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Race-ing toward the Real South Korea

The Cases of Black-Korean Nationals and African Migrants

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Although students of South Korean multiculturalism have laudably given voice to the many non-Koreans who live in a country known, until recently, for its ardent self-image as *tamil minjok* (a monoethnic people), two voices I present here are often muted in the literature. One is of Black-Korean singer Insooni (Insumi)—arguably one of the nation's most respected, beloved, and longest-lasting entertainers—and the other is of an African migrant, a de facto community leader of the growing group of Nigerians who call Seoul home. Says Insooni at a 2006 summer retreat for the country's multiracial children, who daily suffer the indignities of oppression and discrimination: "You must work harder than any Korean. . . . You know why I am what I am? Because I work harder" (Kirk 2006). Says the Nigerian community leader in response to the question of why his coethnics (and other Africans) are moving out of Seoul: "Just because we are Nigerians we are asked to pay the security deposit twice as big as the one other nationals pay" (H. Lee 2010).

Why are such struggles absent in most studies of minority populations in the Republic of Korea (ROK), those that led to the moniker "multicultural society?" And why do Insooni and the Nigerian community leader not sound like those who live in a self-proclaimed multicultural country? What can we learn from the social locations and the "subaltern-speak" of the Black Koreans themselves to gain intellectual traction on how they are treated by the South Korean nation-state and how they interpret and act in response?¹ These are the signal questions that inspired the writing of this

¹ Although I understand why scholars of Korean Studies, including those in this volume, use the term "Amerasian" to include the Black-Korean offspring of at least one U.S. military parent, I eschew the term altogether. Although language is partial and imperfect in every

critical review. The body of work on South Korean multiculturalism has, in my view, been very timely, well-researched, and theoretically rich. The contributions to the present volume are certainly testament. Credit must first be given to those who study a civil society that changes as quickly as its dizzying fashion trends. Once mired in the various dimensions of a self-described single-blood society (outed as one of the most monoethnic in the world), now scholars must scramble to make sense of a South Korea proudly touting itself as a multicultural nation, seemingly overnight, with the state on the loudest sound horn. Despite the daunting task, researchers on South Korean multiculturalism have trenchantly captured its underbelly. Beyond casting into relief government-made and -sponsored inequities mystified by Kumbaya-like mantras (H. Choe 2007; G. Han 2007), studies have addressed how the state has prioritized the cultural assimilation of the migrant wives of the "unmarriageable" rural Korean farmers (H. J. Kim 2009). Multiculturalism, then, Hui-Jung Kim argues (2009, this volume chap. 3), has been about addressing the country's urgent need for people—given a rapidly aging society and the lowest birth rate in the developed world—and a desire to show moral progress to the advanced Western states. That is, the state is engaging in a new form of nation building by using old tactics: redrawing its boundaries by preserving the traditional Korean family, the bedrock of the national family, on the backs of impoverished Vietnamese, Filipina, and other migrant women (H. J. Kim 2009). Therefore, although the women mastering *han'guk mal* (the Korean language), *kimchi* preparation, and obedience to mothers-in-law are oft-distilled into tropes about what is best for them or into depoliticized multicultural festivals, such acts uphold hegemony. The state and many NGOs and promigrant activists therefore do not define and enact multiculturalism as pluralistic equality of all groups (H. J. Kim 2009; see H. S. Kim 2006), be they child-bearing and culture-carrying wives or the ethnic Chinese or single Muslim men. In this chapter I do not contest these arguments about the state. I am rather critiquing an omission in the scholarship. In part because of state policy, much of the existing literature focuses on these female marriage migrants or the Asian labor migrants to whom the state has granted legal status as "industrial trainees" (G. Han 2003), with particular attention to the *Chosŏn'jok* (ethnic Koreans from China) and the *Hwagyo* (ethnic Chinese in Korea).²

respect, "Amerasian" privileges the American status, de-ethnicizes the Korean status, and excludes those who are not part-American, not a military descendant, and/or are born of a Black mother.

² Of course, exceptions exist, such as a study by Kim and Kang (2007) on Seoul's new ethnic residential and social concentrations, which provides an equal look at the Islamic (Bangladesh), Indonesian, Mongol, Japanese, Filipino, French, and Italian communities.

I argue in this critical review of the literature, however, that few include or examine the Black-descent populations on the peninsula—namely, the multiracial children of military couplings or the African migrants—in their research on South Korean multiculturalism.³ The dearth of works on part-Black multiracial children is unexpected in light of Super Bowl XI MVP Hines Ward's 2006 visit, which was widely seen as the opening salvo on a multicultural South Korean future. While other Korean children who looked like Ward continued to be segregated and excluded on the peninsula, President Roh Moo-hyun and others down the pecking order embraced Ward as a prodigal Korean son, all despite Ward's public censure of discrimination against children like him. I see part of the reason for the omission in multicultural works as the state's and NGOs' influence in defining who indeed are the nation's "multicultural citizens" (see Kymlicka 1995). But what of the Black-Korean multiracial individuals, most of whom have long called the peninsula home? By focusing this essay partly on the Black-descent multiracial children I do not imply that those Koreans with White, Latino, or tribal ancestry—or those who are "Kosian" (with Korean and other Asian parentage)—are central to ROK multiculturalism or to debates in the academic literature; nor would I argue that they are treated as the equals of "pure" Han-blood Koreans. These "mixed-blood" offspring (derided as *t'wigil*), who are the embodied markers of much of South Korea's ambivalence toward U.S. (neo)imperial rule, have never seen equality, nor does it appear to be in the offing in the near future.⁴ Children with Black ancestry, however, are on the bottom of this multiracial social order. Furthermore, the ROK government's designs of who is legal may be influencing scholarship, as most African labor migrants are undocumented by government design.

In overlooking the vulnerable African migrant population, however, we inadvertently reify the country's belief that Blacks are the most biologically and culturally different (see Cho and Faiola 2006) and perpetuate the *relittve* "closeness" and state "privileging" of diasporic Koreans,

³ Some studies of the mixed-race Korean population have been done (e.g., K. Han 1994).

⁴ Even the recent craze in Korean popular culture for Korean-White actors Lee Yoo-jin, Daniel Henney, Dennis Oh, Julien Kang, and Sean Richard does not mean full equality, as actress Lee Yoo-jin (and her agency) had hidden her White ancestry until government papers revealed otherwise, and she admitted at a press conference through shameful tears her "transgression." Much of the public viewed her differently thereafter and was outraged (Sung 2010, Cage chap. 11 this volume). In addition, the girl group Chococat, ironically named, consists of a majority of Korean-White biracial singers but has enjoyed moderate success, although Kollene Park has gained notoriety as a Korean-White musical director, conductor, actress, and judge on *Korazzi's Got Talent*. Few Korean-White people, however, rank in the top echelons of the government, military, corporations, academe, the medical and legal fields, and the like.

Asians from the Pacific region, and lighter-skinned people who themselves endure inequality. The relegation of part-Black Koreans to the bottom of the multiracial order and of Africans to the lowest migrant rung is in part the result of Korea's profound influence by Euro-American and Japanese imperialist hierarchies of whiteness over blackness (Han 2003), themselves tied to economic development and social-class statuses (N. Kim 2008; see Lie 1998). Anti-Black discrimination also flows from inter-racial class-skin color social orders and Korea's desire to compensate for, and erase, reminders of the U.S. (patriarchal) dominance in their country, a superpower about which they are ambivalent, and their past as a "nothing" third world country (N. Kim 2008). If we indirectly reify such societal ideologies by not questioning who Korean multiculturalists are and, in turn, how they should be treated, we will continue to overlook those who languish in the shadows, including the lesser known Middle Eastern and South Asian labor migrants. Middle Eastern and South Asian migrant workers, however, at least have been mentioned or addressed (Kim and Kang 2007; S. Choe 2009), in part because of the growing Islamic community who frequent the mosque in It'aewön (Kim and Kang 2007) and the small number of Koreans (mostly women) who have married South Asians (S. Choe 2009). The *New York Times* also used an Indian male professor's encounters with blatant prejudice as the leitmotif for a story on the country's broader struggles with race (S. Choe 2009).⁵ I have yet to find, however, such attention to the African migrant community on the peninsula (see G. Han 2003 for exceptions).

Although our focus may be steered by South Korean society's navigation of racial/ethnic diversity, I contend that the principal reason for the omission is our insufficient use of the explicit and conceptual language of "race" and "racism" in our analyses. Certainly, race and race-based criteria are implied or mentioned in scholars' treatises on Korean blood nationalism in the context of multiculturalism. Given prominence in the word "multicultural" itself, the association of "culture" and cultural diversity with new immigration is not surprising or uncommon, nor is the focus on ethnicity or ethnonationality. In fact, Han (2007) finds that multiculturalism is a ruse for multiracialism in that it does not fundamentally change the stricture of monoethnicity. It is likewise not surprising that we often use ethnicity and race interchangeably, following Korea's rare differentiation between the two (Shin 2007; N. Kim 2009). In fact, many students

of South Korean multiculturalism have emphasized the futility of a truly diverse society if this lack of differentiation persists (H. Choe 2007, 2008; G. Han 2007, 2008; see Kang 2008). To be sure, Korea's single-blood nationalism crystallized in resistance to colonial Japan (Shin 2007) and later to the United States (N. Kim 2008). And, to be sure, in scholarly conceptualizations of the two category systems, there is overlap. Ethnicity, however, is generally regarded as a cultural phenomenon grounded in shared national origins, history, language, and the like, while race is defined by biological, heritable characteristics like blood, genotype, and phenotype (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; see Orni and Wissant 1994). Gi-wook Shin (2007) argues that Korean society in fact distinguished between the two historically: race "served as a marker that strengthened ethnic identity, which in turn was instrumental in defining the notion of nation" (see also Robinson 1988; Shin 1998; Schmid 2002). Since in the Korean imagination being Korean in body rarely has been extricated from being Korean in practice—such as speaking the language, knowing the history, and enacting Confucian norms like filial piety—Koreanness is called into question if both cannot be taken for granted (N. Kim 2009).

But, just as Koreans have differentiated between race and ethnicity in the past, human populations operating within matrices of domination (Collins 2000) do not manage well with neat social categorization. Given the power of context, the coupling of biology and culture do not always make the best marriage. For instance, South Korean society traditionally has categorized the world into three encompassing "races": White, Black, and Yellow. Yet, while many South Koreans learn to see their East Asian neighbors (Japanese, Chinese) as distinct biological races, at other times, they are conditioned to subsume them all under the "Yellow Race" (*hwang saek injong*). Rarely does a hybrid race get considered (Gage, chap. 11) or split off into a fourth race. At times, the distinctiveness of non-Korean migrants' bloodlines, hence cultures, are cast into relief; at other times, it is their cultural closeness that is emphasized. Even under South Korea's biologized ethos, then, race and ethnonationality are not always coterminous. Most importantly, I contend that if minorities in a fiercely nationalist state are being grouped and treated, often in life-threatening ways, on the basis of racial criteria (e.g., blood line), yet are increasingly couched in the language of culture (e.g., cultural assimilation) per the new multiculturalism (Lim, chap. 2; N. H. Kim, chap. 3; E. Kim, chap. 8), then scholars are inadvertently helping the state's self-interested projects. Academe becomes implicated in the production of Han Korean dominance, one that depends on economically enriching the "pure-bloods" by relegating the foreign- and darker-looking people to the lowest-status,

⁵ Indeed, there is evidence of discrimination against non-Korean professors, as they are often left out of faculty meetings for lack of Korean language skills and out of decision making for lack of Korean cultural literacy (McNeill 2011).

lowest-paying jobs. In recasting South Korean multiculturalism, then, we should use the language of race per the Western colonial construction, or adopt more integrated concepts like ethnorracial (see Barth 1998). We should also jettison sole usage of the term "multicultural" to employ the language of "multiracialism," referring to the various racialized groups who call South Korea home (e.g., Nigerians, Vietnamese, Iraqis) as well as peoples of multiple racialized backgrounds whose phenotype cannot be singularly categorized (e.g., Black Koreans). Using race as an analytic category also forces us to study groups with whom Han Korea cannot easily claim biological or cultural commonality or hold up as paragons of a gradual egalitarian society under multiculturalism: African migrants. It allows us to name the ROK state's refusal to grant African migrant workers legal "industrial trainee" status as racism and ethnorracism, not just ethnic nationalism. In this vein, we would conceptualize the state as a thoroughly racialized and racializing (Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 2002) system and interpret the following bold conclusion by Janet Mintzer, president of Pearl S. Buck International, in such a manner. As president of a foundation that champions child victims of race discrimination, she states publicly: "My impression is that there is more discrimination against Amerasians in South Korea than anywhere else in Asia and that it has not improved significantly" (Demick 2004).

I seek to make an initial intervention here by reviewing existing information on groups that do not fit into a narrative of the welcomed migrant global village in wealthy South Korea: (1) the multiracial children of Koreans and Black U.S. soldiers, and (2) African migrants. Their voices are significant as they, too, force cracks in the legitimacy of, and betray the motivation behind, the cause célèbre of a multicultural South Korea. Drawing on journalistic articles and Internet websites and blogs (most of which include interviews), as well as extant multicultural scholarship and the little research on either population, I provide background information on Black-Korean residents (of which there is a substantial amount journalistically) and African migrants (of which there is little in any form). I also address the main issue of how both groups are aware of, and experience, racialization processes and racism vis-à-vis the multicultural exploration. Here, the dearth of academic research on Black-Korean multiracial residents led to my reliance on biographical information on public figures—namely, singers and athletes—and on Sue-Je Gage's contribution to this volume to piece together an analysis. Overall, I find that despite Black Koreans' and African migrants' endless tales of identity crises, rejection, dejection, struggles for justice, threadbare survival (for some), and doubts about the multiculturalness of South Korea, they still consider it home, or count it as one of two. Such a DuBoisian double consciousness

shows in the sizable contingent who choose not to go to the United States even when they have the opportunity to do so; who find that their U.S. experiences, even for school, are not ideal or do not match the romanticized ideal; and who resign themselves to living in Korea without a strong collective movement to represent their voice in nonpolitically correct, unapologetic terms (Gage, chap. 11). Such a double consciousness makes ever more pressing scholars' task of including both groups in the multicultural population, analyzing their social stations vis-à-vis the multicultural explosion, and proffering policy prescriptions to realize equality and justice for all who cannot make a life in Korea because of how they look.

Theoretical and Contextual Background

"Even Though We're Not the USA, Remember, Our Homeland is Korea, Not Africa"
 In my book *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (2008) I found that much of Korean society's views of whiteness over blackness prior to America's post-World War II advent were profoundly shaped by a confluence of interrelated factors.⁶ They included a local as well as Japanese folk valorization of the color white and distaste for the color black, an agrarian order premised on such gradations of skin color, Confucianist notions of natural and obligatory inequalities between groups, biological constructions of nations since the Enlightenment, previous encounters with elite Whites but not elite Blacks, a scattered introduction of Euro-American racial ideologies under Japanese colonial rule, and a lack of *antiracist* movements in the country's history (notwithstanding those against racialized national oppression, like Japanese colonization). Taken together, these dynamic factors primed Koreans for the White-over-Black institutional order imported by the U.S. military beginning in 1945. Specifically, Whites' justification of African enslavement and Black segregation on the basis of racial inferiority helped affirmed to Koreans Black people's "inferior" ethnorracial blood line, one they traced to an African national family. In this way, the congruence across Korean and American ideologies was, and remains, striking.

The story of anti-Black ethnorracism, however, does not end with this congruence. It is also fundamentally about how Korean society's penchant for consanguinity serves as a symbolic point of resistance against U.S. (neo)imperialist power and its pollution of Koreans' once "pure blood" and the culture that attends it. As such, the more Han Korea can compensate by ignoring, stamping out, and impoverishing the evidence—that

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this and the following paragraph comes from N. Kim (2008), especially chapter 4.

is, the multiracial children—the less inferior and subjugated they feel, discrimination against the offspring of a mostly American male–Korean female sexual relationship is also about patriarchal nationalism: Korean women are meant to be the possession of Korean men and there is no greater reminder of one's inferiority than an outsider's ability to conquer one's women. In addition, the mothers of Black Koreans (and other Asians) who are "prostitutes" from poor families are themselves excluded from the realm of the Korean (Gage, chap. 11). The reservation of the most severe racism for Black-Korean nationals, then, and the barriers placed in the way of their mothers, relies on the harshest forms of micro and macro discrimination at the nexus of ethnoracism, patriarchal nationalism, and classism.

Although South Korean society traces all Black peoples' blood line to the African continent (N. Kim 2008), their ethnoracism toward the migrants who hail from Africa draws on a different political-economic context than that of the part-Black multiracial children. While the children were part of South Korean society long before rapid economic development and are the product of ongoing U.S. (neo)imperial power, the vast majority of Africans are illegally entering a South Korea of their own volition, drawn by its powerful G-20 economy. Although much of Korean society perceives foreign migrants' need for their cities' worst jobs as an expression of inferior national blood, the African continent's lowest position in the world economy signifies the most inferior of blood lines. South Koreans, therefore, have positioned themselves below Euro-America but above Africa, shaped historically by a Western Darwinist view of the world as the White top, Asian middle, and African bottom (see Russell 1991, 6) and by Japan's blackening of the countries from which its labor migrants hailed starting in the late 1980s (Lie 1998).

While South Korea has realized its nationalist goal of being a "whiter" and more middle-class nation-state than those from, say, "blacker" Vietnam or "black" Ghana, they are perpetually compensating for their inferiority vis-à-vis the United States as they do with the children of U.S. soldiers. Also operating under the specter of colonial Japan, one way that the Korean populace tends to negotiate not being on top but in the middle of the racialized global economic order is to dissociate from the very symbolic Africa they once were and fear returning to: poor, underdeveloped, war-torn, and starving. Han Geon-soo finds this dissociation in popular cultural depictions of Africa as teeming with unintelligent and incoherent primitives or in news coverage that cannot seem to move beyond famine and murderous ethnic cleansing (2003, 159–160). In government circles, anti-African statements are commonplace, such as a Korean National

Assembly member's remarks that some of his colleagues seemed to think South Korea was "a primitive country in Africa." Elsewhere in the Korean imagination, Africa is a premodern "source of life"—abstract, romantic—through which people from more advanced civilizations "find themselves" (159). In Han's words, such an Africa allows much of Korean society to "fulfill their desire in order to enjoy the fruit of having born [sic] the hardships of the painful twentieth century" (161).

In summary, Koreans' status as a formerly colonized and presently occupied people tends to manifest in an ethnoracist displacement of their inferiority onto part-American children and foreign labor migrants. The response, a tragically familiar one, is deftly captured by Laura Mulvey who writes, "It cannot be easy to move from oppression and its mythologies to resistance in history; a detour through a no-man's land or threshold area of counter-myth and symbolisation is necessary" (1987, 11). South Korean society, I argue, is still wandering through this detour through oppression, only now in multiculturalist garb. For the remainder of the chapter, I address, in turn, the historical and sociopolitical context of Black Koreans and undocumented African labor migrants and how both are treated, and respond to such treatment, under ethnic/patriarchal nationalism and multiculturalism.

Black Koreans: Perspectives of Race and Multiculturalism through Hines Ward

Who Are "Americans"?

After Korea regained its independence from Japan at the end of World War II, the country began to see the number of multiracial children, mostly those of part White or Black ancestry, grow (Ro 2006) and then swell in the wake of the Korean War's thriving red-light districts around U.S. army bases. The figure once reached 40,000 in the 1960s when the sex industry with American GIs was at its peak, according to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, but has decreased to the current level of 5,000 after many emigrated to the United States and others passed away (Shim 2006). With an estimated 30,000 children of Korean and Southeast Asian parents in the wake of 1980s labor migration (Ro 2006), the total number of multiracial children is estimated at 35,000, according to Pearl S. Buck International (hereafter Buck International). Of the 5,000 multiracial Korean/non-Asian population, estimates show that 60 percent have White American fathers while the rest have fathers who are Black American, putting the number of Black-Korean offspring at roughly 2,000 (Kirk 2006). The reliance on estimates owes to the lack of an official government

tally on the population and the fact the multiracial offspring have long been treated as aliens or outcasts because they are assumed to be born of American GIs and prostitutes (Shim 2006); in fact, a sizable number of the women are not prostitutes (Yuh 2002). It was not until recently, in the 1990s, that the ROK had chosen not to tie citizenship rights directly to family blood line, leaving orphans with no legal status for all those years. The difficult childhoods lived by these multiracial orphans or children of mostly maligned parents have often meant a difficult adulthood. A 2003 study by the state human rights body on Amerasians found that most could not find marital partners and had conflictual marriages because of discrimination and mental stress; in all, over 71 percent were single or divorced (Shim 2006), not surprising given that their parents rarely stayed together themselves. In 2011, 40 percent of Seoul's divorce suits were filed by interethnic/-racial couples (*Korea Times*, 8 May 2011).

Because 83 percent of first-generation Amerasians were raised by single mothers who were sex workers or worked in low-paying, part-time jobs, Lee Ji-young, a spokesman for Buck International, remarked, "Generation after generation, mixed-race people get poorer, locked in a vicious circle of poverty." Many multiracial Koreans are relegated to the red-light districts near U.S. army bases, working as entertainers, sex workers, and food servers. Of those adults who work, less than 30 percent have jobs, and most are temporary. Lack of educational attainment also entrenches intergenerational poverty. Almost 10% of multiracial people do not enter or finish primary school, while 17.5% drop out of middle school, according to 2002 figures from Buck International. The NGO also reported, "It's very hard for them. Maybe one or two a year goes to college, up to the second generation," with "ladies [being] left behind" for they are "lower educated, and about 10 percent of them are completely illiterate" (Kirk 2006), an astounding fact in a country with a 99 percent literacy rate.

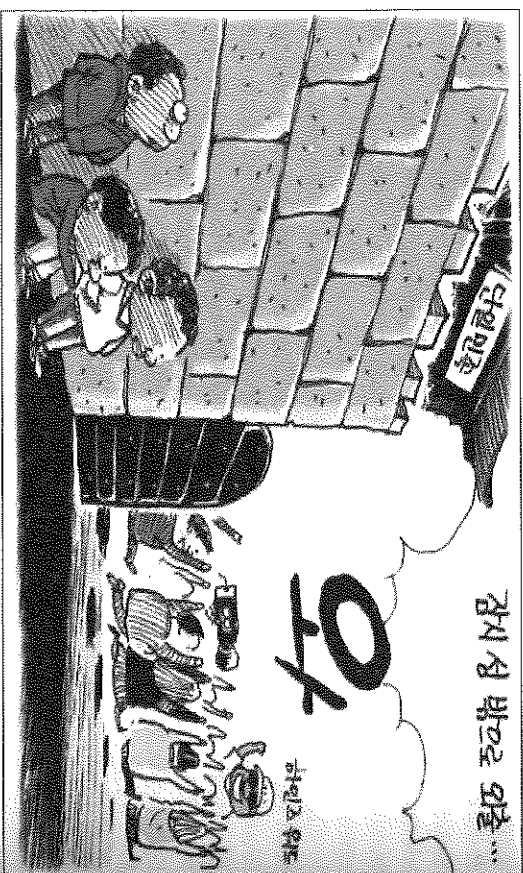
Hines and Hope?

Given similar occupational and educational inequities in the United States and other developed economies, those on the bottom of this multiracial hierarchy, Black-Korean nationals, often have the best chance at success and wealth in the fields of entertainment and athletics. Such professions, of course, offer no guarantee of either success or even life satisfaction. A middle-aged singer who had enjoyed some success in the past, James Lee, had left the discriminatory halls of his high school early and searched for low-skilled work, sending resumes to about ten factories. Each time he was rejected for "unknown" reasons. Lee has been singing on nightclub

stages to support himself, telling a newspaper, "I have lived in constant stress over somebody jeering at me just because I'm mixed blood. I couldn't break away from a sense of inferiority" (Shim 2006). These sentiments of never being good enough and never belonging were echoed by many of the multiracial Koreans that Gage interviewed (chap. 11), though not all of them were part Black.

Contrast the treatment of Lee with that of American Hines Ward, the man who broke open the gates to South Korea's claim on a new national identity, but whose Black-Korean brethren we hear little about in multicultural discourse. Born in Seoul of a Korean mother and an African-American GI father, Ward was adored and embraced as a Korean hero during his 2006 "homecoming" visit: a dinner guest at the president's Blue House, an honorary citizen of Seoul, and a darling of the news media who used him as a poster child of South Korea's multicultural future. A survey of South Korean newspapers makes apparent that no Black-Korean star—even singers Insooni and Yoon Mi-rae (Tasha), athlete Jang Yae-eun, or American stars such as R&B singer Amerie—ever received the fanfare given to Hines Ward and his mother (Washington 2009). The public adulation of Hines Ward as a "Korean" despite his obvious African ancestry would seem to disprove my claim that Korean society fails to accept those of Black ancestry as equals. Scholar Myra Washington (2009), however, observed that South Korea was really doing it for South Korea. The state and its supporters wanted to claim Ward to elevate the country's status in the eyes of advanced, promulticulturalist Western nation-states and to better their record on human rights after the release of the United Nation's CERD report. Washington (2009) also found that the country's awareness of its exceptional economic growth and industrialization just decades earlier compelled them to make Ward a symbol of "Korea's desire to put behind them the effects of imperialism by both its Asian neighbors and the West," and of "its acceptance of the flows [and effects] of globalization." In brief, Ward was signaling Korea's national identity of the future. The *Korea JoongAng [ChungAng] Daily, English Version* (Lee 2006) reported that some observers perceived the Ward adulation to reflect many Koreans' longing for internationally known figures commensurate with the nation's powerhouse economy. Chun Byeong-jun of ChungAng University remarked, "This is a sort of collectivism. . . . If the country had many internationally acknowledged people, the interest would be divided. As it is [few], the attention gets focused." Mr. Chun also noted "the timing of the new love affair" emerging after South Korea's most talented geneticist and cloning researcher Hwang Woo-suk had falsified his most prominent research accomplishments (Lee 2006). None of these reasons for the Ward hero worship, however, had to do with granting multiracial Koreans,

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this paragraph comes from Shim (2006).



especially those of Black heritage, full sociocultural citizenship and equality of opportunity. Indeed, this is still a country where not long before Ward's celebrated homecoming "television spots urged Koreans to be indifferent to South Koreans of mixed blood" (Lee 2006). To be sure, Ward was not naive about the ethnoracism. In contrast to the false, romanticized reports that 2006 was the first time Ward and his mother Kim Young-hee had returned to his birth country since departing in the late 1970s, Mrs. Kim told the *Chosŏn ilbo*, "When we went to Korea in '98 [when Ward was in his early twenties], even Korean people who looked educated spat when we walked by. Koreans judge others based on their appearance and their age. Those kinds of Koreans think that they are so special" (8 Feb. 2006). Perhaps cautioned by his mother, Ward chose to visit in 2006 without his wife and son, who look fully African-American. He made sure to say to the press that they would accompany him the next time he made the trans-Pacific journey (Kirk 2006).

Many South Koreans themselves were not naive. As the *Korea Herald* (*K'oria herald*) reported, "When Ward became a national hero after his Super Bowl success, many biracial Koreans were understandably confused—Ward became a celebrity for the same reason that biracial Koreans are ostracized" (Ro 2006). Many blog sites set up by multiracial Koreans or observant expats living in South Korea waxed eloquent on how backward the country was on the question of race, and how shameless it seemed about its obvious two faces. Perhaps no one better captured the hypocrisy

than Hines Ward's mother herself, whose own Koreanness has been questioned. During a visit to Buck International in 2006, *Chosŏn ilbo* (6 Apr. 2006) reported that Kim spent much of the time wiping away tears as she watched her son play with the kids. Finally, one of the other multiracial kid's mothers came over to Mrs. Kim and said that she wouldn't hesitate to leave South Korea if she could. Kim grabbed her hand and said, "Do it I, too, often thought the same thing. . . . What would have become of us if I'd brought Hines back to Korea? Perhaps he could have become nothing more than a beggar. Who here would have hired me even as a house cleaner?" She recounted how she was spat on by other Koreans when she walked around the streets with little Hines (and again with twenty-something Hines). She added, "Nobody helped when I was having a tough time, but now that Hines is famous, they are showing us a lot of attention. . . . Yeah, well. It's burdensome. That's life, isn't it?" Equally skeptical, Lee Jee-young of the Buck International office told the *Chun-gang ilbo* newspaper that despite Mr. Ward's success, life for mixed-blood Koreans will continue to be difficult: "I have experienced this sort of thing [multiracial Korean fantasy] several times, although this is the most extreme. . . . The fact is, placing mixed children for adoption here is almost impossible, and it won't get better" (B. Lee 2006). Others who were not purging their conscience of what they knew was a racist reality nor refashioning the country's image into a racially democratic one showcased their cynicism, indignation, and/or rage.

An editorial cartoon, which appeared in the progressive newspaper *The Han gyŏngye* in 2006, cast into relief the injustice of the Ward hero worship and perhaps harnessed the anger on the part of multiracial individuals. The heading, top right, reads "*chamsi sŏng pakkurŏ oech'il* . . ." meaning "a short jaunt outside the castle. . ." denoting the pure-blooded Koreans—*tanil minjok*, per the sign above the castle—who have temporarily left its protected walls to worship a smiling Hines Ward with a collective "wow" (literally, *uwā*). The Black-Korean children leaning against the outer wall, long outcasts of the pure-Korean castle, appear uncertain of what to do: leave the cold shadows of their lives and bask in the warm light of Hines Ward, enter the temporarily opened door of a castle to which they never belonged, or just stay put? The decision to seemingly stay put perhaps is explained by the child, left, who peers up at the castle's sign: *tanil minjok*. Ward's mother and newspaper cartoonists were not the only ones to complain about the ruse and double standard. Korea's Queen of Hip Hop/Soul and most influential rap star, part Korean-part Black Yoon Mi-rae (Tasha), lambasted the hypocrisy almost a year later: "When the success of half-Korean U.S. football player Hines Ward raised interest in

mixed-race children in Korea last year, I was so furious. . . . Were there no mixed-race children in Korea before Hines Ward? And have things changed now? No, it's as if nothing has happened" (*Chosŏn ilbo*, 24 Feb. 2007). The reaction of Yoon Mi-rae, a child of an African-American GI and a Korean mother, points to her experience not only of incessant humiliation and institutional exclusion while growing up, but also her conflicts with the music industry. She was often told by record executives to hide her father's racial background, perhaps to say one grandparent was part Black, as her African ancestry is not always readily apparent. She does not have a dark complexion and she changes her loosely curly hair at will. Therefore, she could rarely sing about her family and her life of discrimination in Korea, which placed her at odds with her label and prevented an album from being released for four years, an eternity in the Korean music business that usually spells one's demise. She was able to rebound, however, because multiracial people in Korea, especially those of Black ancestry, have been accepted in the music industry (though not acting or beauty [see Sung 2010]) in true hegemonic and profiteering fashion. In doing so, South Korea also seems to be seeking global cultural recognition by emulating the prominence of Black singers and rappers in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. Her enormous success in South Korea, and the fact that she has lived and can live (at least in part) in the United States, also explains the latitude that she has to sing publicly about her Black ancestry, her Black father (with whom she is close), and her struggles with discrimination. A new or fledgling Black-Korean artist would likely not have such a chance, sticking rather to innocuous, apolitical bubble-gum K-pop. One of the songs from Yoon's 2007 comeback album, "Black Happiness," from which some verses are excerpted and translated here, laid bare the life that she had to hide so long from her fans:

"Black Happiness"

My skin was dark from my past
 People used to point at me
 Even at my mom, even at my dad who was Black and in the army
 People whisper behind my back, said this and said that
 I always had tears in my eyes
 Although I was young I saw my mother's sadness

Everything seemed like it was my fault
 Because of my guilt I washed my face all day, as much as I could
 With my tears I melt the white soap
 I always hated my dark skin
 Why, oh why, does the world judge me

...
 Then I turned nineteen
 I have to lie
 I put white makeup over my face
 They told me to wear a mask
 They said my mom's race was okay, but not my dad's
 Every year I was nineteen

During the times when time stopped I felt like I was in jail
 And I leaned on myself
 I spent endless, painful days

Washington (2009) argues that the South Korean state and mass media were also, however, responding to a situation that they had not faced so extensively before and that belied their multicultural image machinery: mainstream American criticism of South Korea as categorically racist against multiracial peoples, especially those who looked like Ward. Many U.S. news stories focused on how fortunate Ward was to have grown up in the United States as the extreme discrimination against multiracial children in South Korea would have tragically limited his life opportunities (Herskovitz 2006; cf. Washington 2009). Of course, the claim falsely insinuates that no such discrimination exists in the United States. The U.S. press was so vocal in part because no other Black-Korean American star had quite the stature or the poignant biography of Hines Ward. The Super Bowl is the biggest sporting event in the United States, the pinnacle of a sport that is distinctly American, and Ward had just been named Most Valuable Player after a brilliant, unselfish performance. He was born in the Land of the Morning Calm, of utmost importance to a people who express nationalism by touting their embodiment of their land (N. Kim 2008). After leaving everything to move to the United States, Ward's mother Mrs. Kim endured a divorce and lost custody of her son in a court battle with her African-American ex-husband because she did not speak English, leaving Hines to be raised by his paternal grandmother. Although Mrs. Kim was alone in the United States, knew no one, had no job skills, and knew nothing about the U.S. system, she stayed close to win back her son. By the time Ward had run away to his mother at age seven and was in her legal custody again, Mrs. Kim had juggled sometimes up to three menial jobs at once, typically averaging \$4 per hour, to survive and demonstrate fitness as a parent (*Chosŏn ilbo*, 8 Feb. 2006). Although the wide linguistic and cultural chasm with her son proved difficult in the early years, she worked hard to bridge that divide. Hines would grow to love and appreciate his mother so deeply that after he turned professional, he bought her a large home (which she found too big and subsequently moved out of) and

pledged to support her and end her working days (she continues her work at a school cafeteria by choice) (*Chosŏn ilbo*, 8 Feb. 2006). This touching family biography was splashed across countless Korean newspapers, television stations, and Internet sites, for it resonated well with the cherished Confucian narrative of parental sacrifice and a child's repayment through filial piety (Washington 2009), not to mention an exceptional work ethic.

To be sure, it would be difficult for anyone in any society not to be touched by the story's universal themes of love, loss, rejection, hope, and triumph. One would almost have to lack emotion to feel no inspiration. Despite the hegemonic interests of the state and the nationalist prejudices of even the most prominent NGOs (H. J. Kim 2009), I do not argue here that no South Koreans are willing to sacrifice privilege to achieve a nation of ethnorracial equality and that anyone who sees Ward as a catalyst to that end is naive. Indeed, many Black-Korean nationals who have lived lives of rejection, exclusion, and sorrow are some of the most inspired, hopeful, and optimistic about Ward as the bridge to a multicultural Korea. After all, change must start with the ability to envision it. An example is the once popular singer Park Il-Jun whose struggles with racial discrimination live on (he was fifty-two at the time of the following 2006 interview). To *Yonhap Nyusu Agency* he said he was emotional when he watched Hines Ward's touchdown catch that helped clinch the Pittsburgh Steelers' Super Bowl XL victory over the Seattle Seahawks. Growing up in an even more homogeneous society than the one that rejected Yoon Mi-rae (almost thirty years younger), in school Park rarely found respite from the bullying, harassment, and discrimination by students and teachers because of his darker skin color. He admitted, "When I was little, I drank a lot of milk in the belief that this would help whiten my skin color." When he debuted in the music world in 1977, he was forced to wear thick yellow makeup to allay Koreans' derision for interracial children (Shim 2006). Owing to South Korea's love-hate relationship with the United States (Abelmann and Lie 1995; N. Kim 2008), the bodies marked by U.S. (neo)imperial dominance and the challenge to Korean men's possession of their women had to be covered up. Within this historical context of Koreans' anti-American backlash, Park was hopeful about Ward's potential to engender change: "I hope the attention to Ward will provide an opportunity to change society's treatment of children from interracial marriages." A forward on South Korea's professional women's basketball team, Jang Yae-eun, is another Black-Korean public figure who saw Ward's accomplishments as more than a mere success story. The daughter of an African-American serviceman, Jang suffered enormously despite being raised by a loving Korean mother. She was compared to objects that

were black like charcoal, constantly reprimanded that she was African whenever she declared herself Korean, and condemned by elders who detested her fluent Korean (Ro 2006), demonstrating that only certain Koreans on the peninsula had to align their body with their body's practice (see N. Kim 2009). Similarly, Gage (chap. 11) found that multiracial Koreans in general were presumed to have inferior intelligence and a cultural gap owing to a "mixed" composition. Because of such ethnorracism, Jang admitted, "I even once wished that no more black-Koreans would be born at all" (*USA Today*, 9 Feb. 2006). On Ward's success, she remarked, "It gave me a lot of hope, that I, too, can do it. Because although we live in different countries, we're both biracial and in sports. I wish to hear more and more stories like Ward's, because such stories really encourage mixed race kids like me" (H. E. Kim 2006; see Herskovitz 2006). This last line shows that she does not simply mean becoming rich and a world-class athlete like Ward, but that she and other "mixed race kids" need constant reminding that they can be anything in a country that has constantly reminded them that they are nothing. Another emerging athletic star, Ich'ŏn United forward Kang Soo-il is also the child of a Korean mother and a Black-American GI. The twenty-two-year-old, however, was the only Black-Korean interviewee I found who perceived his dark skin as garnering him more positive attention than "pure Koreans," and thus helping his soccer career. "I used to regret that I had dark skin. I even hit friends who made fun of me. But now, I realize that it could be a benefit to me. If I play the same level with my teammates, I get more attention because of my skin color" (*USA Today*, 9 Feb. 2006). His words reify South Korean pronouncements of a new multicultural reality and the political import of the recognition of difference (Taylor 1994).

Indeed, Gage (chap. 11) finds that other multiracial Koreans have the ability to maneuver within hegemonic inequalities precisely because the latter often work at cross purposes. For instance, some believe they are better-looking than Han Koreans because they have the bigger eyes, higher nose bridges, and, among women, the bodily curves for which many Han Koreans get cosmetic surgery. Many multiracial Koreans also have American English names and speak some English, which they deploy situationally and strategically to their benefit.

Part of Kang's inspiration came from Hines Ward himself, with whom he is similar, not only in terms of parental heritage but in his devotion to repay his mother for her many sacrifices (he sends virtually all of his paycheck to her, saying, "I want to succeed as a football player to please my mom" [J. Kim 2009]). After Kang met Ward during the 2006 visit, he remarked, "I set my goal in life after meeting Hines Ward. [Repeating

Ward.] 'Set your goals high, do your best to achieve it while thinking of your mom and praying for it'" (J. Kim 2009).

As singer Insooni (Lee Insoon, Yi In-sun) is the peninsula's most well-known resident of Korean and Black parentage, her words of being greatly "inspired" by Ward carry much weight. Her life story differs from that of Yoon Mi-rae not only in terms of age (Lee is nearly twenty-five years her senior) but also in her more apparent African ancestry, her lack of English proficiency, her South Korean (not Korean-American) husband, and her thirty-year reign in the music industry, almost unheard of in the ruthless, trend-driven, youth-heavy celebrity culture. When she was born to a Korean mother (Kim Yang-bae) and an African American GI father, Mrs. Kim's family forced her either to abandon her child or be disowned. Kim Yang-bae chose her daughter. Raised only by her mother, Insoon began her career at twenty years old. Despite her beautiful and unique voice, she could only eke out a living by performing at pubs. She was discovered by a producer who helped land her a spot in a female trio called the Hee Sisters, "Korea's first archetypical 'girl group.'" Although the trio was adored by many male fans, Kim was forced to wear a hat or handkerchief to hide her hair each time they performed. Moreover, *Chungang ilbo* reported, she was "often banned from appearing on TV shows and was denied the chance to participate in an international singing competition as a representative of Korea. Yet, today, she is still one of the country's most influential musicians."⁸ When it came time to give birth to her daughter (with her Korean husband), Insooni flew to the United States to give her child American citizenship. As Insooni publicly stated, her daughter would thus have the option of leaving Korea in case she inherited her mother's dark skin and suffered the same immense pain. As reported, "While other mothers may count the number of their babies' fingers or toes right after they are born, Insooni checked her daughter's skin color." It is not surprising that she would continue to feel plagued by these issues, as a contingent of Koreans did not appreciate her heart-felt rendition of "Our Beautiful Country" (Gage, chap. 11). Although Ward's visit gave her new hope for the future of multiracial children on the peninsula (Sung 2010), she is the same woman who tells those children every year the tragedy that the only way they can realize their dreams is to "work harder" than any other Korean (Ro 2006). This, along with the choice to make her daughter a citizen of a country she barely knows, reveals the depth of her pain despite her hope in Hines.

African Migrants: The Shadows (Must) Speak

Community with a Capital "C"

Although the ROK state officially records family lineage as a way to determine one's Koreanness, appearance is often the de facto criterion used by wider society. Both lineage and appearance work to subordinate Black Koreans as "not really Korean" (and "quasi-American"), while most African labor migrants' lack of Korean blood means that their darker skin and "Africanesque" features mark them as wholly ineligible for claims to Koreanness. The African migrants' illegal status, too, intersects with race to place the group outside the boundaries of the country that, each day, they try to survive within. These Africans are thus the other population largely missing from public discourse and scholarly research on Korean multiculturalism. I found a helpful academic piece by Han Geon-Soo (2003) that I cite extensively, some newspaper articles and blog sites, and the now-expired website www.nigeriancommunitykorea.com of the Nigerian Community Korea. Indeed, the lack of sources was confirmed by a graduate student beginning to write his Ph.D. dissertation about African migrants, who said that almost no scholarship existed.

Han (2003) reports that Nigerians, Ghanaians, and other ethnic Africans first came illegally to Korea in the 1990s through Inch'ön Port and worked as longshoremen.⁹ Thereafter, the migrants bought junkyard cars and returned to Nigeria and Ghana to establish transportation businesses, in turn spreading the word about this land called Korea where one could make lots of money and realize the "Korean Dream." As South Korea's immigration policy prefers highly skilled professional workers as entrants and denies African migrants legal entry, the men have to enter the country through personal or informal broker networks. Demographically, Han found a population of mostly single males in their twenties and thirties in his informal survey of fifty-five workers. As is true of much of the labor migrant population, about half had received some college-level education and had held a professional position in their sending country (e.g., teacher, technician, trader, priest!), about one-third had worked previously in other countries as migrant workers. Of all the non-Korean labor migrants on the peninsula in 2003, Han estimated that over two thousand were African workers (perhaps more, given those who fly under the census radar). The majority originated from Nigeria, Ghana, and Egypt. Many came to South Korea in the hopes of learning how to invest there,

⁸ The information in this paragraph and the following paragraph comes from Sung (2010).

⁹ The information in this paragraph comes from G. Han (2003, 163–68) unless otherwise indicated.

as well as to draw on the Asian Tiger as a model for developing their own country's economy.

The vast majority of African migrants live in It'aewön, the commercial and residential area that surrounds Seoul's Yong-san U.S. military base, owing to its many businesses and social-cultural organizations that support African and other non-Korean ethnics' lifestyles and needs. I also infer from news articles and blogs, however, that South Korean discrimination against Africans also explains their largely segregated existence in the It'aewön area. Between 2004 and 2009, the number of African migrants rose about 80 percent, from 385 registered residents to about 706 (*Korea Times*, 13 Apr. 2010). In late 2010, ROK government crackdowns on Africans seem to have forced a good number of the undocumented to nearby cities where other non-Koreans have settled (Lee 2010), a point to which I will return.

Living the Multicultural Promise?

Nigerians make up the largest contingent of African migrants in the Yong-san District at about 70 percent (Lee 2010). Through their website titled "Nigerian Community, South Korea" (www.nigeriancommunitykorea.com; since expired) they demonstrate that they are in the country to stay and do not see themselves as sojourners. One can infer that they are doing their best to make a home away from "home" and to integrate themselves into South Korean society without relinquishing their political, cultural, and identity connections to Nigeria. Visitors to the site first read:

This Website is designed to furnish you with comprehensive information on the unfolding events in the Nigerian community South Korea. Through the site, you will also be equipped with the current and useful information relating to developments in Nigeria. The website is also geared towards offering you the opportunity of having access to a host of useful websites in Nigeria. We hope that these web pages will go a long way to satisfy your curiosity about Nigerian living in South Korea and home. (Emphasis mine.)

This online introduction reveals that the Nigerian community to which the site primarily refers is the one in South Korea, but they also reference the diasporic community across the globe seeking information on the going-on in the homeland: politics, how President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is doing, the status of the national soccer team, and so on. As evidence that the Nigerian migrants are in South Korea to stay, they have established a local hierarchical political system to which people are elected and must fulfill strict responsibilities, bearing such titles as Honorable Obinna, the "President of Nigeria Community South Korea" and "Chief Whip" Eze

As further evidence of settlement, and in line with G. Han's (2003, 163) findings, the Business page highlights the establishment of the Nigerian Investors Forum under the auspices of the Nigerian community, which, it writes, "has come a long way and is gradually settling into different areas of business in Korea like Export of General Goods, Travel and Tours, Hotels / Restaurants" and is "working to provide an enabling business environment for the Nigerian investors by way of arranging workshops and seminars."

Importantly, there is evidence that the Nigerian migrants believe in the principle of multiculturalism insofar as they prioritize the positive recognition and empowerment of their homeland and culture in their Asian host nation. The introduction to the "Constitution of the Nigerian Community, Republic of Korea," reads:

We the citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria domiciled in the Republic of Korea realizing the needs for regular interactions, exchanges, guidance, care for one another in our collective determination to portray a positive image of our father land before our host Country and the International Community, having decided to form a strong Community that will protect and give full and unfettered expression of equal justice, love, peace, prosperity and unity...

Similarly, in Section II, "Aims & Objectives," two of the bullet points read as follows:

- d) To collaborate with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in
- e) The promotion of Nigeria's rich culture

Finally, in the section "Responsibilities of Members," one of the requirements that must be met to avoid losing community membership status reads as follows:

- d) All members of the Nigerian Community, irrespective of the constitutional duties as executive, shall observe the Nigeria national day celebration as it is done in Nigeria, in conjunction with the Embassy.

In multiculturalist fashion, the Nigerian migrants also politically organize to gain from the host government greater recognition as an ethnicity and nation (Hanagan 1997; Koopmans et al. 2005). On the About Us page under the link "Brief History about Nigerian in South Korea" is proud mention of Seoul city's acknowledgment of Nigerian civic leaders' work for their own community: "In recognition of the Nigerian Community by the host country, Emmanuel Njoku and Hon. Ujah C. Oduh, became the first and second Nigerian to receive an honorary citizenship from the

Seoul Metropolitan Government" (interestingly, this same honorary citizenship was conferred on Hines Ward). The website also shows Nigerians' efforts toward gaining rights as a cultural group (see Kymlicka 2005) when host government(s) are antagonistic. On the home page is a link to a speech delivered by the community leader Honorable Obinna at a hearing on Korean immigration law, tax law, and local laws and regulations for Nigerian residents. The excerpt here reveals the legal discrimination that Nigerians feel they have suffered at the hands of the ROK state, that which has "debased" individuals and the homeland writ large:

Today's epoch making event mark's a remarkable history in Nigerian Community South Korea. It is a clear indication of a road map to normalcy-on the lingering ugly situations that have so much debased the integrity of Nigerians in Korea and Nigeria at large.

In the first instance, I wish to express my appreciation to His Excellency the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Korea, for his effort to create this enabling atmosphere for Nigerians to close ranks with Korean immigration services and national tax services, in order to arrest the problems Nigerians are facing in Korea.

... I feel deep sorrow and pain for the sufferings endured by Nigerians in Korea, precisely at Korean Immigration Direct Foreign Investment department. These suffering [sic] are real and serious. But [I] wish to state that [the] communication gap, language barrier and lack of understanding of Nigerian investors' convenient style of financial transactions and business system, are responsible for the situation.

... We expect together with all good, democratic approach and peace loving forces that this seminar... would occasion a result that will represent a clear call for the supremacy of the authority of the rule of natural justice; so that Nigerians could enjoy prosperity, progress and peace in Korea. (Emphasis mine.)

Striking is Honorable Obinna's belief that the ROK state's lack of understanding of Nigerian business culture is one of the reasons for its rejection of some form of Nigerian foreign investment, a multiculturalist perspective on problem solving. Despite the overall website's clear admiration for South Korea's powerhouse economy and elevation in the world order, Nigerians are also airing their ongoing conflicts with the ROK state. In this vein, the constitution lists two benefits of membership in the community as follows:

a) Every member shall be protected against abuse or discrimination within the pretext of the law in the Republic of Korea.

k) Handle Cases of Maltreatment of Nigerians

Obinna's speech may also be a criticism of the Seoul immigration office's discrimination against Nigerian migrants, prompting his coethnics' gradual relocation from It'aewön in Seoul to foreigner-heavy Ansan, Tongduch'ön, and other cities in Kyönggi province.¹⁰ Asked why Nigerians seemed to be moving out of It'aewön, the *Korea Times* reported that "the leader of the Nigerian Community" (Ikely Obinna) explained that soaring living costs and racial discrimination were the culprits.¹¹ He lamented, "Just because we are Nigerians we are asked to pay the security deposit twice as big as the one other nationals pay. It'aewön is a great place for us to live. But it has become too expensive to stay in the area." He also complained about the Seoul Immigration Service's stricter screening of Nigerians: "The Seoul office is known to take a harsher stance toward us. I heard many Nigerians decided to relocate to Gyeonggi Province to extend their visas more easily." The *Korea Times* also reported that government-led crackdowns on African visa overstayers and terrorism suspects ahead of the November 2010 G-20 summit were responsible for the African flight. Such raids would not be surprising given the state's history of exploiting and oppressing "undesirables" ahead of events that place South Korea on a global stage, like the 1988 Olympics and the 2002 World Cup, as it is so conscious of the Euro-American imperialist gaze (N. Kim 2008; see G. Han 2003, 161).

This form of state ethnoracism against African workers, however, seemed to be unfounded, as there are visa overstayers of all stripes on the peninsula and I could not find any evidence of alleged terrorist activity in my review of literatures. Perhaps the government was motivated by the fact that the Africans' presence, namely along "African Street," has heightened perceptions of an It'aewön already in disrepute as more dangerous and crime-ridden at night. On my visit to the foreigner-heavy area during a short personal trip in late 2008 and early 2009 I did not see anything criminal or dangerous, but these are, of course, impressions, not ethnography. Worth noting is that most travel blogs also consider the fears to be overblown and racially stereotypical (though a few disagree). Nonetheless, the perception of It'aewön as dangerous has only reaffirmed to many South Koreans their view of Blacks as entrenched in urban poverty and criminality around the world.

Importantly, recent government raids on a migrant community do not

¹⁰ The Yonggan District Office reported in August 2010 that the number of Nigerian residents declined 18.8% (to 605 residents) from 2008. Legally residing Ghanaians in the district also dropped in number. The *Korea Times* reported that "African Street" seems to have become desolate and the number of Africans consorting in It'aewön fewer (H. Lee 2010).

¹¹ The information in this paragraph is from H. Lee (2010).

sound like the realization of a multicultural society. Indeed, South Korea today sounds much like the one Africans experienced eight years ago. In Han Geon-Soo's 2003 interviews, African workers mentioned their bouts with seemingly unmonitored institutional discrimination in the workplace (2003, 168). They worked longer hours for less pay and had shorter lunch breaks compared to other migrant workers, especially ethnic Koreans from China and Central Asia. On the everyday level, the migrants reported that buses and subways were major sites of racial discrimination. Often, no one would sit next to them even if no other seats were vacant, or many bus drivers would cover their noses and ask them to sit far back. Hailing from Mali, twenty-eight-year-old Moses reported that a bus driver asked him to get off the bus and another actually sprayed deodorant on him (G. Han 2003, 168). Thinking themselves well-intentioned, other Koreans would tell the migrants how lucky they were to live in their country where they would no longer starve (169). Interestingly, some African migrants reported that because of Korean society's biases against underdeveloped nations, Black Americans were treated better than they were, prompting some to introduce themselves as such (170). Given the country's fixation on the status of nation-states within the global order, this observation seems to have merit. At the same time, the fact that much of Han Korea treats the offspring of Black American soldiers (and Black Americans in general) so poorly (Kim 2008) lays bare the severity of their mistreatment of those directly from the African continent.

Exercising a form of resistance, African migrants are critical of Korean society. The migrants revealed to Han (2003, 170) that Koreans were racist, nationalist, and had lost their community spirit, as they did not even help their own impoverished and disabled who parhanded on streets and subways; people in their African countries would never be so cruel, they argue. They also remarked that Koreans do not practice their vaunted Confucianism, citing an example of a fifty-year-old Ghanaian man beaten by Korean teens (170). The Muslim Africans in particular thought Koreans were too sexually liberal, citing men's womanizing and women's hypersexualization in mass media (171); the latter also fit well with what they considered unjust gender discrimination against women. One could argue, however, that the workers' dichotomization of a bad Korea, on the one hand, and a good Nigeria, Ghana, or Egypt, on the other, would tend to overlook complex nuances and commonalities. African migrants' perceptions, however, as well as job, housing, and state and police discrimination point to how "un-multicultural" South Korea has been and continues to be. The lived experiences of African migrants, in brief, betray the amount of work that needs to be done to raise much of South Korean society's political consciousness on forms of racism; it does not appear

that the majority are ready to sacrifice certain privileges and resources to live up to a multicultural calling, especially one rooted in redistribution and not just recognition (Kymlicka 2002).

Conclusion

Despite the conclusion of most scholars that the ROK state is reproducing "pure Han" dominance under a multicultural cloak, this does not mean that no forms of minority recognition or resource sharing have been realized. Hegemonic nation-building requires that dominant systems secure the consent of the masses by integrating and rewarding the previously subordinated, lest all legitimacy and powers of coercion be lost. Such a hegemonic multicultural project, especially one that seeks to gain approval from the modern West (H. J. Kim 2009), requires that South Korean discourse, ideologies, and realities change in some fashion. In addition, hegemony does not mean that there are no well-intentioned elected officials, businesses, or "Han Korean" citizens making real efforts toward a multicultural society. In other words, the state is not homogeneous and, in fact, has originated and enacted some of the most fundamental policies, laws, and cultural changes that move toward the inclusion of multiracial Koreans.

For instance, the state has made some bold moves to prove that a multicultural Korea is more than just talk. It approved changing the vaunted language in textbooks of a nation "united by one bloodline" to that of a multethnic or multicultural nation. In 2010, the state also established a provocative policy of free day-care services from birth to age five for all multicultural children, irrespective of parental income (*Korea Times*, 9 Sep. 2010). In 2005 the state also instituted the first landmark change to military policy on multiracial individuals when it allowed mostly "Kosian" men to enlist for the first time. The policy, however, still forbade those of visibly "mixed-race"—namely, part-Black Koreans—from serving due to fears they would not fit in. To much of Black Korea, their continued exclusion was a major setback, as whether or not a man fulfills his military duty is deemed crucial for entering and succeeding in the South Korean job market (Shim 2006). *Yonhap Nyusu Agency* (12 Oct. 2010) reported that effective 2011, the government would finally lift the ban on "visibly mixed-race" enlistees, establishing provisions to fight discrimination and allow the men special treatment. In addition to this watershed moment in ROK military history, it appears promising that the country's first official primary school for multicultural children opened in 2011. Created by an ad hoc private committee led by political insiders, it would be the first multicultural institution for elementary education accredited by the state

if approved. Currently, graduation certificates from the unofficial schools are not recognized (Do 2009).

In other realms, three domestic crayon manufacturers have pledged to change the label "skin color" on the peach-colored crayon to "light orange," in the wake of NGO pressure (Shim 2006). Not only does representation affect the self-esteem of multiracial children and non-Koreans, but such changes force Han Korea to cease taking its status as the dominant group and reference point for granted. Representation of multiracial families and children has also gotten a boost in its first television channel "Salad TV," created by migrant advocate Park Kyong-ju (Kwon 2010).

On the level of individual attitudes, news articles are finding that some South Koreans are starting to question why they feel so uneasy about mixed-race people, with some blaming the older generation. Perhaps a certain Miss Hong captures it best when she quips: "I do not know why these people are discriminated against. . . . They are all Koreans" (Kirk 2006). Indeed, powerful institutions are intervening in unprecedented fashion to mitigate such prejudice. In 2009 the first contempt charges were applied to a case of racism when a Korean man hurled slurs at an Indian professor (Bonogit Hussain) sitting on a bus. The incident prompted rival Parliamentary parties to begin drafting legislation that would provide an official definition of racial and ethnic discrimination as well as impose criminal penalties, a move that caught the attention of the *New York Times* (S. Choe 2009). Certainly, as this chapter showed, even Black-Korean nationals and African migrants who have suffered the most dehumanizing practices on the part of individuals and institutions have hope in South Korea.

At the same time, their ability to make public statements about Korea to the contrary seems unlikely, the value of their sentiments notwithstanding. In an increasingly "racially PC" country in which multiracial children, particularly of part-Black origin, still do not call the shots in their respective professions and lives, it is hard to imagine that successful Black Koreans in particular would not feel censored in some way. Professional basketball player Jang Yae-eun is trying to reach Hines Ward's stature in the country; footballer Kang Soo-il is trying to qualify for the national ROK team for the World Cup; and Insooni is trying to sustain a thirty-year career in an industry full of much younger and much "purer" Koreans. And even after wresting control from her label and releasing the most personal and race-conscious album of her career, rapper Yoon Mi-rae's response to an interview request about life as a multiracial artist three years after the album's release was thus: "An official from Jungle Entertainment, which represents Yoon, said, 'She feels uncomfortable talking

about [her background]'" (Sung 2010). Her reticence is not altogether surprising, though perhaps it should be. And more questions arise as newer Black Korean entertainers enter the multicultural scene: will the rising yet controversial Black Korean pop singer Michelle Lee be offered a different path from that of her predecessors? As goes the old adage, South Korea is giving mixed signals, with those of ethnoracism, at times, seeming to drown out the signals of anti-racism. On a popular televised national singing contest Lee proved herself to be the most capable singer yet lost to a "pure Korean," opening the social media and telephone floodgates to "monkey"-bashing as well as outrage over the ethnoracist decision. And, yet, in a bold move that even Yoon Mi-rae cannot always make despite her long, enviable career, Lee's very first single "Without You" is about being pulled and excluded in South Korea her entire life. Similarly, recent advertisements for KT&G company's new cigarette brand, This Africa, featuring monkeys rolling cigarettes and news-reporting that "Africa is Coming!" were taken down after a global backlash and at the insistence of the ROK state. Yet months of these ubiquitous ads in Seoul spurred no public Korean protest or boycott; KT&G got to keep monkeys on the cartons; and the glaring dearth of African studies, school curriculum on Africa, and mass media/consumer sensitivity about its people persists (Bonate 2013). It is hard to imagine that the (mostly undocumented) African migrants would not be jailed or deported for publicly protesting the racism of these ads, let alone of the job and housing market. Rather, the experiences of these migrants point to the pressure to laud Korea's success and to post grievances about racism in vague terms, as what they say in public can be used against them to justify further discrimination. Equally troubling about the state's pursuit of the "real multicultural Korea" is Jasmine Lee, an ethnic Filipina, who endured an onslaught of racist xenophobia by Internet users when she was the first naturalized immigrant to become an ROK lawmaker. It seems that a multicultural South Korea is finally going to have to contend head on with the racist attitudes that minority residents experience daily and with some Han Koreans' claims that free day care and military preferences are versions of reverse discrimination (see Do 2009). Without turning multiracial Koreans into pitiable victims, the state, NGOs, and the nascent progressive movement are going to have to contend with the fact that about 40 percent of biracial Koreans have attempted suicide in response to their struggles with bigotry, per the state-run National Human Rights Commission report (Ro 2006).

One thing academics and scholar-activists can do, I have argued, is to include, and conduct empirical studies on, these two groups (and the many others who live in the shadows) and analyze the ways their presence

problematic ethnic and patriarchal nationalism as well as claims of a multicultural democracy. Although well-intentioned, we unwittingly reify hegemonic projects that ultimately uphold Han Korean dominance and express pity for minorities when we overlook certain populations and do not use concepts of race and racism to describe inequality on biological and essentialist bases. In the absence of these concepts, the state and like-minded institutional forces can rest on the multicultural language of cultural assimilation to deny minority groups pluralistic equality. Indeed, the state and its adherents would not promote cultural assimilation *ad nauseum* if it did not seek to maintain Han dominance. Multiculturalism in salad bowl fashion, with all ingredients in the bowl being of equal value, is nowhere to be seen. Gi-wook Shin (2007) identifies ethnic nationalism as the primary culprit in the multicultural equation:

Ethnic nationalism will remain an important organizing principle of Korean society. Neither democratization nor globalization has been able to uproot the power of nationalism.... It should be recognized that ethnic nationalism has become a dominant force in Korean society and politics and that it can be oppressive and dangerous when fused with racism and other essentialist ideologies. Koreans must strive to find ways to mitigate its potential harmful effects and use it in constructive manner. In particular, Koreans must promote cultural diversity and tolerance, and establish democratic institutions that can contain the repressive, essentialist elements of ethnic nationalism.

I would argue, however, that in a country like South Korea, ethnic nationalism has always been entwined with ethnocentrism; the two are not discrete in the way he describes. There is no "us" without a "them," and an ethnic nationalism that has been biologized for decades can never be solely about a nation and its culture. I do not see any way for the country to use ethnic nationalism in a constructive manner, unless the signal goal is to become the first nation-state ever to achieve salad bowl multiculturalism in practice. Otherwise, the only way to go is to completely let go. Perhaps the best people to ask would be the ones who have never been allowed to bask in the light of the Morning Calm.

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