2026 American Studies Association Annual Meeting

ASA-JAAS Sponsored Panel Repot

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On October 23, 2026, I presented my paper, titled “Japanese Women in ‘Oriental’ Narratives: Representing Japan in Shizue Ishimoto’s ‘Facing Two Ways’” as a panelist on the ASA-JAAS sponsored panel “Geographies of Resistance” at the 2026 American Studies Association Annual Meeting. My paper analyzed *Facing Two Ways* (1935), an English-language autobiography, written by Ishimoto Shizue, who is later known as Katō Shizue, to examine how Ishimoto acquired a unique position in the US-Japan relationship through the self-representation of herself and Japan in the book. This paper comes from one of my dissertation chapters, and the feedback from the commentator, Professor Hana Maruyama, the chair, Professor Patricia Ventura, and the audience was incredibly helpful and beneficial as I continue writing my dissertation.

My presentation highlighted Ishimoto’s unique position in American cultural imagination: she attracted Americans as a woman who embodied traditional Japanese/Oriental femininity and simultaneously she was recognized as a feminist leader with a progressive vision. This image not only helped her gain popularity and commercial success in the 1930s but also laid the foundation for her post-WWII political career, as it enabled her to secure the support of the US occupation forces. I locate this discussion in a scholarly conversation on the international women’s network and transnational feminism that has developed since the late 1990s. My research aims to contribute to the field by elucidating Asian women’s agency in their engagement with these international movements.

My analysis mainly focused on two points. First, I positioned her in the genealogy of Orientalist narratives. The ways in which Ishimoto recounts her childhood experience, her encounter with American feminists, and the activism as a birth control advocate follow the pattern established by her predecessors such as Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto's *A Daughter of the Samurai*. Second, I looked at the representation of the household and the marital relationship through the lens of gender. Ishimoto draws a parallel between her conflict with her husband and the domestic political conflict with gendered language to emphasize her position as a pro-American feminist leader.

The questions from the commentator and audience gave me an opportunity to elaborate on the points I could not cover in my presentation. Professor Maruyama's question about the reactions of Japanese immigrant community and the Japanese government allowed me to build a meaningful connection between my own research and the presentation by another panelist, Shinya Yoshida, through the examination of cross-racial and transnational contexts.

The International Scholars Happy Hour also gave me a great opportunity to connect and reconnect with many scholars and students. I am especially grateful to Professor Sekiguchi, who introduced me to Professor Hiromi Ochi whose research interests overlaps with mine. I gained many insights into my research and my future career through the conversation at the reception. I appreciate the academic and financial support from JAAS that enabled me to have an invaluable experience at the 2026 ASA annual meeting.

2026 American Studies Association Annual Meeting Report
Mamiri Imai (University of Connecticut, Department of History)

I attended the annual meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA) in Chicago, where I had the opportunity to present my research on Black Feminist Geographies. Through this conference, I was able to situate my research within broader international scholarly discussions, expand my academic network with scholars primarily from Japan, the United States, and Canada, and gain new perspectives and insights.

My presentation, titled "Black Feminist Geographies: Memories on Terrestrial, Oceanic, and Climatic Landscapes in Rebecca Hall's Wake," examined Rebecca Hall and Hugo Martínez's graphic novel Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts (2021) through an interdisciplinary framework combining Black women's history, Black feminist geographies, and comic book geographies. I focused on the representations of space, geography, and landscape in the graphic narrative, arguing that Wake functions as a counter-geography that challenges the hegemonic spatial orders produced by slavery and colonialism. In particular, I explored how the graphic novel reinscribes the ancestral memories and resistance of enslaved women across the African diaspora into landscapes.

Drawing on Black feminist and critical geographies, I examined how Wake challenges terra-centered understandings of geography by representing land, oceans, shoals, and weather as interconnected, fluid, and relational spaces. Rather than treating geography simply as physical space, the graphic novel portrays it as an emotional, embodied, and generative space shaped by Black women's experiences, memories, and resistance. Furthermore, drawing on comic book geographies, I explored how the visual and spatial forms of comics construct these alternative geographies and shape readers' geographical experiences.

This presentation is connected to my broader research interests, particularly my doctoral dissertation on the intersections of Black women's transnational mobilities and Indigenous geographies in the nineteenth century. My current research examines how nineteenth-century Black women who escaped slavery constructed geographies of resistance through transnational movements to places such as Canada, Africa, Mexico, and the West Indies. In particular, I am interested in examining how the geographies formed by Black women who migrated to Canada intersected with Indigenous geographies and cosmologies in the Great Lakes region, sometimes creating solidarity and sometimes causing conflicts and tensions. Attending to other sessions, I also had the opportunity to exchange ideas directly with Canadian scholars specializing in Black history and Indigenous history in Canada. While my doctoral research is primarily grounded in history, my analysis of the graphic novel adds a new perspective by exploring how geographies rooted in Black women's experiences, memories, and resistance are represented and reconstructed in contemporary visual culture, and how readers experience these geographies.

Furthermore, I actively attended sessions on topics closely related to my research interests, including Black Geographies, Black Ecologies, Black Diaspora, Black Feminist Thought, and Indigenous Geographies, which allowed me to deepen my academic exchanges with international scholars. In particular, I was contacted by a representative from an academic publisher who expressed interest in my research and encouraged me to reach out again as my conference presentation project and doctoral dissertation research develop further. Through these exchanges,

I believe I was able to situate my research within broader international scholarly discussions.

I sincerely thank ASA-JAAS for awarding me the travel grant. I am also deeply grateful to everyone who supported my participation in this conference. Thank you very much for this valuable opportunity.

ASA–JAAS Sponsored Panel Report
2026 American Studies Association Annual Meeting

Shinya Yoshida
Ph.D., University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

I had the opportunity to attend the American Studies Association's 2026 Annual Meeting in Chicago. This was my first academic presentation since submitting my dissertation at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, in August. Before leaving Japan, I was concerned about whether I would have difficulty entering the United States at O'Hare International Airport under current immigration policies. The immigration officer asked only about my destination, the length of my stay, and the purpose of my visit. Fortunately, I cleared immigration without any difficulty. I had worried more than I needed to.

On October 23, I joined three other Japanese panelists in the session "Geography of Resistance," where I presented my paper "Appealing to the American Public: Chinese and Japanese Migrants' Publicity and Propaganda in California, 1931–1941." The paper drew on a chapter of my dissertation, In the Shadow of the "Good War": Chinese and Japanese Migrant Communities amid the U.S.-Sino-Japanese Relations, 1929–1945. My paper examined how Chinese and Japanese migrants in California sought to reach American audiences through publicity and propaganda in the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, situating those campaigns in the context of international politics. Drawing on English-, Chinese-, and Japanese-language primary sources, I showed that the two migrant communities competed to shape American public perceptions of East Asian affairs. I also highlighted differences in their propaganda strategies. The Japanese community sought to portray Japan as a modern, civilized, and "peace-loving" nation committed to law and order. The Chinese community drew on existing

racism in the United States to portray Japan negatively and used Orientalist imagery and performances to project a positive image of China.

The three other presenters, Hiroko Saito, Mamiri Imai, and Azumi Sakamoto, gave engaging talks based on their ongoing research. Our chair, Professor Patricia Ventura, and our commentator, Professor Hana Maruyama, guided the session skillfully. I especially appreciated how Professor Maruyama identified the main points of my paper and drew connections among presentations spanning American studies, history, and film studies. Saito and I both examined the activities of Japanese migrants on U.S. territory in roughly the same period. Hearing her presentation prompted me to think more about the diversity of Japanese migrant communities and the differences among them.

In addition to our panel, I attended several other sessions, including “Improvising Transpacific Knowledge Production through Translation,” “Genealogy of the ‘Gook’: Anti-Asian Racism and Solidarity across Wars in Asia,” and “The Long Chinese Century: Capital, Immigration, and Class Struggles between the U.S. and China.” An informal gathering of JAAS scholars and the International Scholars Happy Hour gave me opportunities to make new friends and reconnect with old ones. I am grateful to the ASA–JAAS team for making these experiences possible.