



EAST-WEST CENTER
COLLABORATION • EXPERTISE • LEADERSHIP



WEDNESDAY EVENING SEMINAR

Education Program Presents

Thinking through Race as Cultural Foundation and Contemporary Expression in Japan: The Case Study of Obamania

Dr. Christine R. Yano

Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Hawai`i

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Keoni Auditorium, Imin International Conference Center

This presentation will examine race and the Obamania phenomenon in Japan, particularly during Barack Obama's presidential campaign and continuing through 2009 and 2010. Obama has been wildly popular in Japan, with best-selling books as English-speaking lessons, a rural town sharing the same name ("Obama" in Fukui prefecture) re-branding itself with his literal image on souvenir goods, and the coinage of the term "Obamajority" by the mayor of Hiroshima Tadatoshi Akiba. Obama's many fans in Japan have adopted his two slogans – "Yes we can!" and "Change" – as rallying cries for social and political reform. When asked, many of these fans claim that Obama's race (whether African American or mixed) plays little or no part in his image or popularity, and that he thus heralds the acceptability of a "post-racial" figure. However, Japan is a country whose blood ideology persists. This ideology plays a part in defining who is or may be "Japanese," whether legally, culturally, or racially. This presentation will ask questions such as: How is Obama's purported post-raciality inflected by the persistence of blood ideology in contemporary Japan? How does race take on different guises, whether vetted as commodity or nullified by humor? These issues surrounding "post-race" are part of an ongoing project of Dr. Christine R. Yano of the Anthropology Department.

Dr. Christine Yano holds graduate degrees from the University of Hawai`i, M.A. in Musicology (Ethnomusicology) and Anthropology, and Ph.D. in Anthropology. Dr. Yano has published extensively on the topics of gender, class, nationalism, and globalism in relation to popular music and consumer goods of Japan including her recent publication *Crowning the Nice Girl: Gender ethnicity and Culture in Hawai`i's Cherry Blossom Festival*.

Refreshments will be served. Please bring your own cup. Mahalo!

The community is welcome to attend this public lecture.