

2022 ASA Annual Meeting Report

Hiraku Abe, University of Alabama

From November 3rd to 6th, 2022, I attended the American Studies Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, with the aid of the travel grant provided by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission through the Japanese Association for American Studies and the American Studies Association. As a scholar of the Black Freedom Movement in the 20th-century United States, I found the sessions on Black culture, Black feminism, and Black education particularly interesting among all the sessions I attended. As the panelists had developed their plans amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there were clear implications in each session for the health inequalities between races that have come to light in recent years. In the panel session “Pedagogies of Community: Forging Student Centered Coalitions at HBCUs,” for instance, the presenters discussed how Black institutions have been the places for continuous resistance to regimes of hegemonic violence and inequality. The panel session “Communicating the Pandemic in Black America” also had a conversation about the communicative acts employed by Black Americans in response to the crises of Black rights and their access to public healthcare. I was able to take part in the discussions based on the latest trends of these academic studies with concerns with the ongoing global pandemic.

Another great benefit of attending a major academic conference is the various networking opportunities with other conference participants. I attended almost every luncheon and reception held during the meeting, where I had chances to meet up and talk with my fellow scholars of American studies. On Saturday morning, graduate students were invited to a casual mentoring breakfast to talk with faculty. I was paired up with a professor of environmental history and she gave me invaluable advice on the coursework I am currently taking and my comprehension exams that are coming up in a few years. Since I just started my Ph.D. program in August this year, such guidance was very helpful in knowing about the

US academic culture and how to manage all the tasks required for a degree. I am thankful for this opportunity to attend the 2022 ASA annual meeting and I look forward to participating in the meeting again in the future—hopefully soon as a presenter.

Report on ASA conference at New Orleans
Hirofumi Ariyoshi, University of Alabama

The ASA conference opened my eyes with its interdisciplinarity and, at the same time, gave me deep insight into the field I am studying. I observed various sessions, from food to music studies, in which I have interests concerning my study field of Southern literature. For example, I listened to a session on agriculture in the South and learned about issues with Hispanic farmers in the Mississippi delta area. A presenter reported that some local administrations do not count Latinx farmers as immigrants but as “native people,” resulting in the invisibility of their existence of them. It made me want to visit the place and learn about actual issues, not just read William Faulkner and listen to Robert Johnson in my apartment. Also, I had chances to listen to literature and translation presentations, which are central to my research interests. It was impressive to see some scholars citing Caribbean theorists such as Aimé Césaire and Eduard Glissant to read literature not only from the islands but also from the Americas in general.

I had chances to interact with scholars from the United States and Japan in American Studies. I was pleasantly surprised by some small and close sessions; since it was the first time I had attended an academic conference in person, I did not know how it was. I opened the door to the first session on the first day and found about seven people sitting in a small circle, beckoning me to join their conversation. The session went on in a conversational style, and the presenters answered my elementary questions. A session on translation in American Studies unexpectedly became like a consultation on my dissertation research plan after I introduced myself as a Ph.D. student trying to narrow down my research interest in Southern literature and translation studies. Advice from a scholar remains in my mind: “literature is not the only form that needs translation. More and more people are in the code-switching zone in their daily lives.” Yes, that is true; I am one of those people. Last but not least, it was my pleasure to talk with committee members of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission at a welcoming party and a luncheon. I want to come back to ASA conferences as its member someday.