

Notes on Hoffman NYC article (In Class Discussion)

- Negrón-Muntaner writes, “The three most obvious signs of racialization efforts are the use of ‘brownface’ for Bernardo, the always shifting, asinine accent deployed by most Puerto Rican characters, and the unnaturally blonde hair of the Jets
- In an early draft of the show, Tony (then called Tonio) was marked as Italian, prompting Bernardo to call him “Wop.” Presumably making Tony Polish helped to whiten him even more,
- It might seem that the Jets’ whiteness solidifies their Americanness, but as the musical itself makes clear, the Sharks are also American citizens.
- The show repeatedly challenges and plays with the notion that being “American” is directly tied to being white. Yet this very whiteness, the “whiteness” of the Jets, is suspect and conditional, suspended in quotation marks.
- “Although the Jets constitute an anthology of ‘Americans,’ the gang is made up solely of the children of white European immigrants.
- Sandoval-Sánchez’s observation is a misreading, as Laurents has not said that the gang is “all-American”; rather, they are “what is called ‘American,’”
- *The Music Man* was dealing with its own issues with white-ness on a more subtle level. On the surface, the conflicts in *The Music Man* seem rather straightforward
- The first, “This Turf Is Ours,” written out of town for the Washington, D.C., pre-Broadway stop, was meant to replace the “Jet Song” but was considered “too harsh” by the creators. □
- “mix” The anger leaps off the page and the song was, in addition to having lyrics difficult to understand, deemed too harsh for an opening number
- The song that they ended up using “jet song” The song speaks to the love that the gang members feel for each other and the pride they have in being Jets. It’s an anthem of gang bonding,
- Even though the Puerto Ricans were on the defensive, their outfits gave them an aggressive quality, and their girls, less uniform and more exotic, had brilliant colors, in startling contrast to the Jets’ girls who wore pastels and seemed homogeneous.”
- “I know regular Americans don’t rub with the gold-teeth otherwise.” “Regular” has become synonymous with “white,”
- “America” is a mini-treatise on nationality, discussing the pros and cons of Puerto Rico versus America.
- “Will you let me pass?” she asks as she tries to maneuver past the gang who blocks her way. Snow boy twists her question with racial insight and responds, “She’s too dark to pass.”
- Tony and Maria envision a world where race doesn’t exist at all, let alone racial violence.
- Tony and Maria enter a fantasy space where nothing exists except the two of them. Freed of physical space itself, they are also liberated from the racial categories in which they are forced to live.

- the Puerto Ricans are suspect figures, but suddenly so too are the Jets, who are no more blue-blooded than the Sharks

The second part of the text starts off by discussing the signs of racism in West Side Story which are, the use of brown faces for the Puerto Rican's, the accent used by the Puerto Rican's, and lastly the dyed blonde hair of the Jets. In a first draft of the musical, Tony was originally created as Tonio and as an Italian, however the writers decided to make him Polish because it made him more white. In this part of the text there's a controversy of what being Americans actually means. The Jets come from parents of European immigrants and they were born in America so therefore they are considered American. But for some reason that term doesn't refer to the Puerto Rican's even though they come from American territory, so they should be considered Americans. Although during the 1950s, being a "regular" American meant being white which concludes why the Puerto Rican's weren't considered American because of their brown colored skin. Another point that is made is the difference in the clothing used by the Puerto Rican's and the so called Americans. The Puerto Rican men wore more vibrant colors and the women wore exotic, colorful dresses. The Americans wore pastel colors and were more in sync with their outfits. The whole text ends with a conclusion that although the Puerto Rican's are more of the suspect figures in the musical, the Jets are no more blue blooded than the Puerto Rican's basically meaning that no matter what their race is they come from and live in the same class.