Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies
3 (2012) 53-63.

Realizing blacknpinay: Negotiating Notions of Authenticity in Janet Stickmon's *Crushing Soft Rubies*

by Teresa A. Martinez Hodges

In fifth grade I, a mixed Black and Filipina American, was called a Black Hershey Bar by one of my classmates. At that point in my life, I already had a self-confirmed understanding of Blackness as bad, ugly, undesirable, and dumb-- all traits that were perpetuated by messages everywhere of Black as inferior. Yet now as an adult, I find myself singing along to India.Arie's "Chocolate High" and find solace in knowing that dark *is* beautiful. What kind of messages and understandings must one navigate through in order to go from Black Hershey Bar to "Chocolate High"? In general, how do we help students navigate internal and external messages and embrace a love of self and communities? Despite racism, challenges from family and communities, and oppression within schooling, Janet Stickmon's memoir *Crushing Soft Rubies* exposes how she navigates and ultimately finds home in a world that does not always work in her favor as a mixed Black and Filipina woman. Her text eloquently speaks to the importance of fluidity within Lisa Lowe's (1996) intersectionality and critical counternarratives and centering of Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales' Pinayism (2005). I will examine the ways in which Critical Mixed Race Studies can promote an understanding of "multiple minority" mixed Asian American experiences of negotiating challenges to authenticity; and further, how this can be applied to a general understanding of one's self, especially one's racialized self, and one's situation within one's communities. This analysis includes two lessons and a group project related to teaching this memoir.

Janet Stickmon's memoir centers around her life as a mixed Black and Filipina. It chronicles her major life events and other moments that have colored her world. From the deaths of parents and trying to find home within her family, to negotiating the challenges of coming into being with herself especially in terms of race and her place in the world, this memoir not only exposes particulars about being mixed with Black and Filipina, but also reveals experiences that are common to mixed people of color. Stickmon does not characterize herself solely in terms of her racialization, yet she vividly captures how those identities greatly inform her non-racial identities. Ultimately the most powerful message the book conveys is how important it is to have "home" within oneself and one's communities.

Some of the most salient aspects in Stickmon's memoir are relationships with others that are impacted by racial and ethnic power dynamics within family positions,

Teresa A. Martinez Hodges is an M.A. candidate in the Asian American Studies department at San Francisco State University. She has also been a teacher for three years with Pin@y Educational Partnerships, which teaches Critical Filipina/o American Studies to students in elementary, junior high, high school, and city college level in San Francisco. Her involvement in these institutions grounds her work as an aspiring Critical Mixed Race Studies scholar who seeks to engage in work that addresses issues within her communities.

ISSN: 2154-2171

and interpersonal and internalized conflicts[1]. In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe describes the idea of intersectionality as being impacted by power dynamics in various realms: multiplicity (multiple identities within oneself especially where each is delineated by their relation to power), heterogeneity (differences within a "bounded category"), and hybridity (cultural products that are a result of "uneven…power relations") (Lowe 66-67). The differences that are recognized and accepted within the three levels enable various identities and beings to be considered a part of communities, challenge homogenous notions of what comprises communities, and force us to consider power between relationships. The idea of inclusion of various identities for Stickmon's memoir sets up one of the main problems that she faces in the text: her identity is challenged as a family member, as a student in school, as a student of Christ, as a Black woman, as an Asian American woman, amongst other things.

Yet in the memoir, Stickmon does not really expose the complexities of the issues that others face in regards to their treatment of her. For example, she brings up various struggles she faces as a family member, but does not always talk about what issues her aunt is facing when her aunt does not stick up for her. She does a good job in exposing the ways in which her identities as a Black and Filipina woman informs her other identities.

However, the apparently overwhelming struggle that she endures is in her desire to find or maintain home within her process of developing racial/ethnic identities. The challenges that she faces racially/ethnically are constantly juxtaposed with earlier times of harmony within her family, such as when she says "I missed the encouragement my parents gave me" (Stickmon 55) despite also speaking of earlier times of her mother being very hard on her and how she realized "how much pressure she was putting on me" (Stickmon 19). But she also recognized how the home with her parents was so loving compared to her life later, "I didn't want to be accepted as a full-fledged Filipino, if it was gained at the expense of my Black side. The most distressing feeling in the world was not feeling at home in places that were supposed to be home. I was between races and between homes" (Stickmon 68). Stickmon admits to finding a lot of strength in her multiple roles (identities) of being a student, Christian, poet, being involved in extra-curricular activities, etc, that all ground her identities in other ways that provided some comfort that she lacked racially[2]. This is not to suggest that she did not need a racial/ethnic identity but that she also sought a home within her non-racial/ethnic identities and communities.

The impact of power dynamics that cause conflict internally and interpersonally are in part shaped by her identity as a mixed Filipina. Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Jocyl Sacramento's Praxis of Pinayism is a framework that works "toward connecting the global and local to the personal issues and stories of Pinay (Filipina) struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength" (Tintiangco-Cubales 157). One aspect of this praxis is how Stickmon's memoir reflects what Tintiangco-Cubales and Sacramento explain as "a critical cultural production of art, performance, and engaged scholarship that expresses Pinay perspectives and counternarratives" (157). Stickmon's memoir exposes the interplay of identities through a racial lens, class lens, gendered lens,

---

[1] This is not to say that this is the only aspect of her book.

[2] This is reminiscent of Verna Keith's chapter "A Colorstruck World: Skin Tone, Achievement, and Self-Esteem Among African American Women" in Evelynn Nakano Glenn's *Shades of Difference*. Keith points out "As St. Jean and Feagin observed, African American women who have learned that their (stigmatized) looks will not carry them very far, turn to other avenues" (35).

spirituality lens, and more[3]. Ultimately, a Pinayist praxis is one in which Pinays and allies love, respect, and struggle for the humanization of Pinays and our communities. As described by Tintiangco-Cubales and Sacramento, this struggle exists through many different yet interrelated components that challenge dominant notions and make visible Pinay realities. Janet Stickmon's memoir is a "critical cultural production" in which her experiences as a Black and Filipina internally, interpersonally, and institutionally challenge her humanization. What would be valuable in "centering Pinay epistemologies" and "critical cultural production" would be an inclusion of her reflections of and significance in writing this memoir. As a Pinay (and Black) counternarrative, her process of understanding the self and others serves as a reflection of growth, community, dialogue, and action. Stickmon also engages the multiplicity of identities, whether of hers or of others, and shows the complexities of how the identifies inform and add layers to one another. For example, when she used to pick cans for money with her mother, she expresses how she went from being "glad" about doing so to "a little more ashamed" about it (Stickmon 28). As an adult she reflects on how that experience shaped her understanding of her Pinay mother and her mother's hopes and dreams as an immigrant woman of color (Stickmon 218-220). But by engaging these intersectionalities, Stickmon exposes negotiations of Pinay individuals, communities, and families, and the process of loving and humanizing oneself and others, which centralize her experience as a Pinay, a mixed Pinay, and a mixed woman of color.

Stickmon negotiates many of her experiences as a mixed Pinay through her relationship with her families. In "Factors Influencing the Variation in Racial and Ethnic Identity of Mixed-Heritage Persons of Asian Ancestry" Maria P.P. Root discusses many issues that can influence one's racial/ethnic identities. Family is one factor that Root and others have highlighted as being particularly significant for the identity development of people of mixed heritage (Root 63). For example, "instability" within the family may cause strife with one's relationship to a community (Root 63) because the individuals' racialized experiences within the family may cause them to feel uncomfortable with and possibly disassociate from a certain community[4]. Janet Stickmon's relationships with family members vary between having positive or negative racialized experiences with different people and therefore affects her relationships with those corresponding racial communities. She fondly recalls times with her parents like "spen[ding] late afternoons… laughing and watching the sunset, while our dogs ran around in circles, barking at us" (Stickmon 8). However, later she talks about discord with her extended family members, who ultimately become immediate family members, such as when Stickmon would hear her cousin say "'That Black… don't know how to wash dishes!" (Stickmon 94). Incidents like this resulted in Stickmon questioning her authenticity not only as a Black woman and as a Pinay woman but also as a Black family member and Filipino family member.

Stickmon's conflicts within her position as a family member can be viewed through an understanding of internal and external influences and relationships. Kerry Ann Rockquemore, David L. Brunsma, and Daniel J. Delgado's (2009) article theorizing mixed identity development promotes an ecological framework of understanding identity that involves "differentiating… *racial identity* (an individual's self-

[3] Tintiangco-Cubales and Sacramento point out how intersectionalities of "race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality, religion" may "work together to create situations in which Pinays live and the treatment they face in the United States and throughout the world" (157).
[4] Which Root labels as racially "coding" pg 63.

understanding), *racial identification* (how others understand and categorize an individual), and *racial category* (what racial identities are available and chosen in a specific context)" (27-30). This demarcation of "identity," "identification", and "category" enables us to consider the dimensions of identity on the internal, interpersonal, and institutional levels, and how all three of those dimensions contribute to the understanding of one's self. Stickmon's memoir highlights ways in which these dimensions are at play, overlapping, informing each other, sometimes conflicting with the other dimensions. One such instance is when Stickmon recalls when sharing a Black music video with her Filipino relatives,

> It was at that moment that I understood that Black people had been laughed at all our lives. We could reveal our deepest talent and be laughed at. My own family wasn't just laughing at what they heard on the video, but they were laughing at my people and the music my people created. They were laughing at my father. They were laughing at me. (Stickmon 68)

Although she feels isolated at that moment within the presence of those cousins, she shows that she felt connected with other Black people and associated herself positively with other Blacks. This does not stop her from feeling bad, but it does show that she was able to relate to her Blacknesss despite her constant self-doubting.

Stickmon's experience with fighting negative notions of blackness and inauthenticity is not isolated. Root points out that Black/Asian American mixes are "more often challenged as to whether they are authentically black or black enough" (69[5]). Within the Asian American community, she finds that these mixes "suffered more rejection, more lack of recognition, and less acceptance by other Asian Americans, particularly first-generation Asians" compared to European American/Asian American mixes (67). Hall and Turner cite Spickard's agreement[6] that Asian/Black mixes tend to experience more rejection than others (90). However, Hall and Turner emphasize that Black/Asian and other "minority"-"minority" mixes can have very different experiences in which different factors influence their lives compared to mixed White and Asian Americans (90). Stickmon experiences rejection as a Black and Pinay in different situations and even feels a self-rejection as an other in which she feels she does not fit in with others. For example, she says "As I picked up words and idioms reminding me of what I was too embarrassed to admit I was missing, I hoped to never be exposed as a phony, an imitator of Black culture, even though I was Black" (Stickmon 62). Amongst her mom's side of the family she has felt othered by her family, like in the way that her cousin questions why she uses her own shampoo and Stickmon reflects that they have a different "texture…of hair" that requires different hair care products (Stickmon 54).

It seeks to fight the oppression of mixed Asian Americans that promotes self-hate and disconnection from communities. By grounding the teaching components with these theories and frameworks, I draw from Asian American Studies, Critical Filipina/o American Studies, and Critical Mixed Race Studies, amongst other theories. All of these

---

[5] As cited in Root 1998a, Root, Maria P.P. "Experiences and Processes Affecting Racial Identity Development: Preliminary Results from the Biracial Sibling Project." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, I:XX.

[6] Spickard, Paul R. *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1989. Print.

disciplines emphasize a critique of power and a hope in the agency that we possess to combat it. Thus, the following two lessons and group project expand on Paulo Freire and _____ 's praxis of theory + action + reflection. These three pedagogical components focus on ways to act, ways to be, and ways to think and feel (theory + reflection). Together they comprise transformative elements that facilitate students' understanding of self and group agency as expressed within Stickmon's counternarrative.

LESSONS

Lesson 1

Part of the negotiation with labels is that there are codes that go along with the meaning behind the label. These codes, behaviors, languages, and other cultural cues signify the meaning of the label. Lisa Delpit, in her article "The Silenced Dialogue" argues that there is a "culture of power" in classrooms that provide students that are familiar with that culture an advantage over others (Delpit 282-284). Ultimately she argues that students should embrace the codes that they already know from home, but also learn institutionalized codes in order to work the system (296). Scholars doing work on critical mixed race studies have argued or expressed that mixed heritage people have the right to situationally identify (Maria P.P. Root's "Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People" and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, just to name a few), but I also argue, in the same way Delpit argues that students of color should learn multiple codes, mixed people should also be conscious of codes that we use and also use them for negotiating boundaries and for social change. In a sense, we should work the system and work for good before the system of labels is used to work and define us.

This first lesson delves more deeply into how we act: with ourselves, with others, and within society. Power differentials (Lisa Lowe) and internal and external influences (Rockquemore, Brunsma, and Delgado) are especially key in this examination. This lesson is meant to explore the "culture of power" in negotiating mixed identities and communities, grounded in the way that Stickmon often grapples with acts of code-switching. Students will identify hierarchies of power in different situations and what role *codes* play in negotiating access to communities and individual relationships for mixed people. They will also actively practice code-switching with classmates. In doing so, students will become cognizant of their ability to utilize different codes if they choose.

STEP 1- Introduce and connect the idea of multiple identities

First, have students think about how they communicate with various people in their lives. Then have students express the way they greet and converse with:

1. Their mom/dad/guardian
2. Their best friend(s)
3. Their dog/cat/pet
4. A younger sibling, cousin, neighbor, student
5. Their professor
6. Their boss (any boss, past or present)
7. A stranger at the grocery store

Then ask them to reflect:

1. Do they greet everyone in the same way?
2. Why do they greet people differently?

3. What factors influence how they greet someone?
4. Does greeting each person in different ways make them less of another identity?
    a. i.e. does the way they greet a professor make them less of a best friend?
5. What expectations do they have of people that they have relationships with (i.e. the people listed in #1-7 in the first part of Step 1) and how does that affect their interactions with them?
6. How do these different roles impact their overall identities?
7. How are their interactions impacted when the people listed in #1-7 have multiple layers to their identities (i.e. if their best friend is a girl, is mixed Asian American, is a student, is the president of a club they are involved in, etc.)?

STEP 2- Discuss the reasons for negotiating situational identities
In the way that people have multiple identities (daughter/son, student, co-worker, pet owner, best friend, etc) Janet Stickmon has multiple races/ethnicities in addition to the different ways of relating to people. Have students identify situations in the memoir where Janet Stickmon situationally identifies around different people or is conflicted about identifying differently. Use answers to step one to help recognize instances in Stickmon's memoir. Also have them point out where she is denied access, i.e. when someone does not accept her or challenges her membership within a particular group. When doing so, have them identify how she actively situationally identifies: i.e. manipulating language, highlighting cultural knowledge, using cultural cues, etc. Does Stickmon ever use code-switching to her advantage?

STEP 3- Identify *power* in the memoir
Lisa Delpit says, "When acknowledging and expressing power, one tends toward explicitness (as in yellin to your 10-year-old, "Turn that radio down!"). When de-emphasizing power, there is a move toward indirect communication" (Delpit 284). Have students identify the way that power is enacted in the memoir and consider the ways that we all see power enacted in our own lives within conversations and schooling. For example, when Rovalia is telling Janet that she needs to start paying rent (Stickmon 90-91) what is the communication style that is enacted in that space? How does that compare to other instances of communication in the book? How do displays of power within that instance (and other instances) shape Stickmon's understanding of her role as a family member? As a mixed person? Etc?

STEP 4- Discuss the power of knowing the codes
It is very important to consider the ways that code-switching enables us to survive. Delpit writes, "…if parents were members of the culture of power and lived by its rules and codes, then they would transmit those codes to their children. In fact, they transmit another culture that children must learn at home in order to survive in their communities" (Delpit 286). Ask students if Stickmon knew the codes to survive at home? Did she know the codes to survive at school? Did she know the codes to survive in her extended family and other communities? Have students identify some kinds of codes she would need to know in order to survive at home, at school, and in her communities, especially based on her interactions and experiences within those spaces as discussed in the memoir. Finally Delpit argues that understanding multiple codes

and the "power realities in this country… [enable students to] work to change the realities" (Delpit 293). How can knowing multiple codes, for Janet Stickmon, be used to advocate for social change? If mixed people and other people of color or for your students knew multiple codes, how could *they* advocate for social change? Why is it even important for mixed people to also be involved in working for social change?

This exercise enables students to strategically exercise and therefore choose how they act in different situations. These are choices that we make everyday; by consciously examining the struggles (internal and external) that influence our choices and the constructed parameters that seek to confine us (power differentials), students are able to make choices that uplift themselves and our communities. By drawing from the experiences of Stickmon's life, students can witness how her and others' actions are performances that reflect who they are and where they come from.

Lesson II[8]

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of authenticity for Stickmon lays in how her identities are defined for her in her various spaces. Whether they are self definitions (such as "racial identity"), other people's definitions (such as "racial identification"), or institutional definitions (such as "racial category"), they are all definitions that she has to negotiate and make sense of in order to create her own meaning within it. In particular, these definitions are signified by labels, and in her memoir, Janet Stickmon often feels confined to labels or is denied labels, depending on the situation. In this exercise, students will think critically about the power of labels/names/identities. They will physically move around the room and physically experience the compartmentalization of labels/identities. Finally, they will examine their own relationship to labels and reflect on how labels impact them.

This second lesson focuses on how we are, looking at who we are and what we say, as in Pinay perspectives and counternarratives described by Tintiangco-Cubales and Sacramento and where we come from (such as Maria P.P. Root's article on factors influencing identity). They will begin to examine labels through the text, looking at what does it mean to be Black? Filipina? Mixed? Low-income? A woman? Whatever identities you have? For 10 minutes, have the students independently write about a time when they "felt" like they were that label. It could that they literally named themselves that label or talked about their experiences being that label.

Step 1- Prepare to think about labels defining authenticity

In preparation for this activity, the class can read Wei Ming Dariotis' article, "To Be Hapa or Not to Be Hapa: What to Name Mixed Asian Americans" and in class discuss the following in relation to this topic: An important question to ask is how did you determine who is "authentically" "Black"? "Filipina"? low-income? a woman? etc? A follow-up question to that is does a mixed person get included in categories meant for "Black" or "Filipina" or etc? If they do, can you notice whether or not characteristics of one race/ethnicity impacts or is ever separate from another race/ethnicity? One's race(s) or ethnicities do NOT ever have to be compartmentalized[10] yet also one may engage in situational identity that emphasizes aspects of one identity over others even if

[8] The formatting of these lesson suggestions is altered from the Pin@y Educational Partnerships Lesson Plan and Unit format that include format, learning goals, and concepts

[10] Maria P.P. Root's Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People

they are always multiple races/ethnicities. If a mixed person did get included in monoracial categories, was their race ever quantified in order to be justified (i.e. "full" Black is more than "half" Black)? But what happens when you get a label (whether Black, Filipina, woman, low-income, student, athlete, hapa, etc)? Do you "live up to it" or do you resist it? Or does it depend on the situation? In other words, how do we understand something to be a certain label or associate a meaning with the label?

Step 2- Identify fluidity of identities within the text
Ask students how Stickmon negotiates "living up to" or resisting labels? By pulling direct descriptions, comments, actions, or comparing a person's situations at various points in the book, have students find instances in the book where a person embraces or resists or floats between a label(s). Or you can focus on one person in the book and identify the different labels/identities that the person performs or challenges.

Step 3- Discuss the meanings behind labels
Another important question to examine is how do labels get placed/who creates labels/why are they created? Stickmon's idea of Blackness is sometimes contrasted to how she herself is. Discuss how knowing or not knowing people of a particular race(s) can influence fluidity or rigidness of meanings behind labels or typecast associations with labels. For example: how do Stickmon's experiences at the Black engineers conference while in college impact her as a Black woman engineer (Stickmon 125)? For Stickmon, she describes it as

> In an atmosphere where all of us, as Black people, were college-educated and no one was made to feel ashamed; amongst each other, being smart was celebrated, not ridiculed. By admiring the beauty of my people across the room, I was admiring my own beauty. I had no reason to look at my nappy hair with contempt or disgust and no longer thought of my Blackness as the reason why boys weren't attracted to me. I was beautiful; and I was beautiful because I came from beautiful people (Stickmon 125).

This quotation shows a way that labels can impact us negatively (feeling ashamed) and positively (seeing her beauty in others with whom she shares a label). Based on the interpretations about labels from the memoir, have students consider the overall impact of labels: how can labels/names hurt us? What are situations where it is hurtful to have a label? At the same time, how can we use labels to our advantage? It is also important to examine how sometimes we are labeled without it being explicitly labeled (i.e. treated a certain way without the actual label). What situations exist in which is it important to be able to switch between labels? How are labels fluid, how are they not fixed definitions, and how do they change meanings? Who has the power to create or deny a label for someone else? Who has the power to label influences the impact and meaning of the labels. It is very important that the class discuss how labels can harm us and that they also discuss how labels can help us.

Yen Le Espiritu's theory of panethnicity of Asian Americans might be a good example to supplement this discussion in showing the power of labels.

Even though it may not seem clear, Stickmon may have always known that she is "blacknpinay." The challenge for her is that others have a hard time embracing her self-

identification for themselves, which plays out through her grappling with listening to her own voice and knowing where that is situated within her past, present, and future. This lesson on ways to be speaks to the heart of one's being, as a core that is not static, but is consistent. Naming these essences of ourselves in the form of labels is a powerful statement to all, but being critical of the meanings behind these labels enable us to continue growing and to gain a better understanding of what we are all about.

Group Project

This group project largely addresses how we think and feel: how we understand ourselves and our place in this world. In considering these theories, frameworks, and lessons, the insights gained through the in-class exercises can be helpful to apply a close reading of the text in order to emphasize the depths and lessons of her counternarrative. Examining the tone throughout the text is one way to gauge Stickmon's treatment as a Black and Filipina.

1. As a homework assignment, have students take two pages out of the text and uncover the tones that are conveyed in the different interactions/dialogues, descriptions, and reflections.

2. In class, split students up into groups, assign them a particular chapter, and have them work to answer the following questions as a group outside of class, with one in-class work day. This could be done as a group project where they creatively express their findings (for example they could perform a skit that aggregates the tone or captures a particular moment, drawings that illustrate the struggles, a dance that melds the different tones and conveys the flow or ruptures of the tone, etc). How do the characterizations add to the tone and therefore impact Stickmon's acceptance as a Black and Filipina and express her experiences as a Black woman, Pinay, and blacknpinay? And of her other identities? What words, phrases, and contexts are used to signify the tone? How is tone used to depict power differentials within the text? This is especially important to consider when thinking about the oppression and agency of the characters. How is the tone of these experiences used to exemplify/challenge/juxtapose/complicate notions of what it means to be those labels? How does the tone contribute to the understanding of her relationships to and relationship to self within those institutions (i.e. schooling, family, church). This provides insight into factors and external racializations (i.e. "racial identification" and "racial category") that influence Stickmon's identity. Include other questions but be sure to ask what are the overall messages in each chapter and how is the tone used to ground that message?
3. At the end of the group projects, find commonalities and differences, threads and disjointedness between the chapters. What does the class feel is the overall tone of the book?

Examining the tone of the text connects the emotional to the mental, which is important to facilitate for the emotional and mental negotiations for oneself and one's communities. Using tone, Stickmon makes many clear distinctions of what she considers to be helpful and harmful to herself as a blacknpinay. This group project and

the in-class exercises cultivates a consciousness of oppression and providing a way to process and act on it, especially for--but not limited to--mixed people.

CONCLUSION

Stickmon's families greatly impact her ability to see herself as a part of certain labels/communities. These relationships expose a power dynamic that causes her to feel like her relatives' positions in the family cause them to be gatekeepers to her communities. Additionally, her non-racial/ethnic identities are all still influenced by her being Black and Filipina and contribute to her feelings about her authenticity as a mixed Black and Pinay. Stickmon's memoir as a counternarrative gives insight into how important labels and the meanings within them are not only for oneself but also for one's relationship to one's communities. Her memoir also shows how external definitions of self, as well as one's relationship with their communities, impact one's notion of self. Having a heightened awareness of one's position within one's communities and the realities of the oppression those communities face can encourage one to advocate for social change. Ultimately, when Stickmon comes to believe that Black *is* beautiful, thanks largely to friends and positive experiences she is able to love herself as a mixed Black and Pinay.

Prior to *Crushing Soft Rubies*, I had not read anything by a mixed blacknpinay (other than myself) besides Melissa Howard's blog[11]. The first time I read the memoir I found so many similarities of experiences as a blacknpinay. When I first met her at the 1st Critical Mixed Race Studies Conference, I wanted to tell her how thankful I was for sharing her story. Her memoir speaks to me not just as a fellow blacknpinay but also as someone who seeks to look critically at the experiences of mixed people. I am grateful for her perspectives and for providing insights into how she as a mixed woman of color realized her agency in her process of identity development. My work as a teacher apprentice with Pin@y Educational Partnerships has grounded my entire pedagogical approach. For this essay, it helped me to focus on key concepts, flush out questions through problem-posing, has guided my lesson formatting in this article, and perhaps as importantly, embraced my blacknpinayness. In teaching her memoir, I hope others find hope through reading her counternarrative and realize the value and agency in negotiating the terrains of our many homes and identities, like Stickmon has.

Works Cited

Dariotis, Wei Ming. "To be Hapa of Not to Be Hapa: What to Name Mixed Asian Americans." *At 40: Asian American Studies @ San Francisco State*. Asian American Studies Department. San Francisco: Asian American Studies Department, San Francisco State University, 2009. 173-178. Print.

Delpit, Lisa D. "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children."*Harvard Educational Review*. 58.3 (1988): 280-298. Print.

Hall, Christine C. Iijima, and Trude I. Cooke Turner. "The Diversity of Biracial Individuals: Asian-White and Asian-Minority Biracial Identity." *The Sum of Our*

[11] Melissa Howard, a mixed blacknpinay from MTV's Real World New Orleans cast. Her blog used to be princessmelissa.com and is now http://melissabeck.tumblr.com/.

Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans. Ed. Teresa Williams-Leon and Ed. Cynthia L. Nakashima. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2001. 81-91. Print.

Keith, Verna. "A Colorstruck World: Skin Tone, Achievement, and Self-Esteem Among African American Women." *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters*. Ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. 25-39. Print.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann, David L. Brunsma, and Daniel J. Delgado. "Racing to Theory or Retheorizing Race? Understanding to Build Multiracial Identity Theory." *Journal of Social Issues*. 65.1 (2009): 13-39. Print.

Root, Maria P.P. "Factors Influencing the Variation in Racial and Ethnic Identity of Mixed-Heritage Persons of Asian Ancestry." *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans*. Ed. Teresa Williams-Leon and Ed. Cynthia L. Nakashima. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2001. 61-70. Print.

Stickmon, Janet. *Crushing Soft Rubies*. Piedmont: Broken Shackle, 2003. Print.

Tintiangco-Cubales, Allyson. "Pinayism." *Pinay Power: Peminist Critical Theory, Theorizing the Filipina/American Experience*. Ed. Melinda de Jesus. 1st ed. New York: Routledge, 2005. 137-148. Print.

---. "Pinayism Unit: Global, Local, and Personal." *Pin@y Educational Partnerships: A Filipina/o American Studies Sourcebook Series. Volume II: Filipina/o American Identities, Activism, and Service. Santa Clara: Phoenix Publishing House International.* 2009. 155-168. Print.

Tintiangco-Cubales, Allyson, and Jocyl Sacramento. "Practicing Pinayist Pedagogy." *Amerasia*. 35.1 (2009). 179-187. Print.