



**GenerAsians Learn Chinese:
The Asian American Youth Generation and New Class Formations**

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“Where’re my fuckin’ Asians at?”
Jin (*The Making of a Rap Star*, 2004)

Theorizing Asian American youth and generation

Why is Jin telling us that we should learn Chinese? Is there an Asian American youth culture? How does immigration and relative generation define it?

This essay addresses Americans of Asian descent¹ who are roughly 18 to 25 years old: I focus on the mass-mediated popular cultures that they consume and create. My central question is how young Americans of Asian descent are in some ways moving away from the ‘Asian American’ cultural and political project created in the 1960s-70s that has driven Asian American Studies to date. This youth generation is no more homogeneous than any other, and my purpose here is to think about its identifications because I believe minoritarian politics are still essential to American democratic potential. Further, the relationship between immigration, transnational movement, and class-defined democracy is the challenge of this historical moment. My interest in two contrasting Asian American youth cultures is thus embedded in these broader questions, and for me have a certain urgency.

I argue that this youth generation responds to the conditions of their moment in ways that do not come down to any tidy generational profile, but my reading of Asian American popular culture (and especially popular music) suggests that this generation is responding to their own racialization in imaginative as well as sometimes compromised ways. Immigration haunts this generation—that is, the ideologies that continually reshape the immigrant experience and its material conditions can be traced through the experiments of this new Asian American generation. George Lipsitz has argued that the ideological predominance of the nation-state in area studies (including American studies) has “poorly prepared us for the ways in which culture functions as a social force

or the ways in which aesthetic forms draw their affective and ideological power from their social location” (2001:17). Following his lead, I try to connect the late capitalist phenomenon of Pacific Rim popular culture to the emergence of newly racialized Asian/American youth that may move across borders in some ways but reconfirm the power of citizenship in others. I address several sites of Asian American popular culture-making. My strong sense is that the spatial movement of Asian/Americans is pressured by fantasies of a globalized Pacific Rim, and that some American youth of Asian descent are willing to accept a class-driven consumption model of culture while others turn to more challenging popular spheres of race-based interethnic exchange. I compare and contrast two areas of Asian American youth culture: globalized Asian hip, and Asian American participation in hip-hop culture.

The classic Ethnic Studies models for relative generation don’t stand up well to the particularities of Asian American youth culture and the conditions of its emergence. The North American youth generation of Asian descent locates itself within a globalized circuit of Pacific Rim exchange more than it does with the ‘Asian American’ complex generated in the 1960s-70s. I do not dismiss the importance of generation in relation to the experience and memory of immigration,² but I think mass-mediated youth culture on the West Coast has generated a uniquely Asian American youth profile that is unashamedly upwardly mobile, and this stands in marked contrast to the ideology of class-consciousness in hip-hop culture. I address the ‘GenerAsian’ concept by focusing on West Coast Asian Americans and, concomitantly, offer a close reading of second-generation Chinese American Jin the MC, a hip-hop artist whose 2004 single “Learn Chinese” offers one line of response to early 21st-century (Asian) American pop culture.

In some ways, the old confusion between Asians and Asian Americans just seems exacerbated by global corporate exchange. Davé, Nishime, and Oren ask, “How do we address the Asian American presence within our hyperglobalized mainstream culture?” (2005:1). Yet the

emergence of a strong Asian American youth culture defined (at least partly) by its consumption of Asian popular culture is undeniable. Indeed, it is the enactment of the globalized circuit of exchange by this generation that fascinates me. Sometimes this youth culture is marked by a hip, ironic reframing of materials that is powerfully agentic, but sometimes it reenacts the slippage between the Asian/American. Often it hinges on the fact of post-1965 Asian immigration to the U.S. and stepped-up transnational movement between the First Worlds of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and the U.S. Aihwa Ong's influential work has modeled a dynamic set of relationships between subjects, nation-states, and political economies. She shifts analytical emphasis away from globalization *per se* and instead toward the ethnography of transnational practices and responses. She writes (1999:4),

... I prefer to use the term *transnationality*. *Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism.

The Asian American youth generation in question includes some young people who move easily between the U.S. and an Asian 'home' country, and others who are geospatially based in the U.S. but consume Asian popular culture, American popular culture, and Asian-disseminated American popular culture. Ong's insistence on movement of many kinds, through different economies and varied desires and across borders, describes the ways that these youth negotiate and enjoy the "embeddedness" of lives that literally and figuratively move through interconnected cultural economies. I am thinking of my self-identified "2.0-generation Korean American" undergraduate Jessica who speaks to her parents in Korean, plays the *kayagum*, speaks English without any trace of a Korean accent, spends summers in Seoul, reads *Rolling Stone* and *The Source* from cover to cover every week, and watches the current Korean soap operas at home in Los Angeles. I am thinking of

my 1.5 generation Taiwanese American undergrad Bonnie who has Pokemon charms dangling from her backpack and J-pop ring tones on her cell phone. I am thinking of my 1.5 generation undergrad Jin Hee who asks to be called 'Genie', who argues in Korean with her mother about having non-Korean friends, and who chooses to spend her free time tutoring at-risk Chicano and African American elementary students in Riverside. I am rethinking of Edmund, a 2nd-generation "Filipino" (not "Filipino American") who always parked his skateboard at my classroom door and gave his final presentation on videogame music, in which he displayed an encyclopedic knowledge of Japanese videogames, *anime*, and *manga*.

Immigrant arrivals have everything to do with the specific conditions of nation-state relationships. 'The' immigrant experience is thus always particular even as it is folded into the sweeping gestures of statecraft and legislation. Generation is a theoretical concept that has had to change in order to keep up with the circumstances driving its upsets. The first-, second-, third-generation, etc., configuration of experience in relation to the act of immigration is deceptive in its suggestion of shared conditions. Even the supposed clarity of Japanese American generations has been problematized by Asian American Studies: the Issei-Nisei-Sansei monolith is less clear when *Shin Issei* ('new' Issei) like Japanese war brides and Nisei Kibei who were schooled in Japan are considered (Wong 2006).

The watershed of 1965 looms large in American immigration studies and forced new ways of thinking about generation. It also Asianized the face of American immigration.³ American Ethnic Studies responded to the realities of post-1965 immigrant communities by theorizing the 1.5 generation as a discrete formation, applicable to any immigrant group but in fact particularly characteristic of many Asian immigrant communities, in which young people born in Korea, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and beyond became impressively bicultural. Sandhya Shukla writes that "diasporas simultaneously illumine and recreate vectors of time and space" (2003:213) and she

shows how South Asian immigrant generation is located precisely in the environment of post-1965 American legislation and millennial globalization. I would argue that post-1965 immigration drove a number of changes, including the transformation of American Studies from a field focused on (mostly) White American class-based history and culture into a vibrant interdisciplinary site that, by the 1980s, positioned difference as central to American identity.⁴

The successful, affluent, transpacific Asian/American is one of the newest targets of xenophobic anxiety. He (and I use this gendered pronoun deliberately) stands in marked contrast to the brown tide of workers (undocumented and otherwise) who enter the U.S. from Mexico and below (and I also use this above/below, top/bottom metaphor deliberately). Indeed, racialized class-based fear is still a problem but in a new way: progressive politics promotes a celebration of the working classes but not of an upper-middle class, successful, transnational Asian/American subject. In this case, race and class come together in worrisome ways. Focusing on the late-twentieth century mobile class of ethnic Chinese, Ong notes that the “flexibility” of Pacific Rim globalized capital and citizenship is celebrated by those who are most likely to benefit from it, e.g., “elite Hong Kong executives” (1999:20). Attending to the class formations created by Pacific Rim corporate commerce is as important as theorizing its effects on ideologies of race and the nation. As Ong writes (1999:19):

Among transnational Chinese subjects, those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrate flexibility and mobility, which give rise to such figures as the multiple-passport holder; the multicultural manager with “flexible capital”; the “astronaut,” shuttling across borders on business; “parachute kids,” who can be dropped off in another country by parents on the trans-Pacific business commute; and so on. [...] Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability.

Some recent work in Asian American Studies focuses on the instabilities created by the rising Asian/American upper-middle class. Pensri Ho’s research focuses on 1.5 and second generation

Chinese American and Korean American professionals in Southern California (25-35 years old during the period of her research, 1995-98) and their troubled relationship to race. Sometimes eager to cite the model minority myth as the key to their success, they discovered that their Asianness was as likely to be held against them. The contradictions surrounding Asian/American success thus highlight the deadly relationship between class and race in the U.S. Ho writes that this professional class is the result of a complex set of conditions: many of the young professionals she interviewed had at least one professional parent, access to higher education, and had experienced transnational movement between the Asian home site and the U.S.

In Ho's analysis, this young professional class discovered that they represented the Asian model minority once they entered the white collar work force even though many had "trivialized, suppressed, or denied" their ethnicity when younger (2003:151). She focused on their ability to draw on multiple identifications as a key cultural resource (150):

Their resultant transpacific racialized American experiences were paired with their lifelong exposure to American and Asian mass media portrayals of the Asian "Other" to create an Americanized Asian "Other" cultural identity, which they mimetically exploit and embody for personal and professional gain.

Ho argues that the model minority myth—already a problem because it is essentially a way to encourage Asian/Americans to accept the terms of White American middle class success and the glass ceiling that maintains Asian American marginality in the American racial hierarchy—is thus a means to simultaneously reward and contain Chinese American and Korean American professionals. As a result, these young professionals shift uneasily between "celebration and rejection of the self as the Asian Other," simultaneously accepting and denying the terms of racial asymmetry (153).

Within Asian American Studies, some research has moved toward 1.5 and second generation issues (and away from its previous emphasis on the immigrant generation). Indeed, more than a few Asian American Studies scholars are themselves from these two post-immigration generations (Min

2001:3). Some argue that millennial second generation Asian Americans have complex relationships with both American racial regimes and globalization discourses. Yen Le Espiritu finds that second generation middle class Filipina/os in Southern California negotiate both assimilation and racism precisely because they are located at the intersection of race, class, and postcolonial self-awareness. American culture is familiar to them because they were born here and because their parents grew up with American cultural imperialism in the Philippines. They more likely live in White American suburbs than in Filipino ethnic 'enclaves'. Yet they are unavoidably self-aware of their racial difference (Espiritu 2001:24):

The majority do not live in an ethnic neighborhood, attend school with other Filipino children, or belong to Filipino organizations. Thus, like later generation white ethnic groups, their ethnic behavior is largely symbolic, characterized by a nostalgic but unacquainted allegiance to an imagined past. However, there is a crucial difference; because Filipinos are dark-skinned, their ethnic/racial role is ascriptive rather than voluntary, and thus their ethnicity often is politicized rather than just a leisure-time activity. The intersection of their race, class, and ethnicity means that these Filipinos simultaneously conform to the forces of acculturation and assimilation, challenge the U.S. model of multiculturalism, and construct a distinct new culture that is not simply an extension of the "original" or of the mainstream "American" culture.

The shaping force of race, class, transnational movement, and nation is thus pronounced even for a generation which has apparently 'assimilated'. Similarly, Hung Cam Thai found that second generation Vietnamese Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-seven described changing self-awareness between childhood and becoming young adults. Most said that they had gone through a stage as children when they equated Americanness with Whiteness and tried to act and view themselves as White American. One Vietnamese American interviewee referred to a process of "deprogramming the self" during her college years when she entered a period of ethnic "recovery" and "discovery" that was both powerful and profoundly transformational (Thai 2001:66). Most gravitated toward a stronger, explicit understanding of themselves as Vietnamese and as

members of Vietnamese families; Thai refers to this as a “cultural ideology of collectivism” that was reinforced by trips to Vietnam (73-75). She argues for “ethnogenesis, or [a] ‘collective identity shift’” that took place for her young interviewees as they entered young adulthood (as well as for second generation Korean Americans and Chinese Americans she cites in related research) (76).

Contrast this with the raucous Mexican and Mexican American protests against H.R. 4437 in March-May 2006 and the use of Mexican flags in demonstrations for immigrant rights which were quickly replaced by American flags when the rhetoric of citizenship was put up for grabs, dangling between the defensive and the offensive. Mexican immigrants and their 1.5/second generation children stand in stark relief as an unruly labor class in relation to upwardly mobile, privileged transpacific Asian American youth. My position is that neither generation nor ‘the immigrant experience’ is generalizable and that the specific economic and legislative conditions of any given moment will fundamentally shape the specificities of generation—and especially the second generation. With this in mind, I turn to the matter of two early twenty-first century Asian American youth cultures.

GenerAsians, AZNs, and other self-identifications

Two foundational edited collections have laid the groundwork for studying Asian American youth culture: *Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity* (2004) and *East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture* (2005).⁵ These books explore the link between Asian American youth culture and popular culture, both posit that Asian ethnicity still matters but in new ways. Both show how youth culture upsets established understandings of race, nation, media, and mainstream vs. oppositional cultures.

Min Zhou and Jennifer Lee argue that “Asian American youth create and define an identity and culture of their own against the backdrop of contemporary immigration, continued racialization, and the rise of the new second generation (the U.S.-born of foreign-born parentage)” (Zhou and

Lee 2004:2). They also note that scholarly work on U.S. youth culture has almost entirely ignored the presence of young Asian Americans (9). Davé, Nishime, and Oren, the editors of *East Main Street*, show how Asian American popular culture—and the youth generation engaged with it—is only understandable if viewed in the context of “trans-Asian” contact, “counterflows” of culture, and “porous boundaries between America and Asia” (2005:4-5). Many of the authors in their collection address Asian American popular culture not as discretely American forms but as sites of inter-Asian contact. This poses new theoretical problems even as it reactivates older ones. As the editors put it, “Paradoxically, this current visibility of global ‘Asianness’ renders the cultural presence of Asian Americans in mainstream American culture conceptually problematic: simultaneously hypervisible and out of sight” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 2005:1).

The current generation of twenty-something West Coast Asian Americans has a distinctive profile. Most of its members were born after 1985. It is hip, playful, often aware of Asian American history, and closely in touch with certain forms of East Asian mass mediated culture (especially Japanese *anime* and Hong Kong martial arts films). Some of its members are involved in the street racing scene focused on Japanese import cars,⁶ or hip-hop (especially clothes and slang), skateboard culture. It is marked by a blurring of generational formations: 1.5 and second generation Asian Americans come together in some of its activities. It is often (though not always) decidedly middle-class in its access to disposable income and its aspirations.

A third collection, Sunaina Maira’s and Elisabeth Soep’s *Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global* (2005) attends to youth cultures in the context of globalization and the politics of transnationalism. Taking youth studies as a point of departure, they ask, “What might studying youth reveal about social identities being remade through transnational popular culture and new communication technologies in the context of debates about cultural authenticity, renewed nationalisms, and free-market relations?” (2005:xviii). Maira and Soep reposition youth as “key

players” in the constitutive links between nation and globalization (xix) and note that the overlap between globalization studies and youth culture has long been critically “evaded” (xxi) due to some of the historiographical and ideological assumptions driving each area. They illuminate the disconnects, contradictions, and force between consumption and national identity (xxiii-xxix), and the ways that youth figure prominently in the very figuration of the nation-state, particularly the U.S. California emerges in their analysis as a site where many of these dynamics intersect, due to intensified immigration into the state from both Asia and Latin America and to the “confluence of social, political, and economic factors” that have crystallized the cultural work done by youth (xxix).

Yet members of this generation often speak with an intriguing mixture of political awareness plus a certain blindness to the effects of its own class location. Arar Han and John Hsu’s introduction to *Asian American X* (2004),⁷ a collection of writing by Asian American youth, is a case in point. The two editors, both undergraduates at the time of their writing, noted that the contributors were “primarily first- to third-generation Americans who are in college and hail from middle-class backgrounds. It is likely that these writers are a self-selecting sample of our generation of Asian Americans, since all are attending, have attended, or plan to attend college” (2004:8). Han and Hsu cite their shared experiences, noting that “as the children of white-collar professionals in Silicon Valley, we grew up with the privileges of an upper-middle-class American lifestyle” (3). They argue for the continuing necessity of an Asian American political consciousness grounded in knowledge about Asian American history. Yet their bottom line is a liberal humanist argument that sets up Asian American “collective” experience against the trump card of the “individualistic” and an unencumbered search for the individualized self (3-4). In short, their awareness of class and the privileges of higher education only goes so far.

The term “GenerAsian” is more and more widely used by members of this generation to identify itself. The term was derived from ‘Generation X’, the generation following the baby

boomers. Though rarely marked as such, Gen X is mostly White American and middle class. Members of Gen X are generally characterized as deeply skeptical about consumer culture even as they live through its terms; they refuse to aspire to its conditions (e.g., by working toward a career). Brought up in a thoroughly mediated western, First World environment, their sense of community and even (stereotypically) their sense of self is structured through any number of information technologies (cell phones, the internet, etc.). The legendary disaffection of Gen X is enacted in the performance of self in daily life (“whatever”) and by a disinterest in/distrust of electoral political processes.

The term ‘GenerAsian’ was purportedly coined in 1998,⁸ when ‘GenerAsian X’ was used to describe the target audience for *Shopping for Fangs* (1997), a low-budget independent film made by Quentin Lee and Justin Lin focused on Asian American post-college young people in Southern California’s Asian immigrant San Gabriel valley. The X quickly vanished and ‘GenerAsian’ was in general use by 1999-2000. GenerAsian is satirized in Justin Lin’s independent feature film *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2003), which follows several over-achieving but deeply disaffected young Asian American men through part of their senior year in a Southern California high school. Since the release of *Better Luck Tomorrow* at the 2002 Sundance Festival, Lin has gone from Asian American independent filmmaking to directing Hollywood feature films.⁹ In *Better Luck Tomorrow*, his depiction of amoral upper middle-class Asian Americans in Orange County who rob, do drugs, and cheat on high school tests created a ripple of discussion among Asian American audiences and critics because the film’s characters, by and large, are depicted as having no interest or investment in Asian American identity politics. Indeed, the film isn’t ‘about’ Asian American identity, and doesn’t have a clearly articulated Asian American message. In an interview for *Mother Jones*, journalist and critic Oliver Wang asked Lin about this absence:

[Oliver Wang]: What’s striking about *Better Luck Tomorrow* is that it’s not caught up in any “Who am I?” identity politics. The teens in the

film might worry about their next heist but not existential questions about what it means to be Asian American.

JL [Justin Lin]: I was talking to a filmmaker -- he made one of the early Asian American films -- and he literally thought they were going to go bankrupt. He figured if they were going to do that, they were going to put as many messages as they could into that film. That's the feeling -- when you have the opportunity to speak, you're eager to get all of your messages across. Hopefully, with this film, there is a maturity to it. People don't want to sit there to have you explain why you need to exist. You just do, and people have to come along with it.

I would argue that Lin's film attracted attention not only because Asian Americans weren't idealized (the model minority), but especially because Lin didn't make a message film about Asian American-ness. Or did he? For some audiences, watching a cast of characters who 'happen' to be of Asian descent was satisfying in itself; certainly this kind of spectatorship aligns with mainstream ideologies of multiculturalism that allows audiences to believe race doesn't matter. In other ways, of course, Lin was making a film 'about' Asian Americans, or perhaps he was even making an Asian American film, and his previous work confirms his own position as 'an Asian American filmmaker'. I am fairly certain that *Better Luck Tomorrow* is a satire (its conclusion confirms this if nothing else). But it also opened the way for an Asian American youth sensibility that moved into a wholly new identity politics in which it was no longer 'necessary' to have to argue for presence or even for the right to middle-class citizenship and success.¹⁰

Oliver Wang—to whom I will refer more than once in this essay, as his work on Asian American music, film, and popular culture is far-reaching and critically adept—writes that the “new second generation of Asian Americans” is the “unlikely, unknowing, and sometimes unwilling heirs to the legacy of the [Asian American] movement” and its nationalist assumptions (2001:456). He reminds us that the construct of the ‘Asian American’ is still so recent that it is bound to change and perhaps to be continuously redefined, and he argues that music is one of many sites of cultural production where that work will be done. We have already entered a different historical moment (a

“postmovement” era, as Wang calls it) in which the political construct of Asian American panethnicity is no longer the spark that ignites cultural production.¹¹ Wang writes (2001:457),

In contrast to the previous generation, who made music “for, by, and about” Asian Americans, many of the new artists seek to make music for an audience beyond their constituency. This doesn’t equate to a *rejection* of an ethnic audience, but they’re not seeking dialogue solely with that community. Their music is, as the cliché goes, “for everyone.”

GenerAsians are thus more focused on mainstream participation than on eking out a separate, nationalist foothold in North America. To summarize my argument at this point, GenerAsian youth have a distinctive profile for a host of reasons. Their generational distance from the 1960s era of the Asian American movement gives them a very different political profile. Their distance from the 1965 changes in immigration laws grants them a certain confidence in citizenship without cultural assimilation, on the one hand, and a strong belief in the right to information technologies that grant them the ability to cut across geocultural space and to create virtual communities.

GenerAsians are more apt to describe themselves as Chinese than Chinese American and Vietnamese than Vietnamese American, and they are also likely to view the Pacific Rim as an open arena of cultural exchange.

In short, there is a tight circuit of production between the representation of Asian American youth as ‘beyond’ identity politics and the construction of a newly assertive post-ethnic identity for American youth of Asian descent. And yet, at least some American Asians continue to assert ethnicity and race but—markedly—without the 1960s-70s assertion of a pan-Asian American community. Rather, transnational movement, globalized economies, and the right to middle-class consumption mark this new kind of American Asian youth culture.

At this point, the term ‘GenerAsian’ is in fairly wide circulation among young Asian Americans.¹² It is strongly marked for age and Asian ethnicity, but not for gender, class, immigrant generation, sexuality, etc. It does not seem to be used more by some Asian ethnicities than others

(i.e., Asian American youth of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Filipina/o, etc. heritage are equally apt to self-identify in this way). It usually indicates some awareness of ethnic heritage and the political identifications that compel historicized awareness. The term has been around for long enough so that it not only includes high school and college-aged youth but sometimes extends beyond it, into post-grad twenty-something professionals (who are probably not yet ready to let go of the implied hipness that accompanies the identification) and even into pre-high school youth—that is, the demographic may be in the process of widening. There are indications that the term is changing as corporations use it to identify emergent Asian-Pacific markets:¹³ although the ‘GenerAsian’ sensibility was generated by North American Asian youth, it is now in the process of being exported to Asia through mass-mediated popular culture.

But what exactly is it that’s exportable? The GenerAsian aesthetic is similar to that of the deracialized Gen X (in its social sensibility of mediated community and its pleasure in information technologies), but it also involves an awareness of Asianness as hip—actually, a specific form of Pacific Rim Asianness that is heavily based in J-cool popular culture and its widespread consumption through *animé*, Pokeman, Hello Kitty, and J-pop.

Yolk and Giant Robot

In 1994, two magazines focused on Asian American youth culture were founded, and each provided a certain view of GenerAsian political economy and aesthetics. I can’t offer more than a ‘reading’ of the magazines—that is, I don’t have access to empirical information about their readership, subscription bases, or corporate profiles—but I argue that, together, they emerged from and then synergistically generated the sustained terms for a GenerAsian transpacific youth culture.

Yolk magazine (1994-2003) was a formative site for GenerAsian style. It addressed Asian American culture from 1994-2000 and then underwent extensive redefinition in 2000. It had always covered Asian as well as Asian American style, fashion, and popular culture, but after 2000 its Asian

popular culture coverage was much broader. The magazine title was also revised as *Yolk: GenerAsian Next 2.0*, and it proclaimed that it had “its sights set on becoming the definitive Asian American entertainment, lifestyle, and pop culture magazine.”¹⁴ In short, its expanded Asian pop culture coverage and its self-proclaimed Asian American location were connected and simultaneous.

Most of the magazine’s cover images between 2000 and its demise in 2003 (13 out of 15) featured Asian American women in sexy glamour poses; many articles were devoted to Asian films, food, and music. The layout was punchy, bright, and self-consciously cutting-edge. In short, the GenerAsian profile defined by *Yolk* was deeply hip, and that hipness was substantively informed by Asian popular culture: the message was that GenerAsian was ‘in’ North America but in touch with Asian popular culture, or was essentially a kind of Pacific Rim consumer.

Giant Robot magazine, on the other hand, focused on Asian pop culture from its first issue, which appeared in 1994. Its subtitle is *Asian Pop Culture and Beyond*, and its readers are “half-Asian and half-not.”¹⁵ Its website explains its purpose and focus as follows:

From movie stars, musicians, and skateboarders to toys, technology, and history, Giant Robot magazine covers cool aspects of Asian and Asian-American pop culture. Paving the way for less knowledgeable media outlets, Giant Robot put the spotlight on Chow Yun Fat, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li years before they were in mainstream America’s vocabulary.

But Giant Robot is much more than idol worship. GR’s spirited reviews of canned coffee drinks, instant ramen packs, Japanese candies, Asian frozen desserts, and marinated bugs have spawned numerous copycat articles in other publications. GR’s historical pieces on the Yellow Power Movement, footbinding, Asian-American gangsters, and other savory topics have been cited by both academics and journalists. Other regular features include travel journals, art and design studies, and sex.

The magazine was founded in Los Angeles by two UCLA undergraduates, Eric Nakamura and Martin Wang, and was initially a stapled zine. Since then, it has expanded exponentially and includes stores in West Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York that carry Asian popular culture such as

toys, clothing, books, comics, candy, and accessories. The magazine, now glossy and carried at Barnes and Noble and Tower Records, doesn't have an articulated political position or agenda, but has featured some edgy Asian American content (including a historic 1998 issue on Asian American/African American activism in the 1960s). The founder/editors have an anti-exploitation philosophy and argue for supporting "quality" Asian products. They have a "sixth sense of cool" (Garcia 2005) that is sometimes tapped by other corporations (e.g., Urban Outfitters), and they have a somewhat cynical attitude about the American commodification of Asian popular culture even as they are clearly on the cutting edge of that process. They claim that the difference is their selectiveness and connoisseurship (Garcia 2005):

A lot of the magazines write about things they just don't care about. [Their theory is that] there's this market of Asian people with money, and they're going to write for them. They don't care about the movies or art or design. They'll just pick whatever's hot and write about it. We're really selective – we only write about things we like.

Together, these magazines offered a new kind of Asian/American panethnicity, modulated by an enthusiastic and sometimes ironically knowing consumption of globalized Asian popular culture.

Hard on the heels of such stepped-up celebrations of Pacific Rim exchange, the term "AZN" has crept into common use among GenerAsian members, and it is often paired with "AZN pride" or "pryde." Note the disappearance of "Asian American." "AZN" or "azn" emerged out of hip-hop culture (i.e., its free play of slang and Ebonics) and cell phone/internet chat room abbreviations and slang. It is especially used by high school students (and some college students) and was apparently generated on the West Coast before spreading more widely.

The internet Urban Dictionary offers a troubling snapshot of how the term and, by extension, AZN/GenerAsian members are regarded by non-Asian Americans. Like Wikipedia, this dictionary is a compilation of slang definitions gathered through open submission. Here is a sample

of some of the definitions, along with the thumbs-up/thumbs-down votes submitted by readers that indicate approval/disapproval of the 'definition':¹⁶

AZN 👍 1422 up, 666 down 👎

retarded form of "asian."

immature children who's eyes have not been open to the world who claim "asian pride," usually high school/high school drop outs and under with bleached hair that spend their days at the local arcade playing DDR, also types "LyKe Dis On thE InTerNeTzZzZz"

Azn 👍 598 up, 264 down 👎

The younger asians or non asians that profess that they are better than everyone else (even though they are not). Signs of the "Asian retards" are:

- (1) Typing in alternating CAPS and lowercase letters.
- (2) Using words such as: dis, dat, sho, da, ETC.
- (3) Claiming that Asians are the best even though they don't know shit about their own heritage.
- (4) *sigh* I hoped it wouldn't come to this. The dreaded "Got Rice?" song...

AZN 👍 383 up, 146 down 👎

1.) Shortened form of Asian.

2.) Today, commonly used by non-Asians to identify themselves as Asians. This can be contributed to the fact that most self-respecting Asians would not be caught dead doing some of the actions "AzN's" perform on the internet.

AzNpRyDe: MaI H0nDa i2 FaSt!!!!11!!!

azn 👍 251 up, 113 down 👎

Asians (mainly from California) who shame their race by bleaching their hair blonde and trying to develop the personality of a 'ghetto' negro. Ironically, these azn's do nerdy things such as hang out in arcades playing Tekken and DDR, but they still uphold their 'ghetto' persona online in chat rooms and blogs/xanga accounts.

azn: look, my hair is blonde
white guy: you're not white

azn: yO nlgUh?
black guy: you ain't black

azn: got rice?
asian guy: you're not asian

9. azn 👍 89 up, 72 down 👎

Azn is another acronym for Asian. It's relation is usually related to young, mostly SouthEast Asian Americans, mainly from the hip hop generation.

In order to find their own identity, Azn youth often use upper and lower case letters in order to communicate in online-slang. While there are uneducated Azn out there acting up, there are those who are educated enough to identify Azn with their own pride and heritage.

Even though many of these youths are born in America and may not even speak their native tongue, using Azn slang to communicate is a way of finding their own identity in an American culture dominated by mainstream music such as hip hop, rap, pop, and rock.

I have a nephew embedded in this culture. You would not be able to tell by the way he types on line that he is an A student who excel in sports. Having this Azn attitude is simply a way to push out the steam of realizing that you are born a minority and trying to find your own identity.

AzN PrIdE !!

GOT rICe BiaTCh.

Clearly, the term “AZN” activates a range of responses, from pride to the most stereotyped vilification of Asians and Asian Americans. If Asian/American identity is at work in the term AZN, then its location at the crossroads of interethnic information technology culture leaves it vulnerable to accusations of cultural inauthenticity (bleached blonde hair and ‘borrowed’ African American culture), cultural arrogance and superiority, and socioeconomic privilege. The last entry above (last only here—there are many more entries on the website) offers a thoughtful, presumably ‘elder’ Asian American perspective on the need for AZN identifications and the cultural work for which the term clears a way: it suggests an awareness of Asian American absence from mainstream American popular culture and the willingness to try out new, confrontational relationships... but relatively few readers ‘approved’ this perspective.

That final entry above also includes a reference to an online music video that swept the internet in 2004 titled “Got Rice, Bitch?,” by an artist named “AZN Pride.”¹⁷ Though it is not entirely clear who wrote the song, it is smugly anti-Asian and designed to sound ironically ‘bad’—the ‘rapping’ is lame in the extreme, and is presumably meant to evoke bad Asian hip-hop. The lyrics are in the first person—that is, the lyrics are meant to communicate an Asian point of view (see the complete lyrics in Appendix A):

It’s the AZN better recognize
 Got rice bitch, got rice
 Got food, got soup, got spice
 Got brainz like us, got skillz like us
 Got carz, got clothz, got girlz like us
 Whats sup we the shit we kill yall foolz

We got money in the banks from our family jewelz
 Can we help it if we rain and corrupt the schoolz
 It don't matta fuck the law shit we break the rules
 We jack carz fuck games yo we got the toolz
 Hoop it up break it down then we go shoot some pool
 Fuck with me you fuck with all of us don't think its kool
 1 on 1 fuck that it's 3 on 1, no duels

The song was widely disseminated over the internet, and found its way to 'Asian joke' sites as well as Asian American chat lists. At this point, it is literally everywhere: it has been endlessly reposted and its lyrics retranscribed, so I have been unable to trace it to its starting point. Its point of origin is perhaps less important than the fact that it attracted a lot of attention. Reposting is the highest compliment on the internet, and "Got Rice, Bitch?" was endlessly recirculated.

Though the AZN configuration is fraught in certain ways, its valence as young and hip led to its use as the name for a new cable station launched in 2005, "AZN Television: The Network for Asian America." The station's website features a set of statistics arguing in market terms for its existence: according to them, "the Asian American market" is 4.8% of the U.S. population (14 million people), 85% speak English fluently, have \$397 billion in "buying power," have the "highest HH income [and] education of any ethnic group in the U.S.," have a median income of \$56,000, and a median age of 31.¹⁸ In short, the station is not directed toward the youngest GenerAsian that created the AZN profile, but is instead directed toward an affluent post-college Asian American.

To summarize: at this point, the AZN pride sensibility is less than ten years old, is a specifically youth stance, and has been ridiculed and satirized as much as it has served as a site of identification for young Asian American men. A Wikipedia stub notes that the term "Asian pride worldwide" is also common, "to express an identity which extends beyond national borders to all people of Asian descent."¹⁹ The term thus serves double duty as a source of young masculinized Asian American confidence on the one hand, and ridicule on the other, and its arrival in "Got Rice Bitch?" outsourced its effectiveness right back into longstanding tropes of xenophobic fear over

Asian supremacy. Its appearance at the helm of the troubled AZN Television station suggests that it has been appropriated by corporate concerns in some ways even as its demographic base, which is older and more settled into its socioeconomic niche every day, is poised to reactivate model minority issues because it has not yet articulated its own political presence.

In an incisive introduction to a special issue on transnationalism and Asian American Studies in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, editors Erika Lee and Naoko Shibusawa offered useful critical handles for addressing the mobile connections that inform, shape, obstruct, and construct Asian American identities. They propose some simple principals for theorizing Asian American presence in a less nation-bound and more connective manner, fully aware of the historical reasons for why Asian American Studies initially focused almost entirely on North American issues. Responding to the rise of diaspora studies and to the intensification of global capitalism in the 1990s, Lee and Shibusawa suggest some practical means for opening up Asian American Studies to transnational problematics (2005:x):

De-center the state, but do so without ignoring state power.

Investigate migratory circuits and border crossings—not only across the Pacific but also across the Atlantic and within the Western hemisphere.

Emphasize the mutual, interactive nature of cultural, institutional, and economic flows. In this respect, transnational histories are not merely comparative, looking at parallel developments across national borders. They seek as well to illuminate the connections that bind people and places to each other.

Any consideration of the GenerAsian and its attendant transnational youth culture will require these kinds of critical starting points. In sum, I argue that GenerAsian, AZN Pryde, and street racing all point to the emergence of a new youth bloc that has not yet theorized its own class base and the implications of participating in transpacific capital as privileged youth of color.

In contrast, the world of hip-hop addresses race and class all the time, and the presence of young Asian American men has always had the potential to create politicized interethnic configurations, but not without tension. The appearance of Jin the MC suggests an alternative critical awareness to the GenerAsian's, within the same age and ethnic group but with a working class awareness.

Jin in your face

In 2004, just a few months after Jin released his hit single “Learn Chinese,” I taught a course on Asian American musics and asked my students to come up with a comparative assessment of three Asian American hip-hop figures: Jin, the Mountain Brothers, and praCh. Many but not all of the thirty students were Asian or Asian American, mostly 1.5 or second generation. They eventually agreed that praCh Ly, a self-produced Cambodian American rapper from Long Beach, had the most well-articulated and principled political message but the weakest musical skills and lo-fi production; that the Mountain Brothers were right in the middle, with a polished but decidedly ‘indie’ sound, complex rhymes, and a now-you-see-it-now-you-don’t Asian American sensibility; and they assessed Jin as the most musically polished and highly produced but the least political.

I turn to Jin here because he is a highly visible—and audible—second generation Chinese American rapper whose hip-hop identifications offer important points of difference from GenerAsian practices. Jin is—famously, to date—the only Asian American rapper ever signed to a major recording label. His rhetorical strategies for the performance of Chineseness offer a fascinating close look at how the hip-hop world (from recording moguls to grassroots fans) creates challenges and opportunities for non-African American participants. In another way, it illuminates how a second generation child of Chinese immigrants has become a real participant in conversations about race and interethnic environments. Jin is a mixture of denial, cooption, and assertive presence, and although I initially felt he had sold out, I have (in two short years) come to see him as a

particularly effective figure who has managed to make it in the mainstream but to keep his message coming. Better still, he is only twenty-four years old and there's still much to come, so my reading of his activities will surely be superseded as times goes on.

To my knowledge, Jin does not identify as “GenerAsian,” “AZN,” or even as Asian American. Over and over again, he refers to himself as “Chinese” or “Asian” in his songs and interviews. Although technically a GenerAsian by birth, Jin is not self-consciously involved in transpacific cultural consumption or production. Rather, as far as I can tell, he is entirely focused on the world of American hip-hop. He is focused on the ways that class, ethnicity, and ‘talent’ are defined and positioned in that environment, and his career to date has contained six events through which he has located his work in fascinating and sometimes contradictory ways: (1) his triumph over African American opponents as a freestyler (2002); (2) getting signed by a major recording label; (3) the release of his hit single “Learn Chinese” and first album, *The Rest is History* (2004); (4) his response to “The Tsunami Song” (2005); (5) his decision to leave the Ruff Ryder recording label; and (6) his reappearance as an independent artist and mentor in his second album, *The Emcee’s Properganda* (2005).

Jin Au-Yeung was born in Miami in 1982. His parents are Chinese immigrants who ran a less-than-successful Chinese restaurant during his childhood. Jin grew up in a working-class, interethnic environment in Miami and started freestyling with friends in middle school. He moved to New York City with his family in 2001 when he was nineteen and immediately got involved with the hip-hop scene, where he focused on freestyling. He hired a manager in 2001-2002 and got onto BET’s “Freestyle Fridays” on *106 n Park* in early 2002, where he earned fame by winning a series of freestyling battles. In these one-on-one three-minute matches, always up against African American MCs, Jin quickly became known not only for his improvisational rhyming skills but for aggressively asserting his Chineseness rather than allowing opponents to use it against him as an insult, e.g.,

“Yeah I’m Chinese/Now you’ll understand it/I’m the reason your little sis’s eyes are slanted/If you make one more joke about Chinese food or karate/The NYPD will be searching Chinatown for your body.”²⁰

After winning seven matches in a row by March 2002, he was something of a legend not only in the hip-hop world generally but especially among Asian American hip-hop fans.²¹ When he was inducted into *106 and Park’s* Hall of Fame, he announced that he had just signed with Ruff Ryders. As cultural critic Jeff Chang writes, “Across the country, Asian American teens traded CD-Rs of his TV battles and leaked tracks, lit up Internet boards, and downloaded his singles from AOL more than 500,000 times” (2004). From that point on, his career took off quickly. In 2003, he had a minor role as a mechanic in *2 Fast 2 Furious*, about the street racing scene in Miami. After much fanfare, his single, “Learn Chinese,” was produced by Wyclef Jean (formerly with The Fugees). *The Rest is History* was finished in 2003 but Ruff Ryders delayed its release several times, and it eventually came out in November 2004.

Between 2002 and 2004, Jin’s development was followed closely by Asian American hip-hop enthusiasts. As I have written elsewhere, Asian Americans have always found it difficult if not impossible to break into the American recording industry, and hip-hop poses special challenges due to the ways that Asianness is ambivalently positioned between Whiteness and Blackness (Wong 2004:233-56). Asian American hip-hop artists are inevitably forced to make decisions and assertions about their racial position. At its best, the outcome is new, effective cross-ethnic formations: as Ellie Hisama notes (2004),

Hip hop provides brilliant opportunities for musical crosscurrents and affinities between ethnic communities of color. American hip hop since 1990 offers compelling examples of interaction and exchange between African and Asian diasporic communities, and demonstrates the overwhelming political and aesthetic power of the polycultural.

While Hisama focuses on the points of possibility for interethnic connection, in practice Asian American MCs are frequently accused of being inauthentically Black and few have been able to argue for an unmarked voice (where race doesn't matter) let alone for the value of an Asian American voice. A few have made their Asianness central to their message but—not coincidentally—have not been able to break into the industry and instead have become most well-known on the college performance circuit.²² Others have stayed within local environments, performing at live events within their ethnic community rather than trying to get signed.²³ On his DVD, Jin says “But the key—the most important thing—is to remember where [hip-hop] started,”²⁴ that is (presumably), to respect the urban African American roots of hip-hop.

Jin somehow managed to push past these problems, partly by putting his ethnicity right out front and partly by being very, very good at battling. Jeff Chang, a noted hip-hop historian and critic of Asian American popular culture, pinpoints the effectiveness of Jin's cultural and aesthetic location, suggesting that he manages to work against prevailing expectations and to surprise at the same time (2003):

In fact, Jin does present something wholly new, not just in American but also global pop: an unapologetically working-class, second-generation kid flowing in Cantonese and New York-inflected Ebonics with the same fluency. He's no pricey Hong Kong import, no sexless high-kicking martial arts expert in yellowface. By simply rapping in a black tee with a diamond-encrusted Ruff Ryders pendant, he could have the most impact on the notion of an “authentic” Asian American masculinity since Bruce Lee.

Jin is decidedly not a GenerAsian in his orientation, but Chang identifies a key point of contact: for GenerAsians, Jin provides a politicized possibility that (at least then) was thoroughly embedded in the industry and the mainstream public sphere—a subject who is both authentically Asian American but not mired in the identity politics of the 1960s. As Chang writes (*ibid.*), “For overeducated hip-hop-gen AZN cult-crits like me, Jin presents a subject worthy of our subjectivities,

a voice that validates our own time in the wilderness.” With this in mind, I turn to “Learn Chinese” to consider how things went a little wrong in 2003-04.

“Learn Chinese”

Jin’s most impressive skill is his ability to battle, and “Learn Chinese” is in the finest tradition of hip-hop braggadocio: it opens with the confrontational lines, “Yeah I’m Chinese, and what?/Yeah you know who this is, Jin, and let me just tell you this/The days of the pork fried rice and the chicken wings comin to your house by me is over,” and it goes on from there. The chorus says it all:

Ya’ll gonna learn Chinese, ya’ll gonna learn Chinese
 Ya’ll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps come out, your gonna
 speak Chinese
 Ya’ll gonna learn Chinese,
 Ya’ll gonna be Chinese
 Ya’ll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps go off, ya’ll gon’ speak
 Chinese

In other words, ‘you’ are going to come around to his way of thinking, being, and speaking—you are going to abide by his terms. Moreover, you’re going to get there through fear and submission: the “pumps” are guns, and when they come out, you’re going to be so frightened that you will spontaneously speak Chinese, no, be Chinese, because Jin is in charge. This chorus is heard three times in the course of the song. In footage taken from a live performance of the song in a New York City club, Jin performed on stage with three members of his crew, and the sight of him and these powerful-looking African American men—all taller than him, chanting his chorus in unison, arms raised, index fingers pointed at the audience—is an astonishing and convincing moment. You are going to be Chinese, whether you like it or not.

The recorded version of the song is a dense soundscape of Jin’s voice alone, Jin’s voice with his own voice layered over it, the three voices of his crew who chime in at the ends of many lines in unison with him, and a spare base line that includes a ‘Chinese-sounding’ pentatonic melodic motive

heard at the beginning of the song and then in each chorus. Along the way, the lyrics are constantly ‘interrupted’, sometimes by Jin speaking Cantonese, sometimes by his crew responding in Cantonese, and sometimes by Wyclef. Wyclef mostly inserts shout-outs and promotional phrases, e.g., he inserts the word “Refugees” at one point, referring simultaneously to The Fugees (the group popular during the mid-1990s) and to the clothing line he introduced in 2005. Ruff Ryders is referenced a number of times by name and once as “Double-R.” At one point, a sexy woman’s voice—breathy, girlish, perhaps imitating the sound of Japanese teenaged pop stars—sings an ‘oriental’ melody and then croons, “Mr. Jin, you are the sexist man/Mr. Jin, I love the way you do your things.”

The lyrics are a mixture of bragging, sexist claims about women, gangster talk about guns, thugs, and hooligans (for which Ruff Ryders is famous), and edgy race commentary. Jin refers to “chinks” and to himself as the “original chinky eyed MC” in an age-old strategy of reclaiming injurious language. References to Chinese food and Chinatown abound. And yet, Jin knows his history and is all too aware that Blackness, Whiteness, and Asianness are interconstitutive. He raps, “We should ride the train for free, we built the railroads/I ain’t your 50 cent, I ain’t your Eminem, I ain’t your Jigga Man, I’m a CHINA man,” and yet the bottom line is that he’s a Chinatown gangsta who will blow you away—“ I wish you would come to CHINA TOWN/Get lost in town, end up in the lost and found.”

The music video is an all-too-predictable mix of orientalist imagery. The setting is a dark and dangerous Chinatown straight out of any Hollywood feature film, and Jin struts around as a gangster, decked out in a suit and eye patch, surrounded by Chinese goons, looking stereotypically grim and dangerous... and there isn’t a shred of irony to it. Scenes of a karate class are intercut for no apparent reason—it’s Asian, so it’s there. You’re in a Chinese restaurant kitchen. Everyone’s Chinese except for the women, and they’re African American, sexy, on display as manikins, dancing, gyrating, and draping themselves over Jin given half the chance. Somewhere in there is a narrative

about a beautiful Black woman being held hostage—she’s tied to a couch, and Jin comes and rescues her. It’s ridiculous, or it would be if it were some sort of parody, but it seems to be serious, and it goes on forever. It ends with a chase scene as Jin races through the karate dojo and tries to get away from the gangster Jin, only to wind up in a face to face confrontation that ends with “To Be Continued.”

The most interesting part of the music video is the opening sequence that literally provides a narrative frame for the orientalist ‘story’.²⁵ A late model car pulls up outside a house and Jin steps out, dressed pretty much like himself, carrying a plastic delivery bag. He’s delivering Chinese takeout. He rubs a speck of dirt off a side mirror and then swaggers up the path to the house. He’s so full of attitude that you wonder, as you’re supposed to, how long he’s going to be holding down this job. Cut to inside the house, where three African American guys are sitting around in a living room watching TV and talking. A big poster of Jin is on the wall, and one of the guys wears a Ruff Ryder sweatshirt. You’re only several seconds into the sequence, but you already see that this is playfully ironic, and it’s good. One of the guys says, “Have you heard about this new Ruff Ryder movie about the brothers Chin?” Another asks, “The one about the Chin Chin? Yeah, that’s dope.” The first answers, “I’m telling you, that Mr. Chin Chin is gangsta dope—hey, there goes that joint right there!” and points to the TV. The guys turn their attention to the TV set, where Jin appeared—and we get sucked into it as the camera zooms into the TV and we’re suddenly watching/hearing Jin outside, climbing the steps up onto the porch and swaggering up to the door as we hear his voice declare “Yeah I’m Chinese... and what?” There’s fast intercutting between Jin outside knocking on the door and the guys inside watching him and carrying on a spirited (unheard) conversation about him; Jin pounds on the door, no one answers, and finally he throws the bag of takeout food at the foot of the door in disgust and swaggers away. As he goes down the front walk, he turns to the camera and looks the spectator right in the eye as he says, “Ya’ll gon learn Chinese.”

Then we're plunged into another world—out of the frame and into the song, where Jin is alternately seen out on the street as 'himself' surrounded by an urban nighttime crowd of young African American men, women, and sleek sports cars, and we then see him embedded in the other narrative about him as a high level Chinatown gangster. A curious aspect of the video is the moment, about halfway through, when Jin as 'himself' confronts Jin the gangster: he forces his way through the restaurant kitchen past cooks and goons and faces the gangster at his table in the fancy restaurant, where he is surrounded by a bevy of women. But the threat that he suggests is immediately and confusingly disarmed when the gangster directs his women to get up, and they rise from the table en masse and surround Jin/himself, waving scarves suggestively and overcoming him (apparently) with their sexiness. It's a weird extended moment (that coincides with the "Mr. Jin, you are the sexist man" lines)—it seems to be some odd misplaced harem trope, overlaid with the tired old trope of the Asian man who isn't masculine enough to stand up to women.

In short, for an Asian American viewer, the video is a disturbing *mélange* of old-fashioned orientalia (plus old-fashioned hip-hop misogyny). Oliver Wang offers a ruthless assessment of these issues:

... the video for "Learn Chinese" is rife with problems. One of the biggest and most obvious is Jin's gender politics - women figure in this video like they figure in most rap videos: sex objects desired for nothing more than their bodies. Disappointing but generically so. The more complicated issue is how Jin positions a racialized class element - the second verse of his song is basically about how gangsta Chinese can be, especially in Chinatown and this is Jin's attempt at equating, if not outdoing, the trope of the Black Ghetto by offering Chinatown as an even more lurid competitor. He's glamorizing the ethnic enclave in the same way that African Americans have glorified the ghetto and projects and Latinos talk about the barrio but Jin's approach to Chinatown is even less critical than these other examples.

[...]

Jin trades in one stack of stereotypes: kung fu fighters, take-out delivery men, etc. and just replaces them with another set of equally

suspect images.

Wang's critique is dead on, but the one thing I wonder about is his attribution of Jin as the instigator and 'author' of this narrative through these images. The interface between Jin's ideas, his efforts to sell his work, Wyclef Jean's role as producer, and Ruff Ryder decisions about how to handle an Asian MC in their constructed gangsta Black world is an interstice where I suspect Jin lost control over his product. At that level, everyone's guilty, and the fact is, Jin decided to leave Ruff Ryder a bit further down the road—not entirely out of a principled stand against misrepresentation but due to dissatisfactions with the promotion of his album.

The Rest is History reportedly sold only about 100,000 copies. Further, the album release was repeatedly delayed and then suffered due to lack of promotion despite guest appearances on the album by Kanye West, Wyclef and double R crew member Styles P. Some argue that the album simply wasn't very good.²⁶ Whichever the case, Jin relationship with Ruff Ryders changed in 2005. During the months leading up to that decision, though, the tsunami hit South and Southeast Asia on December 2004 killing about 229,000 people, and a Black-Asian controversy in New York showed a new side of Jin.

"The Tsunami Song" and The Emcee's Properganda

On January 18, 2005, three weeks after the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake, one of the most popular and successful hip-hop radio stations in New York City aired a parody song about the tsunami. Hot 97 WQHT-FM's show "Miss Jones in the Morning" played this song twice that morning, set to the melody of "We Are the World" but with a rather different message:

There was a time, when the sun was shining bright
So I went down to the beach to catch me a tan.
Then the next thing I knew, a wave 20 feet high
Came and washed your whole country away.
And all at once, you can hear the screaming chinks.
And no one was saved from the wave.

There were Africans drowning, little Chinamen swept away.
You can hear God laughing, ‘Swim you bitches swim.’

[Chorus]

So now you’re screwed. It’s the tsunami,
You better run and kiss your ass away. Go find your mommy.
I just saw her float by, a tree went through her head.
And now your children will be sold. Child slavery.

Outrage ensued. The Asian American community mobilized, protests and demonstrations were mounted, the radio station owner apologized and then suspended Miss Jones, etc. On January 25th, Jin released a rapped response (see Appendix C for the complete lyrics) that showed him at his best—in pure battle mode—but newly politicized.²⁷ He freestyled as follows:

and tell the rest of your staff that they need up clean up their act
fuck the tsunami song and whoever thought of it
matter fact, fuck the engineer that recorded it
and the brains behind the scenes that applauded it
anything for ratings huh?
this shit is corporate
that little bullshit statement has gotta be, the worlds most half ass
apology
thousands are still getting discovered each day
how dare you compare a life to a weeks pay
[...]

and its rare that I’m even rapping pissed
jin is far from a human rights activist
so dont take this in a political fashion
nope its just a good old lyrical bashing
in fact I'm making it a mission of mine
wont stop till every last petition is signed
hip hop is designed to unify the masses
and we demand that you be denied the access
radio is whack, yo somebody gotta say this
same five songs on every single playlist (god)
[...]

im juss sayin
dont let it be your peoples that they dissin next time
making fun of they tragedies just for a cheap laugh
and you sittin there like what the fuck
know what I’m saying
so keep them emails going through
keep them complaint letters goin out

keep them phones calls goin into the radio stations and the sponsors
 tellin 'em how you feel
 and what a fucked up move they made
 let 'em know
 let 'em know its about the people

This blistering critique is markedly different from Jin's cocky participation in the Chinatown gangster tropes of "Learn Chinese." Jin locates himself as the member of the broader Asian community and zeroes in on the corporate decisions that allowed the broadcast of the song, noting that the very structure of hip-hop radio creates a narrow channel... and in this case, a racist one.

Knowing his frustrations around the release of his album, it seems likely that he was already thinking about the ways that race and corporate decision-making are related, but putting it into fighting words marked a turning point for him. On May 18, 2005, he publicly announced that he was putting his career on hold, but reemerged in a matter of months as The Emcee and released his second album, *The Emcee's Properganda*, on October 25, 2005 not through Ruff Ryders but instead through CraftyPlugz/Draft Records, an indie label. That is, he made the radical decision to side-step one of the most highly-regarded recording labels in the hip-hop industry.

Many fans agree that *The Emcee's Properganda* has a distinctively indie/underground sound that is distinctively different from *The Rest is History*, and most also agree that the second album is much, much better. Jeff Yang writes (2006),

The push to include, and the resistance against inclusion, could also be seen in the rise, fall and rebirth of Asian America's hip-hop hope, Jin Auyeung, who went from beating all comers in rap battles to being signed by Ruff Ryders and releasing a much-anticipated but underwhelming and long-delayed debut album, *The Rest Is History*. Criticism, both from within and without the Asian community, prompted Jin to announce his retirement in May (on his MySpace site, no less). A few months later, he reemerged sans label and hype. Now calling himself simply The Emcee, he took home 50 grand in the Power Summit's annual rap battle in the Bahamas, and released a thumping indie sophomore album, *The Properganda*, that made his first one look like, well, history.

Though still officially under contract, Jin publicly accused Ruff Ryders of “not giving a damn” about him, or at least not knowing what to do with a playa from a different game.

It is far too soon to predict how Jin’s career will proceed, but in a remarkably short time, he has reformulated himself and his priorities. He has sharpened up his own race location and his approach to how race, the music industry, and emceeing interrelate. As far as I can tell, Jin doesn’t use the term ‘Asian American’ and is not trying to create Asian American community through his work. Rather, he has consistently worked in hip-hop environments that are interethnic but unavoidably focused on the Black-Asian encounter—this is in fact how he became famous. He is still at the very beginning of his career but has already gone from being a Chinese American interloper, to signing on with a major hip-hop label and releasing an album, to rejecting them and striking out on his own. At the time of this writing, he is immersed in a deliberately multiethnic circle of MCs and DJs. So he is not aiming for the GenerAsian mainstream, as it were—he is not primarily directed toward an Asian American audience. Instead, he is essentially doing the hard work of making it in hip-hop on his own, and without playing down his Asianness.

Jin is matter-of-fact about his ethnicity, not least because he had to be when freestyling: his opponents inevitably used it against him, so he developed an effective, strongly preemptive approach that sometimes plays into stereotypes of Asian superiority and insulated arrogance. Missing from his narratives is any trace of what Davé, Nishime, and Oren call “the familiar representation-based models that emphasize victimization and alienation” (2005:3). The long term question is how Jin will forge a second-generation Asian American profile through his work. To date, Jin’s work has proceeded along two separate but interrelated channels. His work with a major recording label resulted in commanding work that was (perhaps inevitably) laced through with orientalist commentary even as it insisted that the listener come around to his subjectivity. His political work since then has been increasingly independent and confident.

At the time of this writing, Jin has no fewer than three websites, and they each reflect different aspects of his career to date. His official Ruff Ryders website (jinsite.com, which stopped getting updates in December 2004) is essentially PR focused on *The Rest is History*. His MySpace.com site is constantly updated and is self-consciously geared toward Jin's creation of an independent persona—and I mean that both in industry and performative terms. His Emcee site (theemcee.com) originally promoted his second album but now represents his new work as a mentor for younger hip-hop artists, several of them Asian American but others not. Always working in interethnic (and especially African American) environments, he has proceeded with confidence even when called out for mediocre work. In a few short years, he has traveled from asserting Chineseness, to putting it out front, to moving back into a matter-of-factly interethnic milieu in which he collaborates and supports Asian American and African American MCs.²⁸

Conclusions

Asian American youth cultures are proliferating, and class is emerging as a particularly salient parameter. In choosing to participate in hip-hop culture, Asian American youth can (if they choose to) become part of a broader interethnic conversation about class, social justice, and a pan-minority configuration that carries tremendous political promise. On the other hand, the transpacific culture of northeast Asian cool reenacts the dangerous rhetoric of an open Pacific Rim and enfold its participants in its troubling logic. These two youth cultures—GenerAsians and hip-hop—are distinct but not hermetically sealed: they have points of contact and overlap, but in many ways seem to represent contrasting identifications, and they illuminate and reenact emergent class formations. Yet of course hip-hop isn't only consumed by the working class even though its habitus is wrought in that environment; its fan base in non-African American youth from the middle and upper middle class is well known. Nor is that dissemination uncontrolled or innocent: the industry establishes the terms for appropriation as the form has moved out from its point of origin. What happens, or

could happen, when GenerAsians listen to Jin? While no ethnic minority should have to apologize for upward mobility, the need for an articulated racial politics of socioeconomic success and transnational connection is more urgent than ever. The difference between transnational opportunity and opportunism isn't always clearly marked, and First World imperialisms are both the driving force and assumed outcome to Pacific Rim connections.

The rise and fall of *Yolk* magazine and Jin's comet-like ascendance and then rejection of the hip-hop music industry suggest that these new cultural formations are changing, shifting, and uneasily outlining new ways of thinking about generation and Asian/American links. Indeed, my undergraduates in 2004, looking only at "Learn Chinese," felt that Jin was the least politicized of several Asian American MCs, and I am fairly certain they would now see him differently. Then again, "Learn Chinese" and "Got Rice, Bitch?" were both in their ears during 2004, so it was easy to get deafened that year by hip orientalia.

As William Wei points out, college campuses and the youth generation remains a primary site for Asian American youth activism but in different ways from the 1960s. As a group, youth are more ethnically heterogeneous than they were in the 1960s and are more ready to accept the terms of social mobility. As Wei writes, "Indeed, they make no apologies for their middle-class aspirations and avidly pursue the so-called American dream" (2004:310). This connects to the deeper issue of how American race and class formations are linked, and some of these young people will discover that a glass ceiling is still solidly in place in American bureaucracies and corporations. As GenerAsians move into positions of greater power and responsibility, they will find that they need critical and political tools for addressing the carefully wrought links between race, class, nation, and capital. Those tools can be found in many places, from Ethnic Studies classes to Jin's asides. At a club in New York City,²⁹ Jin raised his fist to an almost entirely Asian American crowd and shouted,

“Where’re my fuckin’ Asians at?,” and they shouted back, smiling, bobbing, dancing. My hopes lie in these moments when pleasure, consumption, and action converge in thinking subjects.

Acknowledgments

Oliver Wang generously shared his thoughts and a draft of a forthcoming essay; I have learned much from him over the years. Scott Cook (Department of Chinese and Japanese, Grinnell College) went out of his way to find a website for me that included translations of the Cantonese phrases in Jin’s “Learn Chinese,” and I appreciate his help. I am grateful to Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and Paul DiMaggio for inviting me to participate in their symposium at Princeton University. The National Humanities Center provided the haven that allowed me to write this essay.

Appendix A, Lyrics from “Got Rice Bitch?”

The complete lyrics (from www.asianjoke.com/pictures/got_rice.htm) are:

It’s the AZN Nigga fuck the rest
 Dallas to New York Jigga we’re the best
 Vietnam to Japan to Mongolia
 Philippines to Taiwan to Cambodia
 Korea Ah Ah
 Home town China who you got Huh
 You got shit Nigga feel the Size
 It’s the AZN better recognize
 Got rice bitch, got rice
 Got food, got soup, got spice
 Got brainz like us, got skillz like us
 Got carz, got clothz, got girlz like us
 Whats sup we the shit we kill yall foolz
 We got money in the banks from our family jewelz
 Can we help it if we rain and corrupt the schoolz
 It don’t matta fuck the law shit we break the rules
 We jack carz fuck games yo we got the toolz
 Hoop it up break it down then we go shoot some pool
 Fuck with me you fuck with all of us don’t think its kool
 1 on 1 fuck that it’s 3 on 1, no duels
 Got rice bitch, got rice
 Anything you can show that’s nice
 Got cats, got roots, got dogs like us
 Fuck no, hell no your white you’ll never be like us
 Take off your shoes when you enter please
 Or crawl around on the floor on with your fucken knees
 Don’t mind that smell you’ll get used to it
 Mothballs, Fry squid, and that Buddha shit
 What the hell is that, You think I don’t see
 No forks in the house, chopsticks only

Have a taste Don't be scared to try the lemon tea
 You don't want to that's alright try the fuck home weed
 Got rice bitch, got rice
 Got luck anytime you roll the dice
 Your luck is bad unless you run and hide
 Cause we're thugs for life baby Asian Pride!

Appendix B, Lyrics from Jin's "Learn Chinese"

From <http://lyric.mayaage.com/lyric.php?act=lyric&lid=4451>, which includes translations of the Cantonese phrases in the song

Yeah I'm Chinese, and what?
 Yeah you know who this is, Jin, and let me just tell you this
 The days of the pork fried rice and the chicken wings comin to your
 house by me is over
 (This is it, it's crazy)
 (OVA!!!)

[Chorus]
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, ya'll gonna learn Chinese
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps come out, your gonna
 speak Chinese
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, (in Cantonese - *Police*)
 Ya'll gonna be Chinese (in Cantonese - *hurry lets go*)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps go off, ya'll 'gon speak
 Chinese

This is it, cause fuck you head man
 I know a bunch of crips that love redman
 And walk in New York, man things dun change
 STOP, the chinks do it again
 This aint Bruce Lee, ya'll watch too much T.V
 This is the game of death, when i aim for you chest
 And too much sex got me seeing slow motion, eyes barely open, with
 a roach roastin'
 And ur girl, she love the Jin motion, rub it on her body like body
 shop lotion
 What's the commotion? You never seen me?
 Original chinky eyed MC?
 you don't want to stop to the army
 Double-R, rank refugee
 And the barrel of the gun gon make you speak another language
 And amigo i ain't talking about spanish

[Chorus]
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, ya'll gonna learn Chinese (in Cantonese -
Really)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps come out, your gonna

speak Chinese
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, (in Cantonese - *Police*)
 Ya'll gonna be Chinese (in Cantonese - *hurry lets go*)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese, when the pumps go off, ya'll 'gon speak
 Chinese

This one goes out to those that ordered four chicken wings,
 pork fried rice and rolled dice in the hood
 You think shit is all good?
 To the cowboys roll through like Clint Eastwood
 I wish you would come to CHINA TOWN
 Get lost in town, end up in the lost and found
 Eye witnesses?
 You must be crazy, we don't speak English, we speak Chinese
 And the only po-po we know,
 Is the pigs on the hook by the window
 Each time they harass me I wanna explode
 We should ride the train for free, we built the railroads
 I ain't your 50 cent, I ain't your Eminem, I ain't your Jigga Man, I'm a
 CHINA man
 Ginseng in the palm of my hands, she looked surprised when she saw
 it in the palm of her hands
 And you know what's next?
 Safe sex, I'll be damned if I sleep with the flesh in the insect

[Woman singing]
 ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *This one sounds good. Let's give her a call on the
 phone.*)

Mr. Jin, you are the sexist man
 Mr. Jin, I love the way you do your things ([Jin in Cantonese:] *Really?*)
 Mr. Jin, you are the sexist man
 Mr. Jin, I love the way you do your things ([Jin speaking Cantonese:]
Come again?)

[Jin]
 The moral of the story is
 Don't judge a book by its cover
 I know you think he's fam, but he's really undercover
 I saw his name on the affidavit
 It was written in Chinese and this is what he said:
 ([Jin Speaking Cantonese:] *The Chinese restaurant is used for collecting debts*)
 Bring about some local hooligans and thugs so
 Catch them at midnight when they close the shop up
 Reading the Ten Commandments, cooking up heckka
 Movie small posters are all over the walls
 If they think you'd save me the bullet, it's so over ya'll
 Me, I'm just Jin just doing my thang
 Just doing my thang, just doing my thang
 ([In Chinese:] *sing a song and do a dance*)

Why is there beef everywhere I go?
 I'm drunk screaming, can't we all get along
 My ladies with the thongs, my thugs with the firearms

Ya'll gonna learn Chinese ([Wyclef:] all the ghetto)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese ([Wyclef:] all the suburb)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese
 When the pumps come out, ya'll gon' speak Chinese.
 ([Wyclef:] Refugees)

Ya'll gonna learn Chinese ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Police*)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Hurry, get out of here*)
 Ya'll gonna learn Chinese
 When the pumps come out, ya'll gon' speak Chinese

[Woman singing]

[Wyclef]
 The game will never be the same ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *It's finished*)
 Double-R refugees ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Let's go home*)
 First Chinese rapper ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Good night*)
 First Asian rapper
 Refugees
 ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Chinatown*)
 ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *Finished, it's finished*)
 ([Jin speaking Cantonese:] *That's it for now*)

Appendix C, Lyrics from Jin's "Tsunami Response"

From <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Tsunami-Response-lyrics-Jin/3FA5D95D1703CF5148256FA7001CB64F>

You got it twisted, If you think I'm here to cock block
 On a bunch of no talent wanna-be shock jocks
 Nah
 And they say it's all freedom of speech
 Well you just lost yours, read them and weep
 Wont be happy until you're fired
 My peoples is pissed holmes
 And I bet you not a solo miss jones
 Miss who? My point exact
 and tell the rest of your staff that they need up clean up their act
 fuck the tsunami song and whoever thought of it
 matter fact, fuck the engineer that recorded it
 and the brains behind the scenes that applauded it
 anything for ratings huh?
 this shit is corporate

that little bullshit statement has gotta be, the worlds most half ass
apology
thousands are still getting discovered each day
how dare you compare a life to a weeks pay
interesting, y'all quick to have a smack fest
but those that really need to ain't get slapped yet
and its rare that I'm even rapping pissed
jin is far from a human rights activist
so dont take this in a political fashion
nope its just a good old lyrical bashing
in fact I'm making it a mission of mine
wont stop till every last petition is signed
hip hop is designed to unify the masses
and we demand that you be denied the access
radio is whack, yo somebody gotta say this
same five songs on every single playlist (god)
and bad karma is the worst way to go
so I pray that god has mercy on your soul

yea
i mean you know I was gonna have something to say about this
whole situation
cause for some odd reason
whenever some shit like this happens in regards to my peoples in the
society, in the media
it always manages to get swept under the rug
or end up right below the radar for some reason
like it never happened
but let it be any other race and this shit woulda been hit the fan

all my soldiers out there
its time for our voices to be heard yo
its no more of that shit
but you know I got love for everyone
whether you black, white, hispanic
that's why I love hip hop cause it bring us all together
im juss sayin
dont let it be your peoples that they dissin next time
making fun of they tragedies just for a cheap laugh
and you sittin there like what the fuck
know what I'm saying
so keep them emails going through
keep them complaint letters goin out
keep them phones calls goin into the radio stations and the sponsors
tellin 'em how you feel
and what a fucked up move they made
let 'em know
let 'em know its about the people

and shout out to miss info too keep your head up ma
 yeah
 oh yeah and if all else fails
 just turn the bullshit off

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www.yolk.com

Archives of *Yolk* magazine past issues.

www.giantrobot.com

Website for both *Giant Robot* magazine and for their online store.

Endnotes

¹ In previous writings, I have used the term 'Asian American' a bit too sweepingly to describe all Americans of Asian descent. Thinking about current Asian-based American youth culture has forced me to rethink this and to attend more carefully to the specific historical conditions that created an 'Asian American' sensibility to begin with. As will become clear below, I do not think that this sensibility is entirely shared by young American Asians.

² The tight focus on relative generation that has traditionally served as a definitive model for Ethnic Studies reveals the genealogy of that young discipline, which emerged most directly from sociology.

³ As Sucheng Chan writes (1991:145),

The 1965 Immigration Act, which removed "national origins" as the basis of American immigration legislation, has changed the pattern of immigration into the U.S. more profoundly than its architects ever expected. Until that year, the immigrant stream had been predominantly European, with sizable contributions from the western hemisphere, particularly Canada and Mexico, since the 1920s. But after the 1965 law went into effect, Asian immigration has increased so steadily that Asians now compose more than half of the total influx. While Mexico is the source of the largest number of immigrants, the next four most important sending countries are the Philippines, Korea, China (the People's Republic of China on the Asian mainland and the Republic of China in Taiwan each has its own quota), and Vietnam.

Pyong Gap Min (2001:2) notes that there were 1.5 million Asian Americans in 1970 and 11 million by 2000, and that the ethnic diversity of Asian Americans also expanded after 1965 (including

secondary immigration, e.g., Chinese and South Asian immigrants arriving in the U.S. from the Caribbean, Africa, and the UK).

⁴ See the first chapter of George Lipsitz's *American Studies at a Moment of Danger* (2001) for a much more nuanced historiographical argument for how American Studies has gone through at least three stages of critical development, and how American studies scholarship in the 1980s-90s was a response, broadly speaking, to the Civil Rights movement and related social movements of the 1960s (racial minority movements, the women's movement, LGBT activism, opposition to the Vietnam War, etc.). He cites immigration as a related impetus in his compelling overview of how the U.S. has become less White due to massive Asian and Latino immigration since 1965 (2001:8-14). He argues that American studies has been responsive to these interrelated changes, and that "the 'other' American studies" has always been social movements that emerged from outside the academy. He writes, "The power of patriotism and patriarchy, of war and whiteness as cultural forces in the 1980s encouraged American studies scholars to see the price that previous movements for social change had paid by marginalizing issues of race, gender, and sexual identification..." (25).

⁵ A forthcoming collection titled *Alien Encounters: Pop Culture in Asian America*, edited by Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Tu, will offer further consideration of this emergent culture block.

⁶ Soo Ah Kwon (2004:10) argues that, for instance, the import street racing scene in California is marked by "new forms of pan-Asian identity among the current generation of Asian American youth," in which car racing teams consist of young Asian American men from different ethnic groups who come together via a rhetoric of "Asian pride." Kwon also notes that the cost of modifying cars means that the scene is dominated by middle and upper-middle class youth (11-12). See also Namkung 2004 on import car racing, Asian youth identity, and masculinity.

⁷ The "X" in the title of their collection is unexplained. It almost certainly refers to "Generation X," but is possibly also a reference to *American History X* (1998), a feature film that detailed how a neo-

nazi skinhead (actor Edward Norton) draws back from racist hate and tries to save his younger brother from a life of racist violence.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generasian_X, accessed on May 4, 2006.

⁹ Including *Annapolis* (2006) and *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006, forthcoming)

¹⁰ *Harry and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004) was in much the same vein: the film can be viewed as a comedy, or as Asian American satire (though not written or directed by Asian Americans): Asian ethnicity does no apparent ‘work’ for the plot.

¹¹ The political/cultural concept of Asian American “panethnicity” is from Yen Le Espiritu’s influential book, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (1992).

¹² The Wellesley College Asian/Asian American magazine is titled *GenerAsians*; ‘GenerAsians’ is a non-profit, university-based organization that addresses Asian/non-Asian interactions in Canada; ‘GenerAsians Together’ is a Toronto-based community-building organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Asian Pacific Canadians; etc.

¹³ In 1998 and again in 2000, for instance the “New GenerAsians survey” was commissioned by the Cartoon Network and conducted by ACNielsen. In 2000, 7,752 Asia Pacific youth aged 7-18 years were surveyed, including their attitudes, opinions, and buying habits (with an emphasis on fast food and snack preferences). The survey included youth in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam—in short, the term ‘GenerAsian’ in this case did not include the North American Asian diaspora. I would argue that the term is being absorbed into the corporate logic of a globalized Pacific Rim. See http://www.acnielsen.co.nz/MRI_pages.asp?MRIID=14 for more.

¹⁴ <http://yolk.com/about.html>, accessed on May 17, 2006.

¹⁵ <http://www.giantrobot.com/whatsgr/whatsgrindex.html>, accessed on May 17, 2006.

¹⁶ <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=azn>, accessed on May 17, 2006.

¹⁷ Found at <http://www.starterupsteve.com/swf/Asian.html>, titled “AZN Pride,” though it is now known more widely as “Got Rice, Bitch?”

¹⁸ At http://azntv.com/docs/AZN_Network_Overview.pdf, accessed on May 17, 2006.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_pride, accessed on May 18, 2006.

²⁰ In his “Biography” on jinsite.com.

²¹ I first heard about Jin in 2002 a few weeks after his repeated appearances and wins on *106 n Park*, when an Asian American undergraduate at Duke University told me I really ought to pay attention to him.

²² For instance, see the profile of Korean American rapper Jamez Chang (Ling 1999: 355-61).

²³ For instance, see Oliver Wang’s dissertation (2004) on Filipina/o American mobile crews in the Bay Area in the 1970s.

²⁴ In the track titled “Hip Hop and Other Drops.”

²⁵ Similarly, Oliver Wang cites the promise of the frame sequence (2003):

. The opening is particularly interesting - the fact that the first image we see is of three Black men watching Jin’s video (a video within a video) triggers me to want to think of what Laura Mulvey would say about this cross-racial, homo-social scopophilia but frankly, I don’t want to bore you with cinematic psychoanalysis. What’s interesting though is that I seem to think Jin is doing two things... he’s both making a critique, i.e. “this is how ignorant black people view us Asians” but it’s also an attempt to connect with a BET audience by suggesting that if black folk in the video can dig on this video, the BET crowd can too. The black trio are strawmen, to be sure, but they actually help to validate Jin on some level too.

²⁶ For instance, one online column by critic Brian Kayser stated:

So Jin quit!!! One down, 25,000,000 more wack rappers to go. Granted, Jin didn’t have it easy being an Asian MC, but he made wack career choices. He’s not a Ruff Ryder. Why sign with a group that does nothing but rap about drugs and guns? If you’re a battle MC, why sign? That’s like Sage Francis signing to SwishaHouse. What is it that’s so dope about Sage Francis? Seriously. Someone tell me. Jin damn man you gave up quick. I think like 150,000 people

bought that crap album, and you're gonna quit after that. You even sold out Asian culture on "Bridging the Gap" and got away with it. I remember hearin' stories about how you would harass mad people at shows and Fat Beats when Percee P used to be there to buy your CD... I had mad respect for you... then you put out ass songs and killed your career. Honestly Jin, if I were you, stop taking people's advice and do you. If you're [sic] strengths are battling and punchlines, why you gonna make a video with you riding on top of a car? That shit is corny. "Senorita" and "Learn Chinese" killed your career. I guess no one's gonna by that DVD "The Making of a Rap Star" now either. You ever see that shit in ads? Honestly Jin woulda been better on QN5. Damn Jin...

From <http://www.hiphopgame.com/index2.php3?page=column31>, accessed on May 22, 2006.

²⁷ The audio file of Jin's response was widely available on various websites (including his MySpace site) for quite a few months, but it is no longer posted anywhere, as far as I can tell.

²⁸ *The Emcee's Properganda* was produced by African American DJ The Golden Child, and it features Asian American MC Yung Mac and Chinese American rapper L.S.

²⁹ *Jin: The Making of a Rap Star*, "New York City Club Performance."