



Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique

By Kandice Chuh



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Imagine Otherwise is an incisive critique of the field of Asian American studies. Recognizing that the rubric "Asian American" elides crucial differences, Kandice Chuh argues for reframing Asian American studies as a study defined not by its subjects and objects, but by its critique. Toward that end, she urges the foregrounding of the constructedness of "Asian American" formations and shows how this understanding of the field provides the basis for continuing to use the term "Asian American" in light of—and in spite of—contemporary critiques about its limitations.

Drawing on the insights of poststructuralist theory, postcolonial studies, and investigations of transnationalism, *Imagine Otherwise* conceives of Asian American literature and U.S. legal discourse as theoretical texts to be examined for the normative claims about race, gender, and sexuality that they put forth. Reading government and legal documents, novels including Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*, Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls*, and Lois Ann Yamanaka's *Blu's Hanging*, and the short stories "Immigration Blues" by Bienvenido Santos and "High-Heeled Shoes" by Hisaye Yamamoto, Chuh works through Filipino American and Korean American identity formation and Japanese American internment during World War II as she negotiates the complex and sometimes tense differences that constitute 'Asian America' and Asian American studies.

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Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique By Kandice Chuh Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #112082 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Duke University Press Books
- Published on: 2003-04-17
- Released on: 2003-04-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .58" w x 6.13" l, .72 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 232 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Kandice Chuh argues that in the current study of Asian Americans, the critique of social inequality must overcome the impossible insistence on a uniform ethnic subject. She performs a daring deconstruction of the recurrence to ideas of authenticity and identity, discusses the pitfalls of essentialized concepts of 'activism' and 'community,' and encourages us to put the case of Asian Americans towards a more general critique of racialized U.S. society. Her intervention challenges us to think differently, to 'imagine otherwise.'"—Lisa Lowe, author of *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*

"*Imagine Otherwise* is a provocative work. It questions the terms in which Asian American studies have been understood and offers a set of exciting theoretical alternatives, each of which is substantiated by close readings of literary texts. Our understanding of Asian American subjectivity is significantly enhanced in the process."—David Palumbo-Liu, author of *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Kandice Chuh is Professor of English, Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is coeditor of *Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora*, published by Duke University Press.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Lee:

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