members to form support groups, but it is assumed that group solidarity will come from the shared notion of supporting one another. The assumption of solidarity was problematic because, as bell hooks (2000:64) argues, support and solidarity are not equivalent: "Support can mean upholding or defending a position one believes is right. [But] It can also mean serving as a prop for a weak foundation." The informants stated that the ultimate goal of organizing efforts was to create a community, but the support

group environment in which they operated did not translate into the community that some subjects were hoping for.

Although an organization's goals were clearly articulated, the process of achieving these objectives often was not. For example, one of the main goals expressed by the UCLA and UCSD Hapa clubs was to build community, yet the leaders within the organizations had not set strategic plans for doing so. While mapping out ideological aspirations, such as building community, the organizations gained a large group of campus supporters. However, gaining *consistent* membership was difficult due to failure of Hapa clubs to clearly map their objectives. Some of the respondents had ideas as to why their goals were not being achieved:

Daniel: I don't think being mixed alone is enough to bring people together... It's a social club. We're [not] going to do anything bigger unless we had leaders that pushed for that.

Eric: Some people identify as Hapa but they don't feel the need to contribute to a community, or they don't think there is a community... In order to form a community people need to feel that they have a responsibility... There needs to be a strong sense of purpose, and that's how people will come together.

A Hapa by Any Other Name: Race and Hapa Identity Politics. For many of the subjects, asserting a Hapa identity had become their first realization of a racial identity. For some, Hapa became the embodiment of their entire racial selves. According to Weisman (1992:156):

Racially mixed people who consciously adopt an *other* identity actually become *other than other*. They are no longer *other* by virtue of partially or not belonging, but by virtue of *completely* belonging to a group that is different from all; yet overlaps with many existing other groups.

Subjects who identified as Hapa were subscribing to an "other than other" group, which provided them with a source of belonging.

Gabriel: Before, we were just half-this and half-that, and now we're saying, we're not just a mix. We're not just, like, the gray area. We're not the bubbles that can't be filled in.

Eric: I didn't know what I was before I learned about what Hapas are... I didn't really identify racially before that. I always thought I was, you know, an X-factor- an other... So, to me, Hapa was a Godsend.

To understand how Hapa is used in a group setting, it is also necessary to understand that many members look for a place to connect with others with similar backgrounds. However, in attempting to create community, similar backgrounds often equate to similar instances of isolation. Members addressed issues of alienation in their families and communities on the basis of their mixedrace status, but never referred to these issues as racism.

Kim: Everyone has different stories about not fitting in with their families and some of their communities, but for the most part, it's a shared experience.

Each subject interacted with race in his or her everyday life, but they chose not to address it on a structural level. Perhaps the failure to address race came from a lack of knowledge about the racial structure of the United States. Club events allowed members to talk about race without

discussing its institutional function; in essence, race without racism. They did this by promoting an ideological sense of individuality. By making racism and discrimination an individual issue of difference they ignored the institutional function of race in their lives.

Will the Real Hapa Please Stand Up: Hapa and Hawaiians. The subjects' definitions of Hapa seemed to support the Hawaiian Foundation's accusations that Californians use of the word out of context. In summary, the Foundation's responses state that Hapa should only be used by and for Indigenous Hawaiians. Some of the informants knew about Hawaiian criticisms, and many had an opinion about it. However, most subjects seemed to dismiss the negative critiques of their use of Hapa. A few resented Hawaiian accusations.

Eric: We don't mean to demean or take away from the culture of Hawaiians [but] the meanings of words change. [Hapa] has gone from derogatory to affectionate and people are not viewing how Californians are trying to use it. They can't see it or understand it; or don't want to... For us, it's just coming together.

Chris: I think [Native Hawaiians] are being very sheltered because they should know that even if that's how it originated, that through time, language evolves... They're just not being open to the fact that we've sort of adopted this for our own things.

For the informants, the meaning of Hapa had simply evolved. Many subjects referred to the concept of "natural evolution." Some mentioned other words that had come into the American-English language from other languages, and almost none of the informants referred to the social context of Indigenous peoples in these debates. The primary redress to Hawaiian accusations was the argument that words evolved and changed.

Chris: The same words we use today do not have the same meaning that it did in, like, old English. In general, they change. Not only that, but English adopts words from other languages- you have a lot of the romantic languages in our dialect... they are just stuck with their view and were totally like, "you're wrong. This is how it's been, [and] we're going to bad mouth you, curse you, and treat you bad because of it." And they have no justification for that.

Fact or Fiction: the Political Potential of Hapa Organizing. Some subjects alluded to Hapa's future as a potential force in social politics, but the discussion was almost always kept in the future tense. Futuristic dialogue is reminiscent of the vision of multiracial people as the "face of tomorrow" and presents a paradox for multiracial organizing. The subjects shared experiences of attending events that focused on the stereotypes of multiracial people, but their political rhetoric did not reflect the internalization of that dialogue.

Daniel: I don't feel it is a particular word that has any political power- or hasn't yet. Maybe someday it will be, but right now it's just a novelty that uh- people who happen to be Hapa use to identify themselves with.

Eric: I don't think that Hapa now- is a political term, but I think that it could be because there are a lot of issues that Hapas could address in politics... I think it's a political term that's in its formative years and that a kind of political movement could grow out of it... but it doesn't really have the same kind of baggage as other political terms out there right now.

The majority of the subjects felt that Hapa was not a political term. Their reasons ranged from the lack of policies that negatively affected California Hapas, to the lack of individuals who identified as Hapa. This form of rhetoric indicated the subjects' personal privileges when identifying their own social locations. Perhaps other forms of privilege such as heterosexuality, class, and being able-bodied, allowed the subjects to ignore issues facing less-privileged Asian descent multiracials.

Yet, all organizations are political. They either challenge or support the status quo, and thus, opinions about the political potential of Hapa terminology are essential dialogue when discussing the future of APA mixedrace organizing. If members do not believe in the political potential of Hapa then we have to question the hidden politics behind their statements.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to find the meaning of Hapa for APA-descent multiracials in California. In doing so, I have mapped the history of the term and focused on if/how Hapa has been used for both individual and community empowerment. To a certain extent, subjects used the term Hapa to describe their entire racial selves. Many struggled to find a racial identity somewhere between the traditionally defined boxes of APA and the ambiguous "other." For them, Hapa became an important part of how they identified because it represented their mixed APA heritage.

Hapa is a tool used to empower the Asian descent multiracial individuals because it is self-imposed. Some individuals take the label onto themselves easily because of the supposed ambiguity of the definition. However, the idea that individuals can unite under an unspecified label is confusing to some because the "notion underscores the idea that identities are socially constructed" (King and DaCosta, 1996:242). Indeed, collective APA-mixedrace identity directly opposes such ideologies. Despite the term's "agree to disagree" definition, Hapa is still restricted to the Asian/Pacific Islander racial category.

Hapa was described as mixed Asian/white but informants ignored the issues of Indigenous Hawaiians when talking about political agendas for Hapas. Thus, participants implied that Indigenous Hawaiians are not considered part of the Asian/Pacific Islander Panethnicity. By stating that Hapas, and therefore Asian descent multiracials, had nothing to fight for, they ignore the ways in which Hawaiians were/are forced by the government to submit to blood quantum requirements for land allocations, and other effects of colonialism (see Laduke, 1999:172; Root, 1992:9).

By excluding Indigenous Hawaiians from the Asian/Pacific Islander Panethnicity, California Hapas ignore Hawaiians' current and future roles in the political organizing of Asian descent multiracial individuals. Virtually the entire Indigenous Hawaiian population is multiracial. Thus, exclusion may only serve to hurt organizing efforts (Root, 1992:9). Some individuals of Hawaiian descent strongly disagreed with the Californian definition of Hapa, so their use of the term must be re-examined. If Hapa clubs are to participate in what Cynthia Nakashima (1996:86) calls, a "goal of pan-multiracialism," the individuals in the organizations must begin to address their own prejudices and privileges.

Audre Lorde (1984:111) states that there is a "difference between the passive *be* and the active *being*." In identity politics, identifying in any particular social location could be considered a political action because you are asserting an active identity. Declaration means that you are not just using the term, but also engaging with the concept that the term represents in your daily life. The argument that the personal is political is further developed in Paula M. L. Moya's (1997) realist theory of identity. Moya argues that experiences do not automatically provide an understanding of one's identity when she states that:

Our ability to understand the fundamental aspects of our world will depend on our ability to acknowledge and understand the social, political, economic, and epistemic consequences of our own social location... [O]ppositional struggle is fundamental to our ability to understand the world more accurately” (139-40).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Audre Lorde (1984:112) maintains that: “Without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her [or his] oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretence that these differences do not exist.” By using the term Hapa, Asian-descent multiracials attempted to build solidarity among each other by systematically shaping common experiences into a category to which APA multiracials could openly subscribe. By creating an “other than other” identity they attempted to shed the expectations of racial legitimacy that came from traditional ethnic communities, but the concept of Hapa identity had not been internalized. Californian interpretations of Hapa as a word and an identity remain problematic.

I cannot say who should or should not use the term Hapa. As an Asian-descent multiracial, I was excited at the prospect of political organizing in my community. However, after conducting this study, I have come to understand that community organizing does not mean that each member possesses a political consciousness. Community building merely creates the potential for such consciousness to develop. As Satyr Mohan has argued:

An attempt at an objective explanation [of racism] is necessarily continuous with oppositional political struggles. Objective knowledge of such social phenomena is in fact often dependent on the theoretical knowledge that activism creates... without these alternative constructions and accounts, our capacity to interpret and understand the dominant ideologies and institutions is limited to those created by these very ideologies and institutions (quoted in Moya, 1997:140).

Hapa seemed to empower many Asian-descent multiracials, but we must ask ourselves at what cost? Organizing on the basis of a shared mixedrace experience was new to many of the individuals that participated in Hapa clubs, but without an internalization of the active function of race in our society there was limited understanding of institutional oppression across communities. The use of Hapa is problematic because it may prevent mixedrace APAs from forming coalitions across other racial communities.

When using the term, California Hapas did not examine the ways in which Indigenous communities were/are currently working to take back their language as a part of larger decolonization movements. Language was forcibly taken from indigenous Hawaiians; thus, if mixedrace APAs co-opt this word then we are supporting the same dominant racial ideologies that alienate us from larger ethnic solidarities. We are unconsciously subscribing to the idea that colonization brings about modernity, which allowed California Hapas to maintain the argument that “language evolves.”

According to Ropollo (2004:75) “We all... have benefited at least in some material way from the murders of an estimated one hundred million people, crimes that are still going on in this hemisphere.” Colonization allowed us, as mainland American Asian descent multiracials, the privilege to not critically examine how we use this word. It also allowed us the privilege of not asking permission of, nor having to think about, the indigenous Hawaiians who almost lost their language. We are interacting with an intricate system of oppression that simultaneously distances and binds us to racialized communities.

Using the word Hapa has the potential to hurt the multiracial movement. If we want to create a tool that will promote equality and a common human experience then we must address

institutional oppression. In the context of a humanist movement, the inclusion of indigenous peoples, whose numbers of mixedrace births equal if not surpass our own, becomes essential. Traditional pan-ethnic communities, for example, African American, Chicana/o/Latina/o, Indigenous American, and Asian American communities, are also our own and we have as much at stake in racial categorization as they do.

Incorporating difference is not to be confused with the corporate definition of diversity. Rather, it means the ability to confront our own racisms and fetishes towards others and our peer communities. Incorporating difference means reinterpreting history and reality so that we may begin to decolonize our own minds and address the ways in which we interact with institutions of oppression. We can begin by encouraging each other to question ourselves. As noted by Carpenter (2003:26):

There needs to be a political stance made by multiracial people that says the racist structure still exists. [They must] push themselves into dangerous spaces where they are uncomfortable, because most of the spaces they reside in now are no less safe.

It has taken me twenty-two years to become who I am today, and it will take another twenty to deconstruct that being. My hope is that one day the so-called multiracial movement will call for the decolonization of the people--our people.

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