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The Mystery of Pacita Todtod: Filipino American Actress, Singer, Journalist, and Community Leader in the 1940s

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in

Asian American Studies

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Pacita Todtod (married name Bobadilla) was a Filipino American actress and singer, as well as community leader and editor-in-chief of the *Philippines Mail,* a Filipino American newspaper. Through Todtod's performances and written works, we can observe the complex power dynamics of race and gender in the colonial context of American paternalism in the Philippines during World War II, and in the local politics of Filipino American migrant communities in Northern California. Todtod advocated for Filipino women's political participation, representing a specifically *Filipina* form of nationalism, a controversial position at the time. Her sudden and quiet departure from the *Mail* signaled the end of her journalism career, cutting short what potentially was the start of a Filipino woman's bright future in politics. Despite the mysteries surrounding her life, this paper seeks to reconstruct the story of Pacita Todtod as a partial window into the Filipino American women's world of the 1940s.

The thesis of Melissa Jeanne Jamero is approved.

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Introduction

A young Filipina poses for a studio photographer, her sparkling eyes beaming through the black and white image. Her hands cradle her face as her wide smile and radiant beauty capture the photo's beholder. Her makeup accentuates her youthful features, and her hair is carefully coiffed in glamorous Hollywood curls. In small, italicized print, the caption reads, "Pacita Todtod, first Filipina American to be placed under contract to RKO Pictures in 1943."[1] Lost in the pages of history, Pacita Todtod emerged in my research as more than the first Filipina to perform in a major Hollywood film with the likes of John Wayne and Robert Montgomery. In addition to acting and singing she was a community leader and editor-in-chief of a major Filipino American newspaper, all before she turned 25. More than just a pretty face with a lovely singing voice, Todtod proved to be a skillful writer and an influential voice for Filipino women. Her courage on the stage and in the pages of the paper demonstrates her dedication to the Filipino American community.

Pacita Todtod (affectionately called "Pacing" by friends and family) was born on May 14, 1920 in the Philippines province of Cebu. Like many Filipinos from the Visayan Islands of the Philippines, she immigrated to the United States, eventually settling in the Santa Clara Valley of California. Todtod emigrated from the Philippines with her family, which suggests she came from a higher-class position because the Todtod's had the resources to relocate together. Her political involvement, writing skills, and formal vocal training also indicate that she came from a relatively well-off family. Her parents were part of the merchant middle class and owned a grocery store in the Chinatown district of San Jose, California. As a member of a business owning family, Pacita did not have to labor in the fields like most Filipino women of her

[1] Fred Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing

generation. Her connections with important leaders in the Filipino American community suggest that she was part of an elite social class that exposed her to a lifestyle different from that of working-class Filipino immigrants.

Throughout the 1940s, Pacita Todtod's wide range of activities reflects her diverse interests, multiple talents, and popularity as a role model and leader in the Filipino American community. In 1939, she was crowned Miss Philippines at the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco, California, and shortly after began singing in nightclubs around the Bay Area. In 1942 she became involved in the war effort, first as a community advocate pushing the U.S. military to allow Filipino men to enlist, and then as a regular USO performer entertaining soldiers stationed in various camps in California. As a leader in the Filipino community, she was asked by many white American organizations to speak on behalf of the Filipino people. She was even interviewed about the Philippines by a radio station in Los Angeles, of which the Filipino community was very proud. Moving from the small stage to the big screen, Todtod landed a role in a major Hollywood film, *They Were Expendable* (1945). She played a Filipino singer on an American naval base in the Philippines. Meanwhile, her prominent voice and active role in the community earned her the title of Editor-in Chief of the *Philippines Mail,* a Filipino newspaper that was published in the Salinas Valley, as well as widely read in the Santa Clara Valley of California. Eventually, when mail service was extended to the Philippines from the United States, the *Philippines Mail* began distribution in the Islands. Todtod also served as Vice President of the Filipino Inter-Community Organization of the Western States (FICOWS) and was the representative of the Bay Area district. She briefly was the acting President of FICOWS when the elected President left office to serve as a technical adviser for the Far Eastern Advisory

Commission on Japan.[2] Her charm, beauty, musical talents, and intellect took her life and career in many different directions, from singer and actress, to community leader, newspaper columnist, and editor.

An examination of Pacita Todtod's writings, performances, speeches, and other political involvements reveals how some Filipino American women were able to play significant roles in political life and community engagement. In the 1930s and 1940s, Filipino women in the Philippines and the United States were expected to assume the roles of caregivers to their families and keepers of the domestic sphere. However, Pacita's career as a performer and writer provides a female perspective on politics and civic responsibility, an arena largely dominated by men. Despite her accomplishments and leadership position, I encountered much difficulty in researching Pacita Todtod's life. Thus far, I have only found fragmentary limited sources that leave multiple gaps in her life's narrative. Nonetheless, by piecing together her writings published in *The Philippines Mail,* her performance in a major Hollywood film *They Were Expendable*, and other bits of information, it is possible to partially reconstruct her life, as a window into the Filipino American women's world in the 1940s.

Focusing on Pacita Todtod's experiences, I analyze how Filipino American women of the elite, urban class engaged in multiple arenas to influence their communities and negotiate their roles as Filipinos and women. While Filipino women's access to these various platforms was still limited, some, like Todtod, were nonetheless able to project their voices in the newspaper or on the stage. Her socioeconomic position afforded her many opportunities that were not available to other women of her generation, who were mostly of the laboring classes. While a majority of Filipinos were bound to a life of labor in the United States, the community was not monolithic,

[2] "Miss Todtod Assumes FICOWS Presidency," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Dec. 1945.

but was varied in educational attainment, reasons for migration, the types of work they engaged in, and in socioeconomic status. Studying educated women of more elite families reveals the diversity of the Filipino American community. Pacita Todtod was indeed exceptional, but through her experiences and her writings we can imagine a more complex world of possibilities for Filipina American lives. Todtod's position as a writer and an actress made her one of the few female voices of that period who actually was involved in political life, and who attempted to address the concerns of women in her spheres of influence. I will show how Todtod's experience, though not typical of all Filipino women, sheds light on the gendered dynamics of power within the Filipino community.

While early Filipino American communities have been repeatedly described as "bachelor societies," some historians argue that Filipino American women's rarity actually offered women the opportunity to negotiate their gender roles and their relative status among Filipino men. Because Filipino men outnumbered women fourteen to one, Filipinas were treated like diamonds, precious and rare regardless of class. This extreme imbalance was shaped by the labor recruitment of men to work on plantations in Hawaii and in the fields in California. Gender role expectations in the Philippines prevented many women from migrating, as they remained behind to fulfill a domestic role in the family in the Philippines, while the men worked abroad to send money home. Despite the uneven sex ratio, Filipino women were crucial in constructing a Filipino community in the United States, while also negotiating their role as women. Writing about the Filipino community in Stockton, California, Dawn Mabalon argues that "this extreme imbalance in Little Manila offered Filipinas and Filipinos an opportunity to negotiate and transform gender roles and expectations, forge women's networks as well as community institutions, redefine the contours of the Filipina/o American family, and create and preserve

Filipina/o American culture."[3] Due to their small numbers, a Filipino woman possessed significant power in the form of hypervisibility in the community, while navigating Filipino and American gender norms.

Pacita Todtod's involvements in the community, on the stage, and in journalism demonstrate this power, especially through her appointment as editor-in-chief of the *Philippines Mail.* Todtod's early career as an entertainer and local queen contestant seems to conform to conventional expectations of Filipino womanhood, but a closer reading of her community work, speaking engagements, and newspaper columns reveals an exceptional character of female defiance against the backdrop of an uneven gender and racial hierarchy. At the time of her assignment as editor-in-chief of the *Philippines Mail,* Todtod had already gained community notoriety and was dubbed "The National glamour Girl of Filipinos in the United States"[4] by the newspaper. While Todtod's appointment may appear to be an effort to capitalize on her fame to sell more papers, her writings and staunch advocacy of Filipino women's advancement in the public sphere perhaps indicate that the newspaper publisher may have developed an interest in women's issues. Because of a shifting demographic in the Filipino community, the ethnic press would have wanted to attract a broader readership that included second-generation Filipino women. In 1945 the U.S. Congress passed the War Brides Act, which allowed spouses and children of U.S. servicemen to enter the United States after World War II.[5] According to U.S.

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[3] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 152-153.

[4] *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

[5] Barbara M. Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 28.

Census data, the Filipino American population increased from 45,876 in 1940 to 61,645 in 1950. (Compare this to a population increase of 668 from 1930 to 1940).[6]

Pacita Todtod's short time at the *Philippines Mail* partially hints at the gender politics that shaped the Filipino community during the 1940s. Indeed the brevity of her appointment as editor-in-chief reflects the obstacles that Filipinas faced in the public sphere. This project examines how one Filipina American writer negotiated her role as a woman, while intervening within multiple aspects of Filipino American society and politics, both locally and transnationally. My focus on Pacita Todtod demonstrates the ways in which some women did indeed occupy various realms of Filipino American society and politics, beyond the domestic sphere. Her elite background and upper class position afforded her the opportunities to participate in many arenas of Filipino political life, which in some ways may have helped Todtod overcome the social barriers that constrained other women of her generation. Todtod's impressive career in film, on the stage, in politics, and as editor-in-chief for the local ethnic press illustrates these points.

Pacita Todtod resided in the Salinas and San Jose areas of Northern and Central California where many Filipino Americans settled to work in the lettuce fields; this region was also a primary stop on the seasonal migratory circuit for Filipino laborers. Reading *The Philippines Mail* as an important cultural text and window into the local community, Pacita Todtod will serve as a connecting thread throughout this paper. This project spans from the pre-war era of the 1930s into World War II during the 1940s, and through Philippine independence from the United States and Japan after the end of the War. This politically charged period of war fervor and Philippine nationalism deeply impacted the ethnic press, which functioned as an

[6] Barbara M. Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999),151.

important arena where Filipino Americans debated and constructed their identities as Filipinos, as Americans, and as women and men.

Literature

A deeper and more complex analysis of women roles reshapes how we study and understand Asian American history. Critical women of color feminist historians have sought to reconstruct Asian American history by examining how gendered and racialized power dynamics have shaped the lives of both Asian American men and women. Historian Catherine Ceniza Choy explores the history and colonial politics of a gendered and racialized Filipina migrant workforce; however, her focus on post-1965 migration misses the generation of women that this project seeks to highlight.[7] Other historians examine how Asian American women are often relegated to the domestic household or treated as a spectacle on the stages of queen contests. For example, Shirley Jennifer Lim captures how cultural and social tensions intersected with political Cold War rhetoric on the stages of Asian American queen contests, while the contestants themselves came to symbolize a particular gendered and racialized nationalism.[8] My project will build upon this discussion of gendered nationalism, particularly paying attention to how women participated actively in the contested arena of discourse about what it meant to be Filipino, and more specifically, a Filipino woman living in the United States in the dawn of a newly independent Philippine nation.

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[7] Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of care: nursing and migration in Filipino American history* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[8] Shirley Jennifer Lim, "Contested Beauty: Asian American Women's Cultural Citizenship during the Early Cold War Era," in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology*, edited by Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 188-204.

Shirley Hune and Gail Nomura's edited anthology, *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women*, brings together women scholars in various fields to sketch out a broad, multifaceted historical perspective on Asian American women. In their introduction they state their objective of "Centering women as active subjects of history," while looking at how Asian American masculinities and femininities have been historically constructed.[9] In her chapter, "Contested Beauty," Shirley Lim analyzes the multilayered gendered and racialized meanings that were ascribed to the Asian American female body during the politically charged Cold War era. Responding to the call by these historians to re-examine the role of women in Asian American history, I will draw on Pacita Todtod's work to underline the significant influence and participation of Filipino women in political discourse. In her analysis of gendered nationalism and politicized notions of beauty, Lim seeks to understand how queen contests were also a site where definitions of womanhood were celebrated as well as debated. Drawing on Lim's ideas, I aim to show how Filipino American women were agents as well as subjects of these discussions of beauty, womanhood, and nationalism.[10]

The transnational relationships of Asians in America to their various homelands can be characterized by "dual political identity," as conceptualized by Judy Yung. Yung's *Unbound Feet* is one of the first historical accounts of Chinese American women. From the earliest waves of Chinese immigration in the mid-1800s to World War II, Yung traces the sociohistorical and political factors that shaped Chinese American women's experiences of immigration, labor,

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[9] Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura, *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 6.

[10] Shirley Jennifer Lim, "Contested Beauty: Asian American Women's Cultural Citizenship during the Early Cold War Era," in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology*, edited by Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 188.

cultural adaptation, racial discrimination, and war. Yung's concept of "dual political identity" points to the ways in which social and political movements in China had an effect on Chinese American communities, revealing a strong transnational connection that existed in the early twentieth century among the second generation. The dual political identity describes a co-existing sense of loyalty and personal stake within the Chinese American political consciousness towards both the United States and China.[11] Similarly, Filipinos residing in the United States maintained a transnational connection to the Philippines, participating actively in Philippine national events and political elections. Particularly during World War II and the transition to Philippines' independence immediately following the end of the war, Filipino men and women alike in the United States engaged in debates in the ethnic newspaper columns, and invested heavily in candidates and campaigns overseas. This transnational relationship belies the assumption that immigrants "assimilated" entirely into American society; rather, Filipino Americans developed a dual sense of loyalty where one identity constructed the other.

Recent historical works on Filipino immigration before 1965 have emphasized the impact of the United States' emergence as a capitalist power and expanding efforts abroad to recruit cheap foreign labor to work on the plantations in Hawaii as well as in the fields and canneries in the Pacific Northwest. Sucheng Chan's historical monograph, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History,* continues to influence Asian American scholarship and is still assigned as a primary classroom text today. Chan presents the multiple histories of the various ethnic groups thematically rather than chronologically to illustrate overarching themes in Asian American migration and settlement in the United States. Her main focus is to make visible Asian Americans' historical agency, "even when these may be severely limited by conditions beyond

[11] Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 156.

their control."[12] Departing from previous historical theoretical frameworks that focused on Asians as victims or as contributors to a vibrant national multiculturalism, Chan seeks to display their agency, but also to contextualize the conditions in which Asian Americans were forced to act. As a broad survey of early Asian migration to the United States, Chan's text could not address in detail individual ethnic groups, Filipino Americans included. A more multidimensional look at Filipino Americans is needed to provide a deeper understanding of this migrant community and their vital importance in California labor history.

Dawn Mabalon's *Little Manila is in the Heart* represents the most comprehensive historical scholarship in early Filipino American history to date. Mabalon focuses on the semi-urban Filipino enclave in Stockton, California, a central base for Filipino migrant workers traveling throughout the Central Valley and Pacific Northwest to work in the fields and canneries. Her work reveals how histories of race, labor, gender, colonialism, immigration and war have all shaped "Little Manila" in Stockton. Mabalon pays particular attention to race and gender, and recognizes Filipina agency within the community, devoting a chapter to the history of Filipino American women in the pre-war and World War II eras. Mabalon utilizes oral history interviews with second-generation Pinays who reflected on their unusual positions within Filipino American society as somewhat of a novelty among bachelors.[13]

Sucheng Chan's and Dawn Mabalon's work greatly influence and inform my own research on Filipino American women's political stake and engagement in the community. Building upon Chan's foundational work, Mabalon analyzes how Filipino immigrants in this

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[12] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), xiii.

[13] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

specific ethnic community shaped their own identity, in relation to their ethnic origins in the Philippines and the social and political context in which they lived in Stockton. Both Chan and Mabalon dedicate a specific chapter to women in their books, respectively titled "Women, Families, and the 'Second-Generation Dilemma'" and "Women and the Second Generation." These historians' works are part of a shift in Asian American historical scholarship that emphasizes Asian American women's perspectives and contributions.

Although these texts represent important breakthroughs in Asian American, Filipino American, and women's histories, centering and contextualizing Asian American women's agency in a broader global context, historiographical gaps still remain concerning the *Manangs.* The *Manangs* were the Filipino women who immigrated to the United States before 1965, many of whom worked alongside men in the labor-intensive agricultural fields. Little is also known about the Filipino elite class, to which Pacita Todtod belonged, and which was an important part of the community leadership. Building upon the foundational work by Chan and Mabalon, my analysis of Todtod as a Filipina performer and writer reveals how some Filipino women were able to negotiate their roles in the community. And by contextualizing her story and perspective within the broader frameworks of U.S. and Philippine relations, I examine the gendered dynamics of power within the Filipino American community.

In her study *Puro Arte,* Lucy Burns reads the Filipino performing body as a text through which can be understood the struggle against colonial violence acted upon multiple stages of U.S. empire in both the Philippines and the United States. According to Burns, colonial histories of military violence and cultural hegemony act upon, are embodied by, and expressed through

the Filipino body.[14] Burns' argument has helped to expand my understanding of performance as an important site to read Filipino subjectivity and agency. I draw on this analytical framework to dissect complicated notions of gendered nationalism "performed" between the lines of newspaper text and on the screen of *They Were Expendable*.

Second-generation Japanese American women played a significant role in the ethnic press, using their newspaper columns and published letters to build a substantial literary network during the 1930s. In tracing the literary career of Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) columnist Mary Oyama Mittwer, historian Valerie Matsumoto shows how newspaper columns functioned as important sites where Nisei formed peer networks and discussed social issues. Mary Oyama Mittwer acted as a sort of bridge, connecting second-generation Japanese Americans to their parents' generation, as well as to mainstream American society. [15] Similar to Mary Oyama Mittwer, my subject Pacita Todtod serves as a connecting thread through my research. As a prominent community figure and editor of the *Philippines Mail*, her life and work show how a woman of her socioeconomic class was able to publicly negotiate her role in the Filipino American community. In an article titled "Redefining Expectations: Nisei Women in the 1930s," Valerie Matsumoto builds upon the story of "Deirdre," Oyama Mittwer's pseudonym, while contextualizing her correspondence with young Nisei women within shifting gender expectations for Japanese American women at the time. Nisei women negotiated their position as women in both the Nikkei (Japanese descent) community and in the larger white American society. Matsumoto looks at how Nisei women exercised agency in their community by forming

[14] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro arte: Filipinos on the stages of empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[15] Valerie Matsumoto, "Desperately Seeking 'Deirdre': Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, (1991): 19-32.

women's clubs and penpal clubs, as well as writing in the newspapers in order to re-define what it meant to be a Japanese American woman.[16] Through close readings of the various ethnic press, particularly in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, Matsumoto delves into the ways that these clubs were not purely social gatherings, but organizations that developed leadership skills among the girls. Like the advice columns in the Japanese American newspapers, these clubs served as important sites for young Japanese American second-generation women to learn how to navigate between the Nikkei world of their parents and family, and the social and cultural expectations of their white American peers at school.[17] I will apply Matsumoto's historical approach to my examination of Pacita Todtod's experience, analyzing how she utilized the newspaper and community organizations as important platforms for exercising Filipina agency.

David Yoo, in *Growing Up Nisei,* moves beyond the narrative of Japanese Americans as victims of incarceration, by exploring the world that the Nisei, or second-generation Japanese Americans, carved for themselves despite multiple pressures to assimilate into American society that could be hostile to perceived foreigners. Yoo showcases how the Japanese American press functioned as important tools and sites for community building and networking. Specifically, Yoo looks at how journalists served as messengers, enabling incarcerated Japanese Americans to communicate between isolated confinement camps, contributing to a developing Japanese American consciousness behind barbed wire.[18] I will utilize David Yoo's approach to explore

[16] Valerie Matsumoto, "Redefining Expectations: Nisei Women in the 1930s," *California History* 73, no. 1 (Spring 1994) : 44-53.

[17] Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[18] David Yoo, *Growing up Nisei: race, generation, and culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949* (Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

how Filipino newspapers facilitated discourse on citizenship among Filipinos across the United States.

Community Advocate:
"Let us wish more power to the Filipino women."

Cherished by Filipinos across the United States, Pacita Todtod first made a name for herself when she competed as a teenager in the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition for the title of Miss Philippines.[19] The Golden Gate Exposition was part of the larger network of World's Fairs held internationally since the 1850s. Initially meant to highlight the technological advancements of industrialization, the Expositions held after 1939 focused on "cultural exchange" and creating a better society. The theme of the 1939 exposition was "Pageant of the Pacific," and its aim was to showcase the cultural goods of the nations bordering the Pacific Ocean. It was at this exposition in San Francisco, California that Pacita was crowned Miss Philippines, a prestigious honor indeed for the Filipino community in the Santa Clara Valley. This "Pageant of the Pacific" highlighted the unity and "benevolent" relationship between the Philippines and the United States, setting the stage for later U.S. military involvement in the Philippines during World War II.

The outbreak of war with Japan would prove to be a crucial event in the Filipino struggle for political recognition, as they eagerly sought to join with the Americans in the fight against a common enemy. In 1941, the United States entered the War with Japan and Germany after the bombing of an American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, then a territory of the United States, and Manila, Philippines, then a Commonwealth with close ties to the United States. Up to that point, the Filipino community in California was growing and becoming more politically

[19] "Pacita Bobadilla Obituary," *San Jose Mercury News* (San Jose, CA), Nov. 23, 2012.

active.[20] Anti-Filipino racism, alongside a burgeoning Filipino labor movement, spurred a developing political and social consciousness among Filipinos in the United States. Organizations such as the Filipino Federation of America and the Filipino Agricultural Laborer's Association represented the different mobilizing spaces that emerged to serve the interests of the Filipino community in the face of deep-seated racism and discriminatory laws that restricted their rights to citizenship or to own land. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land, which included Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants. Often times the labor strikes resulted in direct confrontation with the local Issei, or first-generation Japanese immigrants, who controlled much of the land on which the Filipinos labored. The ethnic press was an important channel through which landowners and labor contractors recruited Filipino workers, and business owners advertised their goods and services. Many Filipino labor organizations relied heavily on the local ethnic press, such as the *Philippines Mail*, to spread their message and garner support. Despite modest success in these various political actions, Filipinos were still largely ignored at the national level. And although Filipino immigrants in the United States had fought for decades for citizenship, it was not until they subjected themselves to the hazards of battle that they gained citizenship rights.

Filipinos in the United States responded to the attacks in various ways. In reaction to the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Manila, the Filipino community staged boycotts of Japanese-owned businesses. The chain of events that set off the U.S. declaration of war against Japan also upset the racial hierarchy in the domestic sphere. Filipino Americans and Chinese Americans, no longer the targets of racial discrimination, found themselves in a favorable position with white

[20] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 218.

America.[21] Within the first few weeks of war, Filipino American communities competed to demonstrate their loyalty to the Allied Forces and the war efforts on the home front.

Despite the intense fervor of their patriotism, Filipinos who marched to the recruiting offices to enlist were turned away due to their status as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." Pacita Todtod played an active role in the campaign for Filipinos to enlist in the U.S. military to fight in the Pacific War.[22] In a 2005 interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, she recalled, "I was just so angry…A lot of Filipinos were coming up to me and saying, 'They won't let us join the U.S. services. You've got to do something.'" Todtod wrote a letter, with support from the San Francisco Filipino community, to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, urging the U.S. government to allow Filipino Americans to fight in the military. Pacita was surprised to receive a quick response from Stimson, who agreed saying, "You're absolutely right."[23] In February 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt changed the draft law to allow Filipinos to enlist and to work in the defense industries on the home front. This came in the form of an amendment to the Nationality Act of 1940, which also allowed enlisted Filipinos to become naturalized citizens.[24] In California, two-fifths of the state's Filipino population attempted to enlist, approximately 16,000 men. Of that group, 7,000 Filipinos were able to join, forming the two all-Filipino Infantry Regiments.

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[21] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 121.

[22] *An Untold Triumph: America's Filipino Soldiers,* directed by Noel Izon (2002; Los Angeles, CA: ICT Productions Inc.), DVD.

[23] Cicero A. Estrella, "Filipinos had to fight for right to serve their adopted home," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, CA) May 25, 2005. (Todtod is quoted in this article saying Stimson responded with "You're absolutely right.")

[24] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 233.

On the same day that amendments were passed to the draft law, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which mandated the forced removal of Japanese Americans living in "strategic war zones" to be incarcerated in confinement camps.[25] These two pieces of legislation, passed simultaneously, drastically altered the social landscape of Asians living in the United States, shifting the positions of Filipino Americans and Japanese Americans in the racial hierarchy. Despite the relative success of Japanese Americans in farming and business, the events of World War II displaced the community and left many without their homes and their livelihoods. While Japanese Americans were being racialized as the "enemy," Filipinos took advantage of their newly acquired status as the favorable Asian group in the eyes of white America. Eager to display their loyalty to the United States, Filipino Americans enthusiastically attempted to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces and fight in the Pacific War.

Pacita Todtod's letter galvanized the Filipino community around the issue of military enlistment, which may have been influential in encouraging the President to amend the draft law. World War II proved to be a "watershed" moment for Filipinos, as "Filipina/o Americans found an increasingly unified and stronger voice with which to advocate for Philippine independence, Filipina/o American civil and political equality, and justice in the fields."[26] If Todtod's letter by itself was not a key factor in allowing Filipino men to enlist, it serves as an example of Filipino women's political interest and engagement in the war effort and shows a female perspective on the debates over nationhood and citizenship that were occurring at this particular historical moment.

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[25] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 234.

[26] Ibid., 265.

Following her involvement in the campaign for Filipino men to enlist in the U.S military during the war, Pacita Todtod was invited to speak throughout California about the Philippines and Filipinos living in the United States. In one speech addressed to over 500 women at a Pleiades Club meeting held at the "swanky" Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles in 1944, she exhorted listeners to come together across generations so that "all women, mature, and immature, experienced and inexperienced, can pool together their intellectural (sic) and temperamental resources and be of greater service to humanity and country."[27] Her maturity and intelligence were certainly communicated in a bold speech that belies her young age of 24 and status as a Filipino woman. Only one month before General MacArthur re-took the Philippines from the Japanese Imperial Army, Todtod was speaking at a very critical moment about the impending liberation and birth of the Philippines as a new nation. Tugging at the emotional heartstrings of her racially mixed audience of both men and women, she gave thanks to America as the Filipinos' champion: "I[f] for every act of American generosity towards the Filipinos a flower is placed on the tablet of eternal memory, we will see a mountain of flowers." Todtod acted as a symbol of Filipino indebtedness towards the United States, replaying the script of American patron and Filipino subject.

Filipino women played an active role in the war effort, displaying both their intense loyalty to the United States and love for the Philippines, by vilifying Japan as their enemy. In a short but graphic moment in the speech, Todtod claimed that "Verily the Filipino women are giving the Japanese the fight of their lives, keeping them on pins and needles and often clipping their heads off from the rest of their anatomy. For the duration at least, the parlor and the kitchen are verbal battlefields no more, for you see, the Filipino women, like other lively daughters of

[27] "Pacita Addresses 500 Club Women at Los Angeles Ambassador Hotel," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Jan. 1945.

Eve, believe in the doctrine of the last word."[28] Here, Todtod established the Filipinas as defeaters of the Japanese, positioning "the daughters of Eve" as part of a holy line of relentlessly resistant women. Pacita Todtod flipped the script and exceeded the boundaries of her race and gender by re-writing the definitions of a Filipino woman.

Beyond the rallies and war bond drives, Pacita Todtod called attention to the active roles that Filipino women have played in the Pacific War, some of which entailed actual combat. Addressing the audience, she says, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Filipino men are fighting the common enemy with courage and gallantry under the Stars and Stripes. But the Filipino women are fighting too, not always side by side with the men, as in the case of Miss Nieves Fernandez, a guerrilla leader, at the head of the men who follow her leadership with confidence and determination." Todtod's reference to Captain Nieves Fernandez, one of the few known female Filipino guerilla leaders who fought the Japanese during the war, provides a counter example to the more domestic roles expected of women in the war effort. Praising Fernandez as a model of Filipina bravery and patriotism, Pacita not only transcends the boundaries of expectations for Filipina participation in the war, but also expands the realms of possibility for Filipina militancy, expressed both symbolically and physically, through tactical combat on the battlefield.

Through her speeches, Pacita Todtod demonstrated her skillful wordplay and wit, invoking biblical references to challenge societal expectations of women's roles. She said, "At the time of the Creation woman was only a side-issue…" Without denying her Christian values, she re-wrote the narrative of female piety and submission to man by announcing, "When she [woman] came to her own she became well-nigh the whole works." Referring to the notion of woman being borne out of man's side, she declares that women do not occupy a peripheral role.

[28] "Pacita Addresses 500 Club Women at Los Angeles Ambassador Hotel," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Jan. 1945.

She continues, “However let me say that the Filipino woman is an obedient daughter, a dutiful wife, a self-sacrificing mother.” In addition to traditional expectations of Filipino womanhood, Todtod adds “civic-minded citizen” to the list. Pacita’s insistence on civic-mindedness certainly challenges the assumption that women’s roles and power should be relegated to the domestic sphere. Her words convey her belief that women’s issues should be a public concern, and that women should be able to participate in the public forum.

At a critical moment when the Philippines looked forward to liberation from Japan and formal independence as a nation, she besought her audience to “wish more power to the Filipino women.” Speaking in the midst of an intense debate about defining Filipino nationhood and the status of its citizens after years of bitter occupation by Japan and colonial tutelage under the United States, Todtod boldly stated that Filipino women “are helping mightily to win the war and to create a new Philippines.” However, She did not overstate the role of Filipino women, leaving the audience with her assurance that victory and independence could not be achieved without the support of the United States. She ends her speech confidently predicting a “happier and more progressive country, a credit to the Filipino and a lasting monument to the goodwill, the nobility, the fairness and helpfulness of the American people.” Pacita Todtod’s speech reflects the prevailing sentiments among Filipinos who looked favorably upon the United States as their liberator and defender of American-style democracy in the Philippines. However, as a Filipino woman herself specifically speaking on behalf of her sisters, she strategically couches her assertion of Filipina civic participation in language that sings America’s praises.

While thousands of Filipino men were leaving their homes to volunteer for combat, women found ways to contribute to the war effort on the home front, demonstrating their “twin allegiances” to both the United States and the Philippines. Filipino women’s and youth clubs

hosted war bond rallies to raise funds for the military. In the documentary film "Untold Triumph: America's Filipino Soldiers," directed by Noel Izon, Todtod reflected on her experience as a young singer and entertainer during the War. She organized a group of women from Oakland, Stockton, and San Francisco to provide entertainment to enlisted Filipino soldiers. They visited army camps and USOs, and performed at dances for the Filipino regiments, accompanied by large musical bands. Todtod fondly remembered that at these camps the Filipino soldiers played *sipa* (ball game) and roasted *lechon* (suckling pig) during their down time.[29] Performances by young Pinays served as the main attraction for those attending war bond rallies. Historian Dawn Mabalon notes that these Pinay entertainers "sang traditional Tagalog, Ilocano, and Visayan love songs; Filipino patriotic songs; and American standards."[30] Pacita Todtod likely performed for the Filipino soldiers, lifting their spirits with her voice and musical talent. Helen Ragsac Sanchez, one of the Filipina performers, recalls learning how to dance the *Karinyosa,* a traditional Filipino dance, from Pacita.[31] On September 5, 1943, Helen, Pacita, and other Filipinas in the dance troupe were cast to perform in a short Warner Brothers film, *Filipino Sports Parade,* directed by Howard Hill. The film depicted Hill interacting with the Filipino soldiers stationed at Camp Cooke, an Air Force Base in Central California where the 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiment trained. The film was released in 1944, and featured six Filipinas, dressed in traditional *Maria Clara* gowns, dancing the *Karinyosa* with thirty Filipino men stationed in

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[29] *An Untold Triumph: America's Filipino Soldiers,* directed by Noel Izon (2002; Los Angeles, CA: ICT Productions Inc.), DVD.

[30] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 181.

[31] Helen Ragsac Sanchez, "Fil-Am Pinays And The 'Filipino Sports Parade,'" *Positively Filipino,* Oct. 25, 2014, http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/fil-am-pinays-and-the-filipino-sports-parade.

Camp Cooke. [32] In the film, Hill learns about Filipino cultural life, games, dances, and food, while showing off some of his archery tricks. Dubbed the "World's Greatest Archer," Hill was known for his trick shots and multiple archery competition championships.[33] The filming lasted for several days, until director Howard Hill was pleased with his shots of the dancing Pinays.

Actress and Singer:
"Miss Pacita is an inspiration."

Performing on the smaller stages of local clubs and USO camps eventually led to her larger role on the movie screen. In an April 1945 *Philippines Mail* article announcing her role in the upcoming film *They Were Expendable,* the author wrote, "To thousands of Filipinos at home and in the fighting fronts all over the world Miss Pacita is an inspiration."[34] Her role in a major Hollywood film, though as an unnamed club singer who appears on screen for less than a couple of minutes, would have been a huge accomplishment for Todtod, as well as a significant source of pride for the Filipino American community. Leading up to the film's release, much excitement and anticipation was built up around the making of this film. It is likely that the Filipino community would have been very proud and pleased to see themselves represented on the big screen. Articles of congratulation were published in the *Philippines Mail* commending Todtod on this great achievement. The announcement of her role ends with, "Filipinos love her and follow her even to the ends of the earth."[35]

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[32] Geiger, Jeffrey E., *Camp Cooke and Vandenberg Air Force Base, 1941-1966* (Jefferson: MacFarland Publishers, 2014), 114.

[33] "Howard Hill (1899-1975)," *Archery Hall of Fame and Museum,* http://www.archeryhalloffame.com/Hill.html.

[34] "MGM Signs Up Pacita Todtod," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), April 1945.

[35] Ibid.

They Were Expendable was an American war movie directed by John Ford, based on the novel written by William L. White. In 1942, three years before it was made into a film, The Council on Books in Wartime honored White's *They Were Expendable,* naming it the "imperative" book of the season.[36] Most of the cast and crew who worked on the film were former or active Navy personnel at the time, and some had combat experience serving in the PT Squadrons featured in the film. According to *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther, "Quite clearly, the making of the picture was a labor of understanding and love on the part of the men who produced it, from John Ford, the director, on down."[37] It was released in December of 1945, months after Germany and Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces, signaling the end of World War II.

They Were Expendable is a Hollywood classic, part of the popular World War II film genre, featuring a cast with major star power. Robert Montgomery and John Wayne played U.S. Navy officers in charge of a squadron of Patrol Torpedo (PT) Boats used to defend the Philippines from Japanese invasion after the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Manila Bay in 1941. The film opens with a quote from a speech by General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East, broadcast from the USS Missouri where the ceremony for the Japanese surrender took place on September 2, 1945 in Tokyo Bay. On this momentous occasion MacArthur proclaimed, "Today the guns are silent. A great tragedy has ended. A great victory has been won…I speak for the thousands of silent lips, forever stilled among the jungles and in the deep waters of the Pacific which marked the way." The film begins in 1941 before the U.S.

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[36] Paul Jordan-Smith, "I'll Be Judge, You Be Jury," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Dec. 20, 1942.

[37] Bosley Crowther, "They Were Expendable Movie Review," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Dec. 21, 1945.

became involved in the War, four years before General MacArthur would speak these words. The opening scene depicts a line of PT-Boats entering Manila Bay, with commanding officers doubting the efficacy of the PT squadron in battle. Even one of the Lieutenants in charge of the PT squadron, Rusty Ryan played by John Wayne, calls them "high powered canoes," thus establishing the prevailing theme of the movie that "They Were Expendable." Next, the film sets up a scene common in World War II films, that of the club where sailors and officers enjoyed their time off duty with drinks, dancing, and music at the "Silver Dollar Bar."

The film was released after victory was officially declared over Japan and Germany, and offers a re-telling of a story to which the audience already knows the ending. The first ten minutes of the film provide a glimpse of the life of the average U.S. Navy officer and sailor serving overseas before the news of the outbreak of war with Japan had reached the Philippines. Officers in their gentlemanly attire enjoy a few moments of bliss as they dance with the limited number of women also living on the U.S. military base, probably serving as nurses or secretaries. Lower ranking sailors celebrate the retirement of an older Navy man at the bar, with younger and older uniformed men alike toasting his faithful service. These bonds of brotherhood and loyalty to the nation will be tested in subsequent scenes as the Japanese invade the Philippines, and the men are called to duty to defend their posts.

Filipinos served a supporting role in the film, filling out the scenes as part of the backdrop that signals that this story is set in a tropical foreign place. Filipinos as colonial subjects fulfilled the roles of "Little Brown Brothers" in the film, and stood in contrast to, and in the shadow of, the roles played by American men and women alike. Filipinos first appear in the film as piano accompanists and lead vocalists in three striking musical numbers. This musical

trajectory, split into three songs, represents the progressive phases of a process that transformed the Filipino from uncivilized enemy to loyal colonial subject of the United States of America.

The first Filipino to appear in the film is a piano player accompanying a group of naval officers and sailors singing "The Monkeys Have No Tails in Zamboanga," a popular song among American soldiers written during the Philippine-American War. Known as the "Wolfhound March," the song was made the official march of the 27th U.S. Infantry Regiment, formed in 1901 to quell the Moro Insurrection on the Philippine island of Mindanao.[38] The song was written shortly after the bloody pacification of the Moros, during a period of recreation as the Americans occupied Mindanao. According to the song, "The monkeys have no tails, they were bitten off by whales, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga." Though performed in a scene of merriment and American camaraderie around a piano, the song serves as a musical reference to the violent beginnings of the U.S.-Philippine colonial relationship, which successfully "civilized" the Filipino, as "monkeys with no tails," making them acceptable colonial subjects in the form of musical performers. On the periphery of the scene, the Filipino pianist can be seen mouthing the words of the song, though with notably less enthusiasm than the rowdy crowd of white sailors he accompanies.

The second song featured in the opening scenes is a beautiful Tagalog ballad, indicating a transformation of the Filipino from "the monkey with no tail," to a domesticated colonial subject embodied by the singer, Pacita. In this scene Pacita Todtod plays a Filipino club singer working at the U.S. Naval Base. She is featured on the stage of the dance floor in the officers' dining room where gentlemen compete for the attention of the few women present. Todtod sings a Tagalog song, accompanied by a live band behind her. She is dressed in a traditional "butterfly

[38] Thomas P. Walsh, *Tin Pan Alley and the Philippines* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 127.

gown," signaling her as a Filipino woman, and not an American. Dawn Mabalon, in *Little Manila is in the Heart*, wrote "During the war, young women's bodies again symbolized the Philippines nation for Filipina/o Americans." A traditional Filipino "butterfly dress" was often donned by women participating in the local queen contests, and would signify to the Filipino Americans a sense of Filipino nationhood and longing for home. As a Filipino woman, Todtod's character does not pose a threat to the American gaze, a gendered representation of the subjugated colonial subject. It is unclear at this point if she can speak English, as she sings in Tagalog to a notably Western-style melody. The camera cuts to a concerned club owner who has just received word of the bombings at Pearl Harbor. He discreetly seeks out officers in the audience, whispering the news into their ears as their faces visibly change from enjoyment of Pacita's song to worry. Pacita's song is interrupted as the announcement is finally made on the stage, and the room quickly grows solemn as men dutifully stand and file out to report to their posts. Pacita is visibly upset, turning her back to the audience to stifle her tears.

Pacita Todtod and the band suddenly break into the third and final song of the film, "My Country 'Tis of Thee," which appears to happen spontaneously, as if the natural emotional reaction to such news was to be swept up into patriotic song. Here, Todtod's voice booms, as she suddenly now sings in English. It is interesting to note that her entrance into the song is not at the beginning of the lyrics, but at "Land where my fathers died…" a somber and chilling expression of the mood in the scene, and likely of the audience watching the film. It is ambiguous, however, to conclude for whom Todtod is singing. Is she singing about herself? What could a song like "My Country 'Tis of Thee" possibly mean to her character, as a Filipino nightclub singer performing in Manila, and to Pacita, a Filipino American playing this role? Multiple levels of performance and roles blur the lines between the portrayer and the portrayed. Her emotional

outpourings and fervent performance suggest that her transformation to Filipino colonial subject is complete, while her loyalties fully lie with the United States. As a Filipino, her tears may foreshadow the impending bombing of Manila while mourning the future loss of her Filipino brothers and sisters. This singular scene is fraught with the complex meanings of Filipino citizenship, loyalty, and the relationship between the Philippines and the United States, shaped by hierarchies of race and gender.

Because the film was released in 1945, four years after the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Manila, and months after the Allied Victory in the Pacific, audiences watching the film would already know the ending to this story. Therefore, the scenes described do not necessarily portray the uncertainty or the panic that war brings, but reinforce the narrative of American loyalty and superiority in battle. In a backwards reflection of the outbreak of war, the film depicts Filipino women as the mourners of the loss sustained in battle. In another scene portraying the aftermath of the bombing of Manila Bay, an older Filipino woman appears in the film, standing in the middle of the wreckage on a dock, watching the war dead being loaded onto a boat. She stands motionless as the boat pulls away, presumably carrying the body of someone she lost. The visible fear and sadness on the faces of the Filipino women on the screen stand in stark contrast to the solemn demeanor of their white protectors. How the Filipino women are portrayed on screen, as well as the visible absence of Filipino men in these scenes, emotionally communicate a sense of loss and fear, and reflect the American perspective of the Philippines, gendered as female and racialized as the benefactors of American militarism. The women's mourning bodies are framed in scenes that depict the destruction of Manila by the Japanese, which construct the women as poor and defenseless, if not for the remaining military personnel who survived the attack.

Pacita Todtod's appearance in a Hollywood production by MGM Studios is a rare example of an Asian American woman playing such a visible role on the screen. Karen Leong, in *China Mystique,* writes about the constraints placed upon Anna May Wong and other Asian American actresses struggling for the few roles available to them. She states, "Balancing the constraints that racial prejudice put on her career and her desire for visibility required her to perform oriental femininity for public consumption."[39] I argue that Todtod may have encountered similar constraints and was pushed to perform the role of a loyal Filipino subject during war. Because the film was made for a presumably white American audience, Todtod's role fell within the narrative of America as a protector of the Philippines, at the same time fulfilling the stereotype of defenseless Filipina. Asian American actresses in the 1940s would have ultimately found it difficult to successfully break into the film industry, securing roles that would launch their careers. Pacita Todtod did not appear in many films, *They Were Expendable* being her only role in a major Hollywood film. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article published in 2005 briefly mentions that Pacita's mother convinced her to, "give up her aspirations of becoming an entertainer."[40] While her mother may have played a significant part in revaluating her career ambitions, it is likely that the unavailability of roles offered to Filipina actresses at that time was also a determining factor.

Young Filipino women living in the United States, both American born and immigrant, navigated within a convoluted racial and gender hierarchy shaped by American social norms and Filipino cultural expectations. Three centuries of Spanish colonial influence in the Philippines contributed a complex layer to Filipino womanhood idealized as "demure, modest, and devoutly

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[39] Karen Leong, *The China Mystique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57.

[40] Cicero A. Estrella, "Filipinos had to fight for right to serve their adopted home," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, CA) May 25, 2005.

Catholic, as was Maria Clara."[41] Traditional notions of Filipino womanhood combined with American expectations of female domesticity composed a complicated set of gender ideologies for Filipino women in the Philippines and in the United States. This began to shift at the turn of the century when the idea of the "New Modern Woman," characterizing a rising class of educated and independent women, emerged along with "a new model for Filipino womanhood," resulting in the transformation of gender role expectations in the Philippines.[42] Denise Cruz argues that the modern Filipina in the Philippines incorporated both traditional Filipino aspects of femininity and Western representations, which she terms "transpacific femininity."[43] Todtod's character in *They Were Expendable* fits the role of this transnational, modern Filipina. Through this type of transpacific femininity, Filipino women negotiated their positions as objects upon which notions of Filipino nationhood were projected, and as participants in shaping the discourse between the West and the Philippines.

Journalist and Public Speaker:
"We are standing by the United States to our last breath."

While playing the "good" colonial subject on screen, Pacita Todtod also spoke and wrote about the ethnic community's high regard for the United States, revealing the complicated position of Filipinos who felt indebted to American hospitality and bravery. Reading Todtod solely in the film's character role ignores her individual agency within a complex colonial context and success as a journalist and spokesperson of the Filipino community to a larger white American audience. On January 5, 1945, Todtod was interviewed on a segment of *Home Chats*

[41] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 154.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Denise Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.

by host Miriam Lane, a series broadcast on radio station KMPC, "Station of the Stars" based in Hollywood, California. The radio host introduced her as a knowledgeable expert on Filipinos in the Philippines. In the interview, Miriam Lane asked many questions about life in the Philippines, which Todtod answered knowledgably with poise and charm. Miriam Lane also recognized the loyalty of the Filipino people in the ongoing Pacific War. She asked Todtod about the changes that the United States had implemented in the Philippines since the territory was acquired after the Spanish-American War. Todtod commented, "The way we feel, Miss Lane, is that whatever we've done, is only a small expression of gratitude for the many helpful and generous things that you have done for us. We are standing by the United States to our last breath."[44] In this exchange, Todtod acts as a sort of Filipino ambassador to the presumably white American listeners tuning in to this episode of *Home Chats.* Throughout the interview, Todtod fulfills the role of grateful colonial subject, repeatedly thanking the host, as representative of the Philippines' American benefactor, for their modernizing efforts in the islands.

Pacita Todtod echoes these sentiments in her letter "To Gen. MacArthur From the Filipino Women," published in *The Philippines Mail* in February of 1945. This particular piece demonstrates the complex workings of race and gender on the relative positions of a white American male authority figure, such as General MacArthur, and Filipino women, represented by Pacita. More broadly, it illustrates the construction of Filipino women as symbols of national indebtedness to a presumably white American military savior. Todtod's outpouring of gratitude to MacArthur represents a community's deep feeling of obligation to the Americans. She writes, "If words can express a sentiment, profound and overwhelming, then we offer those of our deepest appreciation of the services you have rendered our country in the most desperate

[44] "Popular Pacing Gives Philippine Facts On Radio Interviewed By Miss Lane," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Jan. 1945.

moments in her history."[45] What is interesting about this piece is that, in the relationship between America and the Philippines, Filipino women come to represent the latter. She speaks specifically as a Filipino woman, and on behalf of all Filipino women, presumably in both the United States and the Philippines. Todtod says, "As natural trustee of our race, we Filipino women will never tire of telling the succeeding Filipino generations about yourself, your epic mission in our country and the unliquidable debt of gratitude that they owe you." Todtod charges all Filipino women with the task of scripting and re-telling the narrative of American heroism in the birth of a Philippine nation. While seemingly hyperbolic, her words indicate a deep feeling of loyalty and gratitude that permeated Filipino society. Todtod's open letter to General MacArthur seems to reflect the Filipino cultural value of *utang na loob,* or "debt of gratitude." Many scholars have discussed *utang na loob* in terms of a "patron-client relationship" between Spain and the Philippines, and later between the U.S. and the Philippines, identifying this relationship as completely hierarchical. Prominent Filipino scholars Ray Ileto and Vicente Rafael have challenged this assumption of complete Filipino submission to both colonizers, but emphasize the reciprocity that Filipinos maintained in this relationship. Reading Todtod's speeches through this lens, it is possible that she did not simply view the Filipino position as in debt to the United States, but as an active member of the U.S. national body.

Pacita Todtod also deploys a gendered form of indebtedness by representing the Filipino women in this letter, which could be read as a strategic opportunity for Filipino women to assert themselves in the international discourse of U.S.-Philippines relations. While constructing American heroism, Todtod also constructs the roles of Filipino women as absolutely vital to the survival of the Philippines nation. She writes, "We women as women, who cherish and

[45] Pacita Todtod, "To Gen. MacArthur From the Filipino Women," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

perpetuate life on earth, can not but bless your great military virtue…" Here, Todtod appears to reduce the role of women to reproducers of the Filipino people, but read alongside her support for Filipino women's voices in the public sphere, it seems unlikely that she believes a Filipino woman's role is relegated to motherhood. At the very least, it is unclear, and further complicates the landscape of Filipino gender politics at a critical historical moment. She ends the letter, "Lastly, Sir, permit us to ask you not to risk your life by your fearlessness in exposing yourself to the enemy…" Her final expression of gratitude to an American hero can carry multiple meanings. Todtod may have been expressing a genuine concern for a man she would most likely never meet. Evoking a feminine sensibility, it might also have been a rhetorical strategy to further demonstrate Filipino loyalty to the soon-to-be victors by performing the role of doting and loving Filipina. While not mutually exclusive, these various positions that Todtod took in the letter indicate a strategy that appealed to the American conscience while highlighting the significance of Filipino women's roles in the war effort.

Editor-in-Chief:
"I have a special responsibility to Filipino womanhood."

In 1945, Pacita Todtod simultaneously performed her role in *They Were Expendable* while serving as Editor-in-Chief for the *Philippines Mail*. Todtod's writings and speaking engagements reveal her more nuanced understanding of the position of Filipino women in society, and at times unapologetic stance on raising the community awareness of Filipino women's issues. In many ways, Todtod was unusual in her advocacy of Filipina civic participation at a time when few women had such a broad audience to listen to their demands. Todtod utilized her various titles and positions as a platform to voice her opinions. At the same time, she was also representative of Filipino women who adhered to the social norms of her

generation. Her short career reflects the difficulty she may have encountered as editor-in-chief when she tried to equalize the relative positions of women and men, then a controversial mission.

In February of 1945, the *Philippines Mail* enthusiastically announced the appointment of Pacita Todtod to the paper's editorship, a prestigious position for a Filipino woman at that time. *The Philippines Mail* succeeded *The Philippine Independent News,* which was the first Filipino newspaper in the continental United States. It was first published on November 3, 1930 in Salinas, California by Gonzalez and Co., and ceased printing in the 1980s.[46] Located southwest of the San Francisco Bay Area, Salinas and the surrounding Central Coast region were predominantly farming communities. Filipino labor migrants often found work in the lettuce fields of Salinas, which continues to be the world's leading producer of lettuce. Most of the content published in the paper revolved around politics that concerned Filipinos on the local level in the Salinas Valley, at the state level in California, and on the national levels in both the United States and in the Philippines. The editing and writing staff were almost exclusively male until Todtod's tenure as editor-in-chief, not counting the single "gossip" column by an anonymous author writing under the pseudonym "Miss Spotter."

Miss Spotter's playful musings "spotlighted" the social happenings of the Filipino elite. For example, in February 1945 Miss Spotter wrote, "My co-spotter in San Jose sent me a word that a beautiful and attractive lass from Chicago who arrived there recently is causing lots of heartaches to quite a few number of admirers."[47] In the article she proceeded to add the young woman's name and address, presumably to help said admirers track her down. Her mention of a "co-spotter" suggests that there was a network of gossip sources that often wrote to Miss Spotter

[46] Virginia Mansfield-Richardson, *Asian Americans and the Mass Media* (New York: NY, Garland Publishing Inc., 2014), 56.

[47] "Spotlights By Miss Spotter," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

to share the latest developments in their areas. Miss Spotter often reported on various love triangles and relationships that were forming, from young bachelors and bachelorettes to community leaders and politicians. She shared announcements of upcoming events that the elite would not want to miss, often reporting on the big names that attended and the dresses that the women wore.[48] These gossip columns regularly appeared in the *Philippines Mail*, though they only occupied a very small section of the paper, and constituted one of the few places where a woman's voice could be heard. Not until Todtod's involvement in the paper were women taken seriously in political discourse.

Filipino American newspapers such as *The Philippines Mail* provided an important news outlet for Filipinos in the Salinas and Santa Clara Valleys of California. The *Philippines Mail* published papers monthly, and sometimes bi-monthly, suggesting that scant resources and a small readership may have limited the paper's ability to publish more frequently. Nonetheless, the ethnic press served an important role in the community, facilitating the formation of social networks and the dissemination of information. The *Philippines Mail* motto stated that it was "Dedicated to bringing Filipinos in America closer together."

Pacita Todtod served as Editor-In-Chief for the *Philippines Mail* for two years, 1945-1947. Introducing Pacita as the new Editor-in-Chief in the February issue of 1945, the publisher of the *Philippines Mail* Delfin F. Cruz wrote, "This is the first time that a Filipino woman will serve in that capacity in any publication in the United States." According to Cruz, her "youth and enthusiasm, courage and cautiousness, and a sense of fairness and sympathy,"[49] are among many of the qualities that make her an exceptional young woman and fresh addition to the paper.

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[48] Japanese American newspaper columns in the 1930s and 40s also used playful gossip to highlight social happenings, and to bring the community together.

[49] "Editor-In-Chief," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

Cruz's introduction of Todtod to the readership included a laundry list of attributes that an ideal Editor should possess, and that Todtod indeed fulfilled and more. He wrote, "The editor of a Filipino newspaper in the United States must be a person of many interests and much resourcefulness, for his problems are many and difficult and he does not have much assistance."[50] Cruz's assumptions about the resourcefulness of an ideal editor may reveal the difficulties that publishing an ethnic newspaper may have posed. With little support from mainstream media, Cruz and the rest of the *Philippines Mail* staff may have had to creatively pool their few resources in the community, and effectively utilize their collective skills, in order to consistently publish a paper for their relatively small readership. The use of the male gender pronoun assumes that the standard image of a newspaper editor was indeed male. The use of "he" and "him" serve as place markers in constructing an ideal newspaper editor, indicating that men occupied a neutral position in the imaginings of a newspaper editor, and that women fell outside of this realm. Asserting that a Filipino woman could fulfill the necessary qualifications usually attributed to men would have disrupted this narrative. Although not a transformative shift in gender relations, since the ultimate argument is that Filipino women deserved merit if they acted like men, it was still a significant act.

As head publisher of the newspaper, Delfin F. Cruz, affectionately called "Daddy Cruz" in some of the more lighthearted columns of the paper, served as the main director of newspaper activities. Though he did not always write pieces himself for the paper, he did exercise editorial privileges over some of the pieces ultimately printed in the pages. For example, in an opinion piece published in the February 1945 issue of The *Philippines Mail*, an anonymous author makes the case for hiring more women in the public sector. In this short piece titled, "A Woman for

[50] "Editor-In-Chief," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

JCD's Assistant," "The MAIL suggests and proposes that the Assistant Representative of the Resident Commissioner in the Western States be a Filipino woman." The author argues, "There is no reason in the world why a woman should not be put to work to secure the welfare of Filipinos in the United States."[51] The article then ends with a plea to President Osmena of the Philippines Commonwealth; however, Publisher Cruz wrote the final word on the matter. As if to clarify the radical position of the piece in parentheses at the end, Cruz states, "This is one of the innovations that a female Editor-In-Chief is introducing and we endorse it strongly."[52] Though a small aside that could be easily glossed over in a quick reading, Cruz's words indicate that the newspaper staff were very much aware of prevailing gendered social norms and were concerned about how their readership might react to such bold statements. On the one hand, Cruz's intervention at the end of the piece could be read as an exercise of male authority over the *Mail's* activities. But on the other hand, we can begin to recognize small fractures in the gender hierarchy, through which proponents of Filipino women, like Todtod, began to voice their concerns and demands. Despite Cruz's interjection, the piece represents a forceful attempt by Todtod to directly insert Filipino women into existing structures of power.

As one of the major Filipino publications in the United States when the Philippines was undergoing its own transition from colony to independent nation, the *Philippines Mail* aimed "to be of service to the Philippines in these momentous times in her history." Pacita Todtod was appointed as editor-in-chief at a very critical moment when the concluding chapters of the war determined which nations could claim global dominance, and when Filipinos were eager to cast alliance with the United States as their "liberators." The timing of her appointment coincided

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[51] "A Woman for JCD's Assistant," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

[52] Ibid.

with the end of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines and the dissolution of the Philippine Commonwealth, an intermediary government set in place as a transitional phase from U.S. territory to full independence. Todtod's position as editor-in-chief of a major Filipino newspaper gave her access to a wider readership of Filipinos in the United States. As a Filipino woman, she was able to use her popularity and the credibility of a trusted publication to weigh in on the prevailing issues of the day, including discourses defining Filipino citizenship in the United States, and their relationship to a newly independent Philippine nation.

Pacita Todtod declared that her position as editor-in-chief would facilitate a more democratic and transparent relationship between the government and the Filipino people. In her inaugural letter she wrote, "Let us be reminded, Government exists for people, not people for government…This paper is going to be especially vigilant in this connection because it involves the very basic principle of democracy."[53] Todtod's vision echoes the paper's mission statement announcing its intention of serving as a bridge between the Filipino people and government, keeping the latter accountable to the needs of their readers and the community more broadly.

It should be noted that it is unclear which government, United States or Philippines, Todtod references. This ambiguity suggests a strategic blurring of the lines between allegiances, and illustrates the dual investment of Filipinos in political affairs occurring in the homeland, as well as in the host country. As the primary tool for mass communication, the ethnic press served multiple functions for immigrant communities, such as establishing a network among more scattered communities through advertisements and announcements, or as the main source of information for local, national, and international news from the Philippines. Todtod wrote, "The paper will bend all its efforts to bring about the greatest amount of cordial understanding and

[53] Pacita Todtod, "Miss Todtod Accepts," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

cooperation among Filipinos. In doing so it will not hesitate to expose those who render that kind of understanding impossible."[54] Thus, newspapers such as the *Philippines Mail* were also then considered influential political actors that molded public opinion and disseminated information and particular perspectives to a wide audience.

Pacita Todtod outlined her commitment to the paper's mission, to the Filipino community in the United States and in the Philippines, and to Filipino women in particular. In her acceptance letter titled "Miss Todtod Accepts," she wrote, "I have a special responsibility to Filipino womanhood."[55] From the beginning of her tenure as editor-in-chief of the *Philippines Mail,* Pacita Todtod stood firmly behind her vision for the newspaper's new directions. She set out to use the newspaper as a platform to address women's issues, as well as to demand more representation of Filipino women in positions of power. She wrote, "I have no pretensions of superior knowledge, but I shall introduce changes in the paper. The point of view of women must receive more attention. The idea that man alone plans things is due for discarding. The notion that woman was created to be a mere follower is due to oblivion."[56] Here, Todtod explicitly makes it known that she believes Filipino women's issues merit equal attention from the paper's readership and the community. She clearly draws a vital connection between the welfare and participation of women and the success of all Filipinos, men included.

It is significant that, as a Filipino woman, Pacita Todtod was able to occupy such an influential position at the newspaper to advance her vision of more Filipina participation in the public sphere. As a Filipino woman herself, Pacita successfully fulfilled her own call for

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[54] Pacita Todtod, "Miss Todtod Accepts," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

expanded roles for Filipino women. Breaking through gendered barriers, Pacita Todtod was able to influence public opinion by setting the direction of a newspaper that was read by both Filipino men and women. During her brief time as editor of *The Philippines Mail,* Pacita Todtod published writings that called upon women to acquire political office to serve the needs of *all* Filipinos. In a short piece titled, "Women in Cabinet," the author writes,[57]

> Putting it bluntly, the Philippine Cabinet would be strengthened if it has one or more women as members. In peace as in war, in intelligence and responsibility, the Filipino women have demonstrated beyond peradventure their capacity to occupy high positions of trust and duty.[58]

The paper's participation in political affairs in the Philippines illustrates the Filipino American transnational investment in what transpired in the homeland. And under the direction of Todtod, the paper identified this political arena as another opportunity to push forward the demand for more Filipino women to serve in higher offices of government. Through her work in the community, Pacita Todtod set an example for women to pursue positions of power, exert their influence, and shift the conversation to include their perspectives.

Equally as important as her unequivocal statements are the moments of ambiguity in her writing, which reflect her deep understanding of community and her unwillingness to alienate those who were not as open to ideas of women's political engagement. In the same acceptance piece, Todtod writes, "But make no mistake. This is not going to be a woman's paper—a she-paper, if you please."[59] Though a small reference in her piece, unpacking the term "she-paper" reveals how Todtod may have strategically sought to appeal to her audience, while pushing forward her aims. At first glance, Todtod's insistence that the *Philippines Mail* under her

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[57] Author is unclear, although it can be assumed that Pacita wrote this piece.

[58] "Women in Cabinet," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

[59] Pacita Todtod, "Miss Todtod Accepts," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

editorship not be considered a "she-paper" can be read as her uncritical acceptance of the notion that the female sex should be considered weaker than men. At the very least, there may be an awareness of the gender norms that fixed women's position below that of men's. This could either lead her to conclude that as a woman she must abandon her womanly characteristics that make her weak, and adopt a more aggressive demeanor normally associated with men. This interpretation by itself, however, leads us to believe that Pacita was merely re-inscribing the gender hierarchy. It suggests that she upheld the norms, firmly positioning women below men. More likely, Pacita hoped to transcend all definitions that bound women to the expectations that they were less than men. As editor-in-chief, Todtod must have known that the majority of her readers were most likely Filipino men, and understood their concerns that by appointing a woman, the *Philippines Mail* would be reduced to a "she-paper." Todtod acknowledged these fears, and assured her readers that under her supervision, the paper would continue to thrive as it expanded its scope to include the interests of Filipino women. She insisted that her vision for the paper was to serve the "common good" of all Filipinos, and not necessarily produce a woman's paper. By redefining "all Filipinos," she was including the common good of Filipino women, as well as men, and thus did not necessarily contradict herself in her words. She wrote, "It will be a paper that will be even more courageous than it has been in the past."[60] And in saying this, she not only declared that Filipino women's issues also needed to be included in the columns of the paper to increase the female base of readers (which may have been a key motivation for the shift), but that it was absolutely necessary to include women in the discourse on national politics in order to fulfill the paper's mission of serving *all Filipinos.*

[60] Pacita Todtod, "Miss Todtod Accepts," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1945.

Pacita Todtod's editorship of the *Philippines Mail* appears to end suddenly in February of 1947. Her exit was not commented upon in the newspaper, however a brief note in the issue published one month prior to her departure announced that, while publisher Delfin F. Cruz was vacationing in the Philippines, Paulino M. Olivete, would take over the newspaper. Paulino M. Olivete was the former editor of *The Philippine Independent News,* the *Mail's* predecessor.[61] This announcement did not mention that Todtod would not be continuing her role as Editor-in-Chief in the staff turnover. Todtod's silent withdrawal suggests that there may have been a conflict among the newspaper staff, which could have stemmed from her controversial positions on increasing women's status in the community. This may have proven unpopular with the readership, and among the elite class of the community, which could have resulted in Pacita being ousted from the newspaper's management. In Delfin F. Cruz's absence, Paulino Olivete's official title was "Business Manager" of the *Philippines Mail.* Olivete was helped by his two daughters, Betty and Consuelo "Peaches" Olivete. As the only women on staff, Betty and Peaches served supporting roles under their father's direction as Circulation Manager and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively. Four different associate editors were appointed in Todtod's place, however not one person was named "Editor-in-Chief. In a lengthy editorial, the *Philippines Mail* sought to justify the "Change of Management And Policy" by claiming it was reaffirming the newspaper's mission to uphold the Filipino people. The columnist wrote:

> Accordingly, our policy shall proceed from the premise that the respect of the American people and the world at large to sovereignty and independence of the Philippines must rest on the understanding and appreciation of the American people and the world at large of the spiritual and cultural contents of such Filipino accomplishments and aspirations.[62]

[61] "Olivete To Manage The Philippines Mail," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Feb. 1947.

[62] "Change of Management And Policy," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Mar. 1947.

The article makes no specific mention of the changes being made to the newspaper, or of Todtod's departure. The writer's use of nationalistic language, and his repeated reference to the "spiritual and cultural growth" of the Filipino people, may reflect the paper's pursuit of a more "universal" direction that privileged a male perspective. At a time when the Philippines was forming its own identity as a newly independent nation, the newspaper's management may have felt the need to assert its dominance in the political discourse. I can only suspect that this forceful change in the newspaper's course did not leave room for Pacita Todtod and her dedication to politically advancing Filipino women.

Pacita Todtod's short career with the newspaper raises some questions as to why her editorship was cut off so abruptly after only two years serving as Editor-in-Chief of the *Philippines Mail.* One can only imagine the difficulties she must have faced as a Filipino and as a woman in this position. Reiterating Delfin F. Cruz's comments about the hardships that come with publishing a Filipino newspaper, maintaining a regular publication cycle would have been almost impossible with few resources available to the community. Being a woman may have proven to be an added obstacle for Pacita, despite her efforts to legitimize the role of women in more public capacities. It is possible that "Daddy Cruz"--Delfin F. Cruz the publisher—or even Paulino Olivete, may not have appreciated Todtod's strong voice, despite that being a desirable trait for a newspaper editor when she was initially hired. Cruz's comments at the end of her articles hint at a possible tendency on his part to retain the final word in all matters published in his newspaper. Not wanting to draw unwanted scrutiny from the community, the newspaper made no comment on her departure. Also, as an unmarried woman, Pacita certainly did not follow the expected path of Filipino women her age, and likely faced pressure to marry and start a family, which she eventually did. Pacita Todtod was certainly ahead of her time in trying to

reshape the political landscape to include the voices of Filipino women. Her possible dismissal would indicate that, the Filipino American community simply was not ready for such a change, especially at a time when Filipinos were already transitioning from a position of colonial subjecthood to citizens of a newly independent Philippines nation.

Pacita Todtod did not continue her journalism career and remained visibly absent from the newspaper. In my readings of the *Philippines Mail,* Pacita did not appear in the remaining issues of 1947, and was briefly mentioned only a few times in 1948, until finally the announcement of her marriage to Epifanio "Robert" C. Bobadilla was published in 1949. Pacita met Robert while studying voice with a "world-famous maestro" in New York City, which may help explain her abrupt departure and two-year absence.[63] Until further evidence surfaces I can only speculate as to why Todtod suddenly left the newspaper and moved away from California. Her singing and acting career may have provided a convenient exit for Todtod, who may have also been facing pressure to step down from the editorship as a consequence of her outspokenness. Relocating to New York City may reflect her ambitions to pursue a musical career, but also suggests that she needed distance from the Filipino community in Salinas in order to avoid public shame. Finally, the *Philippines Mail* marriage announcement only mentioned her tenure as editor of their newspaper as an afterthought towards the end of the article. The *Mail* commented on "her service to the Filipino cause whatever it was, but always legitimate, patriotic, and aggressive."[64] This brief acknowledgement of her position at the *Philippines Mail* is lost in the article among the long list of praises for her singing talent and charms. It makes no reference of her support for Filipino women, only mentioning that her work

[63] "Pacita Todtod Is Won By Bobadilla," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Jan. 31, 1949.

[64] Ibid.

represented the universal interests of *all Filipinos,* erasing the specificity of her mission to address issues that affected *both* Filipino men and women. While I can only speculate on the circumstances of her sudden change in career and move to New York, the divisive nature of the material she published could have sparked controversy in the community, leading to her quiet dismissal from the newspaper.

Pacita Todtod and Robert Bobadilla married on March 5, 1949. Robert was a law graduate from the University of the Philippines, and later completed post-graduate work at Harvard University in international affairs. During World War II he worked in the civil branches of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Philippines, and later worked at the Philippines Consulate in New York City.[65] Pacita and Robert married in San Jose, California before returning to New York to settle down; they raised three children together. She later returned with her husband to the Santa Clara Valley in California, where she remained active throughout the 1970s. She supported the San Jose Symphony and Valle Monte League, an organization that raised money to support mental health in the community, eventually retiring in the 1990s. She then resided at the Angels Manor Care Home in San Jose, California before passing away on November 13, 2012.[66] Her continued involvement in local activities and issues that were not Filipino specific demonstrated her lasting commitment to serve the community.

Conclusion

Through Pacita Todtod's performances on the stage, and writings in the newspaper, we can observe the complex power dynamics of race and gender in the colonial context of American paternalism in the Philippines during World War II, and in the local politics of Filipino American

[65] "Pacita Todtod is Won By Bobadilla," *Philippines Mail* (Salinas, CA), Jan. 31, 1949.

[66] "Pacita Bobadilla Obituary," *San Jose Mercury News* (San Jose, CA), Nov. 23, 2012.

migrant communities in the Salinas Valley of California during the 1940s. Her class status and educated background opened up opportunities for her to sing and perform in nightclubs and USO camps, which eventually led her to sing and act in a major Hollywood film, *They Were Expendable.* Though she only had a small part, it was nonetheless a significant achievement for a Filipino American woman actress at that time. Her particular role as a Filipina nightclub singer at the outbreak of World War II would have had a particular meaning for the presumably white American audience who viewed the film. These meanings are caught in a complex web of American paternalism in the Philippines, and Filipino indebtedness towards the United States. At the same time, Todtod's appearance in the film is infused with symbols of Filipino nationalism that would have resonated with the community, especially in the context of intense debate surrounding Filipino citizenship in the United States, and Philippine independence after the end of the war.

Several mysteries remain surrounding the circumstances of Pacita Todtod's departure from the *Philippines Mail,* while little information could be found regarding her life after her marriage to Robert Bobadilla. While rich accounts of her budding career as an actress, singer, and writer could be retrieved in the *Philippines Mail,* they seem to abruptly cease after the end of the 1940s decade. Large gaps in the historical record raise many questions about the remaining majority of Todtod's life after 1949, until her passing in 2012. What was she doing on the east coast? What kind of life did she and her family lead? Did she remain involved in community work or continued to pursue a singing or acting career? Or did she step away from such ambitions to raise her family? While immediate answers to these questions are beyond the scope of my project, my interest in Pacita Todtod fuels my curiosity, and compels me to continue searching for the ending of this story.

More than just a symbolic vessel for Philippine nationalism and American benevolence, Pacita Todtod proved to be a strong advocate for the voices of Filipino women to be heard in political discourse. Moving beyond the domestic sphere, she pushed forward a specifically *Filipina* form of nationalism, which may have stirred controversy in the community. Social pressure to adhere to "traditional" expectations of Filipino and American womanhood tempered her firm position on women's participation in public arenas. Eventually her sudden and quiet departure from the *Philippines Mail* and the Salinas Valley signaled the end of her journalism and political career. While outspoken and assertive, it appears she succumbed to the social expectations and barriers of her time. It is likely that she was facing pressure from the Filipino community, as well as racial barriers in the film and music industries, and decided to settle down with her husband and have a family. Despite the mystery surrounding Todtod's later life, we can still recognize and appreciate the strength and resilience she displayed as she attempted to navigate the complex tensions that came with being a woman ambitiously seeking to alter the gender politics that shaped the Filipino American community in the 1940s. And although she may not have accomplished all she set out to achieve, she later participated in local organizations, indicating that she maintained her civic spirit and interest in the arts. The legacy she left on screen and in the columns of the newspaper are a testament to the efforts and triumphs of this remarkable Filipino American woman.

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