

Building Multicultural Space At the Scene of the Racial Conflicts: *Kimchee and Chitlins and Twilight**

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I. Introduction

The signification of ghettos has developed through the discriminatory history in terms of race and class. The dominant group has exploited and discriminated against racial minorities by structuring the inner cities for its power and interest. Historically racial minorities, especially African Americans in impoverished regions, have provided labor to the center of the city even though they were confined in their devastated places rather than being incorporated into the mainstream society. In the ghettos which have become complex and diverse because of influxes of immigrants from Asian, African, and Latin American countries, tensions and conflicts among different peoples have been growing. On the surface, ghettos are multicultural; on the other hand, people of diverse races, ethnicities, and classes in the ghettos do not

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value difference; rather, they fight with each other. As a result, they have become multi-clash zones.

Although the US dominant group considers multiculturalism¹⁾ a grand national narrative which everyone should accept, as all racial conflicts testify, the relations among racial minorities have become degenerated. In particular, Korean grocery store boycotts in the 1980s and the 1990s in major cities, the conflicts that happened between Jewish people and blacks in 1965, and the 1992 LA Riots in South Central, LA testify violently and destructively to the problems of racial minorities. Put in other words, interethnic riots display the contradiction between the discourse of multiculturalism and reality. Racial minorities with diverse cultural backgrounds are forced to coexist in ghettos structured for the dominant ideology and profits. In addition to their uneasy gathering, the stratification of US society with respect to race signifies that the possibility of confrontation among races is already implicated in ghettos.

As Helen Chun delineates, there have been various approaches to elucidate the racial tensions in the ghettos such as divide and conquer scenario, class problems, “the cultural essentialist explanations that pervaded the dominant media,” and political-economic structure which was advocated by ethnic studies(1-2). Among theories, political and economic inequality structured

1) Since the discourse of multiculturalism emerged in the 1970s, as the fruit of the civil rights movement, it has experienced “rise and fall” in line with political and social conditions outside and within the US. Especially since 9/11 there have increasingly been backlash against and retreat from multiculturalism(Kymlicka 32). However, in this “post-multiculturalism era,” according to Kymlicka, “there is no credible alternative to multiculturalism”(46). When black-Korean conflicts, which are backgrounds both of *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight*, often exploded in the 1980s and the 1990s, multiculturalism as discourse and practice has been actively discussed and employed. It shows that the gap between theory and reality is huge.

through history seems to be persuasive. I also employ it much for my discussion of the play.

Significantly, minority literature or culture demystifies pluralism or multiculturalism by disclosing the material reality of the inner city ghettos. *Kimchee and Chitlins* by Elizabeth Wong and *Twilight* by Anna Deavere Smith also foreground the racial conflicts, and simultaneously resist the national narrative multiculturalism. According to the doctrine of multiculturalism, differences are the entities to celebrate and to respect but in reality African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans in ghettos altercate, bicker, and pick a fight with each other. *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* set in the riots that happened in the 1990s, address the key issues that multiculturalism deals with. The Red Apple Boycott²⁾, which *Kimchee and Chitlins* is based on, took place in 1990, when a Haitian girl allegedly got hit in Family Red Apple store owned by a Korean merchant(Claire Jean Kim 225-6) In 1992, in the LA Riots depicted in Smith's *Twilight*, black and Latino residents mainly targeted Korean stores. The two plays investigate how the interethnic conflicts have erupted in inner city ghettos by representing cultural differences, economic structure of the ghettos, oppressive and discriminated history of African Americans. Responding to the debates circulating in US society when the riots erupted, the two plays especially focus on the roles of media, antagonistic relationship between African Americans and Asian Americans.

While they depict cultural and economic disparities of the two communities, *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* explore the possibility of constructing

2) According to Claire Jean Kim, who analyzes the boycott in terms of sociological perspective in her book *Bitter Fruit*, the boycott, which has continued over a year, finally ended with shutting down the store(226).

multicultural space at the very venue of the clash. The two plays especially draw on the postmodern aesthetics of performance and performativity for the creation of alternative vision. According to poststructuralist notion, identity is not inherent and essential but acquired and unstable. Judith Butler who established the concept of “performative identity” redeploing J. L. Austin’s performative language, emphasizes the fictionality of gender identity. She theorizes that gender is formed through repetitive acts performed every day disrupting the traditional notion which asserts fixed identity. The ideas of performativity concerning identity are also closely related to performance. Although performance is a “genre with its own history, applications, and cultural uses”(Dolan 423), there are affinities between performance and the performative especially when they refer to “a description of cultural behavior without an innate ontological base”(Dolan 423). That is, both performance and performativity focus on undecidability, fluidity, and variability. Elin Diamond also claims that two contradictory aspects are embedded in the norm of performance. According to her “[W]hile a performance embeds traces of other performances, it also produces experiences whose interpretation only partially depends on previous experience(Diamond 1-2). Put in another way, while a performance reinforces established ideas and subjectivity, it also contests them. Jill Dolan highlights the possibility of subversiveness in theatrical representation: “Theatrical representation is a place of ‘perpetual reinvention’”(435). The concepts of performance and performativity which refuse an essentialist concept especially bring light on the signification of reenactment and performance employed in *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight*. Specifically, in *Kimchee and Chitlins* characters cross the boundaries of race and gender when they perform their everyday lives. Besides, an African American chorus and an Asian American chorus imagine the alternative reality

through reenactment. *Twilight* as a documentary play portrays how the 1992 LA Riots exploded delivering the ideas, opinions, and experiences of people who directly or indirectly participated in the Riots. Although the cultural, social, and economic differences of people who live in the ghettos in LA provide the impetus of riots, they are represented by one woman's body. The narratives delivered are real and yet the stories are told not by characters but by Smith. Disrupting boundaries of race, gender, and class she performs diverse characters. Accordingly the play straddles between the fiction and reality and it provides the audience with a chance to reconsider the boundaries of race and ethnicity which were known as essential. In this paper, I examine the major issues of interracial tensions depicted in the plays. Paying attention to racial, cultural and economic differences which reflect or represent the reality, I will examine the way in which the two plays reconsider these issues through unique dramatic techniques and devices. Especially performance and reenactment employed in the two plays which are related with the ultimate vision of the play will be focused.

II. Reconsidering/ Reenacting Racial, Cultural, and Economic Boundaries

Set in Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York in which black residents' boycott of a Korean grocery store happened in 1990, *Kimchee and Chitlins* demonstrates not the harmonious lives of different people in terms of race and ethnicity but the rupture of multiculturalism. For the two racial groups engaged in a fight, their disparate cultural identities just provoke the unease, anger, frustration toward each counterpart. Accordingly, the ghetto in which the action of the

play takes place is configured as the locus of tension and confrontation. On the other hand, the play probes the possibility of coexistence in the very place where the clash took place. Exploration of an alternative reality is practiced through the dramatic devices and techniques such as cross-racial role plays, and performance of the imagination.

The major narratives of the play revolve around the interviews conducted by Chinese American reporter Suzie Seeto who has put some distance from ethnic matter at first but later realizes her identity as an Asian American. While she interviews the two fighting racial groups, she gathers materials which will help to understand the problems the Flatbush Ghetto confronts. The social and economic problems of Flatbush have been aggravated through discriminatory and oppressive history of the ghetto. In particular, from unreleased materials for the news concerning the boycott, Suzie comprehends the crucial aspect of the problems. One of the residents Nurse Ruth Betty imputes the poverty and lack of hopeful vision for the future to the dominant who not only ignore the problems of the region but also carry out the invidious policies against black residents by illustrating specific examples. She has been asking the bank to give her a loan to establish her own business but she has been denied repeatedly since she is “a bad risk.” They only say “you don’t have the proper collateral”(425). As she cannot afford to give surety, her requests for a loan have been rejected. The impoverished space needs help desperately but African American residents have been systematically blocked in the participation of its improvement. To make the matter worse is that the dominant group overlooks African Americans’ plight and even blames them for their inconsiderate and irresponsible behaviors and attitudes. As a result socio-economic problems accumulated in this region became precarious enough to destroy black youth and community.

Black residents in the play knowing the oppressive history which is related to the present situation make clear that their ultimate target of the boycott is the unequal structure. Reverend Carter who is insightful for the problems of the ghetto especially relates the current movement to the Watts Rebellion in 1965: “We rioted back in the 1960s, and we’ll riot again. There will be a race riot if something doesn’t change!”(434) Reverend Carter insists that interracial conflicts are caused by the hierarchical structure of the US formed along with races and ethnicities. Moreover, he extends the current problem to the predicament African Americans in general face. “Innocent black children are doping up, dropping out, dying young--and why is that? Because all their lives they’re ashamed of being black. I’m telling you the truth; racist America has stripped us of our dignity”(434). Racial conflicts, drug and criminal problems of black youth are all linked to the discriminatory stratification in line with race and ethnicity. He especially contextualizes and politicizes the boycott relating it to black youth’s problems in general. Even though his critical insight is attenuated because he is caricatured as a black propagandist and he is dragged out of the court in the play when he points out that it is the white dominant group who has the ultimate responsibility for the problems prevalent in the black community his claims remain pointed.

Although economic and social problems play the decisive role in the tension among racial groups, the materials related to these issues are deleted during the editing. Through the process of editing for the TV news, the playwright Wong enunciates that the dominant discourse is invented rather than being fixed. While Suzie stops, backtracks, skips, and fast-forwards her taped interviews the black chorus and the Korean chorus perform the actions.

Great That’s what I want. Now, skip to ... somewhere around

6:12:45. The Korean grocery owner, no, wait. First a general shot of the Koreans, and their reaction. About 6:08, just before this Grocer stuff. I need a reaction shot. [*The KOREAN CHORUS scurries downstage, joins the BLACK CHORUS. The KOREANS pose—their faces are frozen in a frown.*] That looks good. What do you think, Tommy? Yeah. I think that's nice. (423-4)

Following Suzie's direction the choruses move and halt with exaggerated gesture. In a comical and hilarious environment, this scene vividly demonstrates that the media report does not deliver the facts but is constructed. While Suzie edits the interviews, she cuts the parts containing grocer Mak's disillusioned remarks concerning America's reality and Nurse Ruth Betty's frustration over the economic situation of blacks in the ghetto. Even Nurse Ruth Betty protests saying "Why are you cutting me out?" when Suzie cuts her part. To her outcry, Suzie says that her remark is irrelevant to the current problem: "I am slotted for a one minute-fifteen package. This is no time for an economics lesson"(426). Instead of Nurse Ruth Betty's remark which might inform the public about economic situation of the ghetto the news centers on the cultural difference of the racial groups.

In fact, when Suzie was sent to cover the black residents' boycott against a Korean grocery store, she focuses on the cultural aspect. In the beginning of the play, about fifty African Americans stand off with three Koreans to protest against the incident in which a Haitian American Matilda Duvet allegedly got hit by a Korean store owner. At this moment, the media report emphasizes 'exotic' features. The camera of the TV focuses on voodoo as the magic of Haitian Americans. While Suzie is delivering the news about the contention live, she stresses 'strangeness' calling attention to Haitian Americans' religious practice. By covering the collision of the two racial

groups, Suzie places their differences at the center of attention. In doing so, she treats the whole issue as a matter of culture. Moreover, she gets praised for this coverage from her boss Mark, who “decides what you see on teevee, and . . . what you don’t”(445).

The operation of taped interviews for the news illustrates how the media is constituted. In addition to the construction of media reports, Wong pays attention to how discourse circulating in the society is fashioned through reenactment of the characters. An African American chorus and an Asian American chorus perform the accident which contributes to the boycott against the Korean store, Key Chun Mak’s practice of improving his attitude toward customers, and the invented ending which is different from the real. Further, doubling roles and crossing racial and gender roles they employ and reenactment intervene in the narratives of the plays and suggest alternative meanings.

Especially, the differently performed versions of the event regarding Matilda Duvet reinforce the undecidability and ambiguity of the “fact.” At first, when each chorus reenacts for oneself it provides explanation for their certain behavior.

REVERENT CATER. “I Key Chun Mak. Store owner. Two time alleady today, I catch shopliftahs. Stupid things- candy, potatochips, cig-a-letts. How come dey never steal tofu?”. . .

NURSE RUTH BETTY. “I’m Willie Mak.”. . . But I don’t got nothing to do in this scene, so I be Soomi Mak. [*Aside*] I have a double role. Because there are not enough us of up here. [*To SUZIE*] “Like I was saying, I Soomi Mak and I am in high skoo. My uncle work me like a dog. I am behind da cash registah.” (414)

Carter and Nurse Ruth Betty play roles of Koreans. Nurse Ruth Betty even has a double role playing as Willie and Soomi. Their performances deliver a hilarious and comical environment by using exaggerated accents and comic action. On the other hand, their embodiment of the Korean merchants reveals the Koreans' ordeal which they encounter on a daily basis. While they are running their business they are pestered by black customers' misdemeanor. Moreover, in order to run the business they have to employ family members as cheap labor.

The Korean chorus's version of the story also demonstrates what black residents and Korean merchants deal with in their everyday lives.

SOOMI MAK. I come in. No, first comes two customers. They are from a gang, you know. Lots of big muscles, and a bandana on his head. the other one, he wears big pants. . . .

GROCER MAK. "Don't be looking at my face. The man beat me up for nuthin'. what right does he have, putting me in jail for sittin' on my own stoop, saying I look suspicious in my own brotherhood?"

WILLIE MAK. "Check this." [*open coat.*] "Got myself a .38. Yeah, I'm not gonna go down, that for sure. I'm gonna make it to my sixteenth birthday. Yeah. Brothers killing brothers, that's bullshit." (418)

African American residents played by the Korean chorus also show that how black people suffer from the history of discrimination and disenfranchisement. Simultaneously this scene stresses the danger and violence the Korean merchants come upon while they are running their business. The performances of the two choruses offer different endings concerning Duvet: While the African American chorus finishes their version with Barber Brown, playing the merchant's role, motioning to hit Duvet, the Korean American chorus explains

that Duvet has fainted on the floor with unknown reason. Due to the different stories the truth concerning the fight between Duvet and the merchant does not clear but remains elusive to the end. As a result, the performances of the choruses strongly highlight the variability of discourse. The problematic, however, in these performance scenes is that the two choruses do not challenge dominant discourse much. They just embody the established images of ‘others’ disseminated by the dominant. Shortly, reenactment displays its limit by reinforcing the discourse rather than unsettling it.

Similarly the simulation scene in which Grocer Mak learns to adopt Americanized manner when he interacts with his customers intensifies the dominant discourse which focuses on behaviors or manners of Koreans.

WILLIE MAK. Practice. Be nice. Make change.

GROCER MAK. (*Gruffly.*) Your change.

SOOMI MAK. Put the change in her hand. Look her in eyeballs.

[GROCER MAK *puts change into Suzie's hand.*]

WILLIE MAK. Now what, Uncle?

GROCER MAK. Please, thank you. Come again! (*All applaud, including BLACK CHORUS, GROCER MAK grumbles.*) Only children and Chinese say, “Please, thank you.” Now buy something, or get out of my store. If you can’t help us, then leave, please, thank you. (443)

Although Grocer Mak practices to become a well mannered store owner receiving applause of all the characters it does not mean that his comportment will be completely changed. His grumpy response suggests that there must some limit in his reform of his demeanor as Ju Yeon Kim maintains(546). He might change his attitude as long as he can run his business(Ju Yeon Kim 546). More importantly, this scene raises a question concerning cultural issues. When the

media suggested the determinant reasons for the Riots in 1992, it consistently pointed out Korean merchants' behavior or manners overshadowing the economic conditions and historical signification of the impoverished ghetto. When Grocer Mak participates in the process of rectifying behavior he simulates polite greetings, making eye contact, or giving some change to the customers. In so doing, the simulation scenes solidify the discourse circulated in the 1992 Riots insisting Koreans' behavioral problems account for all the disputes between blacks and Korean Americans. Briefly, the rehearsing scene does not disrupt the dominant discourse. It just materializes it through body and speech. Thus, the play attenuates its critical power.

Although simulation of the Korean merchant's behavior for a better relationship with black customers intensifies the established discourse rather than raising a question to it, the play's value remains acute when it asks the audience to view the racial issue with more critical perspectives. Especially while the black chorus and the Asian American chorus are acting, the dividing lines of them seem to be broken down. Additionally by interrupting the sequence of the play the enactment alienate the audience from the story and examine the racial issue from more objectified views.

IV. Seeking Multicultural Space: Performance of Conflicts/Coexistence Through One Body

Twilight is similar to *Kimchee and Chitlins* as both plays start with the disruption of the possibility of multiculturalism. *Twilight* is based on the 1992 LA Riots in which racial minorities have participated. Mostly Asian American, African American, and Latin American residents are involved in the mayhem.

Although the plays are concerned with racial antagonisms the ways in which the vision of multicultural space is presented are quite distinct from each other. *Kimchee and Chitlins* is a musical; *Twilight* is a documentary play performed by one woman. Additionally, in *Kimchee and Chitlins* characters reenact the fight that really happened between African American residents and Korean grocery merchants. On the other hand, *Twilight* presents actions, thoughts and opinions of interviewees who are embroiled in the LA Riots directly or indirectly rather than representing the riots themselves. Briefly, *Kimchee and Chitlins* is fictional, on the other hand, *Twilight* is the historical record. *Twilight* is a documentary history that delivers a vivid image of the Riot but the process of interviewing, selecting the stories and performing them on the stage blurs the clear boundaries of fiction and reality.

Jacqueline O'Connor also specifies two kinds of characteristics of the play. One is performative, and the other is historical. The play is a historical record; however it implies a fictional element when it is transformed into a performance. O'Connor details the process of the transformation of the facts into a new text:

They embody a transformation of facts into a new text, one that recalls the truth of the oral interview while also highlighting the story-telling or fictional elements of that interview; then, in the move from script to stage, the text is transformed again into a character performed as part of a community identity. (155)

As O'Connor rightly indicates, Smith's performance not only recalls the truth of the oral interview but also stresses the story telling or fictional element of that interview(155). Smith presents through her body those incidents which have shaken Los Angeles from beating Rodney King caught on TV, and the

subsequent trials of police men to the riot. She portrays the communities engulfed by the violence, fear, anger, and frustration through the composite view which was constructed from her interviews with over 200 people. Slipping in and out of diverse identities Smith performs and mimics with inflection and mannerisms forty five excerpts from interviews verbatim.

Since Smith's work consists of monologues, it is criticized that the play reinforces rather than debilitates the animosity among different identities. Monologues in the play just seem to replicate the verbal fight which resulted in the LA Riots. On the surface, characters do not interact with each other but maintain their own thoughts and views on the racial contention. Hyeeyun Chung critiques that monologic methods Smith employs undermine the "dialogue among disparate groups" allowing "one voice to monopolize and have priority over another"(430). It is right in light of the fact that the characters Smith enacts do not engage in direct conversations as Chung indicates. However, the way in which Smith performs the characters asks the audience to look at the performance more than the monologues. Actually her body becomes the very locus in which various complicating, contrasting, and even conflicting voices assemble. No one attempts to intervene or have conversation, and a gap between the presence of Smith herself and the character she presents is apparent during the performance. Smith as a light-skinned African American female actress/professor/playwright and the characters of black gang member or congress woman, white male truck driver or business woman, Latino American male artist or woman who had a child, Asian American male merchant or woman who lost her son cannot be coalesced without seams. In short, there is a gap between Smith's body and the others she enacts as Smith stresses: "Character lives in the obvious gap between the real person and my *attempt* to seem like them. I try to close the

gap between us, but I applaud the gap between us. I am willing to display my own *unlikeness*”(Fires xxxvii-xxxviii). While Smith plays the characters using their own words literally, there must be a distance between her own body and the characters Smith performs. The chasm which Smith reveals and simultaneously she tries to close prevents the audience from sympathizing with those characters. Thus, the play invites them to look at the Riots with critiquing eyes rather than identifying with the characters.

In particular, while Smith exhibits her own unlikeness in her performance of characters her presence is much emphasized. Also, by exposing the difference, she displays that identity is constructed. Shortly, Smith “incorporates this post-structuralist model of racial identity into her acting approach”(Thompson 127). In order to highlight the performativity of identity, Smith employs not only the stereotyped images of races but also images disrupting binary opposition. Furthermore, her positions as a light skinned black woman, actress, and professor, seem to provide a backdrop against which the characters’ stories or their identities are displayed and acutely sensed. Particularly her performance of white powerful figures like politicians and police officers provides antithetical aspects to their authority. Former Chief of Los Angeles Police Department and current talk show host, Daryl Gates justifies for his failure to prevent the rebellion by not keeping his position right after the verdict on the police men came out. He makes an excuse saying that he had to participate in a fund-raising meeting about which he did not know at that time. Besides he complains that he became the symbol of police oppression after the Riots in spite of what he has achieved in law enforcement for forty years: “The most popular Republican in Los Angeles/ and Los Angeles county/ was me/ I got more support/ than/ Ronald Reagan”(186) but his image has become defiled “Just because some officers/ whacked Rodney

King”(187). While the pain, fear, and frustration of victims of the Riots are articulated through Smith body, Daryl Gates’ justification and complaining are seen as the object of sneer or laughter rather than being understood as they are.

Besides, when she depicts the white characters, she does not portray them monolithically. Enactments of white authoritative figures with different positions are contrasted or contradicted. Former President Los Angeles Police Commission, Stanley K. Sheinbaum’s explanation suggests the gauge through which Daryl Gates’s story is considered. Sheinbaum provides the reason why Gates went to a fund raiser saying that he was campaigning against Prop F which limits the Chief’s terms to five years unlike the old Charter under which “the chief was in for perpetuity”(79). Sheinbaum’s narration about what happened right after Gates left conveys the imminence of the situation. Simultaneously, Gates’ behavior occupied by his own concerns rather than the order of the community invites criticism. Gates represents the power the white police officers including four officers battered Rodney King evoke; however, the stereotyped image as a representative of law and order is disrupted by the narration by himself and another officer as well.

On the other hand, Reginald Denny, a white truck driver who was severely beaten by black people does not fit the conventional image of white as victimizer or the power. He got seriously injured while he passed through the spot where the uprising was becoming violent, but he was rescued by four people risking their lives. Denny becomes emotionally charged because of compassion, humanity, and love shown by those people who saved his life. In the typical picture in which people of color become targeted from the violence, Denny as an object of the violence disrupts the stereotyped image. Especially Judith Tur’s description of Reginald Denny who fell like “a sack of potatoes”(94) stresses his helplessness blurring the binary conception concerning

racism. In addition, as she mentions that "People are people./ Black, white, green or purple, I don't care"(97), she seems to emphasize the humanity we need to embrace. Further, when Denny asks people to realize that it's not color but a person which is important, he seems to acquire empathy from the audience. However, right after Judith Tur's statement about Reginald Denny, an ex-gang member Allen Cooper, a.k.a. Big Al summarizes the beating of the white man as a "joke"(102). He contends that "Only thing we're expressing through the Rodney King--/ through Reginald Denny beating--/ it shows how/ a black person gets treated in his community"(100). The observation of Denny and Tur about black people who helped Denny in a critical moment depicts them as people who practiced their love for humanity. The rhetorical power of humanity and brotherhood they use, however, seem to be lessened when Big Al asks the audience to give special look at the fact that "the beating" can be quotidian to black people. While people deliver their own views or opinions their remarks on the cruel treatment sound contrasting and even contradictory. Thus, their speeches on the beating are separate but they converse with each other through the medium of Smith's body.

The way in which people engage in conversation through Smith sounds acute when they take adversarial positions. People in the play can roughly be dichotomized into two opposing groups except those who weren't involved directly in the Riots. Especially voices of people who fought against each other at the venue of the clash sound poignant because of their discordant, incompatible and even antagonistic viewpoints. In particular, Rodney King was the very person whose being thrashed ignited the uprising. In the play his voice is not heard in person. Instead, his aunt Angela King revives his personal stories, and she even becomes extremely emotional while she remembers her nephew's pain and anguish under brutal treatment by policemen. Whereas

Rodney King emerges as an individual human who has a family, pain and “hollering” in Angela’s account Sergeant Duke’s lecture on controlling people with force describes people as mass without character. His remarks on the methods of making people into submission are related to Rodney King’s affliction. Sergeant Duke indicates that if police men had upper-body-control holds Powell would not stroke about fifty-six baton blows. Sergeant Duke even does not mention the victim’s name. He is just concerned about the way policemen can curb people to succumb to the power. When Angela King and Sergeant Duke demonstrate their feeling or opinion about the Rodney King beating through their monologues the topics of their stories are associated with each other. From this point of view they engage in a dialogue. Furthermore, their different and conflicting positions and views on the same events seem sharply contrasted.

Like Angela King and Sergeant Duke’s pseudo-conversation, Korean shop owners and people who were in the looting sound cacophonous because their different or even opposing positions. Julio Menjivar who was at the scene with an approval of a police saying “that’s fine/ that you’re doing that”(124) got arrested later by the National Guard. He also mentions that his mother, sister, and wife were almost shot by the national guard. Katie Miller in “That’s Another Story” delivers the story when people plundered some stores. She suggests the reason why black people burned down the Korean owned stores is the lack of understanding. She also indicates that Mexicans not blacks were looters in Korean stores. For both Katie telling about people participating in the pillage and Elvira Evers who got shot in the scene, looting was like a ‘carnival.’ All three people were at the looting site; on the other hand, Korean merchants sound desperate when they talk about the event.

Basically Korean merchants are portrayed as just victims. Their despair is

stressed by the fact that they cannot deliver their opinion or emotion because of a lack of English competency. As Chung Lee, President of the Korean American Victims Association has to talk in Korean while his son interprets what he says for the playwright. Smith performing as Chung Lee emphasizes his foreignness by presenting his words verbatim. Besides Richard Kim had to arm himself with guns and Walter Park became severely injured after he was shot in his car. According to Richard Kim, Walter Park stopped his car at the stoplight when someone shot him in almost execution style. Faced with the fact that they were targeted by those violent disturbances they protest that they did not get enough protection from the government. As Mrs. Young-Soon Han a former liquor store owner deplores while blacks got their rights by destroying innocent Korean merchants could not claim their rights. Reginald Denny, Judith Tur, and Big Al all are concerned about the violent event in which the white man becomes a just victim, the contexts they evoke are quite different. Although they monologize, through the medium of Smith's body sophisticated dialogue about race relations in contemporary America are created.

Relying on historical records *Twilight* creates the 'liminal space' in which the individual and the communal identities are converged. While Smith constructs the self through her performance she also displays "the travel from self to other, thereby becoming a bridge that forms communities of connected but not necessarily homogeneous selves"(O'Connor 155). The self and the community comprised of heterogeneous identities represent the historical events and at the same time they visualize the very multicultural society. Through the process of creating characters she makes a connection with her body and other characters. The bridge she makes relates "unlikely aspects" of different people in terms of race, culture, class, and gender. In so doing, she creates a multicultural society which recognizes differences of other people.

IV. Conclusion

Both *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* are based on the clash among racial minorities which erupted during the 1990s. At that time, polarized opinions from the antagonistic groups arguing for their position presented on the media often attracted the public's attention. However, they have rarely been developed into intelligent discussions(Ellis 2). On the other hand, playwrights from diverse racial groups respond to such issues with more balanced and insightful views. As Roger Ellis points out, their works contributed to the debate on the racial problems which threaten urban inner cities by making the public aware of them(2). Especially *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* delve into the trouble involving racial minorities including cultural, economic, and social matters, and simultaneously they interrogate the dominant discourse which simplified the racial issues as cultural one. In order to disrupt the views established by the dominant both plays especially take experimental strategies. Evoking and representing the real rebellions involving disparate races both plays seek to imagine the alternative reality in which people 'recognize' and 'respect' differences. Important strategies taken by *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* are role playing, double roles, reenacting the imagination, miming the process of editing TV news in choruses, playing over twenty characters by one person. These experimental techniques and devices disrupt the sequence of the plays. Consequently, the plays disturb the passive reception of them while they make critical distance from the narratives.

Moreover, reconstruction of the incident and the daily lives through the performance of the Asian American chorus and the African American chorus in *Kimchee and Chitlins* asks the audience to view the play alternatively. At the moment when the story ends with the leaving of Key Chun Mak the different

story in which two racial group have harmonious gathering is invented through performance of the choruses. This alternative story imagined on the stage makes the distance from which the audience views the play with critical views. The one person play represented in *Twilight* also offers the similar effect. It is a historical record, but it is represented by Smith's body. Thus, the play reimagines the reality when it is transformed from a text to a performance. Smith's body becomes the very locus where individuals and the communities can converge. The gap between Smith's body and the characters who Smith imitates with gestures, diction, and outfit still exist no matter how hard she tries to be those characters. At this moment the play asks the audience to interrogate the process of identity formation. Traveling from one self to other, the play demonstrates that identity is formed through performance rather than being essentialized. It can be transformed rather than being fixed. As such, both plays employ the Brechtian elements to alienate the audience from the plays. Intervening in the process in which the audience sympathize or empathize with characters, the plays ask the audience to investigate the concerns of identity and our perceptions concerning Others. The two plays do not offer any solutions or resolutions. However, the ways in which the plays imagine through experimental techniques bring to light the coexistence and juxtaposition of racial minorities.

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Building Multicultural Space At the Scene of the Racial Conflicts: *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight*

Abstract

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Both *Kimchee and Chitlins* and *Twilight* deal with the issues concerning racial conflicts which were aggravated during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In both plays, reenactment plays an important role to imagine a multicultural space at the venue of the clash. While cultural difference of the blacks and Asian Americans is stressed as the critical factor for the interracial conflicts, the political, social and economic condition of the ghetto is obscured in the plays.

As the racial conflicts hardly get resolved, the plays imagine traversing racial boundaries by reenactment or performance. Further these techniques and devices interrupt the sequence of the play and provide the audience with a chance to question their perceptions of others. Besides, these Brechtian techniques employed in the two plays defamiliarize the major issues and intervene in the process of the audience's uncritical reception.

Crossing racial roles or inventing alternative reality in *Kimchee and Chitlins* and performance of all the characters by one body in *Twilight* demonstrates that the boundaries established in between races and ethnicities can be blurred. Multicultural space can be imagined after the boundaries are broken down.

Key Words *Kimchee and Chitlins*, boycott, black residents, Korean merchants, racial conflict, multiculturalism, reenactment, performance, *Twilight*

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