

AESTHETICS & POLITICS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPAN & THE US'S 20TH CENTURY

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NOTE FOR THE READERS:

For this paper, I'll be speaking from a very specific perspective: a Black Man from the US. A Black Man who has spent an extensive amount of time in Japan studying, working and interacting with people in the communities that I've lived in. My lens is that of a Black Person who: has experienced racism and oppression in the US. And have a family lineage that has ties with sharecroppers and even possibly enslaved people in Mississippi.

This paper is **my** observation of **my** findings through research, personal conversations with people in Japan and The US and **my** understanding of Sibyl Kempson's statement "aesthetics can never truly be free of their politics". My goals with this paper and accompanying solo project are to: pay respect to those affected by the colonialism, imperialism, racism and facism that destroyed so many lives in the US, Japan and Korea during the early 1900s. Show how we have a skewed understanding of history that overlooks certain stories. And in turn, as human beings, we should take care to learn more about the aesthetics that have skewed these stories as well as learn more about the stories themselves. Also, I want to make people feel more curious and do the research needed to understand the stories.

For the length of this paper, I'll be using language that will at times not read as something "meant for academia". I find some of the language used in academia to be stifling and obtuse. I'd rather write in my own voice for this paper.

I'm not writing this paper for the sole purpose of it being a "finished product of academia". This process isn't about me trying to use the nicest, most "academically appropriate" language possible. I'm writing this in the hopes that anyone that takes the time to read it, can and will understand the things that I'm trying to convey. Not just academics. Not just professors at Sarah Lawrence College. Everyone.

I'm writing this paper with the same goals and intentions that I'm performing the solo thesis with: I want people to awaken their curiosity and inspire them toward their own course of research. My intention is to share my emotional and critical responses to these events as I learned about them in my research. I'm taking every avenue to be honest and authentic to who I am. Below is my attempt at doing all of the things mentioned above.

For this paper, I'll look at some of Japan and the US's policies and attitudes at the turn of the 20th century. By doing so, I'm hoping to show how very little has changed about our racial and cultural biases towards three specific groups of people in Japan and the US.

The aesthetics related to the groups are as follows: For Black Folks in the US, there is an aesthetic that is bathed in the idea of the 'peace-loving, easily subdued Negro of years past. The type of Negro that wouldn't dare riot. Even in the face of Jim Crow.' It's an aesthetic created by white America over the last couple of decades when looking at national race issues during the 21st Century. The aesthetic often praises Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers as peaceful protestors and pretends that MLK was the 'archetypal Black Protestor'. It leaves out the fact that racially charged riots and violent protests have existed in this country since the early 1900s (Davis). Whenever the racial powder keg has gotten to a certain point, violence would explode into the streets of cities like East St. Louis, Springfield, IL, Chicago and Washington DC (Krugler) during the first 50 years of the 1900s. The 1960s and 1970s also had racially motivated riots. I believe that the New Negro Movement of the 1910s-1920s is a direct challenge to the 'demure, domesticated Negro of times past' aesthetic created sometime this century, as well as a direct challenge to the aesthetic of white supremacy.

For Japanese Women, in my experience the aesthetic that they've always been 'submissive delicate flowers that know their place in the world' seems to be a globally accepted concept as of 2022. The aesthetic stems from a national pushback (led by Japanese men in powerful positions) during the years leading up to WWII. I'll show you that between 1900 until around 1936, Japanese Women weren't having anybody's shit. They wanted their rights, desires and humanity to be recognized. Even if it meant "taking it to the streets" and brawling with authority figures in the heart of Tokyo and other large cities (Silverberg 255).

Japanese ideology historically has placed Korean people under a "less than/not good as Japanese people" lens dating back to the end of the feudal system in Japan. How this aesthetic of Japanese superiority-Korean inferiority led to Japan's violent actions towards Korea over the first half of the 1900s is important to understand (Weiner). It shows where these countries stand today on certain issues between the two. Issues related to the Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the use of "Comfort Women" during WWII are still heavily disputed between the two nations. Even in 2022, there are Japanese conservative groups that deny and deflect the severity of any wrongdoing towards Korea during the periods of protectorate & annexation (1905-1945) because the aesthetics of national superiority and blind nationalism for Japan still exist in pockets of Japanese politics (Nishimura and Kitano).

This paper and the solo performance will focus on a specific chunk of time in Japan, Korea and the US's history (1868-1930s). Like this paper, I jumped between Japan, Korea and The US to tell stories of the groups around the same time period during the solo. The solo featured a presentation riddled with gifs. There was a projector and sound bytes accompanying

the presentation. Because this paper is so dense and the solo has a 30-minute time limit, the solo featured roughly 1/3 of the information presented in this research paper.

The aesthetics of the solo's set focused on realism: the set looked like and acted as a regular SLC classroom space. The space had most of the items typically found in an SLC theater space that doubles as a classroom like the Cannon, Wright, DownStage and Performance Lab. I used a projector on night two and two monitors to display the presentation on night one. Hyper-realism was also a part of the performance's aesthetic: I lectured the audience but I didn't use the type of language typically found in a professor's lecture. I used my own voice and vernacular to tell these stories. I used gifs, memes and sound bytes not directly related to the stories to help tell the stories. For example: DMX gif and sound byte was used to describe Imperial Japan's conquering and violent moments, sound bytes from American TV series *The Boondocks*, memes and viral Tik Tok sound clips were used to help underline different incidents throughout the solo.

THE TIMELINES

For continuity purposes, in a linear order, I'll be referring to different time periods based on the year and the reigns of three Japanese Emperors. The emperors' timelines are as follows: the Meiji era (1868 -1912), the Taisho era (1912-1926) and the Showa era (1926-1989). I won't be referring to the Showa era much. This paper is referring to several incidents that took place before his reign. There will be times where I refer to something that happened in the 1930s (Showa 5-14) but that's because there's a connection to something that happened during either Meiji (1868-1912) or Taisho's (1912-1926) era. If not during both. Please refer to Appendix A's timeline starting on page 28 or its QR code at any time.

Why am I fascinated at looking into these countries? Why this specific chunk of time (1868-1930s)? Why am I examining the struggles of these three specific groups? I believe that at the turn of the century Japan and The US had several political and socio-economical similarities. These similarities adversely affected Black Folks and Japanese Women. There were similarities in how Japan treated Koreans and how the US treated Black Folks. There was a national acceptance of "other" and "less than us" in both countries for these two groups of people. It has been my experience that most people are not familiar with some of these issues or these similarities in these groups' respective timelines.

All three groups had two specific lifestyle changes during the Meiji era (1868-1912). First, the majority of all three groups were victimized by exploitative agricultural practices. These practices forced them from farmlands into the industrial revolution happening in big cities throughout Japan and the US respectively. Koreans moved from a failing economy in Korea to factory and "unskilled laborer jobs" in big cities throughout Japan a little before annexation in 1910 (Weiner).

Japanese Women went to work in the textile industries in major cities. Sometimes they went at the behest of the men in their families. More often than not, they left the farm by choice. Whatever the case, they were only allowed to leave the farm with permission from the male head of the household. Their move to textile companies throughout Japan happened during the 1900s-1930s. Their goals were typically to help raise money for their families, to help with the WWI war effort, to pay for their education and/or to help finance personal desires (Molony 225).

At the same time in the US, Black Folks looked to escape neverending sharecropping in the former Confederate States. Sharecropping was a system very similar to the Korean agricultural structure under Imperial Japan. They left their posts in the south for hard and oftentimes unequal opportunities in the north at various “unskilled laborer jobs”. Korean workers in Imperial Japan were dealing with the same issues simultaneously.

From those ominously similar beginnings during Meiji (1868-1912), we will swim through the turmoils of each group during Taisho (1912-1926). Taisho was an era plagued by violence. World War I happened during Taisho. Race wars, revolutionary movements and the stamping out of those movements became a common cycle during Taisho. In fact, any dissent from the government-prescribed ideologies of the time such as: white supremacy as the national norm in the US, Korea’s complete submission to Imperial Japan and Japanese Women accepting their roles as wives & mothers were met with silencing/banning of publications advocating for change, massacres and many other types of violence. Police brutality was also constant in the name of “national progress”. Violence against “agitators” was typically fair game during Taisho in Japan, Korea and the US.

We’ll end with a bit of information from the first five to ten years of Showa (1926-1936). Just right before Japan commits to being Germany’s ‘Right Hand Man in The East’ for WWII. This stopping point is crucial because everything before WWII is important for us to understand why we are where we are today. In my honest opinion, most conversations about international relations and our understandings of internal and international prejudices fall short because we don’t have a lot of context about issues prior to WWII.

If we can expand the reach of our historical knowledge to include events leading up to WWII, it’ll help people to connect the dots for how we view all three groups. If we can connect the dots, we can see why Japan-Korea’s current relationship is so contentious. Especially when both countries talk about Japanese violence towards Korea during the protectorate and annexation years (1905-1940s). We can see why today’s Japanese society pushes for women to find husbands and have children. We can see that today’s talking point about black protests and the “appropriateness” of violent pushback to police violence and racism come from a lack of knowledge about the way Black Folks protested nationally in the US prior to WWII.

WHY THEATRE? & WHY ALIENATION?

What purpose does theatre serve for this peek into the past? In my opinion, theatre is the perfect way to change the world's view of history and get honest responses from an audience. The best example I can give is this: one time I worked in Chicago as a house manager for a production called *Assassination Theatre*. The play was based on a theory by author Hillel Levin that believed that the Chicago mafia was somehow involved in the assassination of JFK in Dallas. The play ran down several little known facts about JFK. The play also tied several mobsters to Kennedy's murder for various reasons. For one of the performances, a close relative of one of the mobsters who is featured in the play as having taken part in Kennedy's assassination attended the performance. I believe she might have been his daughter. She was an older lady, in her eighties. After the show, I heard this woman telling the production staff how she'd "never thought of [her relative] in that manner". She showed no anger or denial. She was simply observing the information presented and showing an appreciation for the magical way the information was presented through theatre.

But where does this "magic" in theatre come from? I believe that this "magic" is best expressed by a set of theories that revolve around the concept of "alienation." Alienation is a theory originated by Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel's version focuses on "signifying the precise moment of astonishment at which we don't understand an object that we thought that we understood completely; a moment that leads to further insight" (Von Held 9). The Hegel theory focuses on "self reflection and enriching the consciousness of humans to liberate themselves through alienation's "ah-ha!" moments" (Von Held 10). Karl Marx later adopted and reframed the theory, focusing on work as an "entity that comes to appear to the worker as exteriorized; as an alienated uncontrollable force that they do not own" (Von Held 28). Later, German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht viewed the theory of "alienation effect" in 1940 as "The known, in order to become understood, must come out of its inconspicuous; the habit of assuming that a certain thing needs no explanation must be broken." (Von Held 28). I used distancing/alienation that leans closer to Hegel's understanding and practice of taking chunks of history and "making strange" the accepted knowledge of that history. The history that I'm looking at acted as an object under the lens of Hegel's theory during my solo performance.

This paper, like the performance, will revolve around a history that, for the most part, is only known on a surface level. The aesthetic of alienation that I'm pressing on is finding the moment of astonishment when we realize that we don't understand this history I'm explaining in its entirety. From my own understanding through experience and conversations with people both in the US and Japan between the ages of 25-60, students in the US and Japan respectively are given crash courses that focus on the first 30-40 years of the 20th century in their countries. We hear about the Harlem Renaissance in the US. Japanese students learn about the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 partially. We all get a small snippet of what led up to WWI and which side won that war, but that's typically where our learning of the time period stops. As for students in Korea, they are taught about the protectorate and annexation periods (1905-1940s) in greater

detail. The Kanto Earthquake and the “Comfort Women” of WWII have museums, films, television programs and theatre productions that talk about Korea’s history under Japanese rule regularly in South Korea. It’s the students in the US and Japan that don’t fully understand this section of history because the context isn’t entirely taught to them. In my solo, I’m interested in showing how the politically charged aesthetics of Japan and the US have shaped our history and understanding of this time in history.

For the solo performances, I used a semi bare stage to show the process of estrangement in space. The audience walked into a space that wasn’t aiming to “represent” anything that it doesn’t already represent. The space was on any given weekday morning. It was a classroom space with theater seats, a projector and a sound system. There was a type of call and response relationship with the audience and some simple sound cues to signify the start and end of the solo performance. This style of theatrical hyper-realism borrows heavily from Malaysian theatre practices that are known for pushing against the boundaries of realism in Malay theatre. These artists make work that is “influenced by postmodernism by generating concepts in an abstract manner, avant-garde, metaphysic, the fusion of various techniques, media, also multi-cultures as a documentation tool for the local culture” (Haj Nor Hashim and Abdul Rahman). I’m using hyper-realism in my solo performance whenever I use modern media and language that steers away from a typical lecture in academia. Whenever the gifs, memes and sound bytes that don’t represent the time periods I’m talking about make an appearance, I’m deliberately pushing the boundaries of realism into a type of Malay theatre hyper-realism.

To me, specific and intentional usages of alienation can be the most powerful in a staged performance. The relative at the *Assassination Theatre* performance admitted to never having that kind of vision of her relative until after seeing the show and hearing some new information. The distance between her and that information created an ‘a-ha’ moment. That information possibly would’ve never reached her if the show never happened. I tried to use the tool of distance to reexamine the things that we *think* that we understand, with all of the ‘facts’ (the things we think we know or have been told) and ‘context’ to these ‘facts’ laid side by side to see what is really beneath them. With this paper (and the performance), I’m looking for the ultimate ‘a-ha!’ moment for myself and the audience, where we suddenly see something we thought we knew in a way that is new after combing through this very dense history.

My reasoning for this project and paper is because of my belief that people all over the world have historically enabled the shittiest parts of our respective cultures to thrive for the sake of advancing things like religious ideologies and national/international power. We often pretend not to understand what negative effects this type of enabling has on the world. Most people honestly have no legitimate reasoning for believing the things that they do about their countries, ideologies or history. They just believe what they've heard from people that they love or respect in most cases (teachers and other authority figures). The best example I can give of this received knowledge is a personal example: as an English teacher at an elementary school in Japan, I took time out of an afternoon to play outside with the children. A student from one of the fourth grade

classes came up to ask me about the types of foods I like. I told him that I like spicy foods. Especially tteokbokki. Another nearby student asked me what type of food it was. When I told them that the dish was Korean, the student responded by telling me “I don’t like Koreans”. When I asked them why that was the case, they told me that they thought that Koreans were “bad people”.

I never mentioned this interaction to my superiors or their teachers because, in my mind, it was “just a kid” saying one of those “silly things that kids say”. It wasn’t until I started to hear similar opinions from Japanese adults that I consider friends, that I started to question where that child could’ve heard or learned such an idea from. Researching where this anger and dislike of Koreans in Japan came from became important to me around this time. What the research led me to was the annexation, colonization and dehumanization of Koreans by Imperial Japan during the latter part of Meiji’s reign (1900-1912).

I also strongly believe that there are people on this planet who tend to deny historical recollections and require more “evidence” to prove any point of historical fault and plainly downright evilness. These people even go as far to deny actual scholars’ life work and “discoveries” (thorough research of history) for their own comfort. In my experience, these same folks typically have done no research themselves or have little to no knowledge of any of the events in question. I personally had an experience in a bar in Toshima Ward, Tokyo in 2017. I was talking to a friend about the incident with the elementary school student and the rabbit hole of research that I’d gone down because of it. I began talking about The Korean Massacre and the murders of Japanese anarchists and union leaders that took place following the 1923 Kanto Earthquake. On his way back from the bar counter to his seat, a British gentleman (that I’d never met or spoken to before) intercepted our conversation. He went on about how he’d been married and lived in Japan for over 20 years and had never heard anything about the killings that took place after the disaster. I directed him to wikipedia pages for the Amakasu Incident and Kanto Massacre. He still couldn’t believe either page because “Wikipedia isn’t a real source.” You know, “*anyone* could put things on there. It’s all fake news”. I even directed him to a monument in Ueno Station that briefly mentions the “deaths of Koreans”. Nothing seemed to register as fact to this man because “he’d never seen this on the news” and my personal favorite: his “very Japanese wife” never mentioned the vigilante style massacre and police authorized murders that followed the 1923 Kanto Earthquake to him before.

I also firmly believe that we don’t have to go back any further than the 20th century to see why our biases and attitudes at present haven’t completely changed and continue to affect Black Folks in the US, Japanese Women and Korean people living in Japan and Korea respectively. I’m using theatre to show these travesties because I believe theatre is one of the most effective (and softest) mediums of self reflection available and widely accepted by the masses.

Meiji Era 1868 - 1912

JAPANESE WOMEN COME INTO A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Let's start our journey into the past with Japan's Women in mind. We'll start with the textile worker. Starting in Meiji's era during the 1890s, the high demand for factory laborers in larger cities required recruiters to find workers to meet the demand. For many years, recruitment companies looked to find solutions that were cost effective but couldn't. That is, until between 1907 and 1917 Japan's operatives for cotton-spinning and other textile work boomed (Weiner 50). Around this time recruiters started going into rural Japan and recruiting young women around the age of 12 or 13 (someone fresh out of elementary school in Japan) to leave their poor farmer lives in the hopes of earning income. The income typically was meant to either be sent home to support their struggling farmhand parents or to save for their own independence and future wedding dowries (Molony 223). The conditions of most of the factories that these young women found themselves in often didn't match the advertisements or promises made by recruiters. Some factories would charge the workers fees for room and board in dormitory spaces that would consist of enough space meant for one person. This space in question would be shared by two or more workers (Molony 232). Factories were also known for forcing these poor workers to have guarantors to ensure their unyielding, hard work for larger manufacturers like Toyo Muslin (Molony 229-30). In some cases, the factory managers and overseers would overcharge the workers for travel/moving expenses from their hometowns to the factory locations. The workers would have to work for years in the red with little to no profit. This meant that their debt wasn't properly being shaved from the "costs" of their training and acclimation into their work lives in cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Yokohama, Kawasaki and Hodogaya (Molony 226-28).

The rural young ladies looked to escape their cycles of poverty or having to marry into other poor rural families by accepting work in the textile industry throughout large cities in Japan. But what about the middle class and elite Japanese women? What was life like for them during the later portion of the reign of Emperor Meiji? At the time, education in Japan catered to a system that educated females for only four compulsory years up until the 1890s, and later extended to six by 1910 (Hastings and Nolie 157). Before 1899 there was no higher education for females in Japan after compulsory schooling. However, during 1899 a mandate was passed that made sure that there was at least 1 higher school (now known as high schools) for females in every prefecture (Hastings and Nolie 158). Even with this mandate, things were still not equal for women in education. Their higher schools were meant to teach them, according to Education Minister, Kabayama Sukenori, how to be "good wives and wise mothers". The education achieved by women in this system was never meant to be equal to the education received by young men in middle school and was in no way a preparation for entrance into universities (Hastings and Nolie 158). Between 1900-1911 the shift to focusing on things like feminine modesty for the sake of "economic productivity" also found its way into compulsory education for young women of lesser means (Hastings and Nolie 159). However, for the daughters of the wealthy and the elite, education could be quite extensive. That was evident when looking into the

backgrounds of some of the women who found their voices in the world as feminists, poets and writers between the pages of *Seito* or “Bluestockings”.

The best examples of the educational system stretching further for those with means or privilege would be three women from the *Seitoshu* (Bluestockings Group) in particular: Hiratsuka Raicho from Tokyo, Akiko Yosano from Osaka and Ito Noe from Fukuoka. All three women came from well-to-do backgrounds. Hiratsuka and Noe both attended higher education programs in Tokyo. This was an opportunity that wouldn't have been afforded to most Japanese women at the turn of the 20th Century. Hiratsuka was the daughter of a civil servant and associate of Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito. Born in 1886, she went on to graduate from Japan Women's University in 1906 at the age of 20 (Hiratsuka). Yosano was the daughter of a merchant in Sakai, Osaka. Born in 1878, she finished middle school and began working in her father's store. In her spare time she read books from her father's extensive library. Her father was also a bibliophile. As a teenager, Yosano began to write poems and had them published in local literary magazines (Rodd 179). Ito was from a wealthy farming family in a village in Fukuoka. Born in 1896, her family fell on hard times after her father went bankrupt, losing all of the family's assets when she was still an elementary school student (Mori 45). She had to convince an uncle that she'd once lived with to pay for her tuition to attend Ueno Girl's High School in Tokyo. Her cousin and close friend, Chiyo also attended this school (Mori 45).

All of this is very important to know because these three women are very focal pieces of the New Woman Movement, the literary community of the time (through Bluestockings) and other political movements revolving around women's suffrage in Japan. For example, Japan's various anarchist and socialist groups led by and associated with Osugi Sakae had Ito as a member. While feminist and suffrage groups like the Accomplished Women's Society had Hiratsuka & Yosano fighting for women's rights in their own respective ways (Filler). Even with this in mind, none of these three women originally come from the same financial struggles as the poor rural farmer's wives or their daughters. They had very little in common with the women who fled the countryside for the factory jobs in larger cities during the late Meiji-early Taisho eras. While Ito did have to live in hardship early on as a child, she started her life off in a wealthy setting in Fukuoka and was later allowed to live with well-to-do relatives in both her home prefecture and Tokyo as she received a higher education. In other words, these were women of means who wanted to fight for equality for all women.

Why are these details about Japanese Women (the textile worker from the countryside and the New Woman) important to know about? Because the world has consistently looked at Japanese women as docile, mild mannered people who just accept whatever is happening to them. Japanese women are often depicted with a soft and quiet femininity. This depiction blossomed through the Taisho era (1912-1926) in magazines and ads. In the solo presentation I showed the difference in aesthetics from women's magazines of the era with two slides. The magazines made for women by men have names like *Wife's Friend*, *Illustrated Women's Gazette* and *Women's Education*. These magazines all have ads for things like beauty cream and covers

that are paintings of young dainty geishas and wives doing house chores. As a contrast, Hiratsuka Raicho's *Bluestockings Magazine* had several earth-toned covers that depicted a "regal woman from Ancient Egypt or Greece" or possibly the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu. The covers were commissions from up-and-coming female artists of the time like Naganuma Chieko (Bradsley 1-2). The ads in *Seito* typically weren't for beauty products. The ads were for things like fountain pens and cigarettes (Bradsley 7). These two slides show that the New Woman was pushing directly against the male driven aesthetic of what a woman should do and be in Japan at the time.

The *Seitoshas* weren't the only group of women that pushed back against the "wise wife, good mother" aesthetic during the first 30 years of the 20th century. Women from different socioeconomic backgrounds found themselves in the fray against the 'norm' established for them by men. For example: the textile workers of the previously mentioned Toyo Muslin at one point had finally had enough of the company's shit and decided to have a brawl with authorities after their labor negotiations were shut down and police were brought into their workspaces to force them back to work. These women from the countryside had a full-on-riot in the middle of one of their strikes in 1930 with local authorities (Silverberg 255).

Much like those daring, take-no-shit textile workers of Toyo Muslin, Hiratsuka, Ito and Yosano were all forces of nature that represented the middle to upper class, educated women during their lifetimes. They were the backbone of the women's rights movement throughout the late Meiji (1900-1912), Taisho (1912-1926) and early-mid Showa (1926-1960) eras respectively. All three of these women spoke their truths and were each hated and hunted for using their voices at some point or another. After Showa became emperor in 1926, Japan's hyper shift into military conquest put all women's rights and desires on the back burner. For the progress of Japan, women fell in line and played their roles as "wise wives and good mothers". As a result of these shifts, the New Woman, the textile worker and the Modern Girl's feverish pushing for equality got lost somewhere in the retelling of the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) eras in history books across the board in Japan.

KOREA FORCED INTO A 'NEW ARRANGEMENT' WITH JAPAN

The young Japanese women who became textile workers weren't the only group of rural occupants uprooted from the farm and thrown into the cold realities of work in a growing Imperial Japan. Farmers from a newly annexed Korea began looking for work in big cities all around Japan (Weiner 50). Following the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japan began looking to take Korea under its wing as a colony. Japan's motives to help keep The West from further expanding into The East, specifically into Japan and Korea through a colonized China, were all about self preservation and not at all about unity (Weiner 11). For Japan, most of the top philosophers during the late 19th century believed that Korea and Korean people in general were incapable of protecting themselves and their resources from "The Western Scourge" (Weiner 18). As a result of this "incapability", many Japanese philosophers of the time believed that it was up

to Japan to “protect” and “civilize” Korea before any non Asian country tried to take over the vulnerable nation the same way that Great Britain took over parts of China following the Opium Wars (Weiner 16-17).

Following Japan’s success in both the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05, no other country stood in Japan’s way of “civilizing” Korea. In order to ensure that their ambitions would go unimpeded, Imperial Japan took two swift steps in 1905. First, Japan forced Korean Emperor Kojong to sign a treaty establishing Japan as Korea’s protectorate (Savage). Then, Japan accepted an arranged series of meetings with the US. The meetings that took place were set up by US President Theodore Roosevelt and Japan’s Prime Minister Katsura Taro. Though Roosevelt didn’t attend the meetings, he sent then-Secretary of War and future US President, William Howard Taft to have a sit down with Katsura while Taft was en route to the Philippines in July 1905 (Ethus). The memorandum was a series of conversations that allowed both sides to acknowledge and in plain terms, legitimize their respective dominion over a pair of recently acquired countries. For the US, it sought to have Japan’s assurances to stay away from the Philippines. The Philippines was a country that the US had just separated from Spain in 1898 and later conquered in 1902. For Japan, it wanted the US’s assurance that its stronghold on Korea wouldn’t be tampered with by any overreaching European superpower. Japan thought that the best way to secure itself and its position was by establishing a good understanding of colonizing boundaries between itself, the US and Great Britain. While there was no formal, written treaty, the US made all the assurances that Japan wanted. By the end of the first set of meetings during the summer of 1905, Japan and the US were reassured of their positions of power in the Philippines and Korea respectively (Ethus). Roughly five years after this informal arrangement, Japan officially annexed Korea.

THE US’S PROBLEM WITH PROGRESS: RECONSTRUCTION & BEYOND

Looking at the US during the Meiji era (1868-1912), Black Folks in the south were going through two changes to their lives. The start and abrupt stop to Reconstruction (1865-1877) and the implementation of Jim Crow Laws following the Compromise of 1877 came shortly after the Civil War ended. Almost all of the progress put into effect by Reconstruction was null and void following the Compromise of 1877. Starting in the 1890s, the numbers of African Americans heading to large cities in the northeast and the midwest grew to double of what it was in the 1880s (Library Of Congress). The numbers doubled in the 1910s and again in the 1920s. By the end of the 1920s, it is estimated that 750,000 Black Folks had migrated from the south (LOC). Though these thousands of Black Folks found new homes in the north and the midwest away from their lives as mostly sharecroppers and poor farm hands, they’d soon learn that the spirit of Jim Crow would follow them all throughout their lives. Even outside of the southern states.

During the 1880s until well into the first decade of the 1900s, Professor Woodrow Wilson put his PhD from John Hopkins to use. Despite his contractual issues during his professorship at Bryn Mawr, Wilson was on fire during the mid to late 1880s. He was a regular contributor to

Political Science Quarterly during the late 1880s-early 1890s (Herscher 83-96). He spent years writing political science books. One of these books, *The State* would be used as a textbook across the nation well into the 1920s (Herscher 101). Born in 1856 in Virginia, Wilson's core beliefs as a staunch "supporter of the south" and segregationist could not escape his life's work. Nor did he ever seem to want either to separate from his work. Wilson was influenced by the likes of social scientist Franklin H. Giddings, who believed that 'Anglo-saxons should assume the burden of governing the "inferior races of mankind"' (Savage). Wilson was known to take joy in mischievously handling "the Negro Problem" even as a paid faculty member at Princeton. He's quoted to have regularly taken time out of his busy schedule to make up issues and berate the colored kitchen workers and house servants to "keep them sharp" (O'Reilly). After returning to Princeton as a professor in 1890, Wilson became a clear leader and fan favorite amongst his students and colleagues alike. Wilson was inaugurated as the university's president in 1902, some twelve years after his return. For the inauguration, Wilson personally invited esteemed Black leader and educator Booker T. Washington to the ceremony. Following that ceremony, it is said that Wilson "spent the next eight years working to keep every other Negro off of the Princeton campus and out of the student body altogether; not wishing to make uncomfortable the southern whites who happened to enroll for classes" (O'Reilly). Wilson's aesthetic and his politics skewed towards "white superiority" and "black inferiority" were without a doubt inseparable and were lifelong companions in his sick and twisted sense of history. Wilson's mindset as a scholar never changed. Even after he became the 28th POTUS, Wilson's level of vitriol for non-whites was palpable. While almost no one who knew him would be surprised, the rest of the world would see who he was after he took his place in the Oval Office.

I personally read two pieces of Wilson's work. I read *Epochs of American History: Division and reunion, 1829-1889* and *A History of the American People: Volume 5*. Both books were written during Wilson's time as an authority in academia. *Epochs* would be published in 1913. This was one year after Wilson was elected President. My focus for both of these books was his outlook on specifically Reconstruction. I learned about his bias towards Black Folks and his almost deifying or hero worship of the Klu Klux Klan in different parts of these two books. For example, in *Epochs of American History*, Wilson's details of carpetbaggers' interactions with the black population in southern states was eerily similar to the plot of the 1915 film, ***Birth of a Nation***: "The most influential white men were excluded from voting for the delegates who were to compose the constitutional conventions, while the negroes were all admitted to enrollment. Unscrupulous adventurers appeared to act as the leaders of the inexperienced blacks in taking possession of the conventions and later of the state state governments in the States where the negroes were most numerous." (Wilson 268-69). This would be slightly problematic at best, but on the same page Wilson called the direction and decision making of these very people (Black People and the carpetbagger/puppet master figures in positions of power) "an extraordinary carnival of public crime set in under the forms of the law". I believe his hero worship of the KKK ultimately led to him being loosely quoted in the opening credits of the infamous film ***Birth of a Nation***. Not only was one of his volumes of *A History of the American People* loosely quoted in the opening credits of the film, he screened the film at the White House in 1915

(Benbow). He was even quoted as saying “It was like writing history with lightning.” depending on who you ask or choose to believe about that quote (Benbow). The film, Wilson’s writing and the aesthetics behind “saving white women and white America from the crazed negro by any means” was the aesthetic that landed critical blows on the heart of the ‘average white American’ of the time. During the November 1915 cinematic run of the film in Atlanta, Klansmen handed out pamphlets promoting the organization to audience members. There were ushers that donned white sheets during the Atlanta screenings (Clark). Following the film’s release, the Ku Klux Klan grew exponentially from a dwindling small club in the south to a national organization with millions of active members during the 1920s (Clark). The popularity of this movie was so great, the movie was used as a recruiting tool for decades after its release and initial screenings (Clark). Wilson’s attachment to *Birth of a Nation* is one of MANY issues that Wilson had with Black Folks during his tenure as president. A presidency that lasted throughout the Taisho era.

Taisho Era 1912 - 1926

TAISHO ERA: KOREA’S LABOR RELATIONS WITH JAPAN

With the end of the Meiji era in 1912, Taisho’s era proved to be one of, if not the most violent and destructive period of time for all three groups. These people were fighting for equality and their rights at every turn of this era, but consistently found themselves on the losing end of things.

First in Korea, the peasant farmers began to find themselves in a new form of indentured servitude. During the Yi Dynasty in Korea, between 1392-1910, contracts between tenant farmers and landlords only ranged from three to five years. However, once Japan’s annexation of Korea took place in 1910, these contracts were subject to an unlimited annual renewal in favor of the landlord. In most cases rent was paid in a type of sharecropping system that saw the tenant giving up between 50-60% of the crop they grew. Also these tenant farmers shared the burden of land taxes, irrigation fees, seed charges, fertilizer, land improvement and services like rice inspection and delivery. In some areas the tenant’s share of the annual yield fell below 25% after all of these charges brought on after annexation (Weiner 40). Tenant farmers also began losing their jobs as Japan began commercializing the land as a protected market for Japanese goods during the decade following annexation (Weiner 40-41). Out of the 105 new companies started in Korea between 1910-1918, both agricultural and otherwise, only 12 were Korean owned (Weiner 41). Because of these factors, the market hit a steep and predatory margin for tenant farmers in less than 10 years. Some accounts for tenant farmers shot up to 70% interest on debts owed to both landlords and moneylenders who were both predominantly Japanese. Because of this trend, by 1930, the Korean immigrant population in Japan had reached an excess of 400,000. By the end of WWII, the population was more than 2,000,000 (Weiner 43).

But even after being pushed out of Korea’s job market, were these “unskilled laborers” better off in Japan’s job market? The short answer is no. Absolutely not. In Japan the Korean

immigrant population found themselves being othered with extreme prejudice from the very beginning of their migration process. Below, I'll list several examples from different points in time when Korean immigrant workers were othered by Japanese society.

In late December of 1917, a writer for the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* suggested that the high turnover rate in low wage-low pay jobs and the lack of efficiency among Korean workers was a result of the “decay of Korean culture” and the “basic idleness and aimless nature” of Korean people. In this same paper, it was suggested that there was a limited scope of jobs available in Japan for Korean workers when the jobs required more than basic intelligence (Weiner 84).

Six years later during December 1923, an editorial in the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* suggested that the employment of Koreans as unskilled workers was “inevitable” because “they lacked the dexterity of Japanese workers” and “were only superior in ‘mere physical strength’” (Weiner 62). A later report from the Osaka municipal authorities that same month noted “The fact that they (Koreans) will perform without complaint, filthy degrading work....which Japanese workers avoid, should be regarded as something which, along with the low wages they will accept, can be taken advantage of as one of their principal assets.” (Weiner 62). During the same year, when the Osaka Prefectural Government surveyed the Korean population, they found that over 77% of these workers listed farming or agricultural work before their arrival in Japan. Only ten people in this survey possessed any kind of factory skills prior to coming to Japan (Weiner 69).

In early 1924, the Nishi-Nari area of Osaka had its first all Korean settlement house, or ghetto. By mid 1924 Nishi-Nari had thirteen households of the sort in the area. Most of the workers in these houses worked for local construction companies or in local factories. Compilers of the *Osaka General Affairs Department* took note of this and wrote a report on immigrant living conditions. In their report they concluded: “Korean vagrants are a frequent sight. While gambling and quarreling are also quite common. As far as hygiene is concerned, from the viewpoint of public morals, there are not a few regrettable items. Consequently, they are shunned by the Japanese in the area and live in isolation.” (Weiner 88).

Why is any of that important? Well, it's important to note that Japanese ideologies about Koreans, both those in Korea and the immigrant workers in Japan tended to be filled with misconceptions and less than flattering rhetoric that referred to Koreans as lazy, idle, violent, simple minded and uncivilized people. This was an unchanging aesthetic in Imperial Japanese politics towards Koreans throughout the late 1800s and throughout all of Korea's annexation. Also, I only mentioned Osaka. Osaka was during the time period, one of the largest cities with a significant Korean immigrant/worker population. However, Osaka wasn't the only place in Japan with a large number of immigrant workers. But its thought process seemed to be at the utmost forefront of Japanese thought during the Taisho era. Though these thoughts weren't ever

violently acted upon on a large scale in Osaka, ambivalence and paranoia towards Korean workers in Japan would turn into mass hysteria and violence in Tokyo during September 1923.

TAISHO ERA IN JAPAN: THE NEW WOMAN SHINES (1911-1920s)

For The New Woman during the Taisho era, the fight for women's suffrage was a fight that ran well into the 1920s. Women didn't earn the right to be present in public meetings related to political matters until 1922 (Molony). While the *Seitoshu* moved away from the days of Hiratsuka Raicho and the original ideology to a more politically charged, socially conscious group under editor Ito Noe in 1915 (Mori 49), the group kept its spirit of feminism from the lens of all women for the sake of Japanese women at its forefront until its disbandment in 1916. The *Seito Magazine* also moved from illustrated covers to having Ito Noe's 'Anti-Manifesto' plastered on the cover pages for the final few volumes of the magazine (Bradsley 7). After Noe took over the magazine, the magazine began to translate more socialist and anarchist literature from American writers like Emma Goldman. Ito also wrote critiques of Japanese laws that restricted women's access to abortions and topics like the legality of prostitution. The issues reached a level of controversy and censorship that put Ito under constant surveillance and harassment by local authorities for the remainder of her life (Filler).

WOODROW WILSON'S "AMERICA" & THE NEGRO CLASH (1915-1921)

For Black Folks in the US during roughly the same time period as the Taisho era in Japan, Woodrow Wilson was at the helm of the Oval Office for the critical war years. While 1915 was the year of Wilson's "Birth of a Quotation", it would be the following years that saw black soldiers intentionally transcribed for WWI. These men initially served as menial workers in France during their time in Europe. There were incidents that took place during the US's involvement in WWI that showed the underlying rage of black soldiers towards Jim Crow and white America's death grip on Jim Crow. There was an incident that led to a riot before the US ever sent a black soldier abroad to serve. The 1917 Camp Logan insurrection and trial put black America's downright refusal of white supremacy on the front page of national black news outlets. The violence revolving around the white people of Houston and the black soldiers of the Third Battalion, Twenty-fourth Infantry resulted in the soldiers never making it to France. Their issues while stationed to guard the camp's construction site were multiple. They dealt with the constant racism of local whites on Houston trolleys as well as the assault and arrest of Private Alonzo Edwards by two notoriously violent white police officers: Rufus Daniels and Lee Sparks (Crowe). This particular issue involving Private Edwards with the police ultimately led to a full on riot that saw the soldiers of the Twenty-Fourth rampage through the fourth ward of Houston on August 23rd, 1917. Even prior to the riot, a black Corporal named Charles W. Baltimore went to the HPD to inquire about the incident between Private Edwards and the police, only to also be assaulted and shot at by none other than Officer Lee Sparks. Sparks was one of the two officers who'd violated Private Edwards earlier that day. With no knowledge on what exactly happened to Private Edwards, there was a rumor that he'd been killed by law enforcement that spread

amongst the men at the camp (Crowe). This rumor sent the 3/24 into a raging tailspin. The ensuing riot would leave sixteen white civilians, four black soldiers and two white HPD officers dead. The riot would lead to thirteen soldiers being found guilty and hanged. Another 41 soldiers were sentenced to life in prison in the state of Texas (Crowe).

There is also the tale of a returning soldier named Wilbur Little who was lynched in April 1919 in Blakely, Georgia for arriving back in his hometown donning his uniform and defying white residents' demands that he not wear his uniform in public (Davis). I mean, because god forbid a black veteran shows pride in serving his country and wants to be given a hero's welcome (like his white counterparts) once he returns home from the biggest war the world had ever seen to that point. There are tales of violence very similar to Wilbur Little's against black soldiers all across not only the south but the US as a whole in both literature and news articles during 1918 and 1919. These tales of lynching served as an aesthetic and political fuel for the New Negro and their movement heading into the 1920s (Davis). There are even documented tales of rioting that took place all throughout the summer of 1919 that pit black and white Americans against each other. This period of time after WWI is often called the "Red Summer". The Red Summer is oftentimes viewed as the awakening of negroes, both old and young alike across the United States'. The Red Summer is credited as the jump start of what would become the New Negro Movement/ Harlem Renaissance. These movements were headed in New York City by the likes of Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke amongst others. While NYC felt the heat of the Red Summer, no place in the US had a summer quite like Washington DC in 1919.

DC's version of the nationwide violent outbreak had black veterans taking up arms to help protect their neighborhoods alongside black civilians from all types of white assailants. This mob included white civilians, veterans and police all looking to destroy the predominantly black neighborhoods in DC (Krugler). Woodrow Wilson's response during all of this chaos near the front steps of the White House seemed to be one of disinterest towards the Negro and his problems. For the most part, Wilson allowed the national guard and the DC Police Department to deal with the madness that engulfed a specific chunk of the city. He made very little effort to address the issues in DC or places like Chicago to the national press for most of the Summer (Krugler).

AROUND THE WORLD: ALL EYES LOOK TO PARIS IN 1919.

For the entire world during 1919, it seemed like every nation was waiting for the spring and the Paris Peace Treaty Summit. The summit was hosted by Woodrow Wilson and his brainchild, the League of Nations. On December 1st, 1918. Black activist and leader W.E.B Du Bois set off to Paris as a "newspaper correspondent" in anticipation of the summit on behalf of a Pan-African based unified group (Contee). By February 1919, several delegates of the Pan-African Committee from nine African countries and a few members from the US joined Du Bois to have several meetings in Paris (Contee). These meetings were all prior to their attempt to be heard and seen by the League of Nations and Wilson. Du Bois and his group would not be permitted to speak directly to Wilson. They'd however have the chance to speak to three

prominent individuals at the Summit: Colonial House and George Louis Beer from the US and English Prime Minister, David Lloyd George (Contee). The Prime Minister promised to give the Pan-African Committee's resolutions from February "his careful consideration" but nothing else came of Du Bois's time in Paris as there was no "chance" or "opportunity" to speak directly with Wilson (Contee).

Du Bois and the Pan-African Committee weren't the only Peace Summit party crashers that had their hopes of speaking to the Great Wilson and the most powerful men in the world dashed. Korea sent a special delegation to Paris as well in hopes to get some attention and assistance in their fight for freedom against Imperial Japan. On March 1st, 1919, a large group of Koreans gathered for the reading of a manifesto that declared Korea's independence from Japanese rule in Seoul's Pagoda Park. Approximately 33 Korean civil and religious leaders signed this manifesto. These leaders in Korea cited Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" as inspiration, specifically point number five: that looked to "make an adjustment to all colonial rule" (Savage). The reading/demonstration turned into a city wide protest against the Japanese military and the predominantly Japanese police force in the city. The Japanese response to the March 1st Movement was swift and violent. Following Japan's reaction to the March 1st Movement, the US, specifically the New York Times began to criticize the handling of Korea in its publications and overall anti-Japanese sentiment began to grow in the US (Savage). Fast forward to May of that same year: merely a few weeks after the Pan-African Committee had to settle for meeting representatives of Wilson and the British Prime Minister, a small delegation of Korean Nationalists, led by Kim Gyu-sik arrived in Paris to join the summit. Much like Du Bois and his colleagues, Kim and his colleagues also would not be granted the opportunity to meet with Wilson directly. They would, however, have a moment to speak with American Diplomat, Stanley Hornbeck (Pennington). Kim is said to have handed Hornbeck two documents. One was the "Petition of the Korean People and Nation for Liberation from Japan and for the Reconstitution of Korea as an Independent State". The other document was "Claims of the Korean People and Nation." Hornbeck accepted the documents but refused to make any promises on what he could achieve with them (Pennington). Kim was not defeated though. Before leaving Paris, Kim gave a speech to an undisclosed crowd where he railed against the weak reception that he received from The Ally's delegation and questioned whether The Almighty Woodrow Wilson's quip on "self-determination" was something that Wilson himself believed in. He also spoke of France's faux love of justice while millions of Koreans sat under Japanese colonial oppression (Pennington).

KOREA'S INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT FINDS AN ALLY IN JAPAN?

1919 was a disappointing and oftentimes violent year for Korea and its people under the thumb of Japan. While 1919 was the second official year for the initial "Korean independence movement" (1918-1921), every aspect of the year would prove to be just the beginning of some of the horrors and brutality that would follow during the remainder of the Taisho era. For example, after the March 1st Movement's bloody end and Korea's snuff in Paris some two

months later, Koreans began to look for support and allegiance to their cause elsewhere. They found unlikely allies in the capital of their oppressor. Korea's independence movement began to align itself with some Japanese social movement leaders in Tokyo in November 1921 (Weiner 149). This alliance was called the Black Wave Association. And though this alliance ruptured in less than a year, at its formation it featured prominent Korean anarchist Pak Yol and future Korean politician Kim Yak-Su as its principal leaders. Notorious Japanese anarchists Osugi Sakae and Iwasa Sakutarō acted as advisers of things in Tokyo for the BWA (Weiner 149).

Why is this important to know? In my opinion, when the 1923 Massacre took place following the Great Kanto Earthquake, a lot of the recent suspicion of Koreans from Japanese authority figures and fear tied to anarchists and other "malcontents" in Japan could be traced back to zoning in on this movement's short lifespan. The group wasn't around long in Tokyo but the mounting issues between Japan and Korea in 1918 and 1919 put Japan on high alert. Because of his ties to the Black Wave Association amongst other issues with Imperial Japanese authority figures, Osugi's death in 1923 seemed inevitable. Osugi's extensive ties to anarchy and other prominent Japanese anarchists like Kotoku Shusui, his ties to various labor movements alongside his commonlaw wife, Ito Noe and Noe's own feminist movement ties put them at the center of the 1923 Massacre. So much so that their murders alongside Osugi's nephew became a separate headline known as the Amakasu Incident in late September 1923.

EARTHQUAKES & MASSACRES: TAISHO'S TOKYO (1923)

What exactly happened with the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake and the ensuing massacre? At 11:58 am on September 1st, 1923 a series of tremors from a 7.9-magnitude earthquake ravaged the eastern part of the Kanto Region (Ryang). In all, seven prefectures were affected by the earthquake but none more so than Kanagawa Prefecture and Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture. The town of Odawara in Kanagawa was completely destroyed by this earthquake (Weiner 164). The tremors knocked over lit stoves and braziers inside of homes. The shockwaves, the unusually strong winds that day and the fire brigades' inadequate water supplies led to thousands of homes burning down on the 1st. By the evening of September 2nd, in Tokyo an entire district extending from Minami Senju in the north to Kanasugi in the south had been burned to the ground. There were thousands of people who died because of the fire/earthquake and close to a million people left homeless (Weiner 164). By nightfall on the 2nd, there were reports of 500,000 people huddled outside of the Imperial Palace near Tokyo Station and 400,000 in temporary shelters around Ueno Park (Weiner 164). Sometime between the night of September 1st and September 2nd, a well-known labor agitator, Yamaguchi Seiken began circulating a rumor in the Kawasaki-Yokohama area. The later unfounded rumor insisted that there was an uprising in the area by a group of unsatisfied Koreans (Weiner 165). Sometime after the massacre/incidents officials from the Justice Ministry confirmed that roughly four hours after the earthquake in Nakamura-cho, Yokohama, Yamaguchi started a "volunteer force" to protect the city against the unsavory Korean mob. However, no Korean mob showed up. There was however looting reported in Nakamura-cho, and neighboring wards Yamamoto-cho and Negishi-cho. The irony is

that members of the Yamaguchi-led “volunteer force” were later found to be responsible for these crimes (Weiner 165). To make matters worse, the police substations in these areas that were being looted were also spreading misinformation concerning “Korean malcontents” in the area (Weiner 165).

As September 2nd wound down, there was a later unfounded report that there were townspeople who banded together as a makeshift “volunteer force” in the area to fight off a group of approximately two-hundred Koreans who were “setting fires”, “poisoning wells” and “raping and looting”. This misinformation added to the confusion in the already chaotic downtown Yokohama area (Weiner 165). In Tokyo, to further exacerbate and cause confusion, between September 2nd and September 8th, there were reports of various clashes between “Korean malcontents” and Japanese people of all ranks and walks of life. Specifically, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* reported about three days of chaos in Tokyo. All three days had a list of crimes that named the equivalent of “Korean John Doe” for things like “several attempts by Koreans trying to steal cloth/clothing from shops in Honjo Ward on 9/1”: “a Korean trying to assault a Japanese woman on 9/1 in the same ward”: “the shooting of a Korean trying to destroy the Edogawa Bridge on 9/2”: “the suicide of a Korean who’d allegedly drank the same poison he was trying to drop in a well on 9/3” (Weiner 168). None of these incidents produced any arrests as all of the “suspects” either escaped or were killed while being apprehended. I repeat, none of these criminals were brought to trial. But that never stopped these stories from traveling to Osaka or spreading around Tokyo respectively (Weiner 168).

Roughly a week prior to the earthquake, Japanese Prime Minister Kato Tomosaburo died of colon cancer on August 24th, 1923. His replacement Uchida Kosai came into the situation in the midst of the chaos and rumors and brought along backup in the form of the Minister of Home Affairs, Mizuno Rentarou and the Inspector-General of the Tokyo MPD, Akaike Atsushi (Weiner 169).

What’s important to note about Mizuno and Atsushi is that they were sent to Korea four years prior to help crush the Korean independence movement that turned into a full on revolt in September 1919. Mizuno and Atsushi were able to stop an attempted assassination of a Japanese official in Korea and with great prejudice and ruthlessness suppressed the ongoing uprising in Korea before the year ended (Yoshiaki). These two men developed a type of “Koreanphobia” - or fear of Korean extremists’ acts of sedition with the intent of harming the interests of Imperial Japan (Yoshiaki). These two men, Mizuno and Atsushi were now left with the task of gaining control of Kanto, more specifically Tokyo and Yokohama following the earthquake and subsequent chaos.

By September 2nd, both Mizuno and Atsushi received reports that 2,000 Koreans had crossed the Tama River and were rioting in various parts of Tokyo (Weiner 170). This kind of misinformation from different sources continued to spread from one end of Kanto to the other throughout the first ten days. This led to two very concerning things happening: first, Martial

Law was called into effect in Tokyo after heavy endorsement from both Mizuno and Atsushi on September 2nd. It was put into full effect in the entire Kanto Region on September 3rd (Weiner 175). Second, groups of vigilante groups known as *Jikeidan* began sprouting up all around Kanto. By the time that complete Martial Law went into effect, there were 3,700 *Jikeidan* around Kanto. Each group claimed to be protecting their country from violent and unruly Koreans. $\frac{2}{3}$ of these groups were in Tokyo and Yokohama. Tokyo accounted for close to 1,700 *Jikeidan* by itself (Weiner 174). While I will not personally speculate the exact number of Koreans murdered by police, the military or the *Jikeidan* while under Martial Law throughout September 1923, there were reports that accounted for 231 dead and 43 Koreans injured from the Police Affairs Bureau. The problem with this number is it didn't include Koreans who were most definitely killed by police or military personnel. Again, this report only accounted for Koreans that were killed by the *Jikeidan* (Weiner 181). On October 21st, the Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun gave its own investigation findings: their numbers were approximately 400 Koreans were killed during the incident. Japanese historian, Yoshino Sakuzo did his own investigation and found that approximately 2,600 Koreans were killed in Kanto with Tokyo and Kanagawa combining for 1,800 of those murders (Weiner 182). There are other sources that cite the number to be closer to 6,000 (Weiner 181).

Koreans were not the only people murdered during the chaos in Tokyo that September. On the 16th Ito Noe, Sakae Osugi and Osugi's young nephew were killed in prison cells. It is suspected that Noe and the nephew were arrested separately from Osugi (Mori 55). However, all three were strangled in cells. Their bodies were thrown into a well. Noe and Osugi were beaten prior to their deaths. Police Captain Amakasu was arrested for the murders but only served three years of his sentence before going back to work under Emperor Showa (Mori 55).

Why is this information about the Great Kanto Earthquake important? It's simple really. To this day, Japanese officials deny the severity of the aftermath. One in particular, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, refuses to acknowledge that the massacre happened (Nishimura and Kitano). In fact, as of 2020, Governor Koike refused to attend memorial services on four separate occasions. Koike is also associated with a conservative group that believes that the incident "never happened" and that "many Japanese saw their relatives killed and their houses burned by Korean rebels" (Nishimura and Kitano). There are people in power in Japan today that deny that the incident ever happened and that Koreans were belligerents during the earthquake. The aesthetic that dehumanized and criminalized Koreans during Meiji's era is alive and well in pockets of today's Japan as well. That's why this information is important to know.

MY PROCESS FOR THE SOLO

The process for this solo project revolved around me not looking to enact or take on the role of a character to tell these stories. I was looking to, in my own body and voice, tell the stories to my audience. The space was meant to not be a representation of anything theatrical. We were in a space that doubled as a classroom and as a theater for Grad Labs. There was a type of

theatrical performance happening in the space but it resembled a class watching a presentation. The space wasn't used to give off an illusion that the audience was in another world or looking at a set. They were looking at the space in its class setting. The set had a table and a chair for me and the projector was lowered. Because of inclement weather on Wednesday and a night festival happening on the front lawn on Friday during performance times, the show didn't happen outdoors in the Remy Space. The performances took place in the Performance Lab. Everything in the space existed already for class times.

The part of alienation that I was looking to explore with the audience was the 'a ha!' moment. For me this moment was simply the moment when the light went off in someone's mind when hearing and processing some new information that either intrigues them or punches their senses square in the gut. I thought from the beginning that most of the information that I presented wouldn't be things that most people were familiar with. Some of my audience did know some things about Japan's imperial ambitions and some of the wars Japan won and partially about the Katsura-Taft Memorandum. But there weren't many folks who knew about the feminist and anarchist movements in Japan or their ties to Korea's independence movement. Same thing goes for the Black & Korean connection in Paris (of all places). The audience didn't tie three Presidents, two Japanese Emperors and a handful of state officials in Japan and the US to a chunk of time in the same manner. The biggest 'OH SHIT' moment from both nights was the tie-in of Japanese and Korean anarchist movements when it was revealed that Ito Noe, her husband Osugi Sakae and his nephew were killed during the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake. I'd mentioned Ito Noe and her greatness/fearlessness earlier on in the show. I got to Japan-Korea's BWA linkup in 1921 and talked about Osugi. I followed up with the earthquake and its aftermath. Once I got through the details of the massacre, I put up a slide of Ito Noe. The slide had her date of birth and date of death. I asked the audience to pay attention to that. An audience member on Wednesday gave an audible "Oh No!". I told the audience about how she died. There were gasps and a heavy air around the audience. I clicked the presentation to reveal that her husband was Osugi and the entire audience gasped. That 'a-ha' moment really sank in on the audience as I'd explained to them earlier that Imperial Japan wanted to hurt any 'agitators', Korean workers and anyone remotely associated with the Korean independence movement following March 1st and the Paris Peace Treaty Summit. The Great Kanto Earthquake gave them a green light to murder with no repercussions. I think I was able to get a few punches in, but this was the most memorable punch on both nights.

All of these ideas came to me during the Embodied Thesis class on Mondays with Caden Manson and my cohort. Over the course of the year, we've broken down our ideas and presented pieces of our projects in class. My project started off as a question revolving around the difference and difficulties surrounding "being human" and "living as human beings". After some careful consideration, I shifted my focus to history and the politics that were driven by ideologies surrounding aesthetics (white supremacy in the US, colonialism via Japan over Korea and the nationalism borderlining sexism in Japan intended to disarm the female textile worker and Japanese New Woman). This change in direction made my process a lot easier to track and write

about from a research standpoint. It also helped me to organize the structure of the performance. I started off looking at the politics of both Japan and The US at the beginning of the year. Trying to focus on the semantics of “human beings” and “being human” made keeping the ideas clear a bit challenging for me. One of Sibyl Kempson’s statements in her Formal Aesthetics class stuck with me and it became my new point of attack. This paper’s structure as well as the performance’s structure are the end result of following Sibyl’s statement: “Aesthetics can never truly escape their politics.”

As I mentioned before, my process for this research didn’t start this year at Sarah Lawrence. It was a process that started somewhere in Eastern Michigan University doing research about feminism in Japan for a class. It led me to *Seitoshu*. I found out about Ito Noe there. Fast forward to my time in Japan. The student’s dislike of Koreans, the British guy’s refusal to accept what he had never researched. And voila! We’re here at SLC.

CONCLUSION

Since the old guards of slavery in the US, the samurai in Japan and Confucious Dynasties in Korea fell in the mid to late 19th century, all three countries have had to find new outlooks of life in the world. The Industrial Revolution in Japan and the US pushed freedmen, former serfs from Japan and Korea into large, sprawling cities. For all three groups, adjusting to new environments with the prospect of better lives and more opportunities to grow as people were met with the harsh reality of violence from people and power structures that weren’t so ready for true change for everyone. As a result, ‘malcontents’ in Japan, Korea and the US respectively were shut down in order to restore power structures throughout the Taisho era.

For the US, its “New Negro Issue” evolved from indentured servitude and unskilled labor to war heroes and defiant city dwellers saying “NO” to the aesthetic of white supremacy. The end result of that “NO” was a summer full of race riots and the denial of a seat at Woodrow Wilson’s Table in Paris. For Japan, its “New Woman Issue” evolved from the granddaughters of serfs, merchants and samurai all looking to become more than mothers and wives. These women became activists, feminists and independent laborers during a time of change and prosperity for the country. These women said “NO” to the aesthetic of the beauty cream buying, ironing and cleaning, submissive wife. They fought to have the right to vote, to attend public meetings, to choose who they married. Hell, even to marry for the sake of love. Though their fight was ultimately silenced and pushed aside for war, the New Woman, the Modern Girl and the proceeding iterations fought against a system that only valued them for their ability to reproduce and strengthen Japan. For Korea, its fight to liberate itself from the clutches of Japan has evolved from a “Protectorate” period and a time of annexation to a space where the country looks to reconcile and find peace with its neighbor. Korea’s initial “NO” to the aesthetic of needing a civilizing effect or savior was met with violence both in Korea and Japan. Even to this day there are conservative groups in Japan that continue to deny Japan’s atrocities against Korea over the course of the last 140 years. But there are people like playwright Kazuyoshi Fukuchi in Japan

who continue to push forward for those Korean people that were taken too soon by crimes committed under the guises of “support” and “protection” during Korea’s annexation (Cho).

Japanese Women, Koreans and Black Folks all had to fight their way through a time that had world leaders looking to stifle them. These groups had to fight against systematically set conditions and obstacles to make a living in big cities. These people fought and said “NO” to all of the unfair conditions placed in front of them. Japanese Women and Koreans told two Emperors to “fuck off” and they were punished and silenced accordingly. Black Folks & Koreans tried to appeal to Woodrow Wilson in France. They were told to “fuck off” by #28. Both groups left Paris and continued to fight for their rights and humanity to be recognized. Riots and Massacres ensued as a result of these people challenging their abusers’ systems.

Today’s outlook on these people don’t show these moments in history where they all stood defiant and dignified in the face of adversity. Japanese Women are still othered if they aren’t having or have had children or gotten married by a certain age in Japanese society. The aesthetic of being a “wise wife and a good mother” lives on in Japan. As of 2022 Black Folks have been seen as irrational during moments of protest in the US in the past 10 years or so and Koreans are seen as liars in the eyes of people like Yuriko Koike in Japan (Nishimura and Kitano). For most Americans, MLK is the only way to show displeasure. ‘You should fight violence with words no matter what.’ There has never been a time where any other type of response to white supremacy has existed that’s “acceptable” to America. For some Japanese conservatives, there was never an actual massacre in Tokyo and the numbers (something closer to 200 Koreans were killed) are 100% properly documented (Nishimura and Kitano). And if that doesn’t suffice, just know that “Koreans were killing Japanese people and poisoning wells the whole time...so something had to be done to them.” is the typical defense from right wing Japanese people that deny any wrongdoing in 1923. These ideas have been presented as fact or retaught for so long, that most people can’t see that history’s funny way of showing the truth can never truly be whitewashed in oppressive aesthetics. No matter how hard an oppressor bleaches.

Since my conversations with the fourth grader and the British dude in Tokyo, I’ve looked for a way to share these stories. I looked at theatre and Hegel’s alienation approach as a way to tell these stories. I feel like the use of Hegel’s alienation, Malay theatrical hyper-realism and the stories themselves all blended to make a compelling piece of theatre for the audiences during my shows. I believe that I hit the mark to reach the ‘a-ha’ moments I was looking for. In conclusion, I don’t think I could’ve given this history without the tools I learned at SLC. Looking at the marriage of aesthetics and politics and how they’ve left their mark on history was an intriguing topic. Putting that concept to paper was challenging. Putting that concept on a live stage with Hegel and Malay theatrical hyper-realism on the wings made for an experience that got everything I was looking to get from the audience.

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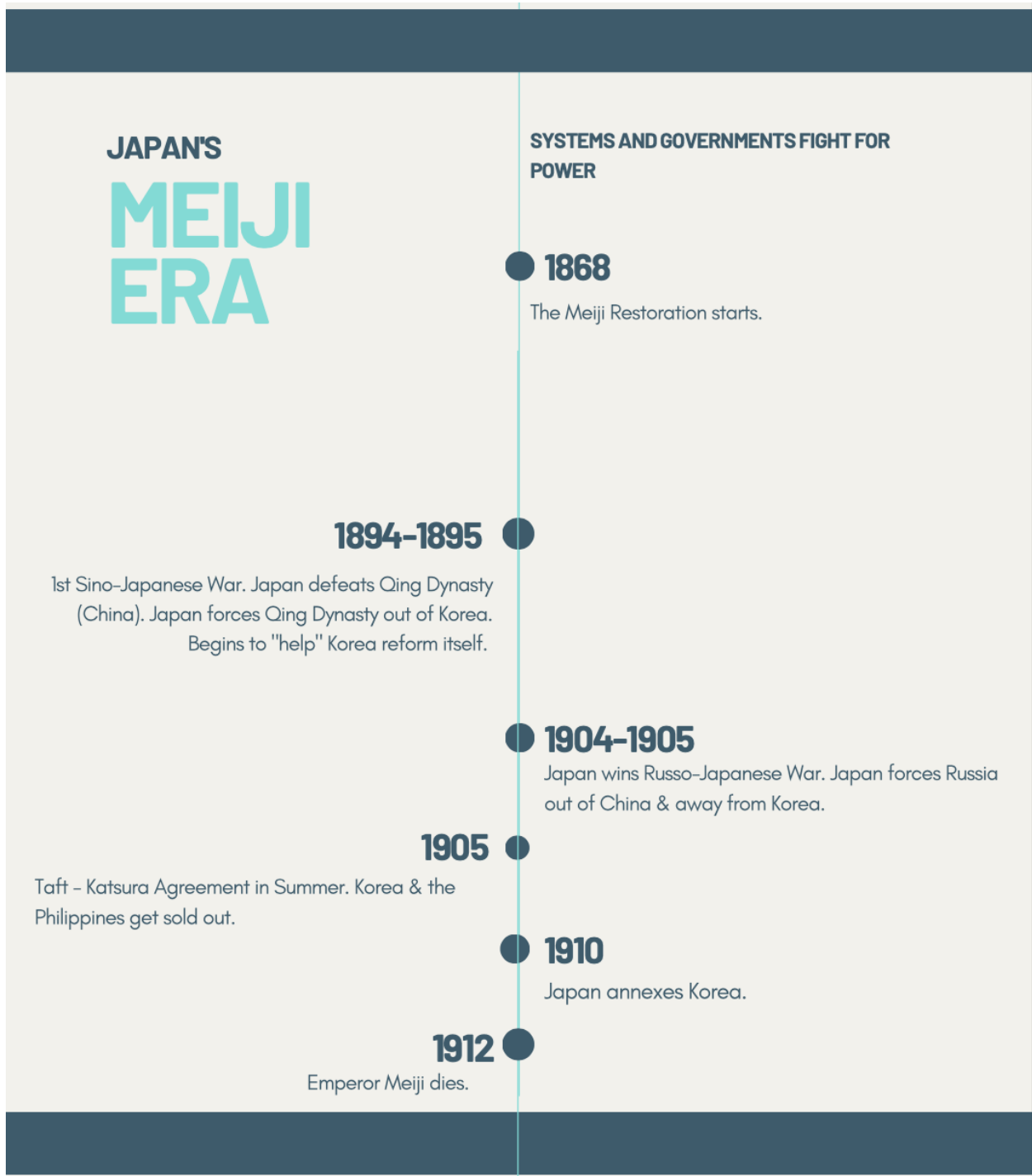
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APPENDIX A:

PERFORMANCE SOLO TIMELINE/QR CODE



JAPANESE NEW WOMEN

MEIJI ERA

SERFDOM, SUFFRAGE & CONQUERING

● 1868

The Japanese Tokugawa is ended. All national feudal systems are destroyed. No more samurai.

● 1870S

Japan began to "modernize itself".
infrastructure, national school
systems, medicine, etc. brought in
from Europe.

● 1899

National mandate requires each prefecture to
have at least 1 girls high school.

● 1907

Japanese Textile Industry recruiters bombard
the countryside for young, unmarried women.

● 1911

Japan's first Women's magazine, written and
edited by women: Bluestocking goes on sale.

KOREA'S

MEIJI ERA

FALSE FREEDOMS & PERFORMATIVE PROTECTIONS

1870S

Qing Dynasty fights to keep European powers out of Joseon.

1880S

Imperial Japan looks to protect itself from European colonization . Wants to steal influence in Joseon from weakend Qing.

1890S

Japan and Qing's power struggle intensifies as Joseon Royalty has inner conflict.

1895

Japan forces Qing Dynasty out of Joseon. Begins to "help" Joseon reform itself.

1895-1900

Japan begins to force its influence on Joseon. Russia begins to build its railroad through China, inching closer to Korea.

1897

Joseon becomes the Korean Empire.

LATE 1890S - 1900S

Poor rural farmers begin to leave Korea and look for "unskilled labor" opportunities in bigger cities in Japan.

1904 - 1905

Japan wins Russo-Japanese War. Japan forces Russia back into its own territory.

SUMMER 1905

Taft - Katsura Agreement. Korea & the Philippines get sold out.

FALL 1905

Japan surrounds palace in Seoul.
Later forces Emperor Gojong to sign Japan-Korea Treaty.
Japan becomes Korea's "Protectorate".

OCTOBER 1909

Resident-General/Former PM of Japan, Hirobumi Ito is assassinated in Korea.

1910

Japan officially annexes Korea.

BLACK FOLKS' / THE US'S

MEIJI ERA

BATTLING THE PERCEPTIONS. FIGHTING THE FIGHT.

1865 - 1877

Reconstruction takes place in the southern states.

1877

The Compromise of 1877 awards the Republican Party the Presidency from the 1876 election while effectively ending Reconstruction in the south.

1890S

The number of black folks leaving the south to find jobs in the northern states grow substantially.

1899-1902

America wins The US-Philippines War.
The US successfully colonizes the Philippines.

SUMMER 1905

The Taft-Katsura Agreement puts Japan-US relations at ease.

1912

Staunch racist, published author, educator & former NJ Governor, Woodrow Wilson becomes 28th POTUS

EVERYBODY'S

TAISHO ERA

1912-1926? WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE!!
AKA 1919 WANTS THE SMOKE!

1915

woodrow Wilson shows Birth of a Nation at the White House.

Wilson's published work is loosely quoted in movie's opening credits.

1916

Bluestocking publishes its last issue in February under editor-in-chief, Ito Noe.

1917

Camp Logan Riot breaks out in Houston, TX.

1919

March 1st Movement in Seoul.

Korean Independence Movement fights to overthrow Japanese Imperialism.

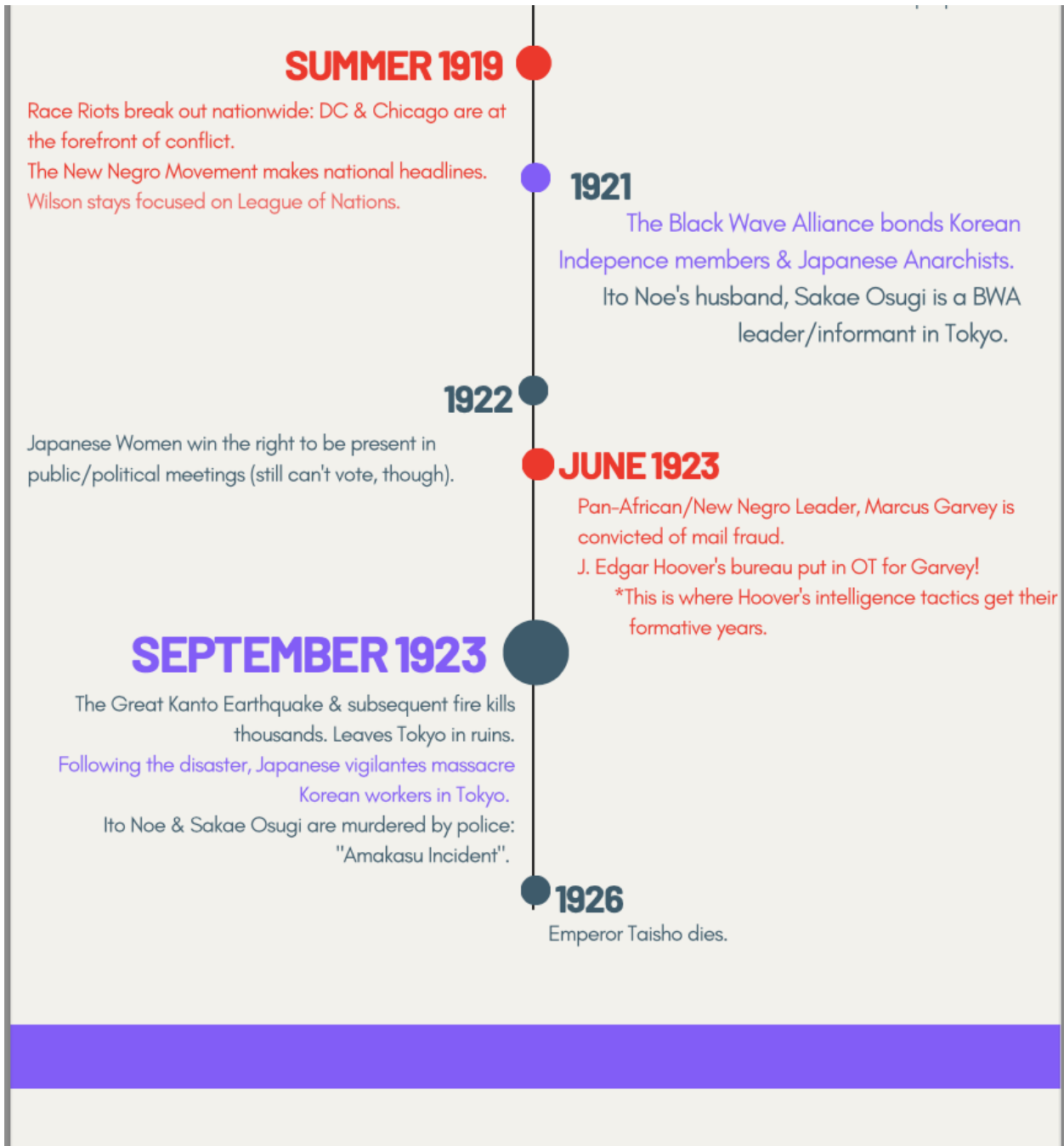
SPRING 1919

Paris Peace Treaty takes place following WWI.

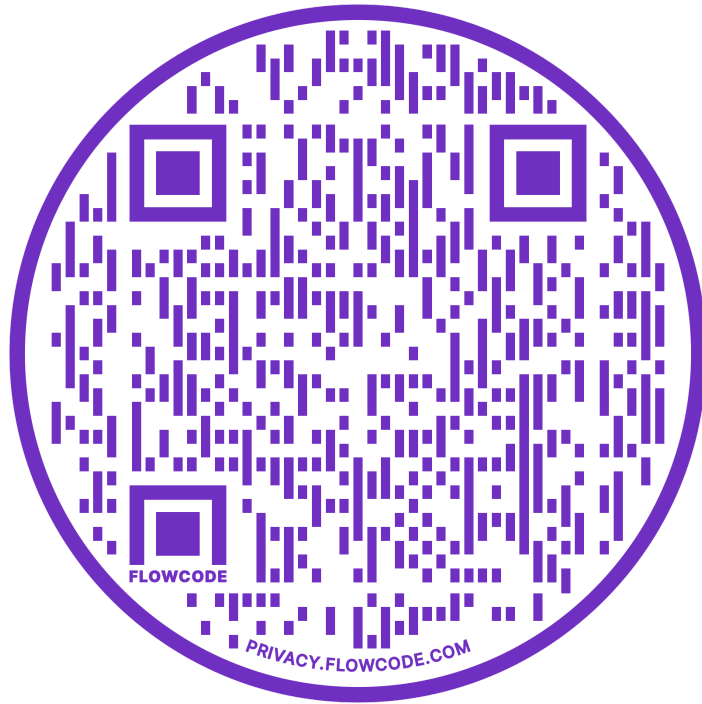
Woodrow snubs Pan-African Leaders & WEB Dubois.

Woodrow Wilson snubs Korean Independence Leaders.

The US, UK & Australia snub Japan's racial equality proposal.



Below is the (purple) QR CODE for this timeline.



APPENDIX B:

SOLO PERFORMANCE ZINE QR CODE

