

2025 ASA Annual Meeting Report

Hiraku Abe

I had the opportunity to participate in the American Studies Association Annual Meeting held in Puerto Rico, where I presented my research on student activism, religion, and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. This experience was both intellectually rewarding and personally meaningful, as it allowed me to receive valuable feedback on my work, engage with fellow scholars, and deepen my understanding of Puerto Rico's culture and history.

My paper examined the origins and development of the Kneel-in Movement in Jackson, Mississippi, during the early 1960s. I focused on how interracial student activism in the 1950s—particularly at Tougaloo College and Millsaps College—laid the groundwork for later direct-action campaigns that challenged racial segregation in white Protestant churches. Rather than viewing the Kneel-ins as a sudden development of the 1960s, I argued that they emerged from earlier interracial dialogues, student-led organizations, and informal networks that brought together Black and white students and faculty to discuss race, religion, and social justice. These interactions, I suggested, shaped race relations in Jackson and contributed to deep divisions within white Protestant churches, many of which ultimately resisted integration.

In addition, my presentation explored why these interracial efforts eventually stalled. Despite growing racial awareness and early momentum, the student movement struggled to form a lasting biracial or multiracial coalition. By analyzing the decline of these efforts, the paper highlighted the powerful forces of segregationist opposition, institutional resistance within churches, and the limits of liberal interracial dialogue in the Deep South. Through this analysis, I aimed to contribute to the expanding scholarship on religion and civil rights by

emphasizing the importance of student activism in the decade preceding the major movements of the 1960s.

I was very pleased to receive thoughtful and constructive feedback from conference participants. Several scholars offered helpful suggestions regarding sources and framing, particularly concerning how this case might be situated within broader studies of religion and civil rights in the South. Their comments helped me identify new directions for revising and strengthening the paper, and I was encouraged by the positive response to my argument and methodology.

The conference also provided valuable opportunities to connect with other scholars. Through panel discussions, informal conversations, and social events, I was able to exchange ideas with researchers from diverse fields and career stages. These interactions not only expanded my academic network but also helped me reflect more broadly on how my research fits into ongoing debates within the field.

Beyond the academic experience, I stayed in Puerto Rico a bit longer after the conference, which allowed me to explore the island's rich culture and history more deeply. I visited landmarks in Old San Juan and spent time in El Yunque National Forest, experiencing both historical sites and natural beauty. The combination of academic exchange and cultural exploration made this conference particularly memorable.

Overall, participating in this conference was a highly valuable experience. It strengthened my research through feedback, broadened my scholarly connections, and offered meaningful cultural insights. I am grateful for the opportunity to present my work and look forward to incorporating what I learned into future research.

ASA Attendance Report

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I attended the 2025 annual meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA), held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from November 20th to 22nd. It was my second time attending an ASA meeting, and it was definitely as intellectually enriching as my first time last year in Baltimore.

Aligning with this year's theme, "the Late-Stage American Empire?," many panels addressed different aspects of U.S. imperialism and colonialism in the past, present, and future. What I personally found fascinating was that ASA extends beyond the US, welcoming critical conversations about imperialism and colonialism, resistance to them, and socio-ecological alternative ways of being. ASA has become a hub of many different radical, alternative thoughts and praxis.

I presented my paper at the JAAS-ASA co-sponsored session *Postwar Racial Liberalism from Mississippi to Okinawa*, where we explored the historical and present stages of US imperialism in the US South, Okinawa, and ocean spaces. My paper explored how imperial practices with ocean spaces shape the nexus of colonial capitalism and climate change, and argued how critical theorization of climate colonialism might benefit from centering oceans. Exchanging ideas and thoughts with the other three presenters, Dr. Julie Sze, who offered insightful comments to the panel, and the audience at the session and beyond, was very stimulating, inspiring, and thought-provoking.

I attended a wide range of sessions, yet primarily on environmental humanities. One of my favorite sessions was the one on water and water spaces. The presenters addressed a wide range of ways of societal interaction with waters and bodies of water, drawing on historical archives, memoirs, films, and creative writings. They further discussed how we can imagine alternative futures that are not colonial, imperial, Eurocentric, or capitalist. I also enjoyed a session focused on queer and trans ecologies and another that attempted to overcome the land-water dichotomy.

I thank ASA-JAAS for awarding me this travel grant. My learning at the meeting would have been real without it. I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved in organizing the logistics behind this opportunity. Thank you.

ASA 2025 Annual Meeting in Puerto Rico 2025 年 11 月 22 日実施

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- ・ 発表内容
第二次世界大戦後の沖縄において、琉球列島米国民政府(USCAR)第三代高等弁務官キャラウェイが行った「自治権神話演説」は有名だ。しかし、その強い言葉の背景には、USCAR に陪審制度を導入するよう圧力をかける陸軍当局の存在があったことは殆ど知られていない。年次大会のテーマが “Late-Stage American Empire?” であったため、沖縄のアメリカ統治と陸軍当局との力関係に着目し、キャラウェイ演説の裏にある新事実を明らかにした。陪審制度に反対するキャラウェイは、陸軍の提案（実質的には命令）に抵抗し続けた。自治神話演説は 1963 年 3 月 5 日、陸軍高官から陪審制導入の最後通牒を受けたわずか数日後であった。自治権神話演説は沖縄内外で物議を醸し、その事象に関連する様々な研究も出ているが、この事実は新たな視点を提供することができる。本研究はアメリカ陪審制度に関心を持つ発表者が、戦後の沖縄で実施された陪審制度を調査する過程において発見したものである。なお、沖縄での陪審制度に関する質問をいくつかいただいたが、時間制限のため回答できなかったのは残念だった。制度導入の契機や実際の裁判等については査読論文や寄稿論文を参照されたい。
- ・ Sponsored Panel について
若手研究者に国際学会での発表の機会が与えられる良い制度だと思う。パネルを初めて経験する方にとってもアメリカ学会がスポンサーであることは心強く、同じような立場や関心をもつ若手研究者と情報交換できるのは貴重だ。また討論者の先生による示唆に富んだコメントは非常に有益で、分析の視点等多くの学びを得ることができた。
そうであればこそ、少し残念に感じたことがあった。まず、JAAS と ASA のどちらの誰がどのように関わっているのかが明確でなく、どこに問い合わせてよいか不明であったこともあり、発表者は連絡を待つしかなかった。パネルについて何も連絡がないまま何か月も過ぎ、発表のわずか 2 週間前に、議長から発表日時の変更やレセプション、発表原稿の提出といった重要事項のメールを受け取った。しかもこの時点で発表の持ち時間は決まっておらず、問い合わせで回答を得た。持ち時間は 13-15 分と言われたが、長いと感じた。やはり十分な質疑応答の時間が確保できなかった。こうした問題はいずれも、連絡を取っていれば事前に相談・解決できたのではないだろうか。例えば採用後に顔合わせのオンラインミーティングを実施し、今後の連絡方法やスケジュールについて簡単な案内があるとよかったのではないかと思う。窓口を明確にし、連絡を取りやすい環境を作りたいことを提案したい。

以上