

**Author:** Eileen Lagman

**Title:** Constructions of Asian American Student Identity in the Race and the University Rhetoric Course

**About the Author:**

**Keywords:** Asian American, writing, race, curriculum

**Abstract:** This proposal for research explores the effects of a multicultural curriculum on Asian American students in the college writing classroom. By studying a Race and the University (RATU) section of the first-year rhetoric course, I plan to explore the extent to which a curriculum designed around issues of race affects Asian American students' negotiations of a racial identity within this curriculum and how it affects students' understanding of the writing they are expected to produce.

**Initials:** ASSIGNMENT ONE: ANALYSIS OF DEAN OF WOMEN'S  
I CORRESPONDENCE

**Exercise:** The document that I am looking at is a typed letter dated March 19, 1925 addressed to Maria Leonard, who was the Dean of Women at the University of Illinois. The letter is on a "Fifty-Fourth General Assembly of the State of Illinois" letterhead and is from Illinois Senator A. H. Roberts. I found the letter in the Dean of Women Subject File in the Student Life and Culture Archives. The box that it came from was titled "Administrative Affairs." While the other folders consisted of general correspondence, enrollment statistics, constitutions and bylaws for various committees, this folder was titled "Colored women 1923-1940."

Finding a folder titled "Colored Women" felt a little bit like hitting the jackpot, since I spent about 30 minutes rifling through other boxes in the Dean of Women Subject file and in the YWCA subject file and finding nothing specifically related to black students before the 1960s. But all the contents within the folder were photocopies, not the original documents, because, according to Ellen Swain, there was rich information in the folder and they wanted to preserve the originals. I also had a little difficulty getting to the Dean of Women series because there were access restrictions in place, so I needed to fill out request form

which was faxed somewhere, and then wait for approval. Ellen said it was because there were some evaluative records within the documents, but she was able to get me the box I requested and asked that if I was going to use those documents, that I not include the real names of the students.

Though there were several different documents within the folder that related to the Dean of Women and the black students on campus, most of them seemed to center around the issue of obtaining the first official on-campus housing for the small group of black female students at the university (referred to as “colored girls” throughout most of the folder.) Though housing may not seem to have a direct relation to literacy, I was interested in the idea of campus housing as impacting how students felt about being part of the literacy community that college creates. There seems to be an interesting relationship between obtaining university sponsored housing—as opposed to housing off campus—and acceptance by the university community. Several of the other documents in the folder revealed that even with the eventual attainment of on-campus housing, black students still faced other struggles that made their living conditions and their lives as college students very difficult.

In the letter, Senator A. H. Roberts writes about a trip that he made to the University with other members of the General Assembly for funding purposes. Roberts states that he “came in contact with several of the colored student body and made anxious inquiry as to how they were getting along.” Roberts explains that the students said they were “handicapped in the way of housing” and Roberts offered help in securing some “financial encouragement” for a girl’s dormitory. He writes, “I am told by some of them, on account of the difficulty in securing proper accommodations, the attendance of these girls is very much cut down. If they had a convenient dormitory, well equipped where they could be housed at a minimum cost to themselves, I think it would be one of the finest things that could be brought about.” It seems that Roberts was concerned for the physical well-being of the students, and says to Leonard “as you know, many of these girls come with limited means,” but also concerned with the way living accommodations were influencing their academic performance. I did a quick Google search and found out that Roberts is a black state senator from Chicago. This led me to wonder about the role of the government in the college education of black students during Jim Crow and how Roberts being a black state senator influenced what was done of his request. It is interesting to think about Roberts and his using his own literacy to intervene in the lives of

these women.

The documents that follow in the folder reveal some of the complications with the Roberts' request and it seems that you can't really understand the difficulty of the task that Roberts is asking without them. For example, also in the folder is a letter from Leonard in response to Roberts written just seven days later. In the letter, she writes about what the University was doing in order to set up the housing for the students and she claims, "We went into the situation very cautiously as the President wanted the urge [to live in the campus housing] to come from the parents of the young women so that the young women would not feel that we were forcing them to live in one house. The question uppermost in our minds was "Is the time ripe for a house for the colored University women?"

These statements seemed to suggest that there was some effort by the administration to be accommodating of the black students and there was some sensitivity to their experience at the university. Another document that suggests sympathy on the part of the administration is a report titled "Boarding and Housing Conditions of Colored Students of the University of Illinois, 1929-1930." There is nothing on the document that lists what it was for, who it was written by, and who might read it, but the report lists the names of all the black students on campus (54 women and 84 men) and where they were eating their meals. After the list, there is a section that details the difficulty of dining on campus:

"Men too, may take advantage of the noon meal at the cafeteria. On Wright Street, a Mr. Diehl, owns a little two by four wooden structure where colored may eat. His food is poor and he grumbles whenever the students protest concerning the dirty conditions of the glasses, dishes, etc. Any further information concerning this, and other conditions, will be readily furnished by any Negro student on the campus, many of whom have been caused to suffer not only physically, but mentally, because of these existing conditions. Every restaurant owner, in and around the campus, has refused them service on the grounds that other students will quit patronizing him if he serves colored."

But at the same time, the last question in Leonard's letter shows that there was some worry about how the University's actions might be perceived by the public. Also in the folder was a newspaper clipping from July 17, 1928. The title of the publication is not included anywhere on the clipping, but the title of the article is "Urbana Council keeps Hands off Frat." The article discusses a protest by Urbana citizens at a city council

meeting against “a University colored sorority” that was going to occupy a house on campus.

All the documents in the folder gave a sense of the procedure to obtain housing and the specific considerations the university had to make for black students—particularly funding for the housing and how their actions would be seen by the students and to the public. Yet, there is much more that could have shed light on the Senator Roberts original letter, including information about Senator Roberts and other work that he was involved in, his relationship to the University, and to college campuses. In what other ways did he intervene in the education of black students at UIUC and other campuses? In addition, more digging through the Dean of Women’s folder might have revealed more about the role of the Dean of Women in the University, her responsibilities and how the administration saw their role in the education of black students. I also am wondering about the other ways that black students were separated from white students on campus—did they take separate classes? How was the education of black students funded at University of Illinois and other campuses? Missing from the file are the voices of the students themselves. It would be interesting to hear from students to see if they saw any relation between their living accommodations and their education. Did the students ever write, speak out, or use their literacy to affect their living conditions on campus?

-----  
-----  
-----

## **ASSIGNMENT TWO: ANALYSIS OF MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION (1906)**

I went into the archives with a few ideas of what I wanted to look at and specifically wanted to learn more about the classroom experience for African American students. The staff at the archives was really helpful and after discussing where would be a good place to look, they pointed me to a row of books on the wall that contained the minutes of the Council of Administration, which we discovered were not yet in the Guide. We looked through the index for the terms "negro" and "colored" and were able to find something under "Negro student, personal difficulty with." It took a while to find the actual document, since the index listed the incorrect book number.

I'm not sure why they did not have these books in the guide yet and it seemed they had never before though to look through them for what they might indicate about the African American experience. Maybe because the council only existed from 1890–1932? There was only one report in the guide related to black students—maybe it wasn't worth including in the guide because it was just one document? It seems that the "3/1/1" records, as the staff referred to them, were possibly more important for what they indicated about the strictness of the council (University President Harry W. Chase called it "the most autocratic body in U.S. Higher Education and wanted it abolished) and for the silly and intricate ways that it involved itself into students' lives, and so maybe issues related to African American students were not the first thing that came to mind when thinking about the records? The way that the report is indexed (which is interesting as "negro student, personal difficulty with" as opposed to discrimination or race relations) might have also caused the report to be overlooked. I'm also thinking that because the document was from 1906 and before most racial equality projects were documented that perhaps no one thought of searching through this earlier time period.

But I think that the information that this document provides makes it worth including in the Guide. Last week, I found some documents about segregated accommodations for black students on campus, and wondered if students were segregated in the classroom. If they were not, I wondered what the experience was like for black students to be in the classroom with whites when they were segregated in other areas in their university life. Finally, I wondered how this segregation affected their learning in the classroom—were their opportunities different? Did they get the same materials/resources? Did instructors treat them differently?

The document I found provides some answers to these questions and raises more questions. It is a report of the minutes of a council meeting from May 29, 1906. The minutes start with a description that W. W. Smith (who was the first African American student to receive a degree from the University) and C.L. Mowder went before the council to discuss a fight that took place between them. The report states that the disagreement started when Smith "attempted to remove some materials" from Mowder's table in an engineering lab. During the argument, Mowder "applied a offensive epithet to Mr. Smith involving an illusion to his race." Smith didn't take the remark well and the report states that there would have been a fight between them had it not been for the intervention of other students. The report also states that later in the same day, "Mr. Smith deliberately crossed the street and attacked Mr. Mowder, administering

physical punishment for what he considered a personal offense." Smith testified that Mowder threatened "further vengeance." That was all that appeared in the report, which was sandwiched between reports about compensation for the band and correspondence about whether bulldogs should be allowed in frat houses. There was no mention of the event in the rest of the book, and no mention about what punishments were given, if any.

The report tells us that black students did in fact take the same classes as white students and used the same materials. It tells us that this was not always a peaceful situation and problems involving race did exist. It also sheds some light on the possible attitudes of white students toward blacks. It is interesting, though, that this is the only report like this in the whole series. The council dealt with all incidents from 1890–1932, and the fact that this was the only racial incident reported suggests that this was either a rare occurrence, or that it happened more often and was not dealt with in an official manner. It actually seems like the report was more about the physical confrontation and the "racial epithet" was a secondary matter. This could be worth looking into more. The report itself contained very dry language and didn't seem to suggest that it sided with one side over another, so it is hard to interpret what attitudes or feelings the administration might have had toward black students.

The report also paints an interesting portrait of Smith, who is listed on the *Early American Museum: The Heritage Center of Champaign County* website, as the first African American graduate of the University, first Illini newspaper editor, and tackle for the football team. He received two degrees from the university and went on to be a civil engineer. This, along with his very distinguished looking picture, seem to suggest he wouldn't be the type of person to chase someone across the street and beat them up. Perhaps it might be worth looking into his life more to gain his perspective of the African American experience at UIUC. I'm wondering what grades he received and what sort of remarks he got on his essays—I'm still left wondering how instructors treated black students at the time. Also, I wonder if he met with other black students on campus, if he was part of a church group or other school organization that would have been another "site for rhetorical education." I wish that the report given would have quoted Smith directly, so that some of his voice could be heard. I did not look into this, but perhaps there are some editorials or articles of his in the newspaper that might give us more insight.

Question  
:

Plan [INTERVIEW PROTOCOL](#)  
:

Trainor's book has encouraged me to reflect on my own experience doing multicultural and critical pedagogy in the current Race and the University (RATU) course I'm teaching. But unlike Trainor, the students that I instruct are mostly Black with a small percentage of Latinos and Asians—a demographic that is consistent throughout the Academic Writing Program (AWP). I am interested primarily in examining the responses of AWP students and AWP instructors to the RATU course and how the success of the RATU course in doing antiracism work can be measured. In a secondary way, I am also interested in how the specific racialized context of the AWP classroom affects these responses to RATU. To narrow down my focus for the scope of our assignment, I am thinking of focusing primarily on Asian American students, because of my own personal interests and because there seems to be a lack of scholarship on the position of Asian Americans in basic writing courses and in their reaction to multicultural and critical pedagogy.

So my research question is something like this: how do Asian American students respond to multicultural and critical pedagogy in the AWP RATU course? Some of the smaller related questions I'm interested in are: How do Asian American responses to this pedagogy differ from that of other races? Does the setting of an AWP classroom, as opposed to maybe a sociology classroom, affect their responses? How exactly did the racialized structure and context of AWP come about and how does it affect current pedagogy? What response to this pedagogy is the desired response? What are the benefits and risks of the RATU course? Do instructors factor in the racial makeup of their students while teaching an AWP course or a RATU course?

The person I am interviewing is an Asian instructor teaching a RATU course in AWP who I already know from bi-weekly RATU instructor meetings. I chose this person because she offers a perspective that can speak to all the areas that I'm interested in examining. I am hoping she can speak to issues she has seen with Asian and Asian American students, give insight as to how her own racial identity affects her take on multicultural and critical pedagogy, and give insight into the students' response to her as an Asian instructor. She has also taught the RATU course more than once and has been an instructor in AWP for more than a semester, so I believe she would have plenty of classroom experience

to speak from.

I plan to conduct the interview in the AWP office for the sake of convenience and because it is a setting where she would be in her element as an instructor, which is the perspective I'd like her to speak from. In that setting, I often talk with her as a fellow instructor, which I think is the perspective I'd like to take as the interviewer. One potential downfall of this location is that the "office" is a bunch of desks with cubicle partitions, so it is loud and other instructors may hear her responses. I think I will have to get her reaction to the interview location to see if she is comfortable with this. I plan on using a digital recorder to capture the interview.

I am thinking that I would disclose to her as much about the study as possible. Since I am asking her to speak from three perspectives—as an Asian instructor, an AWP instructor and a RATU instructor, it seems that revealing what my questions are and also the process of inquiry I had will perhaps help her to see the perspective from which I am asking—as another fellow Asian AWP/RATU instructor and also a researcher interested in Asian student response to multicultural and critical pedagogy. I also agree with the notion from Fontana and Frey's "From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text" that the interview is a negotiated and collaborative process. In this way, I am asking her to "make meaning" collaboratively with me to help us both better understand the questions being asked. So, I think sharing with her the goals and questions of the study will help achieve this. I would see my relationship to my interviewee as similar to the relationship Trainor has with Elizabeth—my interviewee acts as both someone providing information, someone whose discourse I'm examining, but also someone is ultimately helping me understand what are the issues and what are the important things to pay attention to. I decided to do what Fontana and Frey would call a semistructured interview or "the open-ended, ethnographic (in-depth) interview" (652) because it would allow the interview to be guided toward some goal but at the same time be flexible so that I could follow other avenues her answers might bring to light.

I tried to be conscious of the language in the interview questions and use terms that both the interviewee and I would understand in the shared context of instructors in AWP and RATU. In ordering the questions, I decided that I wanted to start with general questions to help me get to know the interviewee better as an instructor and to understand her motivations, approaches, and goals in teaching. I then decided to move on to her role as a RATU instructor, first starting with questions about her

students, then moving on to texts from the course. The last set of questions ask more of her interpretations of the course and students' responses to it. I decided to save these for later in the interview after she has already spent some time reflecting on the actual class structure. The last few questions ask her about her perception of what is "racist" and her encounters of such discourse in the classroom, and also her identity as an Asian instructor. I wanted to put these questions last (though I am still debating on this order) because I thought that I'd try to encourage answers from her first about her pedagogy that may be unconsciously affected by her racial identity, and then have her reflect on her racial identity and attitudes toward race after her pedagogy has been articulated.

I am hoping the interview will give me insight into the perspective of an experienced RATU instructor and insight into the responses and effectiveness of multicultural pedagogy through the RATU course. I hope the interview raises more questions and complicates my own understanding of the RATU course and its pedagogical goals.

#### **Interview questions:**

1. How long have you been an AWP instructor?
2. How did you come to decide to teach in AWP?
3. How long have you been a RATU instructor?
4. How did you come to decide to teach a RATU course?
5. What are the goals for your RATU course?
6. How many students do you have in your current RATU class?
7. What is the racial makeup of the students in your current class?
8. How do you typically prepare to teach a course each day?
9. How did you choose the texts to include in your syllabus?
10. What texts have generated what you believe to be successful student response?
11. What texts have generated what you believe to be disappointing student response?
12. What assignments, discussions, or class activities do you think prompted the most successful student work?
13. What assignments, discussions, or class activities were the least successful?
14. What do you think is the most difficult part of teaching the RATU course?
15. Has there been anything that students have said in class or in their writing that has bothered or disturbed you?
16. Do you think students of different races respond to the course

differently?

17. Do you think your position as an Asian instructor affects how students respond to you or the class texts/discussions?

Data [INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT](#):

:

E: My first question is how long have you been an AWP instructor, and a sort of follow-up question is how did you decide to teach in AWP?

I: I see. Well, this is my fourth semester. Like I said, I took off a year, so I taught a year. I taught in my second year in the writing studies program. The first year, I taught ESL because that it was I had been teaching previously at DEIL...so I did that and in my second semester I worked in the Writer's Workshop, and so this would be my fourth semester.

E: Fourth semester teaching AWP?

I: Yeah.

E: I know that AWP instructors have more requirements for teaching experience, and that often AWP instructors volunteer to teach AWP, so how did you get into teaching it?

I: Well, initially, I didn't think I had the qualifications of teaching a rhet class to begin with because I'd only taught ESL and oh gosh, I was scared at first. I did apply for it, but then, I was scared.

But I felt more comfortable with AWP than rhet, because, you know, considering the demographics of the students, it resembled more to the students I taught previously. That's why I felt more comfortable. But actually, I didn't anticipate on getting so...such a diverse uh, group of students. I thought that, oh you know, most of them would be white. But then..

E: Really? (surprise)

I: Yeah, I don't know why, but that was my assumption before teaching rhet. That's why I thought AWP would be the less stressful compared to....and I didn't want to teach BTW too.

E: Oh. (Laugh) so those were your two options?

I: Yeah.

E: Okay. So how long have you been teaching Race and the University, and how did you decide to teach that, because that was voluntary right?

I: Mmm-hmm. This is my second semester; last semester was my first. And the reason I wanted to teach it because I took courses that were affiliated to EUI. Especially, I took Nancy Abelman's course, who was the creator of EUI. I took a course before her with someone else also in Anthropology. And I liked it.

E: Ethnography?

I: Mmmm-hmm. Ethnography. And that's where I decided to do my own future research doing that method. That's another reason I'm teaching this. Because it's related...you know, I would learn a lot from teaching it. So those are the primary reasons. So does that make sense? I took a course. I knew how it affected the students, how it worked within the class.

E: Oh okay. So it wasn't necessarily because you were interested in the race stuff, it was more for the ethnography, and the research method.

I: And also race....being a racial minority myself I thought it was interesting. It would be a unique course that would focus a lot on not only myself, but other minority groups on campus. Does that make sense?

E: Yeah, it does.

E: So, my next group of questions kind of have to do with your particular Race and the University class. My next question is what are the goals you have for teaching Race and the University, both in terms of methods and research methods and writing and what you want them to understand about race too?

I: Well, as for race. I want...they're fairly new to the campus. You're teaching them in the first semester of the school year. I want to provide them with an environment where they can get comfortable with the idea of being around, being in a very racially diverse environment on campus, because I don't think a lot of people are used to that. So I try to provide an environment where they can explore not only themselves, but other races. Not only their race but other races. And just be open, and become comfortable talking about it because... as you've experienced, they don't

know how to talk about it, and they feel really uncomfortable. Not because their ummm, biased or their prejudiced, but because they don't know. So that's one thing. I'm just kind of disappointed that we don't have a lot of white...white students. I mean that's one thing. Another thing, in terms of the research process...I've taught writing, to different groups, but still I've taught writing and I guess, the method that I'm using now is the most effective, not just giving them a research project, but going and taking them along the steps.

E: Right, the process.

I: The process, yes. And I think giving input, and just that whole idea.

So yeah, letting them come up with their own ideas of what research is by exploring and not just coming up with a fifteen page paper, but just going through that process, thinking about the process.

E: So how many students do you have in your current class, and what...if you could guess, I guess...the racial makeup of your students?

I: There's only eight.

E: That's so nice.

I: One dropped out.

E: Oh. (laugh).

I: Well. Umm...it was actually sad because he had to go back...because of the exchange rate, he had to go back to Korea. I guess his parents were paying for tuition and everything here. So I have, I don't know, this semester it's kind of strange. Out of eight I have let's see....four Koreans. I have one South African.

E: Oh, interesting.

I: Mmm-hmm. He's on the track team. He's white, and...you know they have this whole different idea of race, so that's interesting. I'm trying to be careful though...

I have three athletes. I have one football player who's black...African American. I have a Caucasian. She's disabled. She's on the women's basketball wheel-chair team. And also track team. And she's been to the

Olympics two times...the Paralympics.

E: Wow, that's a diverse group.

I: It is, it is. In terms of you know experience. And she...I found out that she's adopted. She's an adoptee from Russia. And she also has two adoptee sisters.

And another is a Chinese student who just came.

E: International?

I: Yeah. So among the four Korean students, two are exchange students. So, uh, and one is from Canada. So I think he moved from Canada when he was in middle school or high school, and one is just an international student. I think he came in high school too, to the US. But actually, these two speak better English.

E: Oh, interesting...what about last semester?

I: Oh last semester was such a nice group. I had like one Mexican, one Puerto Rican, two...they were also Hispanic. I can't remember off the topic of my head where from. I had uhmm one or two Chinese students I think, two Korean, one Korean American. That was kind of interesting because she had no Korean traits at all. She was...she seemed like a white girl from the rich suburbs. She dressed, she spoke...that was kind of weird. And there were a lot of tensions because of that.

E: That's interesting. We've got to talk about that more later.

I: And umm I've had, a girl from Taiwan. It was diverse. I had two African Americans. So I had a very nice mixture. And the only white girl that came in the first day, she moved.

E: She moved to a different class?

I: I think because I don't think she liked the idea of the themed course because I think she moved to another RATU instructor's class and asked if it was about race, and I think she moved again.

E: Were you teaching 101? Or 103?

I: 103

E: Oh I see. Even the difference between 101 and 103 is so different. Because I have mostly black students.

I: Really?

E: and I have a few international. But yeah, out of my fourteen students, eight of them are black, umm...two are Asian American...well they call themselves Asian American because they've been in the country since like middle school.

I: Korean?

E: Chinese actually.

I: Because that phenomenon has gone to China now. The early study abroad. That's my research topic actually.

E: Well, I think their parents were like immigrants. So they went through the whole school system

I: Ohh, I see.

E: Yeah, and their opinions of the class are...I don't want to like be labeled international or FOB

I: Really? (surprised)

E: Yeah, because they want to be American.

I: But they don't speak or act like American?

E: They speak and act like Americans, but their writing has the issues.

I: Even grammatically? They speak? They don't have the accents?

E: Ummm...in speaking they have the accent, in terms of their personalities, and the things they like to write about...

I: That's strange because a student of mine last semester, who was also Chinese and she was so excited about getting her citizenship. And she got it last semester. And...there was something about becoming an American, that whole idea.

E: Yeah. Well I think those two students I have that have been in the

country for a while, they are so different to me compared to those who have just come here, or have been here just a couple years. In terms of how they even view their own writing...like the ones who have been here longer, they'll like get their paper corrected by a friend, because they don't want to sound foreign.

I: Really?

E: Yeah. They're more conscious of that whereas my other students are not.

I: That's so interesting.

E: Yeah. Anyway...so. Well, how do you typically prepare to teach a course...each day for the race class how do you typically prepare for the course?

I: Umm. My course material and plans depend on what I did the previous semester, and I try to adjust it to that particular group of students, because, as you know, they're all different. As a group, the dynamics are different. I try to find out what's....with every writing assignment that they give me...I decide on what to focus on in the following couple of class. So if I notice a lot of paragraph development problems, I go through material on that topic and then bring it into class.

E: Okay, so you adjust as you go along.

I: Well, I look at their writing, and I see what they need most. What would be the first thing that would be logical.

E: Okay. So how did you come to choose the text in the syllabus for the race class?

I: Well most of it is from previous EUI classes, and based upon that, this semester, I work a lot with another RATU instructor and that helped too, collaborating. We try to throw out ones that didn't work, pick out new ones that's more up to date, and are more concerned with today.

E: Right. Umm..is there a particular texts that have worked well? Or texts that didn't work well?

I: You mean readings?

E: Yeah. In terms of student response to them...

I: I don't know. I can't really say. It varies depending on who responds to it. They did have their likes and dislikes though. The ones that were really dense, apparently they didn't like.

E: Like the theory stuff?

I: Yeah, the theory, the concepts and all that. With more narratives they like because it's easier to read, and I think they relate it more to themselves and their lives here.

E: Hmm. So, do you try to measure in terms of like, their thinking about race as they go along, so I guess do you try to choose texts that challenge them or challenge what they already know?

I: I would like to. I mean, at the beginning of the course, I try to just present the concepts. But as we go along, I would like to give them something that, as you said, that would challenge their thoughts or ideas about race, but it's hard to find things like that. Unless you spend hours and hours looking for something. So I wish we had more resources. More support? More collaborative work?

E: Well, how do you define whether they responded to something well, I guess?

I: How do I know?

E: Yeah.

I: Well, they have a lot to say. When they do response. That's how I know. They have a lot to say in class and on paper.

E: And so when they're not talking, you know they didn't like it or didn't get it.

I: Uh huh.

E: Okay. Kind of the same question, but in terms of class assignments and activities. So what assignments worked the best? And what worked not so well.

I: Assignments as in?

E: Writing assignments...activities you do in class...

I: Well, assignments are assignments. I don't really know if I could differentiate one from the other. They're only journals and the big essays.

E: Okay.

I: I think, they're similar. Uhhh, in terms of activities...the word activity is different from the word activity I used in ESL, because there it's more game-oriented. But here when you say activity, I don't know...maybe I should make it more game-oriented or more fun.

E: Well, I mean, group work or something like that?

I: Most effective? I can say...well this semester group work is good because this group is more serious, so they try to find things to say and try to help each other.

E: Well, plus you guys have such a small class.

I: And that's another thing. It's not hard to talk as a group, a whole group.

E: Oh okay, so you mostly do class discussions.

I: Uh huh. But you know last semester when I had more students I would divide them up. They didn't like it at first.

E: Dividing into groups?

I: They didn't like the idea of getting into groups.

E: It could be because they're used to being told stuff. It's weird because my students, they put on their evaluations that they like group work, but when I put them in groups they don't talk to each other.

E: Well, what do you think is the most difficult part of teaching a Race and the University course?

I: Ohhh, its leading the discussions. Because, (sigh), sometimes, I get stuck in a situation where I don't know how to comment or respond. Ugghhhh, I mean those are awkward. Because you know there are those moments where you feel a little tension and you need to resolve it somehow but you don't know what to say. You don't want to worsen the

situation by saying something wrong or biased that might offend one group and side with the other. That's the hardest. Discussion. So I've been looking into how to lead effective discussions. (Laughs) I'm not a good discussion leader.

E: Yeah, my students say controversial things all the time. I don't know maybe I don't handle it well either. I just let them duke it out between themselves.

I: Well, because sometimes you feel kind of compelled to be the teacher. Not only a facilitator, but a teacher that will give a lesson.

E: Well, what kind of lessons do you think, in that situation, are we trying to give? I guess that's my question. How do we know that we've taught them to be antiracist in these discussions that we have about these race texts?

I: I'm sorry, the question is...how do we?

E: I guess, what's our goal, in terms of having discussions like when students are talking about things that offend other people, or students are talking about things that might appear racist. And then, you know, you talked about wanting to be the teacher in that circumstance, so what are we teaching, do you think?

I: I don't know? Teaching them to be better communicators with issues like these.

E: In terms of being more sensitive?

I: Being more sensitive and more responsible for what they say. So I guess that's what we're teaching.

E: Okay. That makes sense

I: This is another thing. Maybe, this might be different from other instructors. Because we come from an Asian background, especially me, I grew up in Korea, came here. Most of my education was in Korea. I came here five years ago. So that teacher figure. I mean, I do have my own idea of a teacher figure but still I'm sure it's been influenced by my education in Korea and how teachers should be or should be..I don't know.

E: Well, what's that like? More authoritative?

I: Yeah. Back in Korea it's more...you know, teacher is king. You don't really say anything. That's why we're not used to discussions. So when I'm one to one, I can talk. But when I get into a group, I tend not to talk. In our meetings maybe, I don't talk as much...do I?

E: Oh, neither do I. (laughs)

I: So that's one of the things I can't get used to.

E: So does that influence the way that you teach then?

I: Sometimes I think. But I try to be conscious of how I've been taught and what I don't like about it. And what I like about this new system. But still kind of incorporate some of the elements from my experience as a student.

E: Has there been anything that students said in class that has either bothered or disturbed you?

I: In class? Well, ummm. It didn't bother me because it came out offensively. But, let's see. I don't remember.

E: So nothing too shocking?

I: No, I don't think so. Because I emphasize that students need to be sensitive and careful about what you say, in the beginning a lot, so they...maybe that has a very negative effect also. I should think about that. So they refrain a little.

E: So you think they don't say what's really on their mind?

I: Or they write things that seem like the right response, or the way that they should be thinking or responding. Be more political...or be a more ideal person on paper.

E: That's interesting though, because a lot of the critical stuff that they read tells them not to do that or to challenge those ideas.

I: Well maybe I mean, it trains them to be a better person. Because once you start writing or thinking like that, you want to become that person.

E: Yeah, its tough.

I: Its complicated.

E: Do you think students of different races respond to the course differently?

I: (long pause)

E: And I guess I'm more interested in the Asian students.

I: I guess it depends on their experience. So ones I mean just looking from my Korean students in my class right now and my Chinese student, so there's five, it depends on where they came from and what environment they've been exposed to so the ones from Korea, they don't take it personally. They're more distanced from it. Like you know an outsider viewing the American racial culture. As for....kids who have been here since high school or middle school, they do, but their not really. I think its because they're students and because it's their first year. They haven't been exposed to a lot of issues or conflicts or controversies regarding race. And they all take it in as fairly something new.

E: And that's across the board, from the Asian Americans to the African Americans?

I: Well no, actually the people who come from the inner cities, like from my last semester, they have different thoughts. Especially African Americans....and...should I say Latino Americans? Their thoughts are different because they've been exposed to the racial. But with Asians, I don't know. They're mostly from the suburbs.

E: Okay, do you think your position as an Asian instructor affects how students respond to you or to the class discussion?

I: I'm sure, I'm sure. Because if I was Caucasian, it would have....I don't know, it would have come to them as, you know, one of "them." But being Asian, one of the minorities, you're one of "us," so you feel more comfortable maybe, talking about those issues.

E: So you mentioned last time we talked that you're thinking about international TAs and the affect that has, so do you think you being an international Asian effects how students perceive the class?

I: Greatly. I think that can be an advantage a lot of times. Teaching a

diverse group...you know being in AWP means that you lack certain abilities in writing and that's why you were put there, so kind of sympathizing with them and their process I think helps them a lot to open up and realize that you know, I've been there, I know what they're going through. So they share a lot of personal things with me in that respect.

E: Problems they're having with writing?

I: Mmhm. And also personal problems, especially Korean students. They open up, they talk to me about their personal problems, problems with their family.

E: So that creates a different dynamic?

I: I intimidate them less maybe?

(interview ends because her student shows up for a conference).

**Disc** **Transcript Discussion:**  
**uss:**

Some of the choices I had to make while transcribing were to take out several of the digressions that didn't really have to do with the interview. For example, my interviewee referenced classes that she thought I should take and some other things about graduate school, and I left those things out. I also tried to edit some phrases for clarity when the pauses or the phrasing were confusing to follow.

There were a few instances for both myself and my interviewee where I corrected the English, mostly because in leaving them in, they seemed to just cause confusion and didn't really have anything to do with meaning. My interviewee is an international student, and I tried to be conscious of what type of meaning language would convey and how non-perfect non-standard English would represent her. But a lot of instances that didn't get in the way of meaning, I decided to leave in because they seemed more reflective of conversational style rather than "lack of ability".

I decided to transcribe non-verbal cues where they seemed to provide an additional meaning to what was being said. For example, there were a couple instances where my interviewee paused for a very long time, and this stood out to me because to most of the other questions, she responded very quickly. These pauses seemed to come whenever she was answering a race and pedagogy related question. There were also a couple instances of laughter I decided to transcribe, because I think they

showed the level of comfort that I had with the interviewee.

Finally, there were a couple of places in the interview where I wanted the transcription to show some disconnect between me and the interviewee. There were one or two instances in the interview where I decided to transcribe surprise—both surprise on my part to her responses and surprise from her to my responses. I also intentionally chose to transcribe instances where we spend time clarifying each other. Though I probably could have streamlined those parts, I decided to leave them in. At a few points, she didn't really seem to get the meaning of a phrase or word I was using, and there were times where I didn't quite understand her meaning. These were places in the conversation that I thought were really important, because they showed the differences in our thinking about teaching and about race. I didn't notice how often these instances were until I transcribed them, and found out that there were at least four or five questions that we had to spend some time clarifying what I meant and what she meant in her response.

The fact that we differed quite a bit, and where those difference appeared in the interview, were what surprised me the most about the interview. I thought that we would have similar thoughts about race, but I discovered that she talks about race and pedagogy in a somewhat different way than I was expecting—especially since we've talked about race and pedagogy in other meetings and conversations. In this interview, she seemed to be more inclusive and more about being open to different students' opinions. In talking about the race of her students, I also noticed that she differentiated them not only by race, but their interests, hobbies, family background, and hometowns. I think there's an interesting connection between her position as an international student, her history growing up in Korea and moving to America for school, and being a TA that might connect to her ideas here, and I'd like to find out more about this in a follow-up interview.

Another thing I came away with from the interview was my lack of listening skills and how I would really like to work on this as a researcher. There were a couple of places I noticed in the transcription where I could have probed further, instead of reverting back to my list of questions. There were also several instances where I interrupted her, a couple times where I finished a sentence or phrase for her, and several instances where I tried to understand what she was saying by rephrasing it in my own terms or tried to show understanding through telling my own stories. This really bothered me, because it seems that I may have tried to impose my own thoughts and views rather than really listening and trying

to understand how and why she was responding the way she did—and this may have prevented me from really understanding what cultural resources she was drawing from in her responses. Listening to the interview again, I also realized that it was a little more formal than I would have liked. I really stuck to my list of questions, and maybe in the future I'd like to try a less structured approach.

## EUI ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Link

s: "Can Korean Twinkies and FOBS Be Friends?" *IDEALS: Illinois Digital Environment for Access to Learning and Scholarship*. University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. 3 April 2009. <  
<http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/3636>>

The unknown author of this study set out to find the reasons why Korean Twinkies (Asians that act white) and FOBs (Fresh Off the Boat or international Asians) don't frequently interact with each other. After observing the dorm areas and interviewing both a professed "FOB" and a professed "Twinkie," the author determines that the lack of interaction stems from not a difference in language (which most would assume), but a difference in "hangout styles" and lack of common interests or topics of conversation.

I found this study to a fascinating illustration of how particular Asian American students define and construct what it means to be "Asian" on this campus. Interestingly, very little was discussed about classroom interaction or writing, showing that many students formulate their identities in social settings. In the one FOB and Twinkie interaction described in the study, the Twinkie approached the FOB in Korean, but the FOB responded back in English signaling, perhaps, a rejection or illustrating an intentional disconnect. What I find relevant to my project is the idea that Asian Americans work out their racial identities in social settings with friends, rather than through identification with campus organizations or in their academic life. Thus, students are bringing in with them racialized constructions of identity, which shift and fluctuate, when they step into a race-themed writing course. This confirms Goto's study (below) that students in large part understand their racial identity and their ability to change their racial identity through peer interaction and categorization. I believe this affects our work in antiracist and multicultural pedagogy, since ideas instructors might find relevant to racial identity—such as systems of power or historical events—might not be the most immediate sense of how students construct their identities.

Goto, Stanford T. "Nerds, Normal People, and Homeboys: Asian American Students and the Language of School 'Success.'" *The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy: Occasional Papers and Technical Reports*. Technical Report No. 72. (1995). 2 April 2009. <<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/nwpr/694>>.

In this ethnographic study, Goto complicates current explanations of Asian American success in school. He follows five freshman Chinese American students in Diablo Vista to complicate the "model minority" myth and the idea that Asian American academic success is influenced by family and cultural values that coincide with the school curriculum's implicit values. Goto finds that although family and cultural values play some role, most of the students he studied were more influenced by their peers. Goto also discussed that in the language Chinese American used to describe the school social groups, a language of "dumb vs. smart" or "serious vs. fooled around/annoying" students were grouping and identifying themselves according to who followed school curriculum norms. Ultimately Goto concludes that the "family/cultural hypothesis," with its emphasis on group harmony and collective good, provides no way of accounting for conflict between Asian American children and their parents, teachers, and/or peers. In addition, the status mobility hypothesis, which examines how Asian Americans accommodate White dominant culture, does not account for different or conflicting value among Asian Americans. The idea that dominant discussion of Asian American students and their academic success has been limited by these themes is relevant to my research.

I also think that Goto's focus on how Asian Americans construct their own school and racial identities through the language of school success, which includes both academics and fitting in with social groups, is interesting and relevant to my project. Toward the end of his article, Goto gave the example of one student Matthew who had mixed feelings about school, but valued the learning experience given in social interactions. Matthew considers himself to be "accepted by most people" and Goto points to Matthew's position as a Chinese American who was "caught between two opposing categories of people—"smart and dumb." This social mobility seemed to be characteristic of the Asian Americans at Diablo Vista, since Asians were included in all social categories, yet Blacks and Latinos were left out of the "nerd" category and "Whites" were left out of the "Homeboy" category. Thus Goto points to a particular flexible and fluid rhetorically constructed racial identity that was

available to Asian Americans and not available to other racial groups as easily.

Olson, Gary A. "Working with Difference: Critical Race Studies and the Teaching of Composition." *Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future*. Eds. Lynn Z. Bloom, Donald A. Daiker and Edward M. White. Carbondale: SIU Press, 2003. 208–221.

Olson starts the article by discussing the changing racial identity of future composition students and argues that the future of teaching composition includes being prepared to teach a diverse classroom. He says that many composition instructors currently bring with them a "liberal pluralism," rather than take a critical approach and he suggests that compositionists should become familiar with critical race scholarship to prepare for changing student demographics.

Most relevant to me in this article was Olson's claim that no person has a "single immediately distinguishable, monolithic identity" and that critical race theory brings with it the understanding that cultural differences are "nuanced" and include a "complex interplay of multiple forms of difference" (214). He encourages compositionists to see race beyond a black and white framework and in a framework that accounts for the "multiplicity of intersection racial and other cultural differences" (214). In addition, he also encourages compositionists to understand that dominant society "races" oppressed groups in different ways—"in ways that tend to further dominant society's economic and material use of those groups" (214). This discussion challenged me to think more about the identity Asian American students take in a class taught under a critical race theory framework. Whereas as typically Asian and Asian Americans are left out of the discussion of critical race scholarship, Olson reminds us that in fact critical race scholarship encourages us to keep in mind the multiple experiences and cultural identities that a student brings with them—their racial identities, gender, class background and other forms of difference. It also encourages me to think more about what is at risk when instructors label students as "foreign" or "model minority" and when students put themselves into these categories. How is this racialization, in Olson's words, "furthering dominant society's economic and material use of those groups?" How does dominant society benefit from the foreign or model minority label? How do instructors and instructors lose or benefit when these labels are

invoked?

Pickelsimer, Ellen. "Self Identity: Comparing Asian American Adoptees and Second Generation Asian Americans." *IDEALS: Illinois Digital Environment for Access to Learning and Scholarship*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. 3 April 2009.

Pickelsimer's study focuses on the differences between Asian American adoptees and second generation Asian Americans, both of which she describes as "Americanized." She was interested in finding out how these groups differ in their relation to an Asian American identity and how these differences affect their personal satisfaction with life and the identity in which they have created. Though mostly a research proposal, Pickelsimer includes descriptions of two interviews: one of a Korean adoptee and one of a second generation Chinese American. Though both grew up in primarily white neighborhoods, had mostly white friends, and identified themselves as Americanized, she argues that they differed in their perception of family, home vs. school identities, and role that an "Asian" heritage played in their lives. For the adoptee, there was no home Asian identity to return to, and the second generation student, though she did have Asian parents to return to, had a similar resentment of "tradition" and Asian heritage.

I picked this article to examine because I am interested in the ways that UIUC Asian American students construct and make meaning out of their racial identities. In this case, there is a common dichotomy between "Americanized" and "traditional" that each of the interviewees adhere to. All the informants, including the author, relate stories of going to a cultural camp or school to learn their heritage, but that having a negative effect on their idea of cultural heritage. I was also interested in the writer's interest of presenting herself as an Asian American adoptee and presenting a more complex picture of the Americanized Asian through this research project. This could be seen as an additional rhetorical act in which an identity is being constructed. I had not previously considered Asian American adoptees in my reflections of Asian American students, but I think Pickelsimer's work shows that the "model minority" or the successfully Americanized Asian is not a sufficient label to understand the experiences and constructions of self that students bring with them in the classroom. What perhaps surprised me most is the seeming resentment that her informants had of other Asians on campus, and I wonder how this would manifest in a race-centered writing course and

perhaps toward an Asian instructor.

Race and the University Instructor. Personal Interview. 11 March 2009.

The instructor was recruited as my informant through the Race and the University (RATU) instructors group. The interview took place in the Illini Union café, was captured by digital audio recorder and lasted 35 minutes. Park described her experiences as a RATU instructor and an AWP instructor. She specifically gives insight into how the racial identities of her students affect interactions in race-themed course, and how her own racial identity as an Asian instructor from Korea influences discussions of race and writing. This interview particularly illustrated how one Asian instructor interprets the goals of the race-themed course and how that is mediated by her own experiences with race as well as factors such as her educational background and history as an ESL instructor. I was struck by our different conceptions of the race course, and our different conceptions of an Asian identity. The interview also shed light on how a one instructor constructs identities of students and how that plays a role in class interactions. Finally, the interview started to shed some light on the complex nature of the Asian student in the race course. In the interview, the instructor saw her Asian students as responding to the course differently due to economic, family, and regional backgrounds.

Robinson, William S. "ESL and Dialect Features in the Writing of Asian American Students." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. 22.4 (1995): 303-308.

Robinson argues that children of Asian immigrants are often labeled as "ESL students" having errors with a certain "ESL-ness" to them, are often put in ESL courses where they learn cultural adjustment and basic sentence patterns—things they don't need having been in the country for many years or having been born in the US. Thus, he argues that schools with new Asian American populations should recognize that many of these students speak "in a dialect as distinctive as any other American dialect, although one we may not have encountered before." (303). Placing students in an ESL course who are not second-language learners would be inappropriate to their needs, depressing to their morale, and ineffective. He continues to describe the features of what he

calls “Asian American English,” which include specifying time in the verb, articles, prepositions and pronouns. The rest of the article discusses the differences between ESL level “errors” and Asian American dialect “errors” and how teachers might correct them.

I find this article fascinating for the issues it raises and all that is left unsaid about them. I don’t believe that I’ve ever read an article about Asian American students in basic writing who are the children of immigrant parents. This article points to a population often not discussed in composition scholarship. I also find the idea of “Asian American English” as a dialect interesting, though to be sure, different Asian languages would result in different Asian American Englishes—something the author does not bring up. Robinson does end up describing the “dialect” as a pattern of errors to be corrected by instructors, but I would be interested in understanding this dialect as perhaps Min-Zhan Lu would—as a type of “Living English” (2006). He did bring up a discussion about the students home environment where he claimed that a student’s immigrant parents and friends would speak a “fossilized” form of English. Though he takes a rather pejorative stance toward home speaking practices, he does recognize to some extent that there are historical, economic, and social factors that contribute to the language a child of immigrant parents would bring to the college writing classroom.

The majority of Robinson’s article is spent on typical Asian American student errors and how to fix them, but I would want to know more about the family background, economic backgrounds, historical backgrounds, that these students bring with them to the classroom, and how that affects their perceptions of their writing and their racial identity—and how these two intersect. I am also interested in what this discussion would mean for the constructing of the Asian American students’ identity by writing instructors. If we saw in their writing an Asian American English dialect, as opposed to an ESL error, how would instructors’ imaginings of a student’s racial identity change?

Spack, Ruth. “The Acquisition of Academic Literacy in a Second Language: a Longitudinal Case Study.” *Written Communication*. 14.1. (1997): 3–62.

Spack follows a Japanese international student (Yuko) for three years—from the beginning of freshman year where the student was enrolled in her ESL composition class, until junior year when the student declares

her major. Spack's intention is to examine the idea of acquiring "academic literacy" which she claims is the ability to read and write texts in college. She uses interviews with Yuko, journals, in class writing, and also materials from the courses she took and interviews with the professors of two of the courses to see how Yuko ultimately attains academic literacy. Yuko initially is fearful of heavy reading and writing, since she claims she does not have the necessary background information to be on the same level as native English speakers. Also important in Yuko's first year is the fact that she requested to take Spack's ESL course, rather than a regular composition course, despite the fact that her TOEFL scores indicated "she could do work at the same level as U.S. born speakers of English" (3). As Yuko develops more academic literacy in her subsequent years, Spack attributes her success to her ability to understand the reading and writing strategies required at the college level, her own changing ideas about what it means to learn and be a learner in college, and her negotiation of the authority of the academy's standards and practices.

Of particular interest to my project is Spack's discussion of Yuko's construction of herself as an L2 learner, and identities of an L2 learners that faculty construct when they have identified one in a class. She claims that her three-year study allowed her to not fall on limited constructions of L2 students from contrastive rhetoric scholarship, but to see how unpredictable and complex Yuko's academic literacy acquisition was. She ends with a statement claiming "Students like Yuko thus need to be viewed as not as products of cultures but creators of culture." Though Spack doesn't not particularly discuss Yuko's race, just her position as an L2 learner from Japan, it seems that much of Yuko's construction of her literacy identity was also a result of her racial identity. Though she spoke in grammatically perfect Standard English, she insisted that she must take an ESL course. There is also the implicit idea that her understanding of her own racial identity came from what she believed to be the "American" way of learning, reading and writing. She equated "having her own thoughts" and writing "argumentative" papers with being the American way and repeating others ideas was the "Japanese way", though her experience in a U.S. college showed her that depending on sources and others ideas was often rewarded. Spack wrote that Yuko was "very pleased" when her own idea about American writing was affirmed in her grade and in the instructor's evaluative comments.

Spack also argued that faculty constructed an identity of an L2 learner, and in her article she gave the example of how a political science

professor told Yuko to drop the class and take it again junior year when “she would have more background and language.” Yet when Yuko successfully took the course in her junior year, “background” knowledge of American history and events was not what changed her attitude about the course or influenced her success in the course. Rather, Spack claims it was her change in reading and writing strategies and her understanding of herself as a learner. There was also an example of an interview Spack had with Yuko where she asked if Spack had interviewed her professor. When Spack said yes, Yuko attributed her “generous” grade to the fact that Spack had influenced the professor’s opinion about Yuko’s writing.

Generally, I would say that this article sheds light on the complex negotiation and mediation of the Asian and Asian American identities in the classroom. Spack’s study illustrates the ways that Asian and Asian American identity is constructed by the student’s perception of themselves and what is “American” as well as constructed by the teacher who associates certain cultural understandings and writing abilities through that constructed identity. This encourages me to go back to my [interview transcript](#) to examine the ways both the instructor and idea created constructions of Asian identity, and how we also constructed identities of Asian students.

Tasaka, Robyn. “Rhetoric of the Asian American Self: Influences of Region and Social Class on Autobiographical Writing.” *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*. Eds. LuMing Mao and Morris Young. Logan, Utah: Utah State Press, 2008. 153–172.

Tasaka argues that region and social class affects how students construct an Asian American identity and the way they inscribe that identity into autobiographic writing assignments. Tasaka specifically looks at the writing of three Asian American students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In the first part of her article, she discusses Hawaii’s ethnic and racial environment, which she considers to be unique for Asian Americans. In addition, she draws on the work of Mike Rose and Victor Villanueva to argue that social class and place in the academic community contribute to one’s understanding of one’s own race. Finally, she discusses three traits common in the narratives of writers of color: double consciousness, a guided tour of the writer’s culture, and social statement. But she reveals that she did not find any of these characteristics in the writing of the students. In fact, these students did not consider race to play a major part in their writing or in their own

understanding of their identities. In addition, people or events described in their writing never included a reference to race. Tasaka concludes that “through the minimal references to race in their writing, these students rhetorically construct themselves as only marginally influenced by race and ethnicity”(168). Though she admits this may simply be “colorblindness” she also claims that it is important to understand that this reflects their social realities. She ultimately suggests that because Asian Americans are the majority in Hawaii and because these students are privileged economically, race was not an important part of their identity. She claims, “depending on such factors as region and social class, ‘Asian American’ can mean quite differently, even marking relative privilege.” (170).

I believe Tasaka’s argument is relevant to my project because she does acknowledge that there are many factors that contribute to the construction of an Asian American identity. More interesting is, I think, the ability for many Asian American to not see themselves as “raced” in certain contexts. But I wonder if these students in Hawaii understood themselves in their relation to the mainland, what kind of racial identities they would construct? Tasaka also discusses a history of Hawaii’s racial climate, but doesn’t include any statement about how these students understand this racial climate. For example, there are ethnic tensions between more dominant groups of Asians (Japanese) and less dominant (Filipino), as well as tensions between local and non-local groups. Tasaka also discusses the sense that many Hawaiians take a self-congratulatory attitude about their ability to tolerate racial differences, but she claims that this can often make it harder to understand when one is racially injustice. I also find the intersection of writing and hiding this identity really interesting and to think of writing as a way for these students to write in their own lives the invisibility of race.