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**From “Little Brown Brothers” to “Forgotten Asian Americans”:  
Race, Space, and Empire in Filipino Los Angeles**

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## **Abstract**

From “Little Brown Brothers” to “Forgotten Asian Americans”:  
Race, Space, and Empire in Filipino Los Angeles

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Through archival research, close readings of literary works, and oral histories, this dissertation traces the various formations of Filipino American urban space in Los Angeles from the 1920s to the 1980s under the backdrop of the rise of U.S. empire. This dissertation argues that the emergence, disappearance, and later reclamation of "Little Manila"/"Historic Filipinotown" throughout the twentieth century marked critical shifts in articulations of American imperialism. As the United States had a formal colonial presence in the Philippines and Filipinos subsequently migrated to the United States as colonial subjects, whites in Los Angeles segregated, contained, and marginalized their "Little Brown Brothers" in a Little Manila district downtown, deeming Filipinos as "unassimilable" and a "racial problem." However, as the U.S. state expanded domestically and globally in unprecedeted ways during the World War II and postwar periods, Los Angeles city officials destroyed the Little Manila neighborhood

while Filipinos increasingly moved to suburban neighborhoods as whites shifted their view of Filipinos in the United States as “loyal” Americans worthy of citizenship. By the 1960s and 1970s, as U.S. imperialism placed greater political emphasis on globalization and multiculturalism, the lack of a distinct Filipino enclave in Los Angeles, in turn, racialized Filipinos as “invisible.” Efforts to become “visible” and address pressing needs of Filipinos in the United States through campaigns to gain state recognition proved elusive, deeming Filipinos as socially and politically inept by nature to address their own marginality in the United States. Such calls of “invisibility,” therefore, were more products of liberal multiculturalism and its contradictions than on supposed cultural traits.

Key to the shifting racialization and spatiality of Filipinos is the discourse of racial liberalism and its power to maintain U.S. empire and white hegemony. “From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” contends that the deployment and proliferation of an emerging U.S. anti-racial, anti-imperial discourse, which contributed to the historical amnesia, or “invisibility,” of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, shaped and produced the varying manifestations and racializations of Filipino American urban space throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

For my Gerlie

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## **Introduction: Forgotten Asian Americans?**

On March 7, 2008, Rodolfo Vera Quizon, aka “Dolphy,” arguably the most popular comedian from the Philippines, received the Legend Award for his decades long work as the Philippines’ “comedy king” at the First Annual Filipino American Visionary Awards held at the famed Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, California. The late Dolphy, who had a considerable number of family in Southern California, often frequented the United States and became well-acquainted with the region and its large Filipino American community. As he stood on the podium to accept his award and gave his acknowledgements, Dolphy took the opportunity to preach to the predominately Filipino American audience on their perceived lack of political clout in American society. While pointing to the crowd, he remarked in *Taglish*, “We Filipinos need to unite. Why is there a Chinatown, Japantown, and Koreatown here in L.A., but no Filipinotown here or anywhere in the U.S.? We are invisible here! *Tandaan ninyo, Pilipino tayo. Huwag kayong mahihiya!*! (Remember this, we are Filipino. Do not be ashamed!).”<sup>1</sup> Filipinos’ deficient political power in the United States, according to Dolphy, rested on their seeming inability to form a Filipino ethnic enclave. Only through “uniting” and claiming their identity, he posited, could Filipinos gain political recognition like other ethnic communities in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> *Taglish* is the juxtaposition of Tagalog and English, spoken among middle and upper class Filipinos in Manila and throughout the Filipino diaspora. For more on Taglish and its linguistic significance in historical and contemporary Philippine society, see Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 162-189.

Dolphy's perspective on the state of Filipino American political affairs and its correlation to ethnic enclaves was not unique. Many others have made similar observations. *Los Angeles Times* journalist Jonathan Peterson, for example, in his 1989 "community spotlight" on Filipino Americans in Los Angeles, discussed the "unique" nature of one of the region's largest immigrant communities. To Peterson, some have not taken notice of the growing population:

Filipino leaders say they are working harder than ever these days to create a more unified community in Los Angeles. And they have reason: Filipinos are now believed to be the largest Asian ethnic group in Southern California... Yet if the community has grown dramatically, it remains remarkably *invisible* to those outside it. Filipinos often have Spanish last names, speak English and blend into the mainstream. There is no Philippine version of Chinatown or Little Tokyo; efforts to create one sparked rival factions that called a truce only recently. (Emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

As Dolphy and Peterson both asserted in their editorials, the presence of the large number of Filipinos in Los Angeles was not readily known to the "mainstream," mainly due to their seeming aptitude to "blend" into their immediate surroundings. At first glance, this perspective of Filipino "invisibility" seems to ring true. Although Filipinos make up the largest Asian American community in Southern California, the casual observer can easily miss the presence of a distinct Filipino enclave anywhere in the region. Though the Los Angeles City Council adopted a motion in 2002 officially designating the Temple Street neighborhood, an area just west of downtown Los Angeles, as Historic Filipinotown, many have found it difficult to distinguish what makes the area "historic" and/or "Filipino." Despite the multiple 8-foot long street signs that read "Historic Filipinotown," which the city placed around its designated boundaries, the neighborhood is more a residential district for working-class Salvadoran, Cuban,

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Peterson, "Filipinos – A Search for Community," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989.

Korean and Filipino immigrant families than a discernible commercial Filipino enclave like Chinatown, Little Tokyo, or Koreatown.<sup>3</sup>

I begin this dissertation with a discussion on “invisibility” because this discourse circulates around many present-day political circles in the Filipino American community, even permeating the thoughts of Philippine figures such as Dolphy. The late founder of the Filipino American National Historic Society, Fred Cordova, for example, referred to Filipinos as “Forgotten Asian Americans,” “seldom accurately situated in history or cultures and are therefore often misinterpreted.”<sup>4</sup> Filipinos, as many pundits argue, need to become “visible” in order to be politically viable in the United States. However, “invisibility,” as Oscar Campomanes first made clear, has more to do with the history of Filipinos rather than their chameleon-like abilities. As he and other scholars in Filipino studies have argued, the perceived “invisibility” of Filipinos is inextricably connected to the systematic erasure of U.S. imperialism

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<sup>3</sup> For examples of Los Angeles Filipinos’ belief in their community’s “invisibility” as it relates to urban space, see Tania Azores-Gunter, “In the Neighborhood: Filipino Americans: Getting It Together, Raising Their Profile,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1992; Bert Eljera, “Filipino American Gets Award for Work,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 1994; K. Connie Kang, “Filipinos Happy in U.S., but Lack a United Voice,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1996; Wendy Lee, “Filipinotown Searching for Its Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 2005; and Diane Wedner, “A Shared Identity,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2007. “Garcetti Hails Council Recognition of ‘Historic Filipinotown’” *Los Angeles City News Service*, July 30, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Cordova, “Foreword,” in *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity*, ed. Maria P. P. Root (Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Sage Publications, 1997), xiii. For more claims of Filipino American “invisibility,” see, for example, Royal Morales, *Makibaka: The Pilipino American Struggle* (Los Angeles: Mountain View Press, 1974); Jesse Quinsaat ed. *Letters in Exile: An Introductory Reader on the History of Pilipinos in America* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976); Fred Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1983); Peter Jamero, *Growing Up Brown: Memoirs of a Filipino American* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); and Juanita Tamayo Lott, *Common Destiny: Filipino American Generations* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006).

in the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> The United States, in order to deny its imperial nature, projects itself as an anti-racist, anti-imperial nation, making Filipinos, one of America's historical and contemporary imperial subjects, categorically "invisible" since they did not neatly fit in conventional immigrant narratives that emphasize assimilation into a multicultural, democratic polity.

This ascribed characterization of "invisibility" among Filipino Americans, thus, raises some intriguing questions. To whom were Filipinos "invisible"? Did Filipinos always carry this characterization? If the lack of a distinct Filipino enclave makes a community "invisible," then would Filipinos gain the "visibility" they desired if they concentrated geographically in distinct ethnic enclaves? After all, a "Little Manila" district did exist in Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s when Filipino laborers first migrated to the United States in large numbers. Filipinos formed Little Manilas in cities and towns along the West Coast, including Seattle, San Francisco, Seattle, and San Diego. To the largely migratory Filipino laborer population, these districts of pool halls, gambling dens, barbershops, and other establishments served as spaces where they resided and gathered. If "invisibility" took on a peculiar spatial iteration, then were Filipinos "visible" during the 1920s and 1930s since Little Manila districts did exist? What historical and material processes produced such a change in racialization and spatiality? Deeming Filipino Americans as "invisible," I argue in the chapters that follow, was only possible through the

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<sup>5</sup> Oscar Campomanes, "The New Empire's Forgetful and Forgotten Citizens: Unassimilability and Unrepresentability in Filipino-American Postcolonialities," *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 145-200. Other scholars of Filipinos/Filipino Americans have critiqued the discourse of "invisibility" as a product of U.S. empire's uncanny desire to deny its colonial past. However, few have discussed at length the historical processes at which such discourse developed and empirically shaped the everyday lives of Filipino Americans. See Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); and Sarita See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

systematic recalibration of lenses through which to view race and empire in the United States, a process that becomes legible through an examination of the built environment.

Since the 1920s, the “Little Manila”/“Historic Filipinotown” neighborhood in Los Angeles, in its multiple forms, served as an important site through which racializations of Filipinos were developed and reproduced. This dissertation traces the various formations of this distinct Filipino American urban space in Los Angeles from the 1920s to the 1980s under the backdrop of the rise of U.S. empire. The emergence, disappearance, and later reclamation of “Little Manila”/“Historic Filipinotown,” I argue, marked critical shifts in articulations of American imperialism. As the United States had a formal colonial presence in the Philippines and Filipinos subsequently migrated to the United States as colonial subjects, whites in Los Angeles segregated, contained, and marginalized their “Little Brown Brothers” in a Little Manila district downtown, deeming Filipinos as “unassimilable” and a “racial problem.”<sup>6</sup> However, as the U.S. state expanded domestically and globally in unprecedented ways during the post-World War II period, Los Angeles city officials destroyed the Little Manila neighborhood and Filipinos increasingly moved to suburban neighborhoods as whites shifted their view of Filipinos in the United States as “loyal” Americans worthy of citizenship. By the 1960s and 1970s, when the United States placed greater political emphasis on globalization and multiculturalism, the lack of a distinct Filipino enclave in Los Angeles, in turn, racialized Filipinos as “invisible.” Efforts to become “visible” and address pressing needs of Filipinos in the United States through campaigns to gain state recognition proved elusive, deeming Filipinos as socially and politically inept by

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<sup>6</sup> William Howard Taft, the first Governor-General of the Philippines and later President of the United States, first coined the term “Little Brown Brother” to describe the paternalistic inference of American occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. Paul Kramer, *Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 200.

nature to address their own marginality in the United States. Examining the historical changes of Los Angeles's Little Manila through a wider lens of U.S. empire not only demonstrates the contemporary link between "invisibility" and empire, but also exposes the trope as one historically produced iteration of a series of Filipino American racializations formed and shaped by American imperialism in the twentieth century.

Key to the shifting racialization and spatiality of Filipinos, I suggest, is the discourse of racial liberalism and its power to maintain U.S. empire and white hegemony. Racial liberalism, as numerous scholars of American empire have argued, was an ideology that sought the integration of non-white peoples into American society in order to propagate the United States as a democratic, anti-colonial, anti-racist nation, and thus legitimizing U.S. global domination over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of American intervention in the Philippines, government leaders framed their colonial control over the islands as a just act. President William McKinley, in order to justify colonization of the Philippines in 1898, first called for the "benevolent assimilation" of Filipinos into democracy and modernity. However, white hostility towards the corporeality of Filipino presence in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s made Filipino "assimilation" into American society an impossibility.<sup>8</sup> By the end of World War II, further American political and economic expansion throughout the world necessitated the subsiding of overt white supremacy. As cultural theorist Jodi Melamed in

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<sup>7</sup> Works that focus on the central role of race-liberal ideology in American empire-building include: Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Nikhil Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Kramer, *Blood of Government*.

*Represent and Destroy* argues, various iterations of official anti-racisms that permeated U.S. state and capitalist apparatuses after World War II were rooted in an imperial effort to project to the world an image of a benevolent and multicultural American nation. Though appearing to eradicate racism, these official anti-racisms – racial liberalism, liberal multiculturalism, and neoliberal multiculturalism – only normalized racial violence in the United States and abroad.<sup>9</sup> Although it seemed that Filipinos’ “assimilation” into American society and the transition of the Philippines as an “independent” nation-state during and after World War II was an unprecedented triumph of U.S. racial tolerance, it was in actuality another mirage of U.S. democracy deployed to justify further hegemony over the Philippines and Filipino Americans. As “benevolent assimilation” was crucial to the validation of American colonial expansion in the Philippines, so too were discourses of racial liberalism and multiculturalism in the decades after World War II.

As such, “From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” contends that the deployment and proliferation of an emerging U.S. anti-racial, anti-imperial discourse, which contributed to the historical amnesia, or “invisibility,” of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, shaped and produced Filipino American urban space. After the end of formal colonialism in the Philippines, U.S. liberal discourse increasingly deemed Filipino Americans as “immigrants” capable of assimilation into a now-tolerant American society – as opposed to “nationals” from a colony incapable of domesticity – helping to disavow America’s colonial past in the Philippines from the minds of many Americans. The illusion of home ownership and suburban assimilation in Los Angeles became a testament to the apparent “inclusion” of Filipino Americans as citizens. As more Filipinos in the United States gained citizenship, developed families, and adopted

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<sup>9</sup> Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

suburban ideals, many Filipino Americans believed that the United States was finally fulfilling its promise of inclusion into the national polity. At the same time, however, the shift in spatiality also facilitated the destruction of Los Angeles's Filipino district in the post-World II period. As city officials sought to remake downtown to be economically competitive in an increasingly global market, Little Manila became expendable, susceptible to gentrification and redevelopment, both exemplifying and perpetuating this process of colonial erasure.

Consequently, while liberal multiculturalism gained traction as an official anti-racism by the 1970s and 1980s, many Filipino American leaders began to lament their "invisibility," with a seemingly "hidden" Filipino community as evidence. As ethnic communities in Los Angeles organized politically around discrete neighborhoods to address social inequalities such the lack of government resources for services and housing, the absence of a Little Manila neighborhood prompted many city officials and community leaders alike to render Filipino Americans as socially and politically "invisible." Instead of challenging the limitations and contradictions of such political processes and structures behind multicultural recognition, many Filipinos who organized around liberal, reformist politics attributed social inequality in their communities to a culturally inherent "invisibility." As such, Filipinos' elusive goal for "visibility" in the United States to address inequality in their communities has become all too often enfolded into a liberal claim for citizen-subjectivity in a growing multicultural America, reinforcing traditional narratives of immigration and assimilation rather than critiquing U.S. empire and white supremacy. Ultimately, Filipino Americans' desire to become "visible" in multicultural America ironically has led to the "invisibility" of their imperial roots.

Yet, I am also not suggesting that Filipinos were uniformly complicit or militantly resistant to these forces of oppression under U.S. empire. For the most part, many Filipino

Americans accepted many of the dominant ideologies of liberalism as a strategy of survival and adaptation. As Eiichiro Azuma aptly argues in his study *Between Two Empires*, Japanese immigrants negotiated their ideologies, identities, and politics within and against the American racial state and imperial Japan depending on their needs and situations. Wedged firmly between the constricting categories of Japanese and American, many Issei readily adopted nationalist ideals of both empires. Filipinos' adoption of immigrant assimilation, wartime loyalty, citizenship, nuclear familial formation, suburbanization, and multiculturalism – all part and parcel to universalizing claims of American liberal ideology – served as promises of social amelioration within the shifting hegemonic structures of U.S. imperialism and racism. However, their beliefs in and employment of such strategies produced a social and political conundrum, ironically supporting assimilationist discourse that enabled and consolidated U.S. empire. Thus, this dissertation is an attempt at revealing the mutual limitation and persistent power of liberalism that complicates more radical promises of freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Although there are countless lenses through which to analyze this history, I suggest that urban space can vividly illustrate the shift in Filipino American racialization from “unassimilable” to “assimilable,” “visible” to “invisible,” and “domestic” to “immigrant.” As Henri Lefebvre and other scholars in geography have argued, space is not autonomously produced by nature or politically neutral, but rather it is an on-going production formed through

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<sup>10</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Vicente Rafael makes a compelling argument to view power as relational and nuanced in his studies of Spanish and American colonization of the Philippines. See, for example, Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); and Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

a set of societal relations of power.<sup>11</sup> As I demonstrate in this study, white Americans' perceptions of and relationships with Filipinos constructed and shaped the various formations of Little Manila. The study of Filipino spatiality in the local scale can open a window into the larger politics of race and empire in the United States.

Moreover, Los Angeles serves as a critical backdrop since perhaps in no other city have race and empire been so physically manifested in its geography and historically entrenched in urban planning policy. As Edward Soja aptly posits, Southern California's paradigmatic polycentric geography, which grew largely as a result of Cold War expansionist policy, facilitated its economic growth, migrant populace, and segregated landscape.<sup>12</sup> The proliferation of ethnic enclaves in the region because of the large-scale migration of immigrant populations attracted to its growing economy reflects the effects of U.S. imperial expansion. As such, Los Angeles, one of the historic centers of Filipino American life since the 1920s and current home to the largest Filipino population outside of the Philippines, serves as a space where empire, migration, and racial formation intersect, with Little Manila/Historic Filipinotown as a crucial junction. Documenting the history of the shifting spatiality of Filipinos in the city across the span of six decades serves as a critical perspective on how U.S. empire shaped and continually shapes Filipinos as well as race and space in Los Angeles.

## Critical Interventions

“From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” seeks to shift the growing literature of ethnic enclaves in the United States towards a framework centered on race and

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<sup>11</sup> Henri LeFebvre, *The Production of Space*, Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London & New York: Verso, 1989).

empire. Numerous scholars in many academic disciplines have examined and conceptualized ethnic enclaves as the cornerstone of immigrant settlement. Robert Park's Chicago School of sociology, in particular, and Park's "race relations cycle" influenced many of the initial studies on ethnic neighborhoods. His theory, which gained traction beginning in the 1920s, assumed a universal cycle of contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation. Ethnic neighborhoods, Park believed, were universal formations where immigrant communities naturally congregated upon arrival in the United States to weather their new landscape, but eventually "assimilate" with spatial dispersion as evidence. To Park, those who remained in enclaves marked not the regime of racial segregation, but rather the assumed unwillingness and inability to join an increasingly tolerant American society.<sup>13</sup> Without questioning or critiquing the tenets of American liberalism, most works on ethnic neighborhoods, as such, follow and reinforce this pervasive racial theory of immigration and assimilation. Many initial students of the Chicago School such as S. Frank Miyamoto and Rose Hum Lee, as well as scholars in Ethnic Studies, followed this liberal model of race relations.<sup>14</sup> In subsequent years, other scholars, most

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<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950). For more on Robert Park's work on Asian American communities, see Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> S. Frank Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity Among the Japanese in Seattle*, 1939. Reprint, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Rose Hum Lee, *The Growth and Decline of Chinese Communities in the Rocky Mountain Region*, 1947. Reprint, (New York, Arno Press, 1978). See also Paul Chan Pang Siu, *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation*, edited by John Kuo Wei Tchen (New York: New York University Press, 1988); and Andrew William Lind, *A Study of Mobility of Population in Seattle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1925). Many works inspired by the emergence of Ethnic Studies, though acknowledge the racial impetus of ethnic enclave formation and neighborhood segregation, nonetheless posit assimilation as the end and just goal for immigrant communities. See, for example, Victor G. Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Huping Ling, *Chinese St. Louis: From Enclave to Cultural Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); and

notably Oscar Handlin, furthered this assimilation thesis in their studies of European migrants to the rapidly industrializing United States.<sup>15</sup> All too often, these works reinforced and naturalized ethnic enclaves as hindrances to Americanization and/or sites as preparation for eventual assimilation into American society, disavowing the imperial roots and continuation of migration and segregation.

Pioneers of Asian American Studies, inspired by and part of the larger Asian American movement of the 1960s and 1970s, have since challenged earlier discourses of immigration and assimilation by conveying the racial and imperial roots of Asian labor migration and community formation. The United States, according to many of these scholars, was not a “nation of immigrants” that Asian Americans deserved to be a part of. Historian Ronald Takaki, for example, contended that white supremacy lay at the center of American national development. American ideologies such as republicanism, free enterprise, and expansion, he suggested, formed as a result of the subjugation of enslaved Africans, the extermination of indigenous people, the

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Wei Li ed., *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb: New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). Not simply relegated to studies on Asian ethnic enclaves, Chicago School theories of assimilation and liberalism likewise penetrate historical works of other ethnic communities. See Richard Juliani, *Building Little Italy: Philadelphia's Italians Before Mass Migration* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Gretchen Lemke Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Additionally, new fields of ethnic enclave sociology that examine the preferences and dependencies of immigrant communities to ethnic enclave economies rarely take into account race and empire into their analyses. Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Ivan H. Light and Steven J. Gold, *Ethnic Economies* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Oscar Handlin, *Boston Immigrants: A Study of Acculturation* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1941) and *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1951). See also Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

removal of Mexicans from their lands, and the exclusion of Asian migrants. Likewise, social scientists Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich placed Asian immigration within in the larger global capitalist system in their influential *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism*. They cogently argued that capitalist development in industrialized nations prompted imperialist penetration in non-Western regions in search of new consumer markets, raw materials, and eventually, sources for cheap labor in the metropole as a result of underdevelopment in the periphery.<sup>16</sup> Asian communities thus appeared on the shores of North America and beyond not because of a natural longing for American citizenship, but rather because of migration driven by Western imperial expansion.

These early works, among others, would open the door for other scholarship in Asian American Studies that demonstrate the inextricable links between race, empire, migration, and citizenship. Scholars such as Gary Okihiro, Moon-Ho Jung, and Mae Ngai, by exposing the limitations and contradictions of pervasive American discourses such as assimilation, liberalism, and multiculturalism, have critiqued Asian American citizen-subjectivity as a project of the U.S. nation-state to elide empire and employ further subjugation of marginalized communities.<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>16</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich ed. *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> See for example Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*. For similar works in other disciplines, see Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Colleen Lye, *America's Asia Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); and Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011). Many scholars of Filipino American history have demonstrated that empire lay at the heart of Asian American Studies. See for example, Rick Baldoz; *The Third*

critical approach in the field has also shaped new studies of Asian American urban space. By framing analyses of ethnic enclave formation around race and empire, a new wave of historians have questioned and challenged the proclaimed natural cycle of self-segregation and assimilation. Scholars such as Kay Anderson, Nayan Shah, and Mary Lui reveal how racial and sexual borders have historically and currently demarcated Chinatown neighborhoods, shaping the racialization of Chinese in North America since the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> The formation of ethnic enclaves, as these historians and others have argued, was a regime to maintain power within the racial landscape of urbanizing America as opposed to a manifestation of the supposed insular nature of immigrant communities and eventual assimilation as American citizen-subjects.

While these recent historical works have paved new paths in the literature of enclaves, studies on ethnic urban space have nevertheless continued to be mired in the pervasiveness and appeal of assimilationist narratives dominating the field, particularly on explanations of why

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*Asiatic Invasion: Migration and Empire in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Catherine Ceniza-Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Kramer, *The Blood of Government*; and Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Other scholars in other disciplines have also pushed the field to seriously consider the centrality of empire in the study of Filipinos. See, for example, Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Dylan Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Martin Ponce, *Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder Miscegenation, and other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005). See also John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Kathryne Mitchell, *Crossing the Neoliberal Line: Pacific Rim Migration and the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

Filipino ethnic neighborhoods have, by and large, been non-existent. Many scholars have attributed the absence of a discernible Filipino district in the United States to many factors. Some cite the lack of a strong history and culture of entrepreneurship among Filipinos, while others assert that the lack of leadership and unity in the Filipino American community.<sup>19</sup> Most have pointed to the dominance of English as a main lingua-franca in the Philippines, making more English-speaking Filipino immigrants more apt to traditional wage labor and thus, not dependent on an ethnic economy, one of the precipitating factors of an ethnic enclave. The prevailing thought is that Filipinos, due to their colonial history, were “more assimilated” to American society by the time they migrated to the United States.

As a result, although the literature on Filipino urban space is fairly limited, most, if not all, have focused their arguments as to whether or not Filipino Towns existed during the pre-WWII era. Journalist Carey McWilliams first asserted that Filipinos “have not...created permanent settlements” perhaps because of their “high degree of mobility...coupled with the fact that there is little settled family life among them.” Their “‘little Manila’ districts,” McWilliams continued, “are really just centers where they gather in periods between jobs or for purposes of entertainment.”<sup>20</sup> Ronald Takaki likewise suggested that Filipinos “did not develop their own ethnic sections in cities” because of the migratory nature of Filipino agricultural workers and

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<sup>19</sup> Both Sucheng Chan and Ronald Takaki argue that Filipino Americans never developed ethnic enclaves due to Filipinos’ presumed lack of entrepreneurial skills, English-language ability, and transitory work lives. Thus, they suggest that Filipinos “assimilate better” than other Asian immigrant groups. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 336-337; and Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 41; Augusto Espiritu, “The Rise and Fall of the Filipino Town Campaign in Los Angeles: A Study in Filipino American Leadership,” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992). See also Ray Lawrence Tiger, “The Filipino Community in Los Angeles: A Survey of Attitudes and Activities, 1978” (Ph.D. diss: University of California, Los Angeles, 1979); and MC Canlas, *SoMa Pilipinas: Studies 2000* (San Francisco: Arkipelago Books, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (New York: Little Brown & Company), 238.

hence did not have a sustainable population to support an enclave business center. Moreover, he suggested that the “Little Manila” districts in Stockton and Los Angeles “were mainly gathering centers for migratory workers...not places to live and build long-term communities.” In this context, Little Manila communities can be seen as appearing and disappearing depending on a transient population. Stockton’s Filipino population, Takaki noted, reached six thousand during the asparagus season in the summer, but fell to one thousand during the winter. Sucheng Chan asserts that cultural determinants such as the lack of entrepreneurship and the linguistic ability of Filipinos to speak English prevented Little Manilas from flourishing before and after WWII.<sup>21</sup> According to this train of thought, the lack of “permanent settlements” in the pre-WWII era facilitated the demise of Little Manila districts during postwar urban renewal.

However, recent scholars have refuted such claims of absence of “real” Filipino ethnic enclaves. Linda España-Maram, in her study of Filipino American masculinity in Los Angeles, challenges Takaki and McWilliams, that they “miss the point” because Filipino workers, “precisely because their livelihoods depended on mobility, created networks of portable communities.” Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, in her social history of Filipinos in Stockton, convincingly conveys that a “vibrant” Little Manila neighborhood flourished in downtown Stockton, attracting Filipinos from all over the West Coast.<sup>22</sup> However, instead of arguing over

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<sup>21</sup> Bruno Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to the Continental United States and Hawaii* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1931).

<sup>22</sup> While she interrogates Takaki’s assertion that Filipinos lacked the ability to build ethnic enclaves like other Asian Americans, namely Chinese and Japanese Americans, in suggesting that Filipinos instead build “portable” ones, Linda España-Maram neglects to challenge the racial and gendered definition of a “long-term community.” Essentially, her argument reinforces perceived natural differences between Filipinos and other Asian Americans when the former could very much be “stable” and the latter “transient.” After all, it was at their most transient phase when Filipinos had the most “stable” ethnic neighborhoods. Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press), 37; Dawn Bohulano Mabalon,

the existence of specifically-defined ethnic neighborhoods and/or “portable” communities – which, by and large, rely on arbitrary measurements of a population’s ability to build an “enclave” in a specifically defined area – I examine the discourses that are produced by the various manifestations of Filipino urban space. Building on these earlier scholarly works, my dissertation questions and critiques how the propagation of racial and sexual borders constructed such spaces and how the trope of assimilation and suburbanization played, and continues to play, a major role in both concealing and furthering hegemonic power. Race and empire, I argue, shaped Filipino urban spaces, in ways that other scholars point to – such as housing and migratory patterns, employment, business practices, and historical memory – in the development, destruction, and continuing reclamation of ethnic neighborhoods. With this in mind, “From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” suggests the need to challenge and critique multicultural narratives that dominate the field.

Focusing on race and empire, I believe, can likewise help move the field of U.S. urban history towards a more racial and global perspective. Seminal works in urban history, like Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Herbert Gans’ *The Urban Villagers*, and Kenneth Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier*, while providing an extensive history of urban development in the United States, rarely discuss how U.S. race relations and global expansion played a role in the development of cities.<sup>23</sup> Even urban histories that examine Los Angeles tend

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*Little Manila is in the Heart The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961); Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). See also Eric H. Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987).

to disregard race and enclose the city's development within a national framework, despite its historical and contemporary global connections.<sup>24</sup> However, historians such as Arnold Hirsch, Thomas Sugrue, George Lipsitz, and others have sought to establish race as an integral aspect of urban development by conveying how the politics of race and place have worked in tandem to maintain white hegemony in urban cities throughout the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

Even urban history scholarship that focus on race has generally followed traditional U.S. historiography that tends to separate domestic affairs and foreign policy into different spheres, reinforcing liberal notions of developing the United States into “a more perfect union.” To examine racial and spatial formations as simply products of social and political contingencies within the United States can limit the understanding of American race relations and urban development. As such, recent scholars like Mike Davis, Charlotte Brooks, and William

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<sup>24</sup> See Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Leyton, U.T.: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1946); Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); and Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). Janet Abu-Lughod, on the other hand, argues that the development of Los Angeles had always been a “world city” despite scholarship that suggests that globalization is a recent trend. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). For more on “global cities” in the era of post-Fordism, see the extensive work of Saskia Sassen, particularly *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994); and *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origin of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996; and George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011). See also Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Deverell, influenced by the growing corpus of studies on American empire, have broadened the historical purview of cities beyond national borders and illustrated how urban development was shaped by U.S. expansion in addition to white hegemony.<sup>26</sup> These historians, and others, aptly demonstrate how global forces very much shaped local formations.

By weaving through and building on these fields – Asian American history and U.S. urban history – I too seek to understand and reveal the inextricable links between local communities and global processes. As such, “From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” is an attempt to write history from what Asian American historian Gary Okihiro suggests as the “margins.” Okihiro argues that the centrality of American history lay not in the traditional Eurocentric “mainstream,” but rather originate from peoples who occupy the “margins.”<sup>27</sup> Exploring how Filipino migration, racialization, and spatialization in Los Angeles emerged within and against U.S. imperial expansion, a local history of Filipino urban space in Los Angeles can uncover and critique the contradictions and ironies of race and empire, which indeed lay at the heart of U.S. history.

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<sup>26</sup> Works on American empire include Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); and Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2002). Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1989); William Deverell’s *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Charlotte Brooks’ *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*.

## **Methodology**

A dissertation that studies Filipino Americans spanning several decades requires a multitude of sources and approaches. As a historian, I certainly relied on traditional archived materials such as newspapers, government documents, and meeting reports to chronicle the historical events of the period. English-language Filipino newspapers such as *Filipino Nation*, *Associated Filipino Press*, and *Philippine American News* found in various archives were vital in understanding Filipino life in Los Angeles. Moreover, I traveled to several archives to research a myriad of collections, exploring both established and previously untapped collections. The Carey McWilliams Papers at UCLA, the James Earl Wood Collection at UC Berkeley, and written master's theses on Filipino Americans by students at the University of Southern California, though thoroughly examined by other scholars, have nonetheless provided much value to my dissertation. However, recently compiled and untouched collections such as the John Fante Papers at UCLA, the Steffi San Buenaventura Papers at UC Davis, and the Records of the Office of War Information at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland offered new sources on Filipino American history. Even an unplanned, spontaneous trip to the Philippines with my mother allowed me to unearth reports of the Philippine Consulate of Los Angeles from the unofficial archives of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, a catalogue still unavailable to the public.

Additionally, a series of oral histories, some archived and others I conducted, supplemented these written materials. Over the course of my research, I conducted nearly thirty interviews with persons, both Filipino and non-Filipino alike, who were familiar with the Filipino American community dating back to the 1920s. Moreover, while some interviewees were heavily involved in community affairs, I intentionally included some who were not quite as

active to obtain a wide variety of experiences and perspectives of Filipino life in Los Angeles. Considering my emphasis on how larger structural forces affected everyday life, in addition to the overall dearth of written sources on Filipinos particularly after World War II, oral histories proved vital to unlocking histories that have remained occluded in official records.

In that same vein, I felt the need to cross disciplines in my dissertation. At some points in my dissertation, particularly in the immediate post-WWII period, traditional archival materials were simply not enough to understand the historical shifts of Filipino American racialization. I relied on literary works, photos, maps, and other ephemera to help paint a fuller historical picture of the Filipino community of the period. I not only drew on methods from social, political, and urban histories in my dissertation, but I also employed some elements of textual and spatial analysis of these sources to uncover hidden traces of Filipino American representations in materials where it was not so apparent. By adding some multi-disciplinary approaches to this dissertation, my hope is to affix new lenses of analysis to Filipino American history and underscore the often-overlooked complexities of race and empire in local everyday life.

## **Outline of Dissertation**

“From ‘Little Brown Brothers’ to ‘Forgotten Asian Americans’” is organized into five chapters and a conclusion. Beginning with the American imperial conquest of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, Chapter 1 outlines the initial labor migration of Filipinos as American colonial subjects to Los Angeles. While discourses of “benevolent assimilation” helped fuel and rationalize U.S. occupation, Filipinos’ perceived inability to “assimilate” to white society in the U.S. metropole exposed the contradictions of American empire. In this chapter, I argue that Filipinos’ entry into the political economy of the United States during the

American colonial period rested on their marginalization and segregation, creating a sense of the community's "hyper-visibility" in the United States, particularly with the formation and racialization of the Little Manila neighborhood in Los Angeles. While Filipinos entered the city's labor market as low-wage workers, whites contained and isolated Filipinos in the increasingly deteriorating downtown area. To guard against the shock of urbanization and racism, the largely rural Filipino population developed a Little Manila district in downtown Los Angeles as a safe space alongside other non-white communities. Their corporeal presence in vice districts, however, exacerbated the racialization of Filipinos as moral and sexual deviants, especially among city officials who sought to return downtown to its former glory. Filipinos' visibility in these segregated neighborhoods conversely further fueled anti-Filipino sentiment that led to calls for their exclusion and deportation. As a result, with pressure from Progressive reformers, city officials employed urban planning strategies in an attempt to contain and rid the city of this visible problem. The Los Angeles Police Department, in particular, played an integral role in containing and harassing Filipinos in Little Manila. As Filipinos pushed beyond the racial and moral boundaries ascribed to them, white nativists sought the exclusion of Filipinos from the United States. However, doing so meant that U.S. legislators had to come to terms with the contradictions between Filipino migration and formal colonization of the Philippines.

White hostility towards the corporeal presence of Filipinos in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s made "assimilation" on American shores an impossibility due to the large number of whites who sought their exclusion and marginalization. Nonetheless, there was a small cadre of sympathizers based in Los Angeles who concomitantly wrote and preached about Filipinos' unfair treatment in the United States and their ability to be "civilized" and

“Christianized,” calling on whites to accept and adopt tenets of this benevolent cause. In Chapter 2, I focus on three movements in Los Angeles that were central to leading the charge for Filipino assimilation into American society during this era. Emerging at the same time as the height of the anti-immigrant movement was the field of sociology and its theoretical concepts of assimilation in the United States. Emory Bogardus, professor and founder of the Sociology Department at the University of Southern California and a key figure of the Chicago School, was one of the few public thinkers who believed, at the height of anti-Filipino sentiment, that Filipino immigrants were in fact conditioned for integration. Likewise, the American Christian missionary movement, which gained traction in the Philippines at the beginning of American occupation, would eventually become a leading voice for Filipino American civil rights in the pre-WWII period. In Los Angeles, several white missionaries, who possessed firsthand experience in Christianizing missions in the Philippines at the turn of the century, would help local Filipinos establish a church that would apparently help them become indoctrinated to “American Christian values.” Finally, many secular, Depression-era literary writers in California wrote popular works that would attempt to shed a positive light on Filipinos in an otherwise dark era, helping to obscure the history of American imperial violence in the Philippines. The discourses that these three movements produced had profound implications on the spatiality of Filipinos in Los Angeles. These liberal writers believed Little Manila was essentially a “staging area” for Filipinos’ eventual integration into society, once they shed their notoriously foreign influences of their ghetto environment.

By tracing the lives of these writers and scholars and conducting close readings of their works, I contend that despite their progressive intentions, the discourses of assimilation they produced and attempted to spread across society enabled and justified American imperialism in

the Philippines. The trope of U.S. racial uplift during this period not only paralleled but was also teleologically linked with imperial discourses of “benevolent assimilation” of Filipinos in the Philippines. Like American colonial administrators in the Philippines who mandated that Filipinos be educated in the culture and politics of American democracy to achieve independence, these liberals in Los Angeles preached that local Filipinos simply needed to adopt American familial values to avoid racial injustice and become modern liberal subjects of the United States. In turn, white Americans needed to be accepting of Filipinos and be patient with their “adjustment” process. Filipino residential concentration in Little Manila districts, for example, would decline once Filipinos adopted white normative values and moved to suburban neighborhoods. In tethering the discourse of assimilation with Filipino residential patterns in Los Angeles, I suggest, whites used the attainment of cultural citizenship in suburban America as an extension and fulfillment of America’s imperial project of “benevolent assimilation.”

If liberal thinkers lobbied for the “assimilation” of Filipino Americans at the height of the anti-Filipino movement, U.S. state officials reinforced and furthered that call as the United States entered a worldwide conflict. In Chapter 3, I examine Filipino American participation in World War II and how their shift in racialization was rooted in US wartime policy. By examining how the United States altered its policy towards the Philippines from “colony” to “ally” due to the war with Japan, I argue that this imperial policy during World War II directed and shaped the multicultural integration of Filipinos into the American liberal fold. As the United States sought to frame itself as an anti-racist, anti-colonial power during the war, U.S. state officials once again used Filipinos as an example of the benevolence of American democracy. The valorization of Filipinos as loyal American allies in the battlefields of the Philippines and in the various ways

Filipinos in the United States needed to display their loyalty in the U.S. military and on the domestic front fed American empire's ascension as the apparent "leader of the free world."

However, wartime policy and legislation – such as the establishment of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Battalions, the Fair Employment Practices Committee, the War Brides Act, and the Luce Celler Act, that seemed to allow Filipinos to enter both legal and social citizenry in the United States – were always limited and contingent on U.S. imperial needs. Though depicting Filipinos in a sympathetic light, World War II films and wartime patriotic displays, for example, were in actuality tools to maintain American hegemony. Additionally, Filipinos' entry into the manufacturing industry through the seemingly dismantling of workplace discrimination was necessary for transpacific military expansion rather than a practical destruction of racial hierarchies. Finally, the U.S. Congress granted Philippine independence in 1946 and passed a series of post-war legislation as a public display of American benevolence. Ultimately, the geopolitical production of the "ally" trope before and during World War II shifted local racial ideology and allowed Filipinos unprecedented access to certain, though limited, civil and economic rights. However, such a policy change was less an act of true equality, but rather a strategy to demonstrate to the world that the United States was an anti-imperial and anti-racist power in order to justify global expansion.

With the end of World War II and an unprecedented boom in the American economy spurred by Cold War Keynesian capitalism, Los Angeles vied to become a modern global city. Central to Los Angeles's transformation in the postwar period was an increased policy of racial liberalism as Americans wanted to project an image of tolerance in the war against Communism. However, as I will convey in Chapter 4, liberal acceptance into American society in the age of civil rights meant filtering "undesirables" from society and erasing vestiges of America's racist

and colonial past. Those who did not conform to American familial ideals were ostracized marginalized, and rendered dispensable. This transformation can be clearly conveyed in the shift of urban planning in Southern California and the development of a new and modern downtown Los Angeles during the postwar period. I explore how urban planning carried out the mission of building a multicultural Los Angeles and its effects on the Filipino American community. By examining which elements city officials propagated and which they destroyed or hid in constructing a new, modern metropolis, I illustrate the new racial lines whites drew in the city. I argue that the twin processes of suburbanization and urban renewal erased and filtered the memory of Filipino presence in the city to meet the needs of white Americans. Attempting to partake in the “American dream,” many Filipinos in Los Angeles formed families and took advantage of their newly acquired citizenship to purchase homes outside of Little Manila. As Filipinos started to move away from downtown Los Angeles to homes in the Temple Street neighborhood and other areas, local leaders began to reorient the Filipino community around the nuclear family in an attempt to conform to American familial ideals, despite their relegation to the inner suburb.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Filipino bachelors who did not fit into that ideal, since they continued to live the “Little Manila lifestyle,” became ostracized from the community. Whites and Filipino community leaders, however, continued to view Little Manila as “immoral,” “deteriorating,” and “queer.” I end the chapter by highlighting the series of city urban renewal projects that disinvested and destroyed downtown’s Little Manila neighborhood.

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<sup>28</sup> An inner suburb is a term used to refer to the various suburban communities that have close proximity to a large city. Bernadette Hanlon, *Once the American Dream: Inner-Ring Suburbs of the Metropolitan United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012). Although the Temple Street neighborhood lay within the city of Los Angeles, as I argue in Chapter 4, Filipinos during the mid-twentieth century saw this area as “suburbia,” dislodging conventional urban planning definitions and notions of suburbs and suburbanization.

In the final chapter, I expose the limitations and contradictions of Filipino campaigns for American inclusion and political visibility since the 1960s through the various attempts at designating the Temple Street neighborhood as “Filipino Town.” As Filipino labor migration skyrocketed as a result of the 1965 Immigration Act, politicians embraced multiculturalism in Los Angeles. The rise of the local Filipino American identity movement that paralleled and was a part of the larger Asian American movement, and the changing demographics of the Filipino community caused many leaders who believed in reformist causes to lament their lack of political power in the city despite their growing numbers. This is especially apparent as ethnic neighborhoods began gaining political capital as sites for community empowerment. During this period, many groups aimed to reclaim and organize ethnic centers such as Watts, East LA, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo, while Filipino Americans struggled to identify and develop a Filipino Town to gain civic recognition from the city to access welfare state funding for their community. With the lack of a discernible ethnic enclave, different community leaders tried several times to develop a Filipino Town during the 1970s and 1980s. However, city disinvestment in the Temple-Beverly area, lack of community and political support for the project, and the continuing inability for Filipinos to develop an ethnic enclave tourist economy prevented Filipino Town from coming into fruition. The Filipino community’s inability to create a Filipino tourist destination, a space that essentially filtered and erased historical and contemporary iterations of U.S. empire, prevented them from attaining government resources for community social programs. Indicative of the power of race-liberal ideology, Filipino Americans’ desire to become “visible” in multicultural America led to the erasure of American empire.

Ultimately, by framing my dissertation around race and empire, I seek to critique the liberal narratives of immigration and assimilation that dominate the field of Asian American Studies and urban history, particularly among studies of ethnic neighborhoods. The chapters that follow reveal the various discourses, traces, and shifts of American empire that shaped Filipino American space in Los Angeles and the various ways in which Filipino subjects negotiated, challenged, and even enabled imperial hegemony in their own social relationships. It is my hope, then, to encourage an understanding of how race and empire have been and continue to be inscribed in everyday life. Efforts to pursue a social justice agenda for Filipinos, therefore, must go beyond campaigns of recovery and commemoration to fulfill the unfulfilled promise of U.S. citizenship. Rather, they must address and dismantle the various contradictions and nuances of hegemonic power afflicting Filipinos in globalized local sites.

## **Chapter 1:** **Little Manila and the Corporeality of Filipinos in the Los Angeles Metropole**

On January 18, 1933, Frank L. Shaw, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, introduced a resolution calling for the support of a congressional bill to deport Filipinos living in the United States back to the Philippines. Shaw's public message for the resolution rested on his claim that an estimated seventy-five percent of the 12,000 Filipinos living in Los Angeles were unemployed and thus an unproductive population on American shores.<sup>1</sup> The following day, Murray Garsson, assistant to Labor Secretary William N. Doak, appeared in front of the House Immigration Committee and Naturalization to testify that his recent investigation of the Filipino community in Los Angeles revealed that the Census Bureau administered a huge undercount of Filipinos. According to the 1930 Census, there was an estimated 45,000 Filipinos living in the United States. Garsson, however, suggested that Filipinos numbered 80,000 in Los Angeles alone and that over eighty percent of them were unemployed. Garsson continued his testimony, suggesting that "sixty to seventy percent of [Filipinos] would return to the islands if free transportation were provided," since the majority of them were "young, unmarried men."<sup>2</sup> In detailing his discovery of the horrific living conditions of Filipinos in Los Angeles's "Filipino colony," Garsson described a situation in which several

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<sup>1</sup> "Shaw Plans Movement to Send Filipinos Home," *Los Angeles Examiner*, January 18, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> "Filipino Plan Urged by Doak," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1933.

men lived together in a single room, “sharing beds in shifts of three,” rotating sleepers throughout the day and night.<sup>3</sup>

Surely, the greatly exaggerated numbers of Filipino bodies within the borders of the United States was in part a strategy of bureaucratic officials to alarm federal legislators into passing a law to exclude America’s colonial subjects from the nation’s borders and a subsequent law to deport any Filipinos residing in the United States. The vastly inflated percentage of unemployed Filipinos and deplorable living conditions of Filipinos in Los Angeles added to the narrative that Filipinos were a drain on the economy particularly during the Great Depression and a testament to their inability to be a part of American society. Unlike their counterparts in Northern California, which had well-established organizations like the Native Sons of the Golden West, the American Legion, and the Commonwealth Club, white nativists in Los Angeles never formally organized against Filipino exclusion. Most white Angelenos during the pre-World War II period were preoccupied with repatriating Mexicans and containing the Japanese.<sup>4</sup>

Although Los Angeles had a relative absence of violent outbreaks against Filipinos and an organized anti-Filipino movement, the city was by no means a sanctuary for Filipinos. Most witnesses who testified at federal hearings during the anti-Filipino movement were local government officials from Los Angeles. Like Shaw and Garsson, these political and bureaucratic men consistently over-emphasized the burden of Filipinos based on their particular

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Congress, *To Return Unemployed Filipinos to the Philippine Islands*, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization Hearings on HJ 549, 72d Congress, 2d session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933), 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Natalia Molina, *Fit To Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

experience, conditions, and locality in the city. Many of these officials exercised their political and legislative power to segregate and contain the Filipino population in any way possible.

Eventually, the growing visibility of Filipinos on the streets of Los Angeles and elsewhere on the West Coast prompted city officials and other white exclusionists to identify and campaign against the growing “Filipino problem” in the United States, calling into question America’s imperial occupation in the Philippines.

In this chapter, I argue that the formation and racialization of Los Angeles’s “Filipino colony,” or Little Manila, was not the result of the self-segregation of an immigrant population resistant to assimilate, but rather it was a spatial manifestation of U.S. imperialism. As the United States solidified its colonial rule over the Philippines, fueled and rationalized by a rhetoric of “benevolent assimilation,” Filipinos entered the West Coast’s labor market as low-wage workers in the agricultural and service industries. In concert with the national sentiment for racial exclusion, whites in Los Angeles contained and isolated Filipinos in the increasingly deteriorating downtown area as part of a systematic agenda to sustain a white metropolis. As Filipinos formed the Little Manila neighborhood, they were made legible through racialized tropes of immorality and sexual deviance, solidifying the racial and gender borders of Little Manila. With pressure from downtown elites, city officials employed urban planning strategies in an attempt to contain and rid the city of this visible “problem.” Filipinos’ “hyper-visibility” in these neighborhoods conversely further fueled anti-Filipino sentiment that led to calls for their exclusion and deportation. Since Filipinos’ entry into the political economy of the United States during the American colonial period rested on their urbanization, segregation, and containment, Los Angeles’s Little Manila ultimately served as a site that both constructed and demonstrated

their racialization as “unassimilable,” contrasting and calling into question America’s “benevolent assimilation” policies in the Philippines.

In this chapter, I first outline the American colonial project in the Philippines at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which facilitated the initial migration of Filipinos to the United States. When West coast industrialists recruited Filipinos to fill cheap labor needs in the period immediately after the passage of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, whites systematically segregated and contained Filipinos to menial jobs and urban ghettos. I convey how Filipinos in Los Angeles created ways to guard against the shock of urbanization and urban forms of racism, including the formation of a Little Manila district as a safe space alongside other communities of color. In urban cities on the West coast, the largely male Filipino population crowded into non-white downtown areas that increasingly experienced the flight of white capital. Then, I convey how Filipino corporeality and their perceived immorality in this downtown area were then used as reasons for white city leaders to devise ways to rescue the deteriorating city center and build a new downtown that was safe for white, familial capital to return after World War II. I then document the integral role the Los Angeles Police Department played in containing the non-white populations on the Eastside of Los Angeles and ensuring their dispersal into other parts of the city. As Filipinos continued to contest and challenge the racial and gender borders designed to contain them, both white nativists and Philippine nationalists lobbied government legislators to separate the ambiguous link between Filipino migration and U.S. imperialism, resulting in the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934.

## Illogic of American Empire and Filipino Migration

Although Filipino migration to the United States was heterogeneous, it was always dependent on imperial needs and desires. Small numbers of Filipinos who labored on Spanish ships migrated to North America possibly as early as the 1560s as a result of the Spanish-instituted Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade and established small settlements in Western Mexico, California, and Louisiana.<sup>5</sup> American imperial expansion to the edge of the Pacific with the Spanish-American War in 1898 as its formal entry point ushered the beginnings of large-scale Filipino migration into the United States.<sup>6</sup>

As the Philippine revolution in the 1890s came close to ending more than three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule, American imperial interests disrupted Philippine nationalist desires for independence during the Spanish-American War. Through U.S. Navy Admiral George Dewey, who had promised to assist Philippine General Emilio Aguinaldo in achieving independence from Spain, the United States conspired to gain an imperial foothold by remaining in Philippines. Spain, preferring to surrender to a Western nation rather than its colony, ceded its Pacific colony, in addition to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam, for \$20 million in the Treaty of Paris in 1898. Suppressing Filipino revolutionaries into American submission, however, was not

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<sup>5</sup> Fred Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (Dubuque, I.A.: Kendall/Hunt, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> To properly situate this study as a challenge to the limitations and contradictions of assimilation models that dominates the politics of Asian American communities, a paradigm shift in the view of this history of Filipino migration to the United States is necessary. Prevailing accounts of Filipino American history that have gained currency among popular audiences usually highlight Filipinos' historical "contribution" to the building of the United States. Many Filipino Americans, for example, tout that Filipinos migrated to the American continent prior to the nation's founding in 1776 as a way to claim liberal inclusion into the U.S. polity and to debunk the continuing Asian American racialization as a "forever foreigner." See, for example, Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans*. Yet, to suggest that these Filipino "pioneers" laid the foundation for "Filipino America" deemphasizes the fact that they, like Filipino Americans today, came to the West as a result of capitalist exploitation and western imperialism.

without bloodshed. Over the next few years beginning in 1899, Filipino and American soldiers engaged in a violent war of imperial conquest that left hundreds of thousands of Filipinos dead.<sup>7</sup>

Expanding the U.S. empire into the Pacific involved convincing the American public that the U.S. legislators' objective was democratic and liberatory in nature. Those in support of annexing the Philippines justified their involvement across the Pacific to American anti-imperialists through the construction of a racialized policy of "benevolent assimilation," which rested on a desire to prepare Filipinos for national self-rule. As President William McKinley proclaimed, "We could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government...there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."<sup>8</sup> Hence, by racializing and infantilizing Filipinos as savage, immature, and indolent, American imperialists contended that intervention in the Philippines was absolutely necessary. Essentially, the racialization of Filipinos as inferior and in need of American guidance solved in their minds the U.S. contradiction of proclaiming a belief in democratic freedom and its actual policies of imperial expansion. U.S. colonial officials established American-style systems of government, education, and health in the Philippines as part of a modern nation-building program, which allowed U.S. political, corporate, and military

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<sup>7</sup> For detailed accounts on the atrocities of the Philippine American War, see Luzviminda Francisco, "The Philippine American War," in *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmir and Stephan Rosskamm Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 5-19; and Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 87-158.

<sup>8</sup> General James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate* 22, January 1903, 17. Reprinted in Schirmer and Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader*, 22-23.

interests to penetrate the new colony. Such policies essentially helped to justify the violence of the American imperialism without the public admission of being an empire.<sup>9</sup>

One key strategy of convincing the American public to endorse the colonization of the Philippines was to recruit Filipinos to the United States. In 1903, the U.S. government sponsored Filipino students to enroll in American universities as part of their colonial education program. Known as the “*pensionado*” program, young Filipinos from elite families received their education in the United States and returned to the Philippines to help structure a government based on American modern state ideals. Coordinated by the Department of Insular Affairs, the initial cohort of ninety-six *pensionados* first landed in San Francisco in November 1903, then immediately transported towards Los Angeles, leaving some in Santa Barbara and in Ventura, while the rest placed at various schools throughout the Southern California area.<sup>10</sup> After a few months in Southern California, the *pensionados* were sent to the St. Louis as part of the Philippine Exhibition at the 1904 World’s Fair, and then dispersed to universities in the Midwest and East Coast. Most, if not all, Filipino students who came to the United States prior to 1924 returned to the Philippines and obtained various government positions.<sup>11</sup>

In a parallel strategy of American imperialism, federal officials coordinated a public relations campaign to convince the ambivalent American public of the benefits and needs of colonial intervention. In anticipation of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis,

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the development of American colonial institutions in the Philippines, see for example Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 119-166; Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006); Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 159-228, 285-346; Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 19-51.

<sup>10</sup> “Fine Filipino Boys Are Ours,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1903.

<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 55.

Philippine civil governor William Howard Taft ordered the Philippine Commission to organize an exhibit of native Filipino people. U.S. officials imported 1,100 people from the Philippines to the fair in a display of America's newly conquered population. In juxtaposing Christianized Filipinos with non-Christian peoples, mainly *Igorots*, the fair's organizers aimed to demonstrate to the white public the need for American colonial occupation in Asia. Audiences viewed *Igorots* through staged performances of tribal customs with both awe and disgust because of their seeming lack of civility, and thus necessitating American tutelage.<sup>12</sup>

Though initial government-sponsored importation of Filipinos operated as attempts to showcase the benevolence of American colonization, corporate interests shortly thereafter saw the new Philippine colony as a supply of cheap labor. U.S. companies began wide-scale recruitment of Filipinos in the growing agricultural industry. In 1906, the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association, in an effort to quell the Japanese labor movement in Hawaii's sugar industry, began recruiting Filipinos to work in the sugarcane fields, targeting the areas in the Ilocos region and parts of the Visayas, to avoid tapping into the labor pool of the domestic Philippine sugar industry.<sup>13</sup> Although initial Filipino migration started slowly, plantation owners soon intensified their recruitment efforts in response to the 1909 Japanese labor strike. By 1916, over twenty thousand Filipinos labored in Hawaii's sugar plantations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 195. For more on the Philippine exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair, see Jose D. Fermin, *1904 World's Fair: The Filipino Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2004); and Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 229-284.

<sup>13</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 183-191.

Military employment was also a means by which Filipinos landed on American shores, particularly enlistment in the U.S. Navy. With the establishment of the largest overseas military bases in the Philippines, U.S. military officials recruited Filipinos as early as 1901 to work as stewards, cooks, and other service sector positions as part of the federal government's "civilizing" mission via military discipline. As American military installations expanded around the globe, Filipinos increasingly became laborers aboard ships serving white officers. Once discharged, many settled in West Coast port cities such as Bremerton, Vallejo, San Pedro/Long Beach, and San Diego and worked in nearby shipyards and in other military-related industries. By 1917, there were two thousand Filipinos serving in the US Navy. Between World War I and World War II, an average of four thousand Filipinos enlisted in the US Navy every year.<sup>15</sup>

By 1920, the U.S. Census counted approximately 5,603 Filipinos in the United States (excluding Hawaii). Although some racial skirmishes against Filipinos occurred, the trickle of Filipino migration hardly posed a large enough problem to enter American public discourse. Moreover, the events of the Philippine-American War at the turn of the twentieth century no longer dominated newspaper headlines. By 1920, most Americans, particularly on the West coast, had little to no contact with the minute number of Filipinos in the United States nor did the continued American occupation of the Philippines occupy their minds. However, beginning in the mid-1920s, Filipinos and American imperialism once again entered the national conversation when West coast agricultural industries began heavily recruiting Filipinos to work in the fields of California, orchards in the Pacific Northwest, and salmon canneries in Alaska. After a series of immigration laws, culminating with the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, Filipinos became

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<sup>15</sup> Jesse G. Quinsaat, "An Exercise on How to Join the Navy and Still Not See the World," in *Letters in Exile: An Introductory Reader on the History of Pilipinos in America*, ed. Jesse G. Quinsaat (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976), 105.

the most available foreign-born labor force since they were legally classified as neither “aliens” nor “citizens,” but as the ambiguous imperial category of “nationals” as a result of the Philippines’ colonial status. As a result, the population increased exponentially by 1930 when the US Census Bureau counted 45,026 Filipinos.<sup>16</sup>

The majority of Filipinos, approximately eighty percent, worked in the agricultural sector along the West Coast and led migratory lives following the seasonal patterns of various crops and produce. During the growing and harvest seasons of spring and autumn, respectively, Filipinos would work in the agricultural fields of California and the Pacific Northwest, growing and picking tomatoes in the Imperial Valley, grapes in Delano, strawberries in Santa Maria, asparagus in Stockton, lettuce in Salinas, and apples in Yakima Valley. During the summer months, a significant number of Filipino migrant laborers traveled to Alaska to work in the salmon canning industry. During the winter months, many Filipinos flocked to the larger urban centers along the Pacific, namely Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, to work as bell hops, busboys, cooks, and other service sector jobs.<sup>17</sup>

Filipinos’ growing numbers in the United States alarmed many white exclusionists on the West coast, generating much racial anxiety over the seemingly open national borders. Threats of miscegenation, disease, and labor competition that they believed Filipinos brought with them to

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<sup>16</sup> Ancestry.com. *1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*. Vol. 3, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932). Many Filipinos who migrated to prior to World War II had aspirations to study in American universities. Unlike earlier *pensionados*, however, they lacked the financial aid of the federal government. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power*, 51-73. Nonetheless, according to one study, Filipino self-supporting students totaled 13,916 between 1910 and 1938. Benicio Catapusán, “Problems of Filipino Students in America,” *Sociology and Social Research* 26, no. 2 (November-December 1941): 146-153.

<sup>17</sup> Linda Espana-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 20.

the United States undermined American aspirations of a benevolent empire. As more colonial subjects crossed American borders, an increased number of white supremacist groups lobbied their federal representatives to address the “Filipino problem.” Meanwhile, government legislators were slow to react to nativist demands of exclusion because of the legal contradictions of maintaining and admitting American imperial presence in the Philippines as well as the strong lobbying efforts of Western agricultural interests dependent on Filipinos for cheap labor. As Philippine Speaker of the House Manuel Roxas reminded U.S. legislators during Congressional hearings on Filipino migration, “It is unjust to exclude Filipinos from the United States while Americans assume the right to enter the Philippines without restriction.”<sup>18</sup> The “Filipino problem” exposed U.S. colonization of the Philippines, blurring the lines between citizen and alien, domestic and foreign, democracy and empire. Whites on the West coast, fully experienced in anti-Asian movements, thus asserted their own system of local control over what nativists called the “Third Asiatic Invasion.”<sup>19</sup> While legislators sought ways to address the Filipino “problem” without addressing the contradiction of American occupation in the Philippines, Filipinos’ continued entrance into the political economy of Los Angeles rested on their urbanization, segregation, and containment.

### **Colonial Subjects in Los Angeles**

Although transient due to migrant labor constrictions, most Filipinos concentrated in numerous areas along the West coast by 1930. The vast majority of Filipinos resided in

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Congress, *Exclusion of Immigration from the Philippine Islands*, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization Hearings 71<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), 106.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Representative Richard Welch first referred to Filipino immigration as “the Third Asiatic invasion of our Pacific Coast.” *Ibid.*, 3.

California, with most settling in Northern California, particularly in the San Francisco Bay, Monterey Bay, and San Joaquin Delta areas. The latter two were largely agricultural areas and heavily dependent on Filipino migrant labor. Seattle, Chicago, and New York had the largest number of Filipinos outside of California. The following ten counties had the largest number of Filipinos:

Los Angeles (CA) –	3951
San Francisco (CA) –	3037
Monterey (CA) –	3034
Sacramento (CA) –	2855
San Joaquin (CA) –	2259
King (WA) –	1811
Cook (IL) –	1716
Santa Barbara (CA) –	1313
New York (NY) –	1051
Alameda (CA) –	996 <sup>20</sup>

Despite the transitory nature of agricultural work for the majority of Filipinos in the United States, there was a significant number who found relatively stable employment in urban areas, with Los Angeles as a prime center. As the nation's largest city in the West, Los Angeles became a locus for the Filipino community and had the largest urban Filipino population.

Though a mere agricultural town with a population of 5,728 in 1870, Los Angeles expanded to a full-scale metropolis over the following six decades as city boosters sought to make the city the capitol of both the American west and the Pacific Rim. Rapid industrialization, boom economies, a thriving international trade port, and aggressive boosterism widened Los

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<sup>20</sup> Many scholars and non-scholars have put forth their estimates of Filipino American population numbers. Nativists over-exaggerated their numbers and claimed that over 80,000 Filipinos resided in the United States in order to put fear in the general populace about the “Third Asiatic Invasion.” Filipino community leaders, coincidentally, also over-exaggerated their numbers to demonstrate their growing presence and need for political attention from the U.S. state. Sociologists studying Filipinos attempted their own estimates, but none reflected a strategic scientific enumeration system. While census numbers are quite limiting in that many marginalized communities tend to be undercounted, these numbers tend to be quite revealing.

Angeles' global and domestic reach, bringing capital and people to the city at a fast pace. By 1930, the city had a population of 1.2 million people.

As the West coast's largest city, many Filipinos flocked to Los Angeles, looking to labor in the region's booming economy. Manuel Fiores, a working class Filipino from Manila, for example, first made a living as a seafarer traveling the Pacific Ocean before eventually deciding to stay in Los Angeles. At first he worked as a "cleaning boy" for a restaurant, then he learned to be a mechanic after a short stint at a "filling station in Boyle Heights." By 1937, he was able to make \$30 a week as a mechanic.<sup>21</sup> Primo E. Quevedo, a Filipino student, found steady employment as a store clerk for Bullock's, a premier department store in downtown Los Angeles at the time. Immanuel Tardez joined the United States Coast Guard as a mess boy on the *U.S.S. Ute* in the Pacific before landing in Los Angeles and worked as a cook for John Gilbert, a Hollywood movie star.<sup>22</sup>

Many Filipinos who settled in Los Angeles took circuitous routes to get there. Filipinos, who found work on trains as porters and cooks, traveled to other parts of the United States beyond the West Coast before eventually landing in Southern California. Teofilo Alemania, for example, first arrived in Seattle in 1928, but months after worked as railroad section gang worker, which eventually led him to Chicago. In Chicago, Alemania worked a couple of years playing music in bands at local jazz clubs until he eventually enrolled at Purdue University to study civil engineering. He later established himself as one of the many Filipino American

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<sup>21</sup> Manuel Fiores, Interview by Lundy, March 2, 1937, transcript, "Racial Minority Survey: Filipinos," Federal Writers Project Collection, Box 142, Folder 1086, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Tardez, Interview by Lundy, February 18, 1937, transcript, "Racial Minority Survey: Filipinos," Federal Writers Project Collection, Box 142, Folder 1086.

community leaders in Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, Isidro Canlas first migrated to Buffalo, New York in 1905 to work for George H. Fuller, whom he had befriended when Fuller came to the Philippines as an American soldier and editor of a Manila-based newspaper, *American Freedom*. Fuller brought him to Buffalo and offered him a job. Canlas eventually moved to Long Beach, California in 1910 and worked in the wholesale industry then entered the U.S. Army during World War I in 1917.<sup>24</sup>

Filipinos who found work in the agricultural industry difficult flocked to the cities. When given the opportunity, some Filipinos willingly left the agricultural fields to live in the city. In an interview with researcher James Wood, an agricultural labor boss conveyed his doubt in filling “fifty orders for agricultural workers because the boys (Filipinos) prefer[red] the city” since it is a “gay life [with] more comfort than the country.” Moreover, if he did find Filipino workers to fill these jobs, they would “decide to go and then change their minds.”<sup>25</sup> Bonifacio Aragon Pasag, who had migrated to the United States from Pangasinan in 1929, first worked the salmon canneries in Alaska and then the orchards and fields of Washington and California but eventually found employment as a dishwasher in a Jewish restaurant in Beverly Hills because he “didn’t last long” in the agricultural sector since “it was too hard” and “the [employment] ladders were very high.”<sup>26</sup> Severo Doria Gubatan, a Filipino migrant also from Pangasinan, likewise settled in Los Angeles and worked as a short-order cook once he became tired of the migratory

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<sup>23</sup> Teofilo Alemania, interview by Frances B. Atienza & Remedios Calub, 1980, David Clark Oral History, Collection 2080, Box 7, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>24</sup> Eloisa Borah, “Collecting Family Stories, Saving Filipino American History,” *Our Own Voice*, May 2007.

<sup>25</sup> James Earl Wood, “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection, Box 2, Folder 8, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>26</sup> Rebecca Pasag Joseph, “Short story written by Rebecca Pasag Joseph,” Ms. in author’s possession, n.d. (ca. 1960).

experience in the agricultural industry.<sup>27</sup> In March 1933, more than 200 Filipinos left the Salinas area and fled to the cities because of the extreme low wages growers gave laborers.<sup>28</sup>

Aside from greater employment opportunity, many Filipinos migrated to urban areas as a result of white antagonism towards Filipinos in small rural agricultural communities. As white anxiety intensified up and down the West coast as a result of the increasing number of Filipino migrants, most overt incidents of racial hostility occurred in rural areas where many agricultural companies employed Filipinos. The most widely cited incident in the anti-Filipino movement during the 1930s and making national headlines was the Watsonville Riots when angry white mobs clashed with Filipinos and killed Fermin Tobera.<sup>29</sup> As the Great Depression persisted, Filipinos found it increasingly difficult to find employment, particularly with the growing migration of white Southerners to California entering the agricultural industry.<sup>30</sup>

Not only did the Great Depression and Okie migration limit job opportunities, elected officials in rural towns started to demand the ouster of Filipino laborers from their municipalities to avoid a race riot on behalf of white citizens. For example, in the Alta Loma-Ontario-Upland area, where many Filipinos worked in the citrus industry, local officials demanded that employers rid their labor force of Filipino crews after police authorities arrested Santiago Raynas for killing a 15-year old white girl in 1930. Wanting to avoid similar “race outbreaks” in Watsonville just a few months prior, both political and business interests in the area sought to

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<sup>27</sup> Gerald G. Gubatan, Interview by author, August 5, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> “Filipino’s Quit Salinas Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1933.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the Watsonville Riots, see Howard A. De Witt, *Anti-Filipino Movements in California* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1976); Howard A. De Witt, *Violence in the Fields: California Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1980); and Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Migration and Empire in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> James Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 102, 165-168.

“re-employ the Mexicans they had let out when the Filipinos were employed.” The manager of the Upland Lemon Growers’ Association, L.R. Bradley, in the aftermath of the killing, instructed his foreman to “transfer all Filipino workers elsewhere.” After a committee formed to ensure other employers followed suit, Filipinos began a “general exodus” from these districts.<sup>31</sup>

Racial violence in other rural areas as well resulted in Filipino urban migration. On December 8, 1930, a bomb exploded in a Filipino bunkhouse outside of lettuce fields the Imperial Valley.<sup>32</sup> In 1931, a mob stormed residences where Filipinos lived in the Coachella Valley and forced the laborers to leave the area. In order “to avoid violence and race riots,” many Filipinos quit their jobs and “gathered in groups of four or five and board automobiles bound for Los Angeles.” By the end of the horrific episode, there were “very few Filipinos remaining in the Coachella Valley.”<sup>33</sup> Likewise, whites in Escalon led a similar campaign in 1933 to drive the area’s Filipinos out of town.<sup>34</sup>

Though many Filipinos found some refuge in urban areas, they encountered similar economic and social disadvantages. Perhaps one of the great contrasts between working in the Los Angeles as opposed to rural areas was the lack of union organizing among Filipinos in the city. From their immediate arrival to the plantations in Hawaii and on the U.S. Pacific coast, Filipino farm laborers were heavily active in union organizing.<sup>35</sup> Concentrated in the service

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<sup>31</sup> “Filipino Laborers Exit,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1930; “Work Problem Considered,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1930.

<sup>32</sup> “Bomb Outrage at Imperial, California,” *Filipino Nation*, January 1931.

<sup>33</sup> “Reports of Federation Investigation of Filipino Situation in California,” *Filipino Nation*, March 1931.

<sup>34</sup> “Escalon Whites Drive Out Score of Filipino Boys,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1933.

<sup>35</sup> For more on the Filipino American labor movement, see Howard A. DeWitt, *Violence in the Fields: California Filipino Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression* (Saratoga, C.A.: Century Twenty-One Publishing, 1980); Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,

sector such as in restaurants or households, which have been historically difficult to organize, Filipinos in Los Angeles, by contrast, rarely engaged in strike activities like in the fields of the Central Valley or the canneries of Alaska. Moreover, city leaders during the 1920s institutionalized an “open-shop” policy that prevented unionization particularly in the region’s manufacturing sector. As a result, one editorialist in 1939 estimated that out of 6,000 Filipinos in Los Angeles, only 150 belonged to some organized union. Instead, Filipinos who resided in Los Angeles concentrated on more social activities, particularly within the growing Little Manila district, to mitigate the harsh realities of laboring in the United States. However, such socialization caught the ire of city officials almost immediately and increasingly flamed the fuel of Filipino exclusion.<sup>36</sup>

During the American colonial period in the Philippines, thousands of Filipinos migrated to the United States to labor in the expanding agricultural industry on the West coast, particularly following the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act. While the majority worked the fields of California and Washington and the canning factories of Alaska and other fishery areas, a significant number moved to the region’s urban centers seeking greater economic opportunities. In Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, students, military servicemen, domestic workers, as well as agricultural laborers comprised a great deal of the area’s Filipino population. In addition to the heterogeneity of the Filipino population in urban areas, the sheer diversity of cities lured many who sought relief from hostile rural environments. The experiences of men like Teofilo Alemania and Isidro Canlas exemplify the variations of migration and in-migration streams prior

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1994); and Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Espana-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila*, 44-50; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York, Verso Press, 1990), 28-31; “Editorial Comments,” *The Commonwealth Times*, July 21, 1939.

to World War II and the regimes of oppression as well as strategies of resistance took different forms in the city than in rural areas, to varying degrees of success. Although Filipinos sought greater anonymity and autonomy in a more diverse setting, the particular urban context they encountered made them ironically visible and vulnerable.

### Filipino Space in Los Angeles

As U.S. colonial officials and government leaders continued to argue that American occupation would bring democracy and modernity to the Philippines, Filipino migrants in the colonial metropole experienced quite the opposite, exemplified by the urban racial landscape they encountered. As Filipinos entered the United States in increasing numbers, residential segregation forced Filipinos into ghettoized neighborhoods in numerous West coast cities, usually in downtown areas alongside other non-white communities. In any given time of the year during the pre-WWII era, Filipinos knew to flock to safe spaces such as King Street in Seattle, El Dorado Street in Stockton, Kearny Street in San Francisco, Soledad Street in Salinas, Glenwood Street in Delano, and Fifth Street in San Diego.<sup>37</sup> As segregated communities, these streets served as “Little Manilas” where Filipinos protected themselves from a hostile white-dominated society.

Spatial segregation of Filipinos into specific districts was also the case in Los Angeles. City officials invested considerable resources in building its manufacturing base in order to build the region as the top-manufacturing center on the West Coast and compete in an increasingly global economy. In an effort to not replicate the dense, smokestack, industrially-centered urban development of the Northeast and Midwest, Los Angeles urban planners sought to place factories

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<sup>37</sup> España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila*, 37.

in the peripheries of the city apart from residential districts. However, as Mark Wild suggests, the city specifically located and consolidated these factories in or adjacent to communities of color through newly established zoning ordinances to free the rest of the city from industrial-type facilities, exemplifying the critical relationship between zoning and race.<sup>38</sup> Concomitant with the segregation patterns of the city, Filipinos who resided in Los Angeles usually lived on “The Eastside,” among the other “foreign quarters.”<sup>39</sup>

To subsume Filipino newcomers within the stratified racial geographies of the city and contain those who attempted to traverse ascribed racial boundaries, whites in Los Angeles employed prototypical segregation tactics of West coast cities of the era. San Francisco Obera, for example, a Filipino cook who purchased a house in Alhambra, a small city just east of Los Angeles, was harassed by his neighbors and forced to sell his property back to the original owner in 1929 after a judge handling the case upheld the race restrictive clause in the house’s deed. Obera even sought the help of then Philippine Commissioner Pedro Guevara in Washington DC to no avail. Manuel Buaken, who worked in a restaurant in the Mid-City neighborhood, was forced to travel several miles from his residence downtown because apartments near his

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<sup>38</sup> Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 2-37.

<sup>39</sup> Depending on who one asks, the “Eastside” can mean different geographical locations. For blacks in Los Angeles, the “Eastside” could mean the area around the Central Avenue Corridor, the main neighborhood of black Los Angeles from the early 1900s to the 1950s. For the Mexican community, the “Eastside” represented neighborhoods east of the Los Angeles River, the area in which they were relegated to at that same time period. For present-day young white urban dwellers, the “Eastside” could mean the neighborhoods of Los Feliz, Silver Lake, and Echo Park. These areas represent the “frontier” of white geography and thus ripe for gentrification. Ultimately, residents of Los Angeles have historically used the moniker “Eastside” as marker and dividing line between white and non-white space.; “The Metropolis,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1929.

workplace consistently denied his applications for lease.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, on April 13, 1930, white residents in the southeastern section of Los Angeles, led by William E. Wintermute, filed seven lawsuits against Filipinos who lived in the area “on the ground[s] that they [were] not Caucasians.”<sup>41</sup>

The housing market in Los Angeles as much as federal laws during the pre-WWII era limited Filipinos from investing in permanent residence. To create an environment that contrasted the dense, immigrant-heavy, urban planning structure of east coast cities, Progressive officials in Los Angeles attempted to build a city based on single-family homes and connected through a streetcar system that became the largest public transit system in the nation. In 1930, approximately ninety-four percent of the housing stock in Los Angeles was comprised of single-family homes.<sup>42</sup> Since alien land laws prevented foreign-born Filipinos from owning property, many of the newly arrived migrants usually rented rooming houses and apartments wherever they could find them. The largest concentration of these types of properties was in the older downtown and Bunker Hill areas. With a great concentration of Filipinos living in the vicinity, a distinct Filipino concentration emerged around First and Los Angeles Streets just west of Little Tokyo and south of Chinatown in downtown, eventually earning the moniker of “Little Manila.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People* (Caldwell, I.D.: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1948).

<sup>41</sup> “Filipino Housing Will Be Argued” *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1930.

<sup>42</sup> For more on Los Angeles’ pre-war suburbanization, see Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Mark S. Foster, “The Decentralization of Los Angeles during the 1920s” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1971); and Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Lee Shippey, “Ours is a City of Banners,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1932.

The history of Little Manila during the 1920s and 1930s revealed that such neighborhoods were products of an institutional racial regime intended to simultaneously include communities of color into the American political economy, yet segregate and exclude them from larger society. At the turn of the twentieth century, city officials and other progressive leaders imagined a new urban landscape for Los Angeles. Local proponent of the City Beautiful Movement, Dana Bartlett, viewed the future of Los Angeles with optimism because it was a “city of homes, without slums” filled with the “foreign-born.” Even the poor, he argued, “lived in single cottages, with dividing fences and flowers in the front yard.”<sup>44</sup> This pastoral vision of Los Angeles embodied the particular development of the city. Streetcar suburban development had de-centered the city, allowing lower density living, homeownership, and the promulgation of middle-class ideals in areas throughout the region. Those barred from such living standards, namely poor communities of color, however, were contained in the central city. City officials neglected these areas filled with older buildings in dense neighborhoods that housed many of the rent-dependent poor. As one writer noted, “most European races have scattered throughout [Los Angeles]” and therefore the city had “no bilingual districts such as other metropolitan cities of the nation” with the “exceptions being Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, and African Americans.” With suppressed rental prices for businesses adjacent to high-density single-room occupancy (SRO) buildings, downtown was the only place the majority of Filipinos could establish a consolidated presence.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Dana Bartlett, *The Better City: A Sociological Study of a Modern City* (Los Angeles: Neuner Company Press, 1907), 71-73.

<sup>45</sup> Harrison Warner, “Racial Elements,” Federal Writers’ Project Collection, Box 46, Folder 1, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. For more on the decentralization of Los Angeles development and its history of racial segregation, see Jeremiah B. C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Greg Hise, “Industrial and

To be sure, not all Filipinos lived or owned businesses in the First Street neighborhood. Despite all efforts to contain the Filipino population, Filipinos could be found in multiple places around Southern California. As Mary Lui reminds us in her study on the racial geography of New York's Chinatown, although non-whites did cluster around certain locales in urban areas, these geographical borders were erected more cognitively than literally. In Los Angeles, many Filipinos lived in other non-white sections of the city, such as Watts, the Central Avenue corridor, and Boyle Heights, as well as white neighborhoods such as Hollywood and Westwood, in addition to the First Street neighborhood. Small pockets of Filipinos also formed in the Harbor areas of Wilmington and San Pedro. Attracted to jobs in the port industry, the naval base, and the seafood canneries at Terminal Island, Filipinos also resided in the South Bay area, the second most populated region in Southern California. A small yet burgeoning Filipino neighborhood emerged in the downtown San Pedro area centered at Fifth and Beacon Streets.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, many Filipinos who lived in the region at the time worked as live-in domestics, or houseboys, and lived in Los Angeles's many upper-class neighborhoods. Benicio Catapusan, for example, came to the United States in 1924 and became a graduate student at University of Southern California a few years later. While in school, he worked with his brother as live-in domestics for Charles S. Webb, a film writer, in the posh Los Feliz neighborhood.<sup>47</sup>

Nonetheless, most Filipinos resided in single room occupancy hotels, boarding houses, and small apartments concentrated downtown, especially along First and Second Streets, the southern downtown area around 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Grand Avenue, and in the Bunker Hill

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Imaginative Geographies" in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, ed. Tom Sitton and William Deverell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13-44; Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, 13-35; and Wild, *Street Meeting*, 38-61.

<sup>46</sup> Darlene Ventura, interview by author, May 13, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Ancestry.com. 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line].

neighborhood.<sup>48</sup> Under conditions of segregation and white hostility, Filipinos remade this urban space into a community that served social, cultural, and economic needs of the Filipino American community. Dozens of Filipino-owned businesses lined the dense, pedestrian-oriented streets during the 1920s and 1930s. In Little Manila, businesses that catered to the Filipino community such as barbershops, restaurants, pool halls, taxi-dance halls, and photograph studios thrived. As one observer noted:

As one goes shopping around First, Second, Los Angeles, and Weller Streets one cannot help but notice the foreign names printed on window shops. “Manit’s, the best Filipino restaurant in the country” reads a sign on 111 North Los Angeles Street. “Filipino-American A-1 Employment Agency, L. Angeles Antony, Proprietor” is conspicuous on Weller Street. Then there are other native signs which begin with the words “P.I.,” “Manila,” “Filipino,” “Luzon,” “Philippines,” and “Rizal.”<sup>49</sup>

Little Manila also served as a center for Filipinos seeking employment. In the numerous pool halls and barbershops, crew bosses and other recruiters posted announcements for agricultural and service jobs on bulletin boards. Likewise, since many Filipinos lived in transitional lodgings without permanent mailing addresses or telecommunications, gathering in the neighborhood was necessary for Filipinos to exchange news of job openings. Jose Abad, for example, found numerous jobs just talking to his countrymen in Little Manila. Anytime he was unemployed, Abad went “to First Street and found out what available jobs there were...his friend eventually told him of a job at Bullock’s where he worked until World War II.”<sup>50</sup>

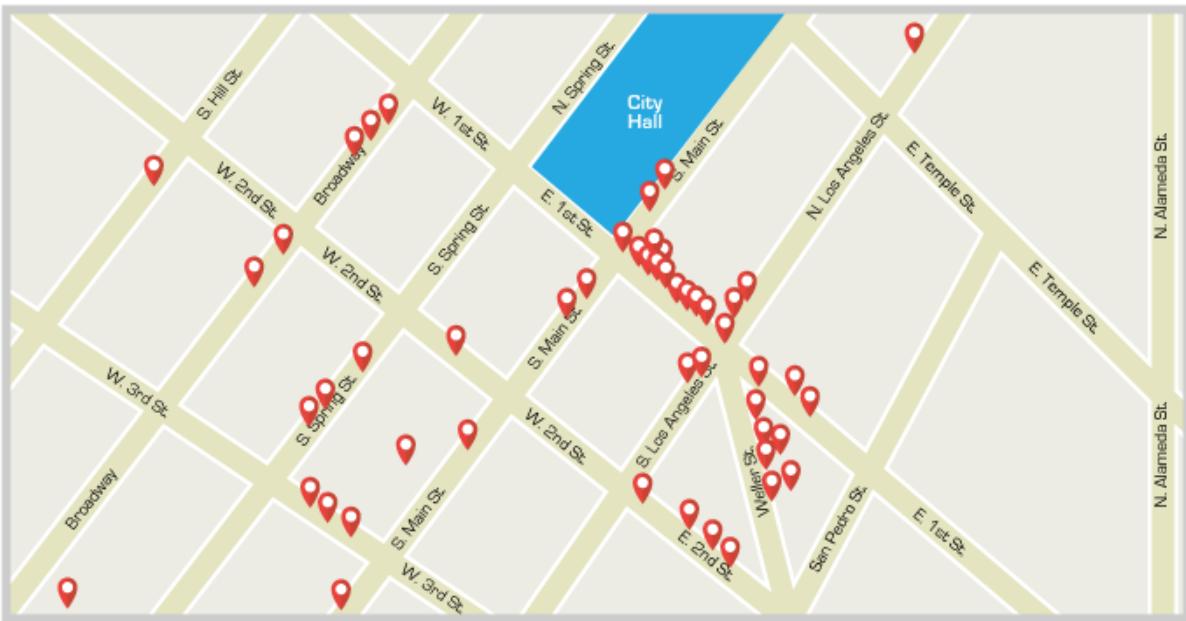
While the majority did enter wage labor employment in the agricultural and service sectors, there was a significant number of Filipinos in Los Angeles who found opportunities to

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<sup>48</sup> Benicio Catapusan, “The Filipino Occupational and Recreational Activities in Los Angeles” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1934).

<sup>49</sup> “L.A. Filipinos Forging Ahead in Business E.C.P.,” *Filipino Nation*, March 1929.

<sup>50</sup> Doroteo B. Ines, “Filipino in America,” Film, Directed by Doroteo B. Ines, Los Angeles, 1938; Jose Abad Jr., Interview by Author, March 13, 2011.



Filipino Establishments in Downtown Los Angeles 1924-1939

open small businesses.<sup>51</sup> Augustin B. Cruz, for example, had owned several businesses that catered to the Filipino community. As early as 1933, Cruz owned the Philippine Import Company on 105 S. Los Angeles Street in Little Manila. The store sold many Philippine products, clothing, and served as the “only manufacture of slippers in the United States.” He and his wife, Trinidad, continued to be self-sustaining entrepreneurs well into the late 1950s. Likewise, Marto P. Orlanes opened multiple businesses throughout his life in Los Angeles. In 1922, he established the Filipino Ace Employment Agency on 110 First Street, which was still in

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<sup>51</sup> As discussed in the introduction, many scholars point to the perceived lack of entrepreneurship in the Filipino community. Their arguments rest on the perception that Filipinos by and large depended on wage labor employment, have historically depended on ethnic Chinese for establishing small businesses in the Philippines and thus lacked the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, or lacked the necessary consumer base in cities due to the migratory nature of most Filipinos’ lives. See, for example, Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 336-337; and Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 41.

operation as late as 1959. He also ran the Orlanes Philippine Products Company as early as 1933, which researcher Benicio Catapusan claims was the “first Filipino business enterprise to devote itself to the importation, wholesale and retail, of Philippine curios...novelties...and preserved Philippine fruits.” Between 1925 and 1929, Orlanes made a profit of more than \$140,000.<sup>52</sup> To promote Filipino entrepreneurship, various organizations such as the Filipino Business Men’s organization formed with the mission of “encourag[ing] the earning of the Filipinos to invest and to patronize our own business managed and financed by us.” Pablo Manlapit likewise organized such a group in 1929 called the Filipino Chamber of Commerce.<sup>53</sup>

Ultimately, Little Manila could be viewed as an example of Filipino resistance in its own right. Though formed because of segregation, Filipinos conversely developed the neighborhood and an environmental culture to serve as protection from both rural and urban forms of racism. With the majority of Filipino migrants hailing from the rural farmlands of the Ilocos and Visayan regions of the Philippines, Little Manila provided these newcomers to the city a safe space to ease the shock of urbanization, isolation, and white antagonism. Carlos Bulosan, for example, in the quintessential Filipino American text, *America is in the Heart*, acknowledged the sense of comfort young Filipino immigrants felt upon arrival in the Little Manila neighborhood in Los Angeles. Through the voice of the main protagonist, Allos, Bulosan wrote:

Then I went out and turned northward on Los Angeles Street, and suddenly familiar signs on barbershops and restaurants came to view. I felt as though I had discovered a new world. I entered a restaurant and heard the lonely sound of my dialect, the soft staccato of home. I knew at once that I would meet some people I had known in the Philippines.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Catapusan, “The Filipino Occupational and Recreational Activities in Los Angeles,” 11; Thos Mercado, “Charming Filipino Woman Successful in Business,” *The Three Stars*, September 15, 1929; Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 228.

<sup>53</sup> Andres Antenor Cruz, “Needs of Filipino Business Men’s Organization,” *The Three Stars*, August 1, 1929; “Filipino Chamber of Commerce,” *The Three Stars*, October 1, 1929.

<sup>54</sup> Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 127.

Throughout the narrative, Allos faced overt and covert racial violence from exclusionist white America jumping from one town to the next, living in a sense of exile. Yet, he finds “home” in each city’s Little Manila district where one can find solace in an otherwise hostile and isolating world.

As the First Street area emerged as the center of Filipino American life in Los Angeles, Filipino writers actively claimed the downtown blocks as their own neighborhood, giving it a greater meaning and function. In an article in the local newspaper, *The Philippines Review*, journalist Amado E. Dino wrote in his op-ed article the joy of having a piece of “Philippine life” in the United States. He stated:

To Filipinos, [First Street] is their home town...The place is synonymous with Filipino life in the west; where they ‘come down to earth’; where most masqueraders take off their masks or are unmasked; where bits of typical Philippine life, customs and even idiosyncrasies can be observed and studied; where the natural, the strange, the unusual things happen; where friendships are made and broken; where stories of sweet and tragic romances are heard and at times seen; where Filipino manhood is made or ruined – in other words, WHERE FILIPINO HISTORY IN AMERICA IS IN THE MAKING!<sup>55</sup>

In his ode to Little Manila on First Street, Dino divulged the complex social world of Filipinos in Los Angeles. More importantly, he revealed the district’s important role as a site of refuge from the rest of the city, where Filipinos could “come down to earth” and be “unmasked” to their true selves. In a similar article in the *Philippines Star Press*, the author articulated the value of the neighborhood in an unfamiliar and hostile city:

My ‘Little Manila,’ a tiny speck, an invisible as a molecule but as significant to us Filipinos as Hollywood is to Movie Actors. A Filipino Community built in the fifth biggest city of this great United States, Los Angeles. My ‘Little Manila,’ the modern Mecca of the ‘City of Angels,’ a port of missing madonnas. ‘First Street, my Little Manila a short block surrounded by my other Oriental brothers the Japanese and Chinese. Here is our tiny heaven, our ‘Corregidor’ where we anchor and sail with the tempo of tides. Here is our gay rendezvous where yesterday’s sorrows, pains, struggles, and

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<sup>55</sup> “First Street Parade,” *The Philippines Review*, n.d. (1938).

agonizing heartaches are forgotten, consoled, lulled with abundant joy, leading, awakening, reincarnating our dead ambitions.<sup>56</sup>

In the face of residential segregation and overt discrimination in many of the city's public spaces, Filipinos built their own neighborhoods among other non-white populations, especially Chinese and Japanese Americans. These "gathering places" indeed served as their "hometown," where for those beaten down by white society, worries could be forgotten and lives resurrected. As a safe space with its own culture and economy, Little Manila was necessary for Filipinos to survive in segregated Los Angeles.

### **"A Demoralizing Spectacle"**

As Little Manila grew in size with increasing Filipino migration to the United States, many residents in Los Angeles began taking notice. The regime of residential segregation ironically accentuated Filipinos' foreign presence in a nation claiming benevolence. Henry Lee Shippey, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* from 1927 to 1949, became quite curious about the growing Filipino population beginning to circulate and congregate on the streets of downtown in the 1920s. To inform the public about the newcomers, Shippey wrote fairly frequently about Filipinos in his column, "Lee Side o' LA." In 1929, Shippey, in a short article titled "The Filipino Invasion," observed:

Late at night, Broadway from First to Fourth is thickly sprinkled with Filipinos. Until recently, Main Street was their promenade, especially in the region of its dance halls. But now when their work is done many of them go out like scouting parties for the advancing foreign front... A couple of years ago the Filipinos downtown were noticeable only along Weller Street and First Street, between Weller and Main. Now it would appear that our Filipino population is growing, for many are seen on Main, Spring and Broadway as far south as Fourth, and Spanish signs, of interest to both Filipinos and Mexicans are more noticeable on those streets.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "My Town Called, 'Little Manila,'" *Philippines Star Press*, n.d. (1930).

<sup>57</sup> "Lee Side o' L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1929.

Particularly in downtown – a pedestrian-oriented, public property-dominated urban landscape – Filipinos’ occupancy of public space accentuated their visible corporeal arrival to the United States. Richard Halliburton of *Reader’s Digest* remarked in his ethnographic tour of downtown’s ethnic neighborhoods that “our brown brothers have come in swarms to Los Angeles, and have made Main Street their headquarters.”<sup>58</sup> As Shippey and Halliburton’s observations conveyed, the “Filipino Invasion” became more apparent to the people of Los Angeles when Filipinos were in eye’s view of the public.

Once racial antagonism towards Filipinos intensified, their presence became even more “visible,” reifying the racial boundaries of Little Manila. In news of the Watsonville Riots spread to Los Angeles, for example, the district became a localized site of white anxiety towards Filipinos. The Los Angeles Police Department received a tip from white girls who danced at a dance hall that Filipinos were angry and would seek revenge for the Watsonville incident. As a result, the LAPD “threw strong cordons around the Filipino districts” in downtown, creating a border of defense against the threat of possible Filipino retaliation.<sup>59</sup> As more Filipinos migrated to Los Angeles, enlarging Little Manila and challenging the racial borders ascribed to them, city officials sought numerous ways to contain and eradicate the noticeable presence of America’s “brown brothers.”

The migration of Filipinos to Southern California coincided with city leaders’ vision to maximize Los Angeles’ global economic reach through attracting manufacturing firms to the region, creating a thriving civic center, and centralizing an increasingly decentralizing city. As

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Halliburton, “Half a Mile of History (Main Street in Los Angeles),” *Readers Digest*, October 1937, 70-75.

<sup>59</sup> “Ringleaders Vanish from Watsonville Investigation” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 26, 1930.

Mike Davis notes, city officials and other downtown elites during the pre-WWII period attempted to retain the Central Business District (CBD) as the social and economic center of Southern California for their own profit. They often competed heavily with other interests who were more than eager to accelerate the decentralization of Los Angeles and dilution of downtown political power. By the 1920s, the car had surpassed the streetcar as the primary mode of transportation for Southern California. At the same time, suburban tract home developments began encroaching agricultural lots on the Westside of the city. Its increasing popularity eventually siphoned white capital from the dense and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods of the city center. As a result, downtown, due to its declining popularity among whites, became the central hub for thousands of non-whites, including Filipinos, who migrated to Los Angeles during this period. Their proximity to civic institutions created a visible obstacle to elites' plans to maintain and bolster a vibrant downtown for its white residents.<sup>60</sup>

Since the turn of the twentieth century, city officials had plans to erect massive civic projects in the northern part of downtown to showcase the power of the municipal government. Plans for the Los Angeles Civic Center began as early as 1907 when the Los Angeles Civic Association commissioned Charles Mulford Robinson to create a plan that would house and consolidate the region's local, state, and federal office buildings as well as other cultural institutions. Although there was a short revival of the Civic Center project in 1918, it was not until 1923 when the newly formed City Planning Commission accelerated its development, with the City Council proposing a bond measure on the ballot for \$7,500,000 for a new City Hall.<sup>61</sup> There were some business interests that attempted to encourage city officials to build the Civic

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<sup>60</sup> Davis, *City of Quartz*, 120-125.

<sup>61</sup> "Board of City Planning Commissioners Annual Report, 1929-1930, Los Angeles," 31-33, Fletcher Bowron Collection, Box 57, Folder "1929 & 1941," Henry Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Center in other parts of downtown, but by 1927, the city adopted a Civic Center plan that would be situated at the northern section of downtown adjacent to the historical Plaza area where the city was originally founded in 1781. The proposed plan called for demolition of unsightly buildings, street widening, and the incorporation of green space.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, as Alison Isenberg reveals in her comprehensive study of American downtowns, beginning in the 1920s downtown districts began to market to white middle-class women to retain consumers. In Los Angeles, the Broadway shopping district still remained the largest shopping area in the city, despite increasing competition from the auto-centric Wilshire Boulevard. Broadway property owners sought façade improvements and attracted businesses that reflected white middle-class values. As a result, downtown interests aimed to close down dens of “immorality” and demanded that the area be clean and safe, particularly for middle-class white women. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce produced a report in 1922 calling for the increase in business activity in downtown, but simultaneously seeking increased police presence to prevent “undesirables” from congregating in the “Drunk’s Paradise” of Second and Los Angeles Streets.<sup>63</sup> With Progressive reformers and city leaders working to market downtown for the white consumer, the containment and eradication of racialized bodies and “deviant foreigners” from the streets of downtown became high priority. The old Chinatown, La

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<sup>62</sup> Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 262-265.

<sup>63</sup> Allison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 78-123; “Report of Committee to Investigate Soap Box Orators on Los Angeles Street,” December 15, 1922, file #147 (January 9, 1923), California Historical Society collection of Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce records and photographs, Collection no. 0245.1, Regional History Collections, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

Plaza (a center for the Mexican community at the time), Little Tokyo, and now Little Manila were among targeted areas for surveillance and policing.<sup>64</sup>

The sidewalks of downtown became one contested space where city officials, through the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), sought to remove Filipinos from the public eye. Due to the dense urban landscape of downtown, sidewalks, in particular, were public spaces where Filipinos in Los Angeles formed a major presence. Shippey, for example, observed that Filipinos “stroll the sidewalks, three or four in a row, possibly for mutual protection against larger men, possibly for sociability...four of them take up no more sidewalk space than would their old-time friend, William H. Taft.”<sup>65</sup> Rebecca Pasag Joseph, the daughter of Bonifacio Aragon Pasag who lived in Los Angeles during the 1930s, recalled her father’s enjoyment of loitering on the sidewalks of downtown:

My father used to tell me he would spend hours and hours during the day hanging out on the corner with his other Filipino buddies. When I asked him why he wasted so much time he said ‘Why, it wasn’t a waste of time being with your friends. All of the action was on the street anyway...not like now. Also, during that [time], none of the buildings had air-conditioning.’<sup>66</sup>

For Filipinos, then, sidewalks served as public spaces for gathering and socializing, particularly in the often-cramped environs of downtown Los Angeles.

While Filipinos like Pasag particularly enjoyed the environs of a crowded sidewalk, many viewed their particular presence as supposed evidence of their unemployment and thus a drain to the American economy. In his examination of loitering laws in the United States, legal scholar Mark Malone demonstrates how loitering both in etymology and Western culture is associated with “delay” and “laziness,” thus contradictory to white Protestant working values.

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<sup>64</sup> Wild, *Street Meeting*, 58-59.

<sup>65</sup> “Lee Side o’ L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1929.

<sup>66</sup> Rebecca Pasag Joseph, Interview by author, March 22, 2011.

Proper citizens were expected not to loiter, but rather go to work in an orderly fashion, then rewarded with the promise of protection in public space during their time of leisure and consumption. Legal rationale of such laws stemmed from the idea that idle bodies were not contributing to the economy, necessitating their removal before the potential for criminal activity was realized.<sup>67</sup> As a result, many presumed that idle brown bodies standing on the street corner further perpetuated the myth that Filipinos were largely unemployed. USC researcher Rex Ragan, in one of the first studies of Filipino Americans, argued that “those boys who can be seen any day on First Street in Los Angeles, dressed in the height of fashion and apparently with all the leisure in the world, are idle only because they wish to be” and not because of what many presumed to be their unemployment status.<sup>68</sup> Their occupancy in the area during all hours of the day also led Richard Halliburton to believe that Filipino loiterers in Little Manila were unemployed. “The several pool halls, which cater exclusively to Filipinos, are packed day and night,” wrote Halliburton. “Apparently the Manilanos (sic) work—if at all—only that they may spend more hours betting in a pool hall paradise.”<sup>69</sup>

Filipinos from upper class backgrounds who migrated to the United States likewise saw idle Filipinos on the streets of Little Manila as symbols of indolence, detrimental to their image proper colonial subjects. B. Cortez, a writer from local periodical *Ang Bantay*, expressed his disdain towards Filipino loiterers on First Street in his editorial piece entitled “A Demoralizing Spectacle.” With abhorrence towards these Filipinos, he wrote:

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<sup>67</sup> Mark Malone, “Homelessness in a Modern Urban Setting,” *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 746-753.

<sup>68</sup> Rex Ragan, “The Economic Effects on the Pacific Coast of Filipino Immigration to the United States” (Master’s thesis: University of Southern California, 1928), 31.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Halliburton, “Half a Mile of History (Main Street in Los Angeles),” *Readers Digest*, October 1937, 70-75.

The limited and much crowded block where Filipino boys of all kinds incidentally meet at weekends on First and Main Streets is daily infested with purposeless bystanders. Parading with all the vanities of useless gestures and all the mannerisms of empty deportment, a considerable number of boys have formed the habit of voluntarily posting themselves here and there, on both sides of the sidewalks of the same block, and apparently with no other purpose of any kind.... Amidst infernal babblings and ferments mostly emanating from crowded joints found in the said block (and there are only but a few exceptions) the boys nevertheless love to linger and round the place. From every other consideration, it is needless to mention that the above picture presented is a demoralizing spectacle. It is high time that a change for the better in some way or other must be made for the good of all.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, Midi Yanez, a writer for *Filipino Nation*, viewed inhabitants of Little Manila as an embarrassment, particularly because of the harassment one would receive from those on the sidewalks of downtown. She wrote in 1932, “Walk down First Street...and, if you are a Filipino, you will immediately be surrounded by a large number of your countrymen begging for a dime or a nickel for something to eat.”<sup>71</sup> Fully aware of the perception whites had of Filipino loiterers, both Cortez and Yanez sought the power of editorial journalism to discipline their working-class countrymen away from “useless” activity and into “better” behavior for the “good of all.” Through the eyes of Cortez and Yanez and their view of this seemingly “demoralizing spectacle,” one can see a glimpse of how whites perceived Filipinos on the streets of Little Manila.

While Filipino elites attempted to control the public image of Filipinos through social pressure, white Angelenos used the power of the state to try to contain and eliminate these visible “nuisances” from the streets of downtown Los Angeles. Police harassment of Filipinos because of their corporal presence on the streets of downtown Los Angeles was part of a systemic effort to redevelop a downtown area that city leaders believed was in decline. Los Angeles police officers employed various enforcement and extralegal tactics to consistently

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<sup>70</sup> B. Cortez, “A Demoralizing Spectacle,” *Ang Bantay*, November 2, 1929.

<sup>71</sup> Midi Yanez, “Filipinos and the Depression,” *Filipino Nation*, November 1932.

harass Filipinos who appeared to be dawdling on public sidewalks. Arrests amongst Filipinos for loitering were extraordinarily high in the prewar period. James Wood, a researcher from the University of California who studied Filipinos, revealed in his field research that over 50% of the total arrests of Filipinos in Los Angeles for 1928-1929 were for “blocking the sidewalk” and that 46 of the total 80 arrested for this crime were Filipinos. According to Wood, “perfectly innocuous groups of Pinoys engaging in chit-chat on the street have usually been dispersed or arrested in times of even slight apprehension.” In 1938, “blocking the sidewalk” again garnered the most arrests of Filipinos in Los Angeles.<sup>72</sup> With anxiety growing because of the proliferation of Filipinos on the streets of downtown, white leaders, through the Los Angeles Police Department, sought to regulate loitering for white consumers downtown. Downtown’s safety and respectability became a greater imperative as Filipinos’ presence increasingly marked a danger towards white women in particular.

### **Taxi-Dance Menace**

As more Filipinos crowded the streets of downtown and conveyed to the white Angeleno public the presence of colonial subjects who lay beyond eligible citizenry, Filipinos spaces downtown became increasingly associated with vice, immorality, and filth. White Angelenos believed the growing number of Filipinos intensified the threat of Filipino-white intimacy, perhaps the most widely sensationalized narrative among Filipinos on the West coast in the 1920s and 1930s and, in many ways, a catalyst for the anti-Filipino movement. Not only were Filipino boys taking low-wage jobs away from white men, as the story was so often told, they

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<sup>72</sup> James Earl Wood, “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Papers, Box 1, Folder 9; Severino Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1938), 31.

threatened the sanctity of white women, racializing Filipinos as hypersexual deviants and fueling nativists' calls for their exclusion and expulsion. As one writer remarked in his observation on Los Angeles's Little Manila district, "A population made up of men only can never be a permanent population, or a desirable population."<sup>73</sup>

To city officials, the growing number of Filipinos in downtown posed a dangerous threat to white women in the form of interracial intimacy, calling for increased policing of ascribed racial and gender borders. In 1931, for example, Los Angeles City Councilmember Thomas Williams ordered more police surveillance of the Bunker Hill area because of the rise of interactions between young white women and Filipino men. "My attention has been called to a situation on Bunker Hill," Williams stated in his address to the Police Commission, "where Filipinos assault white women, drive around in small coupes and seek to pull young girls into cars and otherwise insult them."<sup>74</sup>

As taxi-dance halls, dance clubs where male patrons paid to dance with female dancers, rose in popularity among Filipinos and proliferated downtown, city leaders, obsessed with keeping the racial respectability and safety for white residents, sought numerous ways to contain and police these dens of "immorality." During the 1920s and 1930s, dance halls around the United States became notorious for being spaces of colonial intimacy in the metropole, especially due to their perception as breeding grounds for miscegenation. With a scarcity of Filipina women migrating to the U.S. and anti-miscegenation laws discouraging interracial

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<sup>73</sup> Berkeley Walker, "Racial Minorities Survey, Filipino," June 2, 1937, Federal Writers' Project Collection, Box 46, Folder 1.

<sup>74</sup> Though the Police Commission could not fulfill his plea for more police officers to protect "young girls" from Filipinos due to the city's lack of "an adequate force of officers," Councilmember Williams's concern exhibited the moral borders of the predominantly Filipino neighborhood. "Police Inadequate to Protect Girls from Filipinos" *Illustrated Daily News*, March 18, 1931.

relationships, young Filipinos comprised a significant part of the taxi-dance clientele. To white reformers, these halls became synonymous with Filipino sexual deviance. In his account of Los Angeles's Little Manila, Carey McWilliams wrote:

Wherever they congregate, either seasonally or otherwise, a kind of tenderloin section has come into existence. Characterized as "an eager, ardent, social being," the Filipino is a natural prey for pimps and prostitutes. As a matter of fact, pimps are highly respected in the Filipino community. Wherever they foregather, the taxi-dance halls spring into existence and also the "Filipino Social Club" which is usually a blind for a gambling center. In 1933, there were six major taxi-dance halls in Los Angeles, employing 500 women, who catered exclusively to the Filipino trade.<sup>75</sup>

Likewise, Paul Cressey, in his landmark 1932 sociological study, *The Taxi-Dance Hall*, asserted that although Filipinos in Chicago's Little Manila neighborhood had opened "restaurants, pool and billiard parlors, and barber shops, and have organized an athletic association...aside from these efforts on the part of the Filipinos themselves, the taxi-dance halls furnish most of the social life."<sup>76</sup>

Unlike in rural areas, cities such as Los Angeles did not experience the widespread rioting and lawlessness amongst its white population against Filipinos for commiserating with white women, despite its larger concentration of dance halls. Altercations between whites and Filipinos certainly did occur, but due to the sheer size and heterogeneity of the city's population, Los Angeles dealt with their "Filipino problem" more indirectly and institutionally. To address the increased proliferation of taxi-dance halls, as well as quell political pressure from moral reformers, city officials used a variety of ways to close down these "dens of immorality." On April 16, 1929, the Los Angeles Police Commission first took up the issue when J.F. Goldner, the general manager of the Filipino Protective Association of America, came to the commission

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<sup>75</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1943), 236, 237.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Cressey, *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932).

“requesting information as to whether or not he should bar white members from attending the dances held by this club.”<sup>77</sup> A week earlier, the Police Commission granted the organization a dance hall permit at their location on 128 Weller St. When a group of white men tried to gain admittance to the dance, they complained and threatened Goldner. As a result, the Commission appointed two members to lead a special committee to “make a careful survey of the so-called ‘taxi’ dance hall condition in the City of Los Angeles and report to the Police Commission at their earliest convenience.”<sup>78</sup> Two days following the Police Commission meeting, Councilmember William G. Bonelli introduced and passed the following Council resolution, giving full Council support of the Police Board’s investigation:

WHEREAS, It has been brought to the attention of this City Council through the public prints as well as in personal protests, that the Police Commission has licensed many so-called clubs and dancing academies to Orientals, and  
WHEREAS, It is charged that these establishments are not only fire traps, but are operated in open violation of the City’s Fire Ordinances, and  
WHEREAS, It is further charged that scores of young white girls are employed as dancing partners for males of the Japanese, Filipine (sic), Chinese, and other Oriental races, and  
WHEREAS, It is complained that white men are not admitted to these places, and  
WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Council that Oriental establishments of this character should be confined solely to Oriental patronage, or that white girls should not be employed in establishments where white men are not admitted, now therefore be it  
RESOLVED, That this Council hereby petitions the Police Commission and the Chief of Police to make a thorough investigation of these so-called academies to the end that if the proprietors are guilty as charged in the Daily Press, they may be summoned at once to show cause why their licenses should not be revoked.

Policing and preventing white-Asian intimacy was paramount in the city’s anti-taxi dance hall campaign. At the following Police Commission meeting, the ad-hoc committee reported back their findings after “visiting many dance halls operating taxi dances.” Their report revealed that

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<sup>77</sup> Los Angeles City Archives, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center. “Board of Police Commissioners.” April 16, 1929, pg. 173.

<sup>78</sup> “Dance Methods Lead to Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1929.

they “found in many cases Filipinos dancing with white girls” and that the “general condition of these dance halls was found to be in opposition to the best moral interests of the city, for the reason that in the opinion of your Committee the intermingling of the Caucasian and Asiatic races is very undesirable, and is contrary to the best interests and welfare of the community in general.” As a result, the Police Commission unanimously passed a resolution instructing Police Chief James Davis to “suspend approximately a dozen dance hall permits, pending a hearing as to whether they shall be revoked.”<sup>79</sup>

To reinforce and solidify their racial motives, at the following Police Commissioner meeting, one member exonerated any dance halls that supported anti-miscegenation from the suspension:

In our considerations or deliberations on taxi dancing, it was at no time considered other than the places or dance halls that were conducting the so-called “taxi dances or Instructors’ System” other than places that allowed girls to dance with the Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese, or Chinese...At no time was it considered to close the dancing places that were not allowing the foreign element to dance with white girls.”

The Commission then revoked the suspensions of the Cinderella Roof, Rose Room, Palais de Dance, and National Dancing Academy dance halls “on the grounds that the objectionable features which come under the ban of the former order, have been eliminated” and not allow interracial mingling.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, the city focused their attentions to the Hippodrome, the Liberty Dance Hall, and Danceland, infamous taxi-dance halls in downtown that Filipinos would frequent. Though most were white-owned, they catered to a largely Filipino clientele, even employing Filipinos as on-site managers. Richard E. Lee, of Chinese and Filipino descent,

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<sup>79</sup> Los Angeles City Archives, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center. “Board of Police Commissioners.” April 23, 1929, pg. 192; “Police Told Taxi Dances Must Close,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1929.

<sup>80</sup> Los Angeles City Archives, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center. “Board of Police Commissioners.” April 27, 1929, pg. 195

operated the Liberty Dance Palace on 116 ½ Third Street. However, his license was revoked when he failed to attend a hearing when the police suspended his permit and eventually fled to San Francisco.<sup>81</sup>

During this anti-dance hall campaign, Filipinos devised ways to resist and circumvent targeted aggression from city officials by finding loopholes in the city ordinances. Since the LAPD began their enforcement on commercial dance halls, Filipinos obtained permits under the guise of religious or fraternal organizations and held underground dances. They coordinated several Filipino organizations to obtain one-night dance permits in order to circumvent the rules and regulations of commercial dance halls. In May 1929, for example, the Filipino Home Club of California obtained a permit for 126 Weller St. for May 1. Later, the Filipino Protective Association of America obtained a permit for the same location on May 2, Filipino Protective Association Auxiliary on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Filipino Bachelor's Club on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and the Oriental Screen Club on the 6<sup>th</sup>. However, once the Commission caught wind of their actions, they asked the City Council to “amend the dance ordinance so that religious, fraternal and educational organizations which hold commercial dances shall be compelled to pay the regular dance hall fees.”<sup>82</sup>

Understanding the anxiety taxi-dance halls caused and immoral reputation they produced, many elite Filipinos believed that the halls were detrimental to the Philippine independence movement. They saw Filipino men who sought sexual encounters with white women as possible evidence of Filipinos’ lack of readiness for self-governance and national independence. J. R. Fernandez, for example, in a letter to then the Philippine Senate President Manuel L. Quezon, stated how shocked he was at the lives of Filipinos. Filipinos, he said, were called “very dirty

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<sup>81</sup> “Taxi Dance Hall License Revoked,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 1930.

<sup>82</sup> “Dance Methods Lead to Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1929.

and worse than culie [sic].” He blamed Filipinos for their behavior and urged Quezon to “do something for the sake of the country.”<sup>83</sup> Jorge Bacobo, who came to the United States as part of a Philippine independence mission in 1928 and studied at the University of Southern California, began a “personal crusade” to eliminate taxi-dance halls from Los Angeles. In 1930, Bacobo organized other Filipinos who opposed taxi-dance halls to support a petition to the City Council to close the halls that had a high Filipino clientele. In a speech to the Filipino Catholic Club, he suggested that those who frequent dance halls “have no claim to the good name of the Philippines, they who disport themselves with decency and self-respecting manhood.”<sup>84</sup> Likewise, community leaders also implored the two largest dance halls, the Danceland and the Hippodrome, to shut their businesses down on nights when Filipino civic and religious organizations hosted their affairs. Banding together as the Filipino Unity Council, under the leadership of Johnny Samson, these concerned leaders picketed dance halls until some of them were forced to close. Roque De La Ysla suggested that only when taxi-dance halls are abolished will Filipinos “deserve due recognition and respect from their watchful neighbors.”<sup>85</sup>

As an alternative to dance halls, some organizations tried to provide the men with other forms of entertainment. Felix and Guadalupe Abcade, managers of a Filipino restaurant at 126½ Weller Street, opened a clubroom above their restaurant and tried to solicit moral-leaning organizations, such as the Catholic Welfare Board, to host an alternative party for taxi-dance hall

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<sup>83</sup> J.R. Fernandez, “Letter to Hon. Manuel Quezon, Manila, Philippines,” n.d., Manuel L. Quezon Papers, Box 131, Folder F, National Library, Manila, Philippines.

<sup>84</sup> Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 244; James Earl Wood, “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection, Box 1, Folder 15; “Heart-Felt Speech of Jorge Bacobo,” *The Three Stars*, June 15, 1930.

<sup>85</sup> “Los Angeles... ‘Little Manila’ of The Southland,” *The Fil-American Advocate*, February 15, 1954; Roque E. De La Ysla, “Individual Views of the News,” *The Philippines Mail*, February 11, 1935.

patrons.<sup>86</sup> Their hope was to recreate a more wholesome dance hall atmosphere without the presence of white women to avoid the shame and scrutiny from white antagonists. Despite their efforts, however, Filipinos continued to frequent clubs that remained open.

Yet, many Filipinos believed taxi-dance halls served an important social function and were not contributing to the demoralization of young Filipino males as so many believed. L.A. Jacob, in an editorial in the *Philippine News Reporter*, argued that the taxi-dance hall was “the one way and one place the Filipinos are welcome to fulfill their social desire,” particularly because they were “victims of social inequalities and discriminations.” Likewise, Pablo Manlapit, the labor organizer who was exiled in Los Angeles after leading labor strikes in Hawaii’s sugar plantations, argued that “the taxi-dance affords much necessary diversion for the Filipino. If he weren’t there he would be on the street, or in some place more detrimental to him. Furthermore: I do not favor this proposed discrimination against Filipinos.”<sup>87</sup> In addition to serving as a diversion, taxi-dance halls were very much sites of resistance where Filipinos contested and challenged the conventional meanings of race and gender. Filipinos who frequented taxi-dance halls employed various forms of resistance through dance performance, fashion, and intimacy.<sup>88</sup> Leaders like Manlapit knew the power of the halls to gather working-class Filipinos and negotiated with hall owners to use the space to organize politically. During the Watsonville riots, for example, Manlapit organized a meeting of over a thousand Filipinos at

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<sup>86</sup> “The Lee Side o’ LA,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1929.

<sup>87</sup> “Are Taxi Dance Halls Conducive to Public Welfare and Morale?,” *Philippine News Reporter*, April 5, 1938; James Earl Wood, “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, 14.

<sup>88</sup> See Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, “‘Splendid Dancing’: Filipino Exceptionalism in Taxi Dancehalls,” *Dance Research Journal* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 23-40; España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila*, 105-134.

the Hippodrome Dance Hall condemning the riots. Primo Quevedo also organized weekly meetings to discuss various issues concerning Filipinos at the Hippodrome.<sup>89</sup>

Despite Filipinos' challenges to the racial and gender borders of taxi-dance halls, city officials believed that the institution was a nuisance and that policing on a case by case basis was too laborious of a task for the LAPD. After months of hearings and receiving numerous complaints about the taxi-dance halls, "particularly in reference to Filipinos," the Police Commission believed that abolishing these establishments altogether would prove to be a swifter and more effective solution. Through the persuasion of the Mayor John C. Porter, the Commission unanimously adopted a resolution asking the City Council to prepare and pass an ordinance "banning all taxi dance halls from operating in Los Angeles" on June 25, 1930.<sup>90</sup>

While many interest groups held much disdain towards dance hall activities, there was a loud and significant voice opposing the proposed ban. Certainly, those who profited from Filipinos, the taxi-dance hall operators, led the charge. On June 29, 1930, over 200 members of the United Public Dance Hall Alliance passed a resolution condemning the efforts of the city. The People's Protective Association also protested the proposed anti-dance hall ordinance.<sup>91</sup> However, the movement to close the establishments proved unsuccessful. When the issue of closing down taxi-dance halls came to the City's Police and Fire Committee, on July 30, 1930, Councilmember Williams explained that the Police Commission already possessed the power to enforce the proper conduct of dance halls to ensure that miscegenation would not take place. Additionally, opponents argued that "closing all the taxi dance halls would throw at least 500

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<sup>89</sup> "Filipino Mass Meeting" Flyer, San Buenaventura Papers, Box 7, Folder "Filipino Communities," Peter J. Shields Library, University of California, Davis; "Resolutions Passed By Los Angeles Mass Meeting," *The Three Stars*, February 5, 1930.

<sup>90</sup> "Ban on Taxi Dance Hall Urged by Police Board," *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 1930.

<sup>91</sup> "Taxi Dance Hall Closing Efforts Cause Protest," *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1930.

girls out of work, many of them the chief support of families.” Many dance hall proprietors spoke against the proposed ordinance, while two Filipinos who represented their community also spoke in protest “against any discriminatory measures.”<sup>92</sup> The Police Commission eventually devised a new set of rules and regulations for taxi-dances that aimed at restricting the movement and freedom of the dancing women, but did not abolish the halls altogether. All women were required to register with the Police Department, carry an identification card, and would be discharged as dancers in the city if any dancers “are found living with men, as man and wife, without being married.”<sup>93</sup>

Though the Los Angeles City Council refused to implement an outright ban of taxi-dance halls, the Police Commission still attempted to enforce its containment and close facilities that were smaller in stature. On September 29, 1931, the Police Commission revoked the permit of one of the only Filipino-owned dance hall in the city. Operated by Matea Calpal and Romnaldo C. Peralta, the dance hall at 718 North Broadway in an area at the crossroads of Chinatown and Little Italy, received many complaints from residents for being “the source of much trouble” and for “operat[ing] as a ‘taxi’ dance hall by the employment of white women.” According to police reports, “the Filipino operators were unable to quell disturbances, wrung their hands in despair when the girls began to fight and closed the place.” The Police Commission eventually found the legal avenue to revoke the permit when Calpal and Peralta failed to attend a hearing following a citation.<sup>94</sup>

The Commission also denied the application of Harry R. Leventen, a retired naval lieutenant, who sought to open a taxi-dance hall at 417 S. Beacon Street, in the heart of the

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<sup>92</sup> “Dance Halls Case Argued,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1930.

<sup>93</sup> “‘Taxi’ Dance Halls Given New Rules,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1931.

<sup>94</sup> “Permit Revoked for Filipino Dance Hall,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1931.

Filipino neighborhood in San Pedro. The proposed hall was intended to serve Filipinos in the South Bay area, especially those in the U.S. Navy. The LAPD captain in charge of the San Pedro division, and members representing the Southern California Floating Christian Endeavor Association, an organization headquartered right across the street from the proposed site, spoke against the proposal.<sup>95</sup>

The downtown business elite was crucial to regulating dance halls in the city. Keeping Main Street free from vice became a rallying cry among groups like the Downtown Businessmen's Association who lobbied for the economic revitalization downtown. By the 1920s, Main Street, the city's "melting pot" also served as the city's red light district. Just a block east of Spring Street, coined as the "Wall Street of the West" because of the concentration of the city's major financial institutions, Main Street housed many of the city's burlesque houses, peepshow theaters, flop-houses, and taxi-dance halls. As a result, as more Filipinos and other non-whites lined the streets in the north downtown area, civic leaders and government officials increased their interests in redeveloping downtown and sought to regulate what they felt were immoral activities in the area. In 1940, for example, the Downtown Businessmen's Association went to the police commission to prevent a new dance hall from receiving a permit. At the hearing, they revealed their plans to be aggressive in "cleaning up" Main Street "so that it may be developed with modern buildings."<sup>96</sup>

Ultimately, the anti-taxi dance hall campaign in the city reached its apex in the early 1930s. Once the city implemented a strategic enforcement policy to regulate the halls, the issue became less of a legislative issue and more the responsibility of a bureaucratic regulatory body to

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<sup>95</sup> "Taxi Dance Hall Permit Refused," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1933.

<sup>96</sup> "Main St. Cleanup Campaign of Businessmen Disclosed," *Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 1940.

enforce its policy. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, the LAPD kept a close eye on the dance halls that Filipinos frequented, occasionally reporting establishments that violated the new policies. Additionally, reformers continued to lobby downtown officials to eliminate vice on Main Street. In 1943, the Los Angeles Police Department adopted and published the policy handbook, *Rules Governing Taxi Halls* to streamline the halls' enforcement and the City Council eventually passed legislation banning Asians from frequenting them.<sup>97</sup> By then, however, taxi-dance halls fell out of favor among Filipinos. Nonetheless, whites continued to view Filipinos as threats to the moral sanctity of white racial purity.

## LAPD Enforcers

Though many Los Angeles officials joined the effort to close downtown's taxi-dance halls to prevent Filipino-white miscegenation, the city's police department was perhaps the greatest force to constrict Filipinos within ascribed racial and gender boundaries in the American metropole. As the primary state agency to contain and regulate the city's non-white population, the Los Angeles Police Department employed numerous extralegal and intrusive forms of policing. Targeting Filipinos, and other non-white residents, was very much institutionalized within the department. Carlos Bulosan, for example, in his writings, conveyed the lawlessness of the LAPD. "They often shoot *Pinoys* like that," a Filipino explained to the main character Allos in Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*. "Without provocation. Sometimes when they have been drinking and they want to have fun, they come to our district and kick or beat the first Filipino

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<sup>97</sup> Clyde Vedder, "An Analysis of a Taxi-Dance Hall as a Social Institution, with Special Reference to Los Angeles and Detroit." (Ph.D. diss: University of Southern California, 1947), 48.

they meet.”<sup>98</sup> Though fictional, Bulosan’s assessment of the police department was not far from reality.

The LAPD was infamous for being among the most corrupt police departments in the nation, particularly when it came to quelling vice in the city. Chief James E. Davis, who served as Los Angeles’s Chief of Police for much of the 1920s and 1930s, first gained prominence within the department through his work in the force’s vice squad. The LAPD during his tenure was notorious for over-excessive policing and unabashed corruption. His squads arrested people who possessed even small amounts of alcohol, often-raiding private homes and arresting families. Though he was briefly ousted as chief in 1929, he was quickly reinstated by newly elected mayor, Frank Shaw, and thus, for much of the 1930s, the police’s crooked activities continued to flourish.<sup>99</sup>

City officials often used the department for their own political gain since they always had to appeal to different and often-conflicting constituencies. During the Progressive Era, leaders worked with LAPD to adhere both to religious reformers who sought to abolish vice and to powerful underground syndicates who wielded influence in local politics. For example, LAPD’s attention towards vice industries in Asian neighborhoods in the city came partly as the result of political pandering. As African Americans continued to stream into Los Angeles from the South and were forced to live in the Central Avenue district, popular jazz clubs and speakeasies proliferated in the area and earned the moniker, “Harlem of the West.” Illicit operations in the

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<sup>98</sup> Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*, 129.

<sup>99</sup> Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 172; The Davis-Shaw political force was short-lived as reformers successfully recalled Shaw in 1938. Mayor Fletcher Bowron eventually forced Davis out of office in 1939 after investigations exposed countless evidence of police corruption. See also Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993).

neighborhood became a major industry, making the district the largest concentration of underground vice activity in the city. Since the black population made up a growing and significant voter base, elected officials were reluctant to close down the district's underground businesses. Realizing both the financial opportunities via kickbacks from vice leaders, and the small, yet significant, voting bloc of the black population, city politicians and LAPD leaders targeted vice raids towards "foreign" neighborhoods to appease reformers. Increased surveillance and containment of the city's smaller Asian neighborhoods became a part of the LAPD's regular routine.<sup>100</sup>

From the time of their arrival to the United States, Filipinos were among the most active patrons of vice industries, especially in Chinatown, making them quite vulnerable to police raids. For example, arrests for gambling comprised 20 percent of all arrests on Filipinos in 1936. On many occasions, arrests were unwarranted, indicative of the intense police surveillance in Little Manila. For example, in August 22, 1940, Sergeant J.R. Steward and 10 members of his vice squad arrested 115 Filipino men "on suspicion of gambling" when they were found playing *piquet* in the basement of a building on 113 ½ E. First Street "in the shadow of City Hall." The judge on the case released the men the same night on the grounds that no complaints of gambling were forthcoming and the arrests lacked any evidence. Likewise, Angel Escalona, a prominent member of the Filipino organization, Gran Oriente, was successfully acquitted for charges of alcohol possession. The case was branded as "the most disgracing frame-up ever attempted by the dry squad of the city."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization*, 109-111.

<sup>101</sup> España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 51-72; Corpus, "An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles," 32-33; "Damage Suits Threatened Over Gambling Arrests," *Los*

As a whole, LAPD officers arrested Filipinos out of proportion to their population in the city during this time. According to the researcher James Wood, from July 1, 1930 to June 30, 1931, Filipinos, who comprised .26% of the city's population, represented .87% of overall arrests. Of the total arrests among the foreign born, Filipinos comprised 4.07% of them despite only making up 1.78% of all foreign-born in the city. Researcher Severino Corpus found that in 1938 approximately 13.15% of all Filipinos in Los Angeles have been arrested during the year.<sup>102</sup>

Central to the extralegal harassment of the LAPD was officer's vitriol towards Filipinos who gathered downtown. The Christian Filipino League had complained to LAPD Detective Chief Taylor in 1929 that police officers were "shooting paper clips at Filipinos" when they walked past the Central Police Station. In several interviews with police informants that knew the extra-legal violence the LAPD downtown division bestowed upon Filipinos, researcher James Earl Wood revealed that the officers "would like nothing better than an open season on Filipinos – without a bag limit." An officer of the LAPD vice squad suggested that he "would like to arrest every Filipino and book them all on a murder charge" and that "[the U.S. government] made a mistake by ever making those Filipinos citizens of the U.S."<sup>103</sup> Despite the LAPD's erroneous assessment of Filipinos' legal status in the United States, his sentiments nonetheless conveyed how many white Americans' anxiety over Filipinos called to question the

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*Angeles Times*, August 23, 1940; "Angel C. Escalona, Member of Grant Oriente Acquitted," *The Three Stars*, September 15, 1929.

<sup>102</sup> James Earl Wood, "Field Notes" James Wood Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, 2; Corpus, "An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles," 25-33.

<sup>103</sup> "Someone's Rude to Filipinos," *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1929; James Earl Wood, "Field Notes," James Earl Wood Collection, Box 2, Folder 8.

ambiguity and contradiction of Filipino presence in the United States and, by extension, American imperial occupation of the Philippines

Additionally, the LAPD targeted Filipinos in Little Manila as a strategy to contain communist activity in the city. Initiated in 1933, the department's Intelligence Squad, or "Red Squad," conducted systematic repression and containment of perceived radicals, enforcing the Los Angeles's "Open Shop" policy. Under the leadership of Captain William Francis (Red) Hynes, LAPD's Red Squad infiltrated and broke up union and leftist meetings regularly, arresting and harassing those who were believed to be Communist agitators through extra-legal means and giving Los Angeles a notorious reputation as fiercely anti-communist.<sup>104</sup> As a result, radical organizing, let alone unionism, among Filipinos in Los Angeles was rare. Communist leaders attempted to bring Filipinos into party membership, organizing meetings in and around Little Manila. In one instance, communist organizers held a demonstration at the Los Angeles Plaza denouncing the racial injustices that occurred during the Watsonville Riots. Yet, organizing Filipinos in Los Angeles proved to be difficult. One Filipino suggested that most of his countrymen "refuse to affiliate with anything connected with the Communist party."<sup>105</sup>

Despite the relative dearth of known radical organizations among Filipinos in Los Angeles, the LAPD nonetheless policed and targeted some Filipinos thought to be organizing under the Communist Party. For example, in 1928, the Red Squad raided the offices of Pablo Manlapit, a Filipino union leader who was in exile in Los Angeles after organizing labor strikes in Hawaii. Police discovered Manlapit's plans to organize a strike among asparagus workers in

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<sup>104</sup> Seymour Myerson, "The Lawlessness of the LAPD Red Squad" in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America*, ed. Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 303-318.

<sup>105</sup> Wild, *Street Meeting*, 195; "Mass Meeting and Demonstration" Leaflet, San Buenaventura Papers, Box 19, Folder "Labor Contracts/Conditions"; "Red Strike Plot Revealed," *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1928.

Stockton and Filipino sailors in the U.S. Navy under the Los Angeles branch of the Anti-Imperialist League. At a gathering at the Catholic Filipino Club in 1930, two plain-clothes officers “brutally seized two persons for search and inspection” without any court-sanctioned warrant. In another instance, Ricardo Ramos, another Filipino communist, was arrested for allegedly distributing Party literature to workers in Terminal Island.<sup>106</sup> In a testimonial to a House Committee, Captain Hynes conveyed that the LAPD “through a series of raids and arrests had succeeded in breaking away from the Los Angeles branch of the Anti-Imperialist League, first the Chinese and later the Filipinos, who no longer affiliate with the League or assist in its activities.”<sup>107</sup>

Police harassment in the Filipino community was indeed rampant. Police officers who were caught or accused of exceeding the limitations of the law in their campaign to harass Filipinos and other non-whites were usually exonerated. On January 31, 1928, for example, the LAPD Police Commission gave a ceremonial congratulation to Captain John D. Hubbs of the department’s vagrancy squad on his “clean-up campaign of North Main Street.” “Cleaning-up,” of course, meant making the area safe for white residents and area store patrons. The official gesture signaled a “vote of confidence” for Hubbs, who had been accused of “discriminating against Filipino and Mexican laborers who loiter in the vicinity of the Plaza,” evincing the institutional racism embedded in the city’s law enforcement agency.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> “Red Strike Plot Revealed,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1928; “Some More Police Barbarities,” *The Three Stars*, June 15, 1930; “Lawyer Jailed During Client’s Trial Freed as Friends Pay Fine,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1934.

<sup>107</sup> “Testimony of William F. Hynes, Acting Captain of Detectives, Los Angeles Police Department Commanding, Intelligence Bureau,” Undated (mid-1930), Josephine Fowler Papers, Box 14, Folder 13, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>108</sup> “Police to Ask More Funds to Buy Gasoline,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1928.

Moreover, protests from the Filipino community against police brutality usually had no effect. In 1931, Alex Nocon, the President of the Filipino Mutual Aid Association filed a petition requesting the removal of Officer Patrick Lawler from the beat in the vicinity of First Street. They charged Lawler for the “rough handling of Filipinos.” However, when the case was brought to the Police Commission, members of the Commission upheld the recommendation of Chief of Police Roy Steckel that Lawler was “not showing prejudice against any particular race, but that his activities are in the interest of law and order.” The Commission also concluded that the plaintiffs “cited no particular instance” of police misconduct and that the “charges [were] unfounded.” Yet, when Filipino newspaper editors ran articles in the summer of 1931 detailing an LAPD murder of a Filipino robbery suspect who fled from their custody in front of a taxi-dance hall, the Commission had no response nor took any action.<sup>109</sup>

On May 15, 1938, the LAPD apprehended Marcial Villa, a Filipino who owned a local grocery store, without probable cause. On his way to a restaurant, Los Angeles policemen dragged Villa to a vacant lot and beat him, “unable to explain himself in a language he was not familiar with.”<sup>110</sup> This incident prompted many members of the Filipino community to speak up against the LAPD’s violent harassment aimed at Filipinos. Two days later, Manuel S. Obella and L. A. Gordon, both attorneys, testified on behalf of Filipinos in the city and charged that police officers were “conducting a drive against Filipinos” in which they were enacting a “prevalent practice of police officers in arresting Filipinos in wholesale lots...beating them...[and] preventing them from assembling in groups.” The attorneys also presented a

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<sup>109</sup> “Filipinos’ Plea for Transfer of Officer Refused,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1931; Los Angeles City Archives, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center. Board of Police Commissioners. February 24, 1931, pg. 118.

<sup>110</sup> “Los Angeles...’Little Manila’ of the Southland,” *The Fil-American Advocate*, February 15, 1954.

petition signed by approximately two hundred Filipinos protested against the extralegal activities of the LAPD. Like most formal complaints made by underrepresented communities, however, the petition did little to change LAPD policy. The Police Commission unanimously ordered that the petition “be referred to the Chief of Police for investigation and report.”<sup>111</sup> Although there is no record of any follow-up actions made by Chief Davis, it is safe to assume that little was done in disciplining the officers or changing the policing tactics towards Filipinos.

Various other stories of police harassment against Filipinos emerged during this period. In 1936, two LAPD officers illegally searched Manuel Buaken when he was spotted in downtown at one in the morning. In 1937, Remigio Santiago complained that two officers harassed him as he was waiting for a ride to his employer’s house. He was then questioned for four hours at the police station and was subsequently fired from his job. In 1939, LAPD officers pulled over Amador Gonong and another Filipino at Seventh Street and Broadway and apprehended them for “looking like bums.” As they were resisting arrest, the officers kicked and slapped them repeatedly.<sup>112</sup>

Yet, as much harassment young Filipinos received from the police, the community was able to resist in various ways. The Filipino Patriotic Association, for example, helped Filipinos “in case of sickness, accident, and when in trouble; and also to help him to adjust himself in this country.” On one occasion, sixty-three members of the Association “put up ten dollars a piece” to fight a case in which a Filipino, who was also a trained boxer, was arrested for striking a man who consistently harassed other Filipinos. With the monetary help from the Association to hire

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<sup>111</sup> “Protest Filed by Filipinos” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1938; Los Angeles City Archives, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center. Board of Police Commissioners. May 17, 1938, 357.

<sup>112</sup> Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 89-93.

proper legal representation, the case was eventually dismissed.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, despite the myriad ways Filipinos could resist state oppression and containment from the LAPD, they possessed little power in an already corrupt political system.

### **Filipino Exclusion and Repatriation**

As more Filipinos migrated to the United States and challenged the constrained racial and gender boundaries set before them, white exclusionists became more adamant about stopping the unrestricted immigration of America's colonial population. Though the Watsonville Riots of 1930 brought the "Filipino problem" to the national forefront, it took a few more years before Filipino immigration became restricted. As Rick Baldoz argues, Filipino exclusion only succeeded when nativists aligned their interests with advocates vying for Philippine independence. Philippine nationalists argued in many Congressional hearings that excluding Filipinos from the United States and solving the West Coast "race problem" could only be possible if the United States declared the Philippines independent, reminding legislators of the contradictions of American colonial presence in the Philippines. Indeed, legislators, for fear of projecting an image and contradicted their "benevolent empire," did not bar Filipino immigration while the Philippines was under American legal sovereignty. In essence, nativists' desires for Filipino exclusion rested on solving the legal reality of American imperialism in the Philippines.<sup>114</sup>

It would not be until 1934, when Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act after several years of debate, that limits to Filipino migration were set. The law authorized the federal

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<sup>113</sup> James Earl Wood, "Field Notes," James Earl Wood Collection, Box 2, Folder 8.

<sup>114</sup> For a detailed account of Filipino exclusion debates, see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 413-428; and Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion*, 156-193.

government to relinquish colonial control and recognize the sovereignty of the Philippines after a period of ten years. The Philippine government, in turn, began to draft its own constitution and establish a “Commonwealth” government, an arbitrary “probationary period” before full political independence. One of the more significant consequences of the Act was the reclassification of Filipino migrants from “nationals” to “aliens ineligible to citizenship.” As a result, unregulated Filipino migration to the United States suddenly came to a halt in 1934 and the Philippines became subject to the 1924 Immigration Act quota of fifty persons annually. For the moment, U.S. legislators believed that the entanglement of American colonization and Filipino migration was solved by setting a future date for eventual Philippine independence while placing the Philippines under a lower immigration quota than other nations

While white exclusionists lauded the end of unmitigated Filipino migration, they continued to push government officials to pass legislation that would deport Filipinos still residing in the United States. In January 1933, Frank L. Shaw, chairman of the County Board of Supervisors, who was also running for mayor, planned to launch a deportation program of Filipinos on relief rolls with county agencies.<sup>115</sup> Later that year, Representative Samuel Dickstein introduced a bill that aimed to deport unemployed Filipinos at the federal government’s expense. From the beginning, city officials in Los Angeles were all too eager to participate in the expulsion of these “aliens” from the city. In fact, federal officials looked towards Los Angeles as a model to carry out the implementation of deportation because of the city’s experience with Mexican repatriation beginning in 1929. Deputy Superintendent of the Los Angeles County Department of Charities assured the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization that county officials were willing to help with any repatriation efforts since they

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<sup>115</sup> “Shaw Plans Movement to Send Filipinos Home,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, January 18, 1933.

deported over 30,000 Mexicans from the region the year prior.<sup>116</sup> Los Angeles County officials also claimed to the committee that Filipinos who sought government assistance overwhelmed the County agencies. With the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in March 1934 and a repatriation bill still in legislation, Los Angeles County Supervisor Roger W. Jessup called for the “deportation of approximately 7,000 indigent Filipinos on the County Welfare rolls” and asked the County Counsel to determine the program’s legality.<sup>117</sup> Eventually, Congress passed the Filipino Repatriation Act in July 1935 in which the federal government would pay the transportation costs for Filipinos who voluntarily agreed to return to the Philippines.

William Carr, District Director of the U.S. Immigration Service in Los Angeles immediately opened a special office just two blocks south of the city’s First Street Filipino community to handle all day-to-day business regarding repatriation. However, because Filipinos were skeptic of the program and did not want to return to the Philippines, much of the office’s work was trying to encourage Filipinos to participate in the repatriation program. For example, Carr’s office sent local Filipino businessman Primo Quevedo a letter that outlined the funds available for repatriation and requested him to “kindly advise Filipino residents of this matter” and publicize to the local media that repatriation was part of a humanitarian effort. The *Los Angeles Times* portrayed the Repatriation Act as beneficial to Filipinos, conveying how by going “back home,” they would “be greeted in Manila by brass bands and songs of welcome.” Although some Filipinos did leave, most community leaders claimed that repatriation was a “disguised form of deportation.” In Los Angeles, only “117 men, 8 women, 27 children, and 6 white wives” opted to repatriate. As a result of the low numbers of repatriation participants, Congress renewed the act several times. In the end, few Filipinos decided to leave, with only

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<sup>116</sup> U.S. Congress, *To Return Unemployed Filipinos to the Philippine Islands*, 45-46.

<sup>117</sup> “Urge Filipinos on Relief be Deported,” *Los Angeles Herald*, April 16, 1934.

1,900 opting to leave by 1938.<sup>118</sup> Filipinos who remained in the United States continued to live within a society that sought their urbanization, segregation, and containment.

In this chapter, I analyzed how Filipino migration to the United States and entry into the American political economy exposed the entanglements of American empire. As the United States gained a colonial foothold in the Philippines, seemingly justified by an agenda of “benevolent assimilation,” the corporal presence of Filipinos on American shores revealed the contradictions of such colonial discourse. In contrast to U.S. colonial officials, whites on the West Coast deemed Filipinos “unassimilable” and waged campaigns to isolate and contain them within ascribed racial and gender borders. To Filipinos in Los Angeles, First Street’s Little Manila district represented one of the few areas where the community’s needs were met to find a sense of home in an otherwise hostile city. However, for much of the pre-WWII era, the presence of Filipinos loitering on the corner with no apparent job to occupy their time, going in and out of seedy taxi-dance halls and gambling dens, living in crowded apartments and rooming houses, and parading up and down streets with white women on their arm became a threat to the vision of a white downtown Los Angeles. As a result, urban reformers, government officials, and the Los Angeles Police Department contained, segregated and marginalized in the city, contradicting edicts of democracy and equality that the federal government used to justify American occupation in the Philippines. As Filipinos contested these boundaries, many whites sought their exclusion and deportation, bringing empire back into the political arena. With so few Filipinos participating in the repatriation program, city officials nonetheless continued to

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<sup>118</sup> Los Angeles District, “Letter to Primo Quevedo,” February 27, 1936, San Buenaventura Papers, Box 2, Folder 5; “Filipinos Go Back Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1936; Gene Sherman, “Filipinos Sail for Islands,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1936; “RACES: Philippine Flop,” *Time Magazine*, October 3, 1938.

regulate Filipino mobility in the city and contain them in Little Manila. However, while most whites saw Filipinos as a population needing containment and eradication, a small cadre of sympathizers viewed America's colonial subjects in a different, liberal light.

## **Chapter 2: Discourses of Filipino Assimilation**

In 1929, Reverend Frank Stipp of the Disciples of Christ Church, and founding member of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles, discussed his extensive work of recruiting young Filipino men to study at American universities with James Earl Wood, a sociologist conducting research on Filipinos in the United States. In their interview, Stipp remarked that he felt the duty to “get the boys out in a university atmosphere and away from that bad environment downtown.”<sup>1</sup> As a former missionary worker seasoned after years of converting Filipinos in the Philippines to Protestantism in the early American colonial period, Stipp, having relocated to Los Angeles, saw his new missionary duty to help Filipinos in America veer away from the “immoral” activities of downtown Los Angeles’s Little Manila district and into a life of spiritual and principled enlightenment through education on a university campus.

In many ways, this paralleled President William McKinley’s call for the “benevolent assimilation” of the Philippines thirty years earlier. McKinley, when moving forward with the colonization of the Philippines, attempted to convince the American people that occupying the island nation was an act of benevolence since their primary mission was not to rule over Filipinos, but rather to assimilate Filipinos into democratic ideals and Christian values in hopes

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<sup>1</sup> “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection Box 2, Folder 8. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

of building a strong nation.<sup>2</sup> However, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, white hostility toward the corporeal presence of Filipinos in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s made “benevolent assimilation” on American shores an impossibility. The threat of another “foreign invasion,” as I argued, resulted in the “hyper-visibility” of Filipinos in popular and political discourse during the period. Yet, as white society sought the exclusion and marginalization of Filipino Americans, there was a small cadre of sympathizers based in Los Angeles, such as Reverend Stipp, who wrote and preached about Filipinos’ unfair treatment in the United States and their ability to be “civilized” and “Christianized,” calling on whites to accept and adopt tenets of this benevolent cause.

In this chapter, I focus on three movements in Los Angeles that were central to leading the charge for Filipino assimilation into American society during this era. Emerging at the same time as the height of the exclusion movement was the field of sociology and its theoretical concepts of assimilation in the United States. Emory Bogardus, professor and founder of the Sociology Department at the University of Southern California and a key figure of the Chicago School, was one of the few public thinkers who at the height of anti-Filipino sentiment believed that Filipino immigrants were in fact conditioned for integration.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the American

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<sup>2</sup> For an extensive reading on President McKinley’s policy of “Benevolent Assimilation” in the Philippines, see Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); and Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> In his influential study on Asian American Studies, *Thinking Orientals*, Henry Yu examines the history of Robert Park’s Chicago School of Sociology and their influential role in constructing the understanding of Asian American identity. Yu asserts that Bogardus and many of his contemporaries in the Chicago School, together with their Asian students, stylized an American form of Orientalism. They posited that Asians would eventually rid themselves of their ancient Oriental cultures and assimilate to American norms. In doing so, they essentially constructed social theories that deemed Asian migrants as exotic and foreign, while concomitantly reinforced

Christian missionary movement, which gained traction in the Philippines at the beginning of American occupation, would eventually become a leading voice for Filipino American civil rights in the pre-World War II period. In Los Angeles, several white missionaries, who possessed firsthand experience in the Christianizing missions in the Philippines at the turn of the century, helped local Filipinos start a church aimed to indoctrinate them with “American Christian values.” Finally, many Depression-era literary writers in California wrote popular works that attempted to shed a positive light on Filipinos in an otherwise dark era. Bill Saroyan, Carey McWilliams, and John Fante were part of a Los Angeles-based writing circle who helped promote racial liberalism that, although well intentioned, helped to obscure the history of American imperial violence in the Philippines.

Through tracing the lives of these writers and scholars and conducting close readings of their works, I contend that despite their progressive intentions against the racial status quo in American society, the discourses of assimilation many of them produced and promoted in fact both enabled and justified American imperialism in the Philippines. As Colleen Lye aptly argues, increasing U.S. imperial expansion abroad at the turn of the twentieth century changed domestic race relations as more non-white laborers migrated to the United States, spawning ideas of racial liberalism through discourses of “assimilation.” This trope of U.S. racial uplift among Filipino Americans during this period not only paralleled but was also part and parcel of the U.S. imperial policy of “benevolent assimilation” in the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> Like American colonial administrators

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“American” whiteness. Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Lye, *America’s Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005). Several Filipino American scholars have analyzed the links between Filipino assimilation and American empire, but most accounts consider the contemporary context and do not historicize its origins in the pre-WWII period. See Oscar

in the Philippines who mandated the education of Filipino in the culture and politics of American democracy in order to achieve independence, these liberals in Los Angeles argued that local Filipinos needed to adopt white American values to avoid racial injustice and become modern liberal subjects of the United States. In turn, white Americans, they argued, needed to accept a doctrine of racial tolerance of Filipinos and be patient with their “adjustment” process.

The discourses that these three movements produced had profound implications for the racialization and spatiality of Filipinos in Los Angeles. As urban cities became more diverse by the early twentieth century as a result of increased global migrations and urbanization, local officials sought ways to organize their city’s racial landscape, resulting in the proliferation of segregated ethnic ghettos. These neighborhoods served as objects of study for many social theorists who saw residential patterns as signifiers of assimilation. Filipinos’ “hyper-visibility” in downtown’s Little Manila district became a key component to scholars’ interest in studying the group. Positing that immigrants tended to live in ethnic neighborhoods – usually less desirable places with high concentrations of immigrants – because of financial, social, and cultural capital constraints, these liberal writers believed Little Manila was a “staging area” for their eventual integration into society. Like Reverend Stipp’s duty to take Filipinos out of that “bad environment downtown,” many of these liberals assumed that Filipinos needed to shed the notoriously foreign influences of their neighborhood environment to be accepted into white suburban life. Ultimately, spatiality became a way these theorists attempted to understand and

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Campomanes, “The New Empire’s Forgetful & Forgotten Citizens,” *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 145-200; Epifanio San Juan, Jr., “Beyond Identity Politics: The Predicament of the Asian American Writer in Late Capitalism,” *American Literary History* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 542-565; Dylan Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); and Cynthia H. Tolentino, *America’s Experts: Race and the Fictions of Sociology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

interpret Filipinos' purported racial progress in America, ignoring and obscuring the reality of institutionalized segregation.<sup>5</sup> In tethering the discourse of assimilation with Filipino residential patterns in Los Angeles, I suggest, whites used the attainment of cultural citizenship in suburban America as an extension of America's imperial project of "benevolent assimilation."

### **Emory Bogardus and the "Filipino Problem"**

In the early 1920s, a group of scholars, led by University of Chicago professor Robert Park, conducted an extensive investigative study on the social conditions of Chinese, Japanese, and other non-white residents of the West Coast. Known as the Survey of Race Relations, this study began in 1924 and abruptly ended in 1926 when research funding vanished. As Henry Yu exhibits in his study on these sociologists' work, the Survey played an integral role in shaping the racialization of Asian Americans and developing the theory of American immigrant assimilation.<sup>6</sup> Although the scholars who participated in the Survey rarely studied Filipinos given their scarce population on the U.S. mainland at the time of the survey, their work would influence future studies on Filipino Americans nonetheless.

A few years after the Survey of Race Relations had ended, Professor Emory Bogardus of the University of Southern California began to study Filipino immigrants as their influx to the West coast quickly gained local and national attention as the "Third Asiatic Invasion" during the

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<sup>5</sup> This theory of spatial assimilation is particularly prevalent in the field of Sociology dating back to the Chicago School. Particular iterations of this theory have been reinforced in recent scholarship. See for example Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2003); James A. Allen and Eugene Turner, "Spatial Patterns of Immigrant Assimilation," *Professional Geographer* 48, no. 2 (November 1996): 140-155; and Douglass Massey, "Residential Segregation: A Theoretical and Empirical Review," *Sociology and Social Research* 69, no. 3 (April 1985): 315-350.

<sup>6</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*.

late 1920s and early 1930s. In his work, he also mentored and advised numerous Filipino students throughout his career, many of whom wrote master's theses and other articles on the Filipino community in Los Angeles, which remain some of the most comprehensive sources on the lives and experiences of pre-1965 Filipino Americans. Who was Emory Bogardus and how did he become fascinated with studying and mentoring Filipinos in Los Angeles? In many ways, his personal life and his strong Christian faith led him to study Filipinos who migrated to the United States for sociological research that ultimately served and validated American colonialism.

Emory Bogardus was born in 1882 in the small town of Belvidere, Illinois. Self-described as the youngest son of "deeply religious farmers," Bogardus noted in his autobiography that he grew up in a "strict" Methodist household where he developed "fundamental principles of character."<sup>7</sup> When he moved to Chicago to attend Northwestern University, Bogardus became involved with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) on campus where "he met young men like [him]self, away from home for the first time...newly arrived from a small town or rural community."<sup>8</sup> He eventually received his Bachelors and Masters degrees both in Psychology and Philosophy from Northwestern University in 1908 and 1909, respectively.

Bogardus then attended the University of Chicago where his interest in social psychology had been "deeply aroused by a course in that subject with Professor George Herbert Mead."<sup>9</sup> It was there that he became a part of the Chicago School and learned the same sociological theories

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<sup>7</sup> Emory Bogardus, *Much I Have Learned* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1962), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>9</sup> Emory Bogardus, *A History of Sociology at the University of Southern California* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1962), 5.

and methods of Robert Park. With rapid industrialization and urbanization occurring in most western nations during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many intellectuals, particularly from Germany, began trying to scientifically analyze the increased social interaction of heterogeneous groups. Among these scholars was Georg Simmel, one of the founders of modern sociology. American sociologists, including Robert Park and George Herbert Mead, traveled to Germany prior to WWI to study under Simmel, eventually bringing his theories to rapidly urbanizing Chicago and fashioned their own American-style discipline. Bogardus eventually earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from Chicago in 1911 and then landed a teaching position at the University of Southern California (USC). In 1915, USC President George Finley Bovard gave Bogardus the responsibility of organizing the Department of Sociology at the university, employing many of Park's theories on communities in the West coast.<sup>10</sup>

Bogardus's two main interests as a scholar were juvenile delinquency and race relations. His tenure as the head of a boys' club at Northwestern and his work with the YMCA movement exposed him to the issues of the deviant young male. Likewise, his experience and interaction with growing ethnic populations in the "social settlement of Chicago" during his time at Northwestern University and "the immigrants on the West coast states that had created a variety of social problems" piqued his interest in immigration and race. Moreover, Bogardus's work on American assimilation was remarkably rooted to his religious beliefs, as he noted in his autobiography that he "believed in the church, supported it, attended it, and advocated its

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<sup>10</sup> See Robert E. L. Faris, *Chicago Sociology, 1920-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Bogardus, *A History of Sociology at the University of Southern California*, 6.

essential mission to human beings.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, the thousands of young Filipino males who migrated to the United States and consistently confronted racism with Americans became perfect subjects not only for his research interests, but more poignantly, for his missionary work of Christian conversion, despite Robert Park’s call to keep his colleagues’ sociological work separate from their Christian beliefs.<sup>12</sup>

Like previous campaigns to exclude Chinese, Japanese, and other Asians from the United States, the “Filipino Problem” emerged from the influx of Filipino laborers to the West coast as a result of the 1924 Immigrant Act and the demand for cheap labor. Perceived to threaten white economic, social, and familial structures, as discussed in the first chapter, Filipinos became targets of hostility and violence. As nativist groups and labor organizations lobbied political officials to pass legislation to limit Filipino immigration, their continued migration, ambiguous “national” state categorization, and subsequent causes of whites’ racial anxieties, became subjects of much political and intellectual debate about U.S. empire during the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

Bogardus seemed primed to lead the scholarly study of Filipinos. He had already researched Mexican immigrants in the Southwest in the 1920s, and was one of the lead researchers in Robert Park’s Survey of Race Relations from 1924 to 1926.<sup>14</sup> As the Filipino population rapidly increased beginning in the late 1920s and became a focus of much political debate, Bogardus’s location at USC allowed him close proximity to the large Filipino population

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<sup>11</sup> Bogardus, *A History of Sociology at the University of Southern California*, 6; Bogardus, *Much I Have Learned*, 109.

<sup>12</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> For more on Filipino nativist movement, see Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 347-432.

<sup>14</sup> In 1934, Bogardus wrote the study *The Mexican in the United States*, one of the first studies of Mexican Americans. Emory Bogardus, *The Mexican in the United States* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1934).

in Los Angeles. In 1929, Bogardus published one of the first academic studies on Filipino Americans, “The Filipino Immigrant Problem,” in *Sociology and Social Research*, a USC-produced scholarly journal he co-founded. In the article, he detailed the history of anti-Filipino sentiment in the United States in response to the growing movement for Filipino exclusion and called for a “just procedure” in their treatment. He later published subsequent articles on Filipinos’ experiences in the United States as part of a series. Fascinated by Filipino immigration, Bogardus began teaching a course at USC, “The Filipino and His Cultural Trends.”<sup>15</sup>

Influenced by Park, Bogardus believed and advanced the Race Relations Cycle Theory, in which ethnic groups normally experienced what he called the “race relations cycle”: contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation. Once contact between ethnic groups and white Americans took place, competition for resources would then occur, resulting in antagonism. Each side would eventually accommodate to the other, followed by the inevitable assimilation of the ethnic or immigrant group. Taking this theory and applying it to the Filipino “problem,” Bogardus maintained that white hostility was a natural occurrence in the cycle, and argued that mitigating that antagonism was only a matter of “social adjustment.”<sup>16</sup>

Though he was one of the few lone voices calling for compassion for Filipino migrants in the face of widespread support of their exclusion, Bogardus, true to his training in Chicago, believed that Filipinos’ acceptance in American society hinged on their ability to adopt white

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<sup>15</sup> Emory Bogardus, “Filipino Immigrant Problem,” *Sociology and Social Research* 13, no. 5 (September –October 1929): 479. Emory Bogardus, “Notes,” Bogardus Papers, Box 2, Edward J. Doheny, Jr. Memorial Library, University of Southern California Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>16</sup> Emory Bogardus, “A Race-Relations Cycle.” *American Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 3 (January 1930): 612-617. Although Bogardus believed in a seven-stage process of assimilation, it was more or less similar to Park’s.

middle-class values and whites' empathy towards the newcomers. In his article, "American Attitudes Towards Filipinos," Bogardus juxtaposed the antagonistic feelings towards Filipino migrants with favorable attitudes of them from "broad-minded people" in an effort to highlight the more auspicious viewpoints and gain sympathy from American readers. In other articles, he aimed to explain the root causes of anti-Filipino sentiment as simply a lack of "adjustment." Attributing Filipinos' alleged economic threat on the white working class to their strong work ethic and their ambition to get an American education, Bogardus suggested that their "disappointment" in the promise of America upon arrival resulted in their attraction to immoral activities in gambling halls and taxi dance halls. Moreover, Filipinos' apparent lack of awareness of sexual boundaries because of their perceived hyper-sexuality and relationships towards white women – perhaps one of the greatest threats whites believed Filipinos embodied – was, Bogardus argued, the result of the paucity of Filipina women in the United States and consequent absence of a stable family life.<sup>17</sup>

Theorizing the Filipino "problem" also allowed Bogardus to reaffirm white American hegemony through racial essentialism. Los Angeles, in the 1920s and 1930s, was a hotbed of debate over Filipinos' race classification. The Los Angeles Superior Court served as a battleground where Filipinos, in *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County*, challenged the categorization of Filipinos as Mongolians. Claiming that they were not Mongolian but in fact Malay, Filipinos argued for the right to marry white women during the age of anti-miscegenation laws.<sup>18</sup> During this era of debate over the classification of Filipinos, Bogardus, a staunch

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<sup>17</sup> Emory Bogardus, "Filipino Immigrant Attitudes," *Sociology & Social Research* 14, no. 5 (September 1930): 469, 471; "Social Tangles Told at Parley," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1929.

<sup>18</sup> Eventually, the Los Angeles Superior Court, in *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County*, determined that Filipinos were indeed "Malay" and can legally marry whites. Shortly after the

believer of marriage equality and a supporter of the repeal of these “man-made” laws, sought to racially define them in his 1932 article, “What Race are Filipinos?” in *Sociology and Social Research* to put to rest the debate of Filipinos’ ambiguous racial categorization.

In his study, Bogardus argued that Filipinos were different from other “Orientals” because of their history of colonization and therefore possessed the ability to assimilate more readily. He believed that his study of Filipinos and their “racial situation” in the Philippines was essential in comprehending the widespread white antipathy toward Filipinos on the West Coast. Influenced by the work of W. Cameron Forbes and Dean C. Worcester, Bogardus used racial assumptions to theorize the make-up of the Filipino “race” and demonstrate how they had already reached some form of cultural assimilation.<sup>19</sup> He argued that:

Filipinos are themselves immigrant peoples to the Philippines. They are the sons and daughters of immigrants and the product of racial and cultural intermixtures. They are much like present Americans whose ancestors migrated to what is now the United States, who found here scattered aborigines, and who are in the process of becoming a race as a result of many admixtures.<sup>20</sup>

Then building on Dean C. Worcester’s wave migration theory to explain the peopling of the Philippines, Bogardus categorized Filipinos into ten distinct ethnic groups that migrated to the Philippine archipelago in succession: Negritos, Indonesians, Moors/Mohammedans, Tagalogs, Visayans, Ilocanos, Spanish, Chinese, Chinese-Filipinos, and Japanese. His theory followed the

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decision, the State of California passed legislation to include “Malay” in the miscegenation statute. For more on Filipino legal challenges to anti-miscegenation laws, see Letti Volpp, “American Mestizo: Filipinos and Antimiscegenation Laws in California,” *U.C. Davis Law Review* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 795-835.

<sup>19</sup> In his lecture to the Campbell Party on July 31, 1936, Bogardus noted that he gathered his research from W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands Vol. I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928); and Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippines: Past and Present* (New York: Macmillian, 1914). See also, George A. Malcolm, *The Commonwealth of the Philippines* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1939).

<sup>20</sup> Emory Bogardus, “What Race Are Filipinos?,” *Sociology and Social Research* 16, no. 3 (January–February 1932): 275.

same modernist Philippine development logic that American social scientists devised at the turn of the century that implied that Filipino people “evolved” through the subsequent arrival of more “advanced” peoples. In this “interesting racial and cultural laboratory,” Bogardus speculated, “all the grand divisions of the human race represented, namely, the Negroid; the Mongoloid; and the Caucasoid.” Thus, the Filipino was “a new race, a race in the making, and a race ‘in whom the East and the West have met.’”<sup>21</sup>

To many of the Chicago sociologists, social contact with other ethnic groups was a step towards civilization, with the United States and its heterogeneous population as the exemplary modern nation.<sup>22</sup> Racial and ethnic conflict among a diverse populace was a necessary stage in the development of a higher consciousness where group identities and divisions do not exist. Like Americans, then, Filipinos, too, were becoming modern. In arguing the “Filipino” as a consciousness that formed through the contact of the ten cultural groups in the Philippines, Bogardus asserted that as the “rightful” colonizers of a multiethnic society, Filipinos were already conditioned for modernity and assimilation given their historical composition. He suggested that Filipinos, unlike Chinese and Japanese immigrants before them, would assimilate easier since they were “in many ways more Western than Eastern, more European and American than Asiatic.”<sup>23</sup> To Bogardus, ceasing racial hostility against Filipinos, in turn, served as a modernizing project for Americans. Fair treatment towards Filipinos in the United States

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<sup>21</sup> Early American administrators and scholars suggested that the Philippines was populated by successive “waves” of migration from mainland Asia and Australia. See, for example, Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippine Islands and Their People* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1898). Scholars such as William Henry Scott and F. Landa Jocano would later debunk the theory.; Bogardus, “What Race Are Filipinos?,” 279.

<sup>22</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 87

<sup>23</sup> Bogardus, “What Race Are Filipinos?,” 275

inherently demonstrated American superiority and justified the fulfillment of civilizing missions at home and abroad.

Bogardus's racial theory also demonstrated how the supposed greater degree of Filipino assimilation than that of other Asian groups exemplified, and therefore justified, America's "benevolent" imperial project in the Philippines. He further argued:

The East is illustrated by the Malayans, who are of short, stocky nature, and somewhat timid in temperament, and by the Chinese with their spirit of adventure and of business sagacity. The West is revealed in the Filipino temperament so often Latin in type, and by the marked cultural development in the field of education, health, sanitation, and politics, brought to the Islands from the United States.<sup>24</sup>

In racializing the Filipino as having both the under-developed cultural traits of the East and the more modern "cultural development" of the West, Bogardus suggested that they represented the ideal "Oriental" citizen. Filipinos, to Bogardus, essentially had less of a distance to traverse a linear progression of assimilation. Moreover, by conveying how Spanish colonialism gave Filipinos nothing but their "temperament" while demonstrating the success of American colonial projects, Bogardus implicitly argued that U.S. intervention was necessary and justified for the progress of Filipinos into modernization. Filipinos, to him, were more than just the meeting of the "East" and "West," but more importantly, the West was "taking the reins" towards their modern development as colonial subjects.<sup>25</sup>

In 1935, Congress passed the Filipino Repatriation Act, which funded the transportation for Filipinos who wished to return to the Philippines, although few partook in the program that many perceived as "masked deportation." In his 1936 article, "Filipino Repatriation," Bogardus called this series of events "a sad and concluding chapter of Filipino immigration to the United

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 278

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 279.

States.” Nonetheless, Filipinos, “it is to be hoped, will always be welcome as a student[s] and scholar[s] in the United States.” They were “also worthy of having citizenship privileges extended...on the same basis that they are given to people from any other country.”<sup>26</sup> Even after the halt of Filipino migration, Bogardus continued to believe in the promise of American education and liberal rights to those Filipinos who remain in the country.

The end of Filipino migration also marked the conclusion of Bogardus’s direct scholarship on Filipinos in the United States. His 1936 article on Filipino repatriation was one of the last articles he produced on Filipinos. Altogether, Bogardus wrote six articles and remains one of the pioneering scholars of Filipino American Studies. He was one of the few influential voices at the time that sought just treatment for Filipino migrants, marking a turn from overtly anti-Filipino discourse surrounding them. His larger role in the field, however, was perhaps his years of mentoring several Filipino sociology students who came to study at USC and carried the torch of Filipino assimilation with a more fervent Christian mission.

### **Philippine Missionaries and the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship**

In addition to sociologists, Christian social reformers were instrumental in spreading beliefs about Filipino American assimilation during the pre-WWII era, often taking it upon themselves to help Filipino immigrants adapt to their new, often hostile environment. Inextricably linked, both sociologists and Christian social reformers believed in the process of immigrant assimilation through the adoption of American Christian values. Many Chicago School scholars relied heavily on Christian missionaries to establish contacts with their non-

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<sup>26</sup> Emory Bogardus, “Filipino Repatriation,” *Sociology and Social Research* 21, no. 1 (September-October 1936): 71.

white subjects.<sup>27</sup> For those who studied Filipinos during the 1920s and 1930s, these linkages were very much apparent. One such group of missionaries from the Disciples of Christ denomination used the imperial ideology of missionary work in the Philippines and fused it with Emory Bogardus's discourse of immigrant acceptance, to create one of the most influential institutions in the Filipino community of Los Angeles, the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship.

Upon the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines in 1898, scores of American missionaries arrived in the new colony in hopes of converting both Catholic and non-Christian Filipinos to Protestantism. Though most Filipinos were Roman Catholic, many missionaries believed that Spanish Catholicism was a weak and corrupt version of Christianity. This assumption supported the belief that the vast majority of Filipinos were "unfit" and too "immature" for independence, in the political as well as the spiritual sense. Their years of work in converting the native population to the American brand of the faith were very much a part of the U.S. colonial policy of inclusionary imperialism.<sup>28</sup> Once Filipinos started to appear on American shores, many missionaries began directing their work to the local context.

One of the larger denominations to take foothold in the Philippines, particularly in the Ilocos region, was the Disciples of Christ. William Henry Fonger, an ordained minister from Eureka, Illinois, and his wife, Leith Cox, were missionaries in the Philippines for the United

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<sup>27</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 19-28.

<sup>28</sup> For more on Protestantism in the Philippines, see Kenton J. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); and Mariano C. Apilado, *Revolutionary Spirituality: A Study of the Protestant Role in the American Colonial Rule of the Philippines, 1898-1928* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1999). For background on American missionaries in Asia, see John King Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Christian Missionary Society of the Disciples of Christ denomination, working primarily among students in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, and neighboring provinces in Northern Luzon. During their mission, Fonger, known locally as “Mr. Protestant of the Philippines,” befriended Silvestre Morales, a young Filipino from Batac, Ilocos Norte, who was likewise eager to spread the gospel. Morales eventually enrolled in the Ilocos Norte-Ilocos Sur-Abra Disciples of Christ Pastors’ Institute and became ordained as a minister.<sup>29</sup>

In July 1928, Morales traveled to the World Sunday School Convention held in Los Angeles as one of four delegates selected to represent the Philippines. During their visit, the Filipino delegates became quite alarmed at the experiences of Filipinos in America. Much to their dismay, they witnessed Filipinos relegated to menial labor and barred from many public institutions, only to seek refuge in “hedonistic” places such as gambling halls and taxi-dance halls in seedy downtown neighborhoods. Many whites, moreover, denied Filipino membership in their churches, limiting their opportunities for worship and moral improvement. “In Los Angeles, these young Filipinos had no place to go...they were wandering around,” remarked Reverend Felix Pascua, “When they go to Church...the people would say, ‘No, this is not your place.’”<sup>30</sup>

Upon his arrival at the convention, Morales met Dr. Royal Dye and his wife Eva, influential members of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Dyes, who hailed from Michigan, moved to Los Angeles in 1911 after doing extensive evangelical work in Congo,

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<sup>29</sup> Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916*, 7.; Lorna Ignacio Dumapias ed., *Filipino American Experience: The Making of a Historical Cultural Monument* (Los Angeles: Filipino American Experience, 2010), 11.

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*. (Caldwell, I.D.: Caxton Printers, 1948), 246; “Filipino Christian Church Souvenir Program,” June 28, 1992, Royal Morales Collection, Box III, Folder 3, Royal F. Morales Papers, Asian Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Africa. During their mission in Africa, they became very involved with the Disciples of Christ Christian Board's Men and Millions team, a group whose mission was to promote discipleship in many underserved communities, particularly among youth. The church appointed them a missionary post in Aparri, Cagayan in the Philippines, but eventually stayed in Los Angeles. At the convention, the Dyes greeted Morales and housed him for the duration of his stay. Morales explained to them the "intolerable situation" of the Filipinos in America and convinced them to help establish a Christian presence in the lives of these immigrants. With the financial support of the First Christian Church, Morales and the Dyes established the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship and held regular bible studies and meetings at the Dyes' Hollywood Hills home. Eva Dye's hospitality to the Filipinos of the Fellowship "provided the refuge and sanctuary for the loneliness and home sickness faced by the young Pinoy," since "no other church in the whole United States [had] taken [Filipinos] in" and made them a "welcome part of its life."<sup>31</sup> For these Christian missionaries now living in Los Angeles, converting Filipinos in United States to Protestantism became an extension of their work across the Pacific.

To expand the congregation of the Fellowship, Morales frequented the "crowded Filipino town where pool halls, gambling dens, and other vices were rampant," using his enthusiasm and charisma to recruit Filipinos toward Christian lives. Leaders in the Fellowship also sought to evangelize in Filipino labor camps in the rural areas of Southern California. The missionaries' regional ties to the Ilocos region of the Philippines likewise helped facilitate religious conversion since the majority of Filipinos in America were Ilocano. Eventually, membership grew to large

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<sup>31</sup> Dumapias, *Filipino American Experience*, 13; "Filipino Christian Church Souvenir Program," June 26, 1983 Box III, Folder 3, Royal F. Morales Papers; Severino Corpus, "An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles," (Master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1938), 41; Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 247.

enough numbers that the First Christian Church opened its basement of their church on 11th and Hope Streets for the Fellowship in 1929. Later that year, the Church established the “Filipino Center” a residential dormitory in the Bunker Hill area of downtown “in order to provide a Christian home for Filipinos who want a chance to be decent.”<sup>32</sup>

However, failing health drove Eva Dye, or “Mother” Dye, as many Filipino members affectionately called her, to seek someone to take over her supervision of the Fellowship. The Disciples of Christ State Board, recognizing the importance of the missionary project, called on Reverend Frank Stipp, to oversee the work. Stipp, another Midwesterner, was familiar with Filipinos as well. Together with his wife, Myrtle, Stipp had conducted missionary work in the Ilocos region as early as 1915, establishing several education institutions including the Christian Training School in Laoag, and the Christian Bible Training School and the Young Women’s Training Institute in Vigan. Their experience and familiarity with Filipinos in the Philippines gave them a unique advantage to supervise the further expansion of the Fellowship.<sup>33</sup>

Such evangelical movements were not unique in Los Angeles. The 1920s saw a dramatic increase in religious activity in Southern California as a significant population of white Protestants migrated from the Midwest and South and sought to grow their influence.<sup>34</sup> Filipinos, whom reformers believed were leading “immoral” lives, became primary targets for religious conversion as a growing immigrant group on the West coast. The result was the

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<sup>32</sup> Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles,” 37; Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 247; Frank V. Stipp, “Decent Living Quarters Provided.” *The Christian Evangelist*, May 1, 1930.

<sup>33</sup> Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles,” 36.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Engh, “Practically Every Religion Being Represented” in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, ed. Tom Sitton and William Deverell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 202.

Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, an institution whose mission was “to promote the moral, physical, and social well-being of the Filipinos in Southern California, and to be an active agency in the solution of their problems.” Creating a venue for Filipinos to bond and provide mutual support together with white Americans, organizers believed the Fellowship, more importantly, served as a vehicle to uplift Filipinos socially and spiritually. The hyphen in “Filipino-American,” in fact, connoted not the present understanding of Filipinos in America, but rather a mutual bond between Filipinos and Americans through Christianity.<sup>35</sup> Reminiscent of U.S. policies of benevolent assimilation of the Philippines, the act of conversion to Protestantism and becoming “a part of the American church” aimed to “uplift” Filipinos to an equal stance with Americans.

Yet, the Fellowship did not accept all Filipinos, only allowing willing converts and those who adhered to the teachings of the group and the social mores of “respectable” citizens. Leaders in the Fellowship upheld strict social definitions as to what was an acceptable Filipino and what was not. Filipinos who crossed racial and sexual boundaries, for example, were not welcome at all. Reverend Frank Stipp explained that there were “twenty to fifty Filipinos coming to the regular meetings of the Christian Church here. It is the only one which has accepted them. But we don’t want any Filipinos with white wives...that would ruin the cause.”<sup>36</sup> Stipp, adamant about the just “cause” to accept Filipinos into his church – a progressive step in social reform during the era – nonetheless upheld the precise social mandate that nativists accused Filipinos of over-stepping: anti-miscegenation. According to this logic, Filipinos who

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<sup>35</sup> Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles,” 85.

<sup>36</sup> “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection Box 2, Folder 8, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

adopted white Christian ideals belonged in American society and validated the success of assimilation, while those who did not represented the deficiency of Filipino culture. Like the conditional and contingent state of Philippine independence in which Filipino government officials had to “prove” their worth for self-governance, inclusion of the Filipino American subject in U.S. society was always predicated on racial and sexual norms set by white Americans.

Of course, the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship was neither the first Filipino organization nor the first religiously oriented Filipino group in Los Angeles. Filipinos formed dozens of local and intra-state groups that served as mutual aid societies, catering to the needs of migrants. The Filipino Federation of America, for example, founded in 1925 by controversial leader Hilario Moncado, boasted over twenty thousand members and became an unofficial community representative to the mainstream press along with leaders from Masonic organizations like the Gran Oriente and the Caballeros de Dimas Alang. However, the Fellowship provided more benefits than just camaraderie. As historian Dorothy Fujita-Rony suggests, the majority of Filipinos who migrated during the period aimed at enrolling in college while working.<sup>37</sup> Members of the Fellowship, above all, benefited from access to higher

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<sup>37</sup> While Dorothy Fujita-Rony suggests that Filipinos in Seattle used labor unions as their “safe spaces,” their countrymen in Los Angeles did not follow unionism as much as other parts of the Pacific coast. Several factors contributed to the lack of union participation among Filipinos. First, urban Filipinos were largely employed in the service sector. As many labor historians note, the labor union movement really gained its foundation in heavy manufacturing and aimed at large employers. Unionism in service employment was, and still is, difficult due to the decentralized nature of employment. Second, Filipinos were largely unionized, or at least organized, in the agricultural industry and against large corporate growers. In Southern California, most farmlands were small and family-run, a far cry from the “factories in the field” of the Central Valley, Filipinos who did participate in strikes were largely those who worked in the small fields around Los Angeles. Third, Los Angeles was notoriously an anti-union city. Chief James E. Davis, especially, was infamous for being an anti-Communist and spearheaded

education and institutional leadership development.

The Fellowship's networks and connections with higher institutions such as the California Christian College and USC facilitated educational access for a number of Filipinos. The California Christian College (later named Chapman University), a Disciples of Christ-affiliated university established in 1920 after absorbing the former Hesperian College, was instrumental in providing education to members of the Fellowship. C. C. Chapman of the California Christian College had donated to the group "a part of his building at Los Angeles and Sixth Streets known as the 'Filipino Center.'" Additionally, the Dyes, who had assisted in the formation of the Fellowship, also served as trustees of the College. "The development of leadership," explained Frank Stipp, "both for use here and in the Philippines is an important feature of the work...we are trying our best to get the young men in school and keep them there." Since he stipulated that "missionaries [would] cease lending encouraged (sic) and financial support to students unless they were graduates," they worked hard to recruit and admit a significant number of Filipinos to the college through their influence. As a result of this institutional network, thirteen Filipinos, including Reverend Morales, were among 125 freshmen enrolled at the California Christian College in 1928, at the expense of the First Christian Church. Missionary leaders also assigned Morales to recruit other Filipinos to go to the college. Though

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the LAPD's Red Squad. This, of course, did not mean that union activists did not try to organize Filipinos in Los Angeles, but their primary affiliations during this period were social organizations. Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 170; Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 45-50; See also Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990); Steffi San Buenaventura, "Nativism and Ethnicity in a Filipino American Experience," (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1990).

the majority of these Filipino students were “to return as Bible teachers among their own people,” many used the opportunity to earn their degree and eventually enter graduate programs.<sup>38</sup>

Through this missionary network formed from the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, many Filipino students had the opportunity to continue on to graduate school at USC. To expand the sociological scholarship of Filipinos in America, Emory Bogardus recruited many of these students who had attended the California Christian College to study under him. Students such as Benicio Catapsan, Marcos Berbano, Severino Corpus, Aquilino Obando, Casiano Coloma, Mario Ave, and Valentin Aquino were all involved in the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship (later established as the Filipino Christian Church in 1933), attended the California Christian College as undergraduates, and worked under Bogardus at USC. In 1933, Los Angeles Junior College, with forty Filipino students, and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), with fourteen, had the highest enrollment of Filipinos in Southern California. By 1937, however, Filipino enrollment dropped significantly at those public schools while the University of Southern California, with fifteen Filipinos enrolled, and the California Christian College, with thirteen, became the top destinations for Filipino students. The drop in enrollment at the public universities was attributed to the change of residential status among Filipinos after the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, prompting schools to charge non-resident tuition fees. With the ability to attain higher education more elusive, Filipinos

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<sup>38</sup> Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 248; Benicio Catapsan, “The Filipino Occupational Activities of Los Angeles” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1934); “Enrollment Reaches 400 Mark” *California Christian Collegian*, October 1928; “Field Notes,” James Earl Wood Collection Box 2, Folder 8. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California; Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 247; Frank V. Stipp, “Decent Living Quarters Provided,” *The Christian Evangelist*. May 1, 1930

increasingly sought private funding for education, making the institutional network of Christian social reformers, including Bogardus, increasingly instrumental for educational support. This network essentially became a pipeline for Bogardus to groom emerging and aspiring Filipino scholars.<sup>39</sup>

Those Filipino students who studied under Bogardus and other Sociology professors at USC wrote quite extensively about the Filipino community in the United States, publishing their works in the Bogardus-edited journal *Sociology and Social Research* and producing many master's theses to fulfill their degree requirements. In many ways, their scholarship reflected influences from the Fellowship and the missionary movement and the liberal ideology of assimilation. Like Bogardus, they argued that anti-Filipino hostility was the natural, teleological stage of conflict in the linear progression of immigrant assimilation. Filipinos, given their history of Western influence, could and would assimilate if racial conflict subsided. However, while Bogardus suggested that American society needed to be more tolerant, his students were more adamant in blaming Filipinos for the problems they encountered in the United States.

Marcos Berbano, for example, one of Bogardus's first students, believed that transcending racial antagonism and reaching equality with Americans necessitated an acceptance of Christianity's teachings and value. In his 1930 thesis, "The Social Status of the Filipinos in Los Angeles County," Berbano wrote, "the church is a means of contact between the Filipinos and the Americans...it takes the place of the lost home influence."<sup>40</sup> Laying the blame of the "Filipino problem" on Filipino laborers themselves for not embracing the Protestant work ethic,

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<sup>39</sup> Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power*, 53; Corpus, "An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles," 14.

<sup>40</sup> Marcos Berbano, "The Social Status of the Filipinos in Los Angeles County," (Master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1930), 77.

Berbano posited:

It is natural to all races of men, but it is a pity indeed, to see that the great majority of the Filipinos choose the easiest but wrong aspects of life situations. ‘Work and have a good time. Who cares?’ Such is their attitude toward life. This is the reason they can afford to have nice cars and good clothes but cannot afford to get proper housing and schooling.

He further explained:

The trouble with the Filipinos is that they are not mindful of their socio-economic status...The Filipinos turn around and blame the American public for their misfortune. Yet, in a way, they are to blame for their indiscreet attitude toward the influence of their circumstancial [sic] environment. Most of them have chosen to remain laborers rather than to rise above it.<sup>41</sup>

In placing Christianity at the crux of their scholarship, Berbano, and many other Filipino scholars who followed, paralleled the missionary efforts of evangelicals who sought converts in the Philippines. Their own experience of racial and religious uplift divorced and obscured the larger racial and imperial context of Filipino marginalization in American society. Berbano condemned Filipinos' propensity to "choose the easiest but wrong aspects of life situations" and believed their individual actions caused anti-Filipino racism rather than questioning the "American public" and the prevalence of institutional racism. He believed that the lack of Protestant conversion and adoption of Christian discipline hampered Filipinos' otherwise facilitated assimilation to American society. Berbano, and others, felt strongly that groups who promoted "moral" values, such as the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, would advance Filipino "progress" in the United States.

Since the Fellowship played an important role in providing privilege to these students, membership consequently solidified and reinforced the notion of assimilation as essential. It is important to note that these students benefited tremendously from the patronage of Bogardus and

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<sup>41</sup> Berbano, "The Social Status of the Filipinos in Los Angeles County," 32.

the missionary network, as they were often accepted in many circles and institutions that barred many other Filipinos, with higher education as among the most valued. As Severino Corpus wrote, “The self-supporting student is an American in the making...he wins friends and influences other people” and “in this way, he is being recognized as a member in the family of nations.”<sup>42</sup> This supportive network served as a means for these students to internalize the race relations cycle, enveloped in a Protestant work ethic. In other words, adhering to assimilation theories proffered their relative privilege in the United States, thus prompting them to propagate such theories to others.

Often writing and studying the inner workings and structure of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in their sociological studies at USC, Benicio Catapusan, Severino Corpus, and Berbano suggested that the Fellowship served as a vehicle to overcome Filipinos’ “maladjustment” to the United States. Echoing President McKinley’s call to “Christianize” Filipinos in preparation for self-rule, these scholars argued that religion was paramount to reforming their countrymen into model American citizens. Because of the “growing intensity of the social problems of the Filipinos in Los Angeles,” Severino Corpus argued that “the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship was organized for adjustment purposes” and that “the Christian environment would conserve the fine qualities of the Filipino youth in America.” Benicio Catapusan further suggested that Filipinos, particularly among the “laboring class,” whose “environmental conditions influencing the behavior of most Filipinos are said to be unwholesome” needed to have “positive” activities to properly “adjust” to American society.<sup>43</sup> In another published article, Catapusan rhetorically wrote, “No wonder the taxi-dance halls exist,

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<sup>42</sup> Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles,” 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 21, 41.

for if the Filipinos aren't welcome in Churches and in Christian homes and other so-called decent places, where else could they go?"<sup>44</sup> As a result, Catapusan, like the other Filipino scholars, lauded the Fellowship's efforts in instituting social, athletic, and religious activities, including sports clubs, debate clubs, Sunday school, and home economics, to steer Filipinos from "unwholesome" activities.

In interviews with members of the Fellowship, these scholars highlighted answers that reinforced the positive role the group played in keeping them away from "immorality." When asked what they would have done if the Fellowship had not existed, members remarked that they would have fallen victim to the "maladjustment" of so many other Filipino laborers in Los Angeles. Some of the answers highlighted by the Filipino scholars included: "I would go to the pool halls to pass away my time"; "I might have gone to the dance halls to spend my good time"; "I might have lost my morality"; "I may be staying aloof with the carefree life"; and "I should have been morally and socially unstable."<sup>45</sup> As this strategy suggested, the Fellowship aimed to discipline the Filipino laborer from "immorality," the perceived target for white hostility towards Filipinos, by offering the promise of American acceptance. Yet, in doing so, they placed the problem of anti-Filipino sentiment on Filipinos themselves. In a sermon to his congregation, Reverend Casiano Caloma stressed that Filipinos needed to "know how to act and treat a white girl in public," so that "there will be no trouble" because most of them "can't and don't maintain dignity here...so you can't blame most Americans for looking down on him."<sup>46</sup> Caloma's assessment essentially called for Filipinos to "adjust" and "self-improve" on an individual basis,

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<sup>44</sup> Benicio T. Catapusan, "Leisure Time Problems of Filipino Immigrants," *Sociology and Social Research* 24, no. 2 (July-August 1940): 541-549.

<sup>45</sup> Corpus, "An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles," 65.

<sup>46</sup> "Field Notes," James Earl Wood Collection, Box 2, Folder 8.

divorcing the larger structural forces of U.S. racism at play.

Ultimately, the missionaries who first worked in the Philippines and helped establish the Fellowship in Los Angeles, the Filipino organizers of the Fellowship, and the students who studied under Bogardus believed in the same mission: Filipinos needed to build their Christian morality in order to be accepted in American society. By tracing the roots of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship to the missionary movement in the Philippines in the wake of American occupation of the Philippines and its links to the sociological model of immigrant assimilation, it is clear that the “adjustment” of Filipino immigrants into U.S. society through Christianization both paralleled and embodied American discourses of “benevolent assimilation” in the Philippines. Thus, like Bogardus who believed that racial relations would improve if Filipinos would simply assimilate, the narrative of inclusion through moral conversion was a seamless extension of American colonialism outside of time and space.

### **Los Angeles’ Cultural Front and the Filipino Literary Subject**

Adding to these academic and religious voices, a small yet influential group of literary authors in Southern California also tried to prove the permeability of liberal assimilation of Filipinos immigrants for years to come. Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s was a locus for young writers seeking to break into the literary industry. These authors eventually developed a distinct local network, and together with many Popular Front writers, aimed at correcting the wrongs of past racial injustices in the United States. Like sociologists and missionaries during the period, writers such as Carey McWilliams, Louis Adamic, Bill Saroyan, and John Fante also became quite interested in the “Filipino Problem” on the West coast. These writers, however, largely because of their own racial experiences and involvement with the labor movement, were

less concerned with Filipinos’ “immoral” behavior, interracial relations, and class standing like their other liberal counterparts mentioned earlier. In their interaction with Filipinos, these authors believed that they were victims of an American society that was not upholding its liberal promise and sought to mitigate this wrong in their writings. In portraying and racializing Filipinos as “immigrant dreamers,” this loose network of Los Angeles writers followed the tenets of the Chicago School, accepting and promoting the discourse of immigrant assimilation, thus reproducing and advancing U.S. empire.

Michael Denning, in his seminal work, *The Cultural Front*, discussed the vital role of the labor movement in influencing American popular culture during the 1930s and 1940s. The Great Depression and the rise of Fascism created an opportunity for left-wing cultural production to proliferate the consciousness of many, mainly white working-class Americans. An integral element of the Popular Front was its integration of non-white narratives in the development of a working-class consciousness. In the same vein, the Popular Front’s broader appeal to non-whites was the promise of a multicultural coalition for civil rights. The public intellectual Louis Adamic, for example, pushed an agenda of cultural pluralism in most of his writings. He suggested that the United States had the unique “opportunity to create a great culture... which could approach being universal or pan-human and more satisfying to the human make-up than any culture that has yet appeared under the sun.”<sup>47</sup> The rise of an American working-class solidarity through the Popular Front allowed many non-whites such as Filipino immigrants to be “accepted” as junior partners in the remaking of a more tolerant America.<sup>48</sup>

Popular Front writers became instrumental in portraying Filipinos in a new, sympathetic

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<sup>47</sup> Louis Adamic, *From Many Lands* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), 293.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso Press, 1997).

light during this period, especially writers in California. Beginning in the 1920s and accelerating in the 1930s, a mainly white mass migration to California from more economically depressed areas of the United States altered the demographics of the state. At the same time, many second generation immigrants whose families settled in California came of age during the period. As a result, a significant number of aspiring writers who embraced Popular Front ideals developed a particular regional literary genre. Carey McWilliams, for example, migrated from Colorado to California in 1922 and became politically active both in his writings and in support of the New Deal. He joined other authors such as John Steinbeck and Louis Adamic to form a loose network of local writers who pressed for a progressive agenda.<sup>49</sup>

How they gained an affinity towards the Filipino experiences in California was primarily due to their economic and geographic proximity to the population. As Filipinos congregated in the downtown working-class areas such as Bunker Hill and First Street, many low-income white migrants from the South and Midwest likewise resided in adjacent poor neighborhoods. Many of these white migrants themselves, moreover, experienced forms of racism and were also relegated to downtown neighborhoods. John Fante, for example, was a second-generation Italian American and often pronounced his last name as “Fan-tee” to mask his “foreign-ness,” while Bill Saroyan was Armenian and Louis Adamic was an immigrant from Slovenia. In his autobiographical novel, *Ham on Rye*, Charles Bukowski wrote about his experience with Filipinos downtown upon his arrival as a struggling writer in Los Angeles:

I found a room on Temple Street in the Filipino district...I'd heard all the stories about Filipinos – that they liked white girls, blonds in particular, that they carried stilettos, that they were all the same size, seven of them would chip in and buy one expensive suit, with all the accessories, and they would take turns wearing the suit one night a

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<sup>49</sup> Anna Loftis, *Witnesses to the Struggle: Imaging the 1930s California Labor Movement* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1998), 62-76.

week...Filipinos set the style trends. They stood on the street corners and swung golden chains around and around...<sup>50</sup>

Like Bukowski, Fante came to Los Angeles from Colorado in the early 1930s and resided in various low-rent apartments in downtown, particularly in Bunker Hill. His daily interactions with “the poor and defeated people from all over the world,” with whom he shared the same social and economic oppression, inspired much of his writing.<sup>51</sup> Struggling as they were, these writers found themselves living in the rooming houses downtown, amongst and next to many Filipinos. In contrast then to both the sociologists and the missionaries mentioned earlier, these Popular Front writers viewed Filipinos as co-equal proletarians, similarly “poor and defeated,” and not simply an insular community that needed to adopt American Christian values to be accepted.

Yet, like the sociologists and missionaries, they continued to believe in the promise of a tolerant America. Bill Saroyan, for example, born in 1908 to Armenian immigrant farmers in Fresno, began writing in the 1930s, and joined the literary networks of West coast progressive writers. While most of his stories centered on the Armenian American experience, he also developed an interest in the stories of Asian communities in California. He mentored many Nisei writers who were emerging at the same time, such as Toshio Mori. His proximity to Filipino farm workers in the Central Valley, moreover, fostered his affinity towards them and their plight as victims of intense racism. In 1938, Saroyan, inspired by their experiences, published the short story, “The Filipino and the Drunkard,” as part of his larger collection of stories *Love Here Is My Hat*.

The plot centered on an unnamed Filipino who is being chased and harassed by an

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<sup>50</sup> Charles Bukowski, *Ham on Rye* (Boston: Black Sparrow Press, 1982), 139.

<sup>51</sup> Ross B. Wills, “John Fante,” *Common Ground* 1 (Spring 1941): 86-87.

intoxicated white World War I veteran in front of an indifferent crowd at a boat dock. While waiting for the boat to arrive, the drunkard, who Saroyan clearly portrayed as racist, begins pushing the Filipino and yells, “I fought twenty-four months in France. I’m a real American. I don’t want you standing up here among white people.” The Filipino then runs to other locations on the dock, attempting to evade the drunkard’s pursuit. “You are drunk,” the Filipino yells at the drunk man, “Go away. Please do not make any trouble.”

Although quite short at less than 1,200 words in length, Saroyan’s powerful tale not only portrayed the injustice and victimization of Filipinos during the period, but also suggested that American society deserved blame for failing in its social responsibilities to uphold tolerance. In the story’s climactic scene, the Filipino, armed with a knife, “thrusts the knife into the side of the man many times, as a boxer jabs in the clinches.” In self-defense, he kills the drunkard, but as he faces the crowd holding the bloody knife, “everyone knew what he had done, yet no one moved...no one daring to speak to him, and everyone aware of his crime.” He then yells to the crowd of by-standers before police officers arrive, “Why didn’t you stop him? Is it right to chase a man like a rat? You knew he was drunk. I did not want to hurt him, but he would not let me go.”<sup>52</sup> Throughout the story, the crowd does nothing to help the frightened Filipino searching for refuge. Seeing that nobody could step up to aid him, the Filipino is forced to kill the drunkard and face his own consequences with the authorities. Saroyan placed the death, not at the drunkard’s own doing, but on the crowd’s apathy and lack of moral consciousness. To him, Filipinos deserved humane treatment, as the boy’s last words, “Why didn’t you stop him?” becomes not only a lesson of individual choice, but also one for all Americans to act upon

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<sup>52</sup> William Saroyan, “The Filipino and the Drunkard” in *Love, Here is my Hat and Other Short Romances* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938).

injustice.

This racial form of the “Filipino victim” was certainly not lost on John Fante, perhaps the Popular Front writer in Los Angeles with the most interest in Filipino immigrants. As early as 1933, Fante hoped to write a novel about the experiences of Filipino Americans in California, devoting more time to it in the early 1940s with his novel *Little Brown Brothers*.<sup>53</sup> However, Fante never completed the novel as he abandoned the project completely in 1946. Nevertheless, his life and the stories he left behind provide a helpful glimpse into the motivations and articulations of many white liberals during this era of racial antagonism.

John Fante, born in Colorado in 1911, moved to Southern California in the early 1930s and worked odd jobs in the Los Angeles Harbor area while striving to establish himself as a writer. He later found work at the fish canneries where he worked alongside many Filipinos and Japanese. After a short stint as a student at Long Beach Junior College, Fante moved to Los Angeles where he “incubated his career as a writer...amid the unrelieved poverty and despair of Bunker Hill.”<sup>54</sup> In 1933, Fante met Carey McWilliams in downtown Los Angeles. At the time, most aspiring writers went to McWilliams’s law office to ask him for various favors such as jobs in the movie-writing industry. Through McWilliams, he met other young writers who had come to Los Angeles, forming this cadre of American literati.

Fante, at first, held much disdain towards Filipinos, particularly for their propensity to adopt American cultural tastes. In a 1935 letter to Carey McWilliams, he wrote “I have come to

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<sup>53</sup> John Fante, “Letter to Keith Baker,” October 9, 1940, John Fante Papers, Collection 1832, Box 25, Folder 1, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA Special Collections, Los Angeles, California; John Fante, “Letter to Pascal Covici,” September 20, 1940 in *John Fante: Selected Letters, 1932-1981*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Wills, “John Fante,” 87.

the conclusion that the Filipino is a pathetic species hopelessly out of the American pale.”<sup>55</sup> Fante was nevertheless curiously fascinated with the “little guys.” “A spectacle that has me by the ears,” he wrote, “is the Filipino scene.” He originally tried to write a story about Filipinos early in his career, but had trouble doing research, “which had to come from the Filipino himself.” However, in 1939, Fante met aspiring Filipino writer, Carlos Bulosan, in Los Angeles, and his view of Filipinos changed. After asking Bulosan to introduce him to “the Filipino community of Los Angeles – the restaurants, the nightclubs, and the poolhalls of the Pinoys,” Fante gained sympathy for them as he listened to stories from “Filipino bus-boys who starved themselves to dress in \$80 suits to wear to 10-cent dance halls.”<sup>56</sup>

Drawing much of his inspiration and fascination with Filipinos from the Bunker Hill neighborhood of Los Angeles and riding on the success of *Ask the Dust*, Fante began formulating ideas for his Filipino novel, *Little Brown Brothers*. Transformed after meeting Bulosan, Fante became quite serious about his research for the project. To gain a better sense of the largely migrant farm-working subjects, he moved in with his mother in Roseville, California to interact and commingle with Filipino farm laborers. He also applied to the Guggenheim Foundation to fund a research trip to the Philippines, but was subsequently declined.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, writing a novel about the experiences of Filipinos was more about Fante’s desire to support and promote the American liberal ideal about racial unity than any genuine interest in the actual lives of his literary subjects. Fante aimed to make the novel “something no writer ever

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<sup>55</sup> John Fante, “Letter to Carey McWilliams,” undated – c. June 1935 in *John Fante: Selected Letters, 1932-1981*, ed. Seamus Cooney.

<sup>56</sup> John Fante, “Letter to Carey McWilliams,” January 12, 1978, John Fante Papers, Collection 1832, Box 27, Folder 3; Wills, “John Fante,” 84.

<sup>57</sup> John Fante, “Letter to Carey McWilliams,” January 12, 1978, John Fante Papers, Collection 1832, Box 27, Folder 3.

dreamed about – a really important contribution,” and “a swashbuckling, romantic story of a proud little people kicked up and down this state under the most vicious system of race and class taboo that ever existed...[and] make the little Filipino a hero.” Additionally, he proclaimed it would eclipse John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* in impact in American progressive literature since it would make “the migratory problem of the Okies a holiday excursion by comparison.” This sensationalized portrayal of the Filipino story in order to “enlist real understanding and sympathy for the Filipinos” was dominant theme in his writings.<sup>58</sup>

As Fante continued to work on his novel, he published several short stories based on its chapters in various magazines and digests. In 1941, Fante published the short story “Helen, Thy Beauty Is To Me” in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Intended to serve as his first chapter, the short story served as an introduction of Fante’s trope of the “Filipino dreamer”: the poor, naïve immigrant whose dreams, “as large as America’s vast land,” become challenged throughout the narrative, and many times dashed due to harsh racial realities. In this story, Fante introduced the protagonist Julio Sal, a young Filipino full of aspirations, who is madly in love with a taxi-dancer named Helen. Helen’s flirtations with Sal, however, were merely opportunistic advances to lure Sal to give her more money as they danced. As Sal’s friends attempted to convey to him, Helen only “take his money, but she no marry...is not love, is business.”<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the chivalrous Sal writes many love letters from afar while he travels up and down the West coast earning and saving money for his supposed nuptials with Helen. Against his compatriots’ warnings, Sal

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<sup>58</sup> John Fante, “Letter to Keith Baker,” October 9, 1940, John Fante Papers, Collection 1832, Box 25, Folder 1; John Fante, “Letter to Pascal Covici,” September 20, 1940 in *John Fante: Selected Letters, 1932-1981*, ed. Seamus Cooney; M. Margaret Anderson, “Letter to John Fante,” John Fante Papers, Collection 1832, Box 25, Folder 2.

<sup>59</sup> John Fante, “Helen, Thy Beauty Is To Me –,” in *The Wine of Youth: Selected Stories of John Fante* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1985), 256.

wishes to take her away from the provocative life of dancing. He works tirelessly and saves the meager money he earns to buy an expensive engagement ring for Helen, only having his dreams shatter when he discovers the true predatory nature of her love for him. In the story's climax, Helen does not recognize Sal when he approaches her for a dance and treats him as another customer. In Helen's face, Sal sees "some peculiarity about it, an iciness in her blue eyes that made him suddenly conscious of his race, and he was glad she did not remember Julio Sal."<sup>60</sup> Sad and dejected, Sal leaves Los Angeles on the bus towards the Central Valley, setting up Fante's second chapter, "The Bus Ride."

In this introductory chapter, Fante aimed to expose the reality of the American dream deferred by racism. Helen, who Fante used metaphorically as a symbol of Sal's desire to become American, used and abused Sal for her own selfish motive, making him "conscious of his race." In the face of a largely societal rejection of miscegenation, Fante's story, moreover, attempted to give the point of view of a Filipino man. Sal was not the sex heathen as most nativists portrayed them to be, but rather an innocent dreamer who believed that love could and should cross racial boundaries. Miscegenation, in other words, was an assimilation process. To Fante, readers of the story were meant to sympathize with Sal and see the hypocrisy of a racist nation, in hopes of building a more liberal and inclusive America.

Similarly, "Mary Osaka, I Love You," another short story by Fante, also propagated and idealized a multiracial American dream. Published in the October 1942 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, the story generated much acclaim and inspired more offers from publishers to sponsor his novel. It followed the life of Mateo Mingo, a kitchen worker at a Japanese restaurant in Little Tokyo, and his love for the restaurant owner's Japanese American daughter, Mary

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 262.

Osaka. Fante intended to use a revision of this story in which Mingo Mateo's name would be changed to Julio Sal, as the conclusion of *Little Brown Brothers*. Throughout the story, they encounter people and circumstances that forbid the existence of their romance: members of the Filipino Federated Brotherhood, Mary Osaka's stern immigrant father, and both the anti-Asian sentiment and intra-racial tension between Filipinos and Japanese of the period. Nonetheless, through overcoming racial barriers and traditional taboos, Mateo and Osaka's love will not be stopped.

At a pivotal point of the story, angry members of the Filipino Federated Brotherhood led by Vincente Toletano confront Mingo and demand that he end his relationship with Mary because she is Japanese. Fante then introduced the character, Aurelio Lazario, as the "conscience" of the story, who attempts to reason with his Filipino brethren that Mingo's love for a Japanese woman should not be cause for discontent. Lazario says to one of the angry Filipinos, "Love is very democratic...nationality is an accident." Lazario finally quells the fears of the Federation members and convinces them to allow Mingo to pursue his romance with Osaka. Through Lazario, Fante created an "ideal" Filipino subject, one who understood the true promise of American democracy. In writing the Lazario character as a university-educated, law degree-holding "fighter for Filipino rights...with gunshot wounds to prove it," Fante conveyed his faith of American education in leading towards a triumph of liberal ideology.<sup>61</sup> To Lazario, and thus to Fante, love does not see "nationality," but rather, in true racial liberal fashion, love is color-blind.

After Osaka's father becomes incensed after discovering his daughter's secret romance,

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<sup>61</sup> John Fante, "Mary Osaka, I Love You," in *The Big Hunger Stories, 1932-1959*, ed. Stephen Cooper (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2000), 184.

Mingo asks Osaka to sneak away at midnight drive to Las Vegas to get married. As Mingo sees Osaka at the steps of Los Angeles' City Hall while walking to his car, Mingo "knew her thought had been his own, his dream melting into hers, and suddenly he was hearing 'The Star Spangled Banner' [on the radio], humming it fervently, because there were no words in his throat to equal his joy..." In this scene, Fante portrayed a Mingo in love with America through Mary Osaka, a second-generation Japanese American, conveying the effectiveness of the assimilation process in producing loyal Americans from Asian immigrants. As Fante wrote: "Vincente Toletano could call her Japanese; but Mingo Mateo had seen the dream of America through the eyes of Mary...America the wild and wonderful, out of the sweet lips of a small girl who loved it deeply, spoke of it intimately, as though it were her brother, her house, her life..."<sup>62</sup> To Fante, Mary represents the ability of Japanese assimilation to take its course, a successful litmus test for the benevolence of America to absorb its immigrant population. He believed that Japanese immigrants had adopted the United States as "her brother, her house, her life," a fact that the general populace had yet to understand and accept. Mingo, on the other hand, symbolizes the desire for Filipinos to enter this very process of Americanization, but racial discrimination and time for "adjustment" prevents them from doing so. Conflicts, such as those with Mary Osaka's father, Mingo's brothers in the Filipino Federation, and larger society present hurdles to the American dream that should nonetheless be overcome through tolerance.

Unlike some of the sociologists and missionaries during the period, Fante wrote freely about Filipinos crossing racial borders. To him, as well as other Popular Front writers, miscegenation was an integral part of building a multicultural America, as evidenced by the intimacy of the Mingo and Mary characters. Love, in other words, was an assimilation process.

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<sup>62</sup> Fante, "Mary Osaka, I Love You," 194.

Ultimately, their story of triumph, which Fante believed he captured, would, in turn, enlighten all Americans on how anti-Filipino racism and anti-miscegenation contradicted the nation's liberal ethos.

At the end of the story, Mingo and Mary wed in Las Vegas on December 7, 1941. Upon their return to Los Angeles the next day, they encounter a deserted Little Tokyo. They go to Mary's house where her father, donning a kimono, reluctantly accepts their marriage, yet is afraid for their collective fates since World War II has just begun. He tells Mingo to "join the army and fight for your country...fight bravely, because [your] children will be Americans." Through the words of the elder Osaka, Fante clearly laid out the path for Filipino assimilation. Like other immigrants, Filipinos could endure and overcome the harsh realities of American racism and still be loyal to their adopted country.

Despite much initial interest in publishing *Little Brown Brothers*, Fante never completed the novel. After his publisher, Viking Press, dropped its support of the novel in 1945, he abandoned the project entirely in 1946.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, Fante found a voice of liberal America through a paternal relationship with Filipinos. From his interactions with his "little brown brothers," particularly those living in Los Angeles's Little Manila, Fante gained sympathy towards their plight and believed that they could be fully integrated into the American fold. Yet, only through Americans' acceptance of racial tolerance and Filipinos' adoption of American values measured through educational attainment, heteronormative relationships, and national loyalty – policies that were employed during the United States' colonization of the Philippines – would the nation be more just.

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<sup>63</sup> John Fante, "Letter to Pascal Covici," November 1945 in *John Fante: Selected Letters, 1932-1981*, ed. Seamus Cooney.

Yet, Popular Front writers like Fante and Saroyan, though humanizing Filipino American subjects and portraying their victimization, omitted any parallels and links between the treatment of Filipinos domestically with U.S. colonization of the Philippines. In their writings, they tied the experiences of Filipinos in California to a broader immigrant heritage, mentioning little about U.S. occupation of the Philippines. Carey McWilliams was perhaps the only Depression-era writer who did connect American colonization of the Philippines to the migration of Filipino Americans, yet, like Fante and Saroyan, he still managed to maintain an assimilationist narrative.

Carey McWilliams was born in 1905 in Colorado and migrated to Los Angeles after his father's cattle ranch went bankrupt in 1922. He attended law school at USC and practiced law from his downtown office in Los Angeles for much of the 1920s through the 1950s.

McWilliams, a staunch left-wing intellectual, was heavily involved with the New Deal and became known as one of the few white anti-racist voices at the time. However, as Colleen Lye conveys, racial liberalism informed much of his activism, in which his “vision of assimilation reflected an ethnocentric conceptualization of racial equality predicated upon the cultural disappearance of minorities themselves.”<sup>64</sup>

In his quintessential work on communities of color, *Brothers Under the Skin*, McWilliams painted the picture of a multicultural America destined to blossom. In his chapter on Filipinos entitled “The Little Brown Brother,” McWilliams acknowledged the paradox of American occupation of the Philippines and the ineligibility of citizenship for Filipinos. Yet, despite his critique of U.S. colonialism, he treated it as merely a policy blunder and part of America’s bi-polar personality – a nation that was “dedicated to freedom and self-government” but “reluctant to apply these ideals to non-Caucasians” – never understanding the link between

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<sup>64</sup> Lye, *America’s Asia*, 155.

the two discourses.<sup>65</sup> As such, McWilliams attributed the migration of Filipinos to the “pull” factor of the American dream and years of educational tutelage as opposed to the direct result of U.S. subjugation of the Philippines. He believed that American occupation “succeeded in educating a generation of Filipinos away from the islands, so to speak, and encouraged this generation to look toward the United States...many of them, quite naturally, wanted to come to this country.”<sup>66</sup>

In addition, McWilliams attributed Filipinos’ lack of social and economic mobility not just to racial prejudice, but also to labor and class segmentation. Since they were relegated to “certain special labor operations...the type in which family labor cannot be utilized,” Filipinos lacked any “great social stability.” Their relegation to the lower rungs of the employment ladder, McWilliams writes, “deprives them of effective opportunities for assimilation and keeps the prejudice against them alive.” Moreover, Filipinos’ “ostracism is really not racial or cultural or social” but simply “economic.” Picking “asparagus” has more to do with their status than ‘race’ or ‘culture.’”<sup>67</sup> By highlighting class structure, McWilliams assumes a naturalized course of labor assimilation of which Filipinos could progress economically if given the chance. His assessment, however, deemphasized the economic injustices of American capitalism as well as the racial structures that created and maintained such labor stratification.

Despite McWilliams’s attempt to recall the history of American imperialism in the experiences of Filipinos in California, he treated the episode as an aberration in the journey to “form a more perfect union.” To him, American colonization of the Philippines was simply political mistake at a time when the U.S. “oscillated” to an unjust “personality,” suggesting that

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<sup>65</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1943), 232.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 240.

the Filipino American subject was but a consequence to this political misjudgment. “Failing to free the islands,” McWilliams stated, “we have failed to ‘free’ the resident Filipinos.”<sup>68</sup> As long as the United States has involved itself in the affairs of the Philippines, it had “to this little brown brother...a greater obligation than to the Cubans or Puerto Ricans.”<sup>69</sup> In concert with these Popular Front writers, McWilliams based his critique on a liberal faith in American benevolent guidance and democratic inclusion, even as he criticized the United States for its occupation of the Philippines and unjust treatment of Filipino migrants.

### **Mapping Filipinos in Los Angeles**

A key marker of assimilation, according to liberal social theorists, religious missionaries, and progressive writers, was spatiality. In most urban studies scholarship, especially those coming from the Chicago School, assimilation and suburbanization went hand in hand. With urban European immigrant communities serving as theoretical models, many sociological scholars argued that immigrants’ dispersal into suburbia was linked to their adoption into American society. Non-whites’ continued confinement in their ethnic neighborhoods, on the other hand, marked their inability to assimilate.<sup>70</sup> As a result, mapping became a common research tool and analytic among many sociological theorists as a way to demarcate racial divides. In mapping where non-whites resided and the boundaries that surround those neighborhoods, they arbitrarily measured the “rate of assimilation” of a particular community, inherently defining what was foreign and non-American.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>70</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 47-54.

However, theories that highlighted physical distance between white groups and non-white groups became synonymous with social and cultural difference and obfuscated larger structures of labor migration and racial segregation. Ideas of spatial assimilation, which many of the aforementioned social theorists, missionaries, and writers employed in their writings, shaped the characterization of Little Manila, and with that the racialization of Filipinos, as deficient of normative values. Using Nayan Shah's idea of "queer domesticity," in which non-white space was systematically racialized as "different" and "backward" in contradistinction to a normative whiteness, I suggest that Little Manila was treated as a "queer" space, wrought with deviant elements and seclusion. Moreover, following tenets of the Chicago School, it came to be seen as a "staging area" for eventual assimilation and citizenship into white suburban Los Angeles, furthering the obfuscation of larger contexts of race and empire.<sup>71</sup>

Chicago School sociologists obsessed over mapping ethnic communities, believing that "space and racial culture [were] virtually equivalent."<sup>72</sup> Emory Bogardus trained his many Filipino students to employ this practice of mapping and studying urban spatial patterns, particularly Little Manila, in their studies on Filipinos in Los Angeles. However, as many scholars on space have argued, marking geographies became an organizing tool to emphasize

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<sup>71</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13-14. This section builds on the work of Cindy I-Fen Cheng in her article, "Identities and Places: On Writing the History of Filipinotown, Los Angeles." Cheng suggests that these sociologists mapped out these enclaves as an extension of their identities as Filipino Americans. However, I contend that by placing these studies within a larger historical context of urbanization, racialization, and evangelicalism, a more complete picture of identity formation through ethnic enclaves can be deciphered. Cindy I-Fen Cheng, "Identities and Places: On Writing the History of Filipinotown, Los Angeles," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 12, no. 1 (February 2009): 1-33.

<sup>72</sup> Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 175.

and reinforce differences and hierarchies.<sup>73</sup> Marcos Berbano, Benicio Catapusan, Severino Corpus, and others who mapped locations of Filipino businesses, institutions, and residential districts in Los Angeles as part of their master's theses attempted to rationalize Filipinos' spatial patterns in comparison to other groups at a time. In many of these studies, Filipino scholars depicted Little Manila as a domain of vice and thus a source of racial antagonism. Dionisio Gonzalo, for example, in his 1929 article, "Social Adjustments of Filipinos in America," argued that L.A.'s Main Street, "a magnet to the homeless and friendless peoples in the city, among whom are the Filipinos," were "not wholesome places" because of the "cheaper amusement" of "pool halls, public dance halls...and other 'whoopee' attractions."<sup>74</sup>

Aware of the infamous reputation of these neighborhoods, many Filipino sociologists attributed these spatial concentrations not only to the racial segregation practices of the time, but more specifically, the result of social deviance among uneducated Filipinos. In doing so, they concluded that Little Manila was merely an aberration in an otherwise upright community. Berbano, in his 1930 thesis, went to great detail in mapping residential concentrations of Filipinos throughout Los Angeles, highlighting the relatively dispersed patterns across the county and arguing that white American attitudes prevented Filipinos from working and residing in certain areas. Included in the larger map was a magnified view of Little Manila on First Street, with demarcations of the neighborhood's cafes, employment agencies, barber shops, laundries, clubhouses, newspapers, and other businesses and offices. While he acknowledged that racism and cheap rent confined Filipinos to downtown Los Angeles, he suggested that Filipinos simply

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<sup>73</sup> See J.B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Shah, *Contagious Divides*.

<sup>74</sup> D.F. Gonzalo, "Social Adjustments of Filipinos in America," *Sociology and Social Research* 14, no. 2 (November-December 1929): 612

failed to excel in their lives. Little Manila, he posited, was where Filipinos “spend their leisure time” because they “get so disgusted with life that it kills their ambition, desire, and hope to make good” and fail “to rise above” their situation and “get proper housing.”<sup>75</sup> Continuing to live in the segregated neighborhood, according to Berbano, stagnated Filipinos from “proper” assimilation.

Likewise, Catapusan, in mapping Filipinos in Los Angeles, highlighted residential dispersion in contradistinction to a “queer” Little Manila in his 1934 master’s thesis. Throughout his study, Catapusan emphasized the relative dispersal of Filipinos in order to distance proper community members from the “disreputable influences” of the Main and First Street areas of downtown. Those who “seek a higher status,” he suggested, moved “to more refined neighborhoods.” To reiterate Filipinos’ ability to assimilate, Catapusan emphasized their dispersion throughout the city, suggesting that “unlike the Chinese and Japanese, who have a community of their own, [Filipinos] are scattered all over the city” because of the “effort on the part of some of the Filipinos to avoid the First Street life, despised so by the American.” Catapusan suggested, moreover, that “Filipinos in general find it more convenient to live in bungalows than to live in hotels, and in apartment houses” since those “who have families will not live in such a congested section” and rather “move to some distant places that will free them from First Street influences” and “live in a family-like atmosphere.”<sup>76</sup> To Catapusan, spatial dispersion away from a concentrated Little Manila translated to the adoption of suburban, heteronormative values and a higher degree of assimilation, boding well for their acceptance as immigrant Americans. Yet, at the same time, such an assessment only naturalized Little Manila

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<sup>75</sup> Berbano, “The Social Status of the Filipinos in Los Angeles County,” 28, 32.

<sup>76</sup> Catapusan, “The Filipino Occupational Activities of Los Angeles,” 4, 6.

as a “staging area” for eventual assimilation, ignoring systematic regimes of racial segregation.

Partially fueling the negative portrayal of the Little Manila area of downtown was the distinct processes of Southern California urbanization. As Robert Fishman argues, suburbia as the amalgamation of the urban and rural life, was a cultural creation of the elite white bourgeoisie based on their economic structure and cultural values.<sup>77</sup> The urban planning policy of Southern California, as a reaction to the dense urban landscape of the Northeast and Midwest, democratized suburbanization for white migrants. By the 1920s, millions of people from across the country migrated to Los Angeles attracted by the promise of a detached home away from immigrants and people of color and city-sponsored promotions of Los Angeles as the “new Eden of the Saxon homeowner,” a metropolis specifically built for white Protestants. By 1930, single-family homes comprised approximately 94 percent of Los Angeles.<sup>78</sup> However, as Scott Kurashige and Mark Wild aptly elucidate, real estate interests marketed suburban neighborhoods of the “Westside” as markers of “whiteness” in contradistinction with the increasingly dense and non-white “Eastside.” Dense downtown neighborhoods, adjacent to industrially-zoned areas and vestiges of a more traditional American urban landscape, housed the majority of the city’s non-white residents.<sup>79</sup> Since suburbanization in Los Angeles, particularly in the city’s “Westside,” represented the white American ideal, downtown dwellings became increasingly racialized as non-white, deviant spaces.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987).

<sup>78</sup> Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 25; Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: Southern California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 89; Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 179.

<sup>79</sup> Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

Berbano and Catapusan asserted in their studies the need to project a difference between “good” Filipino families and young, deviant males who embarked in hyper-sexual and illegal activity in the Little Manila neighborhood. By mapping ascribed and reified moral boundaries onto the Filipino district and its surroundings, Berbano and Catapusan carved out a “queer” world distinct from American society, distinct from those they believed “rose above” such “disreputable influences.” Moreover, by emphasizing the dispersion of Filipinos across the region and their efforts to distinguish themselves from “clannish” Chinese and Japanese, these scholars blatantly disassociated themselves from the negative characteristics of Little Manila and other ghettoized communities. They attempted to align “upright” Filipinos with American middle-class familial ideals as opposed to the deviants who congregated in downtown enclaves since suburbanization represented modernity and assimilation. To Bogardus’s Filipino students, Little Manila was an aberration to an otherwise “normal” and “respectable” Filipino people.

Yet some believed Little Manila could be “respectable” to white Americans by instilling the presence of “positive” influences physically in the neighborhood. Severino Corpus, perhaps the most avid promoter of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, was quite candid about pointing out the neighborhood’s seedy reputation. In his 1938 thesis, Corpus wrote, “I am convinced that the social environment, to a large extent, influences human nature” and posited that the “Filipino environment is indifferent and unfriendly; hence their normal development is arrested.” He proceeded to map this “social environment,” highlighting the locations of pool halls, dance halls, “houses of ill fame,” gambling dens, as well as residential districts in the Little Manila area. On the same map, however, he marked the location of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship headquarters as the lone institution that “conserve[s] the fine qualities of the Filipino youth in America.” If the lack of good-natured activities led to the immoral nature

of Filipino immigrants, as these scholars believed, then the Fellowship would “alleviate the gravity of their social problems.” A physical presence of the Christian institution in Little Manila would provide “alternatives,” such as various social and athletic activities, to the immoral activities of pool halls and taxi-dance halls this “certain group of Filipinos” engaged in.<sup>80</sup> In highlighting the location of the church within the “unwholesome” Filipino neighborhood, Corpus suggested that the Fellowship was the redemptive force of a corrupt environment.<sup>81</sup> Catapusan, in his 1940 dissertation, likewise suggested that though Little Manila’s concentration provided an “obstacle for social uplift,” the neighborhood could also be a “form of accommodation” where churches were “counter-balancing the unadjusted Filipino social life in the United States.”<sup>82</sup> Originally calling for geographic dispersion through suburbanization in his master’s thesis, Catapusan believed several years later that Little Manila could be sustained if the neighborhood transformed into a “positive” environment by eradicating its “disreputable influences.”

In this analysis of these scholars’ works, the discourse of assimilation could be seen through urban mapping. Some scholars depicted the Filipino enclave as an aberration to integration with larger American society thus emphasizing the community’s dispersion throughout the metropolitan area. Others believed that through intervention of a moral institution such as the church like the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, Little Manila could be a site of “accommodation,” assisting in creating the model American citizen. By illustrating through spatial geography how Filipinos had the ability to assimilate into society

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<sup>80</sup> Catapusan, “The Filipino Occupational Activities of Los Angeles,” 66

<sup>81</sup> Corpus, “An Analysis of the Racial Adjustment Activities and Problems of the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship in Los Angeles,” v, 21, 35.

<sup>82</sup> Catapusan, “The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States,” 64.

through suburbanization and urban transformation, Bogardus's students reified and reinforced moral and racial borders between white Westside and non-white Eastside neighborhoods.

The process of urban sociology in racializing Filipino Americans also permeated the writings of Los Angeles literary writers. Both Carey McWilliams and John Fante had similar observations and postulations about downtown's Little Manila, given their proximity to and experiences with Filipinos in the United States. Like the aforementioned scholars, McWilliams attributed the existence of Little Manila and its decrepit condition to the lack of familial values in the largely bachelor Filipino community. In his work, *Brothers Under the Skin*, McWilliams observed that Filipinos "are to be found living in the cheap rooming houses and hotels along Temple Street and on Bunker Hill...hedged in by every conceivable social tabu [sic] and by numerous legal and extralegal restrictions, they lead a bizarre and fantastic existence." He lamented that "wherever they congregate, either seasonally or otherwise, a kind of tenderloin section has come into existence" because of the concentration of taxi-dance halls in their neighborhood. Paralleling the theories and discourse of the Chicago School, McWilliams argued, "unlike many of the minority groups in the United States...the Filipinos have not developed any great social stability [since they] have not, for example, created permanent settlements." Rather, "their 'little Manila' districts are really just centers where they gather in periods between jobs or for purposes of entertainment [and] not tightly knit communities." He then concluded that "the high degree of mobility among Filipinos, coupled with the fact that there is little settled family life among them, largely accounts for the obvious lack of social organization."<sup>83</sup>

In acknowledging that Filipinos' congregation in groups provided "a measure of social

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<sup>83</sup> McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin*, 236-239.

protection,” McWilliams understood the racial impetus of segregated neighborhoods. Yet, McWilliams nonetheless characterized Little Manila with the same assimilationist lens as other social theorists, suggesting that their “bizarre and fantastic existence” due to a supposed lack of “settled family life” and “social organization” led to the proliferation of “tenderloin districts” where Filipinos congregated.<sup>84</sup> In other words, McWilliams, though quite critical of American racism against Filipinos, nevertheless continued to believe in a discourse of assimilation. Furthermore, in quite the opposite vein of the sociologists, McWilliams naturalized Little Manila as a dispensable space of queerness, suggesting it lacked the characteristics of a “permanent settlement,” while concomitantly normalizing other ethnic neighborhoods, such as Chinatown and Little Tokyo, as “permanent” models for assimilation. In bifurcating Little Manila from other ethnic enclaves, McWilliams portrayed Filipinos as lacking the characteristics of assimilability, unlike other minorities like Chinese and Japanese Americans, further naturalizing an American assimilation process.

John Fante similarly presented this linear model of spatial assimilation among ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles in his fictional writings. In Fante’s short story, “Mary Osaka, I Love You,” and his portraiture of L.A.’s neighborhoods. Fante, as mentioned earlier, wrote the Mingo character as a Filipino who has the innate desire to assimilate, while Mary, Mingo’s Japanese American forbidden love, embodies the true triumph of assimilation. In a short scene where Mingo walks along the sidewalk from Little Tokyo to Little Manila, Fante presented a spatial teleology of American ethnic assimilation:

Little Tokyo was crowded with Saturday-night strollers. Coatless, he lost himself among the shoppers, making his way past the toy stores and cafes, the clean, bright shops. The windows always shone in Little Tokyo, there was less refuse in the gutters, the street

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

lamps were brighter, and incense from a hundred doors filled the air with sweetness... The brightness of the street gradually ended. Now there were blackened warehouses, and beyond them the Filipino Quarter began. Flophouses and wine shops, burned hamburgers and strong perfume, barbershops and massage parlors, juke-box music and chippies, and everywhere his countrymen, the little brown brothers, exquisitely tailored, exquisitely lonely, leaning against poolroom doorways, smoking cigars and staring alternately at the stars overhead and the clicking high heels passing by.<sup>85</sup>

In this short passage, Fante distinguished the lively Little Tokyo neighborhood from the “dark” and “lonely” “Filipino Quarter,” where one’s dreams perish and where Filipinos are relegated to stare “alternately at the stars overhead.” Little Manila was a homosocial, queer space for “lonely” Filipino men and a magnet for “vice” and “filth.” By casting Little Tokyo, with its bright colors, cleanliness, and tourist economy, as a neighborhood safe and clean enough for whites, and a space that Little Manila should become after the process of assimilation, Fante conveyed a concept central to liberal discourse: that ethnic groups’ “success” in American society can be measured by spatial and environmental shifts. In this case, his comparison between ethnic neighborhoods demonstrated Fante’s belief that Japanese Americans possessed “assimilable” qualities while Filipinos had “yet-to-assimilate” because of their homosocial environment and behavior. This juxtaposition thus reified both a constructed view of a downtrodden Little Manila and more importantly, a discourse of linear assimilation through urban space.

This discourse of spatial assimilation was similarly depicted in Fante’s story, “Helen, Thy Beauty Is To Me.” The protagonist, Julio Sal, enamored with a white taxi-dancer named Helen dreams of taking Helen away from her unsafe environment in a Little Manila dance hall to a life of suburban bliss. In one scene, he daydreams that Helen is “frying bacon and eggs in a blue-tinted kitchen like in the movie pitch, and he came grinning from the bedroom in a green robe

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<sup>85</sup> Fante, “Mary Osaka, I Love You,” 182-183.

with a yellow sash, like in the movie pitch.” As he walks home from a night of dancing with Helen, he is unfazed by the realities of the urban life: the trash on the streets, rotting anchovies, and crying from babies. He ignores his isolated apartment building that resembles a row of “cell blocks.”<sup>86</sup> Embracing the myth of America, Sal envisions a time when he too could live in a model suburban home for that was what he watched in the movies, ignoring all reality surrounding him. Fante believed that Filipinos’ disavowal of the “rotting” Little Manila environment and adoption of the suburban dream led to their social inclusion in multicultural America.

As the writings of these scholars and writers suggest, Little Manila as an ethnic neighborhood indicated many things. To them, it was universally thought of as a decrepit neighborhood wrought with poverty and crime. They believed the lack of social responsibility and familial cohesion among Filipinos caused the growth of vice and extralegal activities, and thus prevented them from becoming modern Americans. Some scholars tried to minimize the effect that “Little Manilas” had in characterizing negative Filipino traits by deeming them aberrations to an otherwise upright community. Others demonstrated their beliefs that Filipino neighborhoods could be transformed into spaces suitable for whites. However, what many of these liberal writers failed to see is that these cultural arguments obscured the reality of racial segregation, anti-miscegenation, and employment discrimination in shaping the peculiar settlement pattern of Filipinos in Los Angeles. Instead, tropes of assimilation increasingly became the dominant narrative in order to portray the United States as a multicultural, inclusionary, and benevolent nation, the very discourse that promulgated and justified a continued American hegemony.

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<sup>86</sup> Fante, “Helen, Thy Beauty Is To Me – ,” 253.

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, while many whites sought the exclusion and marginalization of Filipino Americans in California during the 1920s and 1930s, a small cadre of mostly white sympathizers went against popular thought about Filipinos' perceived unassimilability and wrote about how Filipinos, as long as they went through the liberal process of Americanization, could be accepted into a benevolent American society. By analyzing the origins and intentions of this assimilationist discourse, however, I argue that this liberal project they produced and attempted to spread in fact absolved and justified American imperialism. Bogardus and his brand of sociology that he instilled in his students racialized Filipinos as more "modern" than other Asian immigrants due to their adoption of Western customs. Christian missionaries, such as those who helped start the Filipino American Christian Fellowship, simply moved their religious work of converting Filipino "savages" from the villages of the Ilocos region to the streets of Los Angeles. Finally, Depression-era writers like Carey McWilliams and John Fante portrayed Filipinos as victims in an unfair society, but in doing so, propagated a liberal ideology that omitted traces of Filipino migration and exclusion to American colonialism in the Philippines.

In their efforts to promote Filipino inclusion, all three movements, moreover, used Filipino spatiality to demarcate "social progress." Paralleling similar treatment of European and other Asian Americans, they viewed Filipinos who gathered in downtown's Little Manila as just one stage for eventual assimilation into the suburban ideal. Thus, in teasing out the imperial impulses of the assimilation narrative, I locate and link the trope of suburban citizenship to colonial modernity. In other words, these liberals drew a map for Filipino immigrants, especially in Los Angeles, seeking American modern subjectivity: embrace the suburban ideal. As I will

convey in the next chapter, World War II enabled this contradiction of Filipino American assimilation took shape beyond mere discourse.

## **Chapter 3: Racial Shifts, Liberal Citizenship**

On April 15, 1945, as American victory in World War II appeared to be imminent, the editor of the Los Angeles-based *Manila Post Herald* newspaper published an article detailing the unique shift in Filipinos' racialization in the United States as a result of the war. Recalling the racist attacks and exclusion movements aimed at Filipinos in America during the pre-war period, the editor stated, "there was no welcoming *nipa* hut to come home to, except the poolhalls [sic], barbershops and restaurants where the dark alleys cast dark shadows in the American cities." "Then, after all those dubious years, the war came," the editor continued, "the Filipinos in America, pledged to fight for Democracy, joined the armed forces. Others left in the home front work in shipyards, airplane factories, munition arsenals, and in the farms." What appeared to be a change of heart among white Americans and newly found access to social and economic prosperity, the editor concluded that at war times' end, "Filipino families are building homes, raising children in the way of American life, and are working hard to realize the secured economy of a post-war world."<sup>1</sup>

As the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and invasion of the Philippines ushered the official entrance of the United States and its Asian colony into war in the Pacific, the racial discourse on Filipinos in America changed significantly. After years of white racial anxiety

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<sup>1</sup> "The War as a Blessing in Disguise to Filipinos in America," *Manila Post Herald*, April 15, 1945.

regarding Filipinos' presence in the United States, the war served as an integral moment in which whites appeared to be accepting Filipinos into the fold of American society, according to some observers, including the writers and editors of the *Manila Post Herald*. If liberal thinkers lobbied for the "assimilation" of Filipino Americans at the height of the exclusion movement, the U.S. government adhered to that call during the war years. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, the rhetoric of racial liberalism only followed the logics of American empire. The United States' determination to demonstrate an anti-imperial and anti-racist stance only fueled American state expansion both domestically and globally during and after World War II. As such, Filipinos were a central component of this imperial apparatus.

In this chapter, I examine Filipino Angelenos' participation in World War II and how the shift in their racialization was rooted in U.S. wartime policy. By analyzing how U.S. government altered its policy towards the Philippines from "colony" to "ally" because of the war with Japan, I argue that this shift resulted in the concomitant change of rhetoric of Filipino Americans from "problem" to "ally," a key strategy that strengthened and reproduced U.S. empire. State-sponsored valorization of Filipinos as "loyal American allies" in the battlefields of the Philippines gave many Filipinos in the United States unprecedented opportunities. For example, wartime and postwar policy and legislation such as the recruitment of Filipinos into the U.S. military, the Fair Employment Practices Committee, Philippine "independence" in 1946, and the Luce-Celler Act allowed Filipinos to enter both legal and social citizenry of the United States. Yet, true to the logic of immigrant assimilation and America's "anti-colonial" empire, such attempts at national inclusion of Filipino Americans were inherently full of limitations and contradictions.

My chapter begins with the outbreak of World War II and local Filipinos' numerous attempts to join the U.S. military in order to fight in the Philippines, bringing the ambiguous and contested state of citizenship back into political debate. I then analyze Filipinos' engagement in a "Double-V"-type campaign in which they fought in the military abroad and for political and economic citizenship domestically. While many local Filipinos joined the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Battalions as well as other military units or entered defense-industry employment to attain numerous social and economic gains, such benefits were always limited and contingent on a continued maintenance of white hegemony. Then I examine how state officials' valorization of Filipinos as loyal allies in the war effort through wartime media as well as public displays of patriotism ultimately helped to justify U.S. empire. This racial shift towards inclusion, moreover, obscured the concurrent exclusion of other non-white communities, namely Japanese Americans and African American migrants from the South. Finally, I analyze how Philippine independence in 1946 and a series of post-war legislation passed as public displays of America's "free-world democracy" bifurcated the Filipino "national" into a foreign alien on the one hand and a marginal American citizen on the other, facilitating the recasting of the Philippines as a postcolonial nation under U.S. domination

## Filipinos at War

Popular histories on the Philippines' role during World War II commonly portrays a mutually concerted Philippine-U.S. alliance engaging in an honorable war against the Japanese.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Ray C. Hunt and Bernard Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines* (Lexington, K.Y.: University of Kentucky Press, 1986); John D. Lukacs, *Escape from Davao: The Forgotten Story of the Most Daring Prison Break of the Pacific War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011); and Mary McKay Maynard, *My Faraway*

In actuality, such an “alliance” was highly complex, created and reproduced, on the one hand, to reinforce the characterization of the United States as benevolent colonial master, while adopted by many Filipinos as a strategy for survival on the other hand. The passage of numerous legislative measures that sought the inclusion of Filipinos into the national polity through the claim of mutual partnership, moreover, was more the result of a wartime agenda to portray the image that the United States was tolerant than true equality. Ultimately, the depiction and propagation of a joint Filipino-American egalitarian brotherhood during the World War II, in effect, obscured the imperial nature of the war, exposing the many contradictions of race, citizenship, and U.S. empire.

Such a liberal narrative of a Philippine-U.S. “alliance” led to the U.S. state’s immediate disavowal of its responsibility over the Philippines in their defense against Japan. Despite juridical status as a “protectorate” of the United States, the Philippines, by U.S. state design, was never solidly militarily “protected” from invasion. Building a strong military outpost for the defense of the Philippines, according to U.S. officials, could be also perceived as a threat to the Japanese empire. Throughout the American colonial period, military strategists never fully developed the defenses of its distant colony for fear of igniting war with Japan. Defense outposts such as Corregidor Island and Bataan for example did not receive any major upgrades after they were initially built prior to World War I. Instead, the United States military devised a series of contingency plans as early as 1906 in case of war. Known as War Plan Orange, the strategy involved the withholding of reinforcements and supplies to the Philippines and other U.S. territories in the Western Pacific in the outbreak of war. The Pacific Fleet would then

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*Home: An American Family’s WWII Tale of Adventure and Survival in the Jungles of the Philippines* (Guilford, C.T.: Lyons Press, 2002).

mobilize its strength at bases in California before sailing towards the Pacific to relieve the American forces it left behind. Once war against Japan began, the actual events were consistent with the outline of War Plan Orange. As such, U.S. forces left the Philippines poorly organized militarily and vulnerable for Japanese attack.<sup>3</sup>

With a military strategy predicated on a negligible number of U.S. forces in the Philippines, defense of the islands necessitated the employment of Filipino soldiers and the intentional promotion of an “ally” trope. When U.S. government officials realized war with Japan was a strong possibility, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called on the people of the Philippines as well as their compatriots in the United States to become an American “ally” since military officials knew American forces were minute in number and its defense capabilities were minimal. On July 26, 1941, President Roosevelt issued Military Order 6 Fed. Reg. 3825 which ordered “into the service of the armed forces of the United States for the period of the existing emergency...all of the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines,” establishing a new command in the Pacific, the United States Army Forces of the Far East (USAFFE).<sup>4</sup> Hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese forces attacked and invaded the Philippines, ushering America’s formal entry into World War II. On December 18, 1941, General Douglas MacArthur, who was designated as

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<sup>3</sup> Michael H. Hunt and Steven I. Levine, *Arc of Empire: America’s Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, M.D.: United States Naval Institute Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> 6 Fed. Reg. 3825 (1941)

the General Officer, issued General Orders No. 46, which called all personnel of the Philippine Army on active duty and all active units into the service of the USAFFE.<sup>5</sup>

As news of the invasion of the Philippines spread to Filipinos in the United States, many sought out ways to free their homeland and embody the “ally” through joining the U.S. war effort. Almost immediately, Filipinos throughout the west coast organized themselves. In Los Angeles, community leaders held a mass meeting on the night of the Japanese attack to form the Filipino War Effort Emergency Committee. As an organized group, they pledged their “one hundred percent loyalty and support to the city, state and national governments in the present war emergency” and were “ready to co-operate any time.” A few days later, the group held a rally at the Music Art Hall.<sup>6</sup>

Many Filipinos desired enlistment in the U.S. military to fight in the Philippines. However, as soon as the war began, the question of Filipinos’ legal status came back to legislative forefront. Because of their enigmatic legal status, Filipinos were initially unsure of how to support the war effort. In anticipation to the U.S. entry into World War II, Congress passed the Burke-Wadsworth Act, otherwise known as the Selective Training and Service Act, in 1940, requiring men between the ages of twenty-one and forty, both citizen and alien, to register for the draft. Many Filipinos in the United States were eager to enlist in the U.S. military, but legally barred since they were classified as neither citizens nor aliens. Stated in Section 2 (12) of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, “all military forces organized by the Philippine Government” were obliged to fight under the American flag during the commonwealth period. However, when

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<sup>5</sup> Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1946* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1965), 200-210.

<sup>6</sup> “City Springs to Attention,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1941; “Filipinos to Hold Joint Victory Rally,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1941.

Filipinos in America tried to enlist in the military at recruitment centers in mass numbers at the outset of war, they were turned away because of their ambiguous legal status as “national.” Carey McWilliams observed in the waking moments of the war, “the Filipinos are simply standing about waiting to see what will happen to them. Many have quit their jobs and are spending their savings, abandoning any effort to make plans for the future. ‘Little Manila,’ in Los Angeles is demoralized.”<sup>7</sup>

Just two weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, on December 20, 1941, Congress modified the Selective Service Act with Public Law 360, allowing Filipinos to be eligible for conscription. President Franklin Roosevelt, who just years prior signed legislation to bar Filipinos entry into the United States and send those remaining back to the Philippines, signed the act into law on January 2, 1942, making it the one of the first measures that sought inclusion of Filipinos after the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act. By proclamation, he raised the age limit and established the right of Filipinos to be inducted into the military service, “so that brothers of the men who were dying in Bataan could join the U.S. Army.” “The courageous defense of their homeland as now being exhibited by the Filipino,” Roosevelt proclaimed, “leaves no doubt in my mind that those residing in the United States will also serve with equal credit.”<sup>8</sup> Legislation to include Filipinos in the military, as a result, came not from a sudden change of heart of legislators, but from wartime politics of inclusion and the promotion of a Filipino-American alliance.

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<sup>7</sup> Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 197-208; “Unwanted Heroes,” Carey McWilliams Papers, Carton 8, Folder 5, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

<sup>8</sup> Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion*, 197-208; President Praises Filipino for Courage in Battling Foes,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1942.

## **Loyalty = Citizenship**

Though eligible for conscription, Filipinos were still barred from citizenship. The entry of the United States into World War II galvanized and reinvigorated Filipinos' struggle to settle their ambiguous status as "national" and gain social and economic justice in American society. Though not organized as an explicit movement like the "Double-V" campaign led by African Americans, Filipinos' wartime mobilization was quite similar in philosophy and drive.<sup>9</sup> During the war, many Filipinos entered the military to fight to free their homeland from Japanese occupation and those who remained civilians fought for citizenship and economic rights in the United States. Filipinos' strategic campaign during the war suggested that transnational politics, Philippine nationalism, and/or American loyalty were not sole motivating factors for military enlistment and/or domestic campaigns. While Filipinos did want to liberate the Philippines from the Japanese through joining the U.S. Armed Forces and some did believe in the promise of American inclusion, many anticipated an entry into U.S. citizenship and all of the promised social and economic gains that came with loyalty to American authority. Filipinos discovered that the privilege of citizenship only came when demonstrations of loyalty as "allies" became recognized during an era when U.S. policy shifted to reflect an "inclusive" America.

Once Filipinos were legally eligible to join the military, many did so in mass numbers. On January 16, 1942, more than one hundred members of the Filipino fraternal order, the

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<sup>9</sup> The "Double V" campaign was an African American-led campaign during World War II to promote and fight for political and economic rights in the United States as well as to win victory in the military. For more on the "Double V" campaign in Los Angeles' African American community, see Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 132-157.

Caballeros de Dimas Alang, pledged to enlist in the U.S. military during their national conference in Los Angeles. Upon hearing that Bataan fell in April 1942, another large group of Filipinos rushed to the federal building downtown to try to enlist in the U.S. Navy. Many Filipinos quit their agricultural or service jobs, a relatively easy transition since their employment was usually temporary. Many Filipinos who worked for Felipe Ventura, a truck farmer in the San Fernando Valley, for example, left his labor camp to enlist in the U.S. Army during World War II. Moreover, many who joined lacked prior military experience upon enlistment. Paul S. Soriano was among the first to enlist in the U.S. Army, serving in the 46<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company, after years of working as a bus boy for the Biltmore Hotel. He later served in the European theater and fought in the Battle of the Bulge, earning several medals for his service. By the end of the war, more than 16,000 Filipinos from California – nearly 40 percent of the state’s Filipino population, registered for the draft.<sup>10</sup>

A great impetus to join actual combat was, of course, rooted in a Philippine nationalist effort to repel back the Japanese from their native country. Arsenio Reyes Calip, a former sailor of a British vessel who was held prisoner by Nazis in the South Pacific in 1940, jumped at the chance to join the U.S. Navy after the fall of Bataan for “revenge” against Germany as well as aiding in “freeing the Philippines, and his family, from Japanese oppression.” Likewise, Manuel Buaken likened his participation as a soldier in the American military as a liberator for democracy. In 1943, he remarked, “We are soldiers now, soldiers of freedom, who go to take

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<sup>10</sup> “Filipinos Vow to Battle Japs, *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1942; “Bataan’s Fall Boosts Filipino Enlistments,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1942; Phil Ventura, Interview by author, 5/11/2011; Linda A. Revilla, “‘Pineapples,’ ‘Hawayanos,’ and ‘Loyal Americans’: Local Boys in the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army,” *Social Process in Hawai’i* 37 (1996): 57–73; United States Army, Enlisted Record and Report of Separation of Paul S. Soriano, In author’s possession; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers for a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 359.

back a free citizenship to our country.” University of Southern California student, Doroteo Vite, suggested that Filipinos had “a personal reason to be training to fight the invaders.” However, the attainment of citizenship was likewise a significant factor for the war effort and in displaying their “loyalty.” Legally classified as “national,” the majority of Filipinos were eligible for military conscription, yet still ineligible to citizenship. In joining the war movement and showing their “loyalty” to their allies both as soldier and as civilian, Filipinos in America hoped that the fruits of their labor would bear citizenship in the United States so that they may be entitled to certain civil rights. As one Filipino journalist suggested, the fight for and attainment of citizenship was “another political triumph of this war for the Filipinos.”<sup>11</sup>

For many Filipinos who were already U.S. citizens at the time of the war, citizenship bore great advantages over others in the community. Under the Naturalization Act of 1918, with increasing emphasis on war-time patriotic allegiance, American legislators modified naturalization laws to allow native-born Filipinos naturalization rights if they served in the U.S. military during World War I. As a result, a handful of Filipinos already living in the United States by World War II were in fact citizens.<sup>12</sup> For example, U.S. Navy veterans Esteban Dizon, Alejandro Dizon, Evacio De La Cruz and Juan Lopez were able to work in relatively secure jobs as mail clerks in the U.S. Postal Service because they attained citizenship through their military service during World War I. After their stint in the military, Esteban Dizon and Alejandro Dizon (no relation) passed the civil service exam in 1923 and began working at the Post Office at Terminal Annex in downtown Los Angeles, eventually earning a relatively stable salary of

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<sup>11</sup> “Filipino Sailor Joins U.S. Navy,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1942; Manuel Buaken, “Our Fighting Love of Freedom,” *Asia and the Americas* 43, no. 6 (June 1943), 357; Doroteo Vite, “A Filipino Rookie in Uncle Sam’s Army,” *Asia*, October 1942, 564; “The War as a Blessing in Disguise to Filipinos in America,” *Manila Post Herald*, April 15, 1945.

<sup>12</sup> Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion*, 83-86.

\$2,700 per year. Aside from a more lucrative salary in comparison to other Filipinos, Esteban Dizon was able to purchase a home in the Central Avenue area without the assistance of an American-born wife or child. Likewise, the Manila Post 464, a local organization comprised of Filipino World War I veterans, held status among the Filipino community in Los Angeles because of their members' citizenship status. Led by Johnny Samson during the 1930s and 1940s, the organization often became a leading and representative voice for the community when dealing with local officials. “[Mayor] Bowron,” Samson explained, “listened to us because we were veterans and vote. He came to our clubhouse...only our organization.”<sup>13</sup>

At the outbreak of war, Filipinos were largely concerned over their ambiguous legal status as “nationals” and lobbied for citizenship rights. To them, the illogic of U.S. exclusion was exacerbated during the war, particularly because Filipinos had the legal precedence to be drafted without citizenship papers. They increased their efforts for inclusion in the war effort. On April 19, 1942, just a few months after Pearl Harbor, over five hundred Filipinos in Los Angeles gathered in a mass meeting at the Filipino Christian Church to organize the community to pass a resolution for the immediate naturalization of Filipinos. Writers of the petition contended that “Filipinos have already proved their LOYALTY to the American people” and “are everyday hearing of the idea of LIBERTY of FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, and equal JUSTICE for all.” They argued that Congress should declare “ALL FILIPINOS residing or born

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<sup>13</sup> Connie Dizon-Thompkins, Interview by author, 5/18/2011; “Photograph,” *The Philippines Star Press*, January 26, 1946. Filipinos coveted jobs in the Postal Service because of the relatively high pay and relative protection from discrimination “by the provisions of the Civil Service Law.” Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People* (Caldwell, I.D.: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1948), 239; Johnny Samson, Interview by Fred Cordova, n.d., 81-Fil-007, National Pinoy Archives, Filipino American National Historical Society, Seattle, Washington.

within the boundaries of the United States, CITIZENS of the United States of America, and entitled to all the rights and privileges of ALL other CITIZENS.”<sup>14</sup>

Like the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, Congress was quick to respond to demands of its Filipino residents. In early 1942, legislators passed the Second War Powers Act, amending the Nationality Act of 1940 and granted the eligibility of naturalization for non-citizens aliens who served three years in active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during the war. The sheer rush of such legislation, however, exemplified the need to meet the political imperatives of U.S. wartime inclusion rather than an altruistic shift in racial policies. As Manuel Buaken rhetorically asked, “How many Americans are truly sincere in granting us this privilege? We know that you have long denied it to us and that military expediency is a large factor in the gift you have made to us.”<sup>15</sup>

With citizenship through the military a practical possibility, many Filipinos uninterested in engaging in battles across seas nonetheless took full advantage of the opportunity to become a citizen through joining the military. A significant number of Filipinos, for example, only served in the military for the minimum amount of time to earn honorable discharge. Some did not even leave California while others were assigned to basic duties inside military bases or warships far away from combat zones. Tomas Mendoza, a cook from Los Angeles, entered the U.S. Army in 1942 and was honorably discharged after serving all of his time at Camp Haan Quartermaster Depot in Riverside. Bonifacio Pasag quit his job as a short order cook when he was drafted into the army. He served his military service as a base hospital ward orderly at Attorney General

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<sup>14</sup> “Mass Meeting Flyer,” San Buenaventura Papers, Box 2, Folder 24 & 30, Peter J. Shields Library, University of California, Davis; “Resolutions Adopted by Filipinos In the United States of America in their Mass Meeting,” April 19, 1942, Carey McWilliams Papers, Carton 8, Folder 4.

<sup>15</sup> 56 Stat. 176 (1942); Buaken, “Our Fighting Love of Freedom,” 359.

Hospital in Palm Springs, just long enough to earn honorable discharge and applied for citizenship soon thereafter. Likewise, there were some Filipinos who served well into their forties. Claudio Jubac, for example, entered the U.S. Army at the age of forty-three.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to legal citizenship through the military and in the battlefields of the Pacific and Europe, Filipinos who remained civilians found their own ways to contest and negotiate for economic gains. Like those who joined the military, Filipino civilians were also concerned about their families in the Philippines and, as such, organized war relief drives and purchased war bonds to help in the effort to free their homeland. As early as 1938, Filipinos in Los Angeles anticipated escalating diplomatic tension between Japan and the United States and its impending effect on the Philippines. Community leaders formed the National Defense Central Committee of America and raised \$2,621 for the Philippines National Defense Fund. As soon as the war in the Pacific began, Filipinos intensified their fundraising towards the war effort. George E. Corpuz and Alexander S. Capas, Sr. established the Filipino War Relief Fund with the Los Angeles chapter of the American Red Cross just days after Pearl Harbor. All money raised would be sent to the Philippines for war relief work. In 1944, the Filipino-American War Finance Committee launched an “Avenge Bataan Bond Drive” to purchase a destroyer for General Douglas MacArthur. A month later, Filipino organizers sold over \$125,000 worth of bonds in downtown’s Pershing Square during one of the largest rallies during the war.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Petition for Naturalization, No. 5058-M and 5241-M, RG 21, Records of the District Courts of the United States, Southern District of California Los Angeles, Naturalization Records 1918-1946, Military Petitions for Naturalization, Folder 5001-M – 5100M Vol. V, Box 14, National Archives and Records Administration, The National Archives at Riverside; Rebecca Pasag Joseph, Interview by author, 3/22/2011.

<sup>17</sup> G.S. Moreno, “Letter to Philippines National Defense Central Committee of America,” May 21, 1938, San Buenaventura Papers, Box 2, Folder 21; “Filipino Fund Drive Executives Named,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1941; “Filipino Launch Bond Drive Today,” *Los Angeles*

Filipino civilians during the war, particularly those living in Los Angeles, also found new labor opportunities through the expanding defense industry as a motive to be “loyal” to the war effort. No other metropolitan area in the nation grew as rapidly during this World War II as Los Angeles. Defense dollars flooded the region as the federal government sought to fortify its military installations on the West coast and along the Pacific Rim. By the end of the war, the Los Angeles region had produced 17% of all of the nation’s war production. Not only did the construction and presence of military bases boost defense production in the region, numerous corporations such as Douglas Aircraft, North American Aviation, and McConnell, anchored the wartime boom and hired millions of new workers. Between 1939 and 1945, the number of industrial workers increased 280 percent. In 1941, thirteen thousand industrial workers were hired per month in Los Angeles. By 1943, one-quarter of all jobs in the region were in defense production. As defense companies proliferated throughout the region, however, Los Angeles did not have an ample working population to sustain this rapid industrial growth. As a result the severe labor shortage, two million people who sought these lucrative defense jobs migrated to Southern California during the war years, increasing the region’s population by 51.7 percent during the 1940s.<sup>18</sup>

With the expansion of the military industry creating a large demand for workers, Filipinos were adamant in ensuring social and economic inclusion in the lucrative industry by depicting a “loyal” and “democratic” Filipino populace deserving of a share of the American life.

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*Times*, March 8, 1944; “\$125,000 Worth of Bonds Sold By Filipinos Here,” *The Philippines Mail*, May 27, 1944.

<sup>18</sup> James F. Bone and A. Slater, “The Facts About Industrial Employment in Los Angeles,” in Los Angeles (County) Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Department, *Collection of Eight Studies on the Industrial Development of Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles [County] Chamber of Commerce, 1944), 6-7.

In a letter to President Roosevelt, Johnny Samson, Reverend Casiano Coloma, and Primo Quevedo outlined several hypocrisies regarding the denial of Filipino citizenship, including the loyalty to American commerce. The letter stated:

We are now experiencing another World War...But how can the Americans expect much from Filipinos now when they were forbidden and are still being forbidden to get employment in those scientific factories, in the U.S. Government Service, private enterprises, etc. on just this question – ‘Are you citizen?’<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Julius B. Ruiz, editor of the *Philippines News Letter* of Seattle, toured around the United States in October 1942 to meet with different Filipino American community leaders and advise them on how to push for employment access. In his stop in Los Angeles, he told local leaders as well as city officials in the audience that “Filipinos in America are loyal to the United States and the democratic system of government, but they are tired of so much dishwashing. They would like to have a more important share in the war effort, and be treated as equals.” He later remarked that “in Detroit and several eastern cities, the Filipinos have jobs in the war plants alongside of white men and are treated as equals,” unlike on the west coast where most are “employed as busboys, dishwashers and other culinary help, although many of them are college graduates.” He pleaded to Americans that Filipinos “want to do everything [they] can to help win this war and assure the continuance of a democratic form of government” and that they “are willing to shelve the independence issue for the duration, but would like to have a fair break in war-plant employment.”<sup>20</sup> Philippine officials were likewise lobbying for Filipino employment opportunities, using Filipinos’ participation in the war effort as a rally for equality.

In 1943, Manuel A. Adeva, chief of the National Division of the Office of the Resident

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<sup>19</sup> “Petition by Filipinos Residing in U.S.A.,” June 22, 1942. Carey McWilliams Papers, Carton 8, Folder 4.

<sup>20</sup> “Filipinos’ Leader Wants More Hired in War Jobs,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1942.

Commissioner of the Philippines to the United States, urged California industrial officials to hire Filipinos in the state's numerous defense plants. Addressing the local Los Angeles community, he proclaimed, "Filipinos in the armed services, in war plants and on farms and ranches of this country are doing their best to hasten the day of deliverance."<sup>21</sup>

With a severe shortage of workers as a result of the war and new governmental interest in curbing hiring discrimination in the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), defense corporations turned to Filipinos, as well as other communities of color, to supply much of their labor needs. For many Filipinos, securing jobs on the shop floors of new defense companies ensured a stable salary. John Dellomes, for example, was too old to join the Army, yet he attained employment at Lockheed in Burbank during the war and stayed with the company until his retirement in the 1960s. Jose Abad began a job as a riveter for the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Plant in Downey during the war and retired with the company as an engineer. Additionally, many Filipinos attained positions in the numerous bases and ship yards in Long Beach and San Pedro during the war and worked there throughout the Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

As more Filipinos attained stable defense jobs during the war, it appeared that the assertion of U.S. state loyalty came to fruition. Observers conjectured a "new era" in American race relations because of Filipinos' new opportunities within the expanding defense industry. A. Guerzon observed that by 1944, "thousands of Filipinos have been able to get jobs where they

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<sup>21</sup> "Filipinos Bide Time for Day of Liberty," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1943.

<sup>22</sup> On June 25, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which created the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), requiring companies with government contracts not discriminate on the basis of race or religion. For more on the FEPC, see Merl E. Reed, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Juanita Dellomes, Interview by author, January 28, 2011; Jose Abad Jr., Interview by author, March 13, 2011; Florante Peter Ibanez and Roselyn Estepa Ibanez, *Filipinos in Carson and the South Bay* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

were not welcome before... in the shipbuilding, aircraft industries and practically all the industries that are doing war work...where none but 'white' workers were seen before."  
Likewise, R.T. Feria wrote that "with the coming of the war and the defense plant boom, a new era opened for the Filipinos. The houseboys, weary of years of dishwashing, hurried to the shipyards of Wilmington and San Pedro and to the teeming gates of Lockheed, Douglas, and Vultee....the majority became welders, technicians, assembly or office workers, and a few became engineers."<sup>23</sup>

Yet, like the opportunity to gain citizenship, Filipinos' advancement in the Los Angeles' economy revealed not necessarily the triumph of American democracy, but rather the great expansion of the U.S. state. As the federal government poured millions of dollars for military installments and factories on the Pacific front, labor shortages during the era and mandates of the FEPC opened up job opportunities in the defense industry for many communities of color. Filipinos took full advantage of the wartime disorder to contest and negotiate for citizenship rights and economic gains through demonstrations of loyalty to the United States. As Filipino reporter Stanley Garibay lamented as he saw Filipinos treated differently from an earlier period:

For a time, it seemed to many Filipinos, and to the rest of us, that a new day had dawned. Most Americans seemed to be touched by the loyalty of the Filipinos who, in turn, seemed to be grateful to us for helping them compel the Japanese to withdraw.

To Filipinos, their loyalty during the war was an offering to Americans in exchange for their benefaction – in this case, the promise of democracy and its many privileges included within it. Filipinos argued that Americans thus had an obligation to fulfill this promise. After decades of

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<sup>23</sup> A. Guerzon, "U.S. Filipinos and World War II," *The Manila Post Herald*, June 5, 1944; R. T. Feria, "War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants," *Sociology and Social Research* 31, no. 2 (September-October 1946): 51.

being a primary target of racial strife, local Filipinos welcomed the opportunity to claim their loyalty to the United States believing it would lead to the betterment of their lives.<sup>24</sup>

### Valorizing Filipinos

While Filipinos pushed for citizenship and economic gains through a “Double-V”-type campaign, U.S. officials capitalized on their efforts in order to promote the United States’ as a benevolent nation. In his study of the different racializations of Chinese and Japanese Americans throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Robert G. Lee argues that racial tropes of Asian Americans shifted and recalibrated as a result of cultural crises caused by economic and social transformations.<sup>25</sup> During World War II, popular media slowly replaced the powerful depictions of Filipinos as “savage natives,” “infantilized pupils,” or “sex-driven foreigners” with that of “loyal allies” and “little brown brothers.” Emphasizing and valorizing Filipinos’ participation in military battles alongside Americans was particularly methodical in promoting U.S. liberal tolerance and masking and enabling U.S. empire.

One method to convey American altruism was to create a distinct Filipino unit of the U.S. Army and promote it as a collection of “loyal” and “brave” soldiers willing to fight for democratic principles. Within weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the establishment of a separate Filipino unit as part of the U.S. Army. Within a few weeks, the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion was formed on March 4, 1942 and was activated on April 1 at Camp San Luis Obispo. By and large, enlistment in the unit was on a voluntary

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<sup>24</sup> Dr. Riz A. Oade, “‘The Day of Infamy’: SD’s Unsung Heroes of World War II” *Asian Journal*, May 21, 2011

<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).

basis, but military officials ordered those who had served in the armed forces in the Philippines to report to the Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Offley served as its first commander since he had experience in the Philippines prior to the war. On July 13, 1942, the Battalion moved to training grounds in Salinas and became the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment, with close to two thousand Filipinos from around the nation volunteered to join. On November 22, 1942, Army officials created the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment in Camp Ord.<sup>26</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment was sent to Australia then New Guinea in 1944 where it fought in combat against Japanese troops, before landing in the southern Philippines. They then joined their Philippine compatriots in fighting Japanese forces. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, on the other hand, never faced combat. At the war's end, 555 soldiers returned to the United States, 500 reenlisted, and 800 of the regiment remained in the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> In 1943, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Regiments became subject of a U.S. military-produced newsreel film in an effort to actively promote American ethnic pluralism in contrast to the racist ideology of the Axis Powers. The short 4-minute newsreel depicted Filipino soldiers as allies and friends, calling them "Americans...descended from people who have lost their native land" and "like any other 'Joe' soldier."<sup>28</sup>

Granting Filipino soldiers citizenship, moreover, allowed U.S. officials to tout the state's liberal principles. On February 20, 1943, prior to the Battalions' extensive training in Camp Roberts and Hunter Liggett Military Reservation, over 1,200 Filipino soldiers were granted

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<sup>26</sup> Alex Fabros, "The Fight for Equality in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II by Uncle Sam's Colored Soldiers," *Filipino American National Historical Society Journal* 4 (1996): 42-48.

<sup>27</sup> Revilla, "'Pineapples,' 'Hawayanos,' and 'Loyal Americans,'" 57-73.

<sup>28</sup> United Newsreel, *U.S. Army 1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments Training in California during World War II* (Washington, D.C.: United Films Newsreel, 1943, film), Records of the Office of War Information, 1926-1951, Record Group 208, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

citizenship in a ceremony where they swore their allegiance to the United States. During the ceremony, several military officers addressed the units, including Colonel Cowley, who expressed to the crowd:

[American] officers who returned from Bataan have said there are no finer soldiers in the world than the Filipinos who fought and starved and died there shoulder to shoulder with our troops...I can well believe it as I look at the men before me. On those faces is [sic] quiet determination and a consciousness of training and discipline with a definite end in view. I congratulate them on their soldierly appearance and on their approaching citizenship.

Then a judge who presided over the ceremony came to the podium and stated, “Citizenship came to us who were born here as a heritage -- it will come to you as a privilege...we have every faith you will become and remain loyal, devoted citizens of the United States, and we wish you God speed and success.” After his speech, he administered the oath to the Filipino soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

Another medium to valorize Filipinos for the benefit of U.S. empire was through print media. News of the role Filipinos played in battles against the Japanese in the Pacific colony was front-page material almost everyday during the war. In major newspapers, journalists depicted Filipinos, both soldier and civilian, as loyal allies to Americans in their mutual fight against the Japanese. In one such article in the *Los Angeles Times*, a writer with the United Press Bureau in Manila, reported numerous Filipinos sacrificing their lives against the Japanese. With the headline, “Filipinos Executed for Resisting Japs,” Wilson portrayed Filipinos as “‘natives’...who refuse to submit to Japanese domination in the Philippines” since Japanese “arrogance has made the average Filipino more stanchly attached to the United States.” Lee Shippey likewise wrote about Filipino heroism and loyalty during the war. He reported after his interview with an American soldier who hid among Filipinos in a remote village in the

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<sup>29</sup> Buaken, “Our Fighting Love of Freedom,” 357.

Philippines that the locals fed and protected the American soldiers despite both death threats and promises of reward from the Japanese military. Shippey then concluded that “it is going to be a great help to us to have the Filipinos on our side.” With the war dominating the headlines, anti-Filipino publicity decreased significantly. Manuel Buaken recalled a “complete stoppage of publicity that sneer[ed] at and ridicule[d] [Filipinos]” and that there were no “race-hatred inciting publicity directed against the Filipinos since Pearl Harbor.”<sup>30</sup>

Film also became a critical channel to change the perception of Filipinos during the war. Hollywood’s movie studios, in collaboration with the Office of War Information (OWI), looked to boost national morale as well as profits by producing a number of films about America’s war in the Philippines. There were few initial attempts to depict the war in films such as the *Texas to Bataan*, released in 1942 and *Corregidor*, released in 1943. However, Metro-Goldwin-Meyer’s (MGM) film *Bataan* captured the nation’s attention of the war in its Asian colony in 1943. Because of *Bataan*’s popularity, many other studios used the film as a template for World War II films throughout the 1940s. Producers soon realized that stories of such heroism and valor during uncertain wartime became very lucrative. As a result, numerous studios produced more films dealing with the Pacific military front. Philippine WWII genres included *Back to Bataan* (1945), *Bataan*’s sequel, *They Were Expendable* (1945), and *An American Guerilla in the Philippines* (1950).

Every production of a film during the war underwent a screening process conducted by the Motion Picture Division of the Office of War Information (OWI). OWI officials read scripts, viewed initial cuts of films, and offered comments in accordance to state guidelines of “proper”

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<sup>30</sup> “Filipinos Executed for Resisting Japs,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1942; Lee Shippey, “Leeside,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1944; Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 322.

viewing material to the national and international public. From the outset, it was clear that the Office of War Information intended to give the American audience a favorable view of its Filipino “allies” against the Japanese in order to demonstrate the benevolence of the American colonial project. OWI official Lillian Bergquist, for example, pushed filmmakers to “dramatize major war information subjects” by “throwing away the old, paternalistic ‘white man’s burden’ concept” and emphasize the benevolence of the new type of empire. She argued that:

Forty years of relative economic, political, and social decency in the Philippines has yielded the Filipino the highest standard of living in the Orient... Thus the Philippines dramatize by example the progress that the entire world can make. It dramatizes the fact that a leveling up of the standard of life in the Philippines has not been at the expense of the United States. Thus a leveling up of the ‘have nots’ nations of the world need not be at the expense of the ‘haves.’<sup>31</sup>

Personifying Filipinos as “successful” benefactors of American democratic ideals and co-equals in the fight for a “free world” through these films gave American audiences the vision of a more altruistic super power in the United States, consequently aiding the U.S. state in justifying, reinforcing, and advancing U.S. empire in the Philippines and beyond. An analysis of this process and the comments of the film screeners provide an instructive glimpse of this critical state-sanctioned shift in racial discourse on Filipinos during the war.

*Bataan*, one of the first and the most popular of the Philippine WWII genre films, received much praise from OWI officials for its “important and valuable contribution to the war effort.” Starring the popular Robert Taylor, *Bataan* depicted the efforts of American and Filipino soldiers to defend the Bataan peninsula against the Japanese. Reviewing the initial script of *Bataan Patrol*, *Bataan*’s original title, OWI official Lillian Bergquist suggested that the

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<sup>31</sup> Lillian R. Bergquist, “Script Review: Bataan Patrol,” October 2, 1942, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder “Bataan,” NACP.

film script scored well in several points towards “the war information program.” She lauded the film for emphasizing “the democratic character of our armed forces” which demonstrated “the difference between our ideology and the Fascist doctrine.” The film’s depiction of the U.S. military as a “people’s army” comprised of soldiers “from all walks of civilian life,” according to Bergquist, would help movie audiences “identify these men with themselves...and that everyone has a part in it.”<sup>32</sup>

Bergquist also commended the film for its racial depictions. She noted that “our people need to realize exactly what they face if they are to gear their full energies to total war,” and thus “the enemy is properly depicted as a terrible adversary” by showing the Japanese’s “cruelty, enormous strength, efficiency and persistence.” Moreover, she noted that the friendship between a black soldier and the other soldiers “furthers audiences’ understanding of the Negro’s part in the war and in our democratic scheme of things.” Finally, Bergquist praised *Bataan Patrol* for showing the “unity and friendship with our Filipino allies” which “emphasizes the spirit which binds together not only Americans and Filipinos, but all people who are fighting for freedom.” “Filipino soldiers,” she suggested, “are shown to be courageous and capable.”<sup>33</sup> While Bergquist commended *Bataan Patrol* for its attempts at garnering wartime unity with allies and antagonism towards the enemy, she recommended more emphasis on a few key points. She argued that the film script missed a “glorious opportunity to dramatize...that the fight of the Filipinos for their homeland is also the fight for the lads from Kokomo, Indiana.” She also implored the filmmakers to demonstrate how the “nature of Japanese facism” made the “Japanese differ from other

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<sup>32</sup> Lillian R. Bergquist, “Script Review: Bataan Patrol,” October 2, 1942, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder “Bataan,” NACP.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Orientals.”<sup>34</sup> The purpose of the film and the intention of the OWI officials then were to help Americans connect Filipinos as comrades fighting the same evil enemy.

After *Bataan Patrol* was filmed and changed its title to *Bataan*, the OWI screened the finished film and reviewed it based on both its domestic and overseas releases. Comments of the OWI officials were consistent with strong praises of the “courage and heroism of the American armed forces,” the “cruel and ruthless” portrayal of the Japanese, and the “great value” the film has in “acquainting other peoples of the world with a representative portrayal of Americans at war” with its “people’s army.” OWI officials likewise complimented the film for portraying the two Filipino scouts in the patrol “sympathetically” because they were shown “to have a tremendous sense of their duty to their country, and invincible determination to drive out the invader.”<sup>35</sup>

For many of these WWII films, OWI officials duly noted any indications of insulting or patronizing scenes towards Filipinos for fear that they may be offended. Lillian Bergquist, for example, in her analysis of the film *Texas to Bataan*, noted that the film had “a disparaging remark, intended for comedy [was] directed at three Filipinos singing ‘Home on the Range’ in their native tongue,” and that it should be omitted “in regard to the war information program.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Patterson Rothacker, in a review of *Bataan*, suggested to the producers to omit the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Peg Fenwick, “Feature Viewing: Bataan,” April 8, 1943, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder “Bataan,” NACP.

<sup>36</sup> Lillian R. Bergquist, “Feature Viewing: Texas to Bataan,” October 18, 1942, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3537, Folder “Texas to Bataan,” NACP.

racist term “yellow” in the line “the little yellow rats” for fear that it would tamper the “good contribution … of United Nations characters, especially the Filipinos.”<sup>37</sup>

Officials were quick to cover up any remarks that showed white Americans as well as other wartime allies in a racist light. William Cunningham provided various suggestions of where to omit certain dialogue in the film, *They Were Expendable*, aimed at African Americans as well as the British. In a letter to MGM studios, he suggested that the line, “It’s gonna be bad back dere in de South – no hemp – what’ll dey do for lynchin’s?” in a scene where the fall of Philippines seemed imminent, be omitted “for obvious reasons.” Cunningham also believed that the remark of an American soldier, ““The Japs knocked off Singapore today – 78,000 tea drinkers and 28 brass hats’ could be resented by our British allies.”<sup>38</sup> OWI content reviewers likewise aimed to point out any potential hypocrisy of U.S. policies that may be detrimental to the image of American democracy. In Claude A. Buss’s review of *The Invisible Army* (later renamed *Back to Bataan*), Buss, a former American diplomat to the Philippines suggested that the film writers change the name of the private club in the film from the Manila Polo Club to the Zamaroas Club since “Filipinos were not allowed at the Polo” and that it “might be better” to show the main character, Bonifacio, “with only one yacht.”<sup>39</sup> In essence, Buss exposed and tried to hide depictions of racial and class inequality of Philippine society under U.S. colonial rule.

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<sup>37</sup> Patterson Rothacker, “Letter to Ulric Bell,” March 19, 1943, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder “Bataan,” NACP.

<sup>38</sup> William S. Cunningham, “Letter to Captain Louis S. Chappelear, Jr.” November 22, 1944, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3537, Folder “They Were Expendable,” NACP.

<sup>39</sup> Eleanor Berneis, “Feature Script Review: The Invisible Army,” December 7, 1944, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder “Back to Bataan,” NACP.

The rise in the popularity of this WWII film genre, however, also had unintended consequences, namely presenting opportunities for Filipinos to enter the entertainment industry, which, in many ways, served as a more lucrative and stable employment avenue than what they were accustomed to. Some movie producers hired some local Filipinos to play such un-credited roles as extras prior to the war, usually playing exotic “native” characters. For example, the MGM-produced 1929 film, *The Pagan*, featured many Filipinos playing the roles of Polynesian “natives.” Other films such as *Good Earth* (1937), *Thief of Bagdad* (1940), and *Across the Pacific* (1942) featured hundreds of Filipinos as extras relegated to the background. During the war years, however, studios recruited more local Filipinos to play extras in WWII movies set in the Philippines. Filipino actors took advantage of their demand for their own benefit despite their societal and economic restrictions. Not only did they advise directors on some cultural and historical tidbits about how to depict Filipinos a bit more accurately, they also organized themselves as workers and founded the Filipino Screen Players Association. In 1945, the association demanded from the Central Casting Association a raise in wages, a rare instance of worker unionism in historically anti-union Los Angeles.<sup>40</sup>

The work of the OWI was nevertheless a blatant attempt to garner national support of a more tolerant America through its favorable depictions of Filipinos. Filmmakers and state officials alike gave both Americans at home and international audiences abroad staged glimpses of purported American democracy and its supposed Filipino recipients. Moreover, the films in many ways conveyed the Philippines as part of a U.S. “homefront” in which American ways of life (in the Philippines) were threatened by Japanese aggression, serving audiences a significant

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<sup>40</sup> Carina Montoya-Forsythe, *Filipinos in Hollywood* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008); Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 214-217; “Philbrick Meets FSPA Members Over Question on ‘Extra’ Wage,” *Manila Post Herald*, April 30, 1945.

dosage of sympathy for both Filipino soldiers and civilians since Filipino characters often experienced sacrificial death. Consistent with the OWI's War Information program, the films conveyed "several outstanding scenes to which a Filipino soldier is dealt with as full equal to all the others."<sup>41</sup>

With any information disseminated to both American and international audiences necessitating a screening process through the Office of War Information, the U.S. government ensured that the popular media portrayed American empire in a benevolent light, censoring potentially harmful portrayals. As OWI film screener Gene Kern aptly surmised in his review of *Back to Bataan* (1945), the film was excellent in "establishing the early resistance to American occupation, the good faith of the American promise of independence, and the present unity of the two peoples."<sup>42</sup> American audiences were thus more compelled to embrace and take ownership of the Filipino-American wartime alliance because the fight in the Philippines was also a fight for their democratic way of life, allowing white Americans to change their views of Filipinos, particularly those living in the United States.

Also evident in the change in racial discourse of Filipinos in films was the shift of local governments' treatment of Filipinos. As I conveyed in the first chapter, elected officials prior to WWII, such as former Mayor Frank Shaw, vocalized their disdain of Filipinos, used the Los Angeles Police Department to harass the community, and supported and helped administer Filipino repatriation. During the war, however, city officials organized several rallies and parades in an attempt to celebrate the integral role local Filipino Americans were playing in the

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<sup>41</sup> Ulric Bell, "Letter to Dr. William B. Cherin," March 25, 1943, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder "Bataan," NACP.

<sup>42</sup> Gene Kern, "Letter to William Gordon," October 9, 1944, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, Los Angeles Branch Office, Box 3511, Folder "Back to Bataan," NACP.

war effort. On June 13, 1942, for example, city officials organized a ceremony celebrating its first “General Douglas MacArthur Day,” in which they rededicated Westlake Park as “MacArthur Park.” Part of the program was a ceremonial enlisting of Filipinos to the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Battalion.<sup>43</sup> On New Year’s Day 1943, the city hosted a large parade of local representatives and soldiers of the United Nations along Wilshire Boulevard in a show of multicultural unity against the Axis Powers. Ten thousand parade participants of all nationalities marched, with parade organizers ensuring that a large contingent of Filipino soldiers played a prominent role and was well represented. Led by the president of the Los Angeles Filipino Community, Melecio Dellota, Filipino soldiers and supporters marched in the parade, many donning “Philippine *chinelas*.” Dellota then addressed the crowd and yelled into the microphone, “Keep on fighting! Never give up! We are going to win!”<sup>44</sup>

On May 16, 1943, state and local officials hosted “I Am an American” Day at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, which featured many immigrant soldiers pledging loyalty and citizenship to the United States, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Battalion. At the rally, California Governor Earl Warren addressed the crowd of 60,000 and proclaimed, “American citizenship is a blessing, regardless of how it comes to us … we welcome you to citizenship and join with you in the pledging of our lives.” Months later on November 15, 1943, the 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Battalion paraded along Broadway Street in downtown Los Angeles and held a rally on the steps of City Hall. Raising their *bolo* knives they received from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Filipinos listened as Mayor Fletcher Bowron addressed the regiment:

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<sup>43</sup> “City to Honor MacArthur,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1942.

<sup>44</sup> Tom Cameron, “United Nations Parade in March for Victory,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1943.

Through the presence here of our brave Filipino soldiers, we give concrete evidence they are sharing the responsibilities and sacrifices of their American brothers and are willing to give their lives, if need be, to establish the principles of democracy...We know with those knives the last Jap will be driven out of the Philippines.

Local Filipino newspaper journalist, Francisco A. Lopez then added, “The history of the Philippines is written in blood and every Filipino is proud of that history.”<sup>45</sup>

City council members also invited local Filipinos to honor and fete the U.S.-Philippines alliance during the war. In 1944, community leaders raised the Philippine flag on City Hall flagpoles then marched to City Council chambers to address the local lawmakers. Roque E. de la Ysla, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, proclaimed, “We pray to god that General MacArthur may soon recapture all of the Philippines.”<sup>46</sup> Previous to this moment, the Filipinos had only addressed the City Council in protest over the city’s unfair treatment in legislation and police enforcement. By wartime, the Council had conveyed the larger national liberal shift in its symbolic treatment of Filipinos.

Organized city groups also contributed to the valorization of Filipinos, even those that had maintained an anti-Filipino stance just a few years earlier. In 1936, George Clements of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce’s Agricultural Division had called Filipinos “the most worthless, unscrupulous, shiftless, diseased, semi-barbarian[s]” to come to the United States. Years later, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce signaled a change in their disposition because of Filipinos’ newfound spotlight as brave and gallant soldiers. Led by its president Frank P. Doherty, the Chamber organized a campaign to raise \$22,500 to manufacture 4,500 *bolo* knives as gifts to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiments in 1943 for their service in the

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<sup>45</sup> “New Americans Welcomed in Enthusiastic Wartime Ceremonies,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1943; “Filipino Troops March in Honor of Their ‘July 4,’” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1943.

<sup>46</sup> “Joyous Filipinos Raise Flag in City Hall Fete,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1944.

U.S. Military. Filipinos historically used the machete-like *bolo* knife for everyday activities such as clearing vegetation but also used it as a military weapon in battle when firearms were limited. The Chamber of Commerce commissioned local knife manufacturer, Albert Rebel of the Super-Cold Corporation to produce the knives. Many white Americans donated to the *bolo* campaign, including local civic clubs from Long Beach, El Monte, and Alhambra if only as a symbolic gesture to America's most "loyal" allies.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the valorization of Filipinos wartime politics brought, the nascent liberal message was easily eclipsed at any given moment. The Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles, for example, conveyed just how fragile "tolerance" towards Filipinos could be. The series of riots that erupted from June 3 to June 7, 1943, resulted in the beating of young Mexican American *pachucos* at the hands of white military men stationed in and around Southern California due to Mexican youths' affinity of the "zoot-suit." Filipinos, as well as African Americans, who likewise adopted the zoot suit fashion were also targets of white rioters.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the fragility of liberal inclusion made community leaders believe they had to continue to inculcate a moral discipline during the war, as they did prior to it, to sustain their newfound racial status as ally. As one editorial writer suggested, "let's keep on hoping and reduce vice...that's one way to win the war – avoid vices and sins."<sup>49</sup>

The aim of the state and popular media to recalibrate the discourse of the Filipino to one of "ally" also proved to successfully elide some of the horrific realities of the war. Although

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<sup>47</sup> John Pickett, "The Labor Situation Grows Acute," *Pacific Rural Press*, May 9, 1936; "Army Thanks Bolo Donors," *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1943; "Los Angeles Businessmen Launch Funds Towards Purchase Of Bolo Knives for Filipino Soldier," *The Philippines Mail*, May 24, 1943; "Father Gets Bolo Knife to Kill Japs," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1943.

<sup>48</sup> Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1949), 249.

<sup>49</sup> "Aren't They Essential to Victory?," San Buenaventura Papers, Box 2, Folder 12.

Filipino guerilla soldiers and civilians alike cooperated with American soldiers in the Philippines against the Japanese, shortly after the war, some U.S. armed forces quickly turned on Filipinos who disobeyed military orders. Reminiscent of the harsh tactics employed during the Philippine-American War, Second Lieutenant Jasper Femmer of the Air Corps ordered the troops of the 18<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group to punish through “any treatment short of killing” any “unauthorized natives” who “wander through the area stealing personal as well as government property.” “Natives caught stealing in the area,” Femmer continued, would be “soundly thrashed and beaten thoroughly.”<sup>50</sup> The military document dated December 18, 1945 was leaked by a Philadelphia resident to various news outlets but never made any media headlines. In a reply letter to U.S Representative Herbert J. McGlinchey of Pennsylvania, who sought an explanation to the military policy, Under Secretary of War Kenneth Royall ensured that “an immediate investigation of [the] matter has been directed.”<sup>51</sup> The resolution to this ordeal is unknown, but its silence in the media affirmed the superficiality and fragility of the Filipino-American alliance.

Through the strategic promotion of a Filipino-American “alliance” against the Japanese facilitated and guided by the U.S. state, racial discourse on Filipinos shifted from that of a “colonial subject,” requiring tutelage from Americans, to an “ally” that joined forces with Americans to fight side by side against a common enemy. As these wartime projections of racial tolerance convey, the change in rhetoric to a more tolerant tone during the war years was the clear result of a manufactured geopolitical alliance between the United States and its Philippine

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<sup>50</sup> Herbert J. McGlinchey, “Letter to Kenneth C. Royall, Under Secretary of War,” January 25, 1946, Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff, Security Classified General Correspondence, 1942-1947, Series 1946: Box 299, Folder 291.2, NACP.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth C. Royall, “Letter to Herbert J. McGlinchey, House of Representatives,” February 8, 1946, Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff, Security Classified General Correspondence, 1942-1947, Series 1946: Box 299, Folder 291.2, NACP.

colony. The state-generated trope of “ally” did not simply proliferate among the populace in a vacuum however. Liberal inclusion created new racial subjectivities in and beyond Los Angeles during World War II, in which Filipinos played a critical role.

### Traversing Los Angeles’s Racial Landscape

The strategy of celebrating the Filipino war effort was by no means simply a radical transformation in racial attitudes and practices. While Hollywood films, newspaper coverage, and patriotic demonstrations shed a new sympathetic light on Filipinos, key to Filipino Americans’ shift to “acceptance” in Los Angeles was also the changing racial geographies in the city, brought about by U.S. state expansion. As Kevin Leonard demonstrates in his study of race relations in Los Angeles during World War II, wartime politics and mass migrations recalibrated racializations among communities of color in the region.<sup>52</sup> As a result, the racial liberal logic that engendered Filipinos’ “inclusion” to the status of “ally” was also dependent on and predicated by the demonization and exclusion of other groups in Los Angeles, particularly Japanese and African Americans.

Being home to the largest Japanese American population on the U.S. mainland, Los Angeles was a hotbed of anti-Japanese sentiment during the war. City officials, particularly Mayor Fletcher Bowron, were vocal leaders in arousing suspicion around the large Japanese community and worked with federal officials to compel their incarceration.<sup>53</sup> However, to

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<sup>52</sup> Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> For more on Japanese internment in Los Angeles, see Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Lon

maintain and project an image of racial tolerance in the midst of Japanese removal from the city, Bowron and others simultaneously valorized other Asian communities whose ancestral homelands were U.S. allies during the war. On many occasions, city leaders hosted numerous rallies that highlighted Chinese, Korean, and Filipino residents in the city.

In the first of these “celebrations,” the city sponsored the California State Militia’s formal presentation of its Chinese, Filipino, and Korean reserve units in Chinatown on April 26, 1942 as part of the “continued co-operation in the battle against a common foe, Japan.” Lieutenant Colonel E. Herbert Herlihy, military aide to California Governor Culbert Olson, presented State militia licenses to the Korean and Chinese battalions. The State Guard, according to Herlihy, had “bigger plans” for the Filipino unit. A month later, Edward Arnold, the president of the “I Am an American” Foundation, and Los Angeles County Supervisor John Anson Ford coordinated a War Savings Bond and Stamp Day at Pershing Square featuring the participation of Chinese, Korean, and Filipino organizations. On July 4, 1943, the Nocturnal Perpetual Adoration Society held a parade featuring “detachments of American and Negro Army troops, the United Mexican Reserves, [and] National Reserves of Filipinos, Koreans, and Chinese.”<sup>54</sup>

On October 10, 1943, the city organized a parade of more than 2,000 Chinese Americans from Pershing Square to City Hall on the anniversary of the birth of the Chinese republic. Alongside them were Chinese and Filipino troops of the U.S. Army as well as the Army marching band. At the rally, Lieutenant Commander Coryden Wassell of the U.S. Navy

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Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*.

<sup>54</sup> “Oriental Units Licensed as Part of State Militia,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1942; “Americanism to Be Theme of Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1942; “Sacred Heart Feast Parade Set for Today,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1943.

addressed the crowd and remarked, “Tell the Chinese people we will fight beside them and for them until victory.” Mayor Fletcher Bowron similarly expressed his support of the Chinese war effort: “Our people love both freedom and peace, but we know we can permanently realize neither until we have conquered the menacing forces of aggression by military might, ruthless and destructive war.” Later, in a statement that exemplified the contradiction and irony of racial liberalism, Bowron proclaimed, “it is fitting and proper that this demonstration should be held in the city of Los Angeles on the shores of the Pacific, that will link our countries close together for all years to come.”<sup>55</sup> Bowron, after all, spoke adamantly of incarcerating Japanese Americans in camps precisely on the grounds of Japan’s proximity to Los Angeles.

Anti-Japanese sentiment during the war also prompted everyday civilians to give preferential treatment and opportunities to Filipinos at the expense of Japanese Americans. In one instance, proprietors of a drugstore in Manhattan Beach deliberately fired two Nisei bus boys after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and specifically requested Filipinos from an employment agency to replace them. In early 1942, the Fourth Area of the American Legion at its semi-annual caucus in Glendale passed a resolution calling for the “immediate evacuation of American citizens of ‘enemy alien extraction’ whose loyalty is questionable,” while, at the same time, proclaimed that “Filipino and Negro citizens be given work in defense plants and that prejudices against them because of their race be dropped.”<sup>56</sup>

State-driven racism towards Japanese and imperial geopolitics during the war consequently exacerbated interethnic tensions imbrued between some Japanese and Filipinos in the United States. Some Filipinos seized the opportunity of wartime racial hatred towards

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<sup>55</sup> “City Hails Chinese Republic on Anniversary,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> “Legion Urges Army Action,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1942; Tom Treanor, “The Home Front,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1941.

Japanese Americans to their own benefit. Labor leader Claro Candelario in an oral interview recalled his support for Japanese incarceration because of his experiences of Filipino-Japanese tensions in Stockton and in Los Angeles. “The Japanese did not respect the Filipinos,” Candelario asserted, “[They] thought that we were lower than them in Los Angeles...so I was also happy that the Japanese were rounded up because the Japanese did not care very much about the Filipinos.” However, in many instances, additional coverage from mainstream media intensified anti-Japanese sentiment among Filipinos. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, reported that “racial hatred flared” when a Filipino stabbed a 24-year old Japanese American, Charles Mayeda, on a Pacific Electric Railway car in Glendale a few days after the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, and reported numerous occasions of Filipino-Japanese fighting in the cannery factories in Terminal Island. The newspaper likewise singled out and quoted a Filipino on one newspaper account of a group of U.S. Navy personnel that purchased War Savings Bonds and Stamps. Quoting Isidro Q. Reyes, a Filipino chief commissary steward, the newspaper reporter explained that he bought his War Savings Bond because he had “offensive reasons against the Japs.”<sup>57</sup>

However, as Eiichiro Azuma argues, Japanese-Filipino conflict during the prewar period in California was largely shaped by and a product of larger American racial ideology and the particular economic structures of the West coast.<sup>58</sup> Filipinos’ attitudes towards Japanese

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<sup>57</sup> Dawn Mabalon, “Interview with Claro A. Candelario,” February 1993, San Buenaventura Papers, Box 15, Folder “Life Histories: Claro A. Candelario”; “Filipino Knifes Japanese in Car,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1941; “Filipino-Japanese Fighting Breaks Out Again at Cannery,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1942; “Destroyer Men Buy War Bonds,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1942.

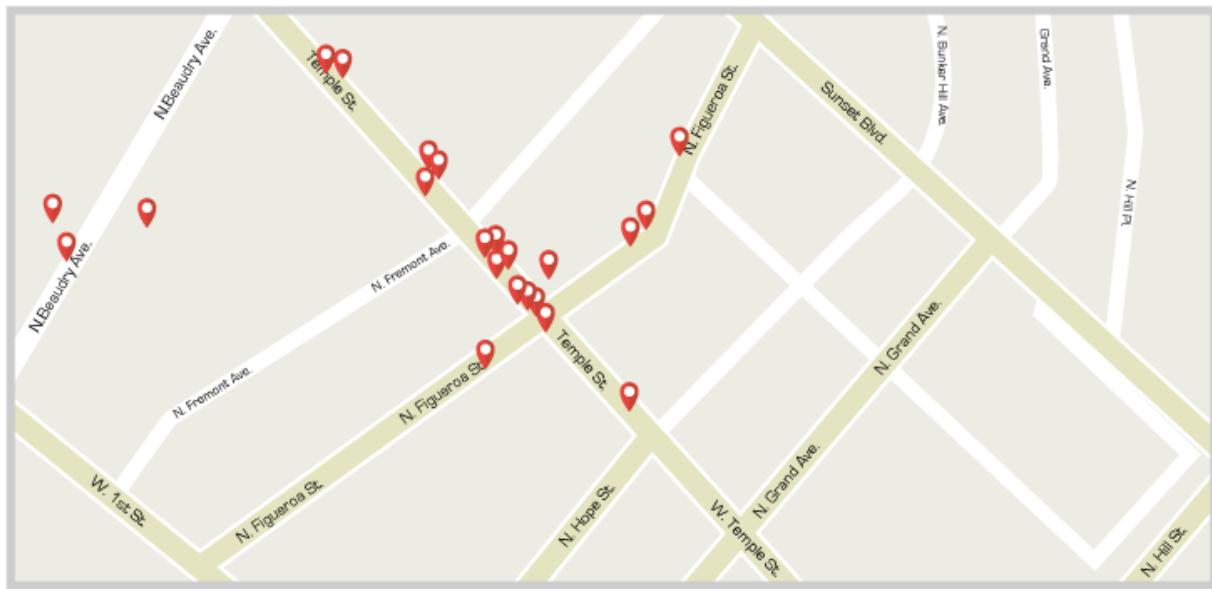
<sup>58</sup> In his detailed chapter on the interethnic conflict between Filipinos and Japanese in the San Joaquin River Delta area during the 1930s, Azuma argues that Issei farmers largely subordinated

internment overall were mixed, with amiable Filipino-Japanese relations receiving little to no mainstream media coverage. There were indeed a number of community leaders who condemned anti-Japanese attacks. Reverend Casiano Coloma of the Filipino Christian Church (formerly the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship) emphatically stated in the *Rafu Shimpo* newspaper that Japanese Americans were not at all responsible for the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and stressed that fact that many Filipino members of his church were married to Japanese Americans. Coloma later led his church along with other religious groups to pass resolutions that extended their “sympathy and good will to [their] Japanese neighbors whom the military authorities, for reasons of defense, have evacuated from [their] midst.” Likewise, during the war, some Filipinos bought smaller “truck” farms and other properties from Japanese who entered internment and served as caretakers of the property until the Japanese’s release.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the Filipino community’s changing spatial location in Los Angeles reflected new shifts in the city’s racial landscape. During the war, the geographic location of Little Manila shifted towards the Temple-Figueroa area of downtown Los Angeles from its original epicenter around First and Main Streets. Simeon Doria Arroyo observed in 1945: “Now, it looks like the Filipino colony of Los Angeles will be firmly established in Temple Street...Filipino business establishments have commercially rooted to stay.” Like First Street, Temple Street was a heavily pedestrian-oriented neighborhood, with brick buildings one or two stories high that had mixed-use designations. The area was also home to a working-class Jewish population during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as a small numbers of Mexicans and African Americans. Prior to the war,

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Filipino laborers not in a demonstration of ethnic superiority, but rather as a way for Issei to gain acceptance in the white American society. Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 187-201.

<sup>59</sup> *Rafu Shimpo*, December 26, 1941; “Church Group Votes Good Will to Jap Evacuees,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1943; Philip Ventura, Interview by author. May 13, 2011.



Filipino Establishments in Downtown Los Angeles 1940-1949

many Filipinos moved into the rooming houses around this area. For example, based on the 1940 U.S. Census, a 60-unit single room occupancy apartment building on 317 N. Figueroa Street housed over thirty Filipinos.<sup>60</sup> However, by wartime, the Temple-Figueroa became the new “Little Manila.”

Part and parcel to this geographic shift was the larger change in racial makeup of the city spurred by the larger political economy of Los Angeles, particularly the mass migration of African Americans to the city. As the federal government invested heavily in the war industry on

<sup>60</sup> Simeon Doria Arroyo, “Of Men and Events,” *Manila Post Herald*, April 30, 1945; “The Way We Were: The Temple Street Community, 1938-1940,” Western States Jewish History Archive, Box 35, Folder 2, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles; Mort Rogo, “Growing Up on Temple Street, During the ‘Twenties and Thirties,’ Los Angeles: Eye Witness Accounts,” *Western States Jewish History* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 321-338; Ancestry.com. *1940 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940), T627, 4,643 rolls. 60-1014.

the West coast, thousands of southern blacks, mainly from Louisiana and Texas, moved to Southern California to work in many of the region's defense companies. As Japanese Americans left for concentration camps in 1942, many white landlords leased apartments and storefronts in abandoned Little Tokyo to newly-arrived black migrants. As more African Americans moved to Little Tokyo, the primarily segregated neighborhood was subsequently dubbed, "Bronzeville." As historian Scott Kurashige conveys, landlords ensured that new African American residents to Bronzeville were restricted within the neighborhood's boundaries, creating over-crowded conditions where families crammed into storefronts as well as apartments. Property owners also made certain that blacks in Little Tokyo stayed temporarily, offering lease-only agreements. The sudden emergence of Bronzeville adjacent to City Hall alarmed city leaders who were quick to condemn and racialize the neighborhood and its residents its unsanitary condition.<sup>61</sup>

Since Little Tokyo/Bronzeville was adjacent to the Little Manila on First Street, Filipinos witnessed firsthand the growth of the Southern black population in the downtown area and city officials condemnation of African Americans. As African Americans moved to Bronzeville at an increasing rate, Filipinos slowly migrated from First Street to Temple and Figueroa. According to sociology student, R. T. Feria, despite the paucity of reported black-Filipino conflicts and that "Negroes [were] welcome in Filipino restaurants," "the threat of a 'little Harlem' was resented by many Filipinos... and more and more Filipinos go only to Temple and Figueroa, where they feel that they have undisputed claim." Moreover, a reporter with the *Associated Filipino Press* observed that "Negroes seem to think that they run the town" and that members of their community have fought with "drunken Negroes." As city officials' resentment towards Bronzeville grew, Filipinos began opening up the businesses and community centers in the many

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<sup>61</sup> Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, 161.

crowded storefronts in the Temple-Figueroa district and by the end of the war it replaced First Street as the new “Little Manila” in Los Angeles.<sup>62</sup>

In lobbying efforts for citizenship during the war, Filipino leaders in Los Angeles likewise attempted to position themselves apart from ethnic groups that whites viewed with disdain. In a petition to U.S. government officials for citizenship, Filipinos contended that years of colonial tutelage created loyal Filipino American citizens as opposed to other ethnic minorities supposedly “unfit” to have that right. They rhetorically asked, “Are the Filipinos so inferior a race that they are *not even fit to match* the Negroes, Porto Ricans, Mexicans, etc. in this U.S. naturalization citizenship recognition?” (emphasis added). They further suggested “if the Filipinos are good enough to be drafted … are not they good enough, also to be naturalized like the Negroes who had never done any constructive assistance to the Americans before they were taken to the United States of America from Africa?”<sup>63</sup>

In distinguishing themselves as colonial subjects unlike other groups, their claims to citizenship followed and supported the logics of national “loyalty” and U.S. empire. In another resolution to U.S. legislators lobbying for citizenship, leaders claimed that unlike any China and Japan, the Philippines was “only country in the Orient that accepted the European and the Western culture,” having “been Americanized in their mode of living.” Through their large participation in the U.S. military, moreover, “Filipinos have already proved their loyalty to the American people.” Manuel Buaken similarly asserted in his published memoir that American colonization groomed the perfect Filipino American citizen-subject, unlike Japanese Americans.

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<sup>62</sup> Feria, “War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants,” 49-50; *Associated Filipino Press*, July 25, 1945.

<sup>63</sup> “Petition by Filipinos Residing in U.S.A.,” June 22, 1942, Carey McWilliams Papers, Carton 8, Folder 4.

“We always wanted nothing more than to learn from America, to become good Americans,” Buaken wrote in a comparison of Filipinos to Japanese Americans. “We have developed no great banks here in the United States – our savings have gone into American banks. We have patronized American stores – not stores devoted to the selling of products from across the seas. We have striven to learn English, not to perpetuate foreign language schools and to teach foreign ideas to our children.”<sup>64</sup>

As Buaken and others demonstrated, supporting and justifying American imperialism in the Philippines while differentiating themselves from those white Americans marked as problematic became a strategy Filipinos employed to gain racial “acceptance.” Filipinos, as a whole, did not consciously use other racial groups for their own advancement, although in some instances, this was precisely the case. Filipinos’ adherence and adoption of racial liberal ideals did not simply occur in a vacuum, but rather within the shifting racial politics and geographies of an increasing liberal Los Angeles, which was always contingent and fragile. While political changes during the war did result in unprecedented opportunities for the Filipinos in the United States, such changes followed the logics of racial liberalism, determining which ethnic communities deserved social and economic rights and which ones do not. In claiming a place in emerging racial orders, many Filipinos by the end of the war believed their new status as “ally” became justification to believe in the triumph of liberalism and the benevolence of U.S. empire despite its inherent limitations and hierarchies.

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<sup>64</sup> “Resolutions Adopted by Filipinos in the United States of America in Their Mass Meeting,” Carey McWilliams Papers, Carton 8, Folder 4; Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, 322-323.

## **Effects of Wartime Alliance**

By the end of World War II, Filipino Americans civilians in Los Angeles immediately felt the change in attitudes among the larger society towards them. Racial rhetoric in the immediate post-war period sustained a general sense of liberal tolerance as the wartime Filipino-American alliance helped to racialize Filipinos as “Little Brown Brothers.” One newspaper columnist elucidated, “we now hear appreciative words from Americans like brave, gallant Filipino soldiers...not like before when they told us that our standard of living is like apes in the jungle and Filipinos live like sardines – 10 or 15 of them sleep in one bed.” Newspaper reporter A. Guerzon similarly stated towards the end of the war that “what Filipinos are enjoying today in this country is made possible by the inherently liberating tendencies of this progressive war...that is why the ‘Win the War’ forces in this country come forward as new and powerful allies of the Filipino people.” R. T. Feria posited that, “of all the minority groups on the Pacific Coast, probably none has gained more social and ecological solidarity as an aftereffect of the recent war than that of the Filipino.”<sup>65</sup>

Local city politicians, instead of clamoring for their expulsion, vied for Filipino political support, aware that citizenship would likely be forthcoming. To solicit Filipino votes, electoral candidates continually used the rhetoric of American-Filipino wartime alliance. Samuel Yorty, in an attempt to gain popular support from the city’s ethnic communities, lobbied for the Filipino vote in 1945 when he ran for mayor against incumbent Fletcher Bowron. He campaigned on the platform that he was a friend of the Filipinos of Los Angeles because Filipinos were so friendly to him during his stint as an Air Force Captain under General MacArthur in WWII Philippines.

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<sup>65</sup> “Aren’t They Essential to Victory?,” San Buenaventura Papers, Box 2, Folder 12; A. Guerzon, “U.S. Filipinos and World War II,” *The Manila Post Herald*, June 5, 1944; Feria, “War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants,” 48.

Yorty's campaign team posted articles in various local Filipino newspapers, including the *Manila Post Herald*, where he boasted about his involvement in the Philippine liberation campaign and gave praise to Filipinos since "the Allies receive[d] more whole-hearted cooperation [and found] more resistance to Japanese propaganda...in the Philippines." He then continued to discuss his involvement in establishing the "temporary organization of self-government" in the town of Tanauan, Leyte. If elected, according to his campaign manager David Foutz, Yorty promised that "Los Angeles Filipinos will be assured of positions and representation in municipal government" and claimed that his rival candidate, Fletcher Bowron, "completely ignored" the city's Filipino community.<sup>66</sup>

In 1949, Los Angeles County Supervisor Raymond V. Darby, in his remarks to the Filipino Federation of America, reiterated the great contributions Filipino Americans had made to the agricultural and industrial development of the Southern California region. Congressional candidate Harvey Mydland, in his address to over two hundred Filipinos at a Masonic lodge banquet, lauded the community for their contributions in building California then expressed his "hope that [both Filipino and American] veterans have fought their last battles and that their sons never know the horrors of war but if we much fight again to retain the liberties we hold so dear – we will not flinch."<sup>67</sup> Not surprisingly, elected officials' words of admiration to Filipinos remained savvy allusions of liberal rhetoric, never translating to real political transformation for Filipino Angelenos.

A shift in racial rhetoric concerning Filipinos was equally evident in local mainstream newspaper coverage. Timothy Turner, in his 1948 profile on Filipinos in California in the *Los*

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<sup>66</sup> "Philippine Liberator In Race for Mayor," *Manila Post Herald*, March 27, 1945.

<sup>67</sup> "Filipino-Americans Lauded for Work Here," *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1949; "Mydland Addresses Filipino Lodges," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1950.

*Angeles Times*, portrayed to its readers a hard-working, persistent Filipino American community, arguing that “many Filipinos are well educated, but openings in business or the professions are few.” Detailing their industriousness in the restaurant industry, one of the primary employment opportunities of Filipinos of the time, Turner explained that Filipinos had become head chefs after years of hard work being bus boys. A restaurant owner he quoted for the article suggested that “there [was] nothing more reliable than Filipino help...they [were] always on time to work.”<sup>68</sup> Turner’s editorial demonstrated to readers that Filipinos had the ability to work hard and assimilate if given the opportunity, echoing the rhetoric of liberal assimilation. Unlike accounts that blatantly lambasted Filipinos for their perceived perverseness, Turner suggested that Filipino were assiduous, despite being victims of a prior unjust society, with the war hailed as a watershed moment of liberal triumph.

### **Philippine Rescission and Filipino American Naturalization**

The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 prompted Japan’s surrender to the United States and the end of World War II. Fighting in the Philippines, however, lasted another month, ending finally on September 2, 1945. Although Japanese occupation ended, the Philippines was left in physical and financial ruin, leaving little incentive for the United States to stay and help rebuild. Immediately after the war, both American and Filipino officials quickly prepared for the end of American sovereignty over the Philippines. On July 4, 1946, Philippine President Manuel Roxas and American Ambassador Paul V. McNutt signed the Treaty of Manila (formally the Treaty of General Relations and Protocol) establishing

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<sup>68</sup> Timothy Turner, “Filipinos in California,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1948.

the new Republic of the Philippines. As historian Paul Kramer suggests of the event, America did not set the Philippines free but rather America was set free from the Philippines.<sup>69</sup>

However, like American occupation, Philippine independence was likewise cast in liberal discourse. With a couple of legislative measures, U.S. government officials ensured that the United States continued to have political and economic power over the new republic. Prior to Philippine independence, the U.S. Congress passed the Bell Trade Act (Bernabe Act) that set economic guidelines for the Philippines after the colonial era. The Act prohibited the Philippines from manufacturing or selling goods that competed with American products, required the Philippine government to amend their constitution to allow U.S. citizens and corporations equal access with Philippine citizens to the new republic's natural resources, and gave the United States the authority to control the exchange rate of the Philippine *peso*. Battered from years of war, the Philippine legislature had no choice but to ratify the Bell Trade Act in exchange for \$800 million in rebuilding funds U.S. Congress offered on July 2, 1946, just two days prior to independence. The Act essentially tied the Philippine economy to the United States for the foreseeable future.<sup>70</sup>

A year later, on March 16, 1947, with Communist insurgency threatening the stability of the conservative Philippine government, the Philippines and the United States signed the Military Bases Agreement, which allowed the U.S. Air Force and Navy to continue the operation of U.S. military bases in the country for a period of 99 years. The treaty also prohibited the Philippines from granting any other nation a military installment without the consent of the

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<sup>69</sup> Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 321-324; Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 431.

<sup>70</sup> Shirley Jenkins, *American Economic Policy Towards the Philippines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954).

United States, allowed American base officials the right to tax, distribute utilities, hand out licenses, search without warrants, deport undesirables, and permitted the American military to recruit Filipino citizens for military service. This measure, along with the Bell Trade Act, guaranteed that the granting of Philippine independence did not end the country's dependence on the United States.<sup>71</sup>

Since the federal government was adamant about keeping its imperial foothold in the Philippines, U.S. Congress made certain to clearly demarcate the status of its former colonial subjects. For much of the American colonial era, the category of "national" was a contentious and often contingent juridical status. The ambiguous label both enabled the recruitment of Filipinos in the Philippines into the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFFE) and prevented – albeit temporarily – the enlistment of Filipinos in the United States into the U.S. military during the war. The Rescission Act and the Luce-Celler Act, however, definitively bifurcated Filipinos in the Philippines and in the United States and essentially terminated the category of "national."

On February 18, 1946, the Congress passed and President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 70-301, the first of Rescission Acts of 1946. The Act appropriated \$200 million for the pay of the Army of the Philippines, stipulated that the service of Filipinos in the "organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President dated July 26, 1941 ... shall not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits." While the

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<sup>71</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), 57.

Act provided some allowances to Filipino veterans for hospitalization, some pension, and funeral services, it stripped Filipinos of full U.S. veteran benefits under the G.I. Bill of Rights. Although President Truman was quick to acknowledge that “the record of the Philippine soldiers for bravery and loyalty is second to none,” he argued that “from a practical point of view, however, it must be acknowledged that certain benefits granted by the G.I. bill or rights cannot be applied in the case of the Philippine veteran.”<sup>72</sup> Though Filipinos fought as “nationals” during the war, the Rescission Acts and Philippine independence in 1946 clearly marked America’s colonial subjects as “foreign.”

Inclusion of Filipinos in the United States into the national polity as citizens, on the other hand, accelerated when several members of Congress introduced a series of bills during the war. As early as 1942, Representative Vito Marcantonio of New York introduced H.R. 1844 which would have enabled Filipinos in the United States to attain citizenship. At the hearing, Secretary of the American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, Abner Green, testified in front of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization on February 4, 1942 in full support of the bill. He stated, with much admiration for Filipinos, “Since December 7, 1941, America has been given a living demonstration of the gallantry and bravery and heroism of [Filipinos] who are denied the right to become citizens at the very moment that they are dying on the battlefield in defense of the United States.”<sup>73</sup>

At a later hearing before the House Committee in 1944, this time to discuss four new, inter-related bills, several government officials, representatives of veterans’ groups, and concerned Filipino citizens testified in support of naturalization. Aside from claims of Filipinos

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<sup>72</sup> First Supplementary Surplus Appropriations Rescission Act of 1946, 38 U.S.C. § 107 (1946).

<sup>73</sup> Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*, Appendix II, 341.

being “law-abiding citizens” who had resided in the United States “for as long as 20 or 30 years,” both Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike used the trope of wartime loyalty as the primary basis for citizenship. In a letter to the Committee, Ramon P. Pobre, from the Filipino National Council of Chicago argued that “to grant Filipinos immigration rights is to treat them on equal terms with all our other allies in this war...to bolster their morale and their determination to resist and to fight our common enemy in the Orient...[and] to nullify Japanese propaganda directed to Filipinos that American faith could not be depended upon, citing the anti-Filipino exclusion law as proof.” The American Legion, one of the oldest and largest U.S. veterans’ organizations likewise presented a resolution in support of the pending House bills because “the Filipino people have proven their loyalty to the United States in time of our national emergency, as well as in peace...they have supported the American ideals of democracy and proven themselves worthy of the trust placed upon them.” Dr. Diosdado M. Yap’s stated that Filipinos have “demonstrated in this war that freedom, justice and equality are their guiding light and that they love America as they love their own native land.” Finally, in a statement that conveyed the limited and contradictory nature of “citizenship,” Representative John J. Phillips from Southern California, when asked, “What has been the relationship out there between the Japs and the Filipinos?,” answered that “relations with the Filipinos have always been good” in contrast to the Japanese who were “an entirely different people.”<sup>74</sup>

While these bills never passed Congress, the Luce-Celler Act resolved Filipinos’ ambiguous “national” status and allowed Filipinos residing in the United States a pathway to naturalization. Although introduced by Clare Luce and Emanuel Celler in 1944 as a

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<sup>74</sup> U.S. Congress, *Naturalization of Filipinos*, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization Hearings on HR 2012, 2776, 3633, 4003, 4229, 4826, 78<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2d session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944).

naturalization bill for South Asians, the act was later amended to include Filipinos. President Truman eventually signed it into law on July 2, 1946 in the advent of Philippine independence two days later. The act set a quota of 100 persons of Filipino immigrants (an increase from fifty as per the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act) and 100 Indian immigrants into the United States per year. The act also gave Filipino and Indian American civilians the right to naturalization and, with it, the right to own property.<sup>75</sup> Hence, with Philippine independence looming, both the Philippine Rescission Act and the Luce-Celler Act finally put to rest Filipinos' liminal status as "national." Filipinos in the Philippines were abandoned by the United States after their imperial war with Japan left the colony in ruins, while the marginal numbers of Filipinos in the United States were nominally and legally accepted into the liberal fold of American society. In addition to moving Filipinos apart from other ethnic groups as a sign of liberal acceptance, America's relinquishment of the Philippines bifurcated Filipino American citizens who had citizenship rights from Filipino "foreigners" in the Philippines.

By 1946, the United States emerged from World War II as a self-proclaimed anti-imperial and anti-racist power. The "ally" trope as a result of U.S.-Japan geopolitics before and during World War II shifted local racial ideology and allowed Filipinos unprecedented access to certain, though limited, civil and economic rights. In just a few years following the apex of the anti-Filipino movement in the United States, the racialization, economic and social status, and citizenship of Filipino Americans dramatically recalibrated. However, such a dramatic shift was dependent and contingent on the maintenance of global hegemony abroad and state expansion locally. Despite the granting of "independence" to its formal colony on July 4, 1946, the United

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<sup>75</sup> Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion*, 227.

States' proclaimed use of benevolence continued to drive its ongoing occupation and control of the Philippines.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Suburbanization and Urban Renewal Along Temple Street in the Postwar Era**

As an organization dedicated to promoting Victorian-like values for Filipino American women, the Philippine Women's Club was established in 1961 by the wives of many Filipino community leaders in Los Angeles, including the wife of then-Philippine Consul General Pedro Ramirez, as a chapter of the national group the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Upon its founding, the group donated \$5,000 to the building of the Los Angeles Music Center in Bunker Hill as part of their civic and philanthropic mission to "erect a bridge of understanding between the Filipino women of Los Angeles and other peoples of the world." To raise the money, they coordinated a fashion show in which its members and various female dignitaries from the Philippine government paraded on stage in national costumes. As a women's group that promoted "family values" to the Filipino community, the Club believed that their donation to the Music Center would be their "entry" into the city's civic community, including access to the Center's primary sponsor, Dorothy Chandler. While the Philippine Women's Club gained recognition and status as civic philanthropists from some of the city's elite, their donation toward the construction of the Music Center ironically contributed to the erasure of a part of Filipino history in Los Angeles. The Music Center was built in the Bunker Hill neighborhood, on top of what only a few years prior served as a residential and commercial hub for many of their

countrymen.<sup>1</sup> While the Philippine Women's Club's donation to the city institution was not directly intended to destroy part of the Filipino district downtown, their campaign was nonetheless illustrative of the complexity and contradiction of racial liberalism in urban renewal Los Angeles.

With the end of World War II and the demise of many Western European empires, the United States, now fully engaged in the Cold War with the Soviet Union, possessed unprecedented global control. Aligned with and fueled by Keynesian economic policies, the U.S. state continued expanding both globally and domestically. While the American military attempted to strengthen their foothold abroad, the military-industrial complex's exponential growth generated more capital for domestic abundance. Central to this state expansion in the postwar period, however, was an increased number of policies and legislation that exuded the discourse of racial liberalism. As numerous scholars have conveyed, while U.S. policy professed the promise of freedom for nations across the globe and non-white communities in the United States, such calls for liberalism only reproduced the imperial violence the U.S. state set out to disavow.<sup>2</sup> In the case of U.S.-Philippine relations, for example, neocolonial discourses of political "independence," military "protection," and economic "partnership" belied its supposed benign intentions.

In many ways, Los Angeles exemplified postwar state expansion as it vied to become the United States' most modern and global city. During this period, Southern California continued

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<sup>1</sup> "A New Club Makes Debut," *Associated Filipino Press*, February 19, 1961; "Philippine Style Fair Set," *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> For works on postwar racial liberalism and U.S. imperial expansion, see for example Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Nikhil Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2005); and Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

to experience unrelenting growth in its economy and population spurred mostly by its Cold War military industry. Like the U.S. state's employment of anti-racist discourse to fuel and justify the country's global ascendency, local government in Los Angeles similarly employed discourses of racial equality in the shift of urban planning in Southern California and the development of a new and modern downtown Los Angeles during the postwar period. As non-white spaces in the city disappeared, so too did the explicit manifestations and vestiges of the U.S. colonial project in the Philippines. In this chapter, I explore how shifts in urban space in Los Angeles were enveloped in racial liberal discourse, drawing new racial and gender lines that reproduced white supremacy in the spatial layout of the city. While much historiography on postwar urban renewal convey the utter destruction of communities of color in city centers, my examination of redevelopment's effects on the Filipino American community demonstrates the vital role the elusive dream of suburbanization and homeownership, spawned by desegregation, played in the demolition of Little Manila.<sup>3</sup> I argue that in the shifting landscape of Southern California, the parallel processes of suburbanization and urban renewal, and the material and discursive power they wielded, destroyed Little Manila in Los Angeles, erasing and filtering the memory of Filipino presence downtown.

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of historical works that focus on postwar urban renewal in American cities, see Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge, M.A.: Cambridge University Press, 1983); E. Michael Jones, *The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing* (South Bend, I.N.: St. Augustine's Press, 2004); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Estelle Habal, *San Francisco's International District: Mobilizing the Filipino American Community in the Anti-Eviction Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); and Dawn Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013).

I begin by detailing the expansion of the U.S. state globally during the Cold War and the imperial logic of racial liberalism, which brought forth the ties between racial liberalism and the local processes of postwar suburbanization and urban renewal. I then examine postwar legislation which promoted and disciplined Filipino Americans around familial normativity, setting the stage for their “suburbanization” to the Temple Street neighborhood. In doing so, however, they consciously denigrated and ostracized aging Filipino bachelors who continued to work as migrant laborers and congregate in Little Manila on Temple and Figueroa, despite the racialized terms and limits of suburbanization itself. Since white city officials and Filipino community leaders viewed Little Manila as “immoral,” “deteriorating,” and “queer,” the neighborhood became a prime target for downtown gentrification. I thus end the chapter by highlighting the series of city urban renewal projects that led to the disinvestment in and destruction of Los Angeles’s Little Manila.

### **The Cold War and the Suburban Shift**

Entrenched in the Cold War in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the United States sought both global and domestic expansion to ensure the maintenance of its imperial hegemony. The rise of U.S. resources and investment in other nations during this period reflected the centrality of Cold War liberal policy among U.S. government leaders. Maintaining political and economic control over the Philippines, for example, became a paramount policy for U.S. state officials as Communist-inspired uprisings swept East and Southeast Asia. The Philippines not only operated as strategic military outpost for U.S. Armed Forces in Asia but maintaining American “democracy” in the country allowed the United States to tout its global “benevolence” in the face of Communist supporters. As such, the CIA orchestrated numerous

covert operations to suppress nationalist uprisings and ensure an American-friendly Philippine government.<sup>4</sup>

Domestically, Cold War policy altered the economies, racial landscapes, and spatial organization of many U.S. cities as municipal leaders adjusted with the expanding U.S. liberal state. In many ways, Los Angeles's postwar development was the archetype of Cold War capitalism at work. During these years, city leaders sought to capitalize on the Cold War economy in their vision to build Los Angeles as the American capital of the Pacific Rim. In order to compete as an emerging global city, Los Angeles leaders, along with developers, sought to build a city that facilitated and promoted efficient economic production. In one of its many promotional business brochures, city boosters argued, "The circle of interest has shifted to the Pacific-Orient area. And Los Angeles is the focal point...Los Angeles has done everything possible to promote this dynamic growth. Los Angeles is building. And rebuilding." One way to growth, they believed, was to remake a city that differed from most American and European cities, one that exemplified a new, modern America.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The 1953 election of President Ramon Magsaysay in the Philippines, for example, was orchestrated by U.S. diplomatic and military officials, including CIA leader Edward Lansdale. For a deeper discussion of U.S. involvement in Philippine politics during the Cold War, see Nick Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States-Philippines Relations, 1942-1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). From 1946 to 1954, the Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP), or Huks, waged a peasant rebellion in Central Luzon in the Philippines. Although the Communist Party of the Philippines did not lead the Huk Rebellion, U.S. intelligence nonetheless treated it as a communist insurgency, employing various CIA-led covert tactics to suppress the rebellion. For more on the Huk Rebellion, see Benedict J. Kerkviet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and Vina A. Lanzona, *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion: Gender, Sex, and Revolution in the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, *Los Angeles Headquarters City: Dynamic Center of the New West* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, n.d. ca. 1960), 1, Box 12, Folder 27, Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project records, Collection no. 0226, Regional History Collections, Edward J. Doheny, Jr. Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California.

Los Angeles's rapid industrialization began in the 1920s, yet its growth into the megalopolis it is today largely occurred during World War II and the early Cold War years as government-directed Keynesian economic policy emerged. Both public and private investment was key to creating the new city. In what Edward Soja calls the "State-managed Fordist City," government funding and directives shaped private development in urban areas across the United States. After the war, Los Angeles invested billions of public funding in multiple infrastructure projects in an attempt to make the city the leading gateway for international trade and commerce in the nation. With federal defense funding pouring into the region, Southern California became one of the leading industrial hubs of the new Cold War economy. In 1962, the *Los Angeles Times* estimated that one out of three workers in Southern California worked for the defense industry.<sup>6</sup>

Decentralization and suburbanization of Los Angeles's city landscape was key to its sustained growth during the Cold War era. Although plans to decentralize the city were already in place in the 1920s, the Great Depression and World War II thwarted much of the implementation of these plans. Following the war, city and state officials resuscitated urban plans from the 1920s to create the "modern" metropolis fit for the new world order, a poly-centric city structured around inter-connected industrial clusters where wealth was concentrated in "middle-class" neighborhoods. With a severe housing shortage and gridlocked traffic plaguing Los Angeles by the end of the war, the city welcomed a new urban landscape defined

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 179-182; John Walton Caughey and LaRee Caughey, *Los Angeles: Biography of a City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

by planned suburban sub-divisions, a regional freeway system, and an innovative auto-centric downtown to serve as Southern California's centrifugal core.<sup>7</sup>

Federal Cold War policy contributed to Southern California's development of its poly-centered landscape. Although the link between militarization and Los Angeles urbanization began largely during World War I and the interwar period when military officials began looking at the Pacific Coast as an imperial and military border, the federal government asserted more power over the region to expand its defense infrastructure during World War II. The Cold War allowed for further government spending in the multiple defense industries in the region. However, federal policy helped ensure that these defense companies were dispersed across the region. Fearful of a Soviet nuclear attack, the National Security Resource Board, a short-lived agency created with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, encouraged the relocation and dispersion of private and governmental agencies in metropolitan areas. Many defense industries in Los Angeles accordingly established facilities away from the traditional industrial corridors in the city center in areas and in regions like the San Fernando Valley, the South Bay area, and Orange County.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, many domestic manufacturing industries that set up shop in Southern California after WWII contributed to the poly-centric nature of the region. Auto companies, like General Motors, relocated some of their plants from rustbelt cities like Detroit to Los Angeles after the war and the nascent aircraft manufacturing industry established its factories across the

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<sup>7</sup> For more on Los Angeles's history of urban planning, see Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) and Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 29-36; Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

region. While a number of companies located their facilities in the Central Manufacturing District, many sought larger acreages of land outside the city center. Formerly rural farming areas like Lakewood, Panorama City, and Irwindale became headquarters for some of the region's largest manufacturing employers. As these burgeoning industries emerged in Southern California, the region's population more than doubled from 3.2 million people in 1940 to more than 7.7 million in 1960. With such large numbers of migrants moving to the city, local officials sought to manage the population growth to prevent an increased proliferation of overcrowded tenements and filthy slums that characterized the city center. The result was an increased investment in affordable suburban development, an urban planning scheme that gained ground across the United States and defined much of the postwar era.<sup>9</sup>

The portrayal of suburbanization as an endless frontier of expansion was part and parcel to American Cold War policy, with Los Angeles as the “city of suburbs” becoming ground zero for this new urban form. According to Elaine Tyler May in her study on Cold War familial domesticity, Vice President Richard Nixon, in his verbal joust with Soviet Premiere Nikita Khrushchev in the famous 1959 “Kitchen Debate,” “insisted that American superiority in the cold war rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes.”<sup>10</sup> As this moment in Cold War politics conveyed, the rapid development of suburbia symbolized and demonstrated not only the consumer demands of the market, but also the perceived benevolence of American life.

While American government officials touted suburbia as the exemplar of postwar American abundance to the communist world, the “promise” of a house with a yard only upheld

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<sup>9</sup> Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

<sup>10</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 20.

and reproduced racial and gender inequality, accelerating with the increasing success of legal challenges to segregation. The Supreme Court decision of *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948, which was a monumental victory by the NAACP as it outlawed court-enforced racial covenants in housing, was short-lived once whites devised alternative ways to maintain housing segregation. In 1949, Congress passed the American Housing Act as part of President Truman's Fair Deal program, increasing authorization of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) mortgage-lending program. Since the FHA ran like a private entity, however, the agency primarily issued loans where it could generate favorable profits, much to the benefit of whites looking to purchase homes in suburban areas. As George Lipsitz notes, between 1932 and 1964, the FHA and the Veteran's Administration (through the G.I. Bill) financed over \$120 billion of new housing for mostly white families, while less than 2% of this real estate was available to nonwhites. While these loans helped lift millions of whites into the middle class, the FHA simultaneously directed lenders to practice "redlining" in which loans were rejected in diverse working class neighborhoods. Moreover, since most new industries located in suburban areas employed its workers locally, many new jobs in the growing number of companies located in postwar suburbia did not go to non-white urban residents. As a result, while society lauded the triumph of liberalism over the old segregationist order, the federal government enabled millions of whites to attain economic prosperity through suburbanization. With capital increasingly moving to suburbia, inner cities became increasingly darker and poorer.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to reinforcing racial hierarchies, suburban housing policies also fortified heterosexual, familial norms. Policymakers facilitated the attainment of mortgages for married couples, while excluding most people who deviated from familial norms from the suburban

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<sup>11</sup> For an extensive study on U.S. place-based maintenance of white supremacy during the postwar period, see Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*.

housing market. Their efforts encouraged Americans to wed, pulling many middle-class married couples out of urban centers like downtown Los Angeles, while alienating those who remained.<sup>12</sup> For Filipinos in Los Angeles, postwar suburbanization, and such racial and gender politics that shaped the new urban landscape, came to affect their lives as they themselves began forming families in larger numbers. Suburban development, I argue, served as an apparatus of U.S. liberal state expansion to reinforce and discipline new citizens like Filipinos to hope for and desire cultural citizenship through familial formation and homeownership, helping to erase the memory of their colonial past.

### Filipino American Familial Formation

Although wartime “loyalty” proved to recalibrate racial depictions of Filipinos, adopting and adhering to middle-class white familial norms served as elusive social stipulations to conformity in the emerging U.S. liberal state. In the 1920s and 1930s, whites racialized and relegated Filipinos as a “threat” to American society partly due to their ascribed queer, homosocial deviancy, justifying nativists’ beliefs in the exclusion and repatriation of Filipinos. Liberals, as such, attempted to convey Filipinos as “queer” only because of their disparate male-to-female ratio in the United States, with normalization occurring if family life “stabilized” Filipino bachelors. Severino Corpus, for example, in his 1938 study of Filipino American families in Los Angeles, argued that:

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<sup>12</sup> For more on postwar nuclear family formation, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002); and May, *Homeward Bound*.

As more Filipinos marry and as they develop a stable married life and raise children it is to be hoped that the prejudice of Americans toward Filipinos will decrease. As more liberal attitudes toward Filipinos develop, the restrictions which they now experience may be removed.<sup>13</sup>

As Corpus's assessment demonstrated, national belonging to the U.S. liberal state was contingent upon the disciplining of Filipino bachelors to seemingly inherent familial norms.

During the war, Carlos Bulosan paralleled such discourse in his attempt to demonstrate a "natural" Filipino familial subject in his March 3, 1942 article, "Filipinos Deserve A Break," *PIC Magazine*, a photojournalist magazine. Juxtaposing family life with wartime loyalty, Bulosan argued for U.S. citizenship for Filipinos by presenting the community as both willing fighters against fascism and "good" citizens who adopted heteronormative family values. Bulosan began by detailing the marginalization of Filipinos since the 1920s. Though they were "driven to a corner of American life," Bulosan wrote, "they are crying for more justice and tolerance." He continued to suggest that Filipinos "are the forgotten quantity in American democracy...excluded by law from the rights and privileges that citizenship entails, [but] have become – by the sudden twist of history – decisive factors in the war against Japan." It was not enough that Filipinos had contributed in the agricultural and fishing industries, Bulosan argued, they also deserved citizenship so that they could enlist in the U.S. military. "When this is done," he concluded, "then we can say that one more sample of fascist penetration and aggression has been wiped out of being in the United States."<sup>14</sup>

Accompanying the article was a series of pictures adjacent to the text that demonstrated Bulosan's need to convey Filipino American familial life. Since *PIC Magazine* was among the many publications during the "golden era" of photojournalism, publishing in a primarily visual

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<sup>13</sup> Severino F. Corpus, "Second Generation Filipinos in Los Angeles." *Sociology and Social Research* 22, no. 5 (May-June 1938): 446-451.

<sup>14</sup> "Filipinos Deserve a Break," *PIC Magazine*, March 3, 1942.

magazine gave Bulosan and his editors to display photos that shaped a narrative of Filipino familial assimilability. The first photo showed a scene of several Filipino men looking intently at a lone female dancer at a nightclub with the caption, “Filipino men, who far outnumber members of the opposite sex in this country, lead a lonely life if they are unmarried.” The following pages, however, showed the community living a heteronormative, familial life. Accompanying a photo of children playing was the caption: “The second generation of Filipinos in Los Angeles will, of course, always claim the United States as their own country...their ideals are American, and it is only natural for them to want to spend the rest of their lives here.” *PIC Magazine* editors also displayed two pictures of young Filipinas on the final page, one with the caption: “Elizabeth Portilla is a representative of the American-born Filipinos. Her father came here in 1907 and married a German woman. Elizabeth is a graduate of U.S.C.” Another picture of a Filipino immigrant playing with his son had the accompanying caption: “Frank R. Perez, who came to this country in 1932 after editing a magazine in the Philippines, hopes his young son will have opportunities offered other Americans.”<sup>15</sup>

The text and visual narration of the *PIC Magazine* article suggested that Bulosan and his editors attempted to convey a teleological arc of progression for the Filipino citizen-subject based on the convergence of American loyalty and supposed familial domestication and maturation. While the text advocated for the citizenship of Filipinos because of their willingness to join America’s fight against fascism, the set of pictures demonstrated the argument that Filipinos were not the sex heathens many whites believed they were years earlier. While the picture of single men ogling over a lone cabaret dancer represented contemporary Filipino life, the pictures of younger members of the community conjure the image of an American future for

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

a younger Filipino generation – a future based on the family. The adoption of marriage and family life among Filipinos, according to Bulosan, had the ability to domesticate the largely male population and prepare Filipinos for American citizenship. These slight, yet powerful shifts in the imagery of Filipinos helped join Filipino wartime “loyalty” with the trope of the family, which served as an elusive dream given the demographics and legal constrictions of the Filipino community at the time.

After the war, alongside legislation that granted American citizenship to Filipinos, several legislative changes subjected Filipinos, and other Asian Americans, to the moral order of familial formation. The War Brides Act was the first of several related legislative measures to allow alien brides and families of U.S. military personnel into the United States following World War II. Passed in Congress on December 28, 1945, the War Brides Act authorized the admission of alien spouses and children under the age of eighteen to the United States outside the ordinary quota system set by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act. On June 29, 1946, Congress passed the Fiancees Act, which authorized the admission of fiancées for three months as nonimmigrant temporary visitors, provided they were otherwise eligible and had a bona fide intent to marry American WWII veterans. It was not until July 22, 1947 that Congress amended the law to eliminate race as a determining factor and include migrants from Asian countries.<sup>16</sup>

While this series of legislation was fueled by a liberal turn in American race relations, it likewise reflected the elusive social stipulations of American liberal acceptance based on immigrants’ willingness to conform to white familial standards. Following Rhacel Parrenas reworking of Asian American immigration historiography, the increased migration of Asian

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<sup>16</sup> David M. Reimers, “Post-World War II Immigration to the United States: America’s Latest Newcomers,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454, no.1 (March 1981): 1-12.

women as a result of the War Brides Act and the Fiancees Act reflected an “era of forced assimilability” in which Asian American migration was acceptable only if it promoted the American notions of the nuclear family, at the expense of the female migrant. Such a gendered reframing, Parrenas suggests, shifts Asian American immigrant historiography of this period from the theme of racial exclusion – and therefore prescribing inclusion as a solution – to the theme of moral discipline that demonstrates how white bourgeoisie norms of domesticity dictated migration.<sup>17</sup>

The new immigration legislation, as such, changed the demographics of the Filipino population in the United States and shifted community life towards that of the family. Over five thousand Filipina women (not including their children) migrated to the United States immediately after the war, many of them the wives and fiancées of Filipino soldiers who had served in the U.S. military and representing the largest migration of Filipinos since 1934. In 1950, the Filipino American community’s sex ratio was 321 males to 100 females. By 1960, however, the disparity decreased to a ratio of 184 males to 100 females. With a higher number of Filipinas in the United States, as well as the repeal of California’s anti-miscegenation law as a result of the *Perez v. Sharp* case in 1948, many Filipinos started new families. By 1960, 52% of Filipinos in California were American-born, reflecting the increase of second generation Filipinos.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rhacel Parrenas, *The Force of Domesticity: Filipinas Migrants and Globalization* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 124-128.

<sup>18</sup> Reimers, “Post-World War II Immigration to the United States: America’s Latest Newcomers,” 1-12; Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America: Californians Coloring Outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 91; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 205-245. Though Filipino migration to the United States severely decreased after 1934 as a result of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, there were small waves of Filipinos who nonetheless migrated to the United States. Numbers of students and military

## **Suburbanization West on Temple Street**

The demographic shifts of Filipino Americans as a result of California's changing economy in the postwar period likewise changed the residential patterns of the community in particular. Traveling up and down the West coast to follow seasonal agriculture jobs became less attractive for the aging Filipino population. As Filipinos increasingly formed families, more of them settled and found employment within the state's economically burgeoning cities. California's Filipino population, for instance, became more urban during the 1950s, with 80% living in the census defined "urban" areas in 1960, up from 60% in 1950, with 53% residing in either the San Francisco or Los Angeles metropolitan areas. In Los Angeles, 39% of the Filipino population worked in the service sector, while 27% worked in the manufacturing sector. Only 5% continued to work in agriculture, reflecting the statewide trend of urbanization after the

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personnel circumvented visa requirements to stay in the country between 1946 and 1965. In the late 1950s, California agricultural interests flirted with the idea to recruit small numbers of Filipino laborers. In 1956, the Department of Labor, through a negotiated agreement between the California Growers Association and the Philippine government, approved the entry of one thousand Filipinos to work in California farms since "it was doubtful that [Mexico] could supply enough laborers." The Valley of Garden Palm Labor Association became the first to recruit Filipino laborers since prior to 1934 when they brought twenty-two Filipinos to work in the farms of Santa Maria, California. Quelling fears of a new Filipino "invasion" to California, Edward F. Hayes, Chief of the California State Agriculture Department's Farm Placement Bureau denied to the media of a purported report by Philippine representative Pedro Padilla that "over 60,000 Filipino workers" would migrate as a result of the program. In 1962, 125 Filipinos migrated to the Imperial Valley as contract laborers. Valentin Aquino, "The Filipino Community in Los Angeles" (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1952), 25; Embassy of the Philippines, *Annual Report of the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, D.C. for the Fiscal Year 1956-1957* (Pasay City, Philippines: Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, 1957), 38-41; "California Aide Denies Any Pact for 60,000 Filipinos," *The Modesto Bee*, January 18, 1957; C.F. Lopez, "OK 1000 P.I. Workers to U.S.," *Associated Filipino Press*, October 19, 1956; California Fair Employment Practices Commission, *Californians of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Ancestry: Population, Education, Employment, Income* (Sacramento: Department of Industrial Relations, 1965), 49.

war.<sup>19</sup> On the neighborhood level in Los Angeles, Filipino residential patterns shifted in the postwar period from the downtown area to inner-ring suburbs. Little Manila, with its pool halls, barbershops, restaurants, and transitory hotels – which largely existed to meet the needs of the largely segregated bachelor community – became less of a focal point of the community as it did in the pre-war era. As families grew, life among Filipinos increasingly shifted away from the property-less, bachelor-oriented community. Homeownership in single-family neighborhoods became a realistic goal for many Filipinos after the war.

Prior to 1946, Filipinos who had the economic means circumvented alien land laws and other legal barriers that prevented non-citizens from homeownership. Like other “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” Filipinos placed their homes under the names of their citizen domestic partners or their American-born children. Rafael Pena, for example, a pantry man in several restaurants in downtown Los Angeles, brought his wife, Alfreda, from the Philippines in 1939 and purchased a 19<sup>th</sup>-century era Victorian house in the Temple Street neighborhood under their son’s name in 1941. Similarly, Jose Abad, prior to marrying Selmy Fowler, his white wife from Oklahoma, bought a home in Los Angeles under her name.<sup>20</sup>

With many Filipinos gaining legal rights to own property after acquiring citizenship in 1946, coupled with increased capital to purchase homes as a result of the G.I. Bill, homeownership for Filipinos who started families increased exponentially. There are no extensive statistics of Filipino homeownership during the period, but some anecdotal evidence suggests that Filipino homeownership became a large part of community life. According to one survey conducted in 1952, out of sample size of two hundred Filipino families living in Los

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<sup>19</sup> California Fair Employment Practices Commission, *Californians of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Ancestry*, 11, 20, 30, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Ralph Pena, Interview by author, February 16, 2011; Jose Abad Jr., Interview by author, March 13, 2011.

Angeles, 81% were homeowners. “Almost all the Filipino veterans of World War II who have houses now” wrote sociologist Valentin Aquino, “obtained them through the help of Veteran’s Administration.” Moreover, Francisco Lopez, editor of local community newspaper *Associated Filipino Press*, wrote in 1955 that “after the war, the Filipinos were able to buy beautiful homes and had more employment opportunities.” One newspaper columnist in 1951 proclaimed in a Salinas-based Filipino periodical that “there are more Filipinos who own their home in Los Angeles than in any other city.”<sup>21</sup>

The Temple Street neighborhood, a marginal area sandwiched between Echo Park to the north and Westlake to the south, became a popular destination for many Filipino families after the war.<sup>22</sup> Situated immediately west of the Little Manila neighborhood, the Temple Street neighborhood exemplified the streetcar suburb. The area was developed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and stretched outward from the downtown core centered on a streetcar line running right through Temple Street. Most homes in the area were either single-family California bungalows or Victorians on narrow lots, with a few clusters of flats and bungalow court apartments. All homes were walking distance from commercial thoroughfares served by public transportation along Temple Street or Beverly Blvd.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, Filipinos moved to many areas of Los Angeles other than the Temple Street neighborhood, mostly in multi-ethnic working class neighborhoods experiencing white flight. However, it was in the Temple Street neighborhood

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<sup>21</sup> Aquino, “The Filipino Community in Los Angeles,” 32, 61; Francisco Lopez, “Fourteen Years,” *Associated Filipino Press*, December 17, 1955; “Los Angeles Lullaby,” *The Philippines Mail*, August 20, 1951.

<sup>22</sup> Throughout its history, there have been various names of this neighborhood: Echo Park, Westlake, Temple-Beverly, Temple-Beaudry, and Central City West. I use “Temple Street Area/Neighborhood” since it is the only residential neighborhood in the post-WWII area that which Temple Street was the main thoroughfare. I do not claim it as a definitive nomenclature for the neighborhood, but rather as a point of clarity from other possible names.

<sup>23</sup> “Temple Street Improvements,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1907.

that Filipinos came to remake their community to reflect their changing demographic, a spatial pattern parallel to other cities on the West coast. Wilmington in the Los Angeles Harbor Area, South of Market and the Mission District in San Francisco, the south side of Stockton, and Beacon Hill in Seattle all experienced similar influxes of Filipino families in the postwar period.<sup>24</sup>

In 1946, Sociology student R. T. Feria defined this area, as well as the adjacent Olympic-Vermont area, as “new districts into which many Filipino families have gone.”<sup>25</sup> John Dellomes, for example, was one of the first Filipinos to purchase property and move to the area on Rockwood Street on the eastern side of the Temple Street neighborhood. Dellomes enlisted in the U.S. Army in the Philippines and migrated to the United States in 1921. Working as a live-in houseboy for Humphrey Bogart, he roamed in and around Little Manila during his time off.

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<sup>24</sup> The opening of more tracts of housing and freeway construction after World War II saw scores of white families move to far-flung suburbs of Los Angeles. Eric Avila, in his cultural history of white suburbanization of Southern California, discusses the increase of ethnic homogeneity in once multi-ethnic neighborhoods. Boyle Heights, for example, was home to Japanese, Eastern European, Mexican, and Jewish families. However, following World War II, the neighborhood became pre-dominantly Mexican after other groups and middle-class Mexicans moved to increasingly desegregated neighborhoods in other parts of Los Angeles. The community of Watts also experienced similar demographic shifts during the post-war period. By the 1960s, the multi-ethnic neighborhood of whites, Asians, blacks and Mexicans became almost entirely African American. While these geographical changes heightened the homogeneity of some neighborhoods there were others in the city, especially those immediately adjacent to downtown – like the Temple Street Neighborhood – which became increasingly diverse. See Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-20. For further discussions on changing spatial patterns of Filipino Americans in West Coast cities, see Habal, *San Francisco's International District*; Florante Peter Ibanez & Roselyn Estepa Ibanez, *Filipinos in Carson and the South Bay* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 10; Dawn Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 272-275; Bob Santos, *Humbows, Not Hotdogs!: Memoirs of a Savvy Asian American Activist* (Seattle: International Examiner Press, 2002), 76-77.

<sup>25</sup> R. T. Feria, “War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants,” *Sociology and Social Research* 31, no. 2 (September-October 1946): 50.

When he married Pauline Lazo, a Mexican American women from El Paso, Texas, Bogart gave them money to purchased a lot in the Temple area on Rockwood Street and transported a craftsman style house from the MacArthur Park area to the location in 1938. During the war, he secured a position as a machinist at Lockheed in Burbank and worked there under the local union until his retirement in the 1960s. Other Filipinos who worked in Los Angeles likewise settled in the Temple Street neighborhood after establishing families. Emil Espanol, a domestic servant, lived on 316 Boylston with his white wife from Illinois Helen, and their two toddler sons, while Ernesto Moscoso purchased a 1906 California bungalow on Coronado Street for \$7,500, after reuniting with his wife, Fe, in 1948.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many more Filipinos moved into the Temple Street neighborhood as Filipino men married and bore children. Agustin and his wife Asuncion Cruz lived with their children in an apartment building in the Vermont-Olympic area during the pre-WWII period then later purchased a home next to John Dellomes's family on Rockwood Street in 1949. Bonifacio Pasag, a short-order cook for the May Company in downtown Los Angeles, after marrying Lorenza Castillo, a Mexican American from Texas during World War II, purchased and moved into a single-family house on Court Street in the late 1940s after they bore two children. Aurelio Gabriel and his family, after falling victim to a burglary in their apartment on Beaudry Street in 1955, moved to a single-family house along Coronado Street. Severo Gubutan, a veteran of the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, married his wife Alice Valdevecio, twenty years his junior, after she migrated on a student visa to the United States in 1955. In

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<sup>26</sup> 1940 *United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940. T627, 4,643 rolls. 60-1016A; Ernie Moscoso, Jr., Interview by author, March 8, 2011.

1960, they purchased a house on Dillon Street and Beverly Blvd. One Temple Street resident in 1952 explained, “I bought a house here because I want to be near my townmates...many of our relatives live in this neighborhood.”<sup>27</sup> Some Filipinos who became real estate agents capitalized on the market demand for homes among new Filipino families and facilitated the population’s entry into homeownership. J. Q. Romaldez, a real estate agent had advertisements on community newspapers for various homes in the local area with the ad line: “YOUR HOME IS YOUR BEST INVESTMENT. Filipinos may buy their homes now, whether Veterans or Civilians.” Lorna Sarmiento, another Filipino real agent advertised a “Beautiful modern 3-bedroom stucco” in the Echo Park district in a Filipino newspaper.<sup>28</sup>

Many Filipino community institutions likewise followed the migration of the population and relocated to the Temple Street neighborhood. In 1947, St. Columban Filipino Church, the first Catholic Church dedicated to serving the Filipino American community, moved into a former fire station on Loma Drive and Beverly Blvd. In 1950, the Filipino Christian Church (formerly the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship) relocated from their downtown headquarters to a former Methodist church on Union Avenue, also in the Temple Street neighborhood. For many years, the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles, Inc., originally established as the Filipino Unity Council in 1930, sought to build a Filipino community center in the area. The organization eventually raised enough capital to erect a modest community hall on Temple Street in 1965.<sup>29</sup> Although the neighborhood was never

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<sup>27</sup> Aquino, “The Filipino Community of Los Angeles,” 30.

<sup>28</sup> Jim Cruz, Interview by author, December 15, 2011; Juanita Dellomes, Interview by author, January 29, 2011; Rebecca Joseph Pasag, Interview by author, January 28, 2011; “A. Gabriels Burglarized,” *Associated Filipino Press*, December 17, 1955; Gerald Gubatan, Interview by author, August 5, 2011; “Advertisement,” *Associated Filipino Press*, August 17, 1959, 5.

<sup>29</sup> John Dart, “Firehouse That Became Church Is Going Down,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 1947; Lorna Ignacio Dumapias, *Filipino American Experience: The Making of a Historical*

majority Filipino, by the 1950s the Temple Street neighborhood became the new geographical focal point of the Filipino American community in Los Angeles.

Yet, while many Filipinos' lives certainly changed after the war with greater access to the post-WWII economic boom, their "assimilation" into American society was far more complex and contradictory than what they assumed it would be. A state report revealed that Filipinos as a whole did not fare well economically compared to other communities during the prosperous postwar period. By 1960, Filipino had the lowest median income among all ethnic groups in California as well as the highest unemployment rates. The median annual income among Filipinos in the state in 1959 was \$2,925, compared to whites who earned \$5,109.<sup>30</sup> The Temple Street neighborhood, furthermore, was not at all the suburban paradise often portrayed in post-WWII popular culture. As an older, inner-ring suburb, the Temple Street neighborhood experienced a major demographic shift beginning in the late 1930s. Based on the 1930 U.S. Census, whites who had migrated from the Midwest comprised the majority of the neighborhood with a few spatters of Latino and black-majority blocks. The 1940 Census revealed a slow influx of immigrant families moving to the eastern portion of the area around Temple and Boylston Streets, adjacent to the Temple-Figueroa area. In 1939, Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a New Deal agency that issued refinanced mortgages to prevent foreclosures, appraised the Temple Street neighborhood and surrounding areas with a "High D" rating, since it "has long since lost its desirability as a residential area, and is extremely heterogeneous both as to population and improvements." According to the HOLC report, roughly 30% were Mexican,

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*Cultural Monument* (Los Angeles: Filipino American Experience, 2010), 20; Frances B. Atienza & Remedios Calub, "Filipino American Community of Los Angeles," 1980, David Clark Oral History Collection 2080, Box 7, Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>30</sup> California Fair Employment Practices Commission, *Californians of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Ancestry*, 13-14.

Russian or Polish Jew, “Oriental,” or “Negro” and “shifting to subversive racial elements and lower income groups.” By the 1950s, Filipinos, Mexicans, and “a few blacks” comprised the majority of the population, according to life-long resident Juanita Dellomes. “Whites up and left once those freeways were built,” she explained, “the only majority white blocks were along Dillon Street on the west end of the neighborhood.”<sup>31</sup>

During the postwar years, the Temple Street neighborhood was one the few areas in the city that welcomed Filipinos. With the growing number of families of color moving there by the 1950s, many of the white families eyed upward mobility in the cheap, newly-developed suburban tracts in the San Fernando Valley, Westchester, and Lakewood areas. They sold their homes to eager Filipinos and Mexicans who saved enough capital since Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans were unattainable in the area. “I am an old timer in Los Angeles,” revealed a Filipino homeowner in 1952, “I have seen several residential districts and have always desired that some day I may live there. When I was ready to buy a home, I tried to buy one in one of these places. But I was told that they do not sell houses to Filipinos there...I had to buy one then where other Filipinos have bought theirs.”<sup>32</sup> And yet, despite being relegated to inner-ring suburbs, many Filipinos still believed that they had “made it.”

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<sup>31</sup> R. Marciano, D. Goldberg, C. Hou, "T-RACES: a Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces," accessed December 19, 2012, <http://www.salt.unc.edu/T-RACES>. Around Bonnie Brae Street and Westlake Avenue was a majority African American neighborhood colloquially called “The Island” during the 1930s since just outside of those blocks were mostly white neighborhoods. Juanita Dellomes, Interview by author, January 28, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion on postwar suburban Los Angeles, see Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*. Aquino, “The Filipino Community of Los Angeles,” 30.

## **Chasing the Filipino American Suburban Dream**

To many Filipinos in the postwar period, entry into homeownership made it appear that the community progressed towards societal inclusion. As many urban history scholars have suggested, ownership of single-family homes in industrial cities came to symbolize autonomy, class stability, and cultural citizenship in American society despite asymmetrical material conditions.<sup>33</sup> To some, the increased number of Filipinos that moved to homes in areas such as the Temple Street neighborhood came to symbolize the defeat of anti-Filipino racism. Valorie Slaughter Bejarano, for example, recalled childhood memories of community prosperity in the postwar period:

Temple Street, in the 1950s, was a warm and friendly neighborhood of families and shopkeepers, bustling in the post World War Two prosperity of Los Angeles. The war provided some changes for the better. Filipinos were able to slowly merge into the middle-class after years of discrimination. Citizenship was offered to young men who served in the armed forces. Filipina brides walked down the aisles of churches, dressed in embroidered gowns brought with them from their island homes...Word of mouth, from other Filipinos who were "making it," led [others] to Temple Street, in Los Angeles.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, President of the Filipino Catholic Club, Ernesto Quiroz, suggested that Filipino home ownership reflected a new, tolerant era immediately after World War II:

Filipinos in America and in the City of Los Angeles in particular have grown into a considerable sized community of well established families who maintain homes of their

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<sup>33</sup> Francisco Lopez, "Fourteen Years," *Associated Filipino Press*, June 25, 1955; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). See also Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987); Margaret Garb, *City of American Dreams: A History of Home Ownership and Housing Reform in Chicago, 1871-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Valorie Slaughter Bejarano, "Temple Street: Filipino Life in Los Angeles," in *Journey of 100 Years: Reflections on the Centennial of Philippine Independence*, ed. Cecilia Manguerra Brainard and Edmundo F. Litton (Santa Monica: Philippine American Women Writers and Artists, 1999), 169-170.

own. An orderly organized and civilized human society should be characterized by the nature of its homes and the families who maintain said homes.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, Filipinos in Los Angeles who marginally benefited from both the post-war economic boom and the introduction of liberal legislation viewed family development and home ownership as symbols of the community's awaited entrance and acceptance into an American life that eluded them because of past exclusion and discrimination. Such depictions, however, did little to dismantle segregation and inequality in postwar Los Angeles. Markers such as homeownership and familial development only cemented the predication of an ideal Filipino liberal subject on white American middle-class values, further ostracizing and enacting state violence on those who fell outside of that ideal.

Again, the field of sociology provides another instructive glimpse of the portrayal of Filipino suburbanization in Los Angeles. To urban sociologists, familial solidarity and suburbanization were indicators of immigrant assimilation. John H. Burma, in his 1951 study, predicted that the “Filipino problem” that captured national attention would slowly end as the many Filipino men who migrated to the United States during the 1920s and 1930s grew older in age, started families, and moved out of their downtown environs. “In the old First Street area,” Burma observed, “there was almost no community life of social solidarity, the nucleating factors being rooming houses, bars, pool rooms and the like. The better class married couples move out of such an area, and their community-making power is largely transferred to their new neighborhood.” He forecasted that as more Filipinos “ma[d]e this their home and their children's home,” they “will tend to seek and attain acculturation, if not assimilation, with considerable readiness.” Burma then concluded that “the Filipino group will become a considerably more stable...and a more widely scattered group with a consequent decline in the ‘Filipino

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<sup>35</sup> Ernesto Quiroz, “We Appeal To You,” *The Philippines Star Press*, October 5, 1946.

problem.”<sup>36</sup> Consistent with previous urban sociological scholarship on Filipinos in Los Angeles in the pre-war period, Burma’s reliance on the logics of assimilation drew on white middle-class ideals of family structure and living environment. Social distance away from “the old First Street area,” according to Burma, allowed the “better class” of Filipinos to “scatter” geographically and “acculturate, if not assimilate” to American society. The “Filipino problem” lay not on the hands of white racism, but rather the supposed lack of “community life of social solidarity” due to a shift in geography.

Similarly, Valentin Aquino in his 1952 thesis equated the greater dispersion of the community in the postwar period as a symbol of Filipinos’ assimilation in America. He noted, “the Filipinos in Los Angeles are scattered in almost every section of the city...there is no Filipino quarter or colony wherein there is a strong solidarity and national cohesion, such as are found in the Mexican group, Chinatown, Italian or Russian Colonies.”<sup>37</sup> Although there were few areas “which show marked concentration in the lower economic areas of the cities in which they reside,” Filipinos are “less concentrated geographically than a few years ago,” despite “common knowledge that population tends to become segregated on the basis of such factors as race, language, income, and occupation.”<sup>38</sup> Aquino then attributed the community’s dispersal to the assumption that Filipinos were “a nation of home-owners [who] love nothing better than to settle down and enjoy family relations.” Prior to gaining citizenship, however, their “uncertainty of their legal status” in the United States caused Filipinos to “regard their American residence as only temporary,” therefore “shifting and moving” their residence and lacking the “incentive or

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<sup>36</sup> John H. Burma, “The Background of the Current Situation of Filipino-Americans,” *Social Forces* 30, no. 1 (October 1951): 43-48.

<sup>37</sup> Aquino, “The Filipino Community in Los Angeles,” 30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

desire in the past to own or look for a good home.”<sup>39</sup> The overturning of racist legislation, to Aquino, released the natural tendencies of Filipinos towards homeownership and suburbanization, or in his words, the “symbolic expression[s] of family solidarity.”<sup>40</sup>

To both Aquino and Burma, the spatial dispersal of the Filipino community facilitated by the triumphant end of racial antagonism conveyed a step towards American assimilation. Such a framework, however, only portrayed such spatial migrations away from “First Street” as natural progress, divorcing the structural and material conditions that produced segregation at its origin. These sociologists clearly ignored the conditions of white flight, for example, in any analysis of the new opportunities of Filipino homeownership. As exemplified by urban sociology, the logics of racial liberalism conjoined homeownership and family to discourses of American assimilation, producing an ideal immigrant subject, one who “settled down and enjoyed family relations,” and distanced themselves from vice and bachelorhood. As these were the parameters of social progress within racial liberalism, many Filipinos strove to attain this ideal.

Part and parcel to this marking of social distance was a nationwide response to anti-communist fervor that venerated the nuclear family as domestic security against an encroaching fifth column. According to Elaine Tyler May, U.S. cultural norms promoted white American ideals of suburban domesticity and strict gender roles in order to provide the moral fiber presumed necessary to resist the spread of communism.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, many Filipinos in Los Angeles were adamant about denouncing communism during the height of the Cold War. If proclaiming loyalty to the United States served Filipino Americans well in the short term during World War II, such rhetoric to gain the graces of an authoritative power continued in the McCarthy era.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>41</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*.

Hilario Moncado, founder and president of the Filipino Federation of America became vocal about his organization's anti-communism and passed a resolution at its annual convention in 1950 officially denouncing any communist activity in the Philippines. Moncado declared at the Federation dinner at the Alexandria Hotel, "We resist all efforts to overthrow the American form of government and the American way of life." Mario Paguia Ave likewise posited in his study of Filipino American organizations in Los Angeles that Filipinos "abhor the practice of a Communistic regime" and that "Communism is, to these sincere people, nothing but a symbol of man's extreme weakness and frustration...[which] has no definite empty space in which to breed in the hearts and minds of these groups." Publishers of the short-lived local Filipino American periodical, *Pro-Files*, described communists as "a tricky lot...like bugs, they have a way of sneaking their doctrine into every mesh of affairs" and that "Filipino communities in the West Coast are not immune from the subtle designs of Red bees trained in the art of ideological subterfuge." This paranoia touched familial life as well. Carlene Sobrino Bonnivier recalled an incident in her childhood in 1953 when a man came to her home gathering signatures to petition the U.S. government to stop the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. When her mother found out that she signed it, she chased down the man and tore up all of the petitions he had in his hand for fear of any government retaliation.<sup>42</sup>

As such, with new, though limited, opportunities for economic gain, coupled with anti-communist tension nationwide, many Filipino homeowners in Los Angeles during the postwar period recognized and normalized a nuclear family lifestyle as the ideal for the community at large. As Filipinos developed families and moved to single-family homes in the Temple Street

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<sup>42</sup> "Filipino Session Backs Charter, Denounces Reds," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1950; Mario Paguio Ave, "Characteristics of Filipino Organizations in Los Angeles" (Master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1956), 62, 65; "Bugs and Bees and Red Subterfuge," *Pro-Files*, June-July, 1; Carlene Sobrino Bonnivier, Interview by author, December 7, 2010.

neighborhood, some began to circulate images and narratives of a leisure-filled suburban lifestyle. As both a print medium for public discourse and a conduit for community building, the *Associated Filipino Press*, the primary community newspaper in the Filipino community of Los Angeles during the 1950s, highlighted and venerated family life as a new beginning for Filipinos. In the periodical, sections were dedicated to the social lives of various “known” members of the community. The “Stork Club” section posted numerous announcements of new additions to families. “Sally Dapar,” the *Associated Filipino Press* published in 1955, “wife of Ralph Dapar, electronics inspector at Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, anticipate their third addition in October.” On the front page of an issue in 1959, the *Press* published a picture of a Filipino family having a picnic in the park with the caption: “Summer ending, vacation’s over, and school around the corner, the Tiratiras, Linda, Dick, Connie, and Michael, make one last fling with California’s great outdoors.”<sup>43</sup> Hundreds of such newsbytes permeated the *Press* during the 1950s. Such repetition of family life narrations suggested that newspaper editors and community leaders attempted to promote and articulate the particular desires and imaginaries of normative family formation among Filipinos.

These newspaper sections also revealed the new “suburban”-centric identity of Filipinos’ social lives, despite their exclusion from white postwar suburbs. On various occasions, the newspaper published announcements of Filipino families entertaining guests at the homes they owned. “Mr. and Mrs. Joe Garcia,” read one article in 1955, “entertained their friends at 2410 W. Temple Street...on the occasion of Joe’s birthday. The couple are [sic] popular members of the community.” In another instance, the newspaper announced, “Perfect setting for an outdoor luncheon was the newly landscaped backyard of Guadalupe Sitjar, president of ‘Las Damas

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<sup>43</sup> “Stork Club,” *Associated Filipino Press*, April 9, 1955; “Summer Ending,” *Associated Filipino Press*, August 17, 1959.

Filipinas.’...Sure enough, ‘Upeng’ Sitjar had every reason to throw a party in her beautiful new home at 347 Parkman.” A few months later, the newspaper published an article about the party the sisters, Leonor Neri Tice and Dulzura Neri Docena, threw for “more than a hundred guests in a beautiful garden party...at the Tice residence at Rockwood St.”<sup>44</sup> Gregory Englis recalled that his parents held Jimmy Melgaso and his wife Marie in “high regard” because they always threw large parties “at their spacious home on Kellam Avenue in Angelino Heights” in the neighboring Echo Park neighborhood. He further stated that his parents’ reverence towards the Melgasos was “rare since [his] parents sparingly agreed on who merited such respect.” Across these descriptions are references to spacious, lush landscaping and images of domesticity. Some Filipinos, especially those with more economic means, re-designed their houses to accommodate such large social gatherings. Ralph Pena explained that his father re-configured and expanded their backyard simply to host parties.<sup>45</sup>

References to “backyard parties” and other social gatherings in private homes conveyed the markers of social status among postwar Filipino Americans. These images and acts suggest that Filipino community leaders in this period sought to position the Filipino subject as assimilated through the display of normative American imaginaries of family and postwar suburbanization, despite their marginalization and relegation to menial jobs and less-affluent neighborhoods. If family formation and homeownership were indicators of cultural citizenship to American society, then, as these representations suggest, many Filipinos were eager to attain

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<sup>44</sup> “Garcia Natal Day,” *Associated Filipino Press*, December 17, 1955; “The Social Whirl,” *Associated Filipino Press*, June 4, 1959; “Neri Sisters Entertain” *Associated Filipino Press*, September 26, 1960.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory Englis, “What Once Was” in *Filipinotown: Voices from Los Angeles*, ed. Carlene Sobrino Bonnivier, Gerald G. Gubatan, and Gregory Villanueva (San Bernardino: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 182; Ralph Pena, Interview by author, February 16, 2011.

families and homes when they could. As the adoption of these standards as life goals structured the social world of the Filipino American community, it also preset the conditions of the alienation and marginalization of those who were deemed “unfit.” While the numerous social parties and other functions many Filipino families threw served as signs of community status, they also reciprocally served as condemnations of the lifestyle some Filipino single men continued to live.

### **“Lonely Pinoy Old-Timers”**

The “promise” of suburbanization widened rifts and differences within the Filipino community. While Filipinos who developed families created and sustained a social world centered on domesticity and suburbia, many of them, once they attained such status, held some disdain towards those who continued to live a bachelor lifestyle. Though the numbers of Filipinos who did not marry and purchase homes decreased, they still represented a significant population within the Filipino American community. Some continued to work as migrant laborers, moving up and down the West coast to work various agricultural and service-related jobs.<sup>46</sup> Their reputation as “queer” and “deviant,” however, continued to follow them. Those who did not embody the ideal Filipino familial subject were viewed as “backwards” by other Filipinos and became targets of harassment and surveillance by the increasingly conservative LAPD.

Many Filipinos who developed families as well as Philippine elites who lived in the United States viewed these bachelors as an embarrassment to the overall community. On many occasions, they expressed their desire to distance themselves from the ill reputation of many

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<sup>46</sup> Burma, “The Background of the Current Situation of Filipino-Americans,” 43-44.

single Filipino men, believing that the family constituted the moral unit to discipline bachelors into proper citizens. In a report to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, for example, the Philippine Consulate of Los Angeles took exception to the significant number of Filipino bachelors living in the region and believed that they needed familial assistance. “Many Filipinos,” the report stated, “own homes with modern furniture, home appliances, and flashy cars...On the other hand, there are many old-timers who have not amply provided themselves for their old age and are now living in misery.” In an effort to “protect the interests of the farmers,” the Consulate suggested reuniting them with their relatives in the Philippines whom they had lost communication with:

They have lost track of their relatives in the Philippines and expressed their preference to remain in this country until their end comes. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the old-timers are *practically illiterate* so that they have not been communicating with their folks at home. (emphasis added)

To rectify the Filipino bachelor “problem,” the Consulate recommended gathering information about the “personal circumstance of each and every Filipino laborer...particularly in regard to his family status, hometown in the Philippines, and the names and addresses of his relatives there, if any.”<sup>47</sup> Aligned with normative familial values, the Philippine Consulate pathologized single Filipino men as “living in misery” and assumed that a familial environment would ameliorate their material inequities.

Even when some Filipino bachelors sought familial support at a later age, many Philippine officials and community leaders condemned such a practice, believing it created a supposed perverse family formation and brought embarrassment and contention. By the 1950s and 1960s, there were growing numbers of older Filipino men who married younger, newly

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<sup>47</sup> Philippine Consulate General of Los Angeles, *Annual Report 1962-1963* (Pasay City: Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, 1963), 12.

migrated Filipina women. As part of the Exchange Visitor Program, a Cold War-era program that allowed persons from allied countries to work and study in the United States for two years to become indoctrinated to American capitalist industries, a significant number of Filipinas migrated to the United States after 1948. Though the program did not target Filipina women specifically, the imperial relationship between the two countries resulted in a large percentage of exchange visitors from the Philippines, particularly those working in the nursing industry.<sup>48</sup> While many exchange visitors returned to the Philippines after the completion of their term, some decided to stay despite their contractual obligations. A common way to circumvent the program's mandates was to marry Filipino American citizens, many of whom were older Filipino bachelors. The Philippine Consulate General of Los Angeles reported that "lady-tourists and visitors from the Philippines [gave] in to the temptation of getting married to Filipinos here who are either divorced or old bachelors, because of the wonderful employment opportunities and all conceivable comforts and luxuries which abound in this rich and beautiful country." Framing the older Filipino bachelors as provocateurs, the Consulate viewed the trend as "irritating to immigration authorities as well as embarrassing to the Consulate General," since such a method of family formation deviated from supposed societal norms.<sup>49</sup>

Filipino "old-timers" who remained unmarried became targets for comic relief within the community as well. In the *Associated Filipino Press*, journalists reported various instances during the 1950s when elderly Filipino bachelors searched for Filipina wives. The newspaper's editor, Francisco Lopez, reported that U.S. immigration officials thoroughly scrutinized

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<sup>48</sup> Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 64-65.

<sup>49</sup> Philippine Consulate General of Los Angeles, *Annual Report 1962-1963*, 3-4.

Filipinas' entrance into the United States because of the suspicion of circumventing immigration laws:

Some girls from the Philippines come to America for so many reasons: like medical, tour, study, etc. All of the sudden, they meet *lonely Pinoy old-timers* with dough. Not knowing exactly the background of each other, they get married, because the women like to stay in the U.S. as permanent residents. Now the Manila Embassy is getting wise too and it now institutes much more rigid scrutiny to all comers to U.S.<sup>50</sup> (emphasis added)

After a report in 1955 announced that a number of hospitals in New Jersey began recruiting Filipina nurses, Lopez jested that he “hoped the Los Angeles bachelors do not migrate Jersey-ward” and that since the nurses “seem to be concentrated in the East and most of the eligible men are out here in the West, something is wrong.”<sup>51</sup> In another article, the *Press* described the desperation of “three eligible bachelors in Los Angeles” that after “hearing about the many Pinays who visit the United States but they never had the chance to be introduced to them” were very much “eager to meet Pinays” with the intention of “matrimony.” The article concluded since they were “between fifty and fifty-five years of age,” they should not “lose any more time.”<sup>52</sup>

Some sympathetic community leaders called out those who looked down on bachelors.

In the *Manila Post Herald*, Simeon Doria Arroyo pontificated:

In our Filipino community in the city of Los Angeles, we have a group among our paisanos who think of themselves as ‘angels’ and do not want to mix with the crowd of ‘bums’ on Temple Street...These are the people who feel so proud of themselves, because of their social background, education, and family standing...They live their own private lives and they rarely condescend to appear publicly with our common people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> “Today by Francisco A. Lopez,” *Associated Filipino Press*, September 25, 1954.

<sup>51</sup> “Exodus of Nurses in Eastern Hospitals,” *Associated Filipino Press*, April 9, 1955.

<sup>52</sup> “For the Matrimony-Minded: Three Eligible Bachelors In Search for Wives,” *Associated Filipino Press*, July 30, 1955.

<sup>53</sup> Simeon Doria Arroyo, “Of Men and Events,” *Manila Post Herald*, April 15, 1954.

Despite Arroyo's defense of bachelors, remarks by community leaders and Philippine government officials, though cursory and at times satirical, nonetheless revealed the particular Filipino intra-community dynamics in the postwar era: family formation became a source of social capital. Filipinos with families viewed and depicted those not married and still living transitory, bachelor lifestyle as "lonely," "illiterate," and "embarrassing," creating a queer Filipino-American subject in contradistinction with the familial ideal that aligned with American liberal standards. Moreover, as Arroyo's editorial alluded in reference to the "crowd of 'bums' on Temple Street," this dichotomous relationship was mapped onto Los Angeles geography.

While many Filipinos were eager to meet women, start families, and quickly move into a single-family home, those who maintained bachelorhood inhabited a Little Manila that became increasingly depressed and neglected by city government. The neighborhood already had a reputation as a seedy neighborhood. As Carlos Bulosan wrote in *America is in the Heart*, "the street was filled with pimps and prostitutes, drug addicts and marijuana peddlers, cutthroats and murderers, ex-convicts and pickpockets. It was the rendezvous of social outcasts."<sup>54</sup> As in the pre-WWII era, Little Manila continued to be a space mainly for Filipino men. While many Filipino establishments moved with the Filipino population to the Temple Street neighborhood, many barbershops, bars, and pool halls remained in Little Manila. Even Filipinos who had families continued to flock to the neighborhood for socializing and camaraderie. Phil Ventura, the son of a Filipino who migrated to Los Angeles in the early 1920s, recalled being "taken to Temple and Figueroa as child and hung out with all [his] father's friends...all of them [he] called uncle." Gerald Gubatan recollects that his father, Severo, "brought him and his brother to a barbershop in the Little Manila area to get haircuts from a barber they affectionately called,

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<sup>54</sup> Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 258.

‘Papa Joe.’” Darlene Ventura mentioned that as a child she remembered the area was one where “‘bookies’ used to hang out all times of the night” and all the “old-timers traveled there to place their bets” in horse races and other sports.<sup>55</sup>

As a homosocial space for Filipino men, Little Manila nonetheless continued to be defined by ascribed racial and gender boundaries. In 1949, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that the Temple and Figueroa intersection was believed to be the “nerve center of a vast narcotics peddling organization” where “it is possible, at almost any hour of the day or night, to see at least 50 persons who earn their living through the sale of narcotics.” Valentin Aquino, in his 1952 study concluded that downtown’s “cheap pool rooms,” “dance halls,” and in “restaurants of low reputation” was where “Filipinos come in contact with the underworld.” Al Mendoza recalled that the Temple-Figueroa area was where “old Filipino waiters and bus boys went after their work shifts at around two or three in the morning to hang out” and on many occasions, they would “pick up prostitutes.” With such infamy, some Filipina wives and mothers viewed these male spaces as a detriment to the sanctity of the Filipino family. Carina Montoya recalled that her mother would get increasingly frustrated with her father because of his propensity to “gamble his money away with ‘the boys’ over there in downtown.” Alfreda Pena always made sure that their children never went with their father Rafael when he went to the Little Manila area because “there was nothing but trouble there.”<sup>56</sup>

As Little Manila continued to be synonymous with vice industries, surveillance and repression by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) likewise continued to be a common

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<sup>55</sup> Darlene & Phil Ventura, Interview by author, May 13, 2011; Gerald Gubatan, Interview by author, August 5, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> “Gangs Operate in Specific Districts,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1953; Aquino, “The Filipino Community of Los Angeles,” 33; Alfred Mendoza, Interview by author, February 18, 2011; Carina Montoya Forsythe, Interview by author, December 21, 2011; Ralph Pena, Interview by author, February 16, 2011.

practice. In 1949, close to 60% of a total of 433 arrests of Filipinos by LAPD officers was either related to prostitution or gambling. In nearby Pasadena, sheriff officers falsely arrested fifty-four Filipino “legionnaires” on March 3, 1951 in a gambling raid. Out of the fifty-four, forty-eight were found guilty for “being present where gambling was being conducted.”<sup>57</sup> When Chief William H. Parker took the helm as the head of the LAPD, police enforcement on gambling increased. Determined to rid the department of its notorious reputation of corruption, the right-wing chief sought to instill a more militarized police force to carry out order in the city. His methods included extralegal policing and harassment, particularly in non-white and homosexual communities. Chief Parker’s anti-communist stance likewise guided his police work. He reinstated the infamous “Red Squads” after a 12-year dormancy, a dragnet that targeted radicals and alleged radicals, with the belief that policing Los Angeles be viewed in a global perspective. In describing a campaign to deal with organized gambling, Parker told his officers:

This plan goes deeper than a means of saving Los Angeles from the stigma of vice. We are protecting the American philosophy of life. It is known that Russia is hoping that we’ll destroy ourselves as a nation through avarice, greed and corruption in government. Hence this program has a wider application than in the Los Angeles alone.<sup>58</sup>

To Parker, the suppression of vice industries was part and parcel of the larger strategy to eradicate communists and other radicals from the city during the Cold War era.

Filipinos in the Little Manila area, especially single men, were consequently included among the targeted communities in Parker’s radar and under constant surveillance. In 1948,

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<sup>57</sup> Aquino, “The Filipino Community of Los Angeles,” 34; “Raids Lead to Pasadena Police Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1951.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Jack Webb, *The Badge* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958), 253. For more on Chief Parker and the Los Angeles Police Department, see John Buntin, *L.A. Noir: The Struggle for the Soul of America’s Most Seductive City* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009); Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Alisa Sarah Kramer, “William H. Parker and the Thin Blue Line: Politics, Public Relations and Policing in Postwar Los Angeles” (Ph.D. diss, American University, 2007).

LAPD officers conducted a series of raids at three Filipino clubrooms in Little Manila, including the Manila Post 464, broke the furniture, smashed windows, and “terrorized the members and their guests.” On March 12, 1953, LAPD vice squad officers raided an underground gambling hall on 816 Temple Street and arrested twenty-six Filipinos, most who were in their forties or above. “Mr. Big,” a notorious gambling boss had just established a gambling den in the basement of the Filipino restaurant, Temple Café, just days prior to the police raid. Among the arrested were two Japanese fantan dealers and two Filipino “lookouts,” Roberto Pedraza and Narcisco Pazo. A year later, on September 9, 1954, LAPD vice squad officers arrested fourteen men and a woman on bookmaking charges after two months of undercover work at various Filipino establishments in Little Manila. John Reyes, believed to be the “straw boss” of the gambling ring that “took an estimated \$7,000 daily in bets on horse racing” was arrested with Thomas Mariano at the Temple Café. In the same sweep, officers also raided the Black Bear Café and Morong Café and arrested those involved, including Martin Cusimino, the Black Bear Cafe’s owner. In 1958, vice officers raided three alleged bookie parlors in the Little Manila area and arrested twenty-two men and a one woman.<sup>59</sup>

It would be difficult to conclude that a division between Filipino suburbanites and Little Manila bachelors was strictly along the lines of class background. The Temple Street

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<sup>59</sup> Carlos Bulosan, “Los Angeles Police Rides Again,” *The Philippines Mail*, November 16, 1948; “Hunt Gambling ‘Mr. Big’ After Fantan Parlor Raid,” *Los Angeles Evening Herald Press*, March 12, 1953; “15 Seized in Roundup of Downtown Bookmakers,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 1954; “23 Arrested in Bookmaking Ring,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1958. Worth noting is that nearly all of mainstream press covering these incidents did not address the ethnicity of those arrested, demonstrating the liberal strategy to evoke “color-blindness” in Los Angeles in the postwar period. Pre-WWII newspaper coverage of incidents in Little Manila blatantly marked assailants as Filipino. Kevin Leonard, in his study of newspaper coverage of race and ethnic communities, argues that WWII marked a critical shift to “color-blindness” in local journalism. Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

neighborhood, after all, was as former streetcar suburb with a low “desirability” lending rating because of its heterogeneous, non-white residential population. Although many Filipinos entered a new era of homeownership, they continued to be relegated to poorer neighborhoods and never attained economic parity with the white majority. Nonetheless, the spectacle of “suburban life” through domestic arrangements and consumption patterns aimed to portray familial Filipino Americans as ideal-citizen subjects. However, such a strategy was produced in contradistinction with the “queer” Filipino bachelor in Little Manila, an image that harkened back to the pre-WWII era. Those “‘bums’ on Temple Street” who did not marry, have children, or own single-family homes were considered backwards, not yet ready or unwilling to “assimilate.” In other words, the existence of the bachelor in the post-WWII era conveyed a delay and obstruction in the formation of the modern Filipino-American citizen. The city, as well as many Filipino families, increasingly neglected the race and gender-bounded Little Manila neighborhood, which continued to be a target for LAPD surveillance and harassment. As a result, while homeownership in the Temple Street neighborhood – albeit a working-class streetcar suburb – represented racial liberalism’s ideal for “modern” Filipinos in Los Angeles, Little Manila represented a past era that the city aimed to forget and erase.

## **Urban Renewal**

As Little Manila and other areas in downtown Los Angeles came to symbolize decay in the heart of the metropolis, city officials employed urban renewal projects to eliminate such unwanted areas. With an unprecedented amount of federal and corporate funding, Los Angeles transformed its downtown into a “modern” city center during the postwar era. This form of state expansion sought to build state-of-the-art buildings and other privatized spaces, while destroying

areas deemed undesirable and ignoring public pleas for subsidized housing. As a result, places downtown that once served as centers for Filipinos in the city fell victim to the wrecking ball when suburbanization and auto-centric urban planning remade Los Angeles's landscape. Multiple decades-long downtown redevelopment efforts eventually swallowed any remnants of these spaces and displaced its remaining residents.<sup>60</sup>

As industry increasingly dispersed in Los Angeles, city officials sought to build the transportation infrastructure to connect the city together. Downtown advocates felt the need to remake downtown as a gravitational center for the increasingly centrifugal city, especially for the tourist trade. "You cannot have a healthy, large community without a healthy downtown area," proclaimed Chairman of the Los Angeles Central City Committee Walter Braunschweiger in 1957. He remarked, "We need a new music center, a sports arena, trade show housing... There was \$600,000,000 spent by the 3,500,000 tourists who came to Southern California last year. Whether some citizens like it or not we are going to have them. They are good business."<sup>61</sup> A new, modern downtown that attracted capital to the region, many believed, was vital for the economic health of the city.

Plans to redevelop downtown Los Angeles had been in place since the 1920s, but it was not until after World War II that city coffers were large enough to fund such large infrastructure projects. Initial expansion of the Civic Center beginning with the construction of City Hall in the 1920s had already displaced lower-income residents of color from downtown. Further expansion of the Civic Center ensued after the war. In 1947, the City Council passed a bond for the planning and construction of the new Police Administration Building (later renamed Parker

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<sup>60</sup> Michelle deGuzman Magalang, "In Search of 'P-Town': Filipino American Place(s) in Los Angeles," *Critical Planning* (Summer 2003): 5-18.

<sup>61</sup> "Building Need Downtown Seen," *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 1957; "Beautified Trade Urged to Attract Tourist Trade," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1957.

Center) on the western edge of Little Tokyo along First and Los Angeles Streets. Despite a series of delays, the police headquarters broke ground in 1952 and officially opened three years later. Throughout the process, the new LAPD headquarters prompted the eviction of many Filipino, black, and Japanese residents and businesses in the project site, including the church of the Filipino American Christian Fellowship.<sup>62</sup>

Many other city-guided projects remade the pedestrian-oriented downtown. New city, county, state and federal government buildings further expanded the Civic Center in the north part of downtown. Pershing Square, a public plaza in the middle of downtown was demolished and excavated for the construction of an underground parking garage. Buildings along Main Street, the main drag where many taxi-dance halls and other adult entertainment venues once attracted many Filipinos during the 1920s and 1930s, fell victim to the wrecking ball to make way for much-valued parking lots in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

There were practically no explicit mentions of race in planning documents or in the rhetoric of city planners when discussing areas considered for redevelopment. Embedded in the shift of downtown, instead, was the structural racism and classism that drove these large-scale redevelopment programs. As John Logan and Harvey Molotch elucidate, of those who were displaced by federally funded urban renewal programs nation-wide in the 1950s and 1960s, nearly two-thirds were either Black or Latino.<sup>64</sup> While decades of segregation policies and

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<sup>62</sup> City of Los Angeles, Board of City Planning Commissioners, *Annual Report 1954* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, 1954), 32; Glynn Martin, "Parker Center: Nine Stories of Stories," *The Hot Sheet*, November-December 2009, 1; Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 92.

<sup>63</sup> Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso Press, 1997), 51-63.

<sup>64</sup> John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

practices contained many poor communities of color in the central city, freeway construction and redevelopment zones inherently targeted neighborhoods that were poor and/or non-white. In Los Angeles's downtown, neighborhoods slated for urban renewal mostly comprised of Latinos, Jews, and poor whites, with a significant handful of Filipinos. Consistent with racial liberal discourse, however, terms such as "slums" or "blighted areas" were employed when referring to areas targeted for redevelopment.

As city officials remade downtown to fit the needs of middle class whites, city officials saw the remaining residential buildings as visible "eyesores," threats to downtown's tourist trade. The passage of the California Community Redevelopment Law in 1945 and 1949 gave local municipalities the legal and economic foundation to eradicate areas of "urban blight." In 1948, the Los Angeles City Council established the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and immediately coordinated the study of neighborhoods deemed as "deteriorating." Bunker Hill became one of the prime targets because of its proximity to the downtown core. Once a neighborhood for Los Angeles's elite in the 1890s, Bunker Hill became a haven for low-income residents, especially single Filipinos, by the 1920s and 1930s. A Los Angeles Planning Commission report in 1944 had keyed Bunker Hill as ripe for urban redevelopment:

High population density definitely contributes to a deterioration of living standards...Living standards are also lower in multiple residence districts where apartment houses and hotels are crowded on the land, leaving insufficient open spaces for adequate light, air, and recreation. Bunker Hill is such an area.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1950s, the CRA commissioned surveys and planning studies of the area and concluded that 82% of the housing units were deemed overcrowded and uninhabitable. The Redevelopment

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<sup>65</sup> City of Los Angeles, Board of City Planning Commissioners, *Accomplishments 1944* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, 1944).



Urban Renewal Projects in Downtown Los Angeles

Little Manila Area - 1920s-1930s

Little Manila Area - 1940s-1950s

Plan called for the demolition of the neighborhood's buildings to make way for new development. In 1954, the CRA applied for and won a federal aid package of \$33 million for the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, with \$7 million in matching local funds. After a series of many public hearings lasting a year, the City Council adopted the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project in 1959. Five different property owners immediately filed lawsuits, challenging the Redevelopment Plan on the basis of land grabbing and proper compensation, but ultimately the California Supreme Court decided in favor of CRA and upheld the Plan in 1964. The Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project subsequently leveled hundreds of multi-unit apartments.<sup>66</sup>

Large-scale projects such as the Los Angeles Music Center and Department of Water and Power headquarters likewise overtook swaths of land adjacent to the Little Manila area on Temple and Figueroa. In March 1955, Dorothy Chandler, wife of *Los Angeles Times* publisher

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<sup>66</sup> Parson, *Making a Better World*, 137-162.

Norman Chandler, began fundraising toward a permanent home for the Philharmonic. After raising millions of dollars for the project, Chandler and the Los Angeles County government used the land cleared away for the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project and opened the center in 1964. Additionally, the Department of Water & Power (DWP) announced plans in 1961 to build its \$31-million head office adjacent to the Music Center. The DWP acquired the land of the southeast block of Temple and Figueroa, in the heart of Little Manila, and built its office building. On June 24, 1965, civic officials and business leaders dedicated the new DWP headquarters.<sup>67</sup>

With the city attempting to sustain and attract capital downtown in the era of suburbanization, city planners believed that the lack of accessibility to downtown via the automobile led to the decline of the central business district and thus envisioned freeways as transit arteries that would pump life back into the city center. Like redevelopment projects, freeway construction destroyed many communities throughout Southern California, particularly among neighborhoods of color in the downtown area. Since the 1930s, Los Angeles city officials had planned a series of studies mapping out an extensive freeway network to combat congestion in the traffic-plagued metropolis. After the war, the prosperous economy yielded the funds to build the state-of-the-art thoroughfares. Although the Arroyo-Seco Parkway was the first freeway in California when it opened in 1940, the passage of the Collier-Burns Highway Act in 1947, which increased state gas taxes, provided the legislative and financial foundation for initial freeway construction in Los Angeles.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162; “DWP Starts Move-in of Employees Friday,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1965.

<sup>68</sup> David Brodsky, *L.A.: An Appreciative Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 115.

The Hollywood Freeway (HWY 101) and the Harbor Freeway (Interstate 110) were among the earliest freeways built after the passage of the Collier-Burns Highway Act. Throughout the early 1950s, construction of the freeways razed homes and businesses in the northwest section of downtown, where many communities of color and the majority of Filipinos lived. The Hollywood Freeway sliced right through the Temple Street neighborhood and the north side of Bunker Hill, while the Harbor Freeway bisected the Hollywood Freeway and went through the Temple-Beaudry area. As early as 1945, over five hundred Filipinos and Mexicans were served eviction notices around the Temple-Figueroa area to make way for the Hollywood Freeway.<sup>69</sup> Gregory Villanueva remembered fondly “the open-air Martin’s Market before they disappeared...by the new five level interchange and the freeway.” Jim Cruz likewise noted that the city demolished the elementary school he attended, Fremont Elementary, which “is now an on-ramp to the Harbor Freeway.”<sup>70</sup>

With the construction of the Hollywood Freeway in the postwar period, businesses around Temple Street and Figueroa Avenue slowly shut down as the freeway created a physical barrier that prevented much interaction with those in Echo Park. As a result, the Temple-Figueroa area became more isolated. The cessation of streetcar transportation within the inner core of the city, moreover, created even more isolated pockets, especially for those without access to personal automobiles. In the Temple Street neighborhood, the Temple Street line of the Los Angeles Railway (LARY) or “Yellow Cars” and the Hollywood Subway line of the

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<sup>69</sup> “Five Hundred L.A. Families Evicted,” *People’s World*, October 26, 1945.

<sup>70</sup> Gregory Villanueva, “Filipinotown” in *Filipinotown: Voices from Los Angeles* ed. Carlene Sobrino Bonnivier, et.al., 147; Jim Cruz, Interview by author, December 15, 2011.

Pacific Electric Railway System or “Red Cars” ceased operations in the 1950s, blocking the transportation lifelines for the car-less.<sup>71</sup>

As these downtown development projects, which emphasized the suburban driver, relocated many residents, the promise of public housing as a viable alternative for the displaced never came into fruition. As Don Parson illuminates, the public housing movement in Los Angeles that began in the New Deal era lost momentum as conservatives in the City Council began using anti-communist rhetoric to halt large-scale housing projects for low-income residents. By the 1950s, integrated public housing gave way to suburban subsidization and urban renewal. Most urban renewal projects in the downtown area, moreover, though marketed as economic generators for a modern Los Angeles, largely benefited large developers who witnessed land values go up without investment on their part.<sup>72</sup>

For displaced residents who once relied on single-room occupancy hotels that dotted downtown Los Angeles, the shifting landscape of the inner city meant finding residence in other parts of the city or leave Los Angeles altogether. While some found other apartments to rent in low-income neighborhoods, many Filipino tenants consolidated their resources and ended up renting rooms from Filipino families in the Temple Street neighborhood. Rafael Pena, for example, increasingly rented out rooms in his house on Union Avenue to various single Filipinos passing through Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s. He found enough of a demand for rental units that he purchased the house next to his and demolished it to build an 8-unit apartment complex in the late 1950s, naming the building “Casa Rafael.” Additionally, Gerald Gubatan recalled frequenting the house of his father’s friends as a child down the street from their family

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<sup>71</sup> Scott Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 16-18.

<sup>72</sup> Parson, *Making a Better World*.

home and remarked on the number of single men living under one roof. In the 1960s, the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) purchased a home adjacent to their community center to rent out single occupancy rooms to Filipino bachelors.<sup>73</sup>

Though renters felt the brunt of urban renewal amongst those in the Filipino community, those who owned their property were greatly affected as well. Another residential area that the city eyed for redevelopment was the downtown-adjacent Temple-Beaudry Area, the eastern section of the Temple Street neighborhood. In 1951, the City Planning Commission and the CRA identified the non-white majority area bounded between Glendale Blvd., the Harbor Freeway, the Hollywood Freeway, and Beverly Blvd. as “blighted.” Though 90% of the residential structures were single-family homes, its non-white population and turn of the twentieth century architecture was perceived as an “eyesore” to those with views from downtown. Plans called for the demolition of the existing buildings, redeveloped with senior housing, office high-rises, some local stores, and parks.<sup>74</sup>

Unlike the downtown and Bunker Hill redevelopment areas, most residents in the Temple Area zone were homeowners, making the procedure of gaining community input more vital. Because of the unpopularity of the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project, CRA officials ensured that an extensive community process took place. They opened a field office in the redevelopment area and established the Temple Urban Renewal Advisory Committee to “pass information to the citizens of the area and in turn secure advice and help from the people affected.” City officials appointed various neighborhood stakeholders to the committee,

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<sup>73</sup> Ralph Pena, Interview by author, February 16, 2011; Gerald Gubatan, Interview by author, August 5, 2011; Royal Morales, *Makibaka: The Pilipino American Struggle* (Los Angeles: Mountain View Press, 1974), 64.

<sup>74</sup> Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles, “Temple Tomorrow,” John C. Holland Collection, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, Special Collections, California State University, Los Angeles.

including a handful of Filipino community members. While the proposed redevelopment area did not comprise the entirety of the Temple Street neighborhood, a significant number of Filipinos lived in the zone, many of whom bought their homes after World War II. According to one city report, the area was 13% “Oriental” with the majority being Filipino. Consequently, among the appointees were: Marie Melgaso, co-owner of Jimmy’s Market on Temple and Beaudry, a popular Filipino store in the neighborhood; Dr. William Grasska, a doctor who served many Filipinos in the area and whom many considered an “honorary Filipino”; and Victor Zamora, past president of the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles.<sup>75</sup>

The CRA-coordinated community inclusion was a nominal gesture, however, disguising their real intention of going forth with the redevelopment project. City officials handpicked members of the Advisory Committee, assigning them particular constituencies to help sway their influence in support of the project. In an internal departmental memo, staff recommended that the “friendly” residents and business owners “be treated more fairly” and that “it is vital that we give encouragement and status to those owners who favor the redevelopment plan.” Melgaso, sensing the fallacy of the input process, eventually became a vocal leader in the opposition to the Renewal Project. The committee failed to garner enough neighborhood buy-in that a new group formed, the Temple Area Home Owners, Property Owners & Tenants Association, which was largely outspoken against the project. There was enough opposition that when brought to City

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<sup>75</sup> Claude Pierson, “Letter to Membership – Valley Chapter of the Small Property Owners League,” July 4, 1962, Edward Roybal Papers, Box 47, Folder “Urban Renewal – Temple,” John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, Special Collections, California State University, Los Angeles; Temple Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, “Meeting Notes,” May 16, 1961, Lois Crouch Papers, Box 24, Folder 2, Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

Council on December 6, 1963, the Council voted 9 to 6 to defeat the project after determining that there was not enough community support of the redevelopment plan.<sup>76</sup>

While the project never fully materialized, the speculation of urban renewal nonetheless caused considerable damage to the neighborhood and adjacent areas because of corporate and state neglect. Anticipating the fruition of the Temple Area Redevelopment Project, private developers purchased many properties in the area and demolished the homes on them. Ted and Feling Sarno's Victorian home on Beaudry and Court Street, for example, was leveled after they sold their property to speculators. Consequently, hundreds of vacant lots were left empty when the project was defeated, becoming nuisance properties and attracting crime and vandalism.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, general upkeep of the neighborhood halted as the debate over redevelopment waged. City services such as street paving and sidewalk repair halted because of the undetermined fate of the area. Rebecca Joseph Pasag recalled that never in her lifetime "has the city paved the street we grew up on...and the sidewalks became worse as tree roots uplifted the sidewalks." As a result, housing prices remained low, maintaining economic and racial segregation of the largely Mexican and Filipino neighborhood. The Temple Area Redevelopment Project thus exemplified how real estate speculation, as much as redevelopment itself, caused neglect and depression in many low-income inner-city areas.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "Analysis of Present Situation in Temple," July 17, 1961, Louis Crouch Papers, Box 24, Folder 2; "Temple Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Roster," Louis Crouch Papers, Box 24, Folder 2; Ray Hebert, "Battle Lines Drawn Again Over Temple Urban Renewal Proposal, *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1968.

<sup>77</sup> Valorie Slaughter Bejarano, "Temple Street: Filipino Life in Los Angeles," in *Journey of 100 Years*, ed. Cecilia Manguerra Brainard and Edmundo F. Litton, 169-173. Large parcels of vacant land were eventually redeveloped into a high school and a park decades later.

<sup>78</sup> Ray Hebert, "Battle Lines Drawn Again Over Temple Urban Renewal Proposal," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1968; Rebecca Pasag Joseph, Interview by author, January 29, 2011; Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, 127-128.

Postwar urban renewal gave the city a new sense of place, one that reinforced racial separation in an effort to maintain the Southern California “White Spot” ideology. The region’s freeways served as bridges between segregated white suburbia and a redeveloped, car-centric downtown, destroying and obscuring neighborhoods in between deemed “undesirable.” Filipinos, whose presence on downtown streets were a source of racial concern amongst city officials and downtown boosters during the pre-WWII era, no longer had such visibility in the new “modern” downtown. Newly-built freeways skipped through areas where peoples of color resided, separating drivers from the older neighborhoods adjacent to downtown behind sound walls. Drivers were thus shielded from residents of these lower-income areas. A white suburbanite from the San Fernando Valley could quite possibly drive on the Hollywood Freeway and park downtown without seeing a single Filipino in the Temple Street neighborhood. As Filipino families moved into the Temple Street neighborhood, they no longer inhabited the public space visible to passers-by. In turn, those Filipino bachelors who continued to linger in the remaining buildings of the old downtown were either displaced by the myriad urban renewal projects of the era or overshadowed and hidden behind freeway concrete. “All of the buildings in downtown you see now,” lamented long-time resident, Juanita Dellomes, “were built over minority neighborhoods like Little Manila.”<sup>79</sup>

Yet, to say that Filipinos were unwillingly pushed out by urban renewal ignores the complexity of gentrification that goes beyond usual dichotomous landlord-evictee narratives. Deflecting the shock of displacement, many Filipinos who were affected by urban renewal simply moved on, relocating to other areas like the Temple Street neighborhood. In addition, Filipino businesses that remained in the Temple-Figueroa Little Manila area were likewise

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<sup>79</sup> Juanita Dellomes, Interview by author, January 28, 2011.

displaced. As business declined because of their obscure and undesirable location sandwiched and hidden by freeways and office high-rises, these storefronts relocated to the more slightly profitable Temple Street neighborhood. Many informants I interviewed did not recall any business owners protesting or organizing a campaign against their removal. Travelers Café, for example, a long-time anchor of the Temple-Figueroa Little Manila area, simply moved further west along Temple Street near Union Avenue in the 1960s. Other businesses such as the Philippine Food Distributors Company and the Morong Café also relocated given the neglect and isolation of the Temple-Figueroa area as a result urban renewal. Jim Cruz, son of former owner of Philippine Import Company, Agustin Cruz, remarked, “Why would my father keep his business on Temple and Figueroa? It was hard to get to, there was no parking, and all the Filipinos moved west.” His father eventually moved and operated his business from their house in the Temple Street neighborhood.<sup>80</sup> Many Filipino businesses found their move slightly west just as prosperous as they became closer to their clientele.

Opposition to the Temple Area Redevelopment Area project, moreover, was never unanimous, even in the Filipino community. In a letter to Mayor Sam Yorty, the Temple Area Home Owners, Property Owners & Tenants Association claimed that 61% of the property owners in the redevelopment zone opposed the redevelopment plan. Other observers believed that the project halted because a small group of stakeholders, vehemently opposed to redevelopment, pressured the city elected officials to vote no when in actuality they did not represent the entire community’s views. Some Filipinos, such as Bonifacio Pasag, hoped to sell their homes to the CRA at a considerable profit. “My father,” Pasag’s daughter explained, “held

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<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Dionzen, Interview by author, January 7, 2011; Jim Cruz, Interview by author, December 15, 2011.

on to the house on Court Street, hoping to sell to the city, but it never happened...he was disappointed.”<sup>81</sup>

Actions and remarks such as these were indicative of the staying power of racial liberal ideology. Many Filipinos who sought a modern, suburban American life in the Temple Street neighborhood believed that the old Bunker Hill and the Temple-Figueroa areas were relics of the past. Those who remained there were subsequently viewed as poor or backwards. As such, some Filipino Americans in the Temple Street neighborhood hoped to profit from redevelopment, possibly to move further into the suburbs, while businesses saw more lucrative locations in other areas. The promise of inclusion through suburbanization framed these intra-community relations making organized opposition to urban redevelopment fairly non-existent and essentially fueling and furthering complicity with the city’s urban planning demands.

Los Angeles’s vision to remake the city into a modern global metropolis through the parallel postwar policies of suburbanization and urban renewal resulted in further spatial apartheid and systematic amnesia. As liberal social policy slowly swept the nation as part of a racial liberal agenda that both masked and fueled U.S. state expansion domestically and globally, the prospect of “assimilation” in American society became, to some, a distinct possibility. For Filipinos and many other communities, however, assimilation carried the weight of conforming to white, middle class ideals. Even when Filipinos made claims to the “American dream” through homeownership, nuclear family formation, and higher labor wages, it was both limited, in that they were relegated to certain space and opportunities, and exclusive, in that Filipino

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<sup>81</sup> Temple Area Home Owners, Property Owners & Tenants Association, “Letter to Mayor Samuel W. Yorty,” n.d., Edward Roybal Papers, Box 47, Folder “Urban Renewal – Temple”; Ray Hebert, “Battle Lines Drawn Again Over Temple Urban Renewal Proposal,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1968; Rebecca Pasag Joseph, Interview by author, January 29, 2011.

bachelors became increasingly ostracized. Urban renewal likewise preserved and invested in the spaces that possessed cultural capital in the city and destroyed and erased those spaces that did not. The remnants of the hyper-visible Filipino community that exposed the porous American borders and posed a racial problem in the United States immediately faded into memory. As I will discuss in my final chapter, ethnic enclaves became sites of political activism years after urban renewal. This imperial amnesia continued to haunt the Filipino community as their efforts to “gain visibility” through engaging in politics in Los Angeles exposed the limits and contradictions of American multiculturalism.

## **Chapter 5: Reclaiming Little Manila and the Limits of Multiculturalism**

On November 22, 1986, a group of some forty students from the University of California, Los Angeles traveled from the west side of Los Angeles to participate in a tour of the former Little Manila neighborhood downtown. As the students disembarked the bus, they were greeted by Filipino American community activists, Royal Morales and Al Mendoza, who began to guide the students around the old locations that once housed poolrooms, taxi dance halls, and hotels in the 1920s. Mendoza explained the journey of his Filipino father to the United States and told the students stories of his experience on those downtown streets. They then took the students to Bunker Hill where Morales explained how the Los Angeles Music Center was on the very site of the Majestic Apartments, an old Victorian home where he was born. The students went to the Filipino Community Center in the Temple Street neighborhood where they met and talked to seniors who once lived and gathered in Little Manila, and now recounted their stories as young men living in pre-World War II Los Angeles. The tour ended with various community leaders speaking to the students about the current concerns and needs of the Filipino American community – affordable housing, senior services, and the proliferation of gangs among others. Local business owner and community activist, Edgar Yap, spoke to them about plans to develop a building that would house organizations “providing medical and dental care, legal assistance,

and other various services...[to] new immigrants who normally would not know where to go for such services.”<sup>1</sup>

The student trip to downtown Los Angeles was part of Royal Morales’s traditional Filipino Town tour. Beginning in the late 1970s, Morales, professor at the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, brought students from his “Pilipino American Experience” class across the city to view the various Filipino urban spaces in downtown Los Angeles. Though students who participated in the tour were not all Filipino, “uncovering” the history of Filipino Americans in Los Angeles through visiting these historic and contemporary sites fostered a sense of ethnic identity among Morales’s Filipino students. His tour became quite popular among Filipino students and institutionalized in many Filipino American Studies classes across universities in Southern California despite his passing in 2001.

Students’ reactions revealed as much. After the field trip to Filipino Town, Morales assigned the students a paper on their personal reflections on what they learned on the tour. “As a Pilipino who has grown up most of my life in Los Angeles,” explained one student in her reflective essay on the Filipino Town tour, “I found it insightful and deeply rewarding to learn the historical events of my people. The tour and what I’ve learned in class has made me more aware of my own culture...I have gained a new understanding of who I am and I am proud to say that I am a Pilipino.”<sup>2</sup> Through instilling a greater connection to one’s ethnic identity, the tour aimed to cultivate a younger cadre of leaders to become more politically active in their communities by exposing them to contemporary issues facing many Filipinos, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Charlene De Jesus, “The Pilipino Town Tour 1986,” December 3, 1986, 2, Box 15.3, Folder “Finals/Papers 1970s-1980s,” Royal F. Morales Papers, Asian Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand Sarreal, “The Community Historical Tour,” December 5, 1986, Box 15.3, Folder “Finals/Papers 1970s-1980s,” Royal F. Morales Papers.

working-class communities in the inner-city. “Many of the new immigrants,” explained a student, “still face the same problems the old-timers faced half a century ago. Problems such as segregation, racism, exclusion, exploitation and cultural shock still exist in the Pilipino community.” As such, Luis Sinco, a journalist with the Filipino periodical *Philippine American News*, who was among the discussants Morales enlisted as part of the tour, suggested to students, “Go ahead and learn, but bring something back to your people.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the students’ reflective pieces also revealed a peculiar sense of frustration felt among the students. In one reflection paper, a student rhetorically asked, “Why were the Japanese able to hold their ground and build such an impressive business district and the Pilipinos could not?” Revealing her emotions, another student wrote, “I saw the Japanese American community represented through Little Tokyo. They seem much more cohesive...I have to admit I’m a little jealous. I feel many emotions, hurt, anger and a sense of loss. It’s kind of like they have a background with a history and I do not. I see the same thing for the Chinese community.”<sup>4</sup>

Upon closer examination, this UCLA’s student’s feelings of “hurt,” “anger,” and “loss” represent a departure from the traditional narrative of American assimilation, which assumes that immigrants to the United States, over time, will eventually assimilate to American society and shed their “old world” ways, including their dependency on and residence in ethnic neighborhoods. Yet, their feelings of loss came at a time when Filipinos did not congregate in

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<sup>3</sup> Vedasto R. Samonte, “Development of Pilipino Town,” December 8, 1986, 6; “Community Historical Tour,” November 20, 1986, 5, Box 15.3, Folder “Finals/Papers 1970s-1980s,” Royal F. Morales Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Vedasto R. Samonte, “Development of Pilipino Town,” December 8, 1986, 4; Tracy D. Soriano, “Philipino Town” (sic), n.d., 2, Box 15.3, Folder “Finals/Papers 1970s-1980s,” Royal F. Morales Papers.

enclaves like other Asian Americans. These UCLA students still felt insecure when comparing themselves with Japanese Americans. If we read the students' reflections as an affective product of liberal multiculturalism, we can begin to understand the sense of inadequacy these Filipinos after going on Morales's tour of downtown.

With increased immigration following the 1965 Immigration Act and as counter to the anti-racist, anti-imperialist social movements of the 1960s, liberal multiculturalism, with its focus on cultural pluralism and the depoliticizing of racial difference, emerged as a new hegemonic discourse in American racial politics by the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>5</sup> For many communities of color seeking ways to rectify racial inequalities in the United States through participation in multicultural politics, political empowerment became their goal and rallying cry. The student's sense of loss, I suggest, came about as ethnic space became increasingly defined as a mark of legibility of an ethnic community within a liberal multicultural framework. In observing the existence of a discernible Little Tokyo, the student became "jealous," "hurt," and "angry" at the lack of a Filipino equivalent since Little Tokyo served as a marker for ethnic recognition, cultural sustainability, and community success. The projected triumph of the Filipino community in her estimation would come once a Filipino Town is established. The student suggested:

The presentation of a Pilipino Town gave a hope and a plan to improve the future of Pilipinos. I can see it now, Pilipinos all over Los Angeles will get together in the Pilipino town to experience the Pilipino culture. They would bring their children with them. And hopefully, these children will learn about the Pilipino culture and they would

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the rise of liberal and neoliberal multiculturalism as it relates to the increasing flow of global labor and capital, see Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Katharyne Mitchell, *Crossing the Neoliberal Line: Pacific Rim Migration and the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); and Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

bring their children with them. And hopefully, these children will learn about the Pilipino culture and they will pass what they have learned to their children and as a result, we can preserve the Pilipino culture within the community here in Los Angeles.<sup>6</sup>

Since ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles became representative sites of cultural and political legibility, Filipinos aimed to build a comparably vibrant Filipino Town. In essence, the hope of Royal Morales, and others who conducted such tours, was to instill a teleological narrative of the Los Angeles Filipino American community's past and yet-to-be-determined future. It was up to young Filipino Americans through their involvement in the Filipino Town effort, as Morales and leaders believed, to move the community politically forward.

Yet, such terms of community organizing, perhaps unwittingly, endorsed and institutionalized liberal multiculturalism as normative, obscuring the larger forces of imperialism at the heart of globalization and thwarting movements that challenged it. As Jodi Melamed argues, the maintenance of white supremacy in the United States and imperial expansion globally necessitated the proliferation of liberal multicultural discourse to pacify the emerging radical social movements of the 1960s. Liberal multiculturalism, the idea that American society had the seeming capacity to be inclusive of a culturally pluralist citizenry, came to dominate ethnic politics by the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> For Filipino American leaders in Los Angeles who adhered to more reformist strategies, engaging in these politics engendered campaigns for “visibility” in order to gain political power.

By analyzing the various attempts at designating the Temple Street neighborhood “Filipino Town” as a campaign for “visibility,” this chapter aims to expose the limitations and contradictions of liberal multiculturalism as a political strategy to address the increasing social

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<sup>6</sup> Don Mungcal, “The Importance of the Pilipino Tour,” December 9, 1986, 3, Box 15.3, Folder “Finals/Papers 1970s-1980s,” Royal F. Morales Papers

<sup>7</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 26-39.

and economic needs in the Filipino American community during the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1960s, there were little remnants of downtown's Little Manila as urban renewal and suburbanization displaced most Filipinos to the Temple Street neighborhood and elsewhere. If there was a great effort to distance the community away from the Little Manila enclave during the immediate postwar period, by the 1970s and 1980s, many leaders sought to recover and reconstruct a form of a Filipino neighborhood on Temple Street. As politics of recognition accelerated in civil rights-era Los Angeles, many Filipino leaders interested in reformist strategies of social change began to lament their lack of political power in the city to address rising inequities in their communities despite the population's exponential growth after the 1965 Immigration Act. Their seeming inability to be thoroughly engaged in politics of recognition, via participatory electoral politics and the growing non-profit sector, prompted Filipinos to claim that they were "invisible" in social and political arenas. This claim of "invisibility," a trope that dominates the political discourse in and around the Filipino American community, I argue, emerged as part of a liberal multicultural ethos of inclusion when strategies for political organization necessitated a turn towards identity-based politics and cultural pluralism.

This trope of "invisibility" was especially apparent in Los Angeles's spatial landscape as ethnic neighborhoods gained political capital as representative sites for ethnic communities. With the lack of a discernible ethnic enclave that rendered Filipinos "invisible," different community leaders tried several times to develop the Temple Street neighborhood as a "Filipino Town" in the 1970s and 1980s. While proponents of the campaign believed a designated Filipino Town would give Filipinos political "visibility" in a multicultural society, and with it, access to government resources for community social programs, the same liberal discourse often meant developing the neighborhood into multicultural tourist destination. Such a project

collided with the realities of Filipino migration to the United States, the imperial logics of economic development and ethnic consumption, and the growing disinvestment in urban Los Angeles. The demise of the Filipino Town campaign in the late 1980s caused many both inside and outside the community to place the blame on Filipinos themselves, somehow rendering them as “inadequate” or historically “disadvantaged” to participate in the American political process, fueling further attempts at American inclusion. Filipino struggles exposed the limits of liberal multiculturalism and its elision of U.S. empire in the past and present. The Filipino American desire to become “visible” in multicultural America thus ironically necessitated the obfuscation of American empire.

I first document the dramatic demographic changes of the Filipino community as a result of global restructuring and the increasing liberalization of the U.S. and Philippine economies, which led to a greater circulation of multicultural discourse as capital and labor moved around the world. I examine how the rise of the local Filipino American identity movement of the 1960s and 1970s, that aimed to challenge American assimilationist narratives and critique U.S. empire, also led to the rise of multicultural politics. As many ethnic communities in the city sought to reclaim and organize around neighborhoods, many Filipino Americans struggled to identify and develop the Temple Street area as “Filipino Town” to gain civic recognition from the city to access government resources and funding. I suggest that such strategies for “recognition” were dependent on developing a tourist industry based on an orientalist multiculturalism. I end the chapter by detailing the unsuccessful Filipino Town Movement in the 1970s and 1980s and the

limitations and contradictions inherent in strategies for “political empowerment” in multicultural Los Angeles.<sup>8</sup>

### **Global Economic Restructuring and New Filipino Migrants**

With immigration quotas for the Philippines limited to one hundred persons per year since 1952, the generation of Filipinos who migrated in the 1920s and 1930s and their offspring comprised the bulk of the population by the mid-1960s. In 1968, the Philippine Consulate of Los Angeles estimated that the Filipino population in Southern California was eighty-five percent American citizen, either through naturalization or by birth.<sup>9</sup> New American immigration laws in response to the global economic restructuring, however, changed the make-up of the Filipino community in Los Angeles in just a few years.

Embroiled in the Cold War, federal government officials were under pressure to eliminate perceived racial discrimination in its immigration laws as a way to maintain U.S. dominance around the world. In 1952, for example, President Harry Truman, cognizant of the fragile image of the United States, spoke up against the maintenance of immigration quotas of Asian countries for fear of damaging foreign policy. U.S. officials also feared that they lagged behind the Soviet Union in scientific and technological innovation. With the landslide re-election victory of President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 as well as a Democratic-controlled House and Senate, Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which increased quotas for immigrants

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<sup>8</sup> The final section of the chapter builds on Augusto Espiritu’s master’s thesis on the Filipino Town movement. While Espiritu focused his study on Filipino American leadership, I suggest that “disunity” was merely a scapegoat. Rather, I center my analysis on how the desire for a “Filipino Town” was predicated on the discourse of multiculturalism. Augusto Espiritu, “The Rise and Fall of the Filipino Town Campaign in Los Angeles: A Study in Filipino American Leadership” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Sharon E. Fay, “Filipinos Striving for a New Cultural Image,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1968.

from countries in the eastern hemisphere and set a quota for those in the western hemisphere. The act set a preference system of new immigrants based on education and skill level for certain industries that had a shortage of workers domestically, particularly in the science and engineering fields. The act also allowed a family reunification provision in which immigrants petitioned by family members were not counted against the national origins quota. Although architects of the 1965 Act did not anticipate a large number of Asians to migrate to the United States since its population at the time was small, Asian immigration, especially from the Philippines, increased exponentially mainly through family reunification.<sup>10</sup>

U.S. domestic and foreign policy conditioned the sharp increase in Asian immigration. The capitalist restructuring of the global economy during the 1960s and 1970s created a high demand for cheaper skilled labor and low-wage service-sector workers in the United States. Corporations, who sought increases in their profit margins, lobbied U.S. government officials to pass policies aimed at business deregulation. The result was corporate expansion and increased outsourcing abroad to many Third World nations, decimating the domestic manufacturing base and with it many union jobs for working class Americans, particularly in the African American community. Funding for education and healthcare also decreased dramatically as neoliberal policies gained ground in the United States and elsewhere. As domestic wages declined, many Asians and Latinos filled the labor needs in the expanding low-wage service sector and provided cheaper labor in professional fields.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng ed., *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 227-264.

<sup>11</sup> For more on global economic restructuring, see for example Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America* (New

Though the change in demographics of the Filipino American community created a more diverse population than in the pre-WWII era, the driving force behind the new migration was the ongoing legacy of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. American political, military, and economic ties created dependency on the United States among countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Unabashed political corruption as a result of right-wing dictators supported by the American government, such as Park Chung-Hee in South Korea and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, widened the economic gap in those countries. Changes in education in many Asian countries to conform to the American education system, moreover, created the system of the “brokerage state,” in which the political economy of the Asian nations became structured for labor migration. In the Philippines, for example, with a national educational system structured by American colonial officials with the adoption of English as the medium of instruction, the country produced millions of laborers fit for the cheap labor demands of the United States and other developed nations. With the Philippine economy unable to support the number of domestically-trained workers, millions of Filipinos sought, and continue to seek, employment opportunity abroad.<sup>12</sup>

Aside from skills-based quotas and family reunification, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos migrated to the United States through another American colonial legacy, the U.S.

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York: Basic Books, 1988); Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); and Ong, et. al. ed. *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*.

<sup>12</sup> Ong, et.al. *New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, 74-99. See also Catherine Ceniza-Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); and Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) for imperial roots of post-1965 Filipino American migration.

Navy. Since their initial invasion of the Philippines in 1898, the United States established some of their largest overseas military bases in their island colony. Beginning in 1903, U.S. base officials in the Philippines recruited local Filipinos to work as stewards and mess hall attendants. By World War I, six thousand Filipinos served in the U.S. Navy. After formal Philippine independence in 1946, U.S. officials, in an effort to maintain this colonial relationship, worked with Philippine officials to pass the 1947 Military Bases Agreement that would allow the U.S. military to keep bases in the Philippines and continue recruiting Filipino citizens to serve in the Navy to fill the labor demand. Because of their military service, Filipinos were allowed to enter the United States, with many settling near U.S. cities with large naval bases such as San Diego, Bremerton, and Virginia Beach.<sup>13</sup>

With geographic proximity to Latin America and the Pacific Rim, relatively cheap housing, a large military industry, and shifting neoliberal economy, the Los Angeles region served as colonial metropole for millions of labor migrants and their families after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. In 1960, eighty percent of Los Angeles County's population was white. The influx of migrants from other countries dramatically changed the demographics of the region. Between 1970 and 1990, the foreign-born population of Los Angeles County increased from eleven to thirty-two percent. In the same time period, Latinos increased from eleven percent of the population to thirty-six percent, while Asians grew from two to eleven percent. By the 1980s, Southern California had the largest Mexican, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Iranian, Armenian, and

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<sup>13</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 27-31.

Filipino populations outside of their respective nations, making the region one of the world's crossroads for global flows of capital and labor.<sup>14</sup>

Filipinos were the largest Asian group to migrate to Southern California. In 1960, Los Angeles County's Filipino population stood at 12,122. By 1980, it had ballooned to 100,040, an increase of 725 percent. Thousands of Filipinos, trained in the Philippines as doctors, accountants, nurses, engineers, and other professionals found employment in the region's restructured economy.<sup>15</sup> Although a large number of Filipino professionals migrated under the third preference of the 1965 Act, which prioritized skilled labor immigrants, most came as a result of chain migration. Only twenty-five percent of Filipino workers in the United States in 1980 were classified as professionals while the vast majority worked in the technical, administrative, or service sectors.<sup>16</sup> This large-scale migration ultimately enlarged and diversified the already existing Filipino American community.

### **The Filipino American Identity Movement and Claiming Invisibility**

While Filipino migration grew exponentially as a result of the 1965 Immigration Act and increased globalization, the changing demographics engendered new problems within the

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<sup>14</sup> Georges Sabagh and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, "Population Change: Immigration and Ethnic Transformation," in *Ethnic Los Angeles*, ed. Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 85-87; Acquest International, *Los Angeles Real Estate Market Analysis* (Los Angeles: Acquest, 1987), 30.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1960, Vol. 1: Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1963); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *The Twentieth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1980, Vol. 1: Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *The Twentieth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1980, Vol. 2: Subject Reports. Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: 1980* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1988).

Filipino American population. In 1972, the Filipino Community Action Services hosted a conference called the “Conference on the Growing Concern of the Needs of Filipinos in Los Angeles” to discuss issues facing the community. They identified myriad needs, particularly for its more vulnerable populations, such as affordable housing and health-care for seniors, alternatives to gang violence, ethnic studies for youth/students, and policy changes to prevent underemployment and job discrimination for newly-arrived immigrants. Meanwhile, poverty and political repression from the Marcos regime continued to ravage Philippine society, prompting more Filipinos to leave for the United States.<sup>17</sup>

In the midst of these societal transformations, a form of Filipino American ethnic identity emerged in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s as an outgrowth of the larger Asian American and Third World Movements. Labeled the Filipino American Identity Movement by its participants, this new social movement surfaced as Filipinos discovered the contradictions of American citizenship, both in juridical and abstract terms.<sup>18</sup> Frustrated with racial discrimination in the United States, many Filipino activists joined other people of color to claim their ethnic identity and address the myriad social needs affecting their communities, both in the United States and in the Philippines. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE) formed in 1968 among students at San Francisco State University to demand ethnic studies, protest against the Vietnam War, and demonstrate against the eviction of elderly Filipinos at the International Hotel. In 1971, Fred and Dorothy Cordova, with others, organized the first Filipino People’s Far West Convention in Seattle, bringing together many

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<sup>17</sup> “Notes – Filipino Community Action Services,” December 20, 1971, Box 3, Folder 14, Royal F. Morales Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Many interviewees used the term “Filipino American Identity Movement” during our interviews, thus my employment of the term.

young Filipino activists for the first time in an effort to mobilize a united movement. In 1973, a group of grassroots activists in the Bay Area established the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP), a radical organization modeled after the other revolutionary groups of the Third World Movements with chapters across the West coast. In Seattle, young Filipino Americans, such as Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo, reinvigorated the Local 37 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, organizing Filipino cannery workers who worked in Alaska's salmon cannery workers.<sup>19</sup>

In many ways, shifts in U.S. society spawned and fueled a new Third World nationalism. In what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have deemed the “great transformation” in American race relations, marginalized communities, frustrated with traditional assimilationist paradigms, rearticulated racial categories and increasingly organized politically along ethnic and national ties as contradictions in American racial liberalism became more apparent. Among Filipino Americans, the decrease of Filipinos in farm labor due to retirement age of many workers and decline of the larger labor movement led to a change in political organizing. The burgeoning number of second-generation, university-educated Filipino Americans entering college campuses, new immigrants encountering discrimination in the workplace and beyond, and political refugees fleeing the Ferdinand Marcos-led Philippines built the momentum for a more

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<sup>19</sup> Estelle Habal, *San Francisco's International District: Mobilizing the Filipino American Community in the Anti-Eviction Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 24-32; Karen Umemoto, “On Strike!” San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Studies,” in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 58-59; Abraham Flores Ignacio, Jr., “Makibaka Huwag Matakot!: A History of the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino,” *Maganda Magazine*, October 2002; Ron Chew, *Remembering Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes: The Legacy of Filipino American Labor Activism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).

politically-driven Filipino identity and movement that critiqued U.S. imperialism in the Philippines and its role in skyrocketing Filipino migration to the United States.<sup>20</sup>

In Los Angeles, local Filipinos became more active and engaged in the larger Filipino American Identity Movement in the 1960s and 1970s as well, establishing a number of organizations to address various concerns. On local college campuses, Filipino American students joined other Asian Americans to form groups like Samahang Pilipino at UCLA, Kababayan at the University of California at Irvine (UCI), and the Pilipino American Coalition at California State University, Long Beach to fight for Ethnic Studies/Asian American Studies classes at their universities as well as engaged in various political struggles such as the building of Agbayani Village in Delano for aging Filipino farm workers. A group of young Filipino activists likewise formed a Los Angeles chapter of the KDP. Rose Ibanez, a co-founder of UCI's Kababayan and a member of the Los Angeles chapter of the KDP, recalled that her activism was sparked by "the Vietnam War; the strong identity movement led by groups such as the Black Panthers, Brown Berets, and Yellow Power; the fight against racism; and a growing movement for women's liberation and the struggle for self-determination of Third World Countries."<sup>21</sup> More radical Filipino organizations like the KDP were smaller and wielded less influence in Southern California than their counterparts in the Bay Area or Seattle. Though Los Angeles had the largest Filipino population by the 1970s, the region's sheer size and fairly conservative

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994); Cecile Caguinig Ochoa, "Touching the Fire: An Introduction to Three Essays from Filipina American Activists," in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, ed. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 49-55.

<sup>21</sup> Royal Morales, *Makibaka 2: The Pilipino American Struggle* (Manila, Philippines: Crown Printers, 1998), 157-160; Rose Ibanez, "Growing Up in America as a Young Pilipina," in *Asian Americans*, ed. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, 74-77.

political environment made Filipino grassroots organizing difficult. Gil Mangaoang, an active member of the KDP during the 1970s who was sent to Los Angeles by the organization to help mobilize and organize young Filipinos in the area recalled, “Nobody wanted to go to L.A. because it was so hard to organize there because of its conservatism.”<sup>22</sup>

While radical organizations ignited and pushed the Filipino American Identity Movement to challenge the tenets of U.S. imperialism and racism, others concomitantly formed organizations and waged campaigns more reformist in nature, particularly in Los Angeles. Professional Filipino organizations such as the Philippine Nurses Association and the Filipino Optometrist Club, for example, fought against discrimination in the workplace that disproportionately targeted Filipino immigrant workers. A group of second generation Filipino Americans in Los Angeles became politicized and organized the Filipino Civic League in 1961, a group largely inspired by the work of Fred and Dorothy Cordova’s youth-service organization, Filipino Youth Activities (FYA) in Seattle. Though short-lived, the Civic League served as a precursor to Pilipino Youth Services and later, Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), a service agency established in 1972 that provided alternatives to gangs for youth. The Filipino American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) likewise continued to serve as an umbrella organization for the many Filipino social organizations in the region. By the late 1960s, FACLA’s mission shifted to include more social services for Filipino elderly and civic engagement once more progressive leadership took helm of the organization. Groups such as the Alliance for Philippine Concerns and the National Committee for Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines organized against martial law dictatorship in the Philippines through bringing

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<sup>22</sup> Jaime Geaga, Interview by author, June 10, 2011; Gil Mangaoang, Interview by author, May 12, 2011.

awareness to those in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Through these organizations and many others, Filipino community leaders established social services for youth and seniors, fought workplace discrimination, and lobbied state legislators to change policies that unfairly affected Filipino immigrant workers, yet were not so critical of U.S. imperialism as groups like the KDP. Instead of using racial difference to challenge and disrupt U.S. hegemony outright, these groups followed others who worked within a liberal framework that focused on multicultural recognition, organizing around state apparatuses such as participatory politics and the nascent “third” or non-profit sector.

These avenues for multicultural inclusion, however, necessitated dependency on a system that already disadvantaged communities of color. As many scholars have argued, the exponential growth of the non-profit and philanthropy sectors during the 1970s and 1980s directed tax money away from governmental programs, services, and institutions that benefit the disenfranchised and instead exempted the wealthy from paying taxes through tax-deductible donations. “Charitable” dollars thus went to corporate pet projects and professional groups with more “organizational capacity” that did little to affect social change for the most marginalized communities.<sup>24</sup> The increasing engagement of communities of color in electoral politics in the post-civil rights era, moreover, yielded limited results. Attaining power in electoral politics was dependent on the fragility of political patronage, adherence to corporate interests, access to the

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<sup>23</sup> Morales, *Makibaka* 2, 192-198; Prosy Abarquez-De la Cruz, “Holding a Pigeon in My Hand: How Community Organizing Succeeds or Falters” in *Asian Americans*, ed. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, 56-63.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History* (Oakland, CA: Africa World Press, 1990) and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “In the Shadow of the Shadow State,” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, M.A.: South End Press, 2007), 41-52.

existing political establishment, and acquiescence to compromise. Despite gains of power in municipal office by non-whites, the rise of tax-reform politics such as Proposition 13 in California helped further subsidize segregation and impoverish areas where marginalized communities gained a governmental foothold. The 1973 election of Mayor Tom Bradley, the first African American mayor of Los Angeles, for example, touted as a triumph for civil rights, came at the heels of massive economic and social upheaval in the African American community. During the 1970s and 1980s, while Mayor Bradley was in office, jobs and capital left South Central Los Angeles at an exponential rate as the region's economy deindustrialized and replaced with various forms of state violence like police repression, drug economies, widespread poverty, and mass incarceration.<sup>25</sup>

As Robert L. Allen argued in his classic work, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, the growth of the philanthropic sector's giving to African Americans and other marginalized groups aided the repression of radical social movements. Large foundations such as the Ford Foundation gave to more moderate, reformist organizations and causes while purporting a form of liberal multiculturalism through the non-profit sector and participatory politics. Such a strategy, Allen exposed, facilitated the marginalization and criminalization of more radical elements in communities of color. As a result, this multicultural agenda led to the normalization of state surveillance and incarceration of social justice activists. Groups, including the KDP for example, were subject to harassment from both the FBI and the Ferdinand Marcos-led Philippine government. According to one public historian, the FBI had over 1,300 pages of surveillance

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<sup>25</sup> See Thomas Kim, *The Racial Logic of Politics: Asian Americans and Party Competition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); and Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso Books, 1990), 300-309.

documents just on the KDP dating back from its founding in 1973. In 1981, the murders of Filipino anti-Marcos activists and union leaders, Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo, conveyed the transnational extra-legality of state power as the murderer of Viernes and Domingo was traced back to Philippine President Marcos.<sup>26</sup>

As community organizing in the 1970s and 1980s shifted to accommodate multicultural demands of state recognition, many Filipino American community leaders, particularly in Los Angeles, nonetheless opted for more reformist strategies at an increasing rate, believing that the promises of “political empowerment” and “inclusion” would address many of the problems afflicting their community. Al Mendoza of the Filipino Civic League remarked that Filipinos needed to “progress, in the form of political expression – community contributions – individual participation in city affairs, in an organized form... What could be in store in the future if Filipinos start applying themselves now.”<sup>27</sup> FACL A member Ted A. Villaganas also argued that Filipinos in Los Angeles needed to be more politically engaged in participatory politics, believing that the American government would address disparities in the Filipino community. “The great majority [of Filipinos in the U.S.] are impoverished,” Villaganas wrote, “in dire need of the material necessities for economic survival. The government is the only ultimate source for help. And yet, because as a minority group we are not making noise, the government continuously ignores us.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Abraham Flores Ignacio, Jr., “Makibaka Huwag Matakot!: A History of the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino,” *Maganda Magazine*, October 2002

<sup>27</sup> Al Mendoza, “Al Mendoza Reports: on The Filipino Civic League,” *Associated Filipino Press*, September 30, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> Ted A. Villaganas, “The Observation Post,” *Bulletin*, February 1976, 3, Box Unsorted 1, Royal F. Morales Papers.

Through this assimilationist framework, Filipino American leaders who engaged in reformist politics engendered a discourse of “invisibility” to describe their community’s continued social and political disparities. In the eyes of many reformists, Filipinos were not “recognizable” enough to American society, somehow not fitting into U.S. standards of multicultural classification and making it difficult to gain the attention of many Americans. In many instances, either Filipinos were being mistaken for another ethnic group or believed that they were readily assimilating into the mainstream of society. In 1975, Amancio Ergina explained at a hearing of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “I wonder if any of the members of the committee knows what a Pilipino is. When he looks for a job, he is mistaken for a Japanese or a Chinese...When he is introduced to someone, he is mistaken for a Latino because he has a Spanish surname. When he looks for an apartment for rent, he is mistaken for a Black.” A Glendale Community College similarly posited in a 1986 *Los Angeles Times* article, “Despite the occasional problems, Filipino immigrants assimilate more easily than other Asians because they speak English and are comfortable with Western traditions because of years as a U.S. colony.” In another *Los Angeles Times* piece, Filipinos were depicted as a group that “often have Spanish last names, speak English, and blend into the mainstream.” *Philippine American News* editor Gil Gorre also suggested that “Filipinos are comfortable in the U.S. language and the culture,” while Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mel Recana argued that “without the language and cultural barriers, we easily blend into the mainstream.” Though many scholars have spent much time refuting such claims of being “misrecognized” or “assimilated,” such tropes were, and continue to be, prevalent in much Filipino American political discourse.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cecile Ochoa, “What We Are Not,” *Asian American News*, February 16-28, 1985; Denise Hamilton, “Filipinos Bring a New, Exotic Touch to Eagle Rock,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 1,

Reformist community leaders who believed that Filipinos lacked a political voice in the United States, especially compared to other ethnic groups, grew frustrated and blamed apathy and invisibility for the lingering problems. Gil Gorre argued that “here we are, the largest Asian community in California, and our political influence is nil.” Another community pundit suggested that Koreans, Vietnamese, and Cambodians, despite their recent immigration compared to Filipinos, had “accomplished a lot by getting together and asserting their rights” while Filipinos were “just minding [their] business individually.” In another comparison to another Asian group, a *Philippine American News* columnist commented on the “lack of assertion and expertise” of Filipinos when a councilmember candidate forum in 1986 only drew a half dozen attendees from Temple Street compared to another forum that drew 250-300 constituents in Chinatown.<sup>30</sup> “Invisibility,” in particular, became a common charge of why there were many shortcomings of the Filipino community in social and political arenas despite its growing size. Newspaper columnist Ernie Delfin in an editorial argued that “although many Filipinos in America have ‘Americanized’ many things and values in their lives, they have yet to prove that they are politically matured. It has been said many times that the Filipinos are now

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1986; Jonathan Peterson, “Filipinos – A Search for Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989; “Filipinos in the Southland,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1989. Many scholars have argued that such lamentation of “blending into the mainstream” ignores the historical racialization and imperialism of Filipinos. See, for example, Oscar Campomanes, “The New Empire’s Forgetful & Forgotten Citizens,” *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 145-200; Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Elizabeth H. Pisares, “Do You Mis(recognize) Me: Filipina Americans in Popular Music and the Problem of Invisibility,” in *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse*, ed. Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr., Edgardo V. Gutierrez, and Ricardo V. Gutierrez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 172-198; and Sarita See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> “A View of Filipino Americans,” *Philippine American News*, February 1-15, 1986; Jonathan Peterson, “Filipinos – A Search for Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989. “Back to Basics,” *Philippine American News*, January 16-31, 1987.

the largest Asian group in California, yet our presence has only been read but not yet felt. Our political clout and influence is still to be proven.”<sup>31</sup> These community leaders who saw mainstream American politics as a solution believed that the continual lack of political clout and influence led to on-going social problems of poverty, criminalization, and discrimination.

To many Filipino community leaders, “invisibility” was the reason for and the example of the dearth of government and foundation dollars to Filipino American organizations and campaigns. With Filipinos and other ethnic communities organizing politically through the non-profit sector, agencies such as FACLA, SIPA, FASGI, and others that took the lead in trying to address the social service and economic development needs of the Filipino community, became increasingly dependent on state and philanthropic funding and support. With the growing trend of government austerity and greater role of non-profit organizations to take on the responsibilities of the decreased welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s, Filipino agencies often competed for funding with other community organizations. When support fell short for Filipino organizations and campaigns, especially compared to other Asian organizations, many blamed “invisibility” rather than the larger issues of neoliberalism. In 1976, FACLA President Remedios V. Geaga posited that Filipinos were “falling behind as we are lagging in Affirmative Action programs, funding of community projects, quality education for our young immigrant children whose primary language is not English, and inequities in job opportunities for technical and professional Filipino immigrants.”<sup>32</sup>

As a result, many Filipino American leaders increasingly organized campaigns around gaining “visibility,” believing that their own liberal self-becoming, in this case as citizens of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ernie Delfin, “We Need To Be More Political,” *Asian American News*, October 1-15, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Remedios Geaga, “From the President,” *Bulletin*, February 1976, 4, Box Unsorted 1, Royal F. Morales Papers.

United States, was contingent upon their “progress” and engagement in American ethnic politics. One step to political empowerment, leaders believed, was to systematically be recognized by the state *as Filipinos*. A galvanizing campaign that many Filipinos across the state of California organized together was the designation of a separate “Filipino” category in government enumeration data. According to advocates of the legislation, Filipinos were often “mislabeled as either Orientals or Others,” and thus “have lost out on numerous employment opportunities in the city and county governments.” The intent of their lobbying efforts was to ensure Filipinos equal access to government programs, employment, and education opportunities in the United States. A separate “Filipino” category, they believed, served as a tool to better indicate and identify specific Filipino needs since they were often either subsumed in the larger “Asian” or “Oriental” category or mistaken for Latinos in data studies. In the 1970s, for example, the Los Angeles County Engineer-Facilities Department disproportionately laid off nearly ninety percent of its Filipino employees because their inclusion in the Asian American enumeration category failed to convey their heterogeneity of Asian Americans, causing much protest amongst government employees.<sup>33</sup>

Filipino community leaders across California lobbied elected officials to pass legislation for the state categorization of Filipinos in the 1970s. Through the advocacy efforts of the Filipino Voters League in the Bay Area and the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles, Inc., California State, Assemblymember John Foran and State Senator Milton Marks introduced twin bills (AB 3452 and SB1870) in 1974 that required “all state statistical tabulations of minorities to include a category for Filipinos.” In 1978, State Senator Alan Robbins introduced a bill (SB

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<sup>33</sup> “T’was a “First”: Categorization Bill signed before Crowd,” *Philippine News*, September 23-29, 1978; “Motion by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn,” September 14, 1978, Box 15: Pilipino Category 1970s, Royal F. Morales Papers.

1140) that mandated cities, counties, and other municipalities that have over 5,000 Filipinos or where they make up over five percent of the population, to count its Filipino employees as such rather than Asians to ensure affirmative action policies adequately included Filipinos.<sup>34</sup> While the bill floated in the California legislature, Los Angeles Filipinos successfully lobbied Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn to introduce a similar motion in the Board of Supervisors to include a category for reporting Filipinos in “all ethnic surveys or tabulations conducted by the County.” On September 17, 1978, Governor Jerry Brown, who ran for re-election that year, signed Senate Bill 1140 into law in front of thousands of Filipino supporters at the Los Angeles Convention Center.<sup>35</sup> If Filipinos were deemed “invisible,” then rendering Filipinos “visible” to the state, as many leaders believed, was essential to address the growing disparities of the Filipino community.

Ultimately, however, the continued economic and social inequality of Filipinos highlighted the limitations of inclusionary politics in American society. With the popularization of the Civil Rights and Third World Movements in the 1960s and 1970s, many Filipinos in Los Angeles and across the United States followed suit and joined in movements and campaigns that addressed these disparities at both the local and global levels. While some, mainly younger Filipinos engaged in radical projects that called to question the contradictions and the hypocrisies of American liberalism, many other Filipinos believed that the shortcomings of their communities simply represented the unfulfilled promise of liberalism rather than its contradictory reality. Local efforts to alleviate poverty in Filipino American communities,

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<sup>34</sup> “T’was a “First”: Categorization Bill signed before Crowd,” *Philippine News*, September 23-29, 1978

<sup>35</sup> “Motion by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn,” September 14, 1978, Box 15: Pilipino Category 1970s, Royal F. Morales Papers; “Brown Power Display: Biggest Filipino Political Events,” *Philippine News*, September 23-29, 1978.

however, relied on the paradigm of participatory politics and the growing non-profit sector, which relied heavily on multicultural identity politics. As neoliberalism and Reaganomics ushered in an era of austerity, ethnic communities competed more and more for dwindling state and philanthropic dollars. Since access to the American welfare state for minority communities necessitated negotiations through a multicultural rhetoric and framework, Filipino leaders and scholars lamented their community's "inability" to engage in political organizing as they experienced the lack of state funding, resources, and political attention in comparison to other ethnic groups. It was these conditions that a perception of Filipino American "invisibility" came to dominate political organizing among many Filipinos since the post-1965 era. In Los Angeles, the Filipino American condition of "invisibility" took on a very spatial context.

### **Ethnic Centers as Political Spaces**

As legislative measures during the postwar period made de jure segregation and racial covenants illegal – the repealing of race-based covenants, the Rumford Fair Housing Act in California, and the Fair Housing Act nation-wide – the spatial landscape of Los Angeles shifted in myriad ways. Whites continued to maintain racial segregation across the region, either by safeguarding affluent neighborhoods along the beaches and in the hills of Southern California from non-whites or by moving to suburbs farther out into the metropolitan periphery. While some communities of color settled into homes outside the inner city and, in effect, integrated all-white neighborhoods, whites increasingly moved to newer and more distant suburban areas. At the same time, however, the increase in residential options for a number of non-whites exacerbated inter- and intra-class divisions. Multi-ethnic neighborhoods like East Los Angeles and Watts became starkly Mexican American and black respectively by the 1960s. As other

ethnic groups and middle class Latinos and blacks sought residential opportunities in other parts of the city, less affluent residents remained in East LA and Watts. Chinatown and Little Tokyo paralleled these neighborhoods. Though many Chinese and Japanese had moved to suburban areas in the region, Chinatown and Little Tokyo continued to serve as home for many vulnerable sectors of their communities, namely seniors and new immigrants.<sup>36</sup>

As neoliberal policies expanded capital accumulation abroad for corporate profit, public disinvestment, economic upheaval, and growing police surveillance of inner-city neighborhoods further impoverished and racialized its residents. Beginning in the 1960s, the decreasing investment in central Los Angeles took its toll, following a nation-wide trend among many American industrial cities. Widespread unemployment, poverty, street crime, and drug activity led to the precipitous decline of many inner city neighborhoods. As poverty grew, moreover, street gangs proliferated the city that by the 1980s, Los Angeles became known as the “gang capital” of the nation. To keep order and ensure that crime did not spread to more affluent parts of the region, the Los Angeles Police Department employed extralegal tactics to suppress and contain many communities of color.<sup>37</sup>

As capital left the centers of the city in increasing rates in the postwar period and state repression targeted these neighborhoods, place-based organizing and campaigns became one of the few ways inner-city residents sustained their communities beginning in the 1960s. Both radical and liberal organizations focused their work on local neighborhood needs in addition to

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<sup>36</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-19; Jerry Hulse, “Chinatown Changing as Suburbs Call Residents,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1959; Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 166-168.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, *City of Quartz*, 267-277.

wider national and global movements. Many Asian American activists across the nation established their bases in inner-city Asian neighborhoods as urban renewal gained momentum as a governmental policy. The campaign to preserve the International Hotel for Filipino seniors, for example, brought nation-wide attention to the struggle over urban renewal in the San Francisco's former Manilatown neighborhood. Asian American activists in Seattle also fought redevelopment efforts to preserve the pan-Asian "International District" and the social service institutions that served neighborhood residents.<sup>38</sup>

As Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and Great Society policies during the 1960s and into the 1970s increased attention and federal funding for marginalized communities, many activists attempted to ensure that government dollars went to social services and economic development projects in these specific neighborhoods. Many communities established organizations to demand and negotiate with government agencies for community control over funding and resources for local residents. Community Development Corporations (CDCs), in particular, became a growing model in many cities to provide economic development in increasingly disinvested urban centers.<sup>39</sup> After the Watts rebellion in 1965, for example, African American activists with the help of the United Auto Workers formed the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) to ensure War on Poverty funding and other social and economic resources went to local residents in Watts. One result of their lobbying efforts was

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<sup>38</sup> Habal, *San Francisco's International District*; Fred Wei-han Ho and Carolyn Antonio, *Legacy to Liberation: Politics & Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (Oakland: AK Press, 2000), iii; Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy A. M. Lai, *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision, and Power* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2008), 87-88.

<sup>39</sup> For more on Community Development Corporations (CDCs), see Kimberley Johnson, "Community Development Corporations, Participation, and Accountability: The Harlem Urban Development Corporation and Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 594, no.1 (July 2004): 109-124.

the building of King-Drew Medical Center that provided medical services for Watts residents and surrounding communities. Similarly, the East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU) served the needs of the growing Mexican American population on the eastside of the city. In the Asian American community of Los Angeles, local activists also formed many organizational institutions to lobby for and protect residential interests. Chinatown community leaders organized Chinatown Services Center in 1971 while the Little Tokyo Services Center formed shortly thereafter to provide welfare assistance to their respective neighborhoods, including employment, affordable housing development, youth activities, and other programs for local residents. With the growing number of Korean migrants moving to Los Angeles and settling in the Wilshire Center area, which later became Koreatown, community activists formed the Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) in 1975. The emergence of ethnic studies programs, particularly at UCLA, brought more college activists to work in these neighborhood-based organizations.<sup>40</sup>

The grassroots community organizing in these enclaves dovetailed the continued globalization of the world economy and the city's desire to incorporate these neighborhoods into the body politic. As cuts to governmental programs multiplied as a result of neoliberal policies and conservative politics in the 1970s and 1980s, anti-poverty work increasingly fell on community organizations. As such, some groups negotiated for limited community concessions from government and corporate interests that encroached the neighborhoods they worked in. In Little Tokyo, for example, some activists believed that an economically prosperous ethnic

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East LA* (Norman, O.K.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 69-109; Alfred Mendoza, Interview by author, February 18, 2011. See also Harvey Dong, "Transforming Student Elites into Community Activists: A Legacy of Asian American Activism," in *Asian Americans*, ed. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, 186-204.

enclave would facilitate more funding for social projects. A group of Little Tokyo leaders, for example, established the Little Tokyo Development Association in 1963 with the support of the city to “build a more beautiful and prosperous Japantown as a cultural and business center of Japanese Americans in southern California.”<sup>41</sup>

By the late 1960s, as Japan’s economy grew, in part through increased trade with the United States, Los Angeles political officials aimed to position the city to benefit from potential foreign capital. Believing that a redeveloped Little Tokyo would help entice Japanese investment in the city, the Los Angeles City Council successfully attained federal funds for restoration and officially established Little Tokyo as a Community Redevelopment Agency project in 1969.<sup>42</sup> Many groups, in turn, pressed the increased transnational interest in Little Tokyo’s development for local needs. In 1975, while many activists protested the increased gentrification of local residents, the Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, led by Frank Chuman and others, leveraged Japanese corporate interests with government investments from HUD to finance and build the Little Tokyo Towers, a 300-unit senior housing development.<sup>43</sup> The politics employed by Little Tokyo activists became a model for other ethnic communities to gain government and business support for neighborhood institutions.

As ethnic neighborhoods increasingly gained political capital as focused sites of community organizing and exemplars of “self-reliance” in multicultural Los Angeles, Filipino

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<sup>41</sup> Kango Kunitsugu, *Little Tokyo Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1969): 65.

<sup>42</sup> Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 191.

<sup>43</sup> Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, “Minutes of Meeting,” March 27, 1976, Box 558, Folder 7, Frank Chuman Papers, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

leaders lamented the lack of a “Filipino Town” in the city. Despite their population size, many argued, the absence of a distinct Filipino enclave indicated their political and social “invisibility” in the United States. “Filipinos rank as the largest Asian minority group in California and the second largest Asian group nationwide,” Joselyn Geaga-Yap stated in an editorial column in 1983, “a frequent reaction to this is astonishment coupled with a realization that Filipinos in general seem to maintain a low-keyed profile and as a group, seem to have been assimilated into the mainstream of society,” having no “geographical centers...comparable to a Chinatown or Koreatown.”<sup>44</sup> As Geaga-Yap’s observation suggested, many embraced the common sociological perception that Filipinos were “too assimilated” and thereby lacked discernible ethnic enclaves, contributing to the trope that the population was “invisible.”

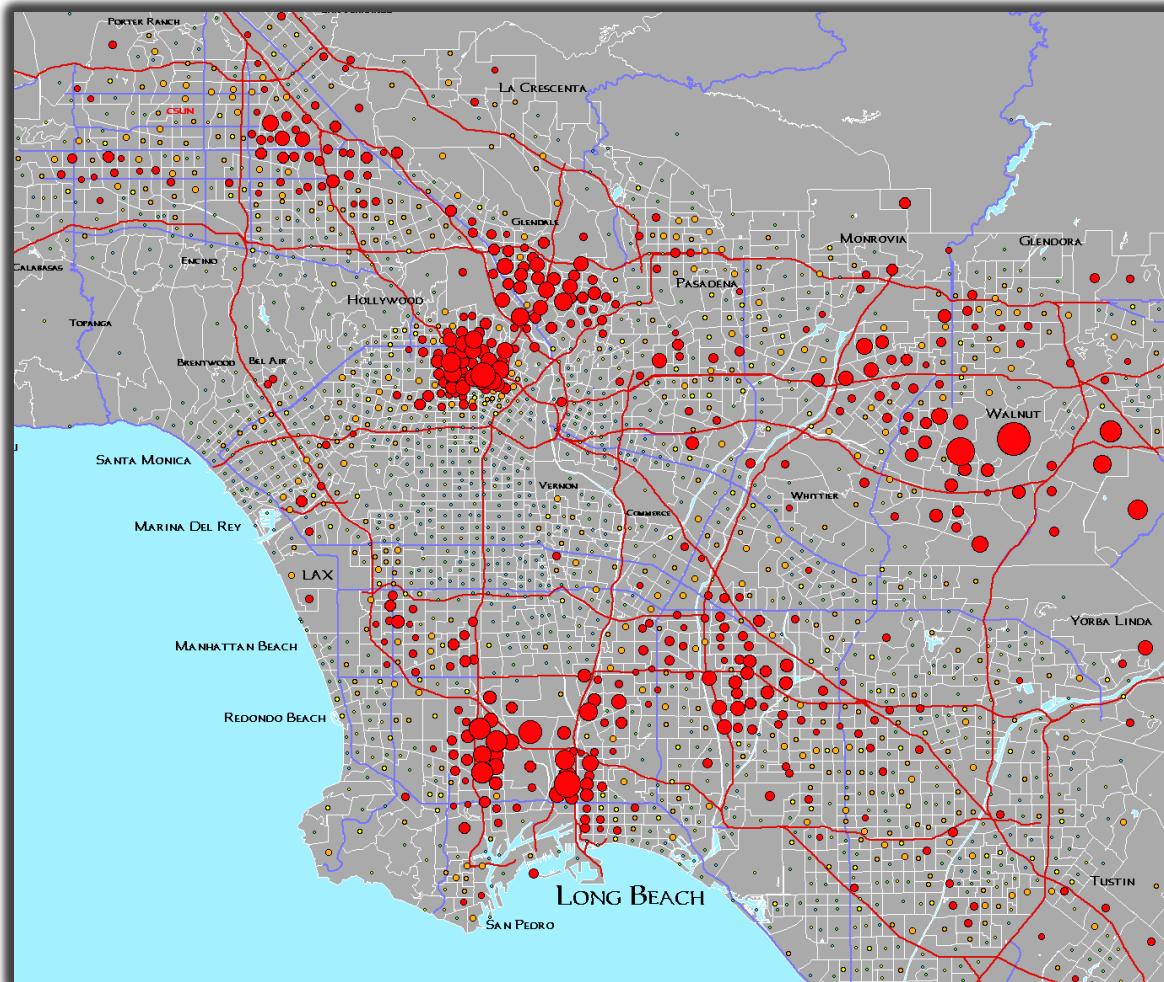
Yet, while Filipino migrants to the Los Angeles area settled across the region, distinct concentrations did emerge largely in working class and middle class neighborhoods. Attracted by the core of affordable rental apartments, proximity to many of the city’s newly built hospital complexes, and the existing Filipino community, many of the new migrants settled in the Temple Street area and surrounding neighborhoods like Silver Lake, East Hollywood, and Wilshire Center. By the 1980s, significant numbers resided in increasingly multi-ethnic suburban cities such as Carson, Cerritos, West Covina, Eagle Rock, and Panorama City. Likewise, many Filipinos who had enlisted in the U.S. Navy migrated to navy port cities in the area such as Oxnard and Long Beach.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Joselyn Geaga-Yap, “The Filipino Family in America” *Asian American News*, May 16-31, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> James O. Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* (Northridge, C.A.: Center for Geographical Studies, California State University, Northridge, 1997), 129-148.

The Temple Street neighborhood continued to be a gathering area for many Filipinos in Los Angeles, even though there were growing populations in other regions of Southern California. Conrad Salumbides observed in 1968, “There is no particular area that can be called ‘Filipino Town,’ just as the Chinese have their ‘China Town,’ and the Japanese a ‘Little Tokyo.’” However, “around the area of Belmont, Alvarado, Third Street and Temple...you will



Residential Distribution of Filipinos  
in Southern California (1990)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Map produced by Benz Zamora, Department of Geography, University of California, Los Angeles.

find two churches where the majority of Filipinos congregate...four Filipino restaurants...and other Filipino-owned and Filipino-patronized establishments...flourishing in this area...and the Filipino Cultural Center." By the 1980s, there was an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Filipinos living in this central Los Angeles metropolitan area, the largest concentration anywhere in the city.<sup>47</sup> While the Temple Street neighborhood and the other aforementioned locales saw a rise in Filipino populations – and with it businesses and institutions catering to community needs – they were never *legible* as ethnic enclaves in sociological and commercial terms.

The Temple Street neighborhood, in the mean time, experienced major public disinvestment since the 1960s. With the demise of the Temple Area Redevelopment Plan and capital investment focused on suburban white communities and downtown corporate interests, the neighborhood declined economically as poverty and blight grew. Over-development of cheaply built apartments from opportunist developers, inconsistent and hazardous zoning plans, and the disinvestment of state funding in city services and local public education created the environment for crime, gangs, and poverty. Lifelong resident, Jose Abad Jr., recalled that as a child, "my street (Parkman Ave.) was beautiful. Trees lined the street, sidewalks were clean...my family loved it here. But in the 80s, the tree trimming wasn't kept up, apartments with absentee landlords sprouted up, and graffiti was everywhere. Now, I can't even walk around without tripping on the crumbling sidewalks or be afraid of someone robbing me."<sup>48</sup> What was once the suburban destination of Filipinos during the 1950s became a demonstrative site of urban decay by the 1970s and 1980s. Since the Temple Street neighborhood continued to

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<sup>47</sup> Conrad A. Salumbides and Committee, "The Filipino-Americans," July 1968, Box 1, Folder 8. Royal F. Morales Papers; "Filipino Town: Big Enough for Both Sides?," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 10, 1988.

<sup>48</sup> Jose Abad Jr., Interview by author, March 13, 2011.

house a high concentration of poorer Filipino senior citizen residents and new migrants in the city, community activists established in the neighborhood the only existing social service agencies that served Filipinos in Southern California: FACLAs, SIPA, and FASGI.

To community leaders in Los Angeles, state dollars to fund community services for poorer Filipinos who increasingly migrated and resided in the neighborhood seemed to necessitate state recognition of the Filipino community through a form of spatial legibility. As newspaper publisher Oscar Jornacion explained to the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1984, Filipinos “have a problem to be recognized like the Japanese or the Koreans” because of the lack of a “Filipino Town.” A Filipino social worker likewise complained that Filipinos “haven’t developed our own resources.” Compared to the “\$2 million budget of the Chinatown Service Center,” Filipinos only had “\$55,000...for advising youths in a scruffy three-room shack behind Filipino Town.” Local developer Val Ramos argued that “Filipinos are concerned about Filipino Town. They see Chinatown, Little Tokyo, and Koreatown and they ask, ‘What about us? Why don’t we have anything like those? Why don’t we have a senior citizens center like them?’”<sup>49</sup> When comparing Filipinos to other Asian groups, particularly Chinese and Japanese communities, community advocates believed they consistently “fell behind” in terms of government recognition and aid for social services. As a *Philippine American News* editorial aptly conveyed, “There is no doubt that Filipinos need to be better heard in government. Neither can anyone argue against the need for Community Redevelopment Agency grants in the semi-

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<sup>49</sup> Marshall Ingewerson, “Filipinos Try to Leave Their Cultural Mark in Los Angeles,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 1984; “A View of Filipino Americans,” *Philippine American News*, February 1-15, 1986; Tania Azores-Gunter, “In the Neighborhood: Filipino Americans: Getting It Together, Raising Their Profile, *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1992.

blighted Temple Street Area...the time has come to come to grips with our political immaturity.”<sup>50</sup>

As a result, many leaders charged the perceived invisibility of the Temple Street area as a neighborhood with distinct Filipino demarcations as a source and indicator of their lack of political maturity, and consequently, the dismal funding for community institutions. In 1976, FACA leader Connie Guerrero rhetorically asked, “Why the Filipino-Americans in Los Angeles are allegedly lagging behind in the struggle for political and economic survival inspite [sic] of our being the second largest immigrant population to the United States, second only to the Mexicans, and the largest Asian immigrant population from Asia?” She further invoked the logic of ethnic enclave building to her question: “A friend came by on a visit and touring the City of Los Angeles is an important part of that visit. Suddenly, the query on ‘Why is there no place for Filipinos like ‘Chinatown’ for the Chinese, ‘Little Tokyo’ for the Japanese, the developing ‘Second Seoul’ for the Koreans, etc...?’” She argued “it is unfortunate that despite our number and the large number of professional immigrants, Filipinos are seemingly unknown in the political world even as the burgeoning political entities of other minorities are already there.”<sup>51</sup>

Political “empowerment” in Guerrero’s estimation required certain “recognition” from the state since Filipinos were “unknown in the political world.” With a growing trend towards ethnic empowerment through electoral politics and community organizing, the increased competition among ethnic groups for waning anti-poverty funds amidst economic policies of austerity, and the place-based model of centering such political organization in distinct ethnic

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<sup>50</sup> “Back to Basics,” *Philippine American News*, January 16-31, 1987.

<sup>51</sup> Connie Guerrero, “Leadership Development,” *Bulletin*, February 1976, 5, Box Unsorted 1, Royal F. Morales Papers.

neighborhoods, many Filipino leaders believed the community needed a commercial enclave of their own.

### **Orientalism in Los Angeles's Ethnic Tourist Economy**

To many Filipino leaders who were involved in community politics in Los Angeles, a “Filipino Town” was central to their visions of political empowerment in multicultural Los Angeles. If clustering into enclaves was not an organic process for Filipinos, therefore hindering political empowerment, then building a Filipino Town in the same fashion of other ethnic neighborhoods, as many believed, would ensure that Filipinos received as much recognition as other communities. Actively developing a distinctly Filipino neighborhood that fit within market demands, however, meant engaging in a tourist economy fraught with problems and contradictions. More specifically, a Filipino Town had to transform itself into a destination for the white consumer.

As scholars have argued, many ethnic neighborhoods, particularly Chinatowns, shifted its economy to cater to white tourists increasingly attracted to what Edward Said would call a foreign “Other.”<sup>52</sup> Once racialized as slums that exemplified vice and immorality, city officials

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<sup>52</sup> Ivan Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880-1940,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (August 1974): 367-394; Kay Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991); and Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Edward Said, in his influential study *Orientalism*, first articulated how Westerners ascribed feminine, inferior, and savage characteristics to non-white Others to define their own masculine, superior, and civilized Self, suggesting that Europeans’ tradition of academic and cultural knowledge production of Asians was based on prejudiced assumptions defined and justified Western imperialism. Deborah Root further complicates Said’s Orientalism theory by arguing that exotic consumption by Western patrons of bastardized forms of non-Western culture attempts to domesticate the foreign in order to construct “a conceptual line of escape out of Western culture

and business interests in many U.S. cities transformed and developed Chinatowns at the turn of the twentieth century to fit the growing economic demands of Orientalist consumption. Creating and sustaining that demand, in essence, necessitated the regulation, sanitation, and erasure of ethnic neighborhood's history of racism and imperialism.

The historical development of various Los Angeles neighborhoods, such as Chinatown, Olvera Street, and Little Tokyo, exemplified this racialized shift. Beginning in the 1930s, city officials aimed to convert these neighborhoods from what had been seen as disease-infested slums to sanitized tourist destinations. Christine Sterling, an elite city booster, saw the deterioration of La Plaza, the original site of the founding of Los Angeles, and aimed to save it from pending demolition as the result of the construction of Union Station. With the help of civic dignitaries, Sterling campaigned to restore the site's historic buildings and convert the area on Olvera Street into a Mexican marketplace filled with vendors who wore "Mexican costumes" and sold "tortillas and Mexican wares."<sup>53</sup> In short, what Sterling and other renewal advocates desired were markers of a traditional sense of Mexican culture packaged through food and other consumables.

Underlying the investment in La Plaza's transformation, of course, was the attraction of tourist capital to the city. Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Director William Lacy argued, "I

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into a titillating, yet manageable other." Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Press, 1978); Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, 1996). Many Asian Americanists have adapted this theory to reveal the nuances of Asian American racialization. See John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> William D. Estrada, *Los Angeles's Olvera Street* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 27; Daniel Hernandez, "Mexican Marketplace Evokes Tinges of Home," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 2002.

don't wish to oppose this resolution for anything that we can bring about that might be attractive to Eastern visitors, of course, naturally brings more money here.” Understanding that more neighborhoods could be changed to tourist destinations, Lacy further suggested that, “bringing back the old alley...I would add to it that you restore our old Chinatown.” Chinatown subsequently experienced similar transformations. Throughout the 1920s, city officials targeted the Chinatown neighborhood as the site for the region’s new rail transit hub, Union Station. In 1930, they eventually condemned and demolished Chinatown to allow for the station’s construction. Through the efforts of the local Chinese business community and the assistance of the city government, a “New Chinatown” was established just north of the original location in 1938. However, like Olvera Street, this version emphasized a more sanitized conception of Chinese culture geared for white Americans. To disassociate Chinatown from the common negative view of opium dens and gambling halls, community and city leaders hired Hollywood set producers to design the “central plaza” to give the neighborhood an exotic atmosphere. “It is to New Chinatown,” wrote *Los Angeles Times* columnist Jerry Hulse, “that the tourist is attracted; not to Old Chinatown.”<sup>54</sup> City officials continued their disinvestment of Old Chinatown as New Chinatown gained more of the city’s attention.

China City, another development project spearheaded by Christine Sterling, was also another themed plaza aimed to attract tourists interested in all things Chinese. Like New Chinatown, it was modeled after a Hollywood movie set, with curved rooftops and fortress-like structures. Although Sterling envisioned China City would complement New Chinatown and compensate for the loss of the original Chinatown district, the project received no support from

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<sup>54</sup> Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, *The Los Angeles Chinatown 50<sup>th</sup> Year Guidebook* (Los Angeles: Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, 1988); Jerry Hulse, “Chinatown Changing as Suburbs Call Residents,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1959.

any major Chinese American community organization. The development officially opened in 1938 with “ten thousand Southern Californians...[who] ate Chinese delicacies and purchased coolie hats, fans, idols, miniature temples images.” Although envisioned to replicate the commercial success of Olvera Street, a fire destroyed China City only ten years later, and its owners did not attempt to rebuild the commercial marketplace.<sup>55</sup>

Though the construction of these districts was clearly based on ethnic tourism, the developments provided a source of employment for many community residents. Sympathetic to Chinese displacement, Sterling believed that the city was “under obligation to the hundreds of Chinese...who have been uprooted from where they have made their home for years.” With limited job opportunities for the Chinese in Los Angeles because of labor segregation, many took advantage of the project. The Chinese community rented space in China City, ran their own businesses, and created the China City Merchant Association to speak collectively to the directors of China City. The transformation of New Chinatown proved to be very profitable to many Chinese business owners as well. Most shops that had displaced from the older Chinatown as a result of the building of Union Station became re-established in New Chinatown. Initial investment in the New Chinatown development was \$20,000. By 1942, it rose to \$1 million in value. Finally, the New Chinatown development employed approximately 25 percent of Chinese residents in the city.<sup>56</sup>

Seeing the profitability of Chinatown as well as the Olvera Street, many Japanese American community leaders began marketing Little Tokyo as early as the 1930s as a tourist

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<sup>55</sup> “China City Lures Crowd,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1938; Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, *The Los Angeles Chinatown 50<sup>th</sup> Year Guidebook*.

<sup>56</sup> “Chinatown to Rise Again,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1937; Thomas Allen, *Development of the Los Angeles Chinatown, 1850-1970* (Master’s thesis: California State University, Northridge, 1973), 68.

destination for Americans looking to consume Japanese culture. In 1935, Carl Kondo suggested in the Japanese American periodical, *Kashu Mainichi*, that Little Tokyo business owners should generate business from white Americans, given their increasing curiosity about Japanese culture. Kondo urged Japanese leaders to “strive to make our section of town entirely different from the rest of the great metropolis. As it is, one cannot immediately feel the foreign atmosphere or distinction upon entering Lil’ Tokyo.” This marketing scheme, Kondo argued, would afford the best chance for Little Tokyo’s continuing viability.<sup>57</sup>

From the initial development of Little Manila, there were attempts to make the neighborhood into a tourist destination. In 1921, a group of Filipinos established the Filipino-American Industrial Corporation, a distributor of Philippine goods to “colonize Filipinos on Southern California lands” and “operate Filipino cafes and barbershops...and retail stores.” With “authorized capital of \$250,000,” the corporation, in cooperation with the wholesale importer, the Philippines-American Company, Inc., planned to sell to the American public commodities such as “buntal hats, Philippine laces, embroideries, curios in shell, pottery, etc.” Members of the corporation additionally envisioned the establishment of “native Filipino cafes and cafeterias with Filipino musicians and native girls as waitresses and entertainers” and other industrial enterprises “with the institution of direct shipping connections between [the Los Angeles] port and the Philippines.”<sup>58</sup> Though the visions of the Filipino-American Industrial Corporation fizzled, its efforts conveyed a desire to be recognized through cultural consumption, much like the merchants who developed New Chinatown or Little Tokyo.

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<sup>57</sup> Carl Kondo, *Kashu Mainichi*, August 12, 1935; Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 46; *Kashu Mainichi*, August 15, 1937

<sup>58</sup> “Filipinos Engage in Industries,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1921.

By the end of World War II, the area around the Temple-Figueroa intersection had become the nucleus of the Filipino community, a shift from the original Little Manila site on First Street. As this new site emerged, some leaders in the community urged the Philippine Chamber of Commerce of California to create a Filipino district centered on ethnic tourism. In 1945, Simeon Doria Arroyo wrote, “to the observant foreigners of Los Angeles, Temple Street is to the Filipinos as Olvera Street is to the Mexicans or Central Avenue is to the Negroes...Evidently Temple Street as a business center for Filipinos, needs so many things peculiarly Filipino in order to stand out as a Filipino commercial center that could cater to community and tourist-trade.” Arroyo then listed the types of establishments needed to have Temple Street flourish as a thriving Filipino ethnic enclave. Sociologist Valentin Aquino similarly noted that “the very few restaurants still in existence...cater mostly to Filipinos” and that they “have not yet introduced special Filipino dishes that would attract the general population.”<sup>59</sup>

By the 1960s, local politicians and boosters began to invest even more resources into the development of ethnic enclaves as part of a new vision of Los Angeles as a “multicultural” city. In 1964, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted to approve the redevelopment plan for Little Tokyo. Aligning and partnering with the larger redevelopment efforts downtown, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association used orientalist market desires to create a “tourist attraction” in Little Tokyo with “a high quality oriental atmosphere in its architecture and landscaping.”<sup>60</sup> City officials and business interests envisioned these districts as ethnic marketplaces to serve the

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<sup>59</sup> Simeon Doria Arroyo, “Of Men and Events,” *Manila Post Herald*, April 30, 1945; Aquino, “The Filipino Community in Los Angeles,” 41.

<sup>60</sup> Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association, *General Plan for Little Tokyo*, Louis Crouch Papers, Box 24, Folder 8, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

consumption demands of white Angelenos. Frank P. Lombardi, executive officer of the city's Planning Commission, suggested that a redevelopment plan for Little Tokyo would be "another element in the renaissance of downtown Los Angeles." In 1965, the Planning Commission passed a \$3 million investment to create an "'international zone' in the Civic Center area between Chinatown and Little Tokyo...as part of the Pueblo de Los Angeles improvement plan."<sup>61</sup>

As city officials provided more attention and capital to these ethnic centers, members of the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) organized a capital campaign to build a community center in the Temple Street neighborhood.<sup>62</sup> In 1965, under the presidency of Ben Manibog, FACLA opened its new Filipino Community Center on Temple and Burlington Streets. While the establishment of the community hall received much fanfare and praise from members of FACLA, the organization's leadership believed it was just one part of a three-phase plan for the area. "The first phase was to erect a modest building," said Manibog, "the second was to purchase more land for an auditorium, and third phase was to build a senior's center."<sup>63</sup> FACLA leadership believed that this Filipino cultural complex would anchor a future "Filipino Village." Manibog's brother, Monty, explained to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1968 that he "would like to see the community band together economically in order to form a corporate image in the

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<sup>61</sup> "Little Tokyo Project: An Inspiration," *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 1963; "Plans Disclosed Civic Center 'Foreign' Zone," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1965.

<sup>62</sup> The Filipino American Community of Los Angeles, Inc. (FACLA) evolved from the Filipino Unity Council, which was established also as an umbrella organization in 1930. Teofilo Alemania, interview by Frances B. Atienza & Remedios Calub, 1980, David Clark Oral History, Collection 2080, Box 7, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>63</sup> "Filipino Center Ground Broken," *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 1965.

Southland.” “His dream,” wrote the *Times*, “includes a national bank and a Filipino Village to hopefully rival the commercial success of such attractions as Chinatown.”<sup>64</sup>

As scholars of Orientalism remind us, however, the commodification and consumption of non-Western culture necessitates the construction and establishment of an Other.<sup>65</sup> Olvera Street, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo shifted its economy to meet the market demands of tourist consumption. No longer were these districts simply a product of labor migration and racial segregation primed for eradication. Rather, they became exotic and sanitized spatial productions of ethnic cultures based on Orientalist imagination. Thus, as Arroyo, Aquino, and others demonstrated in their editorials, creating such a commercial district for ethnic tourism necessitated the accentuation, generalization, and fabrication of an “exotic” Filipino culture geared towards the white consumer. Exoticized enclaves stood outside of history, completely detached from ethnic neighborhood roots in American racism, segregation, and imperialism.

### **The Rise and Fall of the “Filipino Town” Movement**

By the 1970s, as ethnic enclaves served more than strictly economic survival, Filipino leaders nonetheless saw the potential of a distinct Filipino enclave to address their seeming political “invisibility” in American society. The first large-scale campaign to develop a Filipino Town began in the early 1970s as a commercial venture when a group of Filipino investors formed Filipinas Associates, a small property development company that aimed to purchase

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<sup>64</sup> Sharon E. Fay, “Filipinos Striving for a New Cultural Image,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1968.

<sup>65</sup> Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, 1996).

various properties in the Temple Street neighborhood.<sup>66</sup> As the first of a three-phase plan, Filipinas Associates purchased a group of apartment buildings on the southwest corner of Temple and Carondelet Street in 1976. They built Temple Mart, a Filipino grocery store, and opened it in 1979 and developed the rest of the lot into “Filipinas Plaza.” The small strip mall, according to the group, would serve as a commercial anchor for a developing Filipino Town. Dan Alura, the owner of the Temple Mart and one of the Filipinas Associates partners told a newspaper reporter, “When I started here, it was a poor area...We have transformed it.”<sup>67</sup> Economic development in the area through the promotion of place-based Filipino entrepreneurialism, they believed, would lead to the civic recognition they desired and public funding and resources that came with it to benefit all who lived in the area as well as Filipinos across Southern California.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, leaders continued this campaign to develop the Temple Street neighborhood into a commercial Filipino district. Seeking political support and recognition for the project, Remedios “Remy” Geaga and Connie Guerrero began lobbying Los Angeles City Councilmember John Ferraro, whose district encompassed the Temple Street neighborhood at the time, for an official declaration of Filipino Town in 1979. In 1981, the newly established non-profit agency Filipino American Service Group Incorporated (FASGI), which served as an incubator for the Filipino Town group, along with another social service

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<sup>66</sup> To be sure, nationalist affective desires fueled earlier campaigns to create a specific Filipino enclave, but this campaign’s longevity despite the contradiction of a Filipino Town in an urban market economy, I argue, was due to Civil Rights desires for social and economic justice for Filipino Americans. After all, it is in Los Angeles, as opposed to other cities with large Filipino populations that these campaigns are fought for since political organizing in the city is structured, by and large, through a distinct spatial order of ethnic neighborhoods.

<sup>67</sup> Marshall Ingwerson, “Filipinos Try to Leave Their Cultural Mark in Los Angeles,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 1984.

organization jointly hired Cleghorn-Dixon, a planning firm based in Pasadena, as a private consultant to devise a feasibility plan for the development of a Filipino Town. In 1984, FASGI organized a task force, with the guidance of the National Main Street Center, a national organization that helped local communities preserve and redevelop downtown commercial areas, to implement and manage the Filipino Town development plan. Various Filipino American business owners, investors, and community leaders comprised the task force, with a goal of “formulating and implementing a ‘Philippine Town’ development plan, and encouraging investment” in the Temple Street area.<sup>68</sup>

Hoping to attract a large consumer base to the area, leaders implemented an organizing strategy to cultivate and encourage Filipino entrepreneurship as part of their campaign. Edgar Yap and his Filipinas Associates corporation had plans to develop several properties along Temple Street. In 1979, they purchased two lots adjacent to Filipinas Plaza. One of their plans was to build an eight-story shopping complex that would house a hotel, cultural center, and restaurants. “These buildings,” Yap promoted, “will house Filipino-American businesses professional services, enjoy the amenities or just to feel at home away from home.”<sup>69</sup> Likewise, Val and Cecile Ramos financed and developed two multiple unit apartment complexes along Temple Street and a commercial strip mall geared to house Filipino small businesses named Luzon Plaza. In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Ramos stated, “One neighbor said, ‘Why are you taking such a risk?’ We can’t just keep saying we need a Philippine Town. We have to take

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<sup>68</sup> Filipino American Service Group, Inc., “Pasko Sa Nayon: A Filipino Town is Born...” Souvenir Program, December 8, 1984. “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>69</sup> “Solicitation Letter from Edgar O. Yap, President of Nayong Pilipinas, Inc.,” May 18, 1987, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library.

some action.”<sup>70</sup> Monty Manibog, an attorney and former mayor of Monterey Park, also invested in the Filipino Town campaign when he purchased an office building along Beverly Blvd. to attract more Filipino businesses to the Temple Street neighborhood. “We were fortunate to be able to acquire the building,” Manibog told the *Philippine American News*, “as it will house various Filipinos professional offices and our *kababayans* will have the convenience of seeking and obtaining a variety of professional services in the same building and in what is popularly known as Filipino Town.” Like other Filipino Town proponents, Manibog believed his work in obtaining multicultural legibility would result in benefits for all. He explained, “We believed that what we were doing was for the community. Once Filipinos became known to the mainstream, then we can get more money for our groups.”<sup>71</sup>

To Filipino community leaders, entrepreneurialism was key to self-reliance and political empowerment; investing in Filipino Town became a nationalist endeavor.<sup>72</sup> Yap believed that Filipino Town would be “a symbol of the economic independence and financial success of Filipino-Americans in their adopted land,” suggesting that entrepreneurship would allow Filipinos in the United States “true economic independence.” He further argued that “only after [Filipinos] can achieve this can we hasten the pace of our economic development and promote the general well-being of our people.”<sup>73</sup> Newspaper writer Ernie Delfin echoed Yap’s assertion

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<sup>70</sup> Jonathan Peterson, “Filipinos – A Search for Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989.

<sup>71</sup> *Kababayan* translates to “countryman” in Tagalog. “Fil-Am Groups Buys Office Building,” *Philippine American News*, January 5, 1989; Monty Manibog, Interview by author, December 11, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Kurashige makes a similar argument about entrepreneurial nationalism among Black and Japanese communities in Los Angeles. Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 64-90.

<sup>73</sup> “Solicitation Letter from Edgar O. Yap, President of Nayong Pilipinas, Inc.,” May 18, 1987, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library.

and saw hope in the “emerging Filipino Town” with its “sprouting small Filipino businesses, from retail stores and restaurants to business corporations.” He believed that this new activity would “accelerate the formation of a solid economic base that will give Filipino-Americans more political clout not only in Los Angeles area but across the state and the nation.” “Having seen the example set by his Asian brothers and some Filipino entrepreneurs,” Delfin wrote, “the Filipino here will be encouraged to venture on his own...With a resulting wider economic base, this emerging Filipino community will be given a more ‘affectionate look’ by local, state and national politicians.”<sup>74</sup> To many Filipino community leaders, entrepreneurship through the development of an ethnic enclave served as a marker of community “independence” to elevate their political citizenship into multicultural American capitalism.

Indeed, their efforts in the Filipino Town project did garner glimpses of an “affectionate look” from elected officials. As Los Angeles’s population grew increasingly diverse, so did political adoption of multicultural racial discourse. In city master plans and promotional materials, for example, officials increasingly used the region’s multiethnic diversity as a particular social asset of the city. “Think of Los Angeles as a mosaic,” read one economic development brochure in 1988 when referring to the region’s ethnic heterogeneity, “with every color distinct, vibrant and essential to the whole.”<sup>75</sup> Councilmember John Ferraro, who had shown minimal interest in the Filipino Town project initially, saw the growing Filipino residential population in his district as formidable voting base. In May 1984, he met with leaders from FACL A and FASGI to discuss how to bring the project into fruition. Greg Cruz, president

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<sup>74</sup> Ernie Delfin, “Making Hay in Making Money,” *Asian American News*, May 16-31, 1985; Ernie Delfin, “Predictions Far and Wide,” *Asian American News*, January 1-15, 1985.

<sup>75</sup> Los Angeles 2000 Committee, *LA 2000: A City for the Future* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles 2000 Committee, 1988), 51.

of FACLA, presented a report to Ferraro requesting “seed money for a survey of socio-economic needs and resources” to “be the basis of a feasibility study” for the development project.<sup>76</sup> In December 1984, FASGI organized “*Pasko Sa Nayon*,” a two-day long Filipino Christmas festival held at Filipinas Plaza to generate more community support for the Filipino Town campaign. Local representatives such as Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn and Ferraro attended, with Ferraro presenting a prototype of the proposed city signage of Filipino Town to community leaders during the event.<sup>77</sup>

Filipino Town advocates believed that the *Pasko Sa Nayon* event was a significant triumph of their community work in Los Angeles. In the commemorative program, Filipino Town advocates wrote:

We the Filipino Communities in Los Angeles are celebrating the “Birth of a Filipino Town” in this Temple district. We offer this “Birth of a Filipino Town” as the beginnings of a visible symbol of our ethnic heritage and identity. We envision this “Town” evolving into an urban “Filipino” cultural and commercial center. Its setting on Temple Street commemorates the historical contributions of the Filipino immigrants who pioneered the trail to America. The “Town” is meant also to serve as platform from sharing and showcasing the increasing number of contributions Filipinos are making to their newfound homeland.<sup>78</sup>

To advance politically as an ethnic group, as the logic of the Filipino Town advocates went, one would need to gain recognition from the state within the frameworks of multiculturalism. In a coming out party of sort, the *Pasko Sa Nayon* event and the launching of Filipino Town marked the supposed beginning of Filipino Americans’ symbolic entry and maturity into Los Angeles’s multicultural community.

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<sup>76</sup> “‘Manilatown’ Project,” *Asian American News*, April 1-15, 1984.

<sup>77</sup> “Community Setback,” *Philippine American News*, October 16, 1986.

<sup>78</sup> Filipino American Service Group, Inc., “Pasko Sa Nayon: A Filipino Town is Born...” Souvenir Program, December 8, 1984. “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library.

A couple months after the *Pasko Sa Nayon* event, Councilmember Ferraro, hoping to gain the graces of his large Filipino constituency, introduced a motion in City Council moving the “City Planning Department be instructed to conduct a study...on the feasibility of establishing a geographically defined ‘Filipino Town’ in Los Angeles.”<sup>79</sup> Shortly thereafter, the group lobbied California Assemblymember Mike Roos who represented the area, to begin a plan to erect a “Philippine Town” sign at the off-ramp of the Hollywood Freeway (Fwy 101). A few weeks later, with political momentum in their favor, the working task force officially incorporated as *Nayong Pilipinas*, Inc. (Philippine Town, Inc.), and immediately formed an Executive Committee.<sup>80</sup>

However, political support for the Filipino Town movement was short-lived, demonstrating the fragility of multicultural politics. Councilmember Ferraro explained at a community meeting in 1986 that the feasibility study he instructed the city’s Planning Department to work on was tabled to accommodate the Department’s major priorities. After a lawsuit in which a group of affluent homeowners sued the city for zoning inconsistencies with the Los Angeles General Plan, the California Superior Court ordered the city to rezone more than 200,000 commercial and residential properties across the city by 1988. The undertaking of such a project, according to Ferraro, would monopolize much of the planning department’s time and resources. “It’s terribly important that the planning department conform to the general plan,” explained Henrietta Hardy, “but we’re determined to see the Filipino Town project go through, and we’ve set our sights on one to two years down the road.”<sup>81</sup> Ferraro’s cursory assistance for

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<sup>79</sup> “‘Filipino Town’ Presented to City Council,” *Philippine American News*, March 1-15, 1985.

<sup>80</sup> “Nayong Pilipinas ExCom Officers,” *Philippine American News*, July 1-15, 1985.

<sup>81</sup> Luis Sinco, “Filipino Town Project May Be Delayed by State Court Ruling,” *Philippine American News*, April 1-15, 1986.

the Filipino Town project indicated his need to shore up his growing Filipino voting base more than his commitment to follow through on his promises.

The lack of political aid to maintain the Filipino Town campaign also thwarted Nayong Pilipinas' goal to designate Filipino Town an official project of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The CRA – the inter-governmental agency that was instrumental in organizing housing and commercial and economic development in many Los Angeles neighborhoods including Chinatown and Little Tokyo – never adopted the Temple Street/Filipino Town neighborhood as an area project. The absence of the agency from directing economic development of the area angered some activists and called attention to the overall lack of political attention Filipinos received from local government. A public report on the state of the Filipino American community in Los Angeles pointed out the distribution of funding of property tax dollars in Los Angeles County. In an appeal for more engagement, the report suggested that Filipinos “compare [the current distribution] to how much the Filipino immigrant population is taking back from their taxes in terms of human services.” Noting that 7% of property tax dollars goes to the CRA, it rhetorically asked, “Shall we allow this situation to prevail and the Filipino Americans will just sit back, not knowing that your taxes are supporting the CRA Projects of other ethnic groups, and especially so – a \$1.1 million CRA funding of a new Chinatown Multi-Services Center?” “It is about time,” the report further stated, “that we act now – confront your elected officials with what they are giving your community in return for your property taxes.”<sup>82</sup> Without the elected officials’ support to push city government to dedicate funding for a Filipino Town, however, the campaign lacked the resources it needed to survive.

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<sup>82</sup> “Report from ‘Pilipino Americans: Facing Up to Our Challenges’ Workshop,” March 23, 1985, Box 11, Folder 28, Royal F. Morales Papers.

Such attempts at procuring political recognition also exacerbated inter-ethnic competition, highlighting the limitations and contradictions of a multicultural politics of “empowerment.” Ethnic empowerment politics, through the form of city council redistricting, for example, though enabling some opportunities for the growing Latino population in Los Angeles, also ensured that the community campaign for a Filipino Town would not garner wide political support. In 1985, the United States Justice Department, through the lobbying power of the Latino community, filed a lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles for systemic voter discrimination, namely the city’s 1982 redistricting plan, which according to the lawsuit drew its council district boundaries to splinter the political power of Latinos. The Latino population, which had grown to 27% of the city by 1980, had a core concentration surrounding the downtown area but was divided among seven council districts. The dilution of Latino political power, Justice Department officials contended, violated the 1965 Voting Rights Act because the redistricting plan “effectuated for the purpose, and with the result, of avoiding the higher Hispanic percentages in certain districts.”<sup>83</sup>

As a result of the court order, Councilmember Richard Alatorre, who had ironically become the first Latino in twenty three years to be elected to the City Council just two weeks after the Justice Department filed the lawsuit, led the Council’s Charter and Elections Committee to review the reapportionment plan in late 1985. For most of 1986, the City Council reviewed and deliberated the redistricting issue. The sudden death of City Councilmember Howard Finn, who had represented the heavily Latino 1st District in the Northeast San Fernando Valley area,

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<sup>83</sup> In contrast, three African American Council members – Gilbert W. Lindsay, Robert Farrell and David Cunningham – sat on the City Council during this time despite the smaller numbers of African American residents. Victor Merina, “Districting Hurts Latinos, U.S. Says: Justice Department Suit Accuses L.A. of Diluting Hispanics’ Political Power,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1985.

put fear among Valley Councilmembers that a Latino could hold Council office in the Valley.

The City Council immediately went through two plans before finally settling on final boundaries, which repositioned the 1st District into downtown Los Angeles. The 1st District, with Latinos comprising 69% of the total population, was carved out of six other districts.<sup>84</sup>

The realignment of district boundaries to comply with the court-ordered mandate to concentrate Latino voters consequently diluted the political power of Filipinos in the Temple Street neighborhood. Prior to the 1986 redistricting plan, the majority of Filipinos in the central LA area was concentrated in Councilmember John Ferraro's 4th District, with some in Councilmember Michael Woo's 13<sup>th</sup> District. The Filipino Town campaign, as a result, was directed mainly towards Ferraro. During the redistricting discussions in 1986, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) opposed the proposed plan because it would have diluted the vote of many Asian American communities. It proposed an alternative plan that would "put Chinatown and Little Tokyo in a single district (9<sup>th</sup>), Koreans in yet another (10<sup>th</sup>) and Filipinos...into the 4<sup>th</sup> alone." In its report, APALC argued that "consolidating ethnic clusters into one councilmanic district is significant...the uniting of [these] communities will provide those communities with a meaningful voice."<sup>85</sup> With the repositioning of the 1<sup>st</sup> District, however, the core concentration of Filipinos was divided among four different Council Districts. Though Filipino Town advocate Remedios Geaga ran for the 1<sup>st</sup> District, she quickly withdrew

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> "Filipino Groups Join in Move to Consolidate Asian Voters," *Philippine American News*, September 1-15, 1986.

from the campaign and California Assemblymember Gloria Molina eventually won the seat in 1987 to become the first Latina on the City Council.<sup>86</sup>

Community leaders and observers blamed the lack of Filipino political involvement for the redistricting. “Is there anything more deafening than the silence of over half a million Filipinos?” lamented *Philippine American News* editorialist. “Real clout, if we had it, may have prevented the recent breakup of a downtown Filipino voting block from two into four separate districts.”<sup>87</sup> “We were ignorant. We didn’t realize,” stated Geaga in a newspaper article in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, “the redistricting entirely diluted our voting stake. By the time we realized what was happening, it was too late.” “And besides,” Guerrero added, “they did the redistricting in secret.”<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, during the redistricting issue, Nena Decena Sahanaja, an advocate for a Filipino Town, began her own campaign for a Filipino Town. In October 1986, she approached Yap to explain that she felt that Nayong Pilipinas was seen as a “closed-door group” and called for more participation. Under the newly-formed group, Philippine Town Movement, Sahanaja collected signatures for a separate Filipino Town petition asking City Council to reconsider the designation. When Guerrero and Geaga caught wind of Sahanaja’s actions, they immediately accused her of trying to sabotage Nayong Pilipinas’s efforts. Guerrero argued that Sahanaja’s “maneuverings have politically damaged efforts for a Philippine Town.” When their feud

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<sup>86</sup> “Geaga Is Out; Fil Ams Court Other Camps” *Philippine American News*, December 1-15, 1986; Rodolfo Acuna, *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* (London: Verso Books, 1995), 68-69.

<sup>87</sup> “Back to Basics,” *Philippine American News*, January 16-31, 1987.

<sup>88</sup> Shawn Hubler, “Filipino Town: Big Enough for Both Sides?,” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 10, 1988.

became public, Philippine Consul General Leovigildo Anolin summoned them to a meeting to negotiate a truce. However, nothing came out of the meeting except a deeper division.<sup>89</sup>

With two competing campaigns, newly elected city Councilmember Gloria Molina conveniently pointed to the lack of a united voice as a reason why political support for a Filipino Town was premature. To be sure, Molina was concerned with her large Filipino constituency. She hired long-time Filipino American community activist Rose Ibanez to her staff. Filipino Town, nonetheless, was not a great concern of Molina's and did not invest much time and resources to mediate the political factions. "As you can see," Ibanez explained to the *Philippine American News*, "peoples' ideas of what a Philippine Town should be are all over the place." Thus, Molina's indifference to the Filipino Town campaign warring camps resulted in her withdrawal of interest in the matter altogether.<sup>90</sup>

The impetus behind business development, moreover, lost momentum without the political support for a Filipino Town. While proponents' ambitious goal of developing a commercial Filipino Town encouraged some economic activity among Filipino entrepreneurs, their investment did not yield profitable results. Edgar Yap's multi-phase cultural commercial center never came into fruition. Naïve to city zoning laws, the project required more capital than Yap anticipated to mitigate the zoning laws in the neighborhood. He took out loans in his own name to continue the project, while his initial investment in Filpinas Plaza continued to lose money because of the scarcity of businesses occupying the strip mall. The *Philippine American News* observed, "The Filipino Town proponents have been hampered by lukewarm community support aggravated by the disruptive consequences of other groups professing the same goal."

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> "Philippine Town Movements More Polarized than Ever; Discord Aired," *Philippine American News*, January 1-15, 1987.

Faced with mounting debts, a lack of other investors, and no support from government agencies, Yap had to sell all of the properties and declare bankruptcy.<sup>91</sup> The Ramos's Luzon Plaza property also faced a similar fate. Because of the economic recession that hit the nation in 1990 and an inconsistent occupancy rate, the Ramoses, like Yap, had to sell the strip mall in 1993, while Manibog sold his property when his office building lost money.<sup>92</sup> The campaign to designate and develop a commercial Filipino ethnic enclave that garnered much political fanfare in the 1980s came to a slow halt by the early 1990s.

### The Blame Game

With the demise of the Filipino Town campaign, many scholars, journalists, and casual observers offered multiple explanations of the movement's failure, all pointing to supposed internal cultural traits that kept Filipinos from advancing as an ethnic community. First, leaders identified disunity as a supposed inherent cultural trait among Filipinos that prevented any community solidarity as a political bloc in the United States. For example, in a 1979 interview with FACA President Tony San Jose about "his dream" of a "Philippine Town on Temple Street downtown to rival Little Tokyo and Chinatown," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* blamed "rival Filipino factions" for keeping San Jose from achieving his goal. "With the Filipino community lacking a clear leader," the newspaper journalist posited, "there is no end in sight to the confusion and controversy." A few years later, the *Christian Science Monitor* likewise faulted disunity as a natural characteristic of Filipinos that led to the lack of an ethnic enclave, arguing that "if Filipinos find little to pull them together, they find much to pull them apart."

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<sup>91</sup> "Community Setback," *Philippine American News*, October 16, 1986; Jonathan Peterson, "Filipinos – A Search for Community," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989.

<sup>92</sup> Monty Manibog, Interview by author, December 11, 2012.

Nayong Pilipinas leader Remedios Geaga likewise suggested that Filipinos' "fragmentation as an ethnic minority is making [them] vulnerable to the old saying, 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall.'" Her colleague Connie Guerrero similarly believed that local government officials viewed Filipinos as "so divided they don't want to touch us with a 10-foot pole."<sup>93</sup>

Disunity, of course, was never a uniquely Filipino cultural trait, despite the rhetoric of Filipino American community leaders and portrayals in the media. Political harmony in community organizing is always an elusive goal. There were some who did not take the "disunity" thesis to heart. Journalist Cecile Ochoa argued, "We have our share of disagreements as a community but so do others...maybe it is about time that many of us reeducate ourselves to stop thinking that other communities are more 'united' than ours." Nayong Pilipinas advocate, Gerald Gubatan, also disregarded cultural fragmentation as a natural trait in his editorial letter to the *Philippine American News* regarding the absence of a Filipino enclave, "The unity argument, for example, is a superficial one – nebulously defined – that fails to respect individual differences and our unique personal identities."<sup>94</sup> Yet, despite these calls to debunk arguments about disunity, many Filipinos continued to believe that the lack of a united political voice was to blame for their marginality in American society. As one community leader remarked a few years even after the Filipino Town fizzled, "What Filipinos in this country need badly is unity.

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<sup>93</sup> Milt Policzer, "His Dream – Filipino Town," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, March 25, 1979.; Marshall Ingwerson, "Filipinos Try to Leave Their Cultural Mark on Los Angeles," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 1984; Remedios Geaga, "From the President," *Bulletin*, February 1976, 5, Box Unsorted 1, Royal F. Morales Papers.

<sup>94</sup> Cecile Ochoa, "Of Lessons Still Not Learned," *Philippine American News*, July 1-15, 1987; Gerald Gubatan, "Letter to Editor," *Philippine American News*, July 16-31, 1987.

They should unite so they can have a political clout [sic] just like the Chinese or Japanese or Mexicans. For promoting their social, economic, and political status in his country.”<sup>95</sup>

Second, community leaders postulated that the historic lack of entrepreneurship among Filipinos prevented a commercial ethnic enclave from forming. Mel Red Recana, for example, suggested that Filipinos “are not a nation of shopkeepers...historically, culturally, by training and education, we are service-oriented. There is no need for us to live in enclaves nor work in a Filipino Town.”<sup>96</sup> Scholars and journalists alike have argued that a historic lack of entrepreneurial prowess among Filipinos has prevented the formation of Filipino ethnic enclave. Most attributed the lack of Filipino American entrepreneurship to both the colonially-structured dominance of Chinese migrants in the Philippine urban economy and the propensity of Filipino migrants to enter wage-labor employment in the United States because of their professional training and English fluency rather than depend on self-employment.<sup>97</sup> Although historical data suggests that self-employment was generally low among post-1965 Filipino Americans, the general indicator that drew claims for the dearth of Filipino entrepreneurship, this framework ignored the significant number of businesses not geared towards an ethnic economy such as nursing homes, non-brick-and-mortar enterprises such as real estate and insurance, and side businesses meant to supplement wage-labor income among Filipino immigrants. Many Filipino businesses in the Temple Street neighborhood, moreover, did exist to cater to the community, but “Filipino Town” did not garner the multicultural legibility to attract a consumer base beyond

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<sup>95</sup> “Divided Opinions on Filipino Unity,” *Philippine American News*, May 16-31, 1989.

<sup>96</sup> Mel Red Recana, “Filipinos in the Southland,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1989.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 336-337; and Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 41.

local Filipino residents to develop a tourist economy like Chinatown or Little Tokyo.<sup>98</sup> Yet, as an illegible ethnic enclave, many blamed the perceived inherent inability of Filipinos to capture the entrepreneurial spirit.

The perceived absence of an entrepreneurial class was nonetheless viewed as a deficiency of Filipino Americans. Store owner Pastor Obal explained that Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean Americans have “a strong sense of unity in those communities that bands businessmen and customers together,” a “cohesiveness clearly missing among Filipinos.” Store owner Sammy Lorenzana added that Filipinos “have been outmaneuvered and outclassed by more patient and preserving ethnic groups...There are hundreds of Chinese and Vietnamese stores in L.A. that have taken over 60 to 70 percent of our business.” To reverse the perceived cultural trait, Filipino Town proponents believed that their project would encourage entrepreneurship. Gerald Gubatan argued that Filipinos needed to rid themselves of the “colonial experience” that prevented entrepreneurship and encourage “the development of Filipino-owned and operated small businesses, which could eventually lead to a real Philippine Town.” Cecile Ramos also conveyed her intentions to help businesses thrive, “We were helping other Filipinos, especially those who just came here find places to live. We built Luzon Plaza to make Filipino Town good for small businesses. I could have lived a life of luxuriousness, but I decided to help others.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> James T. Fawcett and Robert W. Gardner, “Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Non-Entrepreneurs: A Comparative Study of Recent Korean and Filipino Immigrants” *Population and Environment* 15, no. 3 (January 1994); Jennifer Nazareno reveals that over the last three decades, Filipino Americans have developed an economic niche in the elderly care home industry. Jennifer Nazareno, “Caring for the ‘Undesirables’” (paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies, Washington, D.C., April 13, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Luis Sinco, “Filipino Stores in Hard Times vs. Competition,” *Philippine American News*, January 16-31, 1986.

What many Filipino Town proponents failed to realize was the vital role city officials played in attracting businesses and transnational Asian capital to ethnic neighborhoods like Little Tokyo to booster Los Angeles's place as a center of globalization. Espousing multiculturalist and orientalist rhetoric, city officials facilitated the organization of Little Tokyo redevelopment beginning in the 1960s to entice Japanese corporations, particularly Japan's Kajima Corporation to invest in downtown Los Angeles. The result was a Little Tokyo with businesses that catered to both American and Japanese tourists, ignoring and displacing long-time neighborhood residents.<sup>100</sup> Instead of critiquing city investment in corporations in the development of Little Tokyo, Filipino Town leaders only reinforced notions of cultural deficiency in business acumen when the bid for a Filipino Town failed.

Finally, the demise of the campaign underscored the belief by many Filipino community leaders in a supposed damaged national culture. In numerous ways, the goal of a Filipino Town in Los Angeles was a nationalist campaign among Filipinos in the United States. Just as community leaders believed that a Filipino ethnic enclave would benefit those with less economic means, they also imagined that such a project would fulfill a desire of a bounded national space within a global multiethnic metropolis such as Los Angeles. A Filipino Town, proponents argued, would generate a type of cultural nationalism that produced affective ties with one's Philippine "roots" ruptured through the process of migration. In other words, a Filipino Town was a way to reconstruct a "prosperous" Filipino American nation outside of the Philippines. In *Nayong Pilipinas* promotional materials, organizers' vision for Filipino Town

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<sup>100</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 186-212.

entailed the creating a space where one can “feel at home away from home.”<sup>101</sup> Gerald Gubatan likewise wrote in a letter to the *Philippine American News*:

Such a project not only would inject new economic life into an area in need of revitalization, symbolically, it would allow young American-born Pilipinos to connect with their ethnic roots. It would allow elderly Pilipinos to participate meaningfully in the community’s social life. It would become a cultural frame of reference, a central place giving physical form to the true meaning of community.<sup>102</sup>

Community leader Linda Mabalot also believed that a Filipino Town “can immensely contribute to the *survival and preservation* of our Filipino heritage.” Because of the propensity of Filipinos, especially among the second and third generations, to feel a loss of ethnic identity, a Filipino Town, Mabalot continued, would give “the Filipino American self-pride and self-respect,” and felt that such a campaign is “something worth struggling for.”<sup>103</sup> For Gubatan, Mabalot, and many others, a Filipino Town would serve as a spatial and temporal link between a Philippine past and an American future.

When Filipino Town did not materialize, organically or inorganically, many community leaders blamed the vast heterogeneity of Filipinos and a failed Philippine nationalism. Filipino store owner Sammy Lorenzana argued, “I could go 50 miles from one town in the Philippines to another and not understand a single word...we don’t understand each other. We have different characteristics.” When describing the abundance of public quarrels among Filipinos, journalist Gat Santos similarly suggested, “It is part of our character...in the Philippines we are divided into more than 7,100 islands and 86 dialects. We carry our differences here.” Business owner and community advocate Cecile Ramos likewise believed that Filipinos “are not unified people

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<sup>101</sup> “Solicitation Letter from Edgar O. Yap, President of Nayong Pilipinas, Inc.,” May 18, 1987, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library.

<sup>102</sup> Gerald Gubatan, “Building a Community,” *Philippine American News*, June 16-30, 1985.

<sup>103</sup> Linda Mabalot, “Filipino Town: A Worthy Struggle,” *Philippine American News*, April 16-30, 1985.

there [the Philippines]. It makes it so hard to unify Filipinos here.”<sup>104</sup> Lending credence to the failed national project of uniting disparate linguistic groups under one Philippine nation, community leaders thus shared sentiments with Filipino nationalists. To them, the supposed inability to establish an ethnic enclave because of Filipinos’ seeming lack of national cohesiveness left their community undeserving of a place in U.S. identity-based politics. Such beliefs echoed the same logic U.S. officials used during the American colonial period in which Philippine independence was repeatedly deferred because Filipinos had to prove they could achieve national “unity.”<sup>105</sup> In many ways then, the continuation of Filipino American leaders’ elusive quest for Philippine nationalism in Los Angeles was not simply the product of a campaign traveling across the Pacific, but more significantly, it conveyed the linkage between colonialism in the Philippines and multicultural inclusion in the United States.

Despite much of this blame game, the roots of this desire for a Filipino Town was embedded within the process in which American multiculturalism occluded and subsumed race and empire in the development and promotion of ethnic enclaves. As city officials dedicated more funding towards the continued development of ethnic neighborhoods and social services within those areas from the 1960s onward, Filipino leaders organized a campaign for a distinct Filipino enclave. A FASGI brochure suggested, “Temple Street has long been identified with the Filipino community in Los Angeles. It is where the Filipino pioneers settled. Filipinos have a

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<sup>104</sup> Jonathan Peterson, “Filipinos – A Search for Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1989; Shawn Hubler, “Filipino Town: Big Enough for Both Sides?,” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 10, 1988; Cecile Ramos, Interview by author, March 23, 2011.

<sup>105</sup> In what Paul Kramer calls it “calibrated colonialism,” American colonial officials dictated arbitrary criteria in which Filipinos’ racial capacity for self-rule would be measured by, including the demonstration of national “unity.” Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 159-228, 285-346. See also Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 19-51.

deep yearning to identify themselves with a site *comparable* to Little Tokyo for the Japanese and Chinatown for the Chinese” (emphasis added).<sup>106</sup> As FASGI’s brochure conveyed, proponents’ desire for a Filipino Town was predicated on the existence of other Asian ethnic enclaves in the city and their seeming ability to gain political “recognition.”

To the eyes of Filipino Town proponents, developing a similar ethnic enclave would fulfill the desire of “political empowerment” as a sanctioned member of multicultural Los Angeles, and with it, access to the American welfare state and other public and philanthropic capital for community needs. Doing so, however, meant engaging in elusive multicultural politics through the participation in the vexed economy of exotic tourism. In their plans for a Filipino Town, Nayong Pilipinas leaders called for an “economic sector, which will be composed of Filipino business which should emphasize ethnic products.” “Construction of buildings,” moreover, should “give the area a distinct Philippine architecture and make the place truly a Nayong Pilipinas.” Philippine Town Movement Inc. head, Decena Sahanaja, likewise hoped to develop a \$10 million cultural trade center.<sup>107</sup> Tourism, to Filipino Town proponents, was essential in the development and sustenance of a Filipino enclave. What many failed to realize was the reductive and romanticized development of such ethnic spaces to begin with.

Striving for political recognition and attention in Los Angeles, as the Filipino Town campaign demonstrated, meant constructing Orientalist spatial concentrations, developing ethnic niche entrepreneurship, and engaging in liberal multicultural politics with the elusive goal of

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<sup>106</sup> Filipino American Service Group, Inc., “Notes,” May 1983, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library.

<sup>107</sup> “Pasko Sa Nayon: A Filipino Town is Born...” Souvenir Program, December 8, 1984, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library; Solicitation Letter from Edgar O. Yap, President of Nayong Pilipinas, Inc.,” May 18, 1987, “Filipinotown” Files, Filipino American Library; “Filipino Town: Big Enough for Both Sides?,” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 10, 1988.

“empowerment,” processes that elided the past roots and contemporary realities of labor migration and American imperialism. With the failure of the Filipino Town campaign, community leaders believed they were not only “invisible,” but somehow also culturally “deficient” to participate in American politics, rather than critiquing or recognizing the fallacy of such categorical legibility within multicultural politics. As a result, these leaders continued to vie for a Filipino Town and reproduce other multicultural campaigns that strove for “political empowerment.” In other words, the elusiveness of Filipino American “visibility,” certainly a product of multicultural identity politics, fueled leaders to further engage in participatory politics and maintain their trust in the state apparatuses to alleviate their problems. The failure of the Filipino Town campaign marked not Filipino Americans’ cultural dysfunction, but rather highlighted how the systematic regime of multiculturalism obscured the history of U.S. imperialism.

Within the paradigm of liberal multiculturalism, in which groups mitigate their marginalization through state recognition and negotiation, many Filipino American leaders perceived themselves as “falling behind” in comparison to other non-white communities. When Filipinos did not receive the same level of civic attention and funding as other groups in a myriad of arenas in governmental politics, leaders believed that their communities suffered from “invisibility” and sought to organize politically to gain recognition, while ignoring the inherent elusiveness and fallacy of multicultural “political empowerment” and the larger structural forces of race and empire. Nonetheless, seeing the negotiated social and economic benefits of ethnic tourism especially in the development of affordable housing, social services, and political visibility in Chinatown and Little Tokyo, new Filipino American community leaders, mainly

comprised of post-1965 immigrants launched a campaign to develop a “Filipino Town” in the Temple-Beverly Corridor beginning in the late 1970s. However, Filipino leaders struggled to market the area to sustain an ethnic tourist economy to build a discernible enclave, and with it, government and philanthropic dollars for social service programs and affordable housing projects.<sup>108</sup> This struggle, however, reflects not so much the “inability” of Filipinos to engage in identity politics, but rather the limitations of the paradigm itself to address the true social inequities in the Filipino American community.

Without the state support and capital to sustain economic development in the Temple Street neighborhood, the area became one of hundreds of neighborhoods in Los Angeles that fell victim to urban blight and neglect from the 1970s to the 1990s. Crime, gangs, and poverty rose in the Rampart area, the division that encompassed Temple Street neighborhood.<sup>109</sup> Government divestment in the neighborhood caused thousands of people, including many Filipinos, to sell their homes to the newest wave of global migrants in Los Angeles. Many Filipino Americans assumed further suburbanization as the natural next step, rearticulating the Temple Street neighborhood, which was once the suburban haven for an earlier generation, as a transitory, inner-city “ghetto” only fit for newly arrived immigrants who will supposedly assimilate and suburbanize once properly “adjusted.” As former Temple Street neighborhood resident Eduardo Altamira posited, “It is only natural. Filipinos, when they come here, they first move to L.A....on Temple Street. Then when they are adjusted, they move to other places like West

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<sup>108</sup> Augusto Espiritu, “The Rise and Fall of the Filipino Town Campaign in Los Angeles: A Study in Filipino American Leadership” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992); Wendy Lee, “Filipinotown Searching for Its Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Bangele Deguzman Alsaybar, “Youth Groups and Youth Savers: Gangs, Crews, and the Rise of Filipino American Youth Culture in Los Angeles” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), 80-87.

Covina or the Valley.”<sup>110</sup> Such a spatial racialization of the neighborhood as “transitory,” however, only reinforced assimilationist discourse, leading to further city disinvestment in the area and in the Filipino American community in general.

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<sup>110</sup> Eduardo Altamira, Interview by author, March 9, 2011.

## **Epilogue:** **Multiculturalism in the Revanchist City**

In 2001, as the term of Jackie Goldberg as Councilmember for Los Angeles's 13<sup>th</sup> Council District, which encompassed the Temple Street neighborhood, was nearing its end, several candidates vied to replace her.<sup>1</sup> Michael Woo, the former Councilmember for the area and former mayoral candidate, and Eric Garcetti, newcomer to politics and son of former Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti, succeeded into the run-off election as the top two vote-getters. To ensure issues in the Filipino community were not ignored, a group of leaders from various Filipino American organizations held a town hall debate between the two candidates at Rosemont Elementary School. Urging the participation of the larger Filipino American community, the outreach email for the event read:

Historically, Pilipinotown has been the area of Temple/Beverly Corridor near downtown LA in which the *Manong* Generation and the thousands of immigrant families fleeing martial law has gone and settle for a new life... Well it is our chance to fill up the whole auditorium (I know we can!) and show our support for our community. I am serious, this kind of a venue in which we as a community can tell the candidates what we want and need for our families and neighborhood.

We need to make our demands, like a Veterans memorial center, low-income housing for elderly seniors and veterans run by the community, a multi-service community mall, support for local businesses and recruitment of new businesses, a community park in which all generations and families can interact, a new school, a parade through Pilipinotown, more representation in local and city government, a cultural

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<sup>1</sup> After the release of the 2000 census and another process of redistricting, the Los Angeles Commission on Redistricting consolidated the Temple Street neighborhood within the boundaries of the 13<sup>th</sup> Council District through the advocacy of vocal Filipino American leaders. Cecile Ramos, Interview by author, March 23, 2011; Tina Daunt and Seema Mehta, "Council Districts Redrawn to Benefit Valley, Latinos," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2002.

center/studio/museum, etc.

The chance is here in front of us. WHAT SHALL WE DO???<sup>2</sup>

A key issue during the debate was the proposed designation of “Filipino Town” in the Temple Street neighborhood, a long-standing issue within the Filipino community. Believed to be a close election, both candidates battled to assure the primarily Filipino audience there that evening their full support of the Filipino Town endeavor. Garcetti, who eventually won the election by a narrow vote, formed a task force immediately upon taking office to explore the idea of establishing a Filipino Town, engaging residents, businesses, and community leaders in the process. A year later, on August 2, 2002, the Los Angeles City Council passed a motion introduced by Councilmember Eric Garcetti officially designating the Temple Street neighborhood as “Historic Filipinotown.” The legislative measure catapulted Garcetti to political stardom among Filipinos in Los Angeles, resulting in unprecedented loyalty to the young politician in subsequent elections.<sup>3</sup>

Since 2002, Filipino community leaders have continued to invest resources into the development of Historic Filipinotown despite critiques that the neighborhood possessed nothing “historic” nor “Filipino.”<sup>4</sup> Several individuals have opened various businesses hoping to spur

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Bis, “Pilipinotown/District 13 Townhall Meeting for City Council Election,” e-mail message to author, May, 22, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> “How Councilman Eric Garcetti Emerged as a Champion of the Filipino-American Community (and Fashion),” *The Eastsider L.A.*, March 2, 2009, <http://www.theeast siderla.com/2009/03/how-councilman-eric-garcetti-emerged-as-a-champion-of-the-filipino-american-community-and-fashion/>

<sup>4</sup> Wendy Lee in a 2005 article about the neighborhood claimed, “It’s easy to miss what’s Filipino in the area.” Wendy Lee, “Filipinotown Searching for Its Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 2005. Moreover, after investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to beautify Temple Street and build attractions and amenities to attract capital to build a tourist economy, Garcetti himself admitted, “the development of Historic Filipinotown as an ethnic tourist neighborhood has been slower to come than I had hoped.” Amee Enriquez, “Historic Filipinotown in Downtown Los Angeles,” *Balita*, November 2, 2011.

commercial interest in the neighborhood, some having success while others not. Similarly, new organizations, such as the Historic Filipinotown Chamber of Commerce and the Historic Filipinotown Neighborhood Council, Inc., have dedicated resources to the economic development of the area. Established social service-oriented organizations – such as the Filipino American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI), Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), and the Pilipino Workers Center (PWC) – have concomitantly invested more time and resources since the city’s designation in 2002 in the promotion of Historic Filipinotown, hoping to garner more state and corporate attention to the needs of the clients they serve. “The history of Historic Filipinotown is far from over,” wrote Philippine Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon in 2009, “We look forward to a future when Filipinos would come back in droves, re-establish their domiciles, businesses and landmarks, and eventually reclaim the area, so that Historic Filipinotown would cease to be ‘Historic’ and simply be known as ‘Filipinotown.’”<sup>5</sup> As Aragon and others have conveyed, the hope of developing a “true” Filipinotown where their “demands” are met – and not simply a historical marker – continues to drive the work of many hopeful Filipino American leaders and organizations in Los Angeles. Ironically, the elusiveness of the Filipinotown project itself, and the promise of equality that it purports, continues to fuel community leaders towards a politics of inclusion.

Such politics, however, ignores and elides the history of imperialism that has shaped, and continues to shape, the lives of Filipino Americans. Since the 2002 designation of Historic Filipinotown, the neighborhood has garnered unprecedented recognition from elected officials in local, state, and federal governments. In 2012, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation recognized the neighborhood as a Preserve America Community after much lobbying from the

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<sup>5</sup> Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon, “Message,” in Carina Monica Montoya, *Los Angeles’s Historic Filipinotown* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

some leaders in the Filipino American community. The Preserve America program, initiated by an executive order from President George W. Bush in 2003, aimed to “preserve and enjoy our priceless cultural and natural heritage.”<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of Historic Filipinotown into Preserve America made the neighborhood eligible for grants from the federal program. Yet, it was also President George W. Bush, who during his visit to the Philippines in 2003, declared that Americans “liberated” the country from colonial rule a century earlier, a claim that facilitated the increasing U.S. military personnel in the Philippines as part of his America’s War on Terror.<sup>7</sup> It is certain is that no such history of U.S. imperialism will be discussed in any Historic Filipinotown project funded by Preserve America or any other government, corporate, or philanthropic program. As the linkage between Bush’s Preserve America program and the War on Terror suggests, efforts to develop Historic Filipinotown spring largely from a framework of superficial liberal multiculturalism, a regime that masks and erases empire in past and contemporary Filipino Los Angeles.

Nevertheless, as Filipino populations skyrocket across North America, many communities continue to seek political visibility through the establishment of demarcated Filipino neighborhoods. In 1999, the Stockton City Council voted unanimously to designate a 4-block area around El Dorado and Lafayette Streets as a historic site named “Little Manila” after years of activism from local community members fighting against downtown development. In 2004, the city of San Francisco declared two-block corridor of Kearny Street as “Manilatown.” There have also been attempts to designate a “Filipino Village” in National City, California, a

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<sup>6</sup> “Preserve America Executive Order,” Preserve America, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/EO.html>

<sup>7</sup> John B. Judis, “The Folly of Empire: What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson,” *Center for American Progress*, August 20, 2004, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/media/news/2004/08/20/1016/the-folly-of-empire-what-george-w-bush-could-learn-from-theodore-roosevelt-and-woodrow-wilson/>

“Little Manila” in Queens, New York, and in Canada, a “Pinoy Town” in Vancouver and a “Fil Town” in Toronto.<sup>8</sup> As these numerous campaigns suggest, many community leaders among the growing Filipino populations in the global diaspora are increasingly looking towards and investing in the promise of multicultural inclusion.

Indicative of the limitations of multiculturalism, however, ethnic enclave designation continues to hinge on multiculturalism’s supposed boundaries. In Southern California, it appeared that claiming ethnic space was only acceptable in areas where whites no longer staked a political claim, namely in low-income neighborhoods of color. In 2003, Filipinos tried unsuccessfully to convince neighborhood activists and city officials to designate a portion of Eagle Rock “Philippine Village” since those opposed “did not want to live in Manila.” Likewise, local Filipinos lobbied the West Covina City Council in 2000 to designate the area around Azusa Avenue and Amar Road as “Little Manila,” but fell short of the needed votes.<sup>9</sup> Attempts at claiming state recognition through the formation of ethnic neighborhoods extend beyond just the Filipino community. In 2003, South Asian community groups unsuccessfully convinced the Artesia city council to designate a four-block stretch of Pioneer Boulevard as “Little India,” despite the tourism capital the Indian district attracts and legislation introduced in the California State Assembly to erect “Little India” signage on the 91 Freeway. In San Jose, the Vietnamese community attempted to recall Madison Nguyen, the lone Vietnamese member of

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<sup>8</sup> Neela Banerjee, “‘Little Manila’ Becomes Official,” *AsianWeek*, November 2, 2000; Cicero E. Estrella, “‘Manilatown’ Will Rise Again,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 28, 2004; Mary Ann Reyes, “National City Site for Future Filipino Village,” *Asia*, July 18, 2003; Tim Chan, “Little Manila Thrives in the Heart of Queens,” *Filipino Express*, July 3, 2006; Tyler Orton, “Filipinos Want Vancouver Designated ‘Pinoy Town,’” *24 Hours Vancouver*, January 3, 2012, <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca>; “After Haiyan – Toronto’s Filipino Community,” *CBC-Toronto*, November 21, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca>.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Topping, “Philippine Village: Blocked – but not Stopped,” *Boulevard Sentinel*, December 14, 2002; Dionesio C. Grava, “W. Covina Fil-Ams Voice Optimism on a Philippine Town,” *Bankaw*, June 17-23, 2001.

the city council, for failing to support their campaign to designate Story Road in San Jose as “Little Saigon” since non-Vietnamese businesses complained about the proposed designation. Bangladeshi and Korean leaders clashed when Bangladeshi groups proposed to rename a section of Los Angeles’ Koreatown “Little Bangladesh” in 2009.<sup>10</sup> While these struggles for ethnic enclave designation seem to be simply a matter of American society accepting multiculturalism as a new cultural reality, each needs to be explored as connected to the larger realms of U.S. empire and labor migration. Simply welcoming global migrants through multicultural gestures does little to explain or mitigate the exponential increase of labor migration that create such “diversity” in the first place. The growing trend of ethnic enclave designations must be historicized and contextualized within the liberal ethos of multiculturalism as a means to maintain and reinforce white hegemony and global capitalism.

Historicizing Historic Filipinotown in Los Angeles is precisely the aim of this dissertation. I have attempted to understand the particular historical contexts that produced the varying shifts of Filipino space in Los Angeles from both the built environment and the discourse engendered from it. From its initial inception as a product of segregation to its racialization as a place of unassimilability to its destruction in the age of urban renewal to its reclamation as a site for political inclusion, Little Manila/Historic Filipinotown emerged and evolved because of the material and discursive shifts of U.S. empire. By following the contours of the changing landscape of U.S. imperialism throughout the twentieth century, this dissertation reveals the various and complicated ways in which the larger forces of empire intersect and shape the everyday lives of Filipinos in the American metropole.

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<sup>10</sup> Li Fellers, “Artesia Split on Little India Proposal,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 2003; John Woolfolk, “San Jose Vice Mayor Madison Nguyen Tells Her Story,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 2, 2012; Mira Jang, “Koreans and Bangladeshis Vie in Los Angeles District,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2009.

On one level, my dissertation provides insight of how cities in the United States have dealt and will deal with increased ethnic heterogeneity. Many policymakers, for better or worse, continue to look at Los Angeles as a barometer of the future of race relations in the United States. As urban America is fast becoming multiethnic, histories of cities such as Los Angeles, whose past racial compositions mirror current demographics in the United States, need to be examined closely for multiculturalism's contradictions. Thirty-seven countries currently have their largest overseas population in Southern California, including the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> However, as I have conveyed in my work, such ethnic diversity is very much a historical product of imperialism and labor migration no matter how much local city officials fail to recognize that history. The increased dominance of immigrant assimilation, suburbanization, and multiculturalism across the United States, symbols of what appear to be a growing sense of progress in American race relations, were and still are complex and relational devices to maintain and further white hegemony in Los Angeles and beyond. Moreover, as labor migration to metropolitan cities, brought on by the history of colonialism and empire, accelerates across the world, societies in the Global North will continue to propagate tropes like assimilation and multiculturalism through place. As my dissertation conveys, global labor migration and liberal strategies to maintain control over these economic and political structures were very much embedded in the experiences of Filipino Americans in Los Angeles throughout the twentieth century.

As such, my dissertation, like many recent works in Asian American Studies, critiques traditional immigration/assimilation paradigms very much prevalent in the field, particularly among works on ethnic enclaves. Past and current studies of Little Manila/Historic

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<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Kendell, "Cultural Diversity, Education and Civic Participation Focus of Talk," *Daily Bruin*, February 17, 2012.

Filipinotown, for example, one of the most prevalent subjects of any study of Filipinos in Los Angeles, parallel most works on ethnic enclaves that present narratives of liberal inclusion through a teleological arc of immigration, assimilation, and historical preservation.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, my work seeks to center race and empire in the formation, destruction, and reclamation of such urban developments and the discourses that spawn from and reinforce spatial segmentation. Both the demonization of ethnic enclaves as a physical manifestation of a supposed failed assimilation, as well as the celebration of such neighborhoods as a liberal triumph of multicultural diversity, ignore the politics of imperialism that propelled wide-scale labor migration from its inception. Filipino American political campaigns to stake claims in the American nation, even as attempts to gain social and economic benefits from the welfare state, can, in many ways, obscure and advance forces of globalization. This study on the history of Filipino space in Los Angeles is an attempt to demonstrate these contradictions and limitations from both vantage points.

Finally, my dissertation anticipates the ongoing complications of spatial power in increasingly globalized cities. Spatiality has been an important driver in the history of Los Angeles's racial landscape and will continue to be one moving forward. In what the late Neil Smith called, the "Revanchist City," white capital has slowly returned to many inner cities across the United States beginning in the 1980s after decades of suburban flight and divestment in much of the city center. Throngs of urban professionals have since moved to working-class

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<sup>12</sup> Like the sociological works of Filipinos in Los Angeles produced by scholars at the University of Southern California, Historic Filipinotown has become the subject of many academic studies by local students. In 1990, Tania Azores taught a special topics class in the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA examining the political issues of establishing a Filipinotown in Los Angeles. Students of the class then presented their findings at a special event at the Filipino Christian Church. Augusto Espiritu, "The Rise and Fall of the Filipino Town Campaign in Los Angeles: A Study in Filipino American Leadership" (Master's thesis: University of California, Los Angeles, 1992), 52.

neighborhoods, remaking these areas to fit middle class tastes.<sup>13</sup> Prompting this “reverse migration,” was the increased militarization of the inner city and the systematic criminalization and incarceration of young men of color, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Once crime decreased in the inner city, many higher income professionals made their homes in once crime-plagued areas, raising property and rental values.<sup>14</sup> Urban planners and city planners now laud this “return” to the inner city and tout the land-use policy of “smart growth,” which emphasizes high-density “urban living” and further encourages the gentrification of inner-city neighborhoods. State-subsidized affordable housing aimed to curb gentrification has been minimal at best. Housing developers in California cities, for example, have used loopholes in state code, namely the Ellis Act, to circumvent rent stabilization ordinances. There has also been a paucity of political will at the municipal level to increase affordable housing trust funds and institute legislation to mandate mixed-income housing for new developments. In Los Angeles, the City Council defeated a proposed inclusionary zoning ordinance in 2005 that would provide incentives to developers to provide low-income housing units in new developments.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (New York: Routledge, 1996). See also Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 3-28. See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Under a California law known as the Ellis Act, landlords may exit the business of renting residential property by converting their property to commercial or for-sale residential, with some restrictions. This has resulted in a loophole allowing property owners to demolish their rent-stabilized apartment buildings and build new apartment buildings with no rent restrictions. Marisa Lagos and John Wildermuth, “Ellis Act Evictions Soar, Tenants Rally,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 19, 2012. After the defeat of the inclusionary zoning bill in 2005, a weaker law was passed a few years later, but was reversed after a developer successfully sued the city claiming that the inclusionary housing mandate violated California state law. Kerry Cavanaugh, “Mayor Revives Drive for Affordable Housing,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, October 17, 2007; Howard Fine, “Developers Stand Ground Against Housing Bill,” *Los Angeles Business Journal*, September 2, 2013.

On the other side of gentrification is the increased suburbanization of poor whites and communities of color over the last few decades. Many families in the inner city, eager to sell their home at a high property value or become pushed out because of increased rents, have moved to the suburbs and exurbs at increasing rates, hoping that suburbia would provide a better quality of life. Filipino Americans have certainly been a large part of this suburban migration. Such increased diversity of suburban areas over the last couple decades has also solicited claims of liberalism's triumph over the racial woes of the past.<sup>16</sup> As with past iterations of "suburban assimilation" tropes, however, "ethnic suburbia" has emerged as a place of disparate and divergent realities. Many new suburbanites, for example, became victims of the sub-prime mortgage scandal, deceived by mortgage brokers to take on loans they could not afford. Beginning in 2008, many suburban homeowners lost their homes due to loan defaults and foreclosures. By 2010, poverty became more prevalent in the suburbs than in the inner city for the first time in U.S. history. Moreover, as Los Angeles Police Department officials claim to have lowered the crime rate in the city proper, crime in exurbs like the Inland Empire and Antelope Valley have skyrocketed, proving that crime was not simply eradicated, but relocated to other jurisdictions while incarceration rates increased.<sup>17</sup> As city officials tout the "cleaning up" of the city after years of economic decline, new forms of exclusion and oppression have emerged.

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<sup>16</sup> For a more extensive analysis on post-Fordist suburbia, see Myron Orfield and Thomas Luce, *America's Racially Diverse Suburbs: Opportunities and Challenges* (Minneapolis: Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Amaad Rivera, Brenda Cotto-Escalera, Anisha Desai, Jeannette Huezo, and Dedrick Muhammad, *Foreclosed: State of the Dream 2008* (Boston: United for a Fair Economy, 2008); Brad Plumer, "Poverty is Growing Twice as Fast in the Suburbs as in Cities," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2013; Elizabeth Kneebone and Steven Raphael, *City and Suburban Crime Trends in Metropolitan America* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2011).

As the Revanchist City becomes more of a reality in urban America, campaigns to designate and preserve ethnic neighborhoods through reinforcing liberal paradigms have nonetheless become more popular. In an effort to keep their foothold in their historical neighborhoods in the face of gentrification, many communities have and will continue to employ multiculturalist and orientalist strategies to fuel the ethnic economies of these neighborhoods. Activists and business leaders in places like San Francisco's Japantown, Philadelphia's Chinatown, Harlem in New York, and Los Angeles's Historic Filipinotown ironically use methods that accentuate the "foreign-ness" of these districts to boost their ethnic tourist economies and curb gentrification. Historic preservationists, hoping to gain state recognition and support in order to save ethnic neighborhoods from eradication, have likewise maintained a liberal narrative of inclusion into the American polity in their efforts, erasing the history of empire.<sup>18</sup> Such visions of multiethnic America unfortunately ignore both the realities of the Revanchist City and the sustained suburbanization of communities, while supporting and reinforcing liberal multiculturalism as a societal objective. These realities thus begs a call for more radical activism that challenges white racism and global imperialism.

While many forms of social movements that critique imperialism and racism have certainly emerged historically and in the current moment, tactics of hegemony – counterrevolution and complicity – will undoubtedly continue apace. As I have traced throughout this history of Filipinos in Los Angeles, many Filipinos are more than willing to assume assimilation, war loyalty, home ownership, and multiculturalism if it means they recuperate material benefits from such strategies. Such is the complexity and conundrum of social justice organizing. What is necessary, then, is to strive for a politics that drives at the

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Grant, "Race and Tourism in America's First City," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 6 (September 2005): 850-871.

heart of imperialism, but also addresses the everyday needs and desires of those most affected by it.

At its core, this dissertation conveys how racial and imperial power was and still is inscribed in space. As cities become more global and heterogeneous, those in power will continue to shift racial logics in order to maintain both material and discursive forms of spatial hegemony that favor whites and the affluent. Racial and gender boundaries and imaginaries will mark urban space as it had throughout the history of Little Manila/Historic Filipinotown. Yet, I have also attempted to reveal in this dissertation the complexities of these power structures by conveying how the promise of liberalism, in its various forms, entices the marginalized. Tropes such as assimilation, racial uplift, wartime loyalty, suburbanization, and in more recent years, multicultural “visibility,” continue to complicate and call to question campaigns for social justice as much as it maintains imperial and racial power. The goal of this dissertation then is to help readers understand the links between empire, race, and place and to look beyond many symbols and movements touted by many as “progressive.” Viewed through this lens in which power and space are co-constitutive, we can perhaps devise creative possibilities to advance social justice that address global forces that also takes into consideration local practicalities.

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Louis Crouch Papers  
Western States Jewish History Archive

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Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Records  
California Historical Society Collection of Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce  
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