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21W.742 Spring 2003  
Writing about Race

## Racial Identity – Part II

As I look at the papers spread around me, encircling me with their whiteness, I can't help but catch glimpses of all the writings I have ever done in and for this class. Over there, I talk about the divide between African-Americans and Asian-Americans, and here, I am looking at the lyricism of Faulkner and his satirical look at the South. And I once thought I knew a lot about race and racial issues in America! As it turns out, I discovered that racism existed everywhere, even in the most unlikely of places, and that writers use their palette of words to attack it, communicate the need to fight it, and truly create a "virtual space of responsiveness" where they could wage their battle against racism and prejudice. I had never written so intensely about one topic, but then again, saying race is simply "one topic" is like saying the earth is simply "one planet"!

First, as with most of the participants in this class, I gained an enormous amount of knowledge in terms of facts and history. Then, however, I learned to use writing as a way to sharpen my arguments, to further develop my ideas and thoughts, and to inform other people of a particular topic that I wanted to create awareness around. As a Korean-American, I had never given much thought to my ethnic identity, but I had always been aware of it and stated so in the first piece I wrote for this class. I am grateful that I have been given the opportunity to look at myself in the view of the larger picture, because I am not just simply Korean-American, I am an Asian-American, a minority, and in the larger sense, a human being. I see my family as a vibrant contributor of the Korean-

American community in Southern California, and see myself *belonging* to the United States as an established ethnic group.

As I look through the portfolio, I am proud especially of my third essay, though I would like to do more work on it after the chaos of finals dies down. I would like to expand it and perhaps do a little more research to bolster my arguments. I want to use it to encourage the Korean-American community to do more outreach programs towards African-Americans, and visa versa. Although I had always been convinced that I must fight against racism in any shape or form, now I have the arsenal to actually accomplish this, and a renewed resolve to teach my children to respect everyone regardless of the color of their skin or country on their passport.

As an immigrant, I had always considered “home” to be South Korea, though I had only visited once in the fourth grade and have not been back since. This class made me think of all the culture I am missing out on, and I have arranged to try to go back again, look at my roots, and see where I originally came from.

Although much of what was discussed was national in scope, I know that the best way one can fight racism is through their progeny, setting an example of tolerance and fairness, and by encouraging them to make relationships with people without regard to ethnicity. Akin to the war on drugs, I don't know if we can ever win this war, but it is essential that we fight it, or we become unwilling participants in its perpetuation. That is the charge given to me in this class, and something that I will have to carry out for the rest of my life.