

## Faces of the Past, Voices of the Present



Denise Uyehara, Big Head:  
Performance/Lecture/Book signing

Thursday, February 17, 7:00 p.m.  
OSU Mount Hall Studio Theatre 1050  
Carmack Rd.

For OSU Students: "Body/Story  
Investigation: A Performance Art  
Workshop with Denise Uyehara"

Friday, Feb. 18, 1:30-3:00 p.m., New  
Works Lab, Drake Union 2064

<http://ijs.osu.edu/remember.html>

1

## The Jazz Age



Women in Modern America

2

## From Progressivism to the 1920s

- Focus on reform and politics to obsession with consumption
  - Mass culture
- Victorian asexual maternalism to Modern heterosexuality
  - Reorganization of separate spheres
- Cosmopolitanism and nativism/racism

3

## Women and Politics

- League of Women Voters (1920)
  - Formerly National American Woman Suffrage Association
  - Train women to be good citizens
- Maternity and Infancy Act (1921-29)
  - 1st federally funded health care program
  - \$1.25 million/year for well-baby clinics, educational programs, and visiting-nurse projects
- Protective Labor Legislation (by 1923)
  - 40 states regulated women's work hours
  - 15 states regulated wages
- Politicized Domesticity

4

## Equal Rights Amendment (1923) The Case for Equality

- "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."
- "In many highly paid trades women have been pushed into the lower grades of work, limited in earning capacity, if not shut out of the trade entirely by these so-called protective laws."
- "How much better by one blow to do away with discriminating against women in work, salaries, promotion and opportunities to compete with men in a fair field with no favour on either side!"



National Woman's Party 5  
35,000 members to 1,000

5

## The Case for Difference

- "So long as men cannot be mothers...the cry Equality, Equality, where nature has created inequality, is as stupid and as deadly as the cry of Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace."
- "Women who are wage earners, with one job in the factory and another in the home, have little time and energy left to carry on the fight to better their economic status. They need the help of other women as they need labor laws."
- Who benefits from protective legislation? Who benefits from the passage of the ERA?

6

## Decline in Reform

- National vs. local/regional perspective
- Difference in political strategies
  - Sex-consciousness or individualism
- Red Scare and Political Repression
  - Bolshevik Revolution (1917)
- Alien Act (1918)
  - enabled government to deport any immigrant found to be a member of a revolutionary organization prior to or after coming to the U.S.
  - 1919- 249 people deported
  - 1920 - 6,000 imprisoned and 600 deported
- Year of Strikes (1919)
  - 4 million (1/5 workers)
- “Spider web” chart (1923) and internal purging of leftists
- Shift in Government Priorities
  - Progressivism to “Associative State”
  - Government-Business cooperation
- Shift in Generations



## The Flapper



- Victorian asexual maternalism to Modern heterosexuality
- WWI and sexualization of American Society
  - Birth control vs. disease control
- Freudianism
  - Creation of heterosexual and homosexual as medical categories
  - Normal and deviance
- Peer Group Culture
  - Working-class women and “treating”
  - Middle-class women and college

8

## New Mass Culture

- 60 million attended weekly by 1927
- Emergence of Hollywood
  - Producing 80% of world’s movies by early 1920s
- Ethnic, working-class creators and audience to middle-class form of entertainment
  - Silent to talkies
  - “trickle-up” model of change
- Class mobility through heterosexual romance

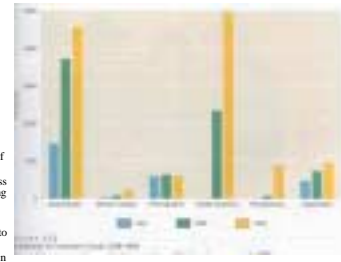


“It was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck, and cheeks, as well as on the mouth.”

9

## Fulfillment through Consumption

- Era of Prosperity
  - corporate dividends went up 2/3
  - Corporate Welfare
    - Workers as consumers
    - Real Wages increased 21% 1923-1929
- Mass production techniques transferred to consumer industries
  - Double-production in 1920s
  - 13 hours to produce one car in 1913 by 1925, one car in ten minutes
- Installment plan
  - unequal prosperity
  - 5% of nation’s family received 1/3 of all income
  - 71% of American families earned less than was necessary for a decent living standard
- Consumer Debt
  - consumer debt rises from \$3 billion to over \$7 billion by 1929
  - mortgage debt rises from \$8 billion in 1919 to \$27 billion in 1929



10

## A Common National Culture

- “In homes across the country in the 1920s, Americans sat down to a breakfast of Kellogg’s corn flakes and toast from a General Electric toaster. They got into a Ford Model T to go about their business, perhaps shopping at one of the chain stores, such as Safeway and A & P, that had sprung up across the country. In the evening the family gathered to listen to radio programs such as ‘Great Moments in History’ and ‘True Story’ or to read the latest issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader’s Digest*, or *Collier’s*. On weekends they might hop in the car to see the latest Charlie Chaplin film at the local movie theater: Millions of Americans, in other words, now shared the same daily experience.”

11

## Creating and Packaging Desire

- Advertising
  - \$15/person in 1929
  - 3% of GNP
- Women as consumers
- Women as products
  - “The first duty of woman is to attract.”
  - “Your masterpiece – yourself”
  - Miss America Beauty Pageant (1921)
- Fulfilling marriage and motherhood
  - 1/7 divorce rate
  - Housework hours doubled 44.3 to 87.5 hrs/week
  - Decline in availability of domestic servants



12

## Cosmopolitanism and Nativism/Racism

- Urban leisure
  - “slumming” in inner city ethnic and racial neighborhoods
  - Prohibition and Speakeasies
  - “primitivism” and exoticism
  - Sexually transgressive spaces
- Black migration
  - 1920-1930, nearly 90,000 settled in Harlem (total population 200,000)
  - 1.5 million African Americans to cities
- Legacies of Jim Crow and American imperialism
  - 300,000 from West Indies (1900-1930)
  - Segregation in nightclubs
  - “Race” issues vs. “gender issues”

## CRAZY BLUES



Race Records, Radio, and Movies  
Selling black culture and blackface

13

## Nativism: Native-born Protestant versus New Immigrants and Migrants

- World War I and 100% Americanism
  - 1/3 of the 92 million Americans were immigrants or children of immigrants in 1914
  - 8 million Germans
- Prohibition
  - 18th Amendment (ratified 1919) prohibited the “manufacture, transport, and sale of intoxicating liquors.”
- Red Scare
- Immigration Act of 1924
  - 2% of 1890 census based on nationality
  - 164,000 maximum
  - exclude “aliens ineligible for citizenship”
  - exempt Western Hemisphere and Philippines

14

## Which “aliens” are ineligible for citizenship?

- Naturalization law of 1790 specified that naturalized citizenship reserved for whites
  - Revisions instituted for African Americans; Mexican Americans; and Native Americans
- Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
- Japanese immigrants
  - Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1906-1907
  - Alien Land Laws
  - 1922 Ozawa case - assimilated but not Caucasian
- South Asian immigrants
  - Bhagat Singh Thind (1923)
  - “Caucasian” but not white
- Cable Act (1922)
  - Gave married women independent citizenship
  - Except women who marry aliens ineligible for citizenship (repealed in 1931)

15

## Ku Klux Klan



- Reformed in 1915, inspired by D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*,
- “Native, White, Protestant Supremacy” – supported prohibition, immigration restriction, attacked birth control and Darwinism
- 1924, 3 million members, including 1/2 million women and President Harding

16

## demands for cheap labor while desire for racial purity

- 150,000 Filipinos - American nationals - arrived between 1920s-1934
- estimated 459,000 Mexicans entered the U.S. between 1921 and 1930
  - Domestic Service
  - Agricultural work
  - Food Processing
- “What was my native land? Japan? True, I was born there. But it had seemed a queer, foreign land to me when I visited it. America? I had until now, thought so. I had even told my father once that even in case of war between Japan and America, I would consider America as my country. In language, in thought, in ideals, in custom, in everything, I was American. But America wouldn’t have me. She wouldn’t recognize me in high school. She put the pictures of those of my race at the tail end of the year book...She won’t let me play tennis on the courts in the city parks of Los Angeles, by city ordinance. She won’t give me service when I go to a barber’s shop. She won’t let me own a house to live in. She won’t give me a job, unless it is a menial one that no American wants. I thought I was American, but America wouldn’t have me. Once I was American, but America made a foreigner out of me.” Kazuo Kawai, 1924
- Segregated peer cultures



Luisa Ronstadt Espinel 17

## Women and Modern America

- Progressive reform to Consumer society
- Gender Consciousness and Individualism
- Merging of Separate Spheres?
- Cosmopolitanism and nativism/Racism
  - “I had a Jewish friend....She was my work buddy....I never saw her outside the cannery but we were friends at work....We broke the ice by talking about Clark Cable. We were crazy about him.”
    - Maria Rodriguez

18