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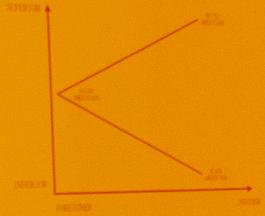
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Thinking about Claire Jean Kim's theory of racial triangulation¹ of Asian Americans —which, in a nutshell, describes Asian Americans having been positioned by white supremacy to constantly try to attain white status via assimilation², the model minority myth³ and antiblackness⁴ to get there—I wanted to know how queerness⁵ fits into the picture. Specifically, what it means or looks like to be Chinese/Taiwanese & queer in America while acknowledging our racial triangulation.

This project features photo portraits & written interviews with eight queer Chinese/Taiwanese individuals Jie En Lee, Michelle Zhuang, Addy Shi, Helen Gao, Doris Liou, Liu Xinyang, Leslie Xia, and Eliza Chen, as part of my observation of how queerness, while also being aware of our position in racial triangulation, could present an alternative outlet for expression that doesn't rely on trying to attain whiteness nor appropriate blackness.

¹racial triangulation

A theory by Claire Jean Kim in her 1999 essay "Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." Kim states that Asian Americans have always been defined relative to and through our interactions with Black and white Americans. She proposes a "field of racial positions," —which she defines as public discourse about racial groups and their relative status in any given time and place—to illustrate her point; the two axis of this field are Superior-Inferior and Insider-Foreigner.



Upon our arrival in the 1800's, white Americans have defined us as supposedly superior to Black Americans (in order to keep Black Americans oppressed) yet permanently foreign and unassimilable to whiteness (so that we may never actually attain white status); since then, they have manufactured conflicts between Black Americans and Asian Americans via the model minority myth.

²assimilation

One of our (Chinese-Americans) earlier attempts at survival through assimilation was through the creation of American Chinese food. This was before the model minority myth which was invented only in the 60s, after decades of Yellow Peril during which we were heavily oppressed due to the fear of the East; white Americans had changed their public attitude towards us much later in order to a counter to the Black movements. American Chinese food today consists of inauthentic dishes like General Tso's which are overly-sweetened and chop-suey variant dishes (the origins of which are literally just "miscellaneous leftovers"), often complete with Chinese imagery and objects, much like what you see on the ground, that have since been widely and massively appropriated and orientalized by white Americans.

³the model minority myth

The model minority myth was invented by white people in the 60s and is the belief that Asian Americans are the most socio-economically successful and assimilable minority in America that other minorities should look up to as an example of a "model" minority. It is one of white supremacy's greatest methods in pitting Asian Americans against Black Americans. When Asian-Americans buy into this myth, they wholly believe that they will attain, or have already attained, white status by working hard and remaining apolitical, which leads to us contributing to the demonizing of Black Americans by labeling them as lazy and aggressive while also being wilfully ignorant of their struggles and our non-existence of equality with whiteness.

⁴antiblackness

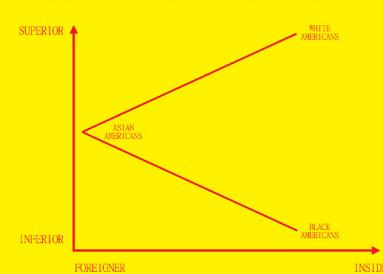
Asian antiblackness comes in a variety of forms today, the most common of which include the stealing and appropriating of Black culture (language, behaviors, aesthetics, music, etc); this has also often lead to blatant blackface while simultaneously dismissing and/or opposing Black Americans' ongoing social, economic, and political struggles in white America. Other forms are variants of colorism both in the Asian community and outside of it (glorification of light skin and small facial features), perpetuation and belief in Black stereotypes created by white media, derailing conversations centering Blackness and attempted justification of their oppressions, and much more.

⁵queerness

So what does queerness have to do with any of this? Considering that white supremacy is largely based on patriarchal ideals towards sex and gender, queerness (both in sexuality and/or gender) rejects and is antithetical to those ideals. Suppose then, that one were determined to dismantle white supremacy and internalized antiblackness, and simultaneously already does not fit the white standard of a human being with value in terms of sex and gender. Would they be able to behave, express, and redefine themselves in a way that rejects racial triangulation, being that in their queerness, they are already excluded from the perceived image of a model minority and thus illegible to white America? This is the question my thesis aims to explore.

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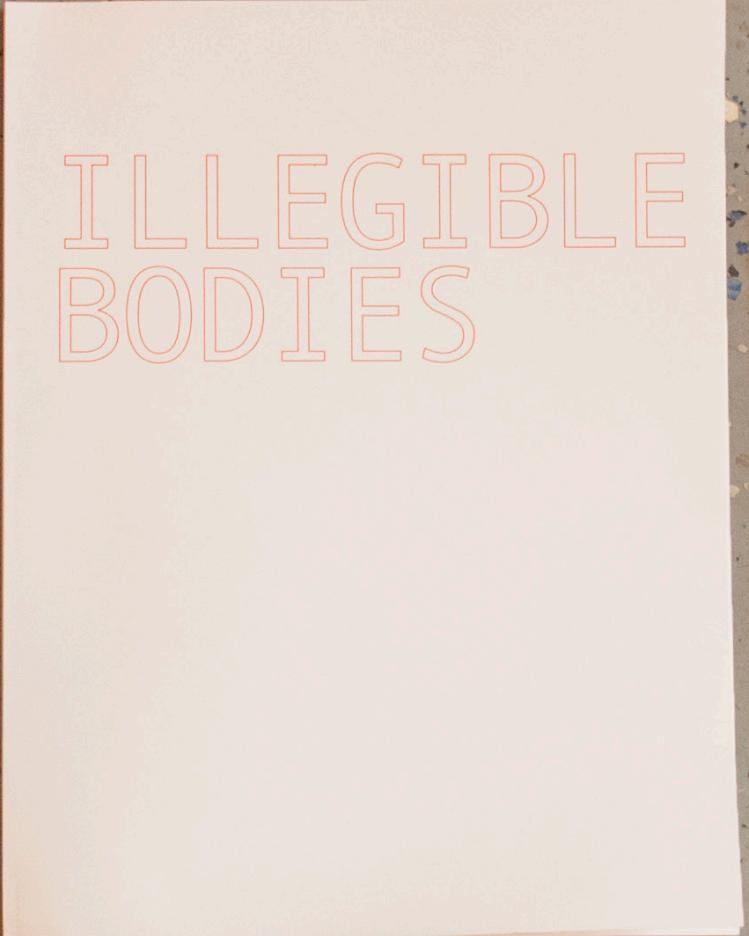
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