

Editor's Introduction

Soon after Donald Trump took office as President in January 2025, drastic changes began to take place in American domestic and foreign policy. Numerous domestic initiatives, such as tightening US border controls, aggressively deporting undocumented immigrants, intervening in the management of private universities, and defunding federal agencies, led to widespread upheaval and caused great controversy. In foreign policy, new diplomatic strategies based on Trump's "America First" policy, such as imposition of steep new tariff regimes (or the threat of them) and the withdrawal of US foreign aid funding in a wide variety of arenas, such as global health, food assistance, and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), have had global ramifications. The turmoil surrounding America's political economy as well as conflict over sociocultural issues continues as of this writing.

In light of such dramatic events, the theme of this year's edition of the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*—"New Approaches in American Studies"—could not be more timely. The volume covers a wide range of topics, with its many contributors examining American studies from diverse theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives. Specifically defining what can be considered a "New Approach" to American studies is difficult; so instead of trying to define it, this volume demonstrates how the discipline continues to push academic boundaries to investigate a wide variety of key issues pertaining to the United States and its global influence, and American history, culture, and society. It is our hope that readers will engage critically with each article individually, as well as reflect on how the articles collectively expand our understanding of the broad potential of ongoing innovation in the field of American Studies.

The papers are presented in rough chronological order, based on the topics addressed. First, Keiko Fukunishi examines photographs of Anglo-American men taken in Hawai'i in the 1890s and discusses how these images employed the

visual motifs of earlier American West oil paintings to contextualize the islands as America's new frontier. She argues that these photographic representations of Hawai'i helped shape mainland Americans' views of the islands' natural landscape and eventually legitimize Americans' settler colonial expansion.

The second two papers pertain to the post-World War II era. Isami Romero investigates postwar US-Japan relations by focusing on two commodities, sugar and whale meat, both of which the US initially assisted Japan in obtaining as it faced significant food shortages after the war, but subsequently became sources of conflict between the two countries. His paper illuminates how food diplomacy is a subject which has received relatively little academic attention, but whose further study provides the opportunity to enhance understanding of the diverse dimensions of bilateral and multilateral relations. Miyuki Daimaruya presents her findings to date of her ongoing oral history research of Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans), who served in the American military during the Korean War (1950–1953). She also critically considers important implications of the methodology of oral history research, demonstrating how oral history, despite its limitations, plays a powerful role in documenting voices and experiences of people who are often invisible in official records.

The next three papers focus on the 1970s and thereafter. Takahito Moriyama explores the role of ethno-racial minorities in modern American conservatism, specifically examining how and why many Asian Americans supported the Republican party from the late 1970s through the Reagan administration, but gradually shifted away from the party beginning in the late 1980s. His article highlights the need for further research on the subject of minority support for American political conservatism, because scholarship to date has predominantly focused on white Americans as major supporters and the mainstream of the movement. Next, Tsuyoshi Ishihara critically compares the interplay between two military aviation action films: *Top Gun* (1986), produced in the United States, and *Best Guy* (1990), produced in Japan. While the Japanese film replicates the plot of its predecessor to a large degree, Ishihara demonstrates how differences between the American and Japanese publics' perception of the military, subtle contradictions between Japan's "Peace Constitution" and retention of its military, and the countries' differing positions in Cold War geopolitics affected the content and meaning of the two films. Focusing on a similar era, Mari Nagatomi examines how and why Japanese male subculture elite writers had great affection for American Black music in the late 1980s and thereafter and how they used it for their own purposes. She argues that these writers employed

the concepts of “Blackness” and “Black musical bodies” to rebel against Japanese mainstream society dominated by American cultural hegemony and to assert their own particular views of Japanese masculinity atop gender and racial hierarchies in Japan. Nagatomi’s article further underscores the importance of transnational research approaches which enable scholars to break traditional boundaries of American-based studies.

The final three papers pertain primarily to events taking place in the new millennium. Bo Tao traces his personal background, academic training, and scholarship, relating it to the “transnational turn” in the field of American history and in American studies in the early 2000s. By offering what might be considered a “critical autobiography,” he emphasizes the importance of connecting to and gaining from adjacent fields and disciplines, however challenging the task may be. Jason Barrows presents the findings of his pilot research study analyzing the effects of teaching American high school students about the concept of the “Japanese yellow peril” before they study the Japanese American internment during World War II. Barrow’s research suggests that such learning enables students to gain more comprehensive perspectives on American history and a deeper understanding of minority groups’ experiences. Finally, Daiki Uchida examines *Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V)*, a popular video game, and analyzes its “game space,” game system, and narrative. *GTA V* continues to attract a huge fan base worldwide since its release, and in what might be the first “game studies” paper ever published in this journal, Uchida demonstrates how much *GTA V* is subliminally contextualized in particular American socio-political settings, taking place in a symbolic virtual reproduction of Los Angeles in which criminality is a privileged form of violence.

As was the case with the last two editions of the journal, this volume owes enormously to John Lewis, who provided a significant contribution through his careful and critical copyediting, which substantially raised the bar for the quality of the edition. Additionally, Maki Tsunoda demonstrated invaluable commitment to facilitating this volume of the journal administratively. I also want to gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support the American Studies Foundation provided for the publication of this volume. The articles published in the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*, including those from back issues, are freely available online (<https://www.jaas.gr.jp/the-japanese-journal-of-american-studies.html?lang=en>). We appreciate responses and criticism from our readers.

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Editor