

The background features a complex, abstract design with organic shapes in teal, red, and dark purple. Various patterns are scattered throughout, including wavy lines, small dots, and short dashes. A white, hand-drawn style rectangular border frames the central text.

Reclaiming Culture: Storytelling, Zines, and Alternative Media

MODULE 3

By Chesa Caparas

Learning Objectives

- Understand the history of Sa-I-Gu (aka the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, aka the LA Riots) and its impact on the Asian American community
- Analyze the elements of effective storytelling, including visual representations
- Introduce the practice of zine-making
- Analyze the cultural significance of zines as a form of alternative media
- Introduce and apply concepts of visual analysis

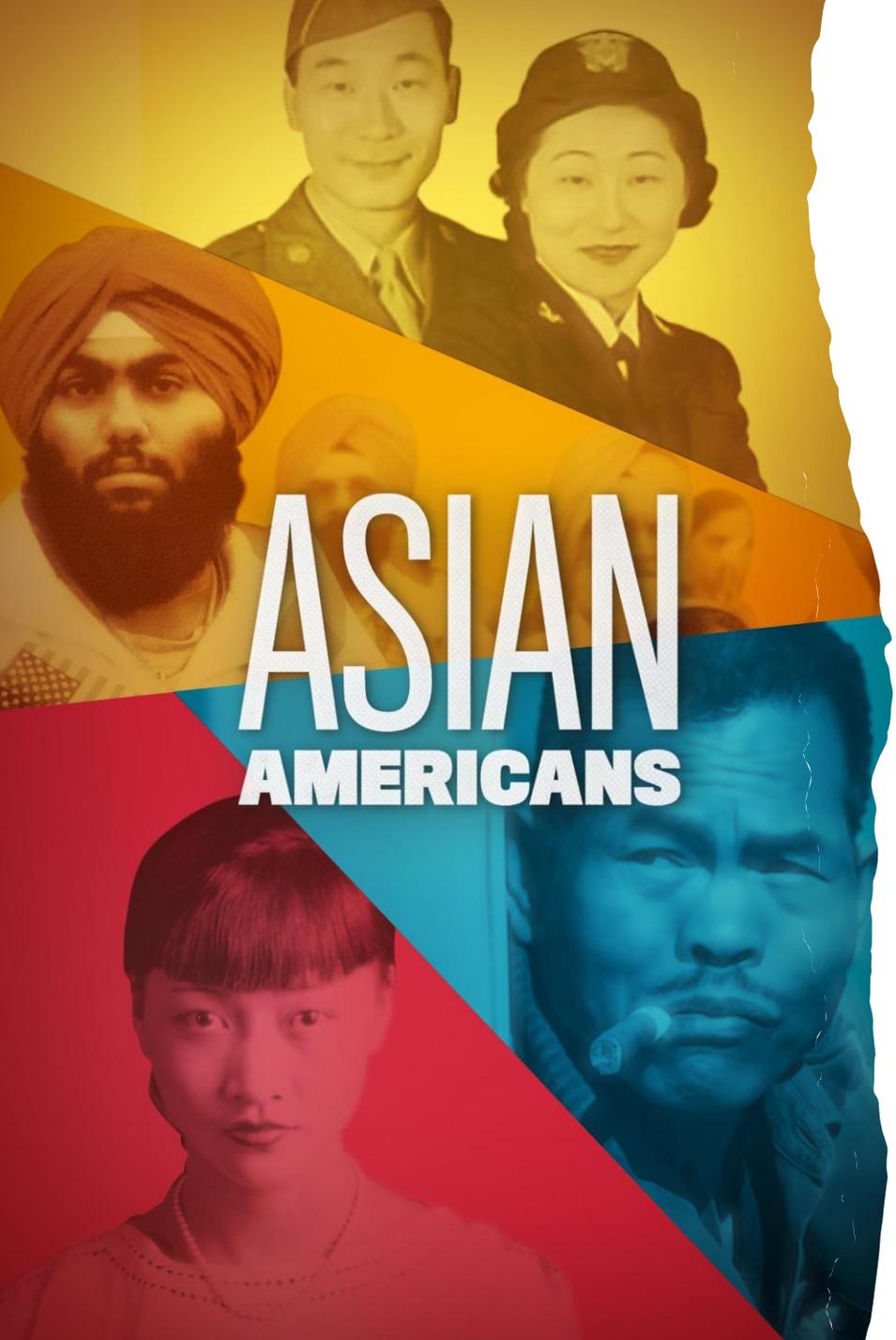
The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, organic shapes in shades of teal, maroon, and red. These shapes are filled with various patterns: some have a fine dotted texture, others have wavy lines, and some have a grid of small dashes or plus signs. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

Lesson 1: The Story of Sa-I-Gu

Warm-up questions

What role(s) did law enforcement play in the lead-up to and aftermath of Sa-I-Gu?

How did racial/ethnic tensions between African Americans and Asian Americans contribute to the conflict?



ASIAN AMERICANS

Watch video clip: "The
1992 L.A. Riots and Civil
Unrest" (PBS, 2020)

Listen to Ice Cube's "Black Korea" (1991)



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, organic shapes in shades of pink, magenta, and red. A prominent blue shape in the upper right contains white wavy lines. Another blue shape in the center has a white dotted pattern. The bottom left corner is filled with a dense pattern of white dots on a pink background. Small white squiggly lines and red plus signs are scattered throughout the design.

Discussion question

How do these two examples provide different perspectives on the causes of Sa-I-Gu?

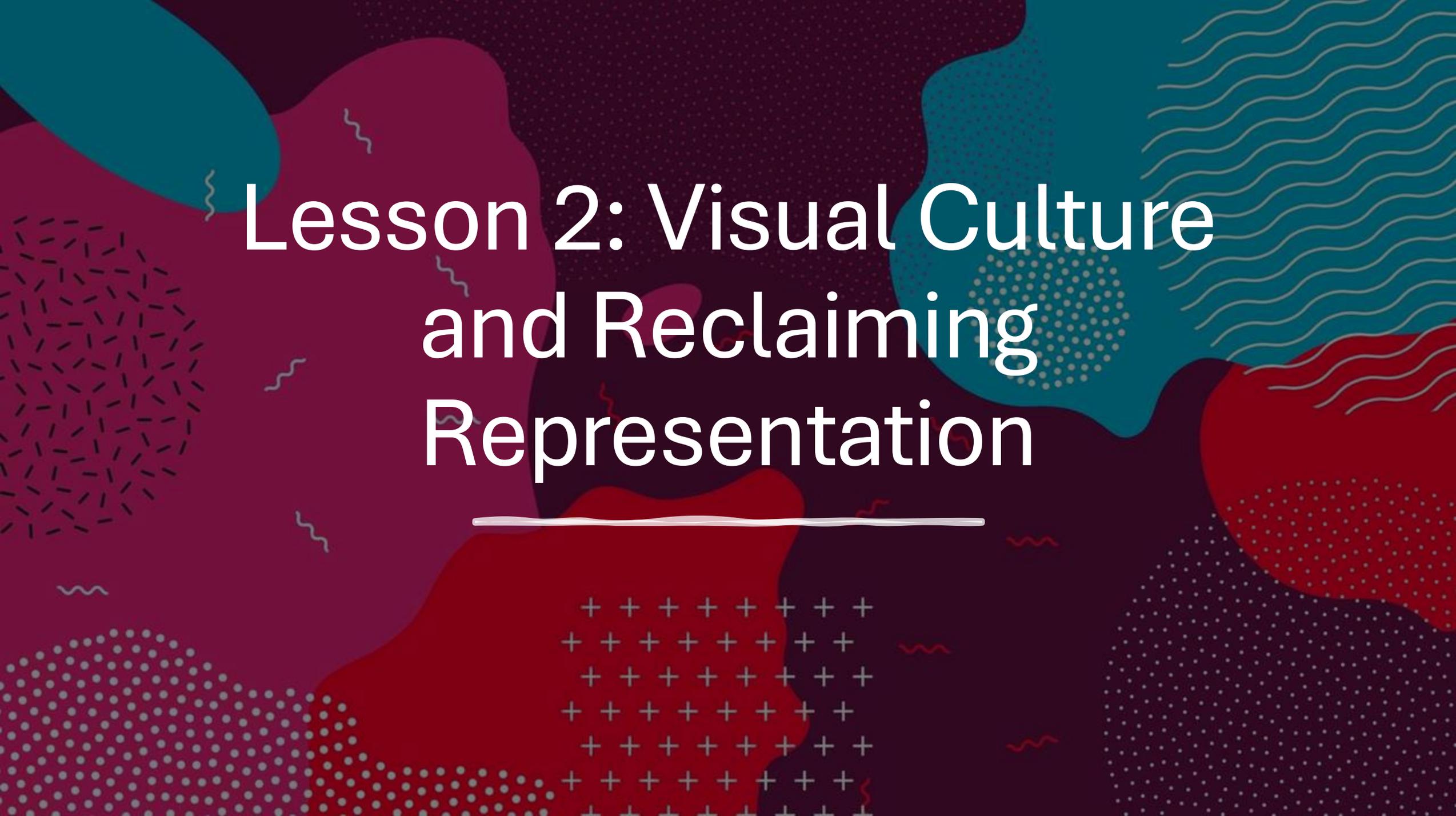
Reflection and Discussion Activity

- Reflect on a contemporary example of widespread civil unrest based on racial/ethnic conflict. Some ideas include: the Movement for Black Lives, the Stop AAPI Hate movement, immigrants' rights protests, etc.
- As someone who lived through that period discuss:
 - In your opinion, what were the causes of this civil unrest?
 - What was your day-to-day life like before the period of unrest? What was your day-to-day life after the unrest? What, if anything, about your day-to-day changed?
 - 25 years from now, what would you want people to know about this period?



Final Takeaway

As you synthesize what you've learned about your assigned place, think carefully about how the varied experiences of the different people associated with that place shape your narrative.

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Lesson 2: Visual Culture and Reclaiming Representation



gook

A JUSTIN CHON FILM



Narratives of Sa-I-Gu

Watch Justin Chon's 2017 film *Gook*.

Content advisory: the film depicts emotionally charged scenes of racialized violence

Students should note:

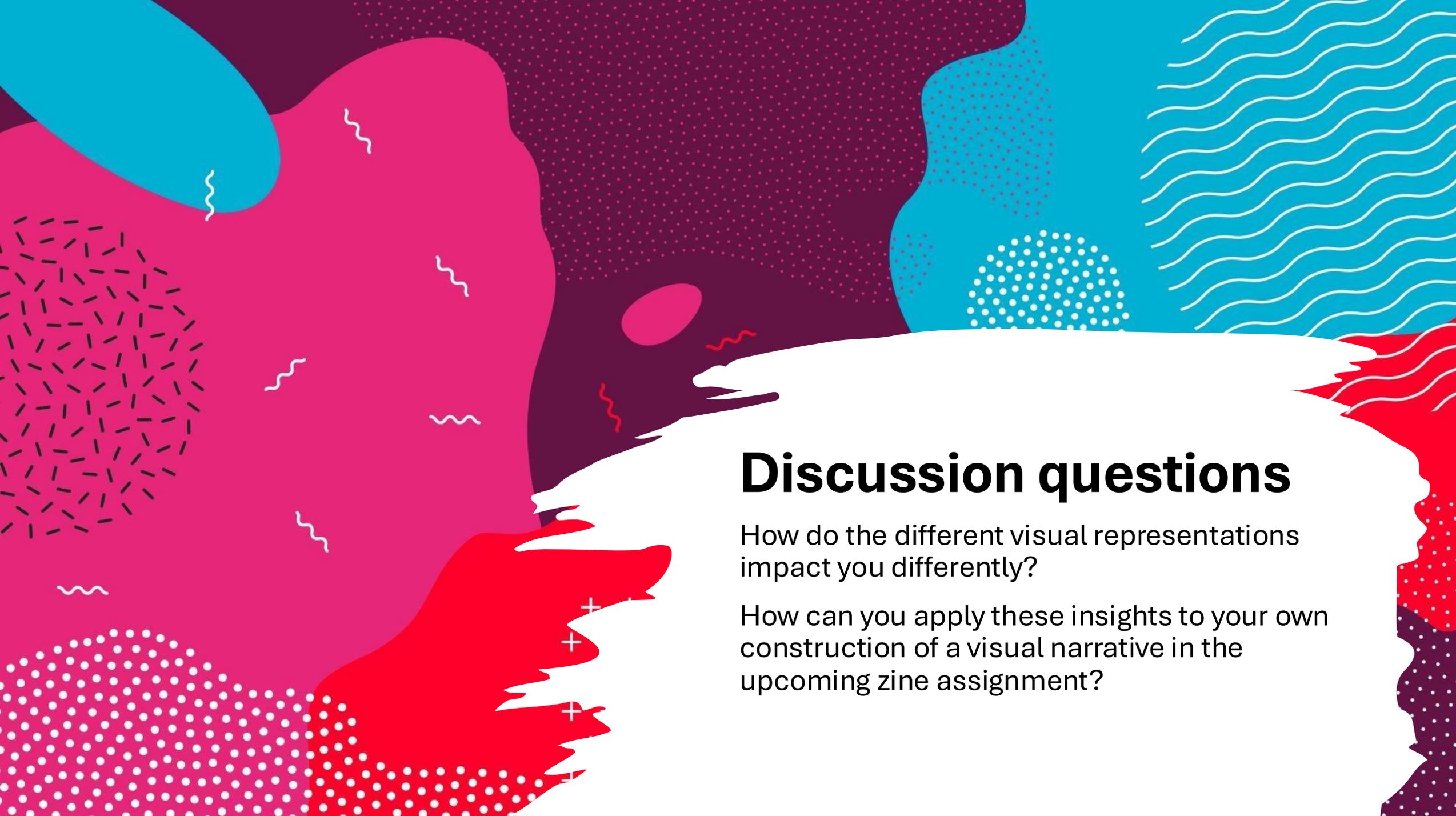
- How does the film represent the complex racial relations between the Asian American (specifically Korean American) and Black/African American communities in Los Angeles at the time?
- What important lessons or themes do you see in the film?
- How does the visual aesthetic connect to those themes?

"Reading Sa I Gu"

Compare/contrast the visual aesthetic of Chon's film with the archival photos by Hyungwon Kang from UCLA's Asian American Studies Center.



Kang/Los Angeles Times



Discussion questions

How do the different visual representations impact you differently?

How can you apply these insights to your own construction of a visual narrative in the upcoming zine assignment?

The background features a dark maroon base with various abstract shapes and patterns. On the left, there's a teal shape with a dashed border. Below it is a circular area filled with small black dashes. At the bottom left, a teal shape contains a pattern of small white dots. In the center, a large red shape is filled with a grid of small white plus signs. To the right, a teal shape has a pattern of small white dots, and below it, a red shape contains a pattern of small white dots. The top right corner shows a teal shape with a pattern of white wavy lines. The text 'Lesson 3: Race and Gender in Zine Culture' is centered in white, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Lesson 3: Race and Gender in Zine Culture

Warm-Up Question

How do individuals use forms of alternative media to reclaim representation of Asian Americans?

What is a zine?

According to Shania Khoo in "How to Make a Zine: Dreaming and Creating for a Better World" (2021):

"Zines are these noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines that creators, artists, and dreamers produce, publish, and distribute by themselves. A zine is just thoughts, any thoughts at all, that you write and bind up on paper and then mass produce to share with friends and strangers. Zines have been around forever. They were and still are political education tools used to elaborate and establish strategies to transform the world."

THE Riot grrrl COLLECTION



Edited, with an introduction by Lisa Darms

Essay by Johanna Fateman

Example: Riot Grrrl

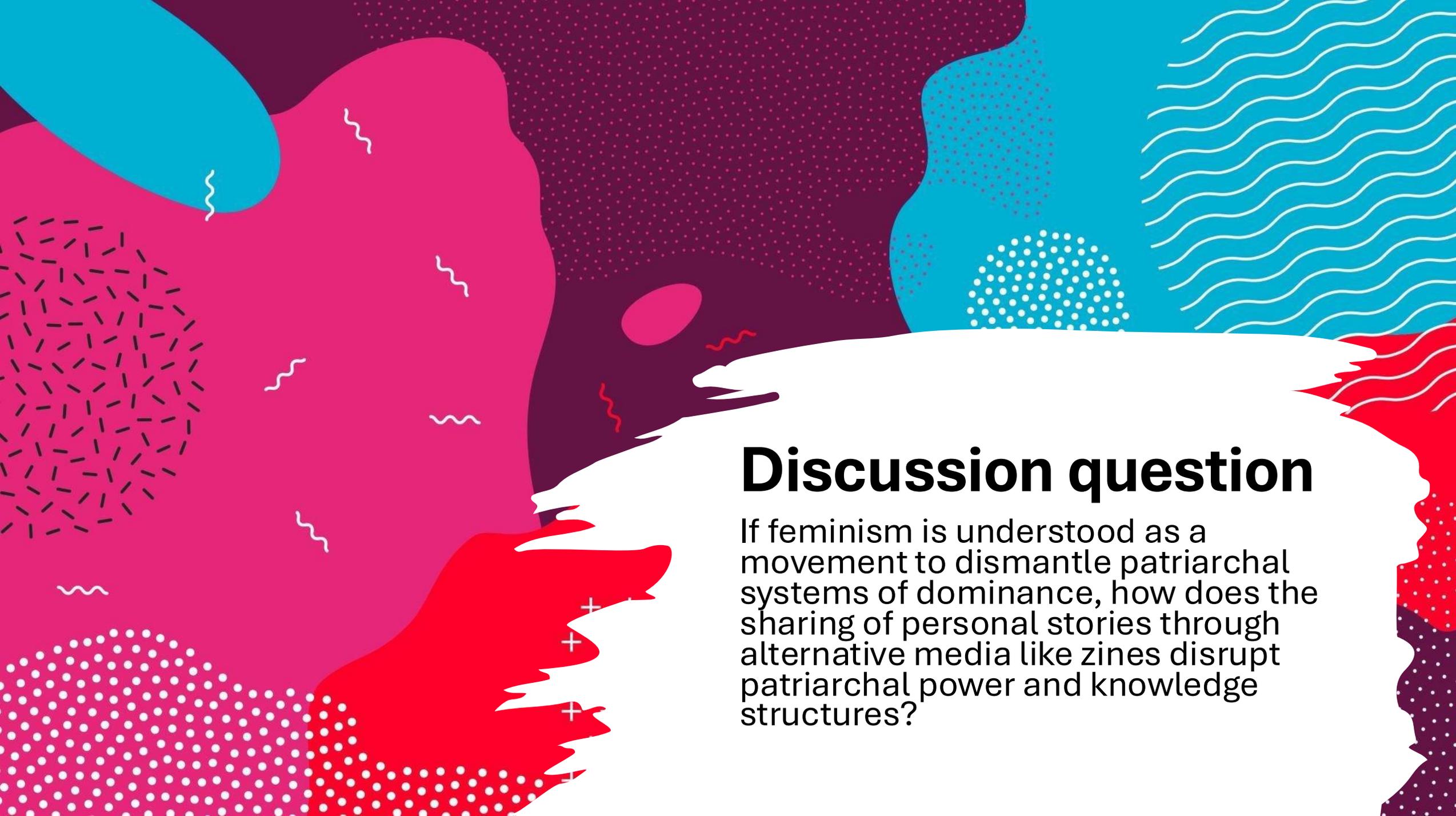
Lisa Darms, editor of *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (2013) traces the emergence of the movement within the punk scene.

In her introduction to the book, she writes,

"A direct response to the dominance of straight white men in the punk scene, riot grrrl encouraged women to play instruments and start bands, write and distribute zines, and share experiences in the safe all-girl spaces of riot grrrl meetings" (p 7).

In her essay "My Riot Grrrl" (2013), Johanna Fateman writes,

"Whatever riot grrrl became—a political movement, an avant-garde, or an ethos, it began as a zine" (p. 14)

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Discussion question

If feminism is understood as a movement to dismantle patriarchal systems of dominance, how does the sharing of personal stories through alternative media like zines disrupt patriarchal power and knowledge structures?

A radical politics of intimacy

Girl Love

In “Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival” (2012), Mimi Thi Nguyen explores how intimacy was constructed through the riot grrrl movement and its impact on women of color. Nguyen explores how riot grrrl offered revolutionary forms of "girl love", as in "girls learning to love themselves, and each other, against those forces that would otherwise see them destroyed or destroy themselves" (p. 176).

The aesthetics of intimacy

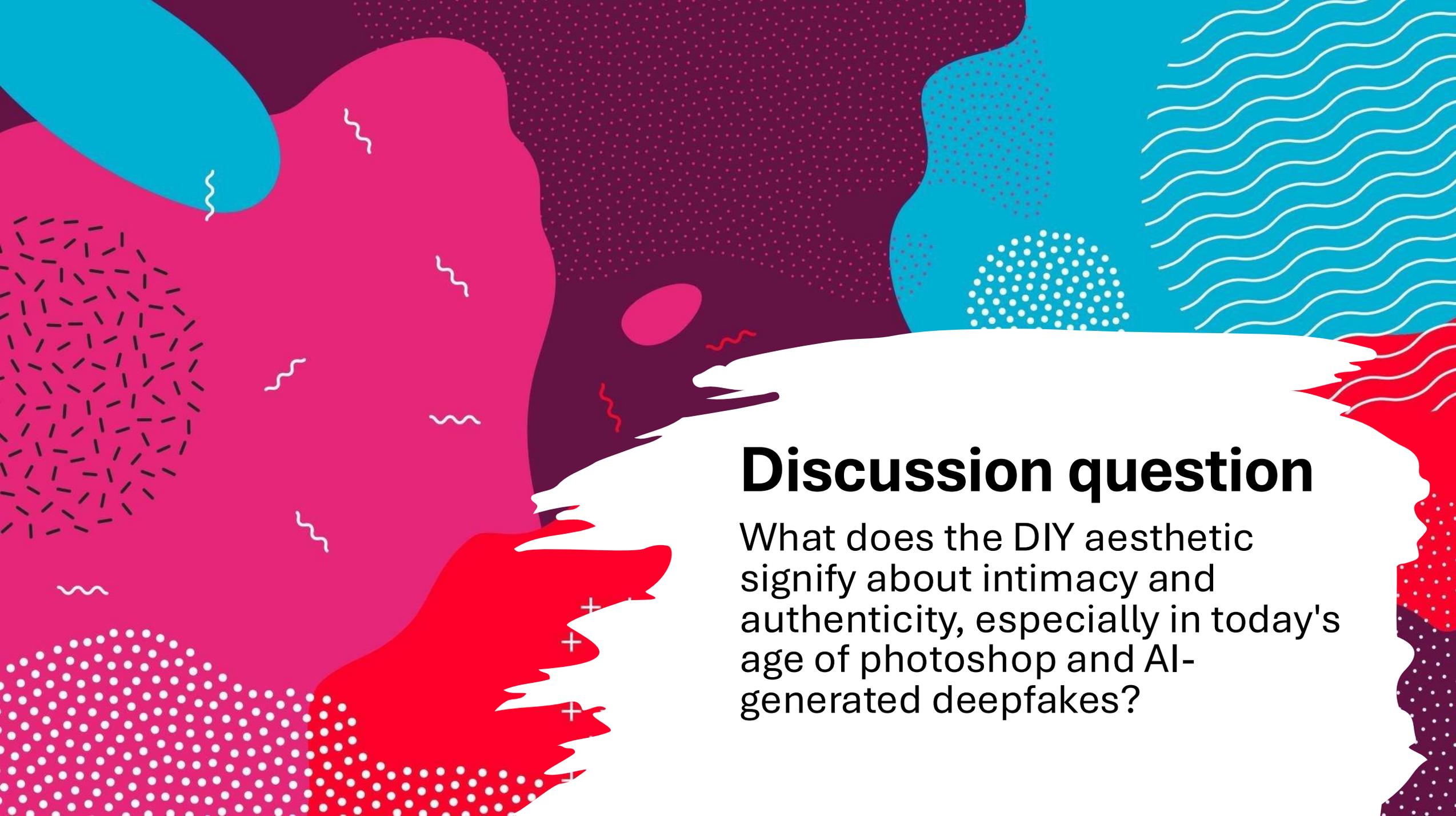
Through zines especially, combining Xerox collage, desktop publishing, and other photo-techniques, and refusing a property relation to information and art...their appeal lay with their handmade nature, the feeling that someone somewhere used scissors and glue and their mother's old typewriter to make this thing, a labor of love, with equal emphasis on both the durational nature of such industry and the imminent promise of intimacy. (Nguyen, 2012, p. 176)

The aesthetics of riot grrrl and other zines

Lisa Darms (2013) writes,

"Reading these zines, flyers, and notes, you'll see plenty of spelling mistakes, sharpie-marker redactions, gaps, rough edges, and last-minute additions. No one used spell-check, but no one cared. There was an urgency to get the message out that superseded perfection" (p .12).

Review the recommended zine archives, such as the [POC Zine Project](#) and the [Riot Grrrl Archive](#)



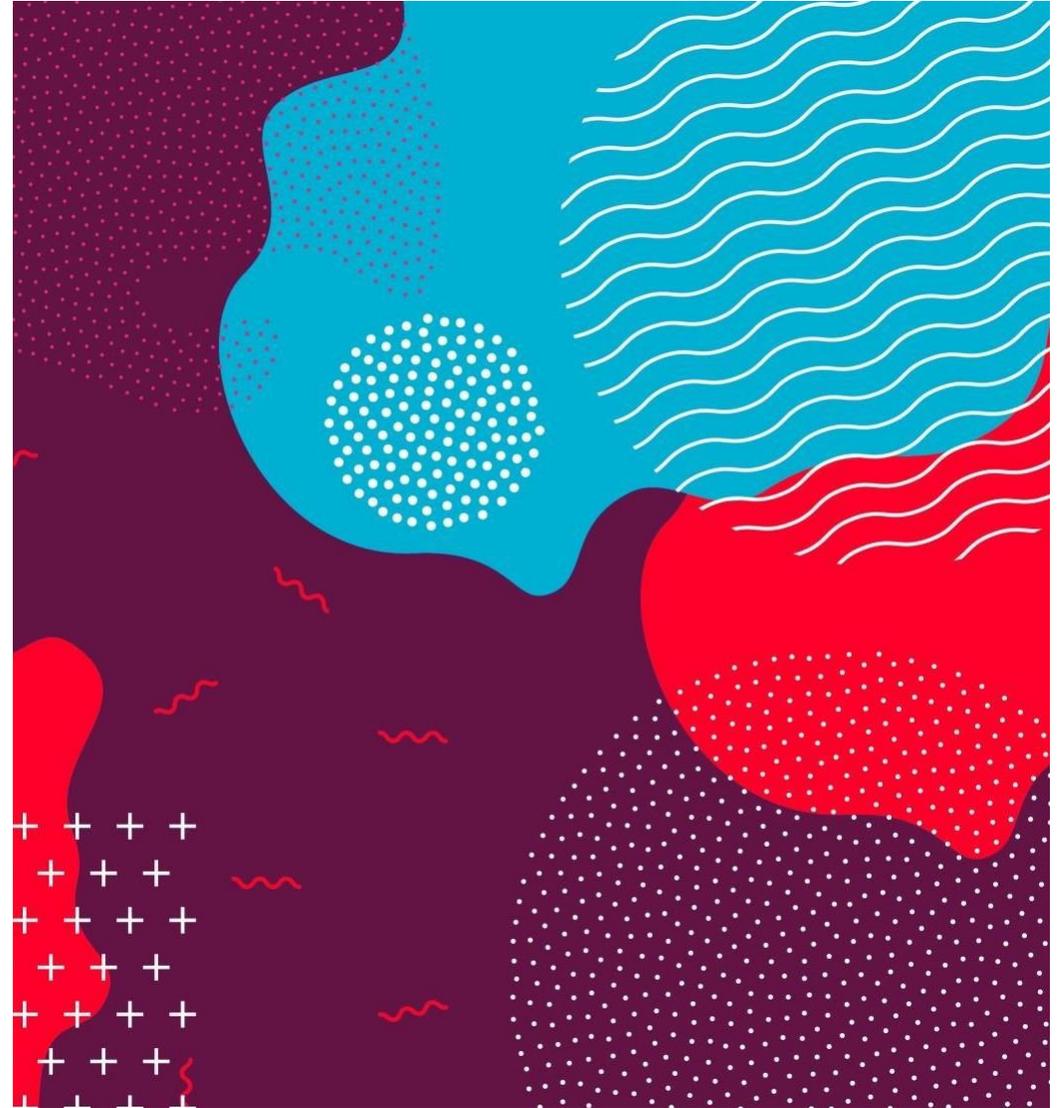
Discussion question

What does the DIY aesthetic signify about intimacy and authenticity, especially in today's age of photoshop and AI-generated deepfakes?

A contested history of riot grrrl

As Nguyen (2012) points out, the demand for intimacy within the riot grrrl movement impacted women of color differently:

...establishing the intimate as a preferred and privileged mode might mirror the forms of surveillance that required some persons –persons of color, for instance – to reveal themselves, to bear the burden of representation ('you are here as an example') and the weight of pedagogy ('teach us about your people')" (p. 180).



Discussion of race/gender in zines

- Synthesizing the articles by Khoo (2021) and Nguyen (2012), discuss how race and gender intersect to create a more complex narrative of zine culture and history.
- Connecting back to Module 1 and the origins of "orientalism", what role can zines play in reclaiming knowledge about and representations of Asian Americans?



Module 3

Assessment: Narrative and Zine Project

Each group will submit a written narrative and a zine capturing the history of their assigned place.

Narrative: minimum 2-3 page story capturing the story of the assigned place; narrative should synthesize insights gathered from both the research and the oral history interview(s).

Zine: digital or hard copy of a zine that captures the narrative in an informative and visually engaging way

Sources

- Slides were created with the help of MS Copilot