

# Chapter 4

## An Introduction to Japanese Society's Attitudes Toward Race and Skin Color

Debito Arudou

### Introduction

Japan, no doubt like any country or society, places cultural value on skin color and melanin content. In Japan's case, historically and traditionally, pale, unblemished white skin is held in high regard. For example, in classical Japanese *ukiyo-e* and woodblock prints, Japan's upper classes and historical figures are generally rendered with very pale skin, while Japanese women, seen mostly indoors, are generally rendered whiter than men. To the present day, Japan's traditional entertainers (from Kabuki actors to geisha) whiten their skin cosmetically, and its heroes (as seen, e.g., in Japan's Neputa Festival (JNTO 2011) in Aomori Prefecture) are depicted as light-skinned Japanese battling hairy, swarthy barbarians. In modern Japanese adult society, skin coloring and care is *de rigueur* for women and sometimes even men (Ashikari 2005). Despite being the tenth most populous nation in the world, Japan's cosmetics market is the world's second largest, with an annual turnover of 990 billion yen in 2009 (Austrade 2010), selling products to both lighten and darken skin. Notwithstanding Japan's fascination with African American culture, most related products, such as UV-blocking makeup foundation, sunscreen, visors, and parasols, help to keep skin light; darker tones due to sun exposure are often negatively associated with aging skin or outdoor manual labor (Ashikari *ibid*). Further, in a society where most members see themselves as similarly dark-haired and dark-eyed, distinctions are made in Japanese media by darkening skin tones and lightening or coloring hair. Darker skin features are also associated with villainy, such as the incorrigibly destructive *Baikinman* (Bacteria Man) character in the

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long-running *Ampanman* (Yanase 1988) animated series, or the generic, unshaven, darkened-skin burglars and petty thieves against whom police and other public service announcements warn the general public. In sum, Japanese society prefers their skin whiter rather than darker, and phenotypical representations of swarthinness, as we shall see below, can be associated with notions of “outsider” or even “not Japanese.”

This chapter will focus on Japan’s association of skin tone with race<sup>1</sup> and nationality. As an introduction, it will explore the cultural associations placed on people, particularly those deemed “foreigners” (*gaikokujin*, *gaijin*) in Japan, and their treatment by society and the media as the “other” due to their physical appearance.

## Historical Japanese Treatments of Foreigners, Based Upon Skin Color

Archaic words for “foreigners”<sup>2</sup> focused less on skin color and more on their origin or apparent “insider-outsider” relationship to local society. For example, words referring to a person’s origin include *shinajin* and *tōjin*, “Chinese”; *kakyō*, “Chinese Diaspora overseas”; *ketō*, “hairy Chinese” (used for Westerner, from a time when most foreigners were seen as Chinese); *ijin*, “different person” or “barbarian” (depending on the *kanji* Chinese character); *ihōjin*, “different-from-Japanese person”; *ezo*, Ainu from Ezo (present-day Hokkaidō Prefecture); and the generic *yabanjin*, “barbarian.” Words referring to a generic lack of local connection include *gaijin*, “outside person”; *gairaisha*, “person who came from outside”; *gaiban*, “from outside our territory”; *toraijin* and *watarimono*, “person who crossed the seas to get here”; *nagaremono*, i.e., “person who washed up here”; *yosomono* and *yosobito*, “isolated person from outside”; *tabigarasu*, vagabond (literally “traveling crow”); *mizushirazu*, “person I haven’t seen before and don’t know”; and the very candid *atchimono*, is “somebody from way over there.”

This linguistic phenomenon was no doubt due to Japan’s enforced isolation period from the outside world (*sakoku*) between 1639 and 1854, when Japan only officially traded with one country through one isolated port in Nagasaki; foreign sailors shipwrecked on Japan’s forbidden shores could expect immediate arrest and probable execution by the authorities. It is likely that few Japanese at the time had much concept that other “races” and skin tones existed. Even the historical word

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter will work under TheFreeDictionary definition of “race” as “a local geographic or global human population distinguished as a more or less distinct group by genetically transmitted physical characteristics.” Available at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Race>

<sup>2</sup>Based upon Japanese thesaurus results for the word *gaikokujin* at <http://thesaurus.weblio.jp/content/>

*gaijin* (“outside person”<sup>3</sup>), still in common use today, was once used to refer to Japanese as well (Arudou 2008a), as its provinces (*kuni* or *ban*) were still in a state of semi-isolation from each other, speaking different dialects of Japanese, and held in tribute to a weakening shogunate in Edo (present-day Tōkyō). People who were short distances outside their villages could be referred to as *gaijin*, and “Japanese” (*hōjin*, later *nihonjin* or *nipponjin*) as a nationality (*kokuseki*) was little seen as a concept since Japan was not yet a nation-state.

Japan's forced opening to the outside world in 1854, followed by the Meiji Restoration of 1868, brought in not only outside cultural influences but also outsiders. These were foreign cultural emissaries imparting Occidental knowledge and technology, as Japan embarked on creating a nation, enabling a “catching up” with the contemporary world. With the visual stimulus of different races and skin tones, new words were added to Japan's already rich lexicon depicting outsider status. For example, foreign words became Japanese—*sutoreinjā* and *etoranjē* (from the English and French words for “stranger”)—and a more sophisticated expression of differences in nationality began to be expressed—*gaikokujin* (“outside country person”), *sei'yōjin* (Westerner, with *tōyōjin* for Oriental), and *amerikajin* (American, along with other countries by name with *-jin* attached). The phenotypical categorization of non-Asians and a concomitant association with outsider status is significant and indicative. Colorful words such as *kōmō hekigan* (“red hair and blue eyes”), *kinpatsu hekigan* (“blond hair and blue eyes”), and *hekigan bizen* (“blue eyes and beautifully full beard”) began to enter Japanese parlance, and clearly not all negatively. Over time, words began to describe offspring when foreigners began having inevitable liaisons with Japanese: the pejorative *ainoko* (literally “alloyed child,” or at a stretch “interspecies child”), *konketsuji* (“mixed blood child”), *hāfu* (“half,” for half-Japanese), and most recently, *daburu* and *mikkusu* (“double” and “mix[ed],” more politically correct versions of *hāfu*).

There are of course descriptors that became racially-based epithets. *Kokujuin* (“black person,” for a dark-skinned person of African descent) also had permutations of *kuronbo* (“blackie”) or just *kuro* (“black”), not to mention later the word *nigā* (“nigger”), appearing in media designed to disparage non-Japanese with darker skin. Caucasians were labeled *hakujin* (“white people”), Asians were *ōshoku jinshu* (“the yellow-colored race”), while descriptors for other less phenotypically identifiable peoples remained less based upon skin color and more upon location; for example, *chūtō-kei* (“middle east lineage”) for Middle-Eastern features, *hisupanikku* for Hispanics, *yōroppa-kei* for Europeans (however broadly defined), and so forth.

A disclaimer should be made at this point: This is, of course, not to say that Japan was behaving in any way that was exceptional or different from the

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<sup>3</sup>Both *gaijin* and *gaikokujuin* mean “foreigner,” but the former “outside person” has a more racial component than the latter “outside country person” as it generally refers to non-Asians and is applied to people, including Japanese citizens such as this author, with differing skin color (Arudou 2008a, b). It is significant that *gaijin* was once deracinated and used to refer to Japanese.

rest of the world (there were many skin-based epithets in common historical use throughout the Occident to describe outsiders). However, for the purposes of this chapter, this discussion of the development of how Japanese lexicography encourages a differentiating of society by physical features is insightful toward an understanding of how Japan views skin tone and race today.

As for other Asians, descriptors were similarly based largely upon country of origin rather than skin color (albeit Asians are sometimes depicted as having yellower skin and, for want of a better word, “narrower” eyes than whiter, rounder-eyed Japanese). In impolite company, Koreans are still negatively offset from Japanese as *chon*, as Chinese are with *shinajin*, and lumped together with other Asians under the descriptor referring to wartime Japanese Imperial subjects (*sangokujin*). However, there are nearly a half million Asian “special permanent resident foreigners” (*zainichi*) who have been born and living in Japan for generations, largely visibly indistinguishable from the rest of the Japanese population. Other Asians with less tenure in Japan are generally labeled by country when necessary (*firipin-jin*, *betonamu-jin*, and so forth), or the generic descriptor *ajia-kei* (Asian).

## Roots of the Coloring of the World: Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Theories of “Civilization”

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) is a man of great stature in Japanese history (earning a place on Japan’s 10,000-yen bank note). A proponent of the *fukoku kyōhei* (“rich country, strong military”) ideology during the Meiji Era (1868–1912), his ideas held great influence in the development of Japan as a colonial power and, for the purposes of this chapter, Japan’s attitudes toward the outside world. One notable essay attributed to his authorship is entitled *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (1875). Within it, he diverges from the classical definition of “civilization”<sup>4</sup> to offer an updated, static concept including a spiritual element—one where a society attains “both material well-being and the elevation of the human spirit . . . abundance of daily necessities and esteem for human refinement” (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, 48). Fukuzawa also offers political purpose to a nascent post-feudal Japanese society (when Japanese systems for universal literacy and tertiary education were established): fostering a Japan that could deal with the outside world on its own terms. *Outline* is an argument for societies as a whole to emulate and learn from more “civilized” lands, in this case to create a sovereign Japanese nation-state (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, xv and xxv). This advice, history demonstrates, was quickly and assiduously taken by Japanese society and government, as Japan grew into a colonial and industrial power within a generation (Ōguma 2002; Russell 2009).

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<sup>4</sup>The classical definition of civilization is a society with a written language—as seen in the very word for “civilization” (*bunmei*) in Chinese and later Japanese, with characters meaning “clear script”—through which its history is recorded for posterity.

There is, however, a racial component to Fukuzawa's theories, where he couches his analysis of social behavior in terms of, for example, "young men of the Caucasian race (persons of white skin)" (Fukuzawa 1875/2009, 57). While one may argue that Fukuzawa was merely reflecting the contemporary rhetoric of Social Darwinism, the point is that Japanese social science proceeded to rank peoples hierarchically based upon skin color. According to Fukuzawa, societies composed of "persons of white skin" (i.e., the USA and Europe) are at the highest stage ("civilization"), then Asian countries ("semi-developed," such as Turkey, China, and Japan<sup>5</sup>), and at the lowest ("primitive") are people of dark skin, such as Africans or Australian aborigines.

It may sound archaic, but this paradigm can be seen in contemporary Japanese social science and institutional attitudes. For example, Japan has intellectually handicapped itself by pigeonholing people based upon "civilizedness" (in more convenient shorthand, skin color) regarding Africa and African studies. Philips (2005) argues, "the example of African history is a case study of Japan's failure to interact with the wider world of international scholarship and its perpetuation of discredited ideas" (604). Philips writes that Japanese discourse on Africa reflects a distortion of the theories of French anthropologist Georges Balandier (1920–), who claims that the histories of colonized peoples could only be written by anthropologists, not historians (609). Therefore, in Japanese academe, Africa has an ill-studied history or, rather, no history, because historical Africa is viewed as a continent of black people without a written language (whereas studies of northern Africa's lighter-skinned Islamic civilizations, with a long history of literacy, are studiously ignored and underfunded in the Japanese education system). "The presence or absence of history in a society, in the view of Balandier's disciples in Japan, is purely a matter of race. Black Africans have no history, whether they write or not. Other peoples do have history, whether they write or not" <sup>6</sup> (Philips 2005, 620).

This is but one example. Some may theorize that this phenomenon is an expression of an intellectual "Galapagos effect" (Zielenziger 2009; Tabuchi 2009), where ideas long discredited in their societies of origin are imported to a more linguistically isolated island society to take on a new life and permutations over generations (Hall 1998; McVeigh 2002; Philips 2005, 610). However, the effects of this preeminent strain of Japanese social analysis, where whole peoples are phenotypically pigeonholed into behavior patterns, are clear: Anyone who has experienced

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<sup>5</sup>Incidentally, despite China's indelible influence on Japanese as a written language, Japan was ranked highest.

<sup>6</sup>A notably disparaging attitude toward Africans is seen in the statements by Nakajima Hiroshi, who commented in 1995 while heading the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO), that some of his African staff members have poor English skills (Chronicle News Services 1995) (he retained his post due to pressure from the Japanese government as the largest donor to several UN African aid agencies) (Philips 2005, 607). There have also been inferences that Dr. Nakajima's opposition to and interference with the WHO's efforts toward AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa may reflect this bias (Hilts 1990; Limb 2004).

a significant period of living in Japan will no doubt attest that attitudes exist toward people based upon skin color. Someone who “looks Japanese” (and that includes foreign Asians who do not, such as “Chinese,” “Koreans,” and so forth) will be generally treated as Japanese unless their nonnative Japanese language skills give them away as “foreign”; whereas someone who “looks foreign” (*gaikokujin mitai*) will generally be treated as “foreign,” regardless of their actual legal or life status in Japan (as in Japanese birth, Japanese upbringing, Japanese citizenship), or how advanced their Japanese language skills are (Arudou, PhD dissertation, forthcoming). This social differentiating or, rather, socially extreme centrifugation process became apparent during the Otaru Onsens Case of 1993–2005 (Arudou 2006).

## The Otaru Onsens Case and Japan’s Judicial Valuation of Skin Color

A significant indicator of Japan’s legal treatment of skin color may be deduced through the Otaru Onsens Case (Arudou 2006). In 1993, a public bathhouse (*onsen*) in Otaru, a port city in Hokkaidō, Japan’s northernmost prefecture, put up a multilingual sign on their front door saying in English, “Japanese Only.” Citing poor bathing manners from visiting Russian sailors, in practice this bathhouse refused all patrons who did not “look Japanese” (regardless of whether they were Russian or not). There were protests, but Otaru city authorities responded that it was not illegal in Japan for a private-sector business to refuse customers based on race, as there is no law expressly against racial discrimination in Japan’s Civil Code. Otaru officials advised the protestors to go to other bathhouses. In 1995 and 1998 respectively, two more *onsens* put up their own exclusionary signs. In 1999, the author (a Caucasian, non-Japanese), several friends, and their Japanese families went to bathe at these *onsens* and found that only certain members of their party were welcome, despite being their fluent in the Japanese language. The people who “looked Japanese” (the Asians, including a Chinese woman) were allowed in, whereas those who did not look Japanese (three Caucasians, including the author) were refused entry (Fig. 4.1).

Complicating the case further was the fact that the author’s young children are both native speakers of Japanese who were born and raised in Japan and bear Japanese citizenship. These children were subjected to the same scrutiny. One child looks more “Asian” and the other looks more “Western” (with lighter skin, hair, and eyes); the *onsen* in question decided that one child would be admitted while the younger, more foreign-looking (*gaijin*) child would be refused entry. This example clearly set the paradigms for extreme racial centrifugation: An Asian-looking noncitizen (Chinese) would be treated as a Japanese, while a Caucasian-looking, Japanese citizen (the author’s younger daughter) would be treated (and excluded) as a foreigner. This ideology was repeated after the author received Japanese citizenship in 2000. Returning to the *onsen*, the author, despite having his Japanese citizenship acknowledged by the management, was again refused entry and was told that he still did not “look Japanese.”



**Fig. 4.1** The author's children; one looks more "Asian" and the other looks more "Western" (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

In 2001, the author and two other excluded Caucasians brought lawsuits in Japanese civil court. One of the Otaru *onsens* in question, a place called Yunohana, was sued for racial discrimination and defamation of character. Also, the city of Otaru was sued for negligence under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD 1995) and under Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution, which explicitly guarantees equality under the law, forbidding discrimination by race (despite the lack of Civil Code codification). In 2002, the Sapporo District Court ruled that defendant Earthcure KK, the parent company of Yunohana, was liable to pay damages for "unrational [sic] discrimination" (*fugōriteki sabetsu*) and "discrimination that transcended socially-acceptable boundaries" (*shakai teki ni kyoyō shiuru gendo o koeru sabetsu*). Therefore, Yunohana was not explicitly punished for racial discrimination. However, the defendant, Otaru City, was exonerated as passing local laws against racial discrimination, albeit required under the CERD, was a "political duty," not an absolute measure to be taken when measures other than overt legislation were theoretically possible. On appeal, in 2004 (Debito.org 2004), the Sapporo High Court reaffirmed the lower court decisions against the defendants, Yunohana and Otaru City. In the latter case, Otaru City was exonerated because legislation was at the "discretion" (*saiyō*) of the government, not something that could be enforced by the judicial branch, as it would violate Japan's separation of powers between judicial, administrative, and legislative branches. A final appeal by the author to Japan's Supreme Court against Otaru City resulted in a 2005 decision (Debito.org 2005) that dismissed the case as "not involving any constitutional issues."



Hence, Japan's legal system, although punishing an individual offender for a discriminatory action, neither penalized racial discrimination *per se* nor penalized the authorities for nonenforcement of either the signatory treaty or the nation's constitution. Thus, in Japan, differentiation by skin color that results in discrimination would not be eliminated by judicial or legislative fiat. Nearly two decades after signing the UN CERD treaty, thereby promising to "prohibit and bring to an end, by all appropriate means, including legislation as required by circumstances, racial discrimination by any persons, group or organization" (CERD 1995, Art. 2(1) d), Japan still has no national law explicitly outlawing discrimination by race. There are still, incidentally, "Japanese Only" signs and rules in several places and business sectors nationwide in Japan (Debito.org 2010), selecting customers as "Japanese" based upon skin color and phenotype.

## Contemporary Japanese Media Expressions of Valuation of Skin Color

Japan's contemporary mass media has public expressions of distinctions by skin color and race that might make outside observers hark back to less sensitive and self-conscious days, where icons such as Stepin Fetchit, the African-American maid in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, and minstrel shows held common currency in the West. Since the topic of skin color is an inherently visual issue, there is no substitute for including and evaluating some modern media images, as noted below. The following are some examples of the common currency of Japan's differentiation by race and skin color in Japanese marketing (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3):

These modern reprints are time capsules of century-old attitudes toward the Orient. *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman 1899) and *The Five Chinese Brothers* (Bishop 1938) are now controversial books in their societies of origin due to their racial content. They were republished in 2005 with great fanfare as *Chibi Kuro Sanbo*<sup>7</sup> and *Shina*<sup>8</sup> *no Gonin Kyōdai* by Zuiunsha, Inc. (Tokyo), despite the former being removed from Japan's market after protests in 1988. *Sanbo* became a bestseller, allegedly due to the nostalgic effect of adults buying a treasured tome from their childhood (McCurry 2005; Wallace 2005). However, without any acknowledgment of historical context or archaic attitude by the publisher, *Sanbo* has inspired at least one 2010 preschool musical (in Saitama, near Tokyo), with the following song about skin color (Chozick 2010):

Little Black Sambo, Sambo, Sambo  
His face and hands are completely black  
Even his butt is completely black (Black Tokyo 2010)

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<sup>7</sup>The Japanese text and illustrations can be downloaded at <http://www.debito.org/chibikurosambo.html>.

<sup>8</sup>*Shina* is an archaic word for China, seen as offensive by some Chinese.



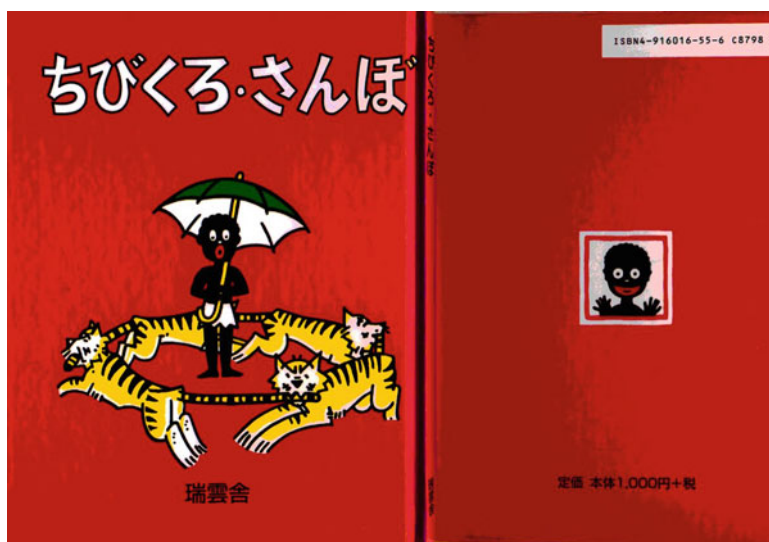


Fig. 4.2 Modern Japanese reprints of *Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman 1953/2005) (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)



Fig. 4.3 *The five Chinese brothers* (Bishop 2005) (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)

This has also become a marketing campaign for other products, including Sambo dolls, much to the consternation of some non-Japanese residents of color who do not want their children being nicknamed “Sambo” at a tender age (Debito.org 2007). The following examples illustrate that skin color and ethnicity are also used as a component of marketing techniques that might be considered crass in other societies (Figs. 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10).

**Fig. 4.4** Sambo dolls (Photo taken 3 December 2007, at Rainforest Café, Chiba, next to Tokyo Disneyland; Photograph courtesy of John C.)



**Fig. 4.5** Black melon pan bread for sale in a Japanese convenience store, using a Japanese anime character with darkened skin and an Afro. November 2010 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

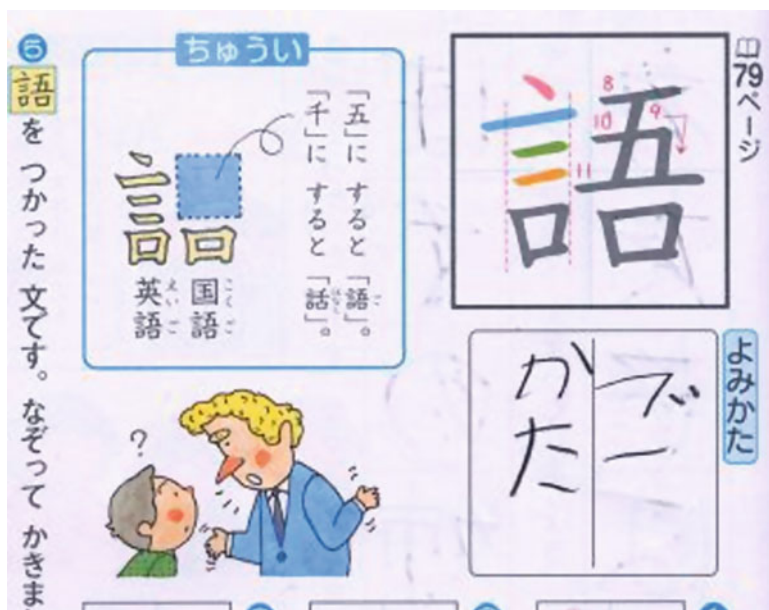




**Fig. 4.6** Mandom Inc.'s Gatsby line of men's toiletries sells facial wipes by using Jamaican "Rasta Man" imagery and juxtaposing a chimpanzee using the product. This TV advertising campaign was discontinued after protests (Community 2005) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

**Fig. 4.7** Selling as a "party joke" in Tokyu Hands department stores in November 2008, the prototypical *gaijin* [sic] features the caption *harō gaijin-san* ("Hello Mr. Foreigner") using the more racially charged version of the word (Arudou 2008a). Note the light hair, fair skin, big nose, blue eyes, and cleft chin, not to mention automatic English capability (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)





**Fig. 4.8** An illustration from a primary school textbook published by *Dōshinsha* (ca. 2001) for 7-year-olds: learning the *kanji* character for *go* (language). The concept of language is illustrated by differentiation, depicting a Japanese schoolboy *unable to understand* a blonde carrot-nosed foreign-language-speaking “Westerner” (Photograph courtesy of Olaf Karthaus)



**Fig. 4.9** Image from a September 2010 TV commercial, from the Nagasaki Prefecture Convention and Visitors Bureau, advertising historical buildings in Nagasaki as a place where Japanese can come and feel “foreign” (i.e., with lightened features, blond hair, and big noses) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)





**Fig. 4.10** Image from a September 2010 TV commercial, from the Nagasaki Prefecture Convention and Visitors Bureau (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

A subtler example of skin color marketing can be seen in the evolution of Japanese pop idol Crystal Kay. Crystal Kay Williams, the child of an African American military serviceman and a Japan special permanent resident (*zainichi*) South Korean mother, was raised as an English-Japanese bilingual in Japan (Poole 2009). Beginning her career at age 13, Kay has as of this writing released some nine studio albums,<sup>9</sup> with an appreciable lightening of her skin on her album covers as her popularity in Japan increased. The following examples show the major change in her skin tone over 8 years, from her first album in 2000 to her 2008 album (Fig. 4.11).

However, when media is in black and white rather than color, it becomes more difficult to suggest subtle differences in skin tone. In this case, other “foreign” stereotypical facial and body features are used to differentiate (Fig. 4.12).

<sup>9</sup>Kay’s major releases include *C.L.L. Crystal Lover Light* (2000), *Almost Seventeen* (2002), *4Real* (2003), *Natural* (2003), *Call me Miss . . .* (2006), *All Yours* (2007), *Color Change!* (2008), *Spin the Music* (2010), *Best of Crystal Kay* (2009), *ONE* (Single, from *Color Change!*; alternative Pokemon edition) (2008).



**Fig. 4.11** Changes in Kay’s skin tone over 8 years show on her album covers, from 2000 to 2008 (Photographs courtesy of Debito Arudou)

Facial stereotypes are not just found in popular media. They are also visible in Japan in a more official capacity, as when the National Police Agency warns the public in official notices about foreign crime (Fig. 4.13, 4.14, 4.15).

There are also, of course, overt cases of intentional racist invective in Japan, as there are in all societies. One famous example was the publication of *Gaijin Hanzai no Ura Fairu 2007* (“Underground Files of Foreign Crime”) (Arudou 2007; Anonymous 2007), exposing non-Japanese who intended to “devastate (*jūrin*) Japan,” which went on sale in convenience stores nationwide until it was discontinued after protests. The magazine’s purpose was to expose how widespread and threatening foreign crime was in Japan, with powerful visual and verbal invective (Fig. 4.16).

*Gaijin Hanzai*’s cover is a case study in facial stereotypes, with center stage being the angular eyes of a Chinese thug; in the foreground is the injured face of a person of African descent, and in the background are various gimlet-eyed Asians (with a waving North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il), incensed Caucasians, and a fanatical Middle-Easterner. While for the purposes of this chapter, skin color is downplayed when rendered in halftone; the magazine interior did resort to tonal and facial stereotypes (Fig. 4.17):



**Fig. 4.12** Four 1999 calendar pages created by Obunsha, Inc., to help Japanese learn to speak English with “foreigners” (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



(2002年10月、浅草通り) UFJのATMにて掲示



## 地域ニュース

発行日 平成14年8月9日

上野警察署・地域総務

(3847-0110内2912)



守ろうよ あなたの好きな 街だから

被害にあった、不審者をみたらためらわず  
すぐ110番

**Fig. 4.13** Tōkyō Ueno Police Department public warning about darker-skinned, dark-haired foreigners (judging by their accented speech) sizing up a lighter-skinned, light-haired Japanese exiting a bank with money (*panel one*). Then she is told that she dropped some change (*panel two*), is approached by a second darker-skinned associate while distracted (*panel three*), and finally has her bag snatched (*panel four*). Dated August 2002 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



**Fig. 4.14** Excerpt of Ōsaka Ikuno Ward Police notice warning the public about illegal foreign workers who engage in visa overstays, fake marriages, falsified passports, and illegal work. “Foreigners” are thus generally rendered with blond hair and exaggerated facial features, unless they are one of the more swarthy South American laborers seen in the fourth example. June 2007 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

There are other examples, and, of course, renderings of hatred targeting skin color happen in every society. However, in Japan there are no explicit laws against hate speech (*ken'o hatsugen*), so these underground expressions can be found in more respectable, widely distributed print media to perpetuate the stereotypes. Given that the Japanese government has argued to the United Nations that specific legislation against hate speech and racial discrimination is unnecessary under the current judicial regime (Debito.org, 2003), there are no signs that this situation will change soon.



**外国人を雇用する時は、「在留資格」を必ず確認し、不法就労をさせないで！**

日本に**不法滞在**する来日外国人の多くは**不法就労**を行い、その一部は、近年深刻化している**国際組織犯罪**等への関与を深めていると思われます。

日本の治安に大きな影響を及ぼしているこれら不法滞在・不法就労防止のため、県民の皆様のご理解と協力をお願いします。

そこで、神奈川県警察では来日外国人による犯罪や不法滞在、不法就労を助長する犯罪等の**取締りを強化**しています。

外国人の不法滞在や不法就労の情報がありましたら、最寄りの警察署、交番等にご連絡願います。



神奈川県山手警察署  
045-623-0110  
国際犯係・経済保安係・外事係



**Fig. 4.15** A warning about illegal foreign laborers, issued by Yamate Police Department, Kanagawa Prefecture. July 2010 (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

## Conclusion

This does not mean values of “good” or “bad” are necessarily assigned to skin color in Japan (as, again, many Japanese are enormous fans of “black culture,” however it is defined) (Sterling 2010). The treatment of skin color in Japan does, however, mean overt differentiation, and “different” by itself can lead to exclusionary practices.

**Fig. 4.16** This magazine's purpose was to expose how widespread and threatening foreign crime was in Japan: *Gaijin Hanzai no Ura Fairu 2007* (*Underground files of foreign crime*), (Anonymous 2007) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)



As has been shown above, different skin color in Japan can result in noncitizen treatment, even when there is legal status and evidence to the contrary, meaning equal protections of the law may not automatically be applied or enforced. Light or dark skin aside, the entanglement of race and nationality in Japan, further promoted by the media, is inextricable, meaning that one generally has to “look Japanese” in order to be considered “a Japanese.” Social conceits and business marketing using skin tone and racially based phenotype have the effect of differentiating and separating peoples. Japanese society’s *de rigueur* sorting and pigeonholing by physical appearance will continue to expose not only people considered as outsiders or foreign, but also Japanese people, to a different set of rules for treatment within Japan.





**Fig. 4.17** African American US serviceman putting a chokehold on a Japanese bus driver in order to rob him. He says in black speech bubble, *gibu mī manē* (“Give me money”) (Photograph courtesy of Debito Arudou)

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