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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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The very concept of asian american youth culture presents a conundrum for American history and culture, for it was never meant to exist. Under the auspices of the nineteenth-century American racial dictatorship,

Asian migration to the United States was not supposed to be permanent nor should it have resulted in settler colonies. The normative Asian immigrant was the young male who migrated as cheap labor in order to replace enslaved African labor after the end of the slave trade. These migrants were not intended to have the leisure time in which to form their own youth culture. As sojourners, they were not supposed to remain in the United States, nor were they meant to propagate. In addition, the controlling trope of "Asian American" was that of the forever foreigner subjected to expulsion from American nation-state borders. Thus, Asian American youth were not allotted any claim on American rights or American culture. For all those reasons, Asian American youths forming their own culture during leisure time was an impossible construct. But, it was one that happened in the twentieth century, nonetheless.

Although people of Asian descent have been in the United States in significant numbers since the mid-nineteenth century, due to demographics and migration patterns, namely the targeted exclusion of female immigration through acts such as the Page Law (1875), the first sizeable group of American-born Asian youth did not appear until the early twentieth century.¹ This cohort owed its genesis to the convergence of three historical **[End Page 211]** factors.² First, in the twentieth century, Asian American sex ratios became more even, families reproduced, and the first substantial group of American born Asians came of age. Second, this generation gained American citizenship through their birth, which set them apart from their parents' immigrant generation who were legally barred from attaining citizenship through naturalization. Third, American immigration exclusion from 1924 to 1965 meant that any population increase would come from the American-born, primarily Chinese American and Japanese American youth, or, until the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act curtailed their migration, Filipino male colonial subjects.³

Filipino American male youth culture began to form in significant numbers in the 1920s. Immigration laws and United States colonialism

shaped the timing of the appearance of Filipino American male youth culture. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 curtailed the entry of Chinese and Japanese cheap labor, thus creating a demand for other sources of cheap labor on the West Coast, a demand filled by Filipino migration. After the 1898 Spanish American war, the Philippines became a colony of the United States and, as "nationals," Filipinos were not subject to immigration restrictions. Beginning in 1923, young Filipino men migrated in large numbers, thus creating the structural conditions for a vibrant youth culture. As U.S. colonial subjects, the young immigrant men had, to varying degrees, been versed in and exposed to dominant U.S. culture in the Philippines and thus as immigrants formed their own youth culture that was analogous to the cultures created by second-generation Chinese American and Japanese American youth.

Asian American communities deployed youthful cultural practices in order to respond to the historical legacy of immigration exclusion, colonialism, citizenship obstacles, and construction as forever-foreign men, as well as to address present-day racial segregation and community specific issues such as Japanese American internment or Filipino American decolonization. The "hep cat" cool, zoot-suited Filipino male and the fresh-faced, smartly-dressed, and smiling beauty queen became prevalent community responses to the mainstream's image of the shuffling, sepia-dour, foreign male coolie. Asian American youth made a culture of their own within the constraints of their historical time. Sites where scholars have located Asian American youth culture include clubs, **[End Page 212]** beauty pageants, and consumer culture. Ingeniously, out of necessity and survival, Asian American youth negotiated their own spaces within the frameworks of mainstream culture.

Asian American (usually ethnic-specific in the pre-1965 era) youth culture formed as a response to the contradictions between the democratic promise of American national belonging and the practices of racial segregation and exclusion. For...



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