

## Foreword by Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng

I feel a strong connection to the portraits and narratives in CYJO's *Mixed Blood*. They are at once familiar and provocative. They highlight the borrowing, plucking, reshaping, and discarding that we do in fixing our identities at any given time, in a particular space, and for a particular purpose. We use or ignore features of our identities at various turns, and this makes us both robustly creative and vaguely melancholy, just like CYJO's portraits. There's always a part of us that we miss. There is no jubilant certainty there, no fist pumped and pulsing in pride, no t-shirt proclaiming national pride with a flag, no cockiness or effort to persuade. No, we hybrids would be a bit embarrassed to be so obvious in our identity markers. CYJO's portraits speak of the need for nuance, for subtlety and reinvention when it comes to *Mixed Blood* families. The subjects remain sensitive and very interesting. Nothing can be taken for granted, and decisions have to be negotiated. Questions linger at the corners of these portraits just as they do in our lives.

These portraits reflect a bit of my own discomfort, truth be told. My father was Indonesian. I was born and partially raised in Indonesia. It felt awkward, then, not to be able to speak fluent Indonesian and be able to catch subtleties and feel the social comfort that comes with being a native speaker. But there was no big mystery here: I was a full-on mama's girl, raised by an open-minded American and home-schooled in the English language because that was regarded by both sides of the family as the language of greater power. Now, in this global age of hybridity, I feel a stronger sense of obligation to understand, maintain, and represent both worlds - as they intermingle, then and now. To me, CYJO's portraits are not just about choosing or unifying race or ethnicity; they hint at tensions and at differences in the power of heritage. They have historical echoes and teach us about colonialism, inequity, oppression, forgiveness, and the kind of powerful love that drives people to cross boundaries.

While these portraits may suggest cultural lopsidedness to some, they remind me of my freedom and the complexity of our attachments. I speak conversational Indonesian, have Indonesian friends in Hawai'i, enjoy Indonesian food more than any other cuisine, and have a house full of Javanese batik, wayang, Balinese statues and paintings. I return to Indonesia for work with the East West Center and the University of Hawai'i. I feel fortunate every time I return, and I feel a deeper sense of spiritual potency in Asia than I do anywhere else. I feel love and longing. Each night I speak Indonesian to our daughters even though I don't expect them to understand. I want the language to belong to them, even if it resides only in a subterranean or shallow layer. They will associate the language's rhythms and sounds with their mother's love, I hope, and they will be able to conjure that love anew when they hear the language as either sojourner or community member.

What do we do with these *Mixed Blood* portraits? -Many things potentially. Some of us will observe and embrace them for the kinship they contain. We might use them to help us understand our histories and our changing world of movement and migration. We might use them to help us think about how we speak to our children at home and in

schools about race and ethnicity. We will think about how we can help the children in the portraits and in our communities understand their own power, potential, and responsibility to their many cultural spaces, and to the world in general. We might use the portraits to shape a new aesthetic that allows for complexity and discordance. Not everything has to match, of course. And we can enjoy the portraits for their beauty too. What an interesting world we live in and how colorful the bodies moving in and around it!