

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Center for Biographical Research

Brown Bag Biography



Thursday, March 17, 2011

12:00 noon to 1:15 p.m.

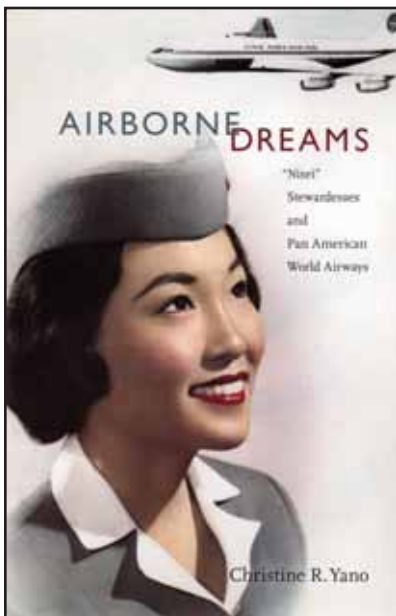
Henke Hall 325, 1800 East-West Road

Christine R. Yano

Writing Lives, Corporate and Personal: Narrating Stories of “Nisei” Stewardesses with Pan American World Airways

One can relax comfortably with Pan American's new Japanese-speaking Nikkei stewardesses. They will provide kind and heartfelt service in Japanese. As soon as you are aboard a Pan Am flight, pretty Nikkei stewardesses will take good care of you. Throughout your flight, whenever you need it, they will be happy to assist you and provide personable service in either Japanese or English.

—from a 1950s Pan Am ad



In the stories of Pan Am's stewardesses I found tantalizing elements: romance (and less sex than one might imagine), race, tears, melodrama, money, glamour, and the swinging 1960s.

Understanding the story of Pan Am's "Nisei" stewardess story means disentangling three strands: Pan American World Airways, Japanese American history and the Japanese American postwar experience, and the Jet Age.

Christine R. Yano is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where, among other projects, she works on "country music"—whether the country is the US, Japan, Egypt, Australia, or Papua New Guinea; the spread of Hello Kitty and Japanese "cute culture" in the US; and the phenomenon of Obamamania in Japan. Her publications include *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Harvard U Asia Center, 2003), *Crowning the Nice Girl: Gender, Ethnicity, and Culture in Hawai'i's Cherry Blossom Festival* (U of Hawai'i P, 2006), and *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways*, published this Spring by Duke University Press.

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Contact the Center for Biographical Research at 956-3774 or biograph@hawaii.edu for more information.