

---

## *Introduction*

# **Filipino Settlements in the United States**

---

Although a majority of Filipinos have come to the United States only since the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965, the history of Filipinos in this country dates back to the middle of the 1700s. As early as 1765, Filipinos lived along the southeastern coast of Louisiana. Congregated in the marshlands of Louisiana's Barataria Bay (about thirty miles south of New Orleans), these Filipinos were believed to be descendants of Filipino seamen who had escaped Spanish galleons—ships that carried cargoes of luxury goods between the Philippines and Mexico from 1565 to 1815.<sup>1</sup> Today, with a total population of more than 1.4 million in 1990, Filipinos compose the second largest immigrant group as well as the second largest Asian American group in the United States.

Despite the long history of the immigration and settlement of Filipinos in the United States, very little sound research has been published about either their past or their contemporary life. As E. San Juan, Jr., maintains, the existing studies on the historical development of the Filipino community in the United States “have been sketchy, superficial, and flawed in their methodology and philosophical assumptions.”<sup>2</sup> Lamenting the neglect of Filipino Americans in the literature on U.S. immigration, ethnicity, and communities, others have declared that Filipinos are the “forgotten Asian Americans”; that “not much is known about them”; and that on this group there is “no history. No published literature. No nothing.” However, most scholars and writers stop short of asking *why* this is the case. In a rare analysis, Oscar Campomanes argues that the institutional invisibility of the Philippines and Filipino Americans is connected to the historical amnesia and self-erasure regarding the U.S. colonization of the Philippines in particular and U.S. imperialism in general.<sup>4</sup> Employing a cultural perspective, Cecile Cruz asserts that the academic neglect of Filipinos stems from the erroneous assumption that the Philippines lacks an “authentic” indigenous culture. This perspective echoes Renato Rosaldo's contention that most anthropologists have ignored the Philippines because they perceived it as “too Westernized,”

with “no culture” of its own.<sup>5</sup> These observations suggest that recent Filipino American history can best be understood within the context of the colonial and postcolonial association between the Philippines and the United States.

### *The Impact of the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines*

In 1898, following the Spanish American War, the United States assumed colonial rule of the Philippines, thereby extending its “Manifest Destiny” to the Pacific. After intense debate, Congress finally decided to retain the Philippines as a U.S. possession—ostensibly to prepare the archipelago for eventual independence. Battling to oust their new overlords, Filipino nationalists held off U.S. rule for several years.<sup>6</sup> From the very beginning, superior American fire power put Filipino troops at a dreadful disadvantage. In the opening battle in Manila, “dead Filipinos were piled so high that the Americans used the bodies for breastworks.” After this initial rout, the Philippine Army quickly resorted to mobile warfare, whereby they took advantage of their superior knowledge of the terrain and the ardent support of many Filipinos. Harassed and attacked throughout the islands by determined peasants, the Americans slowly realized that the major foe of U.S. imperialism was not the Philippine Army but rather the Filipino people.

A series of bloody “pacification” campaigns ensued. Unable to penetrate the guerrillas, the Americans began to attack the population at large, burning barrios, destroying storehouses and crops, poisoning wells, slaughtering farm animals, and killing noncombatants. In the notorious Samar campaign in late September 1901, General “Howlin’ Jake” Smith ordered his troops to ravage the province and to kill “everything over ten.” Three months later, in another brutal campaign, Major General J. Franklin Bell set out to destroy Batangas. According to statistics compiled by U.S. government officials, by the time Bell was finished, at least one hundred thousand people had been killed or had died as a direct result of the scorched-earth policies. In 1902, through superior military force and the collaboration of the conservative and moneyed Filipinos, the Americans finally put an end to the armed nationalist resistance. Although it is difficult to determine how many Filipinos died resisting American aggression, estimates of the combined death toll from fighting, disease, and starvation ranged from several hundred thousand to one million. According to Sucheng Chan, many of the brutal facets of the Philippine American War remain largely hidden from the public.<sup>7</sup>

Although guerrilla warfare continued for several more years, on July 4, 1901, William Howard Taft had taken the oath of office as the first civil governor of the Philippines. The U.S. occupation affected all segments of Philippine society. Politically, the Philippine government was modeled after that of the United States.<sup>8</sup> To win over the existing leadership of the Philip-

pinos and to pacify many Filipino nationalists, the United States adopted the policy of Filipinization—the gradual substitution of Filipino personnel for American administrators and clerks in the colonial government. As early as 1900, Filipinos began assuming positions in the municipal, provincial, and later, in the national governments. However, Americans still controlled the strategic positions that allowed them to formulate and implement policies. Under U.S. colonial rule, the Philippine national economy changed significantly." Foremost among the changes were the further development of the agricultural export economy (begun under Spanish rule), with sugar in the lead, and the growing dependence upon imports for such basic necessities as rice and textiles. By its tariff regulations and the subsequent free trade between the two countries, the United States fostered this export–import policy and kept the Philippines an unindustrialized export economy.

As a civilian government replaced military rule, the cultural Americanization of the Philippine population became an integral part of the process of colonization. Convinced that education was one of the best ways to pacify the Filipinos, U.S. colonizers introduced universal public education and revamped Philippine educational institutions and curriculum using the American system as its model and English as the language of instruction. Filipino historian Kenato Constantino contends that through this policy the colonial educational system became an instrument of assimilation or Americanization. With the use of U.S. textbooks, "young Filipinos began learning not only a new language but a new culture. Education became miseducation because it began to de-Filipinize the youth, taught them to regard American culture as superior to any other, and American society as the model *par excellence* for Philippine society." "Infected with colonial culture and with grand illusions about the United States, Filipinos soon started to migrate to what they had been taught to think of as the land of opportunity and fair play.

### *The Beginning of Filipino Emigration to the United States*

The first Filipinos to come to the U.S. mainland were students on government scholarships. As part of their effort to acculturate Filipinos and to augment their devotion to the United States, the territorial government sent several hundred individuals (predominantly males) to study in U.S. colleges and universities during the first decade of this century. Highly selected, these *pensionados* often were the children of prominent Filipino families whose loyalty the colonial regime hoped to win. Screened from twenty thousand applicants, the first group of one hundred government–sponsored students sailed from Manila to the United States in October of 1903. The *Sari Francisco Chronicle* reported their arrival, stating that the goal of their venture was their Americanization. By the early 1920s, almost all of the original *pension-*

*ados* had returned home to well-paying positions in agriculture, business, education, engineering, and government.”

The achievements of the *pensionados* inspired other young Filipinos to seek their fortunes through U.S. education. Between 1910 and 1938, about fourteen thousand Filipinos migrated to the United States as nonsponsored students. Although they came as laborers, these young men fully expected to earn enough money to attend U.S. schools. Regardless of their qualifications, racial discrimination relegated them to unskilled and menial occupations; some aspiring students took years to save enough money to go to school. A. B. Santos (Chapter 1) was one such student. Arriving in San Diego in 1922 at the age of fifteen, he worked as a dining-room helper at the Coronado Hotel while attending Coronado High School. Years later, as a student at San Diego State College (now University), Santos worked full-time one semester and then went to school full-time the next. Juggling work and classes, Santos took four years to finish two years of course work.

Nonetheless, before the Great Depression, the Filipinos' hopes for higher education had seemed possible. According to Chris Friday, between 1920 and 1925, an estimated two thousand (or 15 percent of the Filipinos in the continental United States) attended high school or college. By the end of the decade, the number had increased dramatically. In 1928 alone, approximately a thousand enrolled in classes. The depression years shattered the Filipinos' dream of success through education. In 1932 only eight hundred Filipinos attended school; in 1935 just five hundred; by 1939 the number had fallen to three hundred. Confronted by the economic devastation of the 1930s, many working Filipino students joined the American labor movement and fought to secure equal treatment for all races. Economic necessity and widespread discrimination forced many self-supporting students eventually to abandon their goals of completing their studies and returning to the Philippines. Stranded by the Great Depression and lost ambitions, most of these “unintentional immigrants” lived out their lives as laborers in the United States.”

According to Barbara M. Posadas and Roland L. Guyotte, the pre-World War II Filipinos in Chicago were among these “unintentional immigrants.” Originating around 1905 with the arrival of the *pensionados* and expanded during the 1920s with the coming of self-supporting students, Chicago's Filipino community was composed principally of students. H. Brett Melendy reported that in 1907, the University of Illinois, with thirteen students, had the largest enrollment of Filipinos in the country.<sup>13</sup> In 1917, the U.S. Bureau of Insular Affairs counted forty-five Filipinos attending school in Chicago or Evanston out of a nationwide total of three hundred and thirty-seven. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, Chicago's working students alternated quarters at school with periods of full-time employment, thus stretching their stay in the United States into unplanned-for years. The

onset of the Great Depression further exacerbated their plight as they scrambled to find work to finance their education. At the University of Chicago, the number of full-time Filipino students dropped from forty-six in 1926–27 to ten in 1933–34. By the time of Pearl Harbor, the majority of Chicago’s Filipino students had been forced to abandon their studies and became like the Filipino immigrant laborers who had immigrated to Hawaii and the West Coast.<sup>14</sup>

### *Filipino Workers in Hawaii*

Filipino migration to Hawaii was tied to the fortunes of the islands’ sugar companies. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the sugar industry had become so massive that the prosperity of Hawaii depended largely upon its continued expansion and prosperity. Because sugar cane cultivation is so labor-intensive, plantation owners needed a constant flow of cheap and compliant labor to work their expanding properties. Filipinos were the last immigrant group to arrive on Hawaii’s sugar plantations.<sup>15</sup>

In 1906, Hawaiian sugar planters sent Albert F. Judd to Manila to recruit three hundred Filipino workers. However, after six months of strenuous campaigning, Judd was able to enlist only fifteen laborers, who came not from Manila but from Luzon’s northern province of Ilocos Sur in the coastal area of Candon. After the 1908 “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” which restricted the emigration of Japanese laborers and the 1909 strike by Japanese plantation workers, which threatened sugar production in the islands, the planters mounted an aggressive and well-organized program to import massive numbers of Filipino workers. Filipinos had become the favored source of labor because of their unusual legal status, for until the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, Filipinos could migrate freely to the United States, protected by their colonial status as U.S. nationals. Moreover, because the Philippines was a “ward” of the United States from 1905 to 1935, the Hawaii Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA) could rely on the assistance of American colonial officials there. Although the territorial government supported the HSPA’s recruitment efforts, the Philippine sugar interests and legislature, through physical force and steep taxes, strained to halt Hawaiian recruiting, as they needed labor for their own growing sugar industry.<sup>16</sup>

In the next two decades, HSPA labor recruiters concentrated on the Philippines as “the only available source of a permanent labor supply and the only hope of the future under existing laws.”<sup>17</sup> So successful were their efforts that, for the first time, the Hawaiian planters could report an adequate supply of labor. Between 1907 and 1919, 28,500 Filipinos arrived in Hawaii; between 1920 and 1924, 29,200 did. The termination of Japanese immigration in 1924 resulted in a surge of Filipino arrivals in Hawaii—a total of 44,000 during the second half of the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> The Filipino migration was

overwhelmingly composed of young men. In 1920, some four thousand Filipinas resided in the islands; by 1930, their number had increased to over ten thousand, but women still represented only 16.6 percent of the Filipino population.<sup>19</sup>

By the middle of the 1920s, it was no longer necessary for HSPA recruiters to offer free round trips as an incentive to Filipino migrants. As Filipinos became increasingly Americanized and as some successful individuals returned home from Hawaii triumphantly, so many Filipinos were eager to migrate to Hawaii that the HSPA ceased recruiting in 1926. Hopeful migrants not only were willing to pay their own passage, they even bribed the recruiters to assure being chosen. Some educated people tried to pass themselves off as illiterates in order to circumvent HSPA policy to recruit the physically strong and the less educated, who were thought to be more likely to remain on the plantations and perform the menial work they were hired to do.<sup>20</sup> A former Filipino plantation worker in Kauai recalled how he had by-passed the recruiters' inspection:

I was told that if you have education, if you talk English that . . . you'll not be accepted. Besides that, if your look is like student, you cannot be accepted there, the same. But, in order that I could get in, I had to go and roughen my hand by having calluses on the back of the knuckles so that when the inspector will see, "Oh, you are hard working man, so you can go". . . . That's how I got in. And I had to avoid speaking any English. Otherwise, I cannot get to Hawaii."

During the 1930s, however, the demands for Filipino exclusion and a labor surplus in Hawaii reduced the flow of migrants to a trickle.

Prior to 1915, attempts to recruit Filipinos were concentrated in the vicinity of Manila City in central Luzon and of Cebu City in central Visayas; accordingly, more Tagalogs and Visayans, natives of these areas, were among the earliest to emigrate. These efforts generally had poor results, however, since recruits from urban areas usually lacked agricultural experience and also had more economic opportunities than their rural counterparts.<sup>21</sup> HSPA agents thus shifted their recruiting efforts first to the Visayan Islands and then to the Ilocano region in northwestern Luzon. From 1919 to 1928, two-thirds of the Filipino laborers migrating to Hawaii were from the Ilocano-speaking provinces. Visayans, primarily from the hard-pressed eastern Visayan provinces, comprised the second largest group.<sup>23</sup>

The recruiters' shift to Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, and their adjoining provinces was deliberate. A rural people who toiled in the least developed region in the Philippines, the Ilocanos filled the needs of the HSPA for unskilled laborers "who wouldn't be too unhappy to do manual work in the plantation, ten hours a day."<sup>24</sup> To understand the forces propelling emigration from

the Ilocano region, one first needs to consider the changes in the Philippine economy brought about by both Spanish and U.S. colonial rules, the foremost being the shift to an agricultural export economy (led by sugar) in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the growing dependence on imports for such necessities as rice and textiles. Instituted by the Spanish, these economic policies were continued by the United States through tariff regulations and subsequent free trade between the two countries. According to Miriam Sharma, these economic changes significantly dislocated the native economy. In the Ilocano area, the shift to an agricultural export trade destroyed the region's important textile industry, thus retarding its economic development. With no investment in other manufactured exports to replace textiles, "the main industry in the area then became the production, reproduction, and subsequent export of human resources."<sup>25</sup> By 1910, when HSPA agents were scouting the Philippines for laborers, the Ilocanos, having suffered severe economic displacements and dislocations, willingly emigrated.

The arrival of Filipinos in Hawaii changed the ethnic composition of the sugar plantations' work force. In 1915, Filipinos formed only 19 percent of the workers and the Japanese 54 percent; by 1932, Filipino workers predominated, constituting 70 percent, and the Japanese were 19 percent.") To defuse the organizing efforts of their ethnically diverse work force, planters stratified employment by race and paid different wages to different nationalities for the same work. Viewed primarily as instruments of production, Filipino workers were given the least desirable jobs and housing and earned the lowest wages. Laboring ten to twelve hours a day in the cane fields, they carried out the tedious and backbreaking tasks of hoeing, hauling, planting, and weeding during the cultivation, and cutting, hauling, loading, and fluming during the harvest. For this type of labor, from 1915 to 1933 Filipino men earned eighteen to twenty dollars a month, and women twelve to fourteen dollars. As late as 1932, the dwellings allotted to Filipinos were still of poorer quality than those furnished to other plantation workers. This segregation system was so entrenched that by the mid-1940s, many more Filipinos than Chinese and Japanese in Hawaii remained unskilled workers, dependent on the plantations." In 1930, according to the U.S. Census, fewer than five thousand Filipinos lived in Honolulu. Composed mainly of ex-plantation laborers (and a small group of U.S. Navy and Army men), most of these urban dwellers worked in canneries, hotels, and private homes as domestic and day laborers.<sup>28</sup>

Like other plantation workers in Hawaii, Filipino laborers had little control over their time and activities. Roused by the screams of the plantation siren at dawn, they spent their days laboring under the watchful eyes and abusive treatment of the **lunar** (foremen). A retired Filipino worker described the control that plantation managers had over their laborers: "In the planta-

tion, if you stay off work without permission, or go to the doctor, the camp police will go up into your house, and bring [sic] crowbar and open the door. If you are not in the house, he looks up the attic and everywhere.”” In her narrative, Connie Tirona (Chapter 3) describes the hard life that her parents endured as laborers in Hawaii in the late 1920s: “It was sad, because my father said that they were so mistreated by the different crew bosses. . . . They would leave for work before the break of dawn and return long after dusk. The women like my mother would do the cooking, and some of them would go to work in the fields along with the men.” As a noncitizen labor force, Filipinos had few protections from such exploitation. Whereas other nationalities theoretically could appeal to the representatives of their homelands for assistance, the Filipinos, as colonial subjects of the United States, had no representation either in the Philippines or in Hawaii.

But the Filipino plantation workers did not yield to their oppressive conditions, but rather engaged in labor militancy to improve their lives. As H. Brett Melendy reported: “The Filipinos proved that they would not be used, cheated, or forced into serfdom for long. They fought hard for equality in labor’s struggle over wages, hours, and working conditions.”” In 1920, in the first interethnic workers’ strike in Hawaii, Filipino plantation workers, led by Pablo Manlapit, joined forces with Japanese laborers to demand greater control over their working conditions and a greater share of the profits they had produced. Because together they constituted more than 70 percent of the work force in Oahu, the 1920 Japanese–Filipino strike brought plantation operations to a sudden stop. Although the strikers were eventually defeated, the plantation owners agreed to improve housing, sanitation, and recreational facilities, raise wages, and distribute monthly bonuses.”

In April 1924, Pablo Manlapit called another Filipino strike, which lasted eight months and involved some two thousand workers on twenty-three plantations. The most violent incident in the strike—and in Asian American labor history—occurred in the Hanapepe plantation on Kauai. During a fight between two factions of Filipinos, a sheriff’s posse invaded the strikers’ camp and fired their rifles into the crowd, killing sixteen and wounding many others. Blamed for the Hanapepe incident, in which four policemen were also killed, strikers and their leaders were arrested, tried, and imprisoned. Many were later deported to the Philippines.<sup>32</sup>

Filipino laborers also resisted their oppressive conditions by leaving plantation work. From the mid-1920s through the 1930s, more than fifty thousand Filipinos headed for the U.S. mainland. One-third were reemigrants from Hawaii,” many having been blacklisted for their alleged participation in the 1924 strike.

### *Filipino Workers Along the Pacific Coast*

Large-scale emigration of Filipino agricultural workers to the U.S. mainland coincided with their influx to Hawaii. The 1920s was a decade of dramatic increase in their numbers, with some forty-five thousand Filipinos migrating to the Pacific Coast. The 1921 and 1924 immigration acts, which barred Asian immigration and restricted European immigration, prompted West Coast farmers and canneries to turn to Filipinos to help fill the labor shortage created by the exclusion of the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and South Asians.<sup>34</sup>

Filipinos were scattered across the nation: in 1930, 3,480 were in Washington, 2,011 in Illinois, 1,982 in New York, 1,066 in Oregon, 787 in Michigan, and hundreds of others in states like Colorado, Kansas, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Montana, Idaho, Texas, and Arizona. But the majority concentrated in California. From 1923 to 1929, Filipinos streamed into the state at the rate of over 4,100 a year. Between 1910 and 1930, the Filipino population in California had increased from only 5 to 30,470. The majority of these immigrants had little formal education and came primarily from the Ilocano region.<sup>35</sup> Almost all came as single young men without families. Out of every hundred Filipinos who migrated to California during the 1920s, 93 were males, 80 of whom were between sixteen and thirty years of age.<sup>36</sup>

In large metropolitan areas like Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, Filipinos worked in restaurants as dishwashers, busboys, or kitchen helpers; in hotels as bellboys, bed makers, or elevator attendants; and in private homes and apartments as servants, janitors, or maintenance men.” But most of the Filipinos — about 60 percent — flocked to agriculture. Although they were the largest group of Asian laborers along the Pacific Coast in the 1920s, few became tenant farmers or independent farm owner-operators. By the time large numbers of Filipinos immigrated to the American West, various anti-alien land regulations had been passed, legally forbidding them to lease or buy agricultural land. As a result, Filipinos, unlike Japanese immigrants, never managed to climb the agricultural ladder; the majority toiled in the fields as unskilled migrant laborers.”

Unlike plantation workers in Hawaii, who remained in one place, Filipino farm laborers on the mainland moved with the crops. Given the great variety of crops grown along the Pacific Coast, something needs to be harvested virtually every month, but each harvest lasts only two to six weeks. This specialty agriculture created a migratory labor force that moved with the harvests.<sup>39</sup> From the 1920s to the 1970s, Filipinos (and Mexicans) on the Pacific Coast formed the backbone of this harvest labor supply. Under the leadership of labor contractors, Filipinos moved in crews of five to fifty from

job to job and pooled funds to help meet car payments, fuel, food, and lodging.<sup>40</sup> In the 1930s, a Filipino agricultural laborer in California earned an average wage of twenty to twenty-five cents per hour. Out of this meager sum, from sixty to seventy-five cents a day would be deducted for room and board.<sup>41</sup>

Viewed by racist growers as ideally suited for “stoop labor,” Filipino farm workers remained in high demand until the Great Depression, following the ripening fruit and vegetables as they developed specialized roles in western agriculture. In Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Idaho, they picked apples, hoed hops, topped beets, and dug potatoes. In California, moving from the San Joaquin Valley to the Salinas Valley to the Imperial Valley, Filipinos dominated the agricultural labor force, pulling carrots, picking strawberries, cutting celery, and harvesting grapes. They were also the predominant workers in the cultivation of asparagus—a multimillion dollar industry. In 1925, Filipinos constituted over 80 percent of the asparagus labor force, numbering approximately seven thousand.<sup>42</sup> Because of the long hours of stooping, extreme heat, and dust involved, cutting asparagus is the most difficult job a farm worker can do, with even experienced, able-bodied laborers passing out from heat prostration and exhaustion.<sup>43</sup>

Filipino laborers also lived and worked within a gender-skewed context. Legally prohibited from marrying white women, most Filipino laborers were lonely bachelors, destined for a harsh life without families. Missing the company of small children, these single nien adopted and pampered the few Filipino children that were around. Born in 1929, Connie Tirona’s (Chapter 3) childhood days were surrounded by bachelor friends of her parents. In her narrative, she describes the joy that her family’s visits brought to the lonely *manongs*<sup>44</sup> who labored in the Sacramento–San Joaquin area:

[Our family] went to see them almost every week or every other week. . . . It was so beautiful there when we visited them. . . . The *manongs* would fix up their rooms immaculately. . . . After eating they would play guitars and mandolins, and we, as little children of the families, would sing and dance. . . . They were so happy. I especially remember when we sang the Visayan songs. You could see the tears on the faces of those grown men. . . . As I was drifting off to sleep, I could hear them laughing as they started to sing nostalgic songs from the Philippines. . . . After such weekends, the *manongs* prepared for another grueling week of hard work.

Because they were predominantly single men, Filipino workers could be housed inexpensively. A Japanese grower told an interviewer in 1930 that he preferred to hire Filipinos because “these Mexicans and Spaniards bring their families with them and I have to fix up houses; but I can put a hundred

Filipinos in that barn” (pointing to a large firetrap).” Housed in dilapidated, crowded shacks or in tents, Filipino laborers endured harsh climate, unsanitary living conditions, and the lack of privacy. Philip Vera Cruz, a pioneering Filipino laborer, recalled: “The first camp I lived in had a kitchen that was so full of holes, flies were just coming in and out at their leisure, along with mosquitoes, roaches, and everything else. . . . The toilet was an outhouse with the pit so filled-up it was impossible to use.”<sup>46</sup>

Familial and friendship networks helped Filipino workers to cope with the daily punishment of agricultural labor. In virtually every area of the American West where Filipinos labored in large numbers (California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Colorado, and Alaska), they established strong and lasting cultural, religious, and community organizations. Among the most important were fraternal associations with elaborate rites of initiation. Some of these groups, such as the Dimas Alang and the Legionarios del Trabajo, spanned great geographic distances. Equally important were regionally and provincially based organizations of immigrants who came from the same area in the Philippines. In Seattle, for example, Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Pangasinans, and Visayans formed their own associations to perpetuate the traditions and folkways of their home regions and to provide mutual aid to their members. Regardless of size, these community organizations provided the earliest immigrants with a substitute for the extended families left behind in the Philippine~.~’

As in Hawaii, Filipinos on the mainland fought oppressive working conditions through labor activism. In the Salinas Valley, where they comprised 40 percent of the agricultural work force, Filipino field workers were especially militant. Harsh words from a boss or sudden wage cuts would prompt them to evacuate the fields. In 1933, after the American Federation of Labor (AFL) refused to organize a union on their behalf, the valley’s lettuce picker? formed the Filipino Labor Union (FLU). The following year, the FLU led Filipino workers in a strike, demanding union recognition, improved working conditions, and higher wages. This violent strike ended when local vigilantes burned the camp to the ground and forced the determined strikers to flee for their lives.

Filipino labor activism eventually jolted U.S. organized labor into accepting them. In 1936, the AFL granted a charter to the Field Workers’ Union Local No. 30326, composed of Mexican and Filipino laborers, and in 1940, it chartered the Federal Agricultural Laborers Association, a Filipino union.<sup>47</sup> Filipinos in the San Joaquin valley were also the ones to launch the historic Delano grape strike in 1965, which catapulted the United Farm Workers Union and its leader Cesar Chavez into the limelight of the nation’s farm labor struggles.<sup>49</sup>

Filipinos also toiled in the canneries of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Deemed a good source of income, cannery jobs were particularly attractive

to Filipino students who needed a quick way to make money during the summer. Manuel Buaken reported that in 1930, 500 of the 4,210 Filipinos contracted during the cannery season were college and university students; 800 others attended various trade schools.<sup>50</sup>

As the Northwest's major metropolitan area, Seattle became the hub for "Alaskeros"—Filipino cannery hands who toiled in the Alaskan fisheries. There, in the city's International District, they doubled up in their hotel and boardinghouse beds, waiting out the winter months before sailing north to work from late spring to late summer. According to Bruno Lasker, in 1931 Seattle's Filipino summer population consisted of only a few hundred, while its winter population rose to some thirty-five hundred.<sup>51</sup> Filipino students at the University of Washington provided an important source of labor for the canneries—so much so that contractors were obliged to cultivate a relationship with them by helping to fund their Filipino Club. The presence of the Alaskeros significantly increased the number of Filipino residents in Washington State, which grew between 1910 and 1930 from seventeen to approximately thirty-five hundred.<sup>52</sup>

Recruited by Chinese and Japanese contractors on the West Coast, nearly a thousand Filipinos joined the Alaskan fishery work force in 1921 and by the mid-1930s had become the backbone of the cannery crews. In 1928, Filipino cannery hands in Alaska numbered 3,916, compared to 1,445 Japanese, 1,269 Mexicans, and 1,065 Chinese. Yet despite their numerical dominance, very few Filipinos became contractors because of the Chinese and Japanese oligarchy. Having entered the cannery labor market later than these two other Asian groups, Filipinos predominantly worked as unskilled laborers in mechanized plants. Those permitted to advance at all were halted at the rank of foreman. In charge of recruiting and managing their countrymen, these foremen received relatively high remuneration and special treatment.

Given the narrow access to cannery jobs, Filipino workers were forced to rely on those who might take advantage of them—the Chinese and Japanese contractors and Filipino foremen. Dependent on advances doled out by Chinese and Japanese contractors, Filipino workers often accumulated considerable debt—as much as a month's wages—before the canning season had even begun, as unscrupulous contractors forced them to buy lodging, food, clothes, and bedding at inflated prices from their stores. In some instances, contractors disappeared with the seasonal wages of a whole Filipino crew. Filipinos in positions of power also often took advantage of their countrymen, sometimes demanding half a month's pay or more just for the promise of a cannery job. If a Filipino complained too loudly, he found himself without a cannery job in subsequent years. The victimization of fellow ethnics is a common phenomenon in immigrant labor as the more seasoned migrants

take advantage of the new arrivals who usually don't speak English and can't fend for themselves.

With the onset of the Great Depression, the upward mobility Filipinos had hoped might come to them through cannery work disappeared. Between 1929 and 1933, wages for unskilled cannery positions dropped by 40 percent. More than other Filipinos, students felt the sting of the Depression through the elimination of cannery jobs and severe wage cuts, which forced them to find other seasonal jobs that left little or no time for school. Faced with the dismal realities of the 1930s, Filipinos tried to open the canning industry in new ways, particularly through unionization. On June 19, 1933, Filipino laborers entered the AFL as the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union (CWFLU), Local 18257. Because of Seattle's proximity to Alaska, the city became the union's headquarters.

Uniting the Filipino community behind a unionization drive proved no easy task. Before the Depression, the myriad of small-group affiliations—the family, friendship, and ethnic networks—had helped Filipinos to brave exploitative employers, contractors, and foremen. During the Depression, however, members of these same associations competed for jobs and disagreed on the solutions to their deteriorating conditions in the cannery industry. In spite of its best effort to unite the community, the CWFLU made little headway. Not until the 1936 murders of two top Filipino union leaders and their elevation to martyrdom did Filipinos rally behind the CWFLU. Negotiating for higher wages, better hours, and improved working conditions for its members, the CWFLU empowered Filipino cannery workers to unite against some of the worst abuses of employers and contractors. In 1938, Filipinos finally eliminated the contract system; from then on, cannery workers were hired through the union hall.

During the late 1920s and 1930s, as the Filipino population grew and as the Great Depression engulfed the nation, white resentment against Filipino laborers intensified. Anti-Filipino spokespersons also portrayed the largely single Filipino men as sexual threats who sought the company of white and Mexican women at taxi-dance halls. Between 1928 and 1930, competition for jobs as well as concern over “hybridization” culminated in a series of race riots in Washington and California meant to drive Filipinos out of various communities. The most explosive and most publicized incident took place in 1930 near Watsonville, California, where four hundred white vigilantes attacked a Filipino dance club, beating dozens of Filipinos and killing one. In 1933, the California state legislature amended antimiscegenation laws to include Filipino-white marriages. Twelve other states had similar restrictions.

In the midst of the Depression, exclusionists also sought—unsuccessfully—to repatriate Filipinos. Although the 1935 Welch Bill appropriated \$300,000 to pay for the fare of Filipinos who would voluntarily return to the Philippines, only 5 percent of those in the United States (2,190 out of

45,000) took advantage of this offer.<sup>53</sup> To enable the government to restrict the number of Filipino immigrants, their legal status as U.S. nationals had to be changed. In 1934, yielding to anti-Filipino forces, the U.S. Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act, granting the Philippines eventual independence, declaring Filipinos to be aliens, and cutting Filipino immigration to a trickle of fifty persons a year.<sup>54</sup> Filipinos who served in the U.S. armed forces, especially in the U.S. Navy, were among the few who were exempted from this immigration restriction.

### *Filipinos in the U.S. Navy*

Filipino nationals are the only Asians who have served in the U.S. armed forces in sizable numbers without holding U.S. citizenship. This arrangement emerged out of the colonial process, specifically the extensive U.S. military presence in the Philippines. It was during the Philippine American War at the turn of the century that the United States established its first three military bases in the Philippines.<sup>55</sup> Since then, the Philippines has housed—at times unwillingly—some of the United States' largest overseas air force and naval bases. Even after the Philippines' formal independence in 1946 the U.S. military installations remained, and the Military Bases Agreement of the following year allowed the United States to lease five major bases and at least twenty minor military installations for ninety-nine years at no cost. Although the agreement was signed in 1947, its preliminary terms had been arranged prior to World War II, in effect making it an agreement between the United States and its colony, not between two sovereign states.

Despite the official pretext that the bases served the security interests of both the United States and the Philippines, they primarily protected U.S. economic and political investments in the region. In the post-World War II era, these bases served as springboards as well as training and supply stations for U.S. military interventions in China, Indonesia, Korea, and Vietnam. With the “fall” of China to Mao Zedong's forces in 1949 and the outbreak of war in Korea in 1950, the bases in the Philippines became critical to the U.S. security in terms of “containing” Communism. After the end of the Vietnam War, they represented U.S. commitment to remain a power in the Asian-Pacific region.

For Filipino nationalists, the bases symbolized the colonial legacy and U.S. dominance over the Philippines. For many others, however, they represented economic opportunities. In 1987, the U.S. bases were the second largest employer after the Philippine government, providing jobs and an annual salary totaling more than \$96 million to over sixty-eight thousand Filipinos. They also fueled local economies, sustaining businesses that catered primarily to the base personnel. For these reasons, local, provincial, and some national officials and business leaders lobbied to keep the bases in the Philip-

piners. However, after a 1991 vote for national sovereignty by the Philippine Senate, the last U.S.-controlled base (Subic Bay Naval Station) was turned over to the Philippine government in 1992, some ninety-four years after the first U.S. troops landed in the Philippines.<sup>56</sup>

During the ninety-four years of U.S. military presence in the Philippines, U.S. bases served as recruiting stations for the U.S. armed forces, particularly the Navy. Soon after the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain in 1898, its Navy began actively recruiting Filipinos as stewards and mess boys. From a total of nine persons in 1903, the number of Filipinos in the U.S. Navy grew to six thousand by World War I and hovered around four thousand (or 5 percent of the total Navy manpower) during the 1920s and 1930s. After the Philippines achieved full independence in 1946, the United States no longer could unilaterally authorize recruitment of Filipino nationals, since they had become citizens of their own country. To sidestep this obstacle, U.S. officials inserted a provision in the 1947 Military Bases Agreement (Article 27) granting its Navy the right to continue to recruit Filipino citizens. With the onset of the Korean War in the early 1950s, the U.S. Navy allowed for the enrollment of up to two thousand Filipinos per calendar year for terms of four or six years.<sup>57</sup>

For many young Filipino men, a career in the U.S. Navy had been a life-long dream. In some towns (and in many families), particularly those surrounding U.S. bases, joining the Navy had become a tradition. Beside serving as recruiting stations, these bases—centers of wealth amidst local poverty—exposed the native populace to U.S. money, culture, and standards of living, generating a strong incentive for enlistment. The economic incentive to join the U.S. Navy was high: the salary of a Filipino enlistee often placed him among the top quarter of his country's wage earners. Filipino recruits also used their service in the Navy to gain U.S. citizenship—the springboard for escaping from poverty.<sup>58</sup> During the 1960s, some one hundred thousand Filipinos applied to the U.S. Navy each year, but few were admitted due to a high reenlistment rate of 94 to 99 percent among Filipinos. "By 1970, in large part due to the grave economic, political, and social problems besetting the Philippines, there were more Filipinos in the U.S. Navy (fourteen thousand) than in the entire Philippine Navy." In 1973, when the U.S. Navy reduced the number of Filipino recruits from two thousand to four hundred per year, approximately two hundred thousand applied for the few coveted slots. According to the U.S. Navy Chief of Legislative Affairs, in the 1970s about forty thousand potential Filipino enlistees were available at any given time.<sup>61</sup>

Prior to and during World War I, the U.S. Navy allowed Filipino enlistees to serve in a range of occupational ratings such as petty officers, band masters, musicians, coxswains' mates, seamen, machinists, firemen, water tenders, commissary stewards, officers' stewards, and mess attendants. How-

ever, after the war the Navy issued a new ruling restricting Filipinos, even those with a college education, to the ratings of officers' stewards and mess attendants.<sup>62</sup> Leo Sicat (Chapter 6), a graduate of the University of the Philippines, described the indignity he felt in steward school: "At the school, we were taught how to cook and bake, how to set the table, and how to position the silverware, and the glass and the cup. They basically taught us the job of a waitress. Personally, I was *so* insulted. I was almost a chemical engineer, and I came to the United States just to become a steward."

Barred from admission to other ratings, Filipino enlistees performed the work of domestics, preparing and serving the officers' meals, and caring for the officers' galley, wardroom, and living spaces. Ashore, their duties ranged from ordinary housework to food services at the U.S. Naval Academy mess hall. Unofficially, Filipino stewards also have been ordered to perform menial chores such as walking the officers' dogs and acting as personal servants for the officers' wives. Even when they passed the relevant qualifying examinations, few Filipinos were allowed to transfer to other ratings—unless they were the personal favorites of high-ranking officials who agreed to intervene on their behalf. In 1970, of the 16,669 Filipinos in the U.S. Navy, 80 percent were in the steward rating.<sup>63</sup>

In the early 1970s, responding to the demands of the civil rights movement and to a senatorial investigation on the use of stewards in the military, the U.S. Navy amended its policies to grant Filipino enlistees the right to enter any occupational rating. In 1973, the first year of the new Navy policy, Filipino nationals served in fifty-six of the eighty-seven ratings available for enlistees. But they were not distributed evenly among these ratings. According to Navy statistics for that year, over 40 percent of Filipinos remained stewards. Of the balance, the majority congregated in clerical jobs such as personnel man, disbursing clerk, storekeeper, and commissary man.<sup>64</sup> This rating concentration—the result of both job availability and ethnic clustering—suggests that Filipinos in the U.S. Navy continue to share common experiences.

These Navy-related immigrants form a distinct segment of the Filipino American community. Because of their similar background in the U.S. Navy, these Filipino men and their families cultivate informal but lasting social networks. In fact, many Filipino Navy retirees prefer living near their "old Navy comrades with whom they spent a great deal of time while in the service."<sup>65</sup> Consequently, U.S. cities with large naval facilities, such as San Diego, have sizable Filipino communities made up largely of Navy families. Following in their fathers' footsteps, some Filipino Americans have also joined the U.S. Navy—but now as officers. For example, Daniel Gruta (Chapter 10), whose father and three uncles were Navy enlistees, became a naval officer after graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1986.

## *Filipinos During World War II and the Postwar Years*

World War II marked an important turning point in the history of Filipinos as well as other Asians in the United States. The military exploits of Filipino soldiers—both in the Philippines and in the United States—did a great deal to reduce white prejudice against Filipino Americans. Their wartime services also earned many U.S. citizenship and helped to rescind exclusion laws, thus making renewed immigration from the Philippines possible. According to H. Brett Melendy, from 1946 to 1965, thirty-three thousand Filipinos immigrated to the United States and contributed to a 44 percent increase in the Filipino American population during the 1950–60 census period.<sup>66</sup> Leaving a war-torn country, the postwar Filipino immigrants, who included war veterans, war brides, students, and skilled and unskilled workers, scattered throughout the United States. During the 1950s, Filipinos in California congregated primarily in the San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles. Other mainland cities in which sizable Filipino populations developed were, in order of rank, Seattle, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C.<sup>67</sup>

When the United States declared war against Japan in December 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt incorporated the Philippine armed forces into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). University student reserve officers and nurses in the Philippines were also inducted for military service.<sup>68</sup> Fighting alongside American soldiers in defending Baatan and Corregidor during the spring of 1942, the heroism and courage of Filipino troops were widely publicized in newsreels and newspaper headlines across the United States. The wartime performance of Filipinos forced whites to view and treat Filipinos in the United States more favorably.<sup>69</sup> Although Roosevelt had pledged citizenship to Filipino nationals who took up arms against the Japanese, a federal act rescinded that pledge in 1946. Only four thousand Filipino World War II veterans were able to gain U.S. citizenship before the rescission.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, large numbers of Filipinos in the United States were inducted into the armed forces. "Their status as U.S. nationals forgotten, many became citizens through mass naturalization ceremonies held before induction. According to A.B. Santos (Chapter 1) who was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943, "[When] I reported to Los Angeles, . . . they swore me in as a U.S. citizen. I did not even have to file an application." Because most Filipinos were males of draft age, some sixteen thousand were called up under the first draft in 1942. Over seven thousand recruits served in the segregated First Filipino Infantry Regiment and the Second Filipino Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army. Although the U.S. Navy tried to enlist Filipinos as mess attendants, nearly one-third of the draft-age Filipino males in the continental United States volunteered for the Army. In 1944 over one thousand Filipino Americans infiltrated the Philippines via submarine to gather

intelligence for General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in Australia. Engaged in sabotage to destroy Japanese communications, Filipino soldiers accelerated the recapture of the Philippines by U.S. forces in 1945."

World War II also changed the economic fortunes of Filipinos by opening employment in labor-starved war industries. In agriculture, California's attorney general reinterpreted the land laws to allow Filipinos to lease and buy land. The war also forced the United States to reopen its gates to Filipino and other Asian immigrants. In 1946, seeking to demonstrate U.S. commitment to democracy, Congress passed the Luce-Celler Bill, permitting the entry of one hundred Filipino immigrants annually and granting Filipinos the right of naturalization. As citizens, qualified Filipinos were able to secure professional licenses and upgrade their occupational status. As the country's industrial base expanded, many found jobs in factories, in trades, and in wholesale and retail sales. Nevertheless, in California in 1960, agriculture remained the largest employer of Filipinos, with 3 percent classified as farmers and farm managers and another 28 percent as farm laborers and foremen.<sup>73</sup> Filipino veterans also made use of the G.I. Bill to attend college and to purchase property. Sociologist R. T. Feria has noted that shortly after the war, many Filipinos in Los Angeles bought homes and small farms that had been vacated by the Japanese who had been incarcerated in "relocation camps."

It was during the postwar years that Filipino women first came to the United States in significant numbers. The majority immigrated as U.S. dependents: some, such as Juanita Santos (Chapter 1), had met and married U.S. servicemen in the Philippines — including a sizable number of Filipino Americans serving in the U.S. Navy; others came to join their Filipino husbands already in the United States; still others, such as Ruth Abad (Chapter 2), entered as "repatriates" — dependents of U.S. citizens who had lived in the Philippines before World War II. According to David Reimers, nearly half of the Filipino immigrants (16,000) between 1946 and 1965 came as wives of U.S. servicemen.<sup>75</sup> Single Filipinas came to the United States primarily as students. As in the case of Luz Latus (Chapter 4), an unknown number married U.S. citizens and stayed in the United States after their schooling was completed.<sup>76</sup>

The postwar immigrants also included the last batch of Filipino plantation workers. Facing a postwar shortage of cheap laborers, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association requested the U.S. Department of Interior, by provision of the Tydings-McDuffie Act (section 8), to permit unlimited Filipino immigration to the islands. Exempted from the immigration quota of 50 persons a year, that is applied to Filipino immigration to the mainland, in 1946 some 7,361 Filipinos migrated to Hawaii to work on its sugar plantations. Many arrived to beat the quota of 100 persons a year that would go into effect following Philippine independence." In sharp contrast to the restrictions

imposed on the immigrant plantation laborers of the 1920s, women and children were allowed in the 1946 group. Most of these families, which included 710 women and 1,425 children, settled on the island of Kauai.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Post-1965 Filipino Immigrants***

Contemporary Filipino immigration has been shaped by changes in U.S. immigration legislation and by political, economic, and social conditions in the Philippines. The 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished the national-origins quotas and permitted entry based primarily on family reunification or occupational characteristics, dramatically increased the number of Asian immigrants. In the twenty years following passage of the 1965 act, about 40 percent of the legal immigration to the United States has come from Asia.<sup>79</sup> The Philippines has been the largest source, with Filipinos comprising nearly one-quarter of the total Asian immigration. In 1961–65, fewer than 16,000 Filipinos immigrated to the United States, compared to more than 221,000 in 1981–85. Since 1979, over 40,000 Filipinos have been admitted annually, making the Philippines the second largest source of all immigration, surpassed only by Mexico.<sup>80</sup> The 1990 U.S. Census counted close to 1.5 million Filipinos in the United States, 50 percent of whom reside in California. Hawaii and Illinois ranked next, with close to 170,000 and 65,000 respectively.

The 1965 Immigration Act alone, however, does not explain why so many Filipinos have come to the United States in the last quarter-century. The ties forged between the Philippines and the United States during the ninety-plus years of colonial and postcolonial rule have also contributed to this influx. Beside creating strong military and business connections between the two countries, this colonial heritage has produced a pervasive cultural Americanization of the population, exhorting Filipinos to regard the American culture, political system, and way of life as superior to their own.<sup>81</sup> Infused with images of U.S. abundance peddled by the educational system, the media, and relatives and friends already in the United States, Filipinos quickly took advantage of the 1965 changes in the immigration law to emigrate.

The grave economic conditions in the Philippines have also pushed frustrated Filipinos to leave for the United States. During the 1960s, the Philippine economy registered high growth when President Ferdinand Marcos implemented an economic plan that depended solely upon U.S. war effort in Vietnam. When U.S. forces withdrew from Vietnam, the Philippines was left with an economic infrastructure ill-suited to local needs.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the Marcos era in 1986, the Philippines was bankrupt and inflation was rampant. Weighed down by the cost of servicing a gigantic foreign debt and heavily dependent on agricultural exports, the Philippine economy suffers

from massive unemployment and inequality in the distribution of income and wealth.

Driven off the land, many peasants migrate to Manila in search of livelihood, but the city does not have enough industries to support its burgeoning population.<sup>83</sup> Also, since the 1960s, the Philippines has had an oversupply of educated people. With U.S. aid, the Philippines underwent an “educational boom” after World War II. In 1970, one-quarter of the college-age population in the Philippines was enrolled in colleges and universities, a ratio second only to that of the United States. But this growing army of college-educated Filipinos faced extremely limited employment prospects. Heather Low Ruth estimated that in the late 1960s, jobs were available for only half the college graduates in the Philippines.<sup>84</sup> Under such grave economic conditions, many Filipinos seized the opportunity to work abroad as permanent immigrants in the United States or as short-term contract workers all over the world.

But the push to leave the Philippines was also political. Declaring martial law in 1972, President Marcos prorogued the legislatures, controlled the media, suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and arrested many of his alleged political opponents. According to a U.S. congressional report, there were between five hundred and one thousand political prisoners in the Philippines at the end of 1978.<sup>85</sup> During the Marcos era (1965–1986), an estimated three hundred thousand Filipinos emigrated to the United States.<sup>86</sup> In 1983, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reported that 208 Filipinos had filed for political asylum that year. However, only eighteen were granted asylum.<sup>87</sup>

As soon as martial law was declared in the Philippines, the Filipino American community organized against Marcos’s dictatorship. The first U.S.-based opposition group was the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP). Shortly thereafter, exiled former Philippine senator Raul Manglapus organized the Movement for a Free Philippines (MFP). Edgar Gamboa (Chapter 8), an anti-Marcos student activist, was among those who left for the United States to escape “the tentacles of Marcos’s repressive government.” Once in the United States, he joined the MFP to protest the Marcos dictatorship. Critical of Marcos’s corruption and alarmed by his political repression and violation of human rights, these opposition groups alerted the American public to the plight of political prisoners and to the regime’s use of torture and execution of alleged opponents. Convinced that U.S. economic assistance enabled the Marcos regime to maintain its totalitarian rule, the main goal of these groups was to stop such aid.<sup>88</sup>

Since the 1960s, the Philippines has been the source of the largest number of white-collar professionals to immigrate to the United States.<sup>89</sup> Because of the shortage of medical personnel in this country, particularly in the inner