

Hapa

the word
myself,
the word

explanations and definitions.

Hawaiian language,
“hapa”

In the

Japanese language,
“haafu”

Hawaiian word for “part”

half-Japanese.

This is what filmmakers Megumi Nishikura and Lara Takagi set out to explore in their documentary film, "Hafu," of which they showed a preview screening in 2013 at the Kansai Franco-Japanese Institute in Kyoto.

“Hapa” transliteration of the English “half,” quickly came to mean “part,” combining with numbers to make fractions. hapalua is half. Hapaha is one-fourth.) Hapa haole — part foreigner

While the word “hapa” traditionally meant someone part Hawaiian, in

modern culture the word is used describe any person of mixed race.

someone who is half
common combination

essentially hybrids
of races

find themselves grasping firmly onto the word.

associated with the idea that the Japanese parent is a Japanese national, which my father is not,

etc.
The fundamentals of

I am This means I am who I am?
Who am I?
Who am I?
who I truly am—

Things become more complicated irrelevant in the makeup of
simple.

name, age, hometown, schooling,

but is your perception
appearance to put into words

so difficult
passions, and

explain to
understand

Another such intricacy

grown to love,
and he is tan-skinned and broad-shouldered, tall
and she is pale, freckled, brunette;
we look so much alike

my two
definitions

life, the issue of defining

what is the point mentioning

they almost seem complicated

grown to identify

I have grown

with. a word

the racial discrimination they faced in rural parts of Oregon

hapa.

In Hawaii, being hapa is nothing special.
“hapa rice for the hapa girl”
at a baseball potluck
my own mixture,

the “Race/Ethnicity” section.
surveys, questionnaires, or censuses,
fill out multiple boxes in
“minority points”

In my home state, I am nowhere near a minority.
Hawaii but not Hawaiian

Both are blood. Both are me; my origins.

when I recognize others of any mixed race,
we have secretly formed a bond.

This is who I am. I am exactly half, not one more
than the other. I refuse to choose.

White alone, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (a)	26.7%
White alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	24.7%
Black or African American alone, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (a)	2.6%
Black or African American alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	1.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (a)	0.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	0.3%
<u>Asian alone, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (a)</u>	<u>37.3%</u>
Asian alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	38.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (a)	9.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	10.0%
<u>Two or More Races, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015)</u>	<u>23.0%</u>
Two or More Races, percent, April 1, 2010	23.6%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015) (b)	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, April 1, 2010 (b)	8.9%
<u>White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2015, (V2015)</u>	<u>22.9%</u>
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, April 1, 2010	22.7%

commonly seen, commonly reported on.

Being hapa in Hawaii,

Every base I could be covered by

you aren't special
you aren't special
you aren't special

of my high school friends

some purely (one Asian)

others a mix (two Asians)

two other hapa friends-

50% Japanese,

haolest

I'm whitest in my friend group.

I was shocked by the realization that in college I suddenly became very Asian.
were you if you chose to?

you need to escape.

“Hawaii kid syndrome”
tired of living

the most geographically isolated land mass
4,330 miles

the mixed race implication always there.

move-in day,

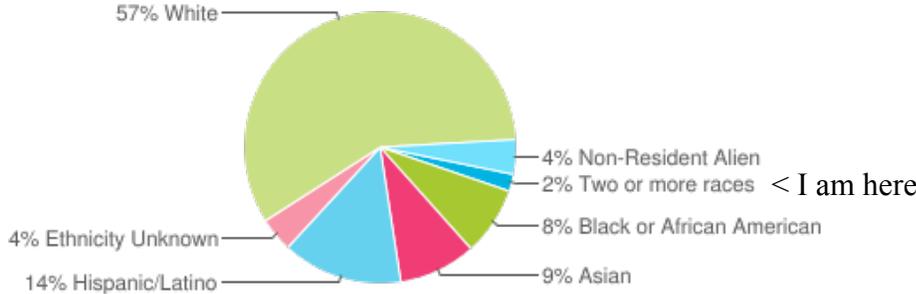
randomly assigned

roommate

another hapa.

the mainland brought new ethnic backgrounds
even Hawaii cannot contain

more than ever before,



a novelty, special, exotic.
mere token of diversity.

and suddenly I feel palatable

proud person of mixed race

this isn't what I should be—

13 or 14 years old, I'm approached by a modeling agent while shopping with Mom.

haole woman—dressed in a muumuu, fake hibiscus flower behind her ear, painful-looking sunburn.

Nice confidence boost for an acne-ridden, still-getting-used-to-her-newfound-height, brace-faced self

until,

“You're what's 'in' in modeling right now.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, you're obviously mixed.”

“What does that *mean*?”

“Mixed people are more attractive.”

More attractive than whom, exactly?

than someone purely of color?
of white?
my mother's snow?
my father's glow?

I, with my inclusion of white blood,

a gem.

why am I perpetuating the problem

When asked about my ethnicity, I respond “half Japanese.” The normalized, white part assumed. It is my inherent otherness that confuses

I’m not upset when people ask

To embody the mix of both Mom and Dad to honor them

If being an “other”

I felt very white at home, surrounded by so many Asian friends.

I thought I looked pure haole,
and still think that sometimes

so it surprises me when people

see me for the sum of my parts

Who Gets To Be 'Hapa'?

August 8, 2016 · 4:15 PM ET

Commentary

AKEMI JOHNSON

controversy regarding the usage

touchy subject

The widespread use of hapa,
is a form of cultural appropriation,

“To have this symbolic word used by Asians,
particularly by Japanese Americans, as though
it is their own,” she writes, “seems to symbolically
mirror the way Native Hawaiian land was first
taken by European Americans,

The Hawaiian sovereignty movement maintains that the
overthrow and annexation of the Hawaiian kingdom in the 19th
century was illegal, and that Hawaii should again be able to
exercise a form of self-governance.

the “idea of aloha”:

“If our word can be used
to assist people
in identifying and understanding
one another,
who am I
to object?”

hapa has become a meaningful part of who I am.

I don't want to let it go

Becoming angry over something like
picking at

a word
that quite literally means “half”?

What is cultural appropriation

can't say it

we are so upset all the time

the real argument and issues regarding the Native Hawaiian movement:

a dying

language

race

land

“Over the last five years,
about 37,000 more people
have left Hawaii for the mainland
than moved in.”

the embodiment of the aloha spirit
is sharing cultures, words, experiences.

I have never identified with a word more in my life.
This is undoubtedly, unabashedly who I am.

at the end of the day, I'm still
I was hapa, am hapa, will be hapa,

and now people tell me
I never was
am not
never will be

"Hapa is a word I don't think I should use anymore.
But I also don't know how I will let it go."

Still figuring out what exactly I want to write
writing this has terrified me

Perhaps I am stubborn,
perpetuating a problem,
don't understand the problem,
refuse to see the problem

with a word that has given me so many answers

hapa

my being

Citations:

“Hawaii QuickFacts.” *US Census Bureau*. N.p., n.d. Web.

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