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# Tangible Lives:

# Pina/oy Migrant Cultures and Labor

# in Interwar California, 1920-1941

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Bernard James Remollino

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Tangible Lives:

Pina/oy Migrant Culture and Labor

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Bernard James Remollino

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Eric R. Avila, Chair

ABSTRACT: This dissertation is concerned with the multiple valences of Pina/oy cultural meaning-making from 1920 to 1941. It focuses on alternative practices of labor and leisure in California, where multiple Pina/oy ethnic enclaves throughout the state underscored the critical role that travel, mobility, and inter-dependent community infrastructures played in sustaining the transpacific lifeways of the Filipina/o diaspora during the interwar period. It will examine Pina/oys' historical negotiations over space, power, and autonomy that occurred on the terrain of several Pina/oy popular cultures. These cultural spaces created the context for alternative modes of work, survival, community-making, and freedom to emerge under U.S. racial regimes.

The dissertation of Bernard James Remollino is approved.

Lucy M. Burns

Frank Tobias Higbie

George Lipsitz

Eric R. Avila, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

For Francesca, Newton, Tess, Milo, and Oso

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"Rambunctious Rebels: Histories of Authentic Expression in Filipinx Tattoo Cultures," *Mahalaya* 1, no. 1 (June 2022). https://www.mahalayasf.org/post/rambunctious-rebels-histories-of-authentic-expression-in-filipinx-tattoo-cultures.

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# INTRODUCTION

This dissertation highlights the histories of alternative practices of labor and leisure by Pina/oys in California between 1920 and 1941.[1] By centering the cultural histories of Pina/oy labor and migration during this interwar period, this project frames the first two decades of Filipina/o American community building as a process that relied on the transmission of migrant values, attitudes, and beliefs into Pina/oy expressive and material cultures. The historical impact of Pina/oy migrants on interwar U.S. politics and society is rooted in both Pina/oy labor activism and the public actions of migrants outside the structures of formal politics. Interwar popular culture created by, consumed by, and mediated through Pina/oys in California had three significant effects.

First, Pina/oy popular culture troubled U.S. racial logics around masculinity and Asian excludability. Pina/oy popular culture challenged notions upheld by interwar racial regimes that characterized migrants from the Philippines as physically and intellectually inferior to white agents of U.S. transpacific empire. Second, Pina/oy popular culture extended radical politics of survival into migrants' everyday lives. Interwar Pina/oys developed and practiced radical politics in the fraternal organizations and labor unions based in Little Manilas in California's cities as part of a broader culture of resistance. These sensibilities were also cultivated in spaces of leisure and play. Pina/oys' engagement with popular culture extended the sensibilities of political struggle to their everyday lives. Lastly, Pina/oy popular culture encouraged transpacific solidarities. While this

[1] The terms "Pinoy" and "Pinay" were used in the 1920s by Filipino migrants living or born in the United States to differentiate themselves from Filipinos living in the Philippines, or elsewhere. I will use the term "Pina/oy" to indicate when a process, event, or ideal affected or applied, very generally, to Filipino men and women in the United States. When a process affected, specifically, either Filipino men or women, I will be using "Pinoy" or "Pinay," respectively, in the interest of historical consistency; See Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony's note on terminology in *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), xvii-xviii; See "Reflections of a Traveler," in the *Philippine Republic* (1924) by Dr. J. Juliano and Carson Taylor's *History of the Philippines* (1927); "Special Filipino Women Students' Number," *Filipino Studies Bulletin*, April-May, 1926; See also Dawn Mabalon's discussion of the term in *Little Manila Is In the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (2013), 20.

dissertation focuses on the lifeways Pina/oy migrants carved in the social spaces of California, this history cannot be discussed without a transpacific lens. Pina/oy popular cultures produced and mediated in California facilitated the creation of Filipina/o American diasporic identities conscious of their connection to the politics of Philippine independence. These transpacific identities were rooted in shared dreams for liberation and semi-autonomy heightened in spaces of leisure and play.

"Everything under the sun is art," declared Juan Y. Billones. "A doubt of things beautiful would leave the world in chaos." Billones addressed his flowery speech to members of the Cosmopolitan Club at the third annual international "Filipino Night" held in Stockton, California, on January 27, 1930. The gala was meant to highlight Filipina/o contributions to American culture. It coincided with a separate gathering of educators, politicians, and labor organizers at Manila's University of the Philippines, where Dean Jorge Bucoco issued a manifesto protesting the recent surge in anti-Filipina/o violence in California.[2] These parallel events highlight the complex interconnected transpacific engagements undertaken by different communities of Filipina/os in response to the violence enacted on their colonial bodies by structures of U.S. imperialism. They also generate questions about the cultural worlds that entangled Pina/oy bodies in alternative lifeways underemphasized in these Stockton and Manila gatherings.

What modes of sociality developed through and despite Pina/oys' violent, hyper-surveilled encounters with California racial regimes? How did Pina/oy cultural producers and consumers engage with and transform American popular culture between 1920 and 1941? How was race queered by the positioning of Pina/oy colonial bodies in various transpacific interwar cultural industries? How might we reorient our thinking about what constitutes Pina/oy labor and ethnic

[2] Agnes McGee, "All World Is Art Theme Of Filipino Speaker Here," *Stockton Daily Independent*, Jan 28, 1930.

identity by examining sites of alternative work that Pina/oys inhabited to survive the violence of interwar California? This dissertation will address these questions by examining the historical negotiations over space, power, and autonomy that occurred on the terrain of several Pina/oy popular cultures in California from 1920 to 1941.

Stockton's Filipino Night brought together middle-class white and Filipina/o patrons of the arts to celebrate Philippine culture by showcasing "native instruments, past and present" and highlighting Filipina/o contributions to American jazz and dance. Billones, a respected Stockton businessman and photographer who immigrated from the Philippines in 1912, worked with his wife alongside community leaders P.M. Marcuelo, Leo Cinco, and P. Villarruz to ensure that the event bolstered the morale of local Filipina/os in the wake of a violent tragedy that occurred only a few days earlier, one hundred and twenty miles away in Watsonville, involving the shooting death of Fermin Tobera. Tobera was sleeping in a bunkhouse on Murphy Ranch when white male rioters shot through the walls, hitting Tobera through the heart. Bucoco's manifesto in Manila criticized the failure of the U.S. government to protect its colonial subjects and "called the Philippines (sic) attention to the thousands of their countrymen in America whose 'lives at this very moment are in serious jeopardy.'" Bucoco's comments reignited longstanding debates over Philippine Independence: "Let us all attempt to reiterate the desire for complete separation now that under the American flag we are not assured that we can enjoy the same rights and opportunities of American citizens."[3] Bucoco's argument underscored Filipina/o struggles to secure their physical and emotional safety in the United States. These struggles were also reflected in

[3] "Filipinos Riot in Protest," *Stockton Daily Independent*, Jan 28, 1930.

Billones's attempts to foster cultural solidarity in the United States as another mode of semi-autonomous survival in the face of these violent attempts at physical erasure. [4]

Pina/oys in California engaged in other practices of labor and leisure that allowed them to survive violent U.S. structures of imperialism during this interwar period. These practices were contingent reactions to the conditions of possibility in the context of California as a Pacific Coast state. This project acknowledges that there were similar processes of Pina/oy identity-making and community building in states like New York and Louisiana. This dissertation focuses on alternative practices of labor and leisure in California because the presence of multiple Pina/oy ethnic enclaves throughout the state provides a comprehensive demographic range by which to assess the widespread role that travel, mobility, and inter-dependent community infrastructures played in sustaining the transpacific lifeways of Filipina/os in the continental United States, Hawaii, and the Philippines. These lifeways were rooted in the social worlds created through popular culture and they fostered different expressions of Pina/oy intimacy in urban and rural spaces of migrant California communities.

Reconstructing the histories of Pina/oy labor and migration to the United States in the early twentieth century requires an acknowledgement of the multiple frequencies along which empire oscillated. It also necessitates an acknowledgement that power flowed from several sources, troubling expected relationships between colony and metropole. This project's methods and geospatial frameworks build on the essential work conducted by historians of Pina/oy migration to urban spaces of the Pacific Coast and to rural sites in California before World War II. The

[4] I use "semi-autonomy" as a framework because Filipina/o migrants engaged this culture in sites where the hegemony of racial regimes persisted. Therefore, I do not want to overemphasize autonomy as being an ultimately liberalized state that Filipinos of any class were able to attain during this period – or any period, for that matter.

works of Linda España-Maram, Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, and Dawn Bohulano Mabalon challenged assumptions about the impermanence of Pina/oy Pacific Coast communities by demonstrating the vibrancy of Pina/oy political and social lives previously dismissed as nonexistent by historians of Filipina/o migration.[5] This dissertation is concerned with the multiple valences of Pina/oy cultural meaning-making. While this project presents a cultural history of Filipina/o labor and migration, it approaches this topic through the intersecting lenses of U.S.-Philippine social history, immigration and labor studies, histories of settler-colonialism in the American West, and narratives of American state-making undergirding histories of the U.S. and the World.[6]

1930 was a profoundly violent year for Filipina/os in California. In January, the first full year of the Great Depression heightened tensions leading to Fermin Tobera's death. "The displacing of white workers and prevailing racial prejudices against these orientals," a report by the California Department of Industrial Relations read, "account for the recent deplorable anti Filipino riots in Exeter and Watsonville."[7] White working-class anxieties were stoked by the increasingly visible population of nonwhite workers in and adjacent to white spaces of politics, work, and leisure. Rising numbers of Filipina/o immigrants into the state reinforced this growing anxiety.

Between 1920 and 1929, the California Department of Industrial Relations recorded 31,902 migrants from the Philippine Islands had entered the state. Over 26,000 of these men, women, and children traveled on the Dollar Steamship Line, which made annual trips between Manila and San

[5] In *Strangers from a Different Shore*, Ronald Takaki argues that Filipina/os did not establish permanent communities in the United States because of the migratory nature of their work in agriculture and canning. Subsequent histories have since challenged these formulations.
[6] Ryan M. Irwin, "Some Parts Sooner, Some Later, and Finally All," *H-Diplo State of the Field Essay* 142 (October) 1-25.
[7] Homer L. Roberts, "Filipinos Are Cause of Trouble," *Courier-Free Press*, Vol. 35 (no. 245), June 18, 1930.

Francisco.[8] By 1930, over 45,000 Filipina/os lived in the continental United States and a significant population resided in Hawaii. An estimated 42,000 of these migrants were young men and nearly eighty percent of all California Pinoys by 1930 were between the ages of sixteen and thirty. The men comprised a significantly visible militant bachelor population. The women mobilized the power of their unpaid reproductive labor to sustain their communities politically, economically, socially, and culturally. In this collective context, Pina/oys asserted claims to space, power, and dignity through their engagement with labor politics, migrant intimacies, and especially popular culture.

I expand on histories of Pina/oy labor and identity construction initiated in the scholarship of historians Linda España-Maram and Dawn Mabalon. While *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila* and *Little Manila is in the Heart* phenomenally reclaim Pina/oy community visibility throughout the twentieth century, their focus on these enclaves understates the value of being mobile in the face of attempts at state control. That is not to say that either author overlooks their importance to the narrative of Pina/oy migrant histories during this period. Each work acknowledges migrancy and transience as definitive shapers of Pina/oy culture during the Interwar period. Rather, because these works are focused on the bounds of Pina/oy ethnic enclaves in the urban spaces of Stockton and Los Angeles, the resulting narratives center notions that Pina/oy were better able to create solidarity in the cities out of which their sociocultural institutions were based. I argue that migrants' transient positionalities and experiences, *as well as* their urban cultural infrastructures, forged their identities as Pina/oys. The stretches of travel between urban centers of community were spaces of sociality – and radical imagination – akin to

[8] State of California Department of Industrial Relations, "Facts About Filipino Immigration into California," by Will J. French, *Special Bulletin No. 3* (San Francisco: April, 1930), 15.

the sports venues, restaurants, and dance halls in the cities. Popular culture mediated the group identities forged in these transient interstices.

**Periodization**

Following the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States government quickly established colonial rule over an emerging Philippine Republic.[9] Progressive Era politics energized colonial policymakers sent to the Philippines. By the 1910s, Westernized schools throughout the archipelago issued "examinations to secure a list of students best qualified to receive and profit by a course of instruction and education" on the U.S. mainland. Under strict requirements of "good moral character" and "sound physical conditions," these select representatives of the Philippines would "be sent [to American universities] for education at the expense of the Government of the Philippine Islands" and under the protection of U.S. law.[10] This

[9] This period has received widespread scholarly attention as U.S. intervention in the Pacific at the turn of the twentieth century marked a moment in which the institutions of American empire expanded their geographical scope and claims to power over Othered populations. For more on the significance of this moment in its context, as well as its implications for Filipino immigration to the United States, see: Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansionism 1860 – 1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited, Vol. 1* (Manila: Tala Pub. Services 1975); Luzviminda Francisco, "The Philippine-American War," in *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskam Shalom (Boston: South End, 1987); David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899 – 1902* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007); Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: American Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Ballantine, 1990); Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007); Frank Hindman Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898 – 1946* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997); Barbara M. Posadas and Roland L. Guyotte, "Unintentional Immigrants: Chicago's Filipino Foreign Students Become Settlers, 1900 – 1941," *Journal of American Ethnic History 9*, no. 2 (1990): 26 – 48; H. Brett Melendy, *Asians in America: Filipinos, Koreans, and East Indians* (Boston: Twayne, 1977); San Juan Epifanio, *From Exile to Diaspora: Versions of the Filipino Experience in the United States* (Westview Press, Harper Collins Publishers, Inc. 1998); Steffi San Buenaventura, "Filipino Immigration to the United States," in *Asian American Encyclopedia*, ed. Franklin Ng (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1995); Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919 – 1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[10] *An Act Providing for the Education of Filipino Students in the United States and Appropriating for such Purpose the Sum of Seventy-Two Thousand Dollars, In Money of the United States*, No. 854, *U.S. Statutes at Large* Section 1 (192-): 7860.

*pensionado* program gave Filipina/o students their initial exposure to American culture outside of the Pacific islands. The stories they transmitted to their families back home – of bountiful employment and a meritocratic culture – inspired an obsession to travel to the United States to realize these purported promises. Filipina/os' imaginations were charmed by messages of adventure, professional opportunity, and education that masked overarching U.S. colonial agendas determined to regulate and legitimize racial regimes in the Pacific.[11] These fantasies powerfully informed Filipina/o migrants' decisions to immigrate and work in the United States over the next decade.[12]

The Interwar Period (1918 – 1941) in the United States saw the development of essential cultural infrastructures by and for Pina/oys along the Pacific Coast. California was a staging ground for popular cultures that sustained, educated, and radicalized various groups of Pina/oy workers inside and outside of geographically bound communities. The Interwar years represent a time of significant global change as white middle classes in North America and Europe leveraged the economic prosperity generated by increased postwar mechanization contributing to the proliferation of popular cultural materials for leisure. Politically, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution saw the rise of Communism as a governing ideology and method for social (re)organization informing the movements for self-determination internationally, but with particular implications for the Philippines as a colonized nation under U.S. imperialism. 1919 saw labor unrests in Seattle and Boston, and race riots in Chicago. The Ku Klux Klan was active in national politics and a political culture of restrictive immigration set the tone of Pina/oy migrant labor relations.

[11] Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xii-xiii.
[12] Catherine Ceniza-Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19, 34.

Dawn Mabalon argues that "the 1920s and 1930s were crucial decades for the forging of a powerful Filipina/o American culture, identity, and community in Stockton" and offers frameworks for thinking about Pina/oy migrant communities on the West Coast. I mobilize this methodology to think about the interstitial spaces of mobility, community building, and identity making to do precisely that. Pina/oys along the U.S. Pacific Coast produced, consumed, and negotiated popular culture to make sense of their social worlds. In their "flexible notions of family, community, and home," Pina/oy laborers' migrant cultures destabilized overarching assumptions about race, class, and gender while negotiating claims to power, space, and citizenship during this period. [13]

The Great Depression and subsequent development of the New Deal liberal state in the United States created the conditions to which existing migrant communities of color – especially within the Pacific-coast states of California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii – were forced to react and contend. In 1930, around 4.5 million Americans were unemployed. That number would peak at around 13 million in 1933 and by 1939 the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the number of unemployed was up at around 9.5 million people.[14] Pina/oy migrants limited by the structures of colonial surveillance within the United States sometimes reinforced racialized, classed, and gendered assumptions of Asian immigrants as threats to a white social order. Simultaneously, they sometimes reified tensions within Filipina/o diasporic communities and sometimes destabilized – albeit temporarily – these Orientalized notions altogether.

While not subject to broader de jure restrictions under the aforementioned modes of colonial surveillance and control, Pina/oys still could not vote, own land, buy homes, marry whites,

[13] Dawn Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 9-11.
[14] Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Technical Note: Labor Force, Employment, and Unemployment, 1929 – 1939: Estimating Methods," in *Monthly Labor Review, April 1948*, bls.gov.

apply for U.S. citizenship, or walk alone down the wrong city streets at night without the threat of extreme violence toward their bodies and communities. The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 – an expression of a political tradition of immigration exclusion dating back to the Naturalization Law of 1790 – ultimately created the conditions by which Filipina/os were identified as a desirable source of exploitable labor and as a target for racialized violence. After 1924, Filipina/os migrating to the United States began to construct identities that compounded and complicated regional allegiances from the Philippine Islands. As laborers in American fields, canneries, hotels, and homes, Filipina/os began to define themselves through their acculturation. These identities – centered on a claim to Americanness that reflected their unique status as U.S. nationals – became the focal point in assertions of belonging to the nation-state whenever the laws critically shifted to exclude them. They also became a key arena of debate in claims to independence from the United States.

This period also saw the passage of several impactful pieces of immigration legislation that specifically Pina/oys, prospective migrants from the Philippines, and Filipina/os in the Philippines engaged in debates over independence from U.S. imperial control. The most comprehensive of these laws were the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934. Johnson-Reed restricted the flow of immigrants to the United States through a national origins quota that afforded limited visas to prospective immigrants and completely excluded immigrants from Asia. However, because the Philippines became a U.S. colony at the end of the Philippine-American War in 1902, Filipina/os were classified by the state as U.S. nationals and could bypass these restrictions. This legislative loophole directly affected the rates of Filipina/o immigration during the 1920s.

The Interwar years witnessed a significant economic boom, global depression, and the construction of a welfare state. The federal government's plenary powers over immigration enforcement increased alongside its regulatory influence over banking, consumer affairs, and labor relations. The 1930s saw the federal government passing welfare programs to alleviate the pressures of the Depression. Heightened labor militancy coincided with the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1936 and preceded a recession the following year. The establishment of the National Labor Relations Board and the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 followed the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934. The act – which passed after intense efforts by Philippine Senate President Manuel L. Quezon[15] – reclassified Filipina/os living in the United States as "aliens" ineligible for citizenship, "considered [the Philippines] a separate country [that] shall have for each fiscal year a quota of fifty" immigrants with documentation administered by the Department of the Interior, and barred Pina/oys from owning land and businesses.[16] In 1935, the federal government passed the Filipino Repatriation Act, incentivizing voluntary self-deportation from the United States and resulting in the removal of around 2,000 Pina/oys to the Philippines until 1940.[17] That same year, the 1935 Philippine Constitution established the Commonwealth of the Philippines. The American imperial project in the Pacific pivoted. The Tydings-McDuffie and Filipino Repatriations Acts changed the nature of Pina/oy claims to belonging in the United States. The different ways in which Filipina/o activists, ethnic community members, and Philippine government representatives responded to the Tydings-McDuffie Act suggest that 1934 was a moment of crisis for the Filipina/o diaspora. The Filipina/o

[15] Sonia M. Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation* (All-Nations Publishing Co., 1994), 314–315.
[16] Immigration Act of 1934 (Tydings-McDuffie), Act of Congress 73d, Session II., CHS 73, 84. March 22, 24, 1934.
[17] Bruce E. Johansen, "Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935," *Immigrationamerica.org*, Immigrationamerica.org, https://web.archive.org/web/20141006083819/http://immigrationinamerica.org/498-filipino-repatriation-act-of-1935.html.

working classes responded to these categorical changes in ways that were sometimes in tension with those of the Filipina/o middle classes.[18] These tensions often centered around appropriate ways to consume popular culture.

**Methods and Historiography**

The context of the Interwar period will frame a discussion of three overarching and overlapping themes: nationalism, expressive semi-autonomy, and American imperial surveillance. First, a political culture of exclusionary immigration policy rooted in nationalist sensibilities reflected a general trend toward the legitimization of the nation-state. This informs the second theme of U.S. imperial surveillance methods anchored in concerns over manliness and settler-colonial exploitation domestically and particularly in the Pacific. The first and second themes overlap with the third theme of expressive semi-autonomy linked to forms of popular culture performed within sites of sociality negotiated by Pina/oy migrants as producers, consumers, and mediators. These three themes allow us to imagine the social and cultural worlds of Pina/oys as spaces of negotiated semi-autonomy from often violent, annihilating racial-capitalist logics.

The Filipina/o colonial body was understood under terms that were explicitly racialized and gendered by social and cultural gatekeepers. Filipina/o middle-class sensibilities often coincided with white perceptions of the Filipina/o working classes. While the middle classes often echoed the sentiments of white respectability, they also functioned as brokers to power: vilifying hegemonic whites as obstacles to upward mobility while relying on the influence of their

[18] To better understand these tensions in the context of Filipino migrant workers, I pull from Tobias Higbie's discussions of how "this tension between class and community was present in all social investigations of seasonal and unemployed workers' lives" in *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880 – 1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 86-87. Higbie contextualizes these tensions as born alongside "the uncontrolled nature of American industrial development [that] created a disjuncture between normal life as society deemed it and the kind of life possible for the migratory worker."

possessive investment in Interwar racial regimes for business opportunities and in self-defense situations against racism. These three themes comprise different but intersecting cultural trends from this period.[19]

Kristin Hoganson defines "culture" as "the common reference points, customary beliefs, and patterns of behavior that formed the framework from within which individuals perceived and responded to the wider world… culture might only complicate our understandings of historical causality, for it is never determinative… political decision makers are shaped by their surrounding cultures." This definition allows for a discussion of what comprises "culture" to include materials and performances affecting the sensibilities of historical actors as they negotiate the contingent decisions required of their lived and perceived positionalities. The political cultures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries form the context out of which "gender convictions – meaning the ideas about appropriate male and female roles" as well as those of race and class coalesce around and through the Filipino colonial body.[20]

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[19] To think through the dual role of the middle classes, I pull from Michael Miler Topp's *Those Without a Country: The Political Culture of Italian American Syndicalists* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and April R. Schultz's *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2009). To think about how this relates to working-class culture, see James Barrett and David Roediger's "In-Between Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the New Immigrant Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (Spring 1997).

[20] Hoganson, Kristin L., *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2-3. I am attempting to mobilize the literal and figurative meanings of "body" in this framework. On the one hand, race and gender are categorically ascribed to the physical bodies of Filipino migrants by hegemonic powers of the State and internalized by Filipino middle classes in their prescriptions for working-class activities. These physical markers of difference provide modes of meaning-making that are informed by historically contingent understandings of brown colonial subjects. For Filipinos during the Interwar Period, a legacy of Asian immigration and Orientalist understandings of the Other in the Pacific intersect with social understandings of blackness in process since the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the metaphorical body as an object around which understandings of a racialized Other cohere makes the Filipino migrant and the popular-cultural spaces they occupied epistemes for this period. To better understand this dynamic, I will pull from Anne Anlin Cheng's theorizations on how nineteenth-century U.S. immigration law fostered a politics of visibility foundational to understandings of Asian immigrants in *Ornamentalism* (Oxford University Press, 2018). I will also draw from Joshua Chambers-Letson's theorizations on a "communism of incommensurability" in *After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2018) to think through the ways in which differences in Filipino diasporic communities in the United States provided conditions of opportunity for solidarity alongside the overt conflicts expressed in published sources.

I also borrow from Eric Avila's discussion of culture as an avenue for empowerment and enrichment that is essential to the creation of a community and its persistence against erasure through sometimes invisible practices of resistance.[21] To this I apply James C. Scott's conceptualization of infrapolitics: that hidden transcripts of resistance developed within dissident cultures to resist abuses of power. Infrapolitics is useful for understanding how and why Pina/oys between 1920 and 1941 mobilized their own laboring resources to push back against racialized violence through avenues other than direct confrontations with power enacted by regimes of race. I borrow from Cedric J. Robinson's articulation of racial regimes as "constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power… yet they are actually contrivances, designed and delegated by interested cultural and social powers with the wherewithal sufficient to commission their imaginings, manufacture, and maintenance."[22]

U.S. imperial expansion into the Philippines replicated dynamics of settler-colonial violence learned and practiced against indigenous communities on the continent. In the Philippines, the United States envisioned itself as fighting another group of indigenous insurgents obstructing its ability to expand its empire beyond continental borders. American political cartoons reinforced these popular notions of Filipino otherness through indigeneity.

In June 1899, *Judge* magazine released a cover image with art by Grant Hamilton entitled, "The Filipino's First Bath." It depicted President William McKinley holding an agitated, dark-skinned, infant Philippines over a river labeled "civilization" and exclaiming, "Oh, you dirty

[21] Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), x.
[22] Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xii-xiii.; For more on how this is expressed in historical communities, see George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford: University Press, 1993) and Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* ((New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2012).

boy!"[23] Ready to scrub away the infant's savage ignorance with the brush of "education," McKinley's tenets of Benevolent Assimilation are on full display in Hamilton's piece. Hamilton's depiction of the Philippines as a naked, disheveled, spear-toting baby paralleled George Catlin's mid-century renditions of indigenous communities in his "Indian Galleries." Catlin's *North American Indian Portfolio* and Charles Bird King's 1837*The History of Indian Tribes of North America* constructed a popular image of Native Americans whose continental tours reinforced these aesthetic associations in its audiences. U.S. policy makers, annexationists, and anti-imperialists would have been familiar with these visual ques that emphasized indigenous tropes.

In the background, brown-skinned adolescent depictions of "Porto Rico" and Cuba are seen donning vestments patterned in the stars and stripes of the American flag. The Teller and Platt Amendments established a U.S. military presence in Cuba while the annexation of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines by 1899 created insular economies that also introduced new racialized laborers into the fold of U.S. society. For audiences steeped in the yellow journalism of the Spanish-American War, as well as the debates over annexation, these would have been recognizable references to the U.S.'s new territorial acquisitions. Wartime cartoons reflected the values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding U.S. empire. They also connected Filipina/o resistance to U.S. Pacific expansion with memories of indigenous opposition to nineteenth-century westward expansion.

The U.S. conflict against Filipina/o insurgents followed similar patterns of indigenous repression. At the same time, U.S. military approaches to the suppression of what it characterized as an insurrection changed in this context. The U.S. Army modified the standard revolvers it had used in its frontier Indian wars to fit the needs of its new Pacific frontier. Likewise, U.S. military

[23] Reproduced in *The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons* (Berkeley: Eastwind Books/ T'Boli, 2004) by Abe Ignacio, Enrique de la Cruz, Jorge Emmanuel, and Helen Toribio.

agents developed new modes of surveillance, interrogation, and torture specifically for use against Filipina/o belligerents. American tactics in the Philippines mirrored the brutality of frontier conflicts against Indians on the continent.[24] In some cases, the Philippine theater encouraged new forms of brutality. On May 5, 1902, the *New York Journal* published an image of an American firing squad executing four blindfolded Filipino boys. The image highlighted General Jacob H. Smith's order to "Kill Every One Over Ten" while the caption read, "Criminals Before They Were Born Ten Years Before We Took the Philippines."[25] U.S. military violence against Filipina/os during the Philippine-American War extended the American strategy of eradicating indigenous communities to the Pacific.

Throughout this paper, "culture" will refer to both material and non-material forms of expression. Material culture refers to the physical objects, resources, and spaces used to identify and define community. Non-material culture refers to the ideologies and concepts that allow historical actors to imagine identities outside of the physical bounds of place or space. Material and non-material culture work in tandem to create dynamics of sociability and meaning-making by which "portable communities" make sense of the world around them, signal themselves as marked and malleable through experiences of colonialism, and sometimes resist their structurally prescribed positionalities as minoritized, Othered bodies.

On January 10, 1930, Justice of the Peace D.W. Rohrback passed resolutions condemning the actions of Filipina/os in recent labor disputes before the Northern Monterey Chamber of Commerce and in a local issue of the *Evening Pajaronian* newspaper. In his critique of intermarriage, Rohrback argued that "a few [Filipinos] have married white girls. Others will. 'If

[24] Alejandro De Quesada, *The Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection: 1898-1902* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 17-25.
[25] "Kill Everyone Over Ten," *New York Journal,* May 5, 1902.

the present state of affairs continues there will be 40,000 half-breeds in California before ten years have passed,' – is the dire prediction."[26] Making a plea to the racial insecurities of Anglo-Americans, Rohrback attempted to mobilize white opposition to Pina/oys by imagining a naturalizing basis for segregation. Furthermore, Rohrback vehemently proclaimed that it would be "better that the fields of the Salinas Valley should grow into weed patches and our wonderful forests be blackened" than to have Filipina/os widely employed and steadily reproducing throughout the United States.[27]

Representatives of the Pina/oy middle class responded to these accusations by leveraging logics of respectability. David P. De Tagle, left-leaning editor of the Stockton *Three Stars* suggested that "Rohrback begin the 'cleaning' among those of his own 'color'" before attacking the hygienic practices of Pina/oys.[28] De Tagle goes on to claim that Pina/oys acted in ways more American than Americans themselves. This exchange reflects political debates in the United States and the Philippines over the Philippine Republic's readiness for self-rule. These debates almost always purported to speak for the working classes without actually giving them the space to engage in these debates. Migrant laborers, then, often relied on popular culture to make sense of their experiences and feel engaged with their communities in ways that mattered to them.

Issues relating to cultures of nationalism comprised the sentiments of the Pina/oyworking and middle classes, of the white working and middle classes, and of Filipina/os in the Philippines. How did what people thought Filipina/os should be signal moments of crisis for the Pina/oy communities in the United States? Conversations over Philippine independence and access to the

[26] Emory Stephen Bogardus, *Anti-Filipino race riots: a repost made to the Ingram institute of social science, of San Diego, by E.S. Bogardus, University of Southern California, May 15, 1930*, May 1930, p F870.F5B6: Provenance: Japanese Relocation Papers, CU-BANC, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, p.7.
[27] Ibid., 7-8.
[28] David P. De Tagle, *The Torch*, No. 2 (California: Salinas, January 1930), 2.

promises generated from the experiences of *pensionados* and other sojourners influenced these debates. Understanding the expectations placed upon the Filipina/o colonial body in connection to the future envisioned for the Philippine and U.S. nation-states is integral to understanding the impact these fugitive subcultures had on the stability of U.S. racial regimes.

Cultures of expressive performance will discuss the intentionalities of and perceptions by performers and their viewers. Thematically, this will center around discussions of visibility as participants resisted state surveillance and contested attempts by Pina/oy middle-class agents to edit these performances to fit expectations of respectability. How did boxers, tattooers, cooks, artists, and organized workers use their bodies to destabilize the expectations of the U.S. colonial state? How did they challenge or reinforce the expectations of the Pina/oy middle classes?

Discussions of issues framing American imperial policies as immigration and labor issues will examine the negotiated legacies of pivotal moments affecting Pina/oy migrant communities – the insular cases, immigration legislation, labor uprisings and violent reactions by the state – to analyze their effects on Pina/oys' sensibilities and contingent actions in the form of material cultural production. How did fugitive popular culture affect the ways in which the United States government attempted to control the movement of bodies, ideas, and performances during this period?

I borrow methodology utilized by scholars of immigration and Asian American historical experiences to examine the importance of transience in the shaping of migrant imaginations and self-identifications toward the bounds of citizenship and community formation. Nayan Shah's *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* suggests that mobility and transience are central to an historical analysis of how the state attempts to identify, surveil, and regulate the movement of racial subversives. Shah's methodology

emphasizes the varied forms of household social organization that are not necessarily beholden to the perceived permanence of an ethnic enclave. In the case of Filipina/o America from 1920 to 1941, primarily male laborers utilized urban ethnic spaces to reinforce community ties that were established as many were forced to follow the seasonal labor patterns of U.S. agricultural, fishing, and canning industries.

Speaking more to this culture of movement and transience – what Linda España-Maram refers to as "portable communities" when discussing Pina/oys during the Interwar period – Nayan Shah argues that "the myth of the nuclear family serves as a conceptual crutch that renders any other form of kinship and household structures pathological, aberrant, and incompatible with cultural support and political privilege… It occludes all necessary transits and circulation of people between households, workplaces, and leisure spaces."[29] These lines of movement were symptomatic of a longer history of structural marginalization that generated or encouraged the development of fugitive economies and renegade intellectuals particularly affiliated with working-class struggles. As Shah asserts, "the policing and prosecution of how people lived, sexually and domestically, readily exposed inequitable distributions of land and labor and the political and legal system that subsidized and normalized these distributions."[30] In response to these lived inequities, transience produced a searching for meaningful experiences and memories that accompanied workers wherever they went.

The response by several observers of these cracks in the regimes of race that purported to govern the physical movement of Pina/oy bodies, specifically, was to "act out." [31] Since Pina/oys'

[29] Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s – 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 10; Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 6-8.
[30] Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 124-125.
[31] Not always critics – because this phrase denotes a deliberate attempt to highlight and possibly call for a restructuring of these shortcomings in the system.

racial identities were contracted as a practice of negative ascription, acting out became a means of self-defense. Through acting out, dynamics of survival and resistance become mixed in complex, multi-directional ways. Sometimes these actions significantly challenged the stability of these regimes. Many times, they reified and reinforced them. Whatever the case, these actions mattered because they had direct and sometimes transformative effects on the communities around which they were centered.

While transience is a powerful and fitting approach to thinking about these migrant bodies in circumstances of perennial motion due to the demands of racial capital, I do not want to dismiss the significance of Filipina/o migrants carving out their own spaces of semi-autonomy in urban centers along the Pacific Coast. Ethnic enclaves and experiences of transience significantly inform how and why Pina/oys' cultural products took their particular forms during this period. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon's *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* challenges the assertions of late-twentieth century scholars of Asian America that Pina/oys did not develop their own neighborhoods or open their own businesses primarily because of the migratory nature of their work. Mabalon argues that Stockton's Little Manila "remained a mecca for even those Filipina/os who traveled frequently throughout the West Coast."[32] Mabalon's focus on a single community as the nexus and funnel for Pina/oy cultural production and survival provides a framework for understanding the development of other such communities on the West Coast – San Francisco, Salinas, Los Angeles, Watsonville, and San Diego – and nationwide.

The power to dictate the political economies of cultural production were not limited to representatives of the State or white communities, but also include members of the Pina/oy migrant

[32] Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart*, 11.

middle classes. These groups all had stakes in the preservation of a racialized order that profits from the labor of the Pina/oy working class. Members of illicit, fugitive, or dissident cultures occupied sites of contestation to these social and cultural powers. Their work often fed into the regimes of race and the requirements of alien capital.[33] However, their existence also had the potential to subvert those dynamics significantly. These fugitive cultural icons were also in a unique position to challenge these marginalizing powers through everyday acts of representations in moments that eluded surveillance from social and cultural gatekeepers.

Robin D.G. Kelley's utilization of infrapolitics to examine sites of Black working-class leisure for their hidden modes of resistance provides a springboard for thinking about the importance of sites of sociality like the boxing ring, the tattoo parlor, or the lunch counter. In these everyday interactive spaces, people shaped themselves and others in ways that sometimes destabilized the power of the state but ultimately allowed them and their communities to survive. The importance of survival cannot be overstated because the perpetuation of community spaces created contingent opportunities for cultural and political participation with transformative effects on the physical and ideological landscapes of the United States. Echoing Tobias Higbie's assertion that the "imagined divide between workers and intellectuals [are] both tragically real and frequently crossed," it is crucial to emphasize that the physical sites of Pina/oy labor and the

[33] Literary scholar Iyko Day argues that "it was against [the nineteenth century] backdrop of Indigenous dispossession and the 'problem' of Asian migration that settler colonial expansion could be justified through ideologies of liberal democracy." She goes further to note that "the connection between the Chinese and the abstract domination of capitalism evolved through their identification with a mode of efficiency that was aligned with a perverse temporality of domestic and social reproduction. In other words, the Chinese personified the quantitative sphere of abstract labor, which threatened the concrete, qualitative sphere of white labor's social reproduction" (*Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 16-17). This lens can be applied to Filipino laborers in the Interwar context, as various Asian immigration restrictions created the context out of which Filipinos became an immediate and desirable source of exploitable labor.

intellectual sites of Pina/oy identity construction cannot be thought of separately.[34] Popular culture functions as a mode for bridging this divide. Moments of infrapolitical resistance in unregulated spaces of sociality allowed for the exchange of ideas that ultimately informed the shape and form of social and political engagement. In this way, resistance and survival are intertwined.

With this in mind, we can think of the performance cultures of Filipina/o migrants as refracted through perceptions and expressions of the Filipina/o colonial body. The Filipina/o colonial body is an episteme. It is the theoretical stage from which the histories of cultural production and performance can be analyzed.[35] The young male bachelor migrant working-class body at work and play is a contested site that can be reimagined through deliberate and unconscious renderings of experience and memory. This reckoning with the trauma of colonial governmentality in its various expressions informs the actions of the Filipina/o diaspora in the United States. As Pina/oys communicated, cooperated, fought, and survived during this period, their cultures of performance in politics and leisure disrupted colonial expectations.

Targeted understandings of the boxing body, the tattooed body, the driving body, the celebratory body, and the organized laboring body inscribed "discrepant histories" onto the physiques and memories of these laboring actors.[36] These discrepant histories signal the tensions inherent in thinking about the experiences of Pina/oy migrants within the imagined boundaries of the U.S. nation-state. While most Pina/oy migrants were agricultural laborers ascribing to working-class positionalities and sensibilities, a large population of writers, editors, business

[34] Tobias Higbie, *Labor's Mind: A History of Working-Class Intellectual Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 5.
[35] For more theorizations on the connections between Asian objecthood and embodiment in the context of exclusion and racialization in the United States, see Anne Anlin Cheng's *Ornamentalism* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[36] Vicente L. Rafael, *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995) refers to Filipina/os' different, often conflicting, modes of understanding lived colonial histories and realities. This concept allows us to think about how racialized, gendered, and classed sensibilities are constructed and maintained historically.

owners, and cultural gatekeepers belonged to an emerging middle class whose sentiments resonated more readily (and often more forcefully) through the press and other widely published forms of media. The sentiments of this working-class culture, then, represent a fugitive archive of sources not readily identifiable but equally important in defining the contours of Pina/oy identities and their relationship to broader dynamics of racial capitalism during this period.

Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (in *Illuminations*, 1969) and Stuart Hall's "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular" (1981) form some of the theoretical underpinnings of this research. Alexander Saxton's *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (1975) and Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (2006) offer historical insights into conversations about U.S. sociopolitical dynamics of empire in the Pacific. Saxton and Kramer also represent different modes of historical methodology given their dates of publication and should allow for an analysis of the changing state of the field of Asian immigrant history in general. In order to understand the historical role of race and ethnicity in the perpetuation of Asian exclusion, I will draw upon arguments made by George Lipsitz in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (1998).

Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (1993), *Peoples of Color in the American West* (1994) edited by Sucheng Chan, Douglas Henry Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson, Mae M. Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004), and Erika Lee's *The Making of Asian America: A History* (2015) broaden discussions of the interconnected histories of besieged (Asian) ethnic communities with U.S. colonial policies aimed at surveilling, policing, and eliminating threats to white racial power in the twentieth century. Alongside Ngai's work, I will utilize John S. Park's *Elusive Citizenship:*

*Immigration, Asian Americans, and the Paradox of Civil Rights* (2004) to think through how Asian immigrant claims to belonging informed their political engagement. I will incorporate these arguments alongside Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996), which discusses the dynamics by which Asians were constructed as integral labor to the U.S. nation-state while simultaneously rendered invisible – and thus prevented from claiming ownership to U.S. national culture – through exclusionary legislation and white-supremacist cultural practices.

The aforementioned works will frame my focus on the following literature specifically discussing the Filipina/o migrant experience in the United States. The U.S. presence in the Pacific marked "the shift to a capitalist, export economy [that] so exacerbated the extreme poverty of rural life that leaving home was, for some, the only option" short of starving to death on barren farmland.[37] Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (1946) is a semi-autobiographical account that traces the development of radical politics in the Pina/oy migrant communities of the Pacific Coast during the Interwar years. Bulosan describes how, by the 1910s, "the younger generation, influenced by false American ideals and modes of living, had become total strangers to the older generation."[38] This rhetoric of disillusionment toward the promises of a fictive dream color the pages of *America is in the Heart*, providing a glimpse into the socioeconomic and political landscape which participants in fugitive popular cultures negotiated. Placing popular-cultural experiences in the context of a larger history of colored people's exploitation and exclusion reveal the close relationship between immigration law, Asian

[37] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 26.
[38] Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1943), 5.

racialization, and the cultural productions of Pina/oy communities manifested in the decades before World War II.

I borrow from Bulosan's work in conjunction with Reuben S. Seguritan's *We Didn't Pass Through the Golden Door: The Filipino American Experience* (1997), which is also a personal account of experiences of immigration, community politics, and cultural acclimation in the United States. Seguritan's discussions of Filipino Social Clubs in New York and San Francisco provide insight into how migrants thought about establishing Filipina/o community solidarity. Vicente L. Rafael's *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Culture* (1995), Catherine Ceniza-Choy's *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003), and Yen Le Espiritu's *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (2003) frame the experiences of Filipina/o migrants in relation to transnational dynamics of imperialism, labor, and identity construction grounded in discussions of belonging in urban spaces. Leslie Bow's *Partly Colored: Asian Americans and Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South* (2010) and Anna Pegler-Gordon's *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (2009) outline relationships between contested Asian immigrant cultures and attempts by the state to surveil, police, and occlude Asian immigrant communities in the United States.

**Chapter Outline**

This dissertation is comprised of four chapters. Each chapter explores one site of Pina/oy cultural meaning making in interwar California. Individually, these sites and its occupants mediated negotiations around nationalism, expressive bodily autonomy, U.S. imperialist policies through immigration and labor law. Together, they weaved the intersecting lives of Pina/oys in California with Filipina/os in Hawaii, Louisiana, New York, and the Philippines together.

Chapter 1, "Fugitive Lives," discusses the social lives Pina/oys sustained through the acts of driving for leisure and extralegal activities. Pinoy working-class culture – and the consequences its visibility invited – coalesced around automobile usage. Pina/oy car culture offered an important kind of mobility in response to the overwhelming obstacles to upward social mobility put in place by U.S. interwar policies in California. Oftentimes used for work and leisure, fugitive Pina/oy migrants also periodically used cars to reimagine the bounds of subsistence and survival. While extant records do not explicitly express this intent, these fugitives' actions differed significantly from the pronounced expectations of the state, Pina/oy middle-class boosters, and fellow workers whose reactions reflected the period's dominant social mores. As Filipina/o workers, managers, and elites on both sides of the Pacific struggled over each other's cultural expressiveness, these tensions unsettled perceptions of Filipino migrant community cohesion in California. These frictions generated opportunities for a population of transient workers to redefine what it meant to live semi-autonomously together during a period of profound social, infrastructural, economic, and cultural change in the United States.

Chapter 2, "If You Do Not Get It, Do Not Work," brings together the cultural worlds of cars, boxing, and tattooing into the social spaces of Pina/oy labor organizing. Exhausted and discouraged by daily exploitation from their bosses, and inundated with an urgency to survive the violence of white workers who perceived them as competition for Depression-era jobs, some Pina/oys stopped working for wages. Narratives of Pinoy migrant criminality emerged in the context of anti-Pina/oy sentiments across the United States. Aware of this perpetual vulnerability, Pina/oys mobilized the opportunities provided by their growing cultural infrastructures to survive in extralegal ways. This chapter focuses on the illicit actions of Filipino migrant men (Pinoys) and how the stories told about Pinoy criminals in mainstream urban publications and Pina/oy ethnic

presses influenced the framing of transpacific debates around Philippine independence in the 1930s.

Chapter 3, "You Ripe, I Eat You," examines how Pina/oy migrant artists heavily influenced the construction of a transpacific tattoo culture between 1899 and 1941. The early American tattoo industry was a locus of U.S. cultural empire building that simultaneously fostered countercultural intimacies for Filipina/os moving and marking bodies between Honolulu, Manila, and the U.S. Pacific Coast. The cultural history of the work of tattooing provides a platform from which the undercurrents of service, power, and art informing broader politics of empire become visible.

The U.S. colonization of the Philippines created transpacific cultural infrastructures that put the Filipino body on display in carnivalesque ways. The rise of an American tattoo industry involved Pina/oy tattooers marking white bodies with nationalist designs complicates traditional narratives of empire by highlighting the active role Pina/oy tattooers played in influencing highly visible forms of bodily expression, performance, and discourses on empire. This chapter analyzes tattooing as a site of cultural meaning making for Pina/oys in transpacific routes of migration between Hawaii, the Philippines, and California from 1898 to 1941. U.S. colonization of the Philippines created cultural infrastructures centered on displays of the Filipino body. A focus on body markings informed popular perceptions of colonial concepts of manliness and civilization. Filipina/o migrants in Hawaii and California became central to the aesthetic development of early Americana tattoo styles. As Pina/oys tattooed the symbols of American empire onto white bodies, their presence troubled racialized assumptions of Pina/oy intelligence, creativity, and power.

Tattooing reified imperial power dynamics at the center of U.S. cultural empire building in the early twentieth century. Pina/oy tattoo artists working at the intersections of race, gender, and the intimacies of body marking expanded meanings about empire building and cultural hegemony.

What did it mean for Filipinos as a racialized group to mark white bodies with the motifs of U.S. empire through the intimate practice of tattooing? How did the presence of Pina/oys at the center of a budding American tattoo industry trouble narratives centering white men as the so-called godfathers of that industry?

Pina/oys tattooing in what would become known as the "Traditional" Americana style both reinforced American racial regimes' cultural values and troubled U.S. discourses on empire. By placing themselves in positions of power over the white male bodies they were paid to mark, Pina/oy tattooers asserted a militant existence at the intersections of race, space, gender, and aesthetic performance. This chapter highlights the important Pina/oy influences affecting the social, political, and cultural worlds of early twentieth-century transpacific tattooing. In doing so, this chapter hopes to reclaim the long-historical spaces occupied by Pina/oys in the making of American popular culture to the present day.

Chapter 4, "Scrapping Into a Knot," explores how Pinoy boxers and fans in California in the 1920s and 1930s mobilized radical imaginations to creatively express a politics of dissent and liberation from oppressive racial regimes. U.S. imperialism in the Philippines reoriented the shape and direction of Pinoy cultural meaning-making and resistance following Spanish colonization. As the sport of boxing developed into an influential transpacific cultural industry, Pina/oy migrant fans inspired pugilists' performative politics. As they worked and performed in interconnected urban and rural spaces across California, Pinoy boxers and their fans destabilized racial scripts while negotiating claims to power, space, and dignity during this period.

The dissertation concludes on the eve of World War II, when Pina/oys in California were pulled into various industries of the war effort. The processes set into motion by Pina/oys during

the Interwar Period did not disappear with the shift to global war. Rather, the institutional and historical memories undergirding expansive Pina/oy cultural infrastructures reoriented themselves into new narratives of dignified resistance and survival across U.S. empire. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of where and how these interwar cultural infrastructures found expressions during World War II and in the immediate postwar organizing of the long Civil Rights Movement.

**Broadening the Scope of Pina/oy Cultural Histories**

When the *Stockton Daily Independent* published its articles on January 28, 1930, the reports on Stockton's Filipino Night and protests at the University of the Philippines appeared on the same page. Readers might have juxtaposed the apparently benign celebrations of Pina/oy cultural identity with the more militant dangers brewing across the Pacific. Still, racial anxieties could hardly have been calmed because news of the Stockton celebration underscored an important, undeniable fact: that Pina/oys comprised large, visible, and stable Asian immigrant communities in California. As historian Dorothy Fujita-Rony astutely asserts in her analysis of sustained violence by white Californians on interwar Pinoy migrant laborers, "Filipino men [and women] were threatening because they were *here* and not *over there*."[39]

This reality, certainly acknowledged by anti-immigrant policymakers and white workers seeing in Pinoys competition for jobs, space, and the affections of white women, informed the violence that led to Fermin Tobera's death and undoubtedly weighed heavily on the minds of Filipina/os from Stockton to Manila. Just as the *Independent* placed descriptions of Filipina/o

[39] Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, "Empire and the Moving Body: Fermin Tobera, Military California, and Rural Space," in *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, eds. Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 212-213.

bodies performing cultural and political work adjacent to each other, so too were the physical lifeways of Filipina/os connected across the Pacific because of the infrastructures of cultural production and consumption that drew Pina/oys into the very circles of power from which U.S. racial regimes excluded them.

Pina/oys seemed to viscerally feel the sentiments described in Billones's speech: "a doubt of things beautiful would leave the world in chaos." It is unlikely that Billones considered cars, tattoos, and boxing to be forms of art in the context of his speech. Yet for scores of Pina/oys in California in the early twentieth century, these modes of cultural expression were beautiful acts of survival against brutal practices of dispossession, exclusion, and death perpetrated by agents of the U.S. imperialism in California and in the Philippines.[40] Through these cultural assertions of existence, Pina/oys refused narratives of victimization even as their bodies were violently rendered expendable by agents of whiteness and respectability. In the chaotic political world of interwar California, popular Pina/oy cultural expressions sustained the diaspora, resisted static conceptions of Pina/oy bodies at work and play, and inspired radical possibilities for the building of Filipina/o America in the U.S. Pacific Coast.

[40] Here, I am inspired by the the concept of survivance in the context of Native American resistance to U.S. settler colonialism. See Gerald Robert Vizenor's *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) and *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). See also William J. Bauer Jr.'s *We Were All Like Migrant Workers Here: Work, Community, and Memory on California's Round Valley Reservation, 1850-1941*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

CHAPTER ONE

**Fugitive Lives: Pinoy Car Culture and Alternative Lifeways on California Freeways**

Don't think of going home. Wouldn't be content there. Have got used to America. But encourage these other boys to go home. Boys loaf.

- Eldio Saldana, Pinoy migrant laborer, ca. 1929

Midst bungalows single and double I ride.
Contusions and nicks in my body and pride.
I dine on a crate till we get settled down.
Then sell out again and move clear 'cross town.

- Stanley Hofflund, *Home Seek Home*, 1929

On the evening of August 29, 1931, a light-colored coupe sped down the Golden State Highway with its occupants in high spirits. Tad Cabe, a twenty-six-year-old Filipino, was at the wheel. His two compatriots, A. Leyda and J. Roscas, squeezed in tight beside Cabe as they traveled four hundred miles south from Sacramento to an undisclosed destination in Southern California. This length of travel was nothing new. Like many migrant Filipinos in California during the interwar period, Cabe and his companions' lives were defined by regular movement between urban and rural spaces of seasonal work. Yet while most Pinoys traveled to find employment in the agricultural or service sectors, Cabe and company engaged in a different venture – a struggle to make a living that made them into radically imaginative fugitives. [41]

While in Sacramento earlier that month, Cabe challenged a representative of an automobile finance company to a game of chance. Over the course of that evening, Cabe was able to rig the game with "a pack of trick cards" he carried with him for just these occasions. Cabe's hustle served its purpose. Soon, the three men left the city with a new automobile, courtesy of Cabe's

[41] "Filipinos in Dinuba Jail for Quizzing: Reedley Officer's Tip Results in Arrest of Trio; Two Pay Fines," *Los Angeles Times (1923 -1995)*; Aug 30, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 10.

quick wits and his pack of cards. Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas made it to Selma, about two hundred miles south of Sacramento, where they stayed for a few days. During that time, one of the men was cited for "cutting in" traffic. The driver refused to pay the $30 fine and insisted that Cabe drive them out of town. Determined to escape from the moving violation and the increasingly surveillant eyes of the law, the three men tested their luck and drove fifteen miles east to the city of Dinuba in Tulare County. By now, Tulare and Fresno county police officers were on high alert and in search of three suspicious Filipino men in a light-colored coupe. Following a tip from nearby Reedley police, Dinuba City Marshal Fullard and Traffic Officer Arthur Thurman flagged the Filipinos' automobile for investigation as it made its way down the state highway on that August evening.

After pulling the men over, Fullard and Thurman investigated the group's activities since they left Sacramento. Their inquiries uncovered that the "machine" conveying Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas "was listed as an 'embezzled automobile,' on complaint of a finance company. Further inquiry revealed that Cabe had "a jail record in Santa Barbara, where, it is said, he knifed another man." This criminal record may have influenced Cabe's decision to drive the car "under a fictitious operator's license," for which he was fined ten dollars by a Dinuba city judge. In addition, Selma authorities identified one of the men as the person cited for "cutting in" and forced them to pay the skirted fine. Fullard and Thurman confined the men to a Dinuba jail cell, "awaiting word from Southern California authorities."[42] Reports of Cabe's recorded violence during incarceration must have heightened already-aggravated tensions the police officers felt as they interacted with these intrastate fugitives. Given prevailing prejudices the fact that the Pinoy driver

[42] "Filipinos in Dinuba Jail for Quizzing: Reedley Officer's Tip Results in Arrest of Trio; Two Pay Fines," *Los Angeles Times (1923 -1995)*; Aug 30, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 10.

faked his identity to drive an illicitly-obtained vehicle must have exacerbated assumptions of the Filipino men as shifty, unscrupulous, exploitative, and dangerous.[43]

Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas's story demonstrates a convergence of several critical dynamics in the Filipino migrant experience in interwar California:[44] An unprecedented number of migrants from Hawaii and the Philippines increased the visibility of the Filipino population in the state, intensifying anti-Filipino violence particularly after 1928.[45] Fraught living and working conditions forced Filipinos to rely on extant lines of ethnic institutional support. A transpacific network of ethnic presses and political factions debating the materialization of Philippine independence incorporated concerns about the resultant character of Filipino culture. The growing disparity in accessible resources and tensions between racialized migrant workers and the state also became more apparent. As Pinoy migrant workers negotiated their place amid imperial expectations of economic production and social reproduction, they destabilized regimes of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

The audacity of fugitive actions like those committed by Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas generates questions concerning the transpacific social and cultural lives of Filipino migrants in California between 1920 and 1941, and what was at stake in their troubling of the perceived stability of interwar racial regimes. This chapter examines fugitive Filipino migrants' encounters

[43] See Mae M. Ngai's discussion of "the problem of the migrating Filipino national" in the context of interwar immigration quotas and "imported colonialism" in *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 93-126; For more on the legal negotiations around and by Filipino migrants outside of California, see also Stephanie Hinnershitz's *A Different Shade of Justice: Asian American Civil Rights in the South*, University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

[44] I plan to discuss these in more detail. See Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

[45] Bruno Lasker, an interwar social worker and immigrant advocate who investigated the "Filipino problem" in 1930, "could not recall a single article on Filipino migration in a popular periodical prior to 1928." His piece, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931) is quoted in Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 105.

with state and class power.[46] Negotiations of popular cultural sociality during these encounters defined working-class experiences as its members lived and traveled between urban and rural spaces across California during the interwar period. Thus, this chapter responds to several questions around fugitive Pinoys' lives: how did these microsocial cultural practices reveal Pinoy migrants' transpacific relations to power? What possibilities did automobile ownership and driving create for Pinoy migrant sociality on the transient interstices of interwar California labor routes? What tensions arose in the social politics of Pinoy migrant interoperability when individuals undermined middle-class expectations of respectability?[47] How did the state attempt to regulate the lives of Pinoy migrants in California? How did Filipino portable communities in California mobilize radical imaginations through the popular culture they produced and consumed? While centered on the experiences of fugitive Pinoys, this chapter also analyzes cultural convergences with the state, the Filipino middle class, and the larger Filipino working-class population.

Historian Eric Avila asserts that structural geographies and consciousnesses around expressions of culture were historically essential for racially besieged populations in the United States to defend themselves and survive.[48] Pinoy migrants often attempted to dictate the terms of

[46] Previous scholarship on this topic focused on Filipino working-class struggles to construct solidarity in the face of state violence and Filipino middle-class detractors, localized to a specific urban space. Only a handful of critical histories of Filipinos in California center culture as a driving force in the formation of class consciousness and identity [Develop or Drop] none (that I have read) grapple seriously with the actions of fugitive Filipinos and their impact on transpacific dynamics of politics, economy, and society.

[47] I use the term "interoperability" to refer to the ability of parts of a system to work together, requiring a standard system that everyone agrees to adopt. Members within the Filipino diaspora in the United States – especially social and political organizers – attempted to control access, exchange, integration, and cooperative use of migrant experiences in a coordinated manner to bolster politics of respectability within a growing middle class. There were moments when this interoperability broke down. In analyzing alternative means of making livings alongside the traditional, I hope to better understand the effects of these tensions between Filipino migrant class lines.

[48] Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), ix-x. Avila writes: "on the streets of the modern ghetto and barrio, culture provides one of the few avenues for empowerment and enrichment. Indeed, its creation is essential to the very identity of a community and its stubborn persistence against the daunting forces of erasure."

their existence while cultivating militant organizing consciousnesses punctuated by refusing to pay rent, organizing work stoppages, and supporting political campaigns that challenged the United States' transpacific imperial goals. More frequently, these working-class folks stubbornly asserted their contingent semi-autonomy through the ostentatious practice of their culture.[49] Within this larger working-class population, fugitive migrants' actions further contested assumed relationships to state and middle-class power while destabilizing categorical assumptions of the Filipino diaspora in California as a controllable, homogenous, and expendable labor source.

Pinoy working-class culture – and the consequences its visibility invited – coalesced around automobile usage. Pinoy car culture offered an important kind of mobility in response to the overwhelming obstacles to upward social mobility put in place by U.S. interwar policies in California. Oftentimes used for work and leisure, fugitive[50] Pinoy migrants also periodically used cars to reimagine the bounds of subsistence and survival. While extant records do not explicitly express this intent, these fugitives' actions differed significantly from the pronounced expectations of the state, Pinoy middle-class boosters, and fellow workers whose reactions reflected the period's dominant social mores. The Pinoy middle class in interwar California attempted to regulate consumptive habits and concentrate working-class energies into transpacific political maneuvers centered on debates over Philippine independence. As Pinoy workers, managers, and elites on both sides of the Pacific struggled over each other's cultural expressiveness, these tensions

[49] I use "semi-autonomy" as a framework because Filipino migrants engaged this culture in sites where the hegemony of racial regimes persisted. Therefore, I do not want to overemphasize autonomy as being an ultimately liberalized state that Filipinos of any class were able to attain during this period – or any period, for that matter.
[50] I use the term, "fugitive," to differentiate these historical actors who engaged in socially unacceptable, undesirable, duplicitous, illicit, or criminal behaviors in the pursuit of alternative means of making a living from a larger Filipino migrant population that opted, for various reasons, to work within the limits of their accessible resources. It is also a term animated by intentional movement between and through various nodes of safety – physical and ideological spaces in the shadows of state surveillance or middle-class respectability politics. I am not trying to make any deliberate moral assertions regarding fugitive individuals' character or capacity for agency (another fraught term). Often, these fugitive Filipinos engaged in the same labor and organization as the larger population. Ultimately, I hope to illustrate the immediacy of historical contingency in shaping (in)action.

unsettled perceptions of Filipino migrant community cohesion in California. These frictions generated opportunities for a population of transient workers to redefine what it meant to live semi-autonomously together during a period of profound social, infrastructural, economic, and cultural change in the United States.

The north-south thoroughfare that Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas traveled on was part of a statewide infrastructural organization effort by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) to establish a new United States Numbered Highway System in 1926 (Figures 1.1 and 1.2).[51] Founded in 1914, the AASHO's Standards Committee worked alongside the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) and the Highway Research Board (HRB) by the 1920s to literally map out ideal traffic routes to and around interwar cities. Under a veil of hard scientific inquiry and empirical-data-laden studies, highway engineers planned out the U.S. freeway systems in ways that operated within their political, economic, and social biases around race and class.[52] Historian Eric Avila demonstrates that, in addition to these infrastructural initiatives, the interwar period significantly shaped the cultural sensibilities of current and potential automobile users. Avila argues that even "as the BPR solidified its power during the 1930s, Futurama, a model of a city of one million people, enticed the public with previews of the expressway world: a moving panorama of experimental homes, industrial plants, dams, bridges, and office towers, linked by ribbons of high-speed highways." Citing American theatrical and industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes's 1940 book, *Magic Motorways*, Avila asserts that "somewhere between science fiction and rational planning, *Magic Motorways* outlined Bel Geddes's vision for a transcontinental highway system

[51] United States Bureau of Public Roads, American Association of State Highway Officials, "United States system of highways: adopted for uniform marking by the American Association of State Highway Officials, November 11, 1926," Engraved and printed by the U.S. Geological Survey, Washington, D.C.

[52] For more on this history, see Bruce E. Seely's work on highway research and engineering: "The Scientific Mystique in Engineering: Highway Research at the Bureau of Public Roads, 1918-1940," *Technology and Culture* 25, no. 4 (October 1984): 798-832; "How the Interstate System Came to Be: Tracing the Historical Process," *TR News 244* (May-June 2006); 4-9.

that would link major urban centers… Even senior highway officials recognized the way the showman's 'magic' mobilized national demand for a nationwide highway system."[53]

This highway system linked California's Little Manilas and Manilatowns with ports of entry in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Since the 1910s, Filipinos applied for permanent residency in the continental United States with the belief that they could lay claim to what they considered the rights and privileges afforded American citizens. After the passage of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, which created an "Asiatic barred zone" that effectively excluded all Asian immigrants, Filipinos mobilized a history of Asian immigrant advocacy and leveraged their status as U.S. nationals to stake claims of continental belonging.[54] These claims were vehemently opposed by white working- and middle-class and upper-class interests by the 1930s; those groups that asserted what George Lipsitz identifies as a "possessive investment in whiteness."[55] Filipinos arriving in the United States after 1898 were inaugurated into a society whose men in power feared and exploited people of color in order to advance Anglo-Saxon nationalism on local, national, and international levels. Elites on both sides of the Pacific needed white nationalism to uphold the political and cultural myths of interwar racial regimes. They also needed other-than-white labor for economic reasons, as well as access to overseas markets and raw materials which created pathways for migration Each of these factors influenced the paths migrants took to the United States.

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[53] Norman Bel Geddes was also the designer behind the well-received Futurama exhibit, which debuted at the 1939 New York World's Fair; Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway*, 20-25.

[54] "An Act to Limit the Immigration of Aliens into the United States, and for other purposes," Pub.L.68-139, U.S. Law, May 26, 1924, https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/43/STATUTE-43-Pg153a.pdf; For more on the intersections of racialized immigration law in the United States, Asian migration, and debates around restrictive immigration quotas, see: Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

[55] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

**"To Me, All Filipinos are Alike"[56]: Escaping Racial Flattening on California's Highways**

In response to their racialized segregation, Filipina/o migrants arriving in California established ethnic enclaves as sanctuaries wherein the social, political, and economic endeavors of their diaspora could enrich their local communities. Taking Lipsitz's assertion that "the putatively race-neutral, liberal, social democratic reforms of the New Deal Era" reinvigorated spirits and structures of interwar racism, it should be worth noting that Filipino middle-class boosters in California also claimed a possessive investment in whiteness's privileges by attempting to curate a politics of respectability which fugitive Filipinos rejected.[57] As with the negotiated formations of other groups' ethnic identities, these tensions suggest that the scope, intensity, and direction of radical imaginations within interwar Filipino populations were "relational rather than atomized or discrete," formed "through complicated experiences of conflict and cooperation."[58]

Despite Filipino middle-class dictums to the contrary, Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas conversed, planned, and imagined their futures as they furtively traveled along the newly commissioned Highway 99. They also took advantage of an increasingly accessible popular cultural product: the automobile. Their embezzled machine facilitated a private intimacy, maintained over hundreds of miles, in which they could literally feel the potentialities of freedom on the open roads magnified by the vibrations from the six-cylinder engine, the texture of the leather seats, and the rhythms of the tires as they gripped the roads. As a deepening economic depression heightened working-class

[56] Governor-General of the Philippines William Howard Taft's testimony before the U.S. Senate, 1914.
[57] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 5, 12. See also Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr.'s *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012) and Yen Le Espiritu's *Filipino American Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
[58] Lipsitz references Rosaura Sánchez's *Telling Identities: The California Testimonios* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) and argues that "displaced Californio elite both resisted and paradoxically reinforced the racist hierarchies of their Anglo conquerors, establishing themselves as an aggrieved and racialized U.S. ethnic group while simultaneously participating in and endorsing the exclusion and subordination of Native Americans." *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 60.

migrant anxieties, the three Filipino men responded to their contingent circumstances by engaging in what felt like liberating acts on the fringes of respectability; acts targeted by law enforcement as undesirable, duplicitous, and criminal. Cabe, Leyda, and Roscas attempted to make a living through alternative means that oscillated between typical employment in agriculture and domestic service and endeavors on the fringes of legal behavior. By engaging in activities that induced police surveillance and intervention, these Filipino men both unsettled and reinforced racialized, classed, and gendered expectations of Filipinos in the United States.

Automobiles facilitated radical mobility. Cars functioned as critical sites of privacy and movement for Filipinos in California, as well as tools in staging alternative means of making a living in destinations of work and leisure that perpetually placed migrant bodies in danger. As Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns makes clear about the character of surveilled and contested spaces of pleasure in interwar California, "the characterization of Filipino patrons as disruptive does not change, even as one shifts from city centers to rural outposts of the U.S. landscape."[59] Contingent responses to the oppressive pressures of interwar racial regimes reflected a migrant population in multiple negotiations with identity and survival. This was not unique to Filipinos during this period, as several social historians have made abundantly clear.[60] Interwar Filipino migrant

[59] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 61.

[60] See Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xii-xiii.; For more on how this is expressed in historical communities, see George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford: University Press, 1993) and Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* ((New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2012); Also, Michael Miler Topp's *Those Without a Country: The Political Culture of Italian American Syndicalists* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and April R. Schultz's *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2009). To think about how this relates to working-class culture, see James Barrett and David Roediger's "In-Between Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the New Immigrant Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (Spring 1997); See also, Natalia Molina's *Fit To Be Citizens? Public Health ad Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) and *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

experiences do present illustrative examples of the complicated ways that ethnic identities and localized survival coincided with transpacific debates surrounding Philippine diasporic identities and national independence, as well as the changing expressions of de jure and de facto exclusion. The dynamics and consequences of Filipino migrants' conspicuous displays of intimate alternative working-class lifestyles were predicated on cultural consumption and production around automobiles. At times, this consumption proved liberating; at others, it proved dangerous and fatal. Still at other times, the automobile became a tool that created opportunities to (re)produce migrant cultures in the different nodes of Filipino gathering across the state, the nation, and the Pacific. Examining automobile use through this lens underscores connections between migrant consumption, sociality, and class politics in a transpacific context.

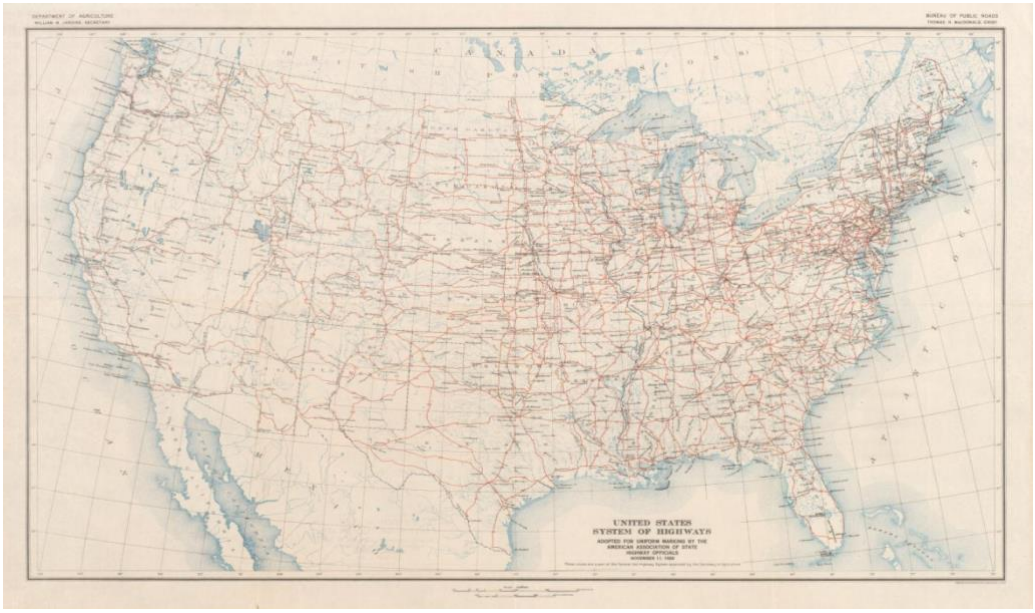


**FIGURE 1.1.** This map highlights the density of interstate highways in the United States. Its caption reads: "Adopted for Uniform Marking by the American Association of State Highway Officials, November 11, 1926."

**FIGURE 1.2.** This map presents the US 99 and 101 (north-south red lines) as the most prominent highways running along the length of the California.

At the turn of the twentieth century, parts of Henry Ford's automobile manufacturing enterprise split off into separate companies. On August 22, 1902, William Murphy, Lemuel Brown, and Henry M. Leland left the Ford Motor Company and founded the Cadillac Automobile Company in Detroit, Michigan following the dissolution of Ford's company assets. Subsequent breakthroughs in the manufacture of interchangeable parts, the invention of an electric starter, and a powerful V8 engine for reaching top speeds of 65 miles per hour led to several Thomas Dewar Trophies starting in 1908 for important advancements in automotive technology. Following the company's acquisition by the General Motors Company, the Cadillac brand became synonymous with comfortable, accessible luxury thanks to a vigorous advertising campaign in the 1910s.[61] While in the first decade of the twentieth century the automobile industry catered to Filipino elites,

[61] *Cars That Build GM: An Album of Historic General Motors Cars,* Published for GM Men and Women, Information Rack Service, General Motors Personnel Staff, 1954.

the sale of the more affordable, mass-produced Ford Model T by Bachrach Motors in 1907 made car ownership more accessible to working- and middle-class consumers by the 1920s. By the 1910s, Bachrach Motors and other dealerships sold an assortment of models by Nash, Packard, Chalmers, Cadillac, and Willys-Overland. Omnipresent advertisements incentivized automobile ownership as a social necessity. In the United States in 1920, the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce recorded nine million motor vehicle registrations. By 1929, this number skyrocketed to twenty-three million.[62] This ubiquity resonated across the Pacific.

The interwar period "ushered in the golden age of Philippine motoring" as the geographical edges of U.S. empire were brought into the consumerist fold with gusto.[63] The Philippine Islands became a critical site of a growing transpacific automobile industry that linked imperial capital and cultural imaginations.[64] A 1928 article in the *Washington Post* put it bluntly: "most of those who can afford cars [in the Philippines], and some who can't, have them." The automobile's prevalence and desirability, regardless of cost, reflected this growing market. Cultural observers in the Philippines reported that "it is a common sight to see an expensive car parked under a nipa house worth not more than $1000."[65] In 1921, American Trade Commissioner of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce J.W. Sanger observed that "here in this outlying possession of ours a shrewd, forceful American advertising manager did what everybody said was impossible…

[62] National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry* (New York: NACC, 1930), 15.
[63] Alex Castro, "24 Rare Photos of the Early Car Industry in the Philippines: The fascinating history of how cars arrived in the Philippines," *Esquire* (Apr 12, 2019); Accessed: 20 April, 2020.
[64] By 1926, GM Overseas Operations (GMOO) in New York began working with the local government in Osaka, Japan, to build an assembly plant in direct competition with a Ford facility in Yokohama. Protected by Japanese law and "free from government restraint, Ford and General Motors dominated the Japanese motor-vehicle industry throughout the decade," controlling "more than 95 percent of the local market by 1930." For a broader discussion of car production in Pacific markets, see Mark Mason, *American Multinationals and Japan: The Political Economy of Japanese Capital Controls, 1899-1980* (Harvard University Asia Center, 1992), 70-71.
[65] "Auto is Outlawed by Inland Filipinos: Town Passes Ordinance Banning Motor Cars from Its Streets," *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*; Dec 16, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post pg. 6.

[H]e persuaded Filipinos to buy plows, tractors, thrashing machines, canned foods and other things which ten years ago they had never even heard the names of." Sanger's Orientalizing report continued: "supported as always by advertising, he sold automobiles to Filipino farmers who were innocent of any clothing except a G string."[66] Although laced with rhetorical references to demeaning racialized constructions of Filipinos as "Little Brown Brothers," Sanger's comments reflected an economic, social, and cultural reality.

By 1930, a total of 32,280 vehicles were registered with 52,921 drivers licensed. Of the number of vehicles registered, 21,341 were automobiles – an increase from the 19,791 recorded in the prior year.[67] The increasing ubiquity of automobiles used for leisure in the Philippines signaled a "changing [of] the attitude of the people, making for growing favor for the automobile and less for the horse-drawn and carabao-drawn vehicles."[68] This changing attitude sparked debates within the Philippine legislature, as reflected in a 1928 bill introduced by Representative Isidro Vamenta of Misamis. Vamenta reasoned that a law "providing for high rates of taxation upon automobiles" would "make the use and possession of automobiles so expensive that only those who are really wealthy or who are in absolute need… may own and run them." The representative maintained that "while people are complaining of scarcity of money and general hard times, at the same moment automobiles are plentiful. Many families own more auto than they can possibly need and people generally sport around in costly cars." Vamenta's contention that "the automobile has a direct bearing upon scarcity of money and upon the general unsteady financial situation of many people" was backed by statistics reporting that "the Philippines… spend[s] approximately

[66] "Much Advertising Done in the Orient," Special to the New York Times, *The New York Times (1857-1922);* ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 31.
[67] "Quarterly Bulletin, Volumes 6-8," Bureau of Public Works (Philippines, Bureau of Printing, 1929), 12.
[68] "Auto is Outlawed by Inland Filipinos: Town Passes Ordinance Banning Motor Cars from Its Streets," *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*; Dec 16, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post pg. 6.

15,000,000 pesos ($7,500,000) for automobiles and accessories each year."[69] In the United States by the 1930s, redlining practices by the federally sanctioned Homeowners Loan Corporation restricted access to homeownership for nonwhite workers. Given these federally sanctioned restrictions, owning real estate was either less accessible or juridically prohibited for Pinoys and other nonwhite communities. The observed prioritization of automobile ownership – and the leisure it facilitated – over the development of domestic physical property reflected a capitalist impetus to market the car as an accessible means of asserting status in a social system that structurally disenfranchised the working poor.

Several accounts of Filipino agricultural and service workers demonstrated the growing ubiquity – and desirability – of the automobile amongst migrants in California.[70] This ubiquity allowed Filipino migrants to travel to their places of work with greater efficiency compared to the railroads and their feet. Filipinos bought into the automobile's appeal as boosters exploited the desperation generated by the growing gap between the working poor and the middle class facilitated by U.S. colonial control over the Philippines. While these sentiments informed cultural sensibilities concerning forms of property ownership that Filipino migrants brought with them to California, Filipino consumers were far from the passive dupes that J.W Sanger made them out to be. The experiences of fugitive Filipinos illustrate that opportunities to carve out maverick lives within the restrictions of U.S. racial regimes were not only conceivable, they were attainable. Sentiments favoring the automobile as a tool of transient lifestyles accompanied Filipinos as they

[69] "Filipino Plans Taboo on Autos: Native Legislator Sees Car as Needless Luxury," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Sep 9, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: San Francisco Chronicle pg. 14.

[70] For the purposes of this paper, and unless otherwise specified, I use "agricultural work" to refer to labor conducted in and around rural areas; I use "service work" to describe employment typically found in the cities: hotel workers, apartment managers, domestic assistants, restaurant cooks, and custodians.

traveled for work in California. These transitory sensibilities informed fugitive Filipinos in their search for alternative livings.

Automobile ownership troubled notions of homogeneity projected onto Filipino migrant populations in the United States. In interwar California, these notions informed ideas about a monolithic, expendable labor force. Nearly two decades of U.S. imperial rule in the Philippines calcified the perceived racial homogeneity of Filipinos living, working, and moving throughout California. In 1914, former commander-in-chief and Governor General of the Philippines William Howard Taft testified before the U.S. Senate that "there is a racial solidarity among [the Filipinos], undoubtedly. I can not tell the difference between an Ilocano and a Tagalog or a Visayan – to me all Filipinos are alike."[71] This perception of sameness – defined through a refusal to acknowledge linguistic distinctions between Philippine ethnic groups – was echoed in some Filipino spokespeople's remarks concerning the consequences of Philippine independence. In 1936 Porfirio U. Sevilla, publisher of the Manila-based *Philippine-American Advocate*, asserted that "culturally [Filipinos] now speak English and have American customs," revealing a deep commitment to nationalism and signaling the consolidation of a national identity in the diaspora – and by extension, the appearance of ethnic solidarity –with English as a lingua franca.[72]

Another former governor general's account echoed this sentiment. William Cameron Forbes asserted in 1930 that "racially, the Filipino is a Malay and throughout the islands the bulk

[71] Taft was the tenth chief justice of the U.S. from 1921 – 1930 (died March 8, 1930); appointed by Warren G. Harding. Taft served as Governor-General of the Philippines from July 4, 1901 – December 23, 1903, First Provisional Governor of Cuba from September 1906 – October 1906, 42nd Secretary of War from February 1904 – June 1908, and 27th U.S. president from 1909 – 1913. This testimony must have occurred sometime between Taft's tenure as Kent Professor of Law and Legal History at Yale Law School (a position he took up on April 1, 1913) and his appointment as co-chairman of the National War Labor Board during World War I.

[72] "Fear Routed by Filipino," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jan 10, 1936; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A12; The 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act established the Commonwealth of the Philippines, which functioned as the archipelago's governing body until 1946. Sevilla frequently criticized its president, Manuel L. Quezon, by advocating for reduced Philippine economic dependence on U.S. capital and oversight. Both men advocated for deploying a cultural politics of respectability in their own way.

of the population is sufficiently similar in type to indicate no great difference in origins." Furthermore, in an effort to assuage concerns over the political repercussions of a potentially independent Philippine Republic, Forbes reassured the American Congress that "a great number of the Filipinos, regardless of their groups or their dialects, speak the English language."[73] Given that their legal status as U.S. nationals exempted them from Asian immigration restrictions in 1924, pigeonholing Filipinos into a single racial category – and by extension, a cohesive nation-state – purportedly made them easier to identify, surveil, control, and ultimately exclude. This dismissal of diversity in Filipino identities and languages speaks to a broader project of imperial governance initiated at the turn of the century. This transpacific project attempted to dictate the lives of Filipino workers in interwar California.

A concentrated effort to Americanize educational infrastructures in the Philippines after 1898 included attempts by white government officials and Filipino elites to flatten Filipino regional and cultural identities. Filipino writer and activist, Carlos Bulosan, described American colonial education as "a new and democratic system" wherein "every family who had a son pooled its resources and sent him to school."[74] In reality, the American system of education was driven by an exceptionalist discourse that ultimately racialized its supposed beneficiaries and continued a trend of U.S. expansion in the spirit of settler colonialism. Literary scholar Iyko Day argues that "it was against [the nineteenth century] backdrop of Indigenous dispossession and the 'problem'

[73] "From a report to the 71st Congress, Senate Report No. 781 on "Philippine Independence," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Box 3; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[74] Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014 (1946)), xv.

of Asian migration that settler colonial expansion could be justified through ideologies of liberal democracy."[75]

Speaking to his childhood in the Philippines, Mr. Inbilleja, an agricultural worker in California's Central Valley, recalled being "taught that U.S. is land of free and plenty by missionaries and teachers."[76] By June of 1930, there were an estimated eight thousand schools on the archipelago, their influence expanding outward from urban centers like Manila and Cebu to geographically distant municipalities and provinces. These primary and secondary public schools housed over one million students by 1928.[77] As Mr. Inbilleja's recollection illustrates, this schoolhouse boom from 1899 to 1930 was instrumental in exposing a generation of Filipino youths to skewed dynamics of American liberal ideals, animating imaginations and inspiring migrations to U.S.-controlled Hawaiian sugar plantations and continental spaces of work.

These zones of education were connected by an expanding network of roads and rails. A report made to the 71st Congress in 1930 announced that "there are three trunk railroad systems, and 13,000 kilometers of first-class roads" alongside an efficient "system of postal communication and interisland shipping communication." The railroad systems were managed by appointees from politically elite Filipino families who were supported by American officials governing within the Philippines. Filipino elites and an emergent middle class expressed appreciation for the industrial development of Philippine infrastructure through American economic production and social reproduction. In October of 1929, a governor-general claimed that "there are more miles of

[75] Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 16-17.
[76] "Mr. Inbilleja Interview, 192—," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[77] In 1928, the registered number of Filipino students enrolled in Philippine public schools was 1,111,500; an increase from the 227,500 registered in 1904.

improved roads in the islands to-day – I know what it is in Luzon – than in the whole continent of South America outside the cities; and that is true all through the Archipelago."[78] This claim reflects almost three decades of infrastructural development under U.S. occupation. In its review of Philippine peso expenditures in 1929, the Philippine Bureau of Public Works reported that, of the ₱28,763,830.56 spent on public infrastructural projects, ₱15,679,012.52 (about 55%) was spent on "road and bridge work" with 381.9 kilometers of new "surfaced roads constructed and designated first class" and 87 "reinforced concrete bridges and culverts completed." This was an increase from the same expenditures in 1928, which saw ₱13,884,383.27 used out of a total of ₱28,925,762.40 (about 48%); a relative increase of seven percent between the two years.[79] Automobile boosters and manufacturers interested in capturing an expanding Pacific market were keen on making sure those roads and bridges had drivers to use them.

Filipina-American historian Dawn Mabalon contends that the U.S. presence in the Pacific also marked "the shift to a capitalist, export economy [that] so exacerbated the extreme poverty of rural life that leaving home was, for some, the only option" short of starving to death on barren farmland.[80] The shift Mabalon describes constructed the realities by which transpacific American lawmakers justified the economic, political, and social control they exerted over Filipina/os in the Philippines and the United States. It also influenced how working Filipina/os articulated their cultural sensibilities.

[78] Luzon is the largest and most populous island in the Philippines, located in the northern part of the archipelago, and housing the capital city of Manila.
[79] "Quarterly Bulletin, Volumes 6-8," Bureau of Public Works (Philippines, Bureau of Printing, 1929), 12.
[80] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 26.

**Making Lives in California's Fugitive Interstices**

On March 20, 1929, Silverio Corpuz Gabriel disembarked from the SS President Pierce at the Port of San Francisco. The nineteen-year-old from Laoag, Ilocos Norte, left Manila on the same steamship bound for Honolulu on June 3, 1927. Following a three-week journey across the Pacific, Silverio split time working on Hawaiian sugar plantations and in the Mexican labor market before entering the continental United States at Calexico City on Christmas Eve in 1927. Silverio's application for a Resident Alien's Border Crossing Identification Card noted the Ilocano's dark skin and scar below his left knee, a "visible distinctive peculiarity" worthy of highlighting by U.S. Border Patrol agents. Silverio reappears in the historical record following his arrival in San Francisco, the city in which he applied for permanent residency. The migrant laborer soon settled in Spreckels, California – a sugar beet company town in the Salinas Valley located one hundred ten miles from San Francisco. The Monterey County sugar beet factory was the world's largest beet processing plant employing Japanese, Mexican, white, and Filipino laborers. It was founded by German immigrant and San Francisco industrialist Claus "Sugar King" Spreckels in 1899. Spreckels opened a brewery in San Francisco in 1856 and used the profits to invest in the Hawaiian sugar trade by the mid-1860s. He expanded his California Sugar Refinery to Watsonville as the Western Beet Sugar Company. By the 1890s, Spreckels owned operations in the Salinas Valley, controlled the Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad to ship his products across the Central Coast and Central Valley, and was a founding member of the national sugar trust.

Spreckels's ownership would expand to positions as president of the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railway, which competed with the Southern Pacific Transportation Company for delivery contracts along the three-hundred-mile stretch between Richmond and Bakersfield. In 1899, the Spreckels Sugar Company in Spreckels, California, became a central meeting point

for transient labor and this continued even after his son Adolph took control of the family business after Claus's death in 1908. The Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad itself was a roughly three-mile rail line in 1908 that extended from Spreckels Junction to Salinas, proper. It was used to transport passengers between the sugar beet refinery and Salinas. By 1915, the line expanded to fifty-four miles of rail with "nine locomotives, six passenger cars, two baggage cars, three combination freight and passenger cars, and two hundred sixty freight cars."[81] Passengers utilized the rail line for leisurely trips to nearby Alisal for Sunday picnics and merrymaking in the open spaces away from Spreckels's refinery.

Workers used the line to travel between their homes and the factories. By 1917, the Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad hauled a total of nearly 175,000 tons of freight and approximately 160,000 passengers annually. Despite its enormous importance to local agricultural production, the widespread growth of alternative modes of transportation forced the railroad company to petition the Interstate Commerce Commission in June of 1928 to abandon all of its routes. On December 5, 1929, the company sold its forty miles of track and nearly two hundred train cars to the Southern Pacific Company for ten dollars.[82] The Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad's decline was linked to the growing ubiquity of automobile and truck usage for work and leisure commutes.

The Spreckels's urban investments in San Francisco and their properties in Watsonville, Salinas, and the Spreckels company town coincide with the physical infrastructures connecting migrant labor between the Bay Area and Central Coast. Historian William Cronon argues that it is impossible – and historically irresponsible – to understand the West without understanding the

[81] "Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad," *Monterey County Historical Society*, http://mchsmuseum.com/railroadpvc.html.
[82] Donald T. Clark, *Monterey County Place Names*, Kestrel Press, Carmel Valley, 1991; Horace W Fabing and Rick Hamman, *Steinbeck Country Narrow Gauge*, Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, 1985.

relationship between expanding metropoles and their surrounding frontiers.[83] Through the compression of space and time, nineteenth-century railroads reconfigured the manner by which rural industries – grain, lumber, and meatpacking – increasingly relied on the metropolis and its new relationship to capital in order to survive. The surrounding frontiers of the Central Coast Spreckels's refinery and company town attest to this connection. Moreover, they illustrate the creation of physical routes of migration utilized by a transient Filipino laboring population that relied on the stability of a place of labor in order to sustain their lifestyles each year. The automobile changed how these routes were traveled and accessed.

It also shifted the mode of visibility by which they could be policed. As planned and predictable physical spaces, interwar California highways contradictorily became surveillable routes of liberating movement. Cabe, Leyda, and Rosca's story foregrounds the connections between Filipino migrant men, state surveillance and policing, and automobile sociality in California during the interwar period. The automobile significantly increased the speed at which the men could escape the illicit scenarios with which they engaged as they traveled from Sacramento to Selma to Dinuba. The physical characteristics of a coupe – with two doors and less seating space compared to a roomier sedan or truck – would have also forced the three Filipinos into a hyper-confined space for long periods of time (Figure 1.3). The article detailing Cabe, Leyda, and Rosca's arrest does not specify the model of the Filipinos' embezzled automobile. In 1920, there were around one hundred twenty-six manufacturers producing one hundred fifty-five mechanical models and five hundred sixty-nine body models. By 1930, forty-five manufacturers produced one hundred four mechanical models and eight hundred seventy-four body models. This downward trend continued so that in 1940 there were twenty-one manufacturers producing sixty-

[83] William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 52, 91.

two mechanical models and four hundred fourteen body models. So while automobile scholars have identified that during the interwar period "more than ten thousand distinct models were on offer at one time or another," the coupe identified by the police may have been similar in make to General Motors's (GM) Pontiac line of automobiles.[84]

The 1926 Pontiac coupe weighed 2,320 pounds, sold for $825, and was advertised as "the lowest priced high quality six-cylinder automobile" that year. The message of affordability echoed the advertising language of their competitor in Ford Motors: "One day, one dollar; one year, one Ford."[85] The first six-cylinder car produced out of General Motor's Oakland plant, the Pontiac received widespread appeal as one of several GM cars "for every purse and purpose" when it sold "at a price between the Chevrolet and Oldsmobile."[86] A 1927 ad in the *Atlanta Constitution* dismissed the notion that consumers' class had anything to do with their capacity to purchase and keep a car:

> On this page today are illustrated seven cars, ranging in price from a few hundred dollars up to several thousand. Yet as you look them over you can't find a car that is not, in its own class, a thing of beauty and that does not, again in its own class, give a service so close to perfection that it would have astounded the motorist of only three or four years ago… [N]o man need feel called upon to excuse his economy in their purchase, nor to apologize for their performance on the road. There is no poor man, actually, in America today. But he who has a little less than his neighbor can still own his own car and point with pride to it… Let no man, after this, say "I can't afford a car." For it is not true.[87]

[84] Daniel M.G. Raff and Manuel Trajtenberg, "Quality-Adjusted Prices for the American Automobile Industry: 1906-1940" in *The Economics of New Goods*, Timothy F. Bresnahan and Robert J. Gordon, eds. (University of Chicago Press, Jan 1996), 72-75.
[85] Daniel M.G. Raff and Manuel Trajtenberg, "Quality-Adjusted Prices for the American Automobile Industry: 1906-1940" in *The Economics of New Goods*, Timothy F. Bresnahan and Robert J. Gordon, eds. (University of Chicago Press, Jan 1996), 72
[86] *Cars That Built GM: An Album of Historic General Motors Cars*, Published for GM Men and Women, Information Rack Service, General Motors Personnel Staff, 1954, https://www.gmheritagecenter.com/docs/gm-heritage-archive/historical-brochures/Milestones/Cars-That-Built-GM.pdf.
[87] "Seven Beauties Suitable for Every Class of Owner," *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)*; Oct 30, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution pg. C1.

Contrary to the author's assertion that affordability would never again be a consumer issue because poverty was presently nonexistent in the United States, the standard retail prices of coupes were still more than Filipino migrant workers generally earned even after several months of work. Even despite "astonishingly easy spaced payments," automobiles were still a significant investment. The onset of the Great Depression drastically reduced automobile prices across the United States. In 1933, presenters at the New York Automobile Show reassured consumers that "prices will take into account present day incomes" and some car manufacturers – like Dodge, Chevrolet, and Willys-Overland – "declare the base [price] will be under $700 or at least $95 below the present base price." Automobile salesmen after 1930 even cited that "such mechanical improvements as free wheeling, safety glass, ride control, rubber spring suspension and rubber engine-mountings, adjustable seals, and other developments, some of which were unknown before 1930, are now available in used cars."[88] American car dealers reduced prices to a range that groups of Filipino workers could still pool their money to purchase a stylish, reliable automobile.

This increased accessibility is demonstrated in the fact that many employers cited their Filipino workers' car ownership as detrimental to maintaining respectable working environments. An observer from the El Centro Woodmen of the World – a fraternal benefit society founded in 1890 that provided private insurance to its members and controlled a large stake in national broadcasting services during the interwar period – commented how the Filipino laborer "drives in the best cars and wears the best clothes. He's ruinin' things here." That observer continued describing how "a Filipino chambermaid over here showed me his wardrobe of five suits and five hats, and so on. And when he went to bathe he had on silk underwear. His clothes are the closest

[88] H.E. Gronseth, "1933 Automobiles at Lower Prices," *Wall Street Journal (1923-Current file)*; Nov 21, 1932; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Wall Street Journal pg. 1.

thing to him."[89] This attachment to material wares that enhanced Filipino migrants' appearances and instructed the ways they moved in the world should not be reduced to a commentary on ethnic vanity or idealized as images of frivolous leisure.

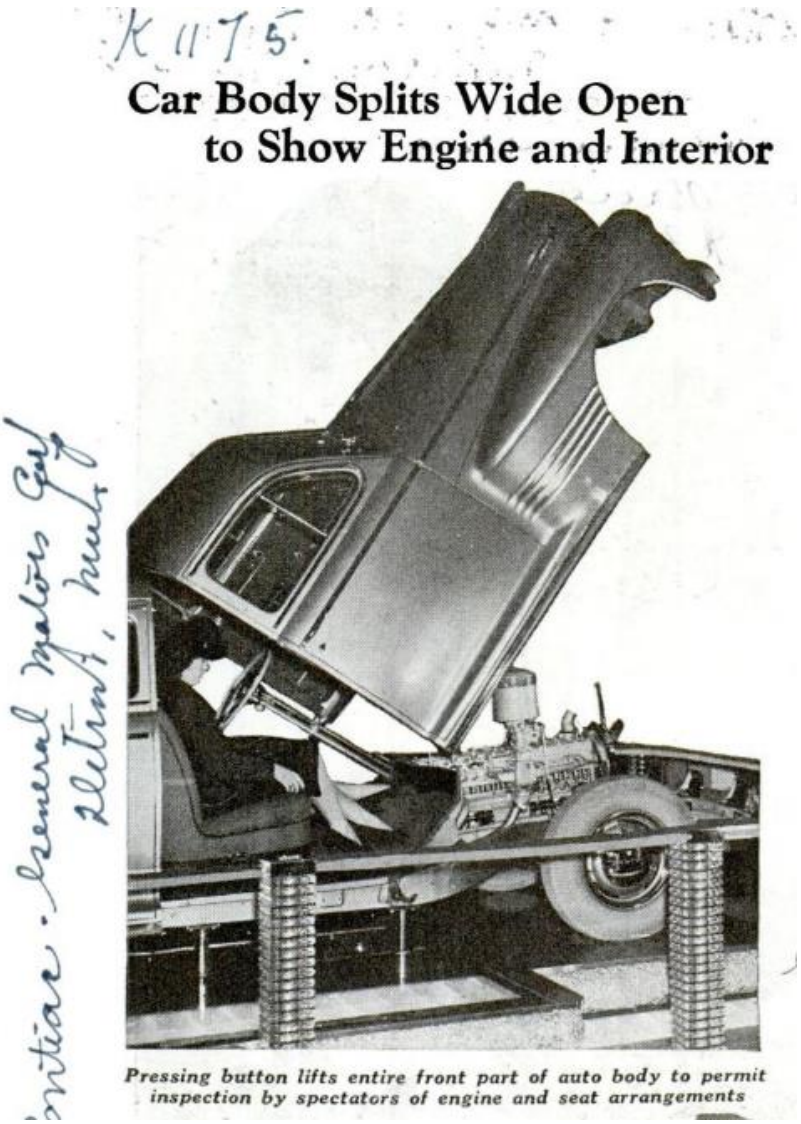


**FIGURE 1.3:** A late-1930s model Pontiac with a Buick torpedo body. Drivers enclosed in the automobile were positioned compactly between seats, steering wheel, and a powerful engine. From *Popular Mechanics Magazine*, Jan. 1941 (Vol. 75, No. 1), 26.

[89] *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Mr. Inbilleja commented how "my countrymen like to dress up. Some boys buy 175-dollar suits." Inbilleja continued to complain how "some boys run away" after earning their wages and "prevaricate as to age" when questioned about their absences by their superiors and peers. Inbilleja recalled being the only Filipino in the city of Pomona in 1919 and being one of only a handful of Filipinos by 1923. In 1924, Inbilleja found himself $1800 in debt and pursued by collections agents. The man somehow convinced his "agitators" that he could settle up on his debts and "got out of the hole" by the next year. In his eventual home, Inbilleja boasted overstuffed furniture, and oak dining room table, "heavy rugs harmonizing with furniture," flowers, pictures, and "scales for weighing babies."[90] This glimpse into Inbilleja's domestic life reveals the aspirational dynamics of an emergent laboring middle class. It also represents a rare case by which a working-class Filipino broke achieved domestic stability in the interwar period.

This conspicuous consumption of "the best" cars and clothes allowed marginalized Filipino workers to negotiate power dynamics employers typically held over them. Ostentatious displays of culture often proved validating in the absence of practical means to attain middle-class standards of domestic living that folks like Inbilleja were quick to dismiss as youths' lack of work ethic. In their consumptive habits, workers could claim an extent of power over their lives and for themselves. Fugitive alternative lifestyles provided their own harmonizing dynamics; less with rugs and furniture, and more with identifiable dress and impressive cars. Moreover, their participation in luxury markets during a severe economic depression constructed a façade of wealth that lifted spirits – even if that façade required constant retouching through the consolidation of meager weekly wages.

[90] "Mr. Inbilleja Interview, 192—," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Regardless of the façade's precarity, employers looked upon the ostentation of Filipino workers' conspicuous consumption with unease. In an interview conducted by sociologist James Earl Wood in 1929, a Mr. Gould from Salinas remarked that a Filipino laborer under his employ "has a Cadillac, same as mine." This remark followed an admission that each Filipino he employs "gives feeling [sic] that you are not to be trusted."[91] This lack of trust often resulted in a lack of work or a refusal to pay wages that were equitable to those of white workers. An employer in a Central Coast camp had used Filipino labor for four consecutive years and found them "better than anything I can get outside of Japs. More reliable than Mexicans. But a little sneaky in work." The employer went on to describe how Filipinos "can make from four to eight dollars a day" on a productive day of work without penalties.[92] Unstable earning potential intersected with biased perceptions of Filipino laborers' shiftiness to generate social realities of precarity that necessitated the imagining of alternative livings to supplement the modes of support available through ethnic organizations and employer patronage.

Even as sales of used cars with generous loan programs became more commonly advertised in daily classifieds, a single Filipino worker would have to save his money for almost a year in order to afford an automobile by himself after spending on rent, food, entertainment, and sending money back to support family in the Philippines. When interviewed by sociologist James Earl Wood, a Mr. Icreda recalled around eighty workers in his Monterey County camp in 1928. At thirty-seven years old, Icreda was significantly older than many of his bachelor compatriots. He contended that despite his age, "I am trying to get an education. Have wife and three children in

[91] "Mr. Gould, Salinas Interview 1929," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[92] "Interview with a Grower," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Islands. Helping a brother in U. of Washington, too. Sending them $70 and over a semester." Icreda's remittances were in addition to the "$18 per man, expenses per month" for food and lodging he contributed to a collective housing pool.[93] The expectation to contribute relatively equally to living expenses was compounded by deep feelings of obligation in Filipino social dynamics of *utang na loob*, or "internal debt."

As historian Linda España-Maram explained, this "informal arrangement of communal assistance… is arguably the most powerful underpinning of Filipino social relations, dictating that assistance received must be repaid."[94] The gravity of this social obligation – heightened by the fact that most Filipino migrants forged non-biological kinship networks for survival and sustainability – made the seeking of alternative modes of living all the more precarious. Yet, Filipino workers continuously took those risks because they were confident in the systems of community support that existed along the transient hubs and interstices of their labor. This dependence often generated generational and classed tensions within Filipino laboring populations; tensions that sometimes necessitated fugitive ventures as a means of practical escape.

These social and class tensions reflect a broader stratification of the Filipino migrant communities in California during this period. P.B. Umanos, a Filipino agricultural worker, observed that by the 1930s, "the Filipinos are losing confidence in their leaders. Villanueva took money and went back to Islands." Umanos went on to say that this Villanueva character pretended to by their leader and asked for financial support before disappearing to the Philippines. Father J.E. Dolein of the Filipino Catholic Club of Los Angeles, a "social-recreational club" with a

[93] "Interview with Mr. Icreda, Filipino Laborer," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[94] Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 17.

tumultuous business history – cited problems with "personal aggrandizement on part of [Filipino labor] leaders. Out of eight or ten leaders chosen, two could trust. American leader preferred."[95] That these moralizing concerns emerged from a religious social institution glimpses the politics of respectability at play in the critique of working-class lifestyles even as the Filipino Catholic Club provided vital support for those same workers.

Citing Spanish traditions wherein "boys [were] allowed greater freedom [while] girls [are] carefully guarded," the priest critiques Filipino boys for "seeking mundane pleasures because [they] get lonesome." Father Dolein asserted that while the Filipino Catholic Club had around one hundred religious members, "a good many [of the younger congregation] say Catholic but don't know what it means. They are accepted in the congregation" regardless of a blatant lack of Catholic social etiquette. The priest continues to observe that younger migrants' "home ties are broken after they've been here [in Los Angeles] awhile. Their practical outlook on life is that of a child." Citing this as a causal relationship, Father Dolein argued that "student groups tend to be aloof;" they "get discouraged when they can't go back [to the Philippines] with a degree or money" and a "good many won't go back because they can't be big fellow." Instead, young Filipinos frequented gambling dens so much so that "gambling houses feed and fuel broke men between jobs. Restaurants will give credit in many cases… Taxi-dance halls functioned as matrimonial bureaus and concubinage thrives" in Los Angeles.[96] The priest's observations touch on aspirational class dynamics, to be sure. They also reveal broader tensions in a working-class culture rooted in a politics of dissent from the limiting expectations of capital in the Philippines.

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[95] "Priest Interview with Filipino Catholic Club of Los Angeles," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[96] Harry C. Steinmetz, "Letters to the Times: Philippine Culture," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jul 26, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. A4.

When weekly wages would not suffice, Filipinos packed up and moved. While the existence of stable ethnic enclaves – particularly in cities like San Francisco, Stockton, and Los Angeles – provided much-needed relief for transient Filipinos, the need to maintain flexible places of residence was an important reality that the automobile helped migrants navigate.[97] Filipinos were among several transient populations moving to and around California as a result of the onset economic depression. Social and cultural observers attempted to express the feelings of movement because of insecurities in housing and employment.

**Troubling the "Colorful Statistics" of Pina/oy Movements and Cultures**

The excerpt of Stanley Hofflund's poem in the epigraph – published in Lee Shippey's *Los Angeles Times* daily column, "The Leeside O' L.A." – speaks to the harrowing precarity of life on the road and the potential of that life to inspire radical imaginations (Figure 1.4). Its author seemed familiar with the transient experience, if not the financial precarity he described which accompanied it. Hofflund was a prominent San Diego real estate developer, rancher, and socialite born in Galesburg, Illinois in 1883. In 1899, he and his brother moved to the El Cajon Valley to oversee ranch operations before Stanley settled on his own in San Diego.[98] Hofflund's status among San Diego's elite perhaps afforded him the resources and confidence to enjoy "tramping through the Sierras – high and low – and Adventuring America," a leisure not as easily accessible to working Filipinos whose survival necessitated their transience.

The increased liberation from upper-crust stodginess Hofflund found driving around Southern California's outdoor landscapes inspired him to moonlight as a newspaper reporter, "with

[97] Historians Linda España-Maram and Dawn Mabalon have argued the case of Filipino spatial permanence in their respective works: *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* and *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California*.

[98] William Ellsworth Smythe, *San Diego and Imperial Counties, California: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement, Illustrated, Volume II* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913), 146-47.

all the eagerness for 'scoops' on police department scandals and grand jury graft probes which the very mention of my profession suggests."[99] Hofflund's enthusiasm for the open road recalls romantic perceptions of Progressive Era tramping as liberating adventures. As Frank Tobias Higbie demonstrates of the dynamics of class conflict through the lives of poor economic migrants in the U.S. Midwest, for outsiders looking in, "the other side of laziness was freedom from work and social strictures."[100] This inquisitiveness into the gradations of urban scandal and the freedoms of the open road likely informed Hofflund's attempt at poetically describing the transient plights of the working poor. These idealizations could not be seamlessly overlaid on fugitive Filipino migrant experiences.

Hofflund's description of riding "midst bungalows single and double" sets a scene of housing insecurity and transience shared by many working-class folks affected by the economic depression. The second line of the longer piece reinforces this reality of impermanence: "It's useless to grumble – we can't keep a home." This resonated with the experiences of Filipinos living along the transient interstices of California's labor routes. John Salazar, a Filipino worker living primarily in the town of Reedley, described how his fellow workers lived in a cluster of around fifty camps with a similar general kitchen setup and eight cars among the residents, "not counting contractors" who were not considered to be part of the stoop labor contingent of this population.

Salazar lived and worked in agricultural routes from the Central Coast to the Central Valley. He was born "Juan Salazar" in the Philippines around 1900 and migrated to California in 1924. By 1930, he was the registered head of a rented household with fifteen other people –

[99] Stanley Hofflund, Foreword to "The Last Cup of Tea" in *Adventure* (New York: The Ridgeway Company, 1918), Vol. 16, No. 1: 184.
[100] Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 75.

including one-year-old Violet Andrews – in the city of Dinuba. Signaling the competition with Mexican labor and the racialized unrest their perceived lowering of wages incited, Salazar wondered aloud: "I don't see why blame isn't placed on Mexicans. I know of many of them working cheaper than we." This racial divisiveness within the working class reflected the ways in which groups were pitted against each other to uphold the structural inequalities created by regimes of race. The radical solidarity forged within ethnic groups, and through the intimacies of interstate travel in cars, produced spaces of mutual support that also created biases aimed at non-normative actors within those ethnic identities. These dynamics informed responses to these experiences of housing precarity whereby the evicted and unhoused took to the roads. Some "streak through the world in a truck driver's care," while others pack up their own automobiles with whatever they can manage.

The makeshift character of migrant life is reflected in Hofflund's description of the domestic activity of eating, a leisure easily upended by the constant need to move: "I dine on a crate till we get settled down, Then sell out again and move clear 'cross town." For Filipinos in California, this movement was often seasonal and became increasingly reliant on automobile usage to support a transient lifestyle.[101] While Filipinos were barred from high-paying, high-skilled employment, the volume of available jobs in urban domestic and service work, as well as some employers' preference for Filipino bodies as an employable and controllable work force, "provided Filipino laborers with some room to negotiate the conditions of their employment." Vincent Mendoza, an apartment custodian in Los Angeles around 1929, recalled how he "worked for three months and I don't like the manager and I said, 'Go to hell, I am leaving.'"[102] This willingness to

[101] Since the 1910s, Filipinos agricultural laborers used the railroads or walked along highways to travel for work; see Bulosan. As automobiles became more widely accessible by the 1920s, groups of Filipinos often pooled their wages to purchase cars for work and leisure.
[102] España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila,* 35.

stand ground by threatening – and then following through with – departure from the workplace challenged employer authority in an already unstable employment market and a growing pool of colored laborers. Having access to a car made it easier for workers to quit and seek better jobs elsewhere. The car was a resource for workers in the interwar class struggle.

Lee Shippey's page in the *Los Angeles Times* was often punctuated with drawings to help readers picture the articles more distinctly. While Hofflund's poem was accompanied by the image of a man moving furniture to a "VAN" from a house with its "TO LET" sign already in the window, an image on the opposite side of the column, in a piece entitled "Colorful Statistics," depicts a racially ambiguous caricature of a "Miss L.A." presenting the latest population numbers for the city at "1,427,480." Two "HEY!s" by the image's boundary suggest that this is something worth highlighting. A particularly colorful statistic – one that places the number of Filipinos in Los Angeles somewhere between 2220 and 6000 – asserts that "most of the Filipinos are unmarried houseboys" and that the Board of Education's use of the school census to track those numbers may not be entirely accurate. This inability to identify the migrant Filipino population may have been a concern for conscientious white citizens mindful of the growing colored immigrant population, particularly over the issue of intermarriage. Father Dolein of the Filipino Catholic Club of Los Angeles observed that while "most Filipino marriages are with Whites," generally "people in a large city don't realize that Filipinos and whites were mixing temporarily. They are astounded when it first comes to their attention."

Around 1930, Mr. Gould in Salinas had been using Filipino labor for four years. He found Filipino workers too demanding and judgmental despite them being "dependable" once hired. But that dependability did not extend to their likelihood to stay at a job. Mr. Gould complained that "Filipinos come and go like crickets. But [they are] thrifty, clean, mind place. Want to keep away

from turnover." A relatively high wage rate for domestic work may have incentivized the handful of Filipinos under Mr. Gould's employ: a pantryman made $55 a month, a bellboy made $60, and a houseboy made $70 in monthly wages.[103]

THE LEE SIDE O'L.A.
BY Lee Shippey

OUR special medal for keeping everything appropriate goes to the Lincoln Theater, for colored people, which is to have some colored films.

**Colorful Statistics**

All kinds of wild statements are made as to the number of Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese and so on in Los Angeles. The Board of Education recently made an estimate, based on school census, which the Chamber of Commerce accepts as the best available. That estimate gives our population as follows: White, 1,152,100; black, 34,820; Chinese, 4879; Indian, 2129; Filipino, 2220; Japanese, 41,400; Mexican, 189,860. The Filipino employment agencies, however, say there are more than 6000 Filipinos here. But as most of the Filipinos are unmarried houseboys



next few decades are going to bring lots of archeologists to the Southwest, fearing that Boulder Dam and other developments soon may spoil their hunting grounds.

Well, there's only one thing about archeologists that grates a little on our inherent prejudices. Those fellows just won't let bygones be bygones.

**Home Seek Home**



*'Midst flats and apartments though we may roam,*
*It's useless to grumble—we can't keep a home.*
*We sell or else trade a place here for one there,*
*And streak through the world in a truck driver's care.*

*I've moved our piano from flat unto flat*
*Or into a house, just to move out of that,*
*So darned many times that I'm trying to trade*
*For a circus calliope—it's a parade.*

*Our sofa's an heirloom (the brute weighs a ton)*
*To me, lying on it will never be fun.*
*Too often I'm under it, muttering prayers*
*For strength to control it and get it downstairs.*

**FIGURE 1.4:** A portion of "The Lee Side O'L.A." with the first three stanzas of Hofflund's poem on the right column and "Colorful Statistics" of L.A.'s population in 1929 – emphasis on Pinoys being "unmarried houseboys."

By comparison, typical agricultural wage rates ranged from $0.25 to $2 per day, maybe five days per week.[104] Despite the wage-earning potential of service positions, Mr. Gould's dehumanizing labeling of Filipinos as insects suggests that "turnover" was a consistent and legitimate concern for him.

[103] Interview with Mr. Gould, James Wood Collection, Reel 4, Slide 3, page 10.
[104] *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Still others, like Cabe and his peers, tested their luck on the open roads outside of racially acceptable migrant work. While the experience of transience was not unique to any single race or class, the stakes of that migrant existence were differently drawn for Filipinos living, working, and moving in interwar California.[105] With the automobile, Filipino migrants oscillated into new spaces of precarity and possibility between work, liberation, and death during the interwar period. These interstitial lifeways and socialities facilitated Pina/oys' movement between hostile racialized spaces and, as the following chapters will demonstrate, broadened the conditions in which Pina/oy cultural imaginations influenced transpacific politics of liberation.

Even as driving enabled the mobility of fugitive alternatives for making a living within the laboring populations of California's Filipino diaspora, automobiles also facilitated travel between urban and rural sites of interwar popular culture. This chapter was meant to outline the stakes of finding alternative workways for Filipinos in interwar California. Working-class Filipino migrants were often positioned between the sociopolitical interests of the state and middle classes. As Filipinos moved between urban ethnic enclaves, they gossiped, complained, theorized, and organized informally. These interactions – referenced obtusely in a handful of sources – suggest that this movement was just as critical for establishing a sense of identity and solidarity than the union halls and dance clubs in the cities. This chapter explores the fleeting possibilities of these limited spaces in which migrants could practice and hone intellectualisms apart from the prescriptions of the Filipino middle classes and the regulations of the State. In the face of one of the most enduring tropes of white supremacy – that nonwhite people like Pina/oys were out of place and needed their bodies policed – popular culture anchored radical thought and political action in these fugitive moments.

[105] Stanley Hofflund, "Home Seek Home," in "Lee Side O'L.A.," by Lee Shippey, *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* May 9, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A4.

Cars expedited traveling to boxing arenas, constructing and maintaining foodways, attending film screenings and book talks, and getting tattooed. These practices of popular culture were often identified by U.S. legislation and the Filipino middle classes as dangerous, subversive, and illicit.[106] Tensions with institutional hegemony from within and without the Filipino communities in the United States reveal the imbricated negotiations of culture, race, and power in the context of immigrant exclusion and the nation-state. Because of this surveillance, policing, and violence, I contend much of this popular culture also functioned as "fugitive" and was rich with the alternative possibilities they generated. Working-class identities – and the solidarities that emerged from them – were painstakingly forged at work, in the courts, and in crucibles of violence. Most strikingly, they were constructed through popular culture. The following chapters will trace the historical meaning-making processes opened up for the Filipino diaspora through these fugitive alternatives.

Boxers, tattoo artists, novelists, and cooks comprised fugitive cultures within the Filipino migrant communities of this period because their labor was often mediated through raced, classed, and gendered expectations that tended to flatten out the extent of their influence. They represented working-class sensibilities and middle-class aspirations. Their visibility and visuality through newspaper advertisements, military induction papers, prison records, songs, and novels suggest that they were also integral to community survival through their infrapolitical actions.[107] Filipino

[106] According to Cultural Studies scholar George Lipsitz: "Much work in cultural studies takes a second look at the forbidden, the frowned upon, and the frivolous on the grounds that these categories make social divisions appear to be differences in taste and morality rather than forces that produce domination and resistance." For more on this concept, see Robin Kelley's *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, Free Press, 1994.
[107] See James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990); For historical discussions of infrapolitical actions in the United States, see Robin D.G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2002); For contemporary discussions of Filipino American historical memory see the essays in the *Pilipinx Radical Imagination Reader*, edited by Melissa-Ann Nievera-Lozano and Anthony Abulencia Santa Ana (Philippine American Writers and Artists, Inc., 2018).Maybe some of

middle-class respectability politics vied for recognition from the U.S. government and conflicted with working-class desires for food, shelter, work, leisure, and dignity. In the transient interstices of cooperation and debate, of conflict and conformity, these members of subordinated cultures created spaces that articulated a growing politics of liberation from oppressive cycles of U.S. colonialism.

these ideas need to be in the text to underscore the importance of seemingly small practices as weapons in the struggle against racial capitalism.

CHAPTER TWO

## "If You Do Not Get It, Do Not Work": Pinoy Criminality and the Curation of Pina/oy Respectability

From across the Pacific I came to swell the ranks of the demi-monde in California. I am one of those nondescripts who make up the half-world of people nearer the criminal class than the elite. In short, I am a Filipino.

- Midi Yanez, Pinay migrant, *Los Angeles Times*, 1932

At the beginning of 1939, with the smell of independence in their nostrils, what do the Filipinos want?

- H. Ford Wilkins, *New York Times*, 1939

Pina/oys encountered the profound violence of interwar California when they moved between spaces of work and leisure.[108] In the early twilight hours of January 12, 1930, Pedro Pagaragan trudged along a highway three miles east of the city of Delano. Earnest Bailey, a white man from Delano, struck Pagaragan with his automobile as the Pinoy walked unawares toward his job at the Paul Driver ranch outside of the city. Witnesses reported that Bailey "failed to stop and render aid" to the fallen man; a carelessness more likely caused by fear than outright race hatred. First responders found Pagaragan "buried in mud and snow alongside the highway" before rushing the injured twenty-five-year-old to an emergency hospital in Delano.[109]

Despite Pina/oys' ability to use automobiles to evade capture,[110] this incident demonstrated that Pina/oy migrants were still extremely physically vulnerable to violence because of their

[108] The terms "Pinoy" and "Pinay" were used in the 1920s by Filipino migrants living or born in the United States to differentiate themselves from Filipinos living in the Philippines, or elsewhere. I use the term "Pina/oy" to indicate when a process, event, or ideal affected or applied, very generally, to Filipino men *and* women in the United States. When a process affected, specifically, either Filipino men or women, I will be using "Pinoy" or "Pinay," respectively, in the interest of historical consistency.

[109] "Filipino Struck Down by Auto, Waxes Violent," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Feb. 4, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 10.

[110] See Chapter One, "Fugitive Lives: Pinoy Car Culture and Alternative Lifeways on California Freeways."

visibility along American roads. Attention to Pina/oys' actions in California's political and social spaces drastically increased in the 1930s. Prior to 1928, few demographic records existed on Filipina/os in the United States. The California Department of Labor, alongside the Bureau of Insular Affairs and the Institute of Pacific Race Relations, called for studies on the state of the Pina/oy population in the United States. These studies reflected concerns by the state over the growing conflicts between Pina/oy and white workers.[111]

Exhausted and discouraged by daily exploitation from their bosses, and inundated with an urgency to survive the violence of white workers who perceived them as competition for Depression-era jobs, some Pina/oys stopped working for wages. Like Tad Cabe, A. Leyda, and J. Roscas from Chapter One, Pina/oys engaged in fugitive acts of survival that separated them from curated narratives of respectability presented in Pina/oy ethnic presses. Narratives of Pinoy migrant criminality emerged in the context of anti-Pina/oy sentiments across the United States. Aware of this perpetual vulnerability, Pina/oys mobilized the opportunities provided by their growing cultural infrastructures to survive in extralegal ways.

This chapter focuses on the illicit actions of Filipino migrant men (Pinoys) and how the stories told about Pinoy criminals in mainstream urban publications and Pina/oy ethnic presses influenced the framing of transpacific debates around Philippine independence in the 1930s. What was the relationship between Pina/oy labor organizing, ethnic presses, popular conceptions of migrant criminality, and illicit alternative work in interwar California? What is made urgent through the cultural productions around Pina/oy working-class criminality during this period? How might thinking of Pina/oy identity construction through ethnic presses affect understandings of Pina/oy migrancy?

[111] Bruno Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 43-65.

The tragedy of Pagaragan's death did not make national headlines. The deadly riots in Watsonville less than a week later captivated local and transpacific attentions more intensely than this roadside incident. Fermin Tobera, the sole fatality over the five days of white violence in Watsonville in January 1930, became the flashpoint of protests from California to the Philippines. These two occurrences were not identical in scale or intensity. They did equally matter for Pina/oys living under California's interwar racial regimes because both events were punctuated by a loss of Pinoy life.

This violent incident punctuated Pagaragan's transient life along routes of migrant labor in the United States. Pagaragan was born on May 13, 1903 in Badoc in the Philippine province of Ilocos Norte. In June of 1922, the nineteen-year-old Ilocano signed a contract to work for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association and boarded the S.S. Lincoln for Honolulu. Pagaragan joined 192 other Filipino passengers, sharing the aim to work with most; some men brought their families. The youngest passenger was one-year-old Teodulfo Mangca from Carcar. After almost one month on the open ocean, Pagaragan disembarked in Honolulu on July 7, 1922 and headed to work in the sugar plantations.[112]

Pina/oy workers in Hawaii had historically organized to destabilize the plantation structure in the U.S.'s other Pacific colony since the turn of the century. Organizing labor was a critical avenue for interwar Pina/oy migrants to maintain a transpacific consciousness of their value as workers and link the working-class struggles to the continent.[113] The labor struggles of Pina/oy workers in Hawaii were also used by the Pina/oy middle class to bolster a political claim to

[112] National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Honolulu, Hawaii, compiled 02/13/1900 - 12/30/1953*; National Archives Microfilm Publication: *A3422*; Roll: *069*; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004*; Record Group Number: *RG 85;* National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; *Index to Filipino Passengers Arriving at Honolulu, Hawaii, ca. 1900-ca. 1952*; Microfilm Series: *A3407*; Microfilm Roll: *14.*

[113] For a discussion of race making for Asian immigrant groups in Hawaii, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*, Harvard University Press, 2002.

independence in the Pacific and to vie for respectability in the imperial center. The Pina/oy press publishing out of various ethnic enclaves along the Pacific Coast states connected the struggles and ideas of Pina/oys across the state in a circuitous network of communication that made it possible for independent labor groups to organize systematically. This press also espoused middle-class agendas of respectability.

While deadly race riots were often focused on meting out de facto punishments on Pina/oys' perceived violations of white supremacist order, Pina/oys' lives could still be cut tragically short in ways that were not overtly politically or socially charged. Accusations that Pinoy workers undercut white workers' wages were not statistically supported in studies conducted by the California Department of Labor in 1928; Pina/oys organizing for wage equality since 1928 intended to ease racial tensions by "emulating the standard of American wages" by not accepting less than 40 cents per hour.[114] Despite, or perhaps because of, the visible work Pina/oys mobilized in response to their workplace exploitation, anti-Pina/oy sentiments persisted. One result was that Pina/oys resorted to extralegal means of making a living; actions that made them a focus of the Pina/oy presses whose narratives and popular reach curated Pina/oy criminality against an emerging politics of respectability tied to federal debates over Philippine independence.

The Pina/oy presses in California – especially the Stockton *Three Stars* and the *Philippine Advocate* reporting on the San Francisco Bay Area – brought together the ideas of traditional and alternative workers discussed in the previous chapters into spaces and conversations that both reified the terms of Pina/oy middle-class respectability and undermined their expectations by giving readers the chance to structure their lives based on the cultural information published. This is not unique to the Pina/oy experience during this period. The context of Pina/oy interwar

[114] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 107; "Letter by the Filipino Workers Delegation to Asparagus Growers," *Stockton Philippine Advertiser*, Feb. 29, 1928.

migration explains its particular manifestation in Pina/oy communities. Pina/oys in California used the presses to stay informed about the violence targeting their bodies, labor, and communities. The press often simultaneously functioned as a vehicle of conservative nationalism and radical counter-surveillance that allowed Pina/oys to sustain their fugitive lives.

**Migrant Cultural Expressions in Pina/oy Presses**

Pina/oy ethnic news publications that operated between 1920 and 1941 helped the diaspora survive in meaningful ways. Newspapers functioned at the intersections of immigration law, Asian racialization, and political organization as physical extensions of the segregated spaces Pina/oys occupied. They were central mechanisms for curating the cultural realities on and for Pina/oy migrants. They were arenas of socio-political contestation toward a xenophobic, white-supremacist system. They also facilitated processes of ethnic identity solidarity that simultaneously perpetuated class divisions within the Pina/oy migrant community and forged a united front from which labor organizers could build a following and in which the masses of working-class community members could sustain connections across far-flung geographical regions. This dynamic came together when Pina/oys reported on Pinoy criminality and death in contrast to how they championed a united Pina/oy community identity that refused to contend with internal class tensions. Grand gatherings of prominent dignitaries, who acted as cultural liaisons of the U.S. colonial government in the Philippines, often became the focal point of news by nationalist publications.

On the evening of July 18, 1931, the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco hosted an elaborate farewell banquet for Archbishop Gregorio Aglipay of the Philippine Independent Church. *The Philippine Advocate* reported that the festivities were marked by "an elaborate and

well-prepared program" highlighted by a speech from the guest of honor.[115] Aglipay was a central figure in Filipina/os' armed resistance to U.S. occupation during the Philippine-American War. In his speech, the Archbishop presented his nationalist ideologies to the gathered crowd. Reporters describing Aglipay's visit point out that "the venerable Father is an Ilocano, but this does not mean to stress that, he being an Ilocano, only the Illocanos were invited to the farewell dinner."[116] Among those in attendance were Mr. Santiago Madrid, Chairman of the United Laoaguenos of America, Mrs. Felizo A. Rosario, President of the Grand Council of Philippine Women's Association of America, Inc., and Mr. E. Suguitan, advisor to the Piddig Sons of California. These Pina/oys represented a diverse range of migrant interests. The gathering made clear that, given the background of provincial cultures, these Pina/oys would have never associated with each other in the Philippines. The event was a significant representation of Filipina/o-American solidarity and pan-ethnic unity. It also underemphasized the deep tensions perennially present within Pina/oy migrant communities along class lines; lines established by Pina/oy presses through a lens and language of respectability.

Malays, Tagalogs, Moros, and Ilocanos were a handful of the dozens of distinct cultures and language groups that comprised the thousand islands of the archipelago. The diversity of the Moro, Malay, Tagalog, and Ilocano subcultures was eventually pigeonholed as "belonging to the same racial stock as do other Filipinos… that they are sending" to the United States.[117] Amalgamating Filipina/os into one inseparable mass of immigrants made it easier for a white American public to identify, isolate, and exclude Pina/oys in the United States. So pervasive was the American government's perceptions of Pina/oys as a homogenous ethnic group that in 1932

[115] Jose Bulatao, "Father Aglipay Entertained by Local Filipinos," *Philippine Advocate* (California: San Francisco, July 1, 1931), 1.
[116] Ibid., 1.
[117] Grayson Louis Kirk, *Philippine Independence: Motives, Problems, and Prospects* (Farrar & Rinehart, 1936), 18.

the Los Angeles Superior Court rules that "the Filipinos, with the exception of the inhabitants belonging to the black race and the whites constituting a negligible proportion of the population, being Malays, are, therefore, properly classed as Mongolians, and marriages between them and white persons are prohibited by the provisions of sections 60 and 69 of the Civil Code."[118] Sweeping legislative decisions such as this reflect American tendencies to lump Pina/oys of diverse ethnic background into an increasingly singular "problem" during the 1920s and 1930s.

According to the *Advocate,* Pina/oys did not see themselves as being of one distinct national stock. Father Aglipay's statements at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel testify to this inherent diversity within the Filipino demographic of San Francisco and California. In his speech reproduced in the *Philippine Advocate*, Father Aglipay admits that "I do not speak or understand English. In the crowd our color is twenty to one. Why is it that you do not speak the language that you and I are proud of possessing… my gratitude would have been more had I been able to understand what you my countrymen were talking about when your lips were moving."[119] This excerpt reveals the extent to which Pina/oys in the 1930s readily identified and distinguished between regional Philippine identities; actions that produced tensions within Pina/oy populations.

The *Advocate* took time to make the distinction that Father Aglipay was an Ilocano, a Philippine ethnic and language group that constituted the bulk of working-class Pina/oy migrants in the United States. The affirmation that the archbishop's ethnic background did not necessarily mean that "only the Ilocanos were invited to the farewell dinner" reveals the inter-ethnic negotiations conducted within the transnational community of Pina/oys in the United States. Aglipay's speech curated an inclusive and respectable image of Pina/oys that framed Pina/oys

[118] U.S. Webb, "Solvador Roldan vs. Los Angeles County: Appeal from the Superior Court of LA County" (California State Printing Office, July 1932), 6.
[119] Bulatao, *Philippine Advocate*, 1, 4.

engaged in extralegal activities as aberrations to the otherwise amenable (and assimilable) Pina/oy populace – in the United States and the Philippines.

**Pinoy Youth, Criminality, and the Makings of Fugitivity**

On December 30, 1929, Louie "Loy" Obaňă Amper rode his roller skates toward the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Broadway Street in Venice, California. Asa Smith, who lived a few blocks away, was driving home when Amper crossed into the road and "skated directly into the path of [Smith's] machine." Smith could not stop in time and the collision left Amper "with a badly injured ankle." Panicked, confused, and distressed, Amper was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. He was eleven years old. This incident left a mark on the young Pinoy's experience in the United States. Amper was born on June 23, 1918 in Honolulu to Pina/oy sugar plantation workers.[120] At some point, Amper's family moved to Venice, California, where they attempted to build a domestic life adherent to normative American standards. After graduating from high school, Amper sought employment in Los Angeles's service industry. In around 1935, he moved out from Venice and found housing as a lodger in a Los Angeles house on Washington Street with four other people. The teenager eventually obtained work as a bartender at L.C. Sigworth's restaurant in Los Angeles.[121] Amper worked a steady forty-eight hours per week and earned around $588 annually. In October of 1940, Amper enlisted in the U.S. Army.[122]

Pina/oy migrants often encountered the prospect of violent physical harm as they walked along the roads, rails, and highways connecting their labor sites. On July 8, 1932, Manuel Tabanico was hit by a train. The nineteen-year-old spent a day "hiking along the Southern Pacific

[120] The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; *WWII Draft Registration Cards for California, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*; Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System, 147*; Box: *36.*
[121] L.C. Sigworth was a white man born in 1895 in Pennsylvania. During the 1940 US Census he was 45 years old and lived in Los Angeles, California. He appears as the head of his house in the 1940 US Census. http://www.rootspoint.com/record/1940-US-Census/L-C-Sigworth-1895-Pennsylvania-PA/a08c46d7-fd5b-4fb4-bd5c-610dd622e94e/.
[122] Add analysis here.

right of way" from Arizona before he "sat down near the rails to rest and fell asleep."[123] Desperation and the promise of work likely informed Tabanico's decision to make the dangerous journey across state lines; exhaustion likely informed his decision to sleep beside rail lines along his route. Migrant work was physically and emotionally exhausting. Tabanico's death illustrates how Pina/oy working-class migrants negotiated a dangerous relationship to space as they traveled for work. Tabanico's movement alongside the Southern Pacific rail line suggests the migrant's reliance on the railroad's way-pointing function. Without an automobile – and a group that could collectively invest in its ownership – Pina/oy laborers found themselves alone and exposed. Railways and the sites of labor to which they led delineated the pathways of travel Filipino migrants could take to earn a living. These static routes often defined migrants' labor experiences from their moment of arrival to California. Automobiles became the preferred mode of transportation for Pina/oys seeking safety from exposure along migrant labor routes.

While automobile driving afforded Pina/oy migrants with an alternative means of movement in interwar California, the risks of manipulating several tons of metal and several gallons of volatile fuel at high speeds meant that accidents could happen. When they did – and especially when these accidents caused damage to white drivers or pedestrians – media outlets were often quick to point out that Pinoys were behind the wheel. In 1922, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported an unprecedented 321 people killed and 6393 injured in traffic accidents in the city and noted that V. Gigosa, "Filipino messboy of the U.S.S. Texas, received the heaviest sentence – a fine of $500 and 100 days in jail." Police reports stated that "the automobile [Gigosa] was driving collided with another and injured another person."[124] Gigosa was one of 222 persons

[123] "Train Kills Filipino Sleeping Near Rails," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jul 9, 1932; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A12.
[124] "321 Killed This Year by Autos Is L.A. Record," *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*; Dec 28, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: San Francisco Chronicle pg. 4.

charged with speeding whose fate lay in the hands of Township Justice of the Peace W.S. Baird. Compared to other white violators, Gigosa was given little choice with his penalty. According to that same report, "Lawrence Green, who drove thirty-two miles an hour, went to jail for twenty-five days in preference to paying a fine of $100." Another speeder, A.A. Ash, "whose maximum speed was thirty miles an hour around a curve on the State highway, paid $200 in preference to going to jail for fifty days." While it is difficult to identify any direct racial motivation for Baird's judgement, that Ash had the resources to pay the fine and Green could avoid a fine by choosing jail time is suggestive of unequal treatment under traffic laws. Pinoy drivers were at greater risk of receiving harsher punishments if caught misbehaving by the arms of the state.

Punitive actions by state law enforcement highlight dynamics of fugitive action wherein Pinoy migrants attempted to co-opt a cultural product that was not designed for them the ideal consumers. On the evening of September 15, 1926, S. Calvo was driving with two companions "about five miles north of Fresno" when his vehicle crashed head-first into John Todd's. Mrs. Todd, the white driver's twenty-seven-year-old wife, "was thrown from the car and her chest crushed and internal injuries inflicted. Her three children Esther, 5; Irene, 4; and Nadine four months, were slightly hurt. [John] Todd escaped injury." Upon arriving to the scene of the accident, Sherriff W.F. Jones arrested Calvo "on a charge of having no operator's permit." Calvo sat in county jail waiting for a possible manslaughter charge. While Calvo's case was one of six accidents that occurred in that area of Fresno that evening, his was the only case that resulted in arrest, let alone a manslaughter charge.[125] The visceral descriptions of Mrs. Todd's fatal injuries and the image of three small children left without a mother would have intensified the feelings of contempt against an apparently negligent Pinoy driver. Calvo's arrest is also instructive because

[125] "Auto Injuries Fatal: Woman Dies, Two Seriously Hurt and Ten Others Recovering From Accidents at Fresno," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Sep 17, 1923; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 110.

of what caused the sheriff to restrain him: no operator's license. Driving added an extra layer to interwar lives wherein Pina/oy migrants continually skirted the boundaries of legality and exclusion.

Even Pina/oys who found work for state surveillance agencies were not entirely safe from automobile accidents. In October of 1930, Anncito Delarosa, "Filipino informer for the [Los Angeles Police Department] vice squad… in the investigation of immoral women," was flattened by a car at Third and Los Angeles Streets in the middle of the night. Initial reports suggested that he had been "shot and thrown from a speeding automobile… [and] exterior evidence of the injury at first caused police to believe that he had been shot in the head, giving cause for the suspicion that underworld enemies had 'taken him for a ride.'"[126] Further investigation concluded that Delarosa, who was operating under the alias of "De la Cruz," was the victim of a hit-and-run. Still, a hit-and-run does not usually entail a shot to the head. Reports of Delarosa's death would have reminded Pina/oy readers of the existential threats they were vulnerable to daily. Throughout this period, Pina/oys were in close proximity to automobiles and illicit cultural economies. While they were not the only minoritized immigrants to experience these brushes with injury and death, their visibility in these press reports reinforced notions of their undesirability outside of the places of work where their presence was tolerated.

Reports of criminal activity linked to Pinoy migrants regularly appeared in syndicated newspapers within and outside Pina/oy communities. After 1928, mainstream sources began covering incidents of Pinoy criminal behavior, extending middle-class Pina/oy efforts that created distinctions between acceptable migrant actions and punishable offenses. These stories curated

[126] "Informer Slain Accidentally," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Oct 17, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A3.

perceptions of some working-class Pinoys as shifty or duplicitous; perceptions constructed by middle-class Pina/oy publications. These reports manufactured a separation between a budding middle-class politics of respectability that insisted on policing working-class activities. In this way, middle-class Pina/oys (and the members of the Pina/oy working class sympathetic tos middle-class sensibilities) defined their respectable identities against some Pinoys' criminal behaviors. While some illicit actions by working-class Pinoys may have been motivated by malice or ill intent, much of the criminalization accounted for in popular presses revealed that Pinoys often responded in self-defense.

In the spring of 1922, thirty-six-year-old Florentino Villanueva of San Francisco "walked into the city prison yesterday afternoon and announced that he had fired the shot that killed Mrs. Vivian Thomas, 23, landlady of the Outside Inn, 2524 Lombard Street, Saturday night." The *San Francisco Chronicle* article detailed a violent altercation that highlights the volatile racial dynamics Pina/oys experienced as they moved around interwar California's urban spaces. The article continued:

> In surrendering, Villanueva displayed several knife wounds which he said had provoked the shooting after seven men in the house had insulted him because of his race, kicked him, stabbed him and started throwing him downstairs [sic]. When they started to throw him out, Villanueva says he drew a revolver and fired once without aiming. The shot entered Mrs. Thomas' right breast. She was pronounced dead on arrival at Letterman General hospital… [Villanueva] was taken to Central Emergency hospital for treatment before being booked on a charge of murder.[127]

The Alaska Packers Association watchman also showed police "where he had been slashed four times in the back part of the left arm." It is unclear whether Villanueva was attempting to make a case of self-defense in order to mitigate severe punitive actions from his assailants and the state. This incident illustrates the dangers Pinoys, like many Asian migrant groups, came into proximity

[127] "Filipino Slayer of Woman Surrenders, Confesses Killing," *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*; Apr 24, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: San Francisco Chronicle pg. 9.

to when seeking aid from law enforcement.[128] Many of these encounters with state power resulted in Pina/oys' incarceration. Pinoy migrants utilized automobiles and the knowledge of where to find support for extralegal activities published in ethnic presses to carve out alternative, underground routes of survival in interwar California.

On February 23, 1929, A.J. Oretego, a "West Riverside Filipino" identified by police as an "ex-convict" who "served a term in San Quentin for extortion," was arrested in San Bernardino County after a high-speed car chase with police ended with Ortego's car overturned and two bystanders dead.[129] Oretego "led Southern California officers [on] a hide-and-seek chase for months with a string of worthless checks totaling several thousands of dollars." The Pinoy's illicit activities spanned Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles counties as he "admitted passing about 250 of the spurious drafts on merchants" throughout Southern California. In an attempt to implicate the Riverside Japanese community, Oretego admitted to being "the tool of a check-forging ring… involving high-up Japanese officials." By all accounts, Oretego acted alone and utilized his automobile to facilitate quick escapes from investigators.

Oretego's encounter with San Bernardino county police, including the infamous Sheriff Walter Shay, illustrates Pina/oy migrants' proximity to the violence of interwar law enforcement in the state and the precarity of existence as a highly-visible colored body. Born in San Bernardino in 1866, Walter Shay served in several capacities as a law enforcement official since the turn of the twentieth century. Shay became chief of police for the San Bernardino Police Department in

[128] For a broader discussion of the dangerous intersections of law and Asian populations in the U.S., see Nayan Shah's *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, University of California Press, 2001 and Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, University of California Press, 1989 (Revised 2012); For a contemporary discussion of how queer Filipino men are policed and surveilled by the state, see Martin F. Manalansan's *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003; See also: Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*.

[129] "Arrest Leader of Check Ring: Filipino Held at Riverside After Long Chase," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Feb 24, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. F8.

1905 and began a thirteen-year tenure as county sheriff in 1918. During this time, Shay initiated the training of fingerprint experts and founded an Identification Bureau in 1921 to increase the surveilling capacity of law enforcement in the region.[130] These enforcement efforts often turned violent because of the increased militarization advocated by Shay, his vice officers, and county officials.

In January of 1922, the *San Bernardino Sun* reported that "Sheriff Walter Shay is laying a supply of hand grenades with a 30-second clip to dislodge highwaymen in dugouts" and "is already in touch with the military authorities to get a supply of the hand grenades."[131] A 1926 article praised this show of force in deterring criminal activity when its author boasted that "Sheriff Walter A. Shay has shown that he has the ability to handle the criminal problems of this county." The article continued its praise: "through the efforts of Sheriff Walter Shay, these unwanted people are giving this county a wide berth!"[132] Oretego was undoubtedly identified as one of the "unwanted people" and "crooks" upending the peace that law-upholding citizens in San Bernardino seemed so intent to protect.

Oretego's history of fraud and extortion reified a narrative of Pinoy migrants as dangers to respectable civil society, particularly in the California spaces that relied on their labor as a vital means of reproduction. In addition to the fraudulent checks, Oretego's attempts to skirt surveillance – and prospective capture – was intensified as he faked his own identity on multiple occasions. "Among his favorite aliases are said to be the names William S. Kennedy and C.M.

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[130] Nicholas R. Cataldo, "Legendary Lawman Walter Shay Ruled County with Iron Fist," *San Bernardino Sun*; July 24, 2017 (orig. Dec 16, 2013), https://www.sbsun.com/2013/12/16/legendary-lawman-walter-shay-ruled-county-with-iron-fist/.

[131] "Grenades for Gunmen," *San Bernardino Sun*, January 2, 1922. The article states that "gunmen who insist on holding off a posse of deputy sheriffs in San Bernardino had better be prepared to 'quick draw' and shoot just as quick. Sheriff Walter Shay is laying a supply of hand grenades with a 30-second clip to dislodge highwaymen in dugouts. This decision was reached by a sheriff of San Bernardino County following his encounter with Juan Barron. The sheriff is already in touch with the military authorities to get a supply of the hand grenades."

[132] "Protect San Bernardino County From Lawlessness," *San Bernardino Sun*, August 22, 1926.

Lewis, both believed to be fictitious." These fictitious names seemed to serve another purpose: they ostensibly hid Oretego's racial identity behind a façade of whiteness. At least literally on paper, Oretego could undermine and destabilize extant racial biases against Pina/oys by leveraging perceptions whiteness. While the nature of these interactions with check recipients is unclear and we will never know whether Oretego handed checks in person or posed as the fake issuer's domestic servant – a common Pinoy occupation – one thing is certain: Oretego's scheme was enough to temporarily allow him an alternative means of survival amid surveillance by agents of the state and pressure from middle-class Pina/oy community boosters.

Oretego's use of the automobile to aid in his escapades illustrates the idea that migrant Pinoy bodies on the move were always in a perpetual state of danger because of their physical positionalities against the tenets of state safety and security. When Oretego's automobile crashed into the two bystanders, "the boy was instantly killed and the man died later." The violence endemic in this attempt to escape and avoid a re-arrest has particular implications for incarcerating the Pina/oy body in this context. Oretego seemed familiar with the connections between violence and driving. According to his jailhouse interview, Oretego claimed that "he served overseas with the American expeditionary forces and was decorated for bravery as a driver of an ambulance in the battle zone." While official census records do not contain Oretego's name or history of military service, his attempt to identify with these experiences of trauma in the name of U.S. imperial intervention overseas is telling of the complicated dynamics of colored migrants' dependence on the resources of U.S. regimes of race and capital.

Like many Pinoy migrants, Oretego's personal experience with and proximity to incarceration illustrate the racialized boundaries of living in California as U.S. nationals – and later as excludable immigrant labor. In some cases, these encounters with incarceration in California

prisons proved fatal. Dick Villion, a twenty-nine-year-old Pinoy was "convicted of murder in San Jose" and hanged in Folsom Prison on December 1, 1933.[133] In January of 1937, thirty-year-old Joe Joven, "was hanged [in San Quentin] for the slaying of a Chinese restaurant operator at Mountain View."[134] News articles covering these executions generally spent no more than two sentences. Nearly all coverage of prison killings specify the victim's race as "Filipino." This racial identification of criminals – as it did in the case of Mexican or Black convicts – further normalized associations of Pinoys as members of a subversive law-breaking immigrant population.

**Surviving Incarceration along California's Transient Interstices**

In other circumstances, Pina/oys who survived regular brushes with incarceration continued to seek alternative opportunities to earn a living in addition to the expected routes of general labor. On March 11, 1931, Santiago Yboa, a houseboy working out of Piedmont, was arrested and "convicted of attempted extortion by a jury which deliberated six minutes."[135] Those six minutes translated to a five-month sentence in San Quentin which turned into a three-year stint.[136] Yboa's migrant story resonated with the thousands of Pina/oys that traveled to the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century.

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[133] "Filipino Hanged at Folsom," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Dec 2, 1933; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 1.
[134] "Filipino Hanged at San Quentin," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 9, 1937; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 4.
[135] "Filipino Convicted of Extortion Plot," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Mar 12, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 22.
[136] Santiago A. Yboa Registration Card No. 23, Eaton Precinct, Kearney, Nebraska, *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/6482/005253438_03947?pid=27406563&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DylH200%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DzQ6TAkYEl8oogdAqqxWK%252Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DSantiago%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DYboa%26gsln_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Duf3%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D27406563%26dbid%3D6482%26indiv%3D1%26queryId%3D30eefad973e0ea5fa89d180b31c95da0%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=30eefad973e0ea5fa89d180b31c95da0&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ylH200&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true.

Yboa was born in Catbalogan, Samar, Philippines on 24 May, 1891. By 1915, he had found employment in a laboratory at the Thomas D. Dee Memorial Hospital in Ogden, Utah. Over the next two years, he migrated to Kearney, Nebraska, where he lived as a student. In 1917, Yboa claimed exception from the WWI draft on the grounds that he was a student.[137] Soon thereafter, he became a naturalized citizen. The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 restricted the flow of immigrants to the United States through a national origins quota that afforded limited visas to prospective immigrants and completely excluded immigrants from Asia. However, because the Philippines became a U.S. colony at the end of the nineteenth century, Pina/oys were classified by the state as U.S. nationals and could bypass these restrictions. This legislative loophole directly affected the rates of Pina/oy immigration during the 1920s. Still, Pina/oy migrants' naturalization to U.S. citizenship was uncommon because of an institutionally racist bureaucracy that heavily policed the floodgates of privilege available to nonwhite populations in California.

By the 1920s, Yboa lived and worked around California, sometimes going under the name, James Bayo. Yboa's tendency toward unofficial means of making a living and growing notoriety in underground circles earned him the nickname, "The Spider."[138] In 1931, Yboa worked as a waiter in Oakland, California. It is unclear how Yboa came into initial contact with Mrs. Stevens, a Piedmont local whose daughter, Mary, seemed to become the focus of Yboa's ransom demand.

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[137] Santiago A. Yboa Registration Card No. 23, Eaton Precinct, Kearney, Nebraska, *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/6482/005253438_03947?pid=27406563&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DylH200%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DzQ6TAkYEl8oogdAqqxWK%252Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DSantiago%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DYboa%26gsln_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Duf3%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D27406563%26dbid%3D6482%26indiv%3D1%26queryId%3D30eefad973e0ea5fa89d180b31c95da0%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=30eefad973e0ea5fa89d180b31c95da0&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ylH200&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true.

[138] San Quentin State Prison Identification Card, Santiago Yboa, *California, Prison and Correctional Records, 1851-1950*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/8833/40477_2221301551_2465-01161/41399?backurl=&ssrc=&backlabel=Return#?imageId=40477_2221301551_2465-01159.

Yboa "wrote a letter to Mrs. Lois Stevens… threatening to kidnap her small daughter unless she left $200 for him at a designated spot."[139] This amount would have far exceeded any weekly wage Yboa would have earned as a domestic servant or waiter. Yboa's actions reinforced notions of Pina/oys in U.S. society as threats to the domestic security of the white middle class and the sexual safety of white women as the interwar period progressed (Figure 1.5). In some cases, the veracity of these reports underscored the gendered violence Pinoys perpetrated in these extralegal acts.

In 1933, Art Marron of Los Angeles was arrested with three other women from Southern California as part of an LAPD sting operation into a "widespread vice ring" (Figure 1.6). The thirty-three-year-old Pinoy hotel clerk was charged with pandering and conspiracy to commit pandering when Oliver Miller, Violet Harris, and Dorothy Wiles "told of being taken to Bakersfield by Marron, Keith Arnold Brady and Tony Moss, and to a cheap hotel and a rooming house and forced to submit to the advances of Filipinos." Testimonies in the case "were limited to police officers, who testified that the reputation of the places to which the three girls said they were taken was that of being disorderly houses."[140] In 1927, Pablo Perlos, "who police say purchased 15-year-old Victoria Chavez from a brother islander for $250… [was held] for trial on three counts of statutory offenses against the girl" who was in Los Angeles for motion-picture work."[141] Illicit relations involving Pinoys and white women with fatal consequences were also reported outside of California. In Atlanta, Georgia, the "bodies of Miss Gladys Frix and Jose Cruz [were] discovered" dead in an automobile by a gardener on Asa Candler's Inman Park estate.[142]

[139] "Filipino Convicted of Extortion Plot," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Mar 12, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 22.
[140] "Pandering Case Bail Set High: Four Held in $50,000 Bonds Each in Municipal Court," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Nov 29, 1933; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A6.
[141] "Filipino Held to Stand Trial on Charge of Purchasing Girl," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jun 8, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A21.
[142] L.A. Farrell, "Filipino Butler and Girl Found Dead in Automobile On Asa Candler Estate," *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945);* Jan 19, 1931; ProQuest pg. 1.

Cruz was purportedly involved in magic and Georgia police concluded that the Pinoy coerced Miss Frix into a romantic relationship before conducting a murder-suicide. The tone of investigators' speculations painted Pinoys as predatory actors involved in unsavory Oriental practices. While examples like this were infrequent, their reporting stoked violent retaliations directed at the larger population of Pina/oy workers throughout California.

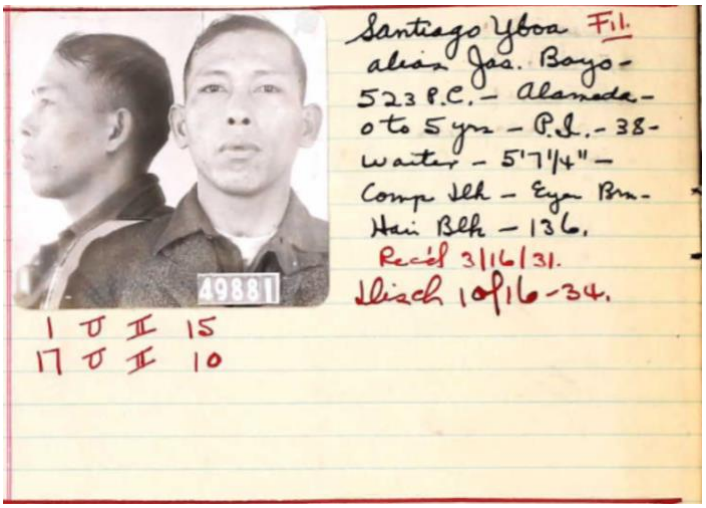


**FIGURE 2.1:** "The Spider," Santiago Yboa's record in a San Quentin prison book created a method for the state to surveil and control Filipinos during and after incarceration.

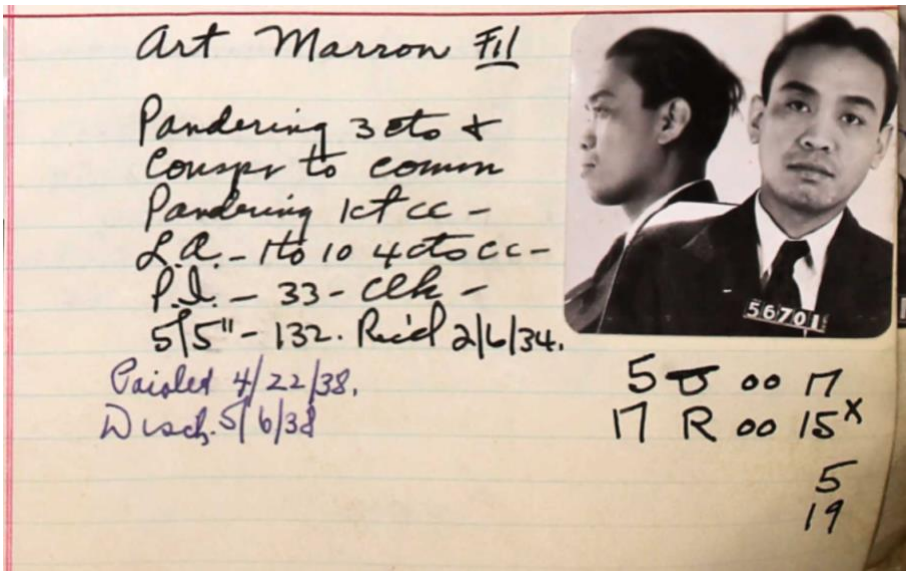


**FIGURE 2.2:** Art Marron's record in the San Quentin prison book. Prison records made a point to note the ethnicity of their prisoners, as evidenced in the underlined word, "Fil," next to mug shots.

Pina/oy ethnic presses' confrontational rebuttals to generalizations of Pina/oy criminality in popular presses indicated bubbling racial tensions. Debates in and around popular presses preceded the outbreak of one of the most significant moments of crisis in the Filipino migrant community in the interwar period. From January 19 to 23, 1930, the city and farms of Watsonville erupted. Five days of mob violence "in which whites shot at and beat Filipinos indiscriminately" in taxi dance halls and in their agricultural work camps ignited a climate of terror that reflected the social anxieties of the Depression period, in general, and the more explicit inclusion of Pina/oys in the racial violence targeting communities of color across the United States. This violence extended to other regions of California. In Stockton, "a white mob bombed the Filipino Federation Building at 2049 South San Joaquin Street," creating tangible reminders of the extent to which Pina/oys were unwelcome in the Central Valley, in California, and in the United States.[143] The violence in Watsonville was not the first time that Pina/oys were brutalized by hostile whites – nor did it represent a particularly exceptional case in the context of the historical modes of racist terrorism targeting Blacks, Mexicans, and other Asian immigrant groups since the nineteenth century. Watsonville represented a flashpoint wherein Pina/oy ethnic consciousnesses were forcefully reoriented to their community's excludability in the United States. Watsonville galvanized the voices of politically minded activists and a working class that wanted to make meaning out of their lives in the United States.

The Watsonville riots and its repercussions also informed violent altercations in U.S. and Philippine cities by Pina/oys tired of the abuse they experienced by an increasingly deadly possessively invested white population. On January 28, 1930, five days after the uprising in

[143] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 92.

Watsonville, Philippine House of Representatives speaker Manuel Roxas and resident commissioner of the Philippines Pedro Guevara arrived in Washington, D.C. "to determine what attitude [the Philippine government] should take in regard to a manifesto adopted last night by a Manila mass meeting protesting against 'Filipino baiting' in California." Citing the Watsonville race riot as a "national humiliation," Roxas expressed outrage at the death of Fermin Tobera, who was shot to death in a workers' bunkhouse and "is considered a martyr by his countrymen, who believe he was killed in cold blood without reason or justification." [144] Anti-Pina/oy suspicions boiled over into violence in San Francisco on the day before Roxas's visit.

Following the severe beating of a white youth in San Jose, tensions remained high in the Bay Area. An anonymous Pinoy employee at the Monterey Presidio disclosed to Lieutenant John Bird that he had attended several meetings of Pina/oys who planned to "seize arms and ammunition [from the garrison] as racial discontent which broke out at Watsonville early last week began to spread." The Pina/oy conspirators claimed "the necessity of protecting themselves against whites in the Pajaro Valley." Lieutenant Bird described how the Pina/oys planned to sneak in and "make away with rifles and cartridges. If this failed, they intended, it is charged, to set the buildings afire and obtain arms and ammunition in the resulting confusion."[145] In response, Presidio marshals established a special guard to deter any potential threats.

In the meantime, newly commissioned San Francisco Chief of Police William J. Quinn ordered the dispersal of "all suspicious groupings and to arrest all persons engaged in altercations and brawls which lead to racial violence of a more serious nature." This increased policing directly targeted Pina/oys as suspicious individuals deserving of arrest. On January 28, 1930, the *Los*

[144] "Philippine Officials Confer in Capital," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jan 29, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 1.
[145] "Race Fights Spreading: Filipinos Beaten in Bay City," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jan 29, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 1.

*Angeles Times* reported that two Pinoys "walking the street [in San Francisco] with two white girls early today, were beaten by two white men, who fled." Police gave the Pinoys "thirty-day suspended sentences in Police Court on peace-disturbance charges. One, Jose Francisco, said the woman with him at the time of the attack was his wife." The same article also reported that:

> Later in the day three Filipinos were set upon by two taxicab drivers who drove up to them at Jones and Sutter streets, where they were working as janitors.
> 'Are you Mexicans or Filipinos?' the whites inquired.
> 'Filipinos,' was the answer.
> Then, they said, they were set upon and beaten. None required hospital attention and their descriptions were not equal to the task of finding the cab drivers.

A few months later in April of 1930, twenty-one-year-old Leo La Rosa sat in San Francisco's Central Emergency Hospital after being charged by police "with assault with intent to commit murder" against a white man. La Rosa stabbed Merline Henslee in the back, chest, and abdomen, suffering "two knife wounds and numerous bruises" in an ensuing "early morning race war in Market street." Ray Evans, also twenty-one, was with Henslee "walking down Market street when they were attacked by four Filipinos." Evans continued to describe how "the fight soon became general, more Filipinos and whites joining in the disturbance."[146] That none of the Pinoys were interviewed or their comments relayed is telling of the story the media constructed around Pinoy criminal activity. In response to allegations of Pinoy-led violence, Gabriel Q. Arellano of the *Philippine Journal* and president of the Philippine Civic League reassured municipal officials that "the Filipinos are not seeking violence, have no quarrel with whites and only ask to be let alone in the pursuit of their labors." Of course, these sentiments reflected the middle-class editorial leanings of the press, whose investment in the politics of respectability, while well-meaning, reoriented any direct inquiry into the roots of Pina/oy workers' fears and frustrations.

[146] "One Dying in Bay City Race Riot: Seven Under Arrest," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Apr 28, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 1.

That some Pina/oys identified performing these violent acts were younger migrants also informed responses by veteran migrant workers. Eldio Saldana of Bakersfield, remarked that after twenty years of living in the United States he "don't think of going home. Wouldn't be content there. Have got used to America. But encourage these other boys to go home. Boys loaf." The generational contrast between an older Pinoy and the majority bachelor youth is striking for its implications in community tensions. And because the community was the workplace during the picking and thinning seasons, these could not have gone unaddressed. Saldana continued to remark on how "Filipino boys cause trouble very largely; conspicuous spending all; no thought of tomorrow… Ilocanos cause trouble; cut wages. You can't expect ignorant people to be respected. Nothing like this if Filipinos keep [their] place."

Saldana migrated to the United States in 1913 at the age of twenty-one and married Japanese migrant Nancy Tanaka in 1923. By 1930, the couple lived in a rented home in Bakersfield, where Saldana made a living writing showcards for a department store. In contrast to many of the younger migrants living in California at the time, Saldana had the privilege of being literate and fluent in Japanese, English, and Tagalog. His investment in a home – as opposed to shared occupancy in a hotel or restaurant with fellow laborers – in a predominantly white lower-middle-class neighborhood suggests an internalization of a bootstraps perspective on the attainment of an American Dream. And while Saldana was not above manual labor in the fields to supplement his income, his positionality amid a growing class of dignity-seeking respectable Pina/oys generates tensions amid the working diaspora alluded to in the experiences of Mr. Icreda – Saldana's contemporary in age but not in access to economic and social capital.[147]

[147] "Eldio Saldana Interview," *James Earl Wood Collection of Material concerning Filipinos in California (collected ca. 1929 – 1934)*, BANC MSS C-R 4, Reel 4; BNEG 2234, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

What was perceived as "loafing" by veteran workers could be interpreted as a way to construct fugitive cultural sensibilities that defined making a living as something other than depending on a boss for wages. Generational tensions seemed to play a part in these perceptions, but not exclusively. Rather, the variance in age suggests that fugitive alternatives to making a living were not simply because boys had trouble obeying authority. These actions were a response to the type of authority being leveraged or imposed on migrant workers. Feelings of frustration and helplessness influenced action in some. This quotation also illustrates the inherent competition between working-class actors in a period of heightened economic uncertainty.

**Pina/oy Unions, Curated Solidarity, and Working-Class Tensions**

The Legionarios Del Trabajo, a Pinoy fraternal organization based in San Francisco, ensured that any member from the Stockton or Salinas chapters would have allies within the city. Pina/oy labor leaders, and the organizations they controlled, provided a focal point for the migrant community in San Francisco to resist racialized marginalization actively through union organization. This resistance began within the institutions of San Francisco and spread outward into the Central and Imperial Valleys as migrants flowed in and out of these cities. Although many leaders emerged out of the crucible of Stockton and San Francisco labor politics in the 1930s, they were inspired by organizers outside of California – particularly by the Pinoy labor agitators in Hawaii. Pablo Manlapit, a lawyer who cut his teeth in Hawaiian plantation strikes, was one of these agitators. His exploits were broadcast through multiple publications across the United States.

According to the "Report of the Second Territorial Conference" published by the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study in 1944, a joint strike organized by the Federation of Japanese Labor in Hawaii and the Filipino Laborers' Association in 1919 saw Manlapit and his peers petition for wage increases, equitable work days, overtime pay, and welfare provisions in an

official contract.[148] When their demands were refused, twelve thousand strikers across six Oahu plantations went on strike, causing a net revenue loss of $12,000,000. Manlapit later petitioned "for a $2.00 a day minimum pay and an 8 hour working day."[149] When his demands were refused, Manlapit ordered another strike, sparking violent altercations between strikers and strike-breakers that resulteds in Manlapit's imprisonment.[150] Periodic labor uprisings-turned-violent "clashes" linked to Pina/oy organizing continued to make headlines in the 1920s.

In September of 1924, one hundred thirty Pina/oy strikers on the island of Kauai were arrested and held in the Lihue and Waimea jails "to permit the gathering of more evidence."[151] Following his release after a few more years as a labor organizer in Hawaii, Manlapit traveled to California in February 1928 in order to convince Pina/oys to advocate for their own labor rights. It worked. By June of 1928, D.L. Marcuelo established the *Anak ng Bukid* organization (Children of the Countryside) and its mouthpiece, the pro-Pina/oy labor newspaper, the Stockton *Three Stars*. At the same time, Jose Bulatao and Pio L. Lonzanida established *The Philippine Advocate,* "devoted to service," at 561 Howard Street in San Francisco.[152]

The unions and newspapers in Stockton, San Francisco, and Los Angeles provided a rallying point around which migrant workers could build a community that resisted racial violence and preserved cultural traditions – both of which are essential to the survival of any newly-arrived nonwhite immigrant group. During the influx of Pina/oys to Hawaii and California in the 1920s, a general perception was constructed that "many employers prefer Filipino workers to white

[148] Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study, "Report of the Second Territorial Conference: Morale and Emergency Service Committees, Kahului, Maui," pg. 52-53 (Maui, July, 1944), *Calisphere,* Accessed: 11 November 2014. file:///C:/Users/BernardJames/Downloads/bk001393b53-FID1%20(2).pdf.
[149] Ibid., 53.
[150] Ibid., 53.
[151] "130 Filipino Strikers Arrested in Hawaiian Plantation Class," *New York Times (1923-Current file);* Sep 12, 1924; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 1.
[152] Bulatao, *Philippine Advocate*, 2.

workers, because the former are considered steadier, more tractable and more willing to put up with longer hours, poorer board, and worse lodging facilities." There was a general agreement amongst employers in agricultural and domestic occupations that "where a white worker may feel restive and disgruntled because of bad working conditions, the Filipino newcomer is satisfied to stay on the job 'without kicking.'"[153] This attitude seemed to justify the average weekly rates paid to Pinoys hired in domestic service occupations, which in 1929 ranged from $11.20 to $18.11 depending on room and board accommodations. While seemingly reasonable, over time these wages were not enough to support the basic necessities of the growing Pina/oy population.

Driven by Pablo Manlapit's message of vocal militaristic resistance to unfair labor practices, D.L. Marcuelo urged workers to recognize the violent conditions they experienced. "'Demand for a good, reasonable price, that is your right and privilege. If you do not get it do not work at all," Marcuelo railed. "Be always conscious of your power, not of your backbone but of your head and not let those growers bluff you every year… Now let's go and get a man's wage and not a horse's wage!'"[154] This vehement call significantly represents the character of Pina/oy resistance and the militant nature of the labor movement's leaders. This aggressively calculated nature is reflected in a pamphlet released by the Agricultural Workers Industrial League in the Imperial Valley calling all "Americans, Mexicans, Filipinos, Negroes and Orientals," as well as "all field, shed and dairy workers, men, women, and youths," to "Organize!" against unfair labor practice targeting low-wage workers.[155]

[153] State of California Department of Industrial Relations, "Facts About Filipino Immigration into California," by Will J. French, Special Bulletin No. 3 (San Francisco: April, 1930), 12.
[154] D.L. Marcuelo, "Stockton Three Stars, 1929" in Dawn Bohulano Mabalon's *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 91.
[155] Agricultural Workers Industrial League, "Organize!" Los Angeles, California. 193-.

Statements made by the Stockton *Three Stars* and its editorial leaders in the *Anak ng Bukid* reflect the extent to which printed media could counter the racial antagonism targeted at Pina/oy migrants. Because few preserved statements by individual Pina/oy migrant workers exist, the content of these pro-labor and pro-Pina/oy newspapers offer invaluable insights into the nature of Pina/oy migrant workers' resistance. They are also limited by their middle-class sensibilities.

As the voice of the *Anak ng Bukid*, the Stockton *Three Stars* provided an outlet through which Pina/oy migrant workers could articulate their frustrations and understand their potential to lobby for lasting change. Regardless of their effectiveness at swaying public opinions, the very existence of provocative responses to inflammatory racism reflects the ability of Pina/oys to remain connected between the Central Valley, the Imperial Valley, and the Bay Area. This interconnectivity allowed them to exercise agency against their oppression. This agency translated into the construction of a community in Stockton, the Little Manila area in the heart of the city, out of which sprang the impetus toward inter-ethnic labor cooperation.

In 1938, on the heels of the First Filipino National Convention in Sacramento, California – which marked "the first time Filipinas/os in the United States attempted to establish official solidarity with one another across regional origin, language group, and class" – labor assistant Francisco Varona called for "independent racial unionism and opposed affiliation with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) or the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)" to achieve labor equity.[156] Instead, Varona advocated for a Pina/oy-run organization that would support the needs of Pina/oy laborers. The labor assistant's desires would take root in Stockton's Little Manila, now a blossoming community thanks to the labor activism of the 1920s that attracted

[156] Stuart Marshall Jamieson, "Labor Unionism in American Agriculture" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 180, in *Little Manila is in the Heart* by Dawn Bohulano Mabalon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 219.

Pina/oy migrant workers from across California and the Pacific Northwest, under the auspices of Dr. Macario Bautista, "the new president of the Filipino Community of Stockton."[157]

In a meeting with asparagus cutters in Stockton's Japanese Hall on April 6, 1939, Varona and Bautista founded the Filipino Agricultural Laborer's Association (FALA), "an independent, all-Filipino union" that engaged six thousand asparagus workers in a nonviolent general strike on April 7, 1939. A massive gang strike reminiscent of earlier Pina/oy laborers' reactions to unfair working conditions, the Stockton Asparagus Strike "caused a crisis in the industry [when] most Japanese and white growers were taken completely by surprise by the unity of the Filipina/o workers" and resulted in the almost immediate capitulation of growers to workers' demands. It was the first sweepingly successful organized effort by Filipino laborers in the Central Valley's history; one that solidified Filipinos' self-worth. Indeed, although "Filipinos in America [were] becoming convinced that individually they cannot hope to win their fight for recognition of rights," FALA newspaper the *Philippine Journal*'s editor Juan C. Dionisio mused. "They are becoming convinced that only through collective action can they win their fight."[158]

On October 14, 1927, Pedro Pagaragan joined fourteen other Filipinos leaving on the S.S. President Cleveland from Honolulu to the mainland United States. The twenty-three-year-old reported to immigration officials that he was married, although no other record of his having a spouse exists. So, when the steamship arrived in the port of San Francisco one week later, Pagaragan disembarked to make a life for himself, by himself. He relied on an extant system of Pina/oy migrant enclaves that connected urban and rural places of work and leisure.[159] For the

[157] Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart*, 219.
[158] Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart*, 220-221.
[159] The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at San Francisco, California*; NAI Number: *4498993*; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*; Record Group Number: *85*.

next three years, Pagaragan joined many others working seasonal agricultural jobs in the Central Valley, the Central Coast, and Southern California. By the time he found steady work at the Paul Driver ranch, he was a veteran of the migrant lifestyle that so characterized most young Pinoy's experiences in interwar California. The exacting toll it took on his body was shared by many young Pinoys navigating their place in the social structures of interwar California.

**"One of Those Nondescripts": Fugitive Travel and Ethnic Presses in Pina/oy Survival**

In the presence of these multifaceted pressures from the state and the Pina/oy middle class, automobiles became even more valuable as cultural tools for fugitive travel. After 1924, Pina/oys migrating to the United States began to construct identities that compounded and complicated regional allegiances from the Philippine Islands. As laborers in American fields, canneries, hotels, and homes, Pina/oys began defining themselves through their acculturation. These identities – centered on a claim to Americanness that reflected their unique status as U.S. nationals – became the focal point in assertions of belonging to the nation-state whenever the laws critically shifted to exclude them. The passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934 was one such moment of crisis. The law, which set an anticipated date for Philippine independence, changed the nature of Pina/oy claims of belonging in the United States. It also drastically affected the stakes at which popular cultures were mobilized by transient migrants whose increased mobility through the automobile fostered fugitive economies resistant to interwar regimes of race.

The different ways in which Pina/oy activists, ethnic community members, and Philippine government representatives responded to the Tydings-McDuffie Act suggest that the process of identity formation hinged upon obtaining and protecting an elusive American citizenship. In this case, citizenship does not necessarily refer to a status by which legal rights and privileges are afforded to native-born or naturalized individuals of the nation state. Instead, citizenship in this regard refers to a perception of belonging to the nation state, regardless of legal documentation or

status, based on extensive acculturation. In other words, Pina/oys asserted their claims to citizenship on the grounds that they exemplified the characteristics of ideal Americans. These claims had precedents in earlier Supreme Court cases by Chinese activist Wong Kim Ark in 1898 and by Indian American veteran Bhagat Singh Thind in 1923. The content of several migrant press publications demonstrated Pina/oys' vociferous responses to physical and psychological threats to their communities. Like other migrant presses newspapers bridged the physical distances that forced migrants across city, county, and state lines in search of sustainable livings.

Pina/oy migrants' challenges to United States immigration law were motivated and colored by a conviction that they could upset the foundations of their oppression. The shape and size of these challenges changed according to new developments in the law. As such, resistance and survival before 1934 looked different from resistance and survival after it. However, while the means differed, the ends remained relatively similar: to live in the United States with the same rights and privileges as whites. To this end, Pina/oy migrants vehemently defended their rights to citizenship in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of U.S. society. The Pina/oy migrant presses were critical to this defense. To better understand the racializing dynamics that Pina/oys experienced and challenged in the United States, we must examine the historical processes that forced them to become a part of the American imperialist project at the end of the nineteenth century. When concessions to respectability were too much to handle, and the pressures of inequitable work conditions felt insurmountable, alternative lifeways existed to alleviate those constraints.

In July of 1931, Pinoy journalist Jose Bulatao attacked white America's moral character. Writing for the *Philippine Advocate*, Bulatao published a scathing article criticizing the unjust racialization of Pina/oys in California. The San Franciscan newspaper had a reputation for militant

responses to violence toward Pina/oys. The July edition of the paper was no different. A month prior to Bulatao's article, Charles Matthias Goethe, a eugenicist from Sacramento and founder of the Eugenics Society of Northern California, had called for the immediate exclusion of Pina/oys from the United States in response to the outbreak of violence in Watsonville a year earlier. Goethe's argument rested on the assumption that the continued presence of a racially inferior, hypersexual male group of immigrants threatened the integrity of the "American seed stock" with miscegenation and moral degradation.[160] The *Advocate* was up in arms over what they argued to be unfounded and altogether outrageous claims that disparaged Pina/oys' cultural integrity. Bulatao's "Reply Made to C.M. Goethe on 'Filipino Peril'" expressed outrage over "the accusations of the provoker about the unjustifiable reflections on the Filipino people."[161]

Bulatao was one of the many labor agitators whose middle-class sensibilities comprised the authorship of the Pina/oy migrant press in interwar California. These interwar journalists and editors were also active union organizers who used the Filipino migrant press as mouthpieces for Pina/oy worker solidarity in the face of escalating violence against communities of color. At the same time, these presses constructed their legitimacy by highlighting the separations between them and Pinoy criminals. Ethnic publications like the *Advocate*, the *Philippines Review*, and other Pina/oy-run newspapers across the United States provided forums in which Pina/oy migrants could voice their political opinions, inform each other of significant local and international developments, and maintain their diasporic communities as colonial subjects of U.S. empire. They also represented and communicated a politics of respectability that were often in tension with

[160] C.M. Goethe, "Filipino Immigration Viewed as a Peril" in *Current* History (June 1931), quoted in Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* ((New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2012), 136; For more on this dynamic, historically, see Peggy Pascoe's *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[161] Jose Eva. Bulatao, "Reply Made to C.M. Goethe on 'Filipino Peril,'" *Philippine Advocate* (San Francisco, CA, July 1, 1931), 1.

working-class actions, especially when those actions undermined law and order. These classed sensibilities affected the ways in which Pina/oy fugitive cultures carved out spaces of autonomy, recognition, and dignity during this period.

These contested dynamics created the conditions around which other modes of Pina/oy expression emerged. These modes of expression compounded and troubled Pina/oy middle class expectations of where and how politics of resistance could take hold. When Pina/oys tattooed and boxed outside of the defined spaces of Little Manilas and Manilatowns, they engaged in struggles for dignified survival that expansively redefined their place within the U.S. imperial center.

CHAPTER THREE

## "You Ripe, I Eat You": Pina/oy Americana and Pina/oy Cultural Impacts on Tattooing

For you discover the spirit of art as understood and enjoyed by the folk-masses of America… the tattoo-medium caters to their feeling for primitive pathos and simple sentimentality.

- Albert Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 1933

You could win ten dollars a day all your life, and make an art of gambling, if you would only try. I am an artist.

- Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*, 1943

The history of Pina/oy tattooers in the United States demonstrates how Pina/oy migrants maintained alternative spaces of living outside the bounds of ethnic enclaves and traditional sources of employment.[162] Pina/oy tattooers were artisans of a craft that incorporated Pacific aesthetics and American traditions of showmanship.[163] At the beginning of the twentieth century, the American masses became familiar with Pina/oy body markings through their display in human zoos at World's Fairs.[164] By the interwar period, Pina/oy tattooers undermined white Americans' popular associations toward Pina/oy bodies and tattoos. Pina/oy tattooers occupied spaces of power in an emerging industry dominated by white men.

The social interactions highlighted through the cultural history of Pina/oy tattooers reveal the obscured connections underscored by the forcible encounters, removals, and entanglements

[162] The terms "Pinoy" and "Pinay" were used in the 1920s by Filipino migrants living or born in the United States to differentiate themselves from Filipinos living in the Philippines, or elsewhere. I will use the term "Pina/oy" to indicate when a process, event, or ideal affected or applied, very generally, to Filipino men and women in the United States. When a process affected, specifically, either Filipino men or women, I will be using "Pinoy" or "Pinay," respectively, in the interest of historical consistency.
[163] Eric Avila, *American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2018.
[164] Mark Rice, *Dean Worcester's Fantasy Islands: Photography, Film, and the Colonial Philippines*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

often omitted in historical memories of American tattooing.[165] This chapter highlights how Pina/oy migrant tattooers were significant contributors to the American tattoo industry in the early twentieth century. Their migration between Hawaii and California established social infrastructures outside Pina/oy ethnic enclaves. Focusing on their work in the American interwar tattoo industry broadens perspectives on how Pina/oys occupied space and asserted their presence in what was perceived to be an exclusively white space.

**From Neck to Feet: The Work of Pina/oy Tattooers**

In October of 1917, U.S. Marine Corps private Harold Greenleaf Gould emerged from a Honolulu tattoo shop marked "from neck to the soles of the feet."[166] Gould, also identified by *Mid Pacific Magazine* as "Jack," notably sported an image of the Holy Family at the Nativity across his entire back.[167] The central image is framed by stars, a crescent moon, and a dozen cherubs in clouds composed in the increasingly iconic Americana style. Gould stated that "it took Filipino, Hawaiian, and American labor to tattoo this back." *Mid Pacific* author Charles A. Stanton marveled at how the final product, "put on in Honolulu during many patient months, is perhaps the most complete piece of tattooing in the world."[168] While the names of the shop and its artists are unmentioned, the "Filipino labor" likely belonged to Oahu's most prominent tattooer of the period: Domingo Galang.[169]

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[165] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
[166] A tattoo shop was the common term for the spaces in which tattooing occurred and clients paid to have their bodies marked by a tattoo artist. The term "shop" will be used to refer to these spaces throughout this chapter; Charles A. Stanton, "Tattooing," *The Mid-Pacific* Magazine XV., no. 4 (April 1918), 386-389.
[167] The Nativity of Jesus refers to a central tenet of Christian belief concerning the divine birth of the prophet Jesus Christ to a virgin mother. This is also acknowledged as part of Islamic teachings.
[168] Stanton, "Tattooing," *Mid-Paciifc* Magazine.
[169] Carmen Forquer Nyssen, "Domingo Galang," *Buzzworthy Tattoo History*, Accessed: October 3, 2020, https://buzzworthytattoo.com/tattoo-artists-tattooed-people/domingo-galang/; The term "tattooer" will be used over "tattoo artist" to stay consistent with the term used during this historical period.

Galang and Gould traveled and lived together for at least one year while the soldier's body was being marked with the images that so fascinated Stanton and his readers. In 1918, Galang's and Gould's names appeared alongside each other on the manifest of a ship traveling between San Francisco and Honolulu.[170] Gould listed his place of residence at 272 North King Street, Galang's Honolulu shop.[171] The close relationship between artist and client suggested by this transpacific travel reflects the intimate socialities experienced in the process of tattooing intricate pieces over an extended period. That this relationship was also between a Pinoy migrant and a white U.S. serviceman raises questions about the possibilities, generated in the fugitive spaces of tattooing, of troubling imperial power dynamics regulating Filipino migration, American manliness, and general martial citizenship in the early twentieth century.

These questions inform this chapter: what is the significance of Pinoys tattooing Americana and what aspects of Pinoy cultural history are revealed through a focus on Pinoy tattooing? How did the transpacific migrant intimacies of tattooing manifest for Pinoy tattooers, in popular imaginations, and through the eyes of the transpacific U.S. imperialist state? What fantasies and imaginations were mobilized when Pina/oys encountered white artists and clients in the intimate spaces of the tattoo studio? This chapter will broaden the history of Pina/oy cultural spaces by focusing on the transient lifeways and migrant socialities of Pina/oy tattooers. For these artists, the very act of marking the bodies of white servicemen with symbols of U.S. empire might have been construed as obedience to narratives promoting American national supremacy. At the same time, by profiting from inflicting pain on white bodies, Pina/oy artists acted out their refusal to be eradicated by the violence of U.S. racial regimes.

[170] Gould's future wife, Alma Gray, also appears on the manifest. Her residence was listed at 2124 Encinal Ave., Alameda, CA.
[171] Nyssen, "Domingo Galang," *Buzzworthy Tattoo History*.

In 1933, when Colgate University historian Albert Parry assessed tattooing as a medium "enjoyed by the folk-masses of America," it is doubtful that he had Filipina/os in mind.[172] Whether as artists or clients, Parry's folk-masses were invariably white men and women.[173] Parry did not include in his assessment of "American tattoo-masters" the contributions of tattooers like Domingo Galang, one among dozens of Pina/oy tattooers engaged in the transpacific industry of skin marking during the early twentieth century. Parry certainly did not include Pinay tattooer Martina Yagyagan, whose popularity in the Honolulu tattoo scene since 1920 was demonstrated by the steady stream of sailors seeking her work well into the 1950s. When these Pina/oy tattooers migrated to California, they did not live in Little Manilas. Instead, they occupied the same spaces as white tattooers in California cities. San Francisco's North Beach and Chinatown areas housed traveling tattooers. Los Angeles's Main Street was a hub for white tattooers and their Pina/oy artisan peers. Pina/oy tattooers gained fame through their work alongside white men in an increasingly popular (albeit still socially underground) artistic practice. When they returned to their tattoo shops in Hawaii, they used this bolstered reputation to maintain economic success.

This chapter will explore the powerful influence that Pina/oy tattooers exerted over the trajectory of U.S. tattoo culture during the interwar period as they migrated between Hawaii and California. Their labor represented a radical mode of survival that both reified the construction of nationalist myths and subverted notions that the rise of the Americana style of tattooing was largely a product of white tattoo masters.

**Addressing Historiographical Silences: Marking Pina/oys Beyond Primitivity**

[172] Albert Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 72.
[173] See Eric Lott's discussion of "folk authenticity" in *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 16-17; Lott also cites Johann Gottfried von Herder's definitions of "folk" as music, dance, vernacular, and art produced by non-elites which are appropriated for the purposes of nation-building storytelling in *Love and Theft*, 33, 96.

This chapter's focus addresses a prominent historiographical gap in works focusing on the labor of Pina/oy tattooers in the United States during the interwar period. This gap may be caused by the anthropological literature produced during the 1920s and 1930s, which constructed Philippine tattoo cultures as primitive. Since the turn of the twentieth century, Philippine tattoo designs became associated with South Pacific compositional aesthetics that differed substantially from the work produced in U.S., European, and East Asian tattoo shops. Instead of single images of roses and anchors, or the intricate details of Japanese wind bars and finger waves, Philippine tattoos marked recipients' skins with geometric representations of flora, fauna, and people in layouts resembling textile patterns.[174] These differences were normalized as distinct markers of a Philippine tattoo style that left little room to consider how Pina/oy artists might have also engaged in and shaped the development of tattoo designs not associated with South Pacific patterns or traditions.

Racist anthropological displays of Pina/oy bodies in amusement parks and world's fairs in the early twentieth century contributed to these lasting associations of Filipina/o primitivity. In 1904, the U.S. government invested $1.5 million to transport 1,300 Filipina/os from various headhunting tribes to the St. Louis Exposition. Each exhibited Filipina/o was paid fifteen dollars per month for their work in justifying McKinley's Benevolent Assimilation of the Philippines.[175] Photographs of these headhunters were published by *National Geographic Magazine*. Lectures seemingly affirming the inherent primitivity of Filipina/os also associated Filipina/o tattoos and tattooers almost solely with the geometric tribal marks. These associations persisted in subsequent historical narratives.

[174] Lane Wilcken, *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2010), 14-29.
[175] Claire Prentice, *The Lost Tribe of Coney Island: Headhunters, Luna Park, and the Man Who Pulled Off the Spectacle of the Century* (New Harvest Publishing, 2014), 21-33.

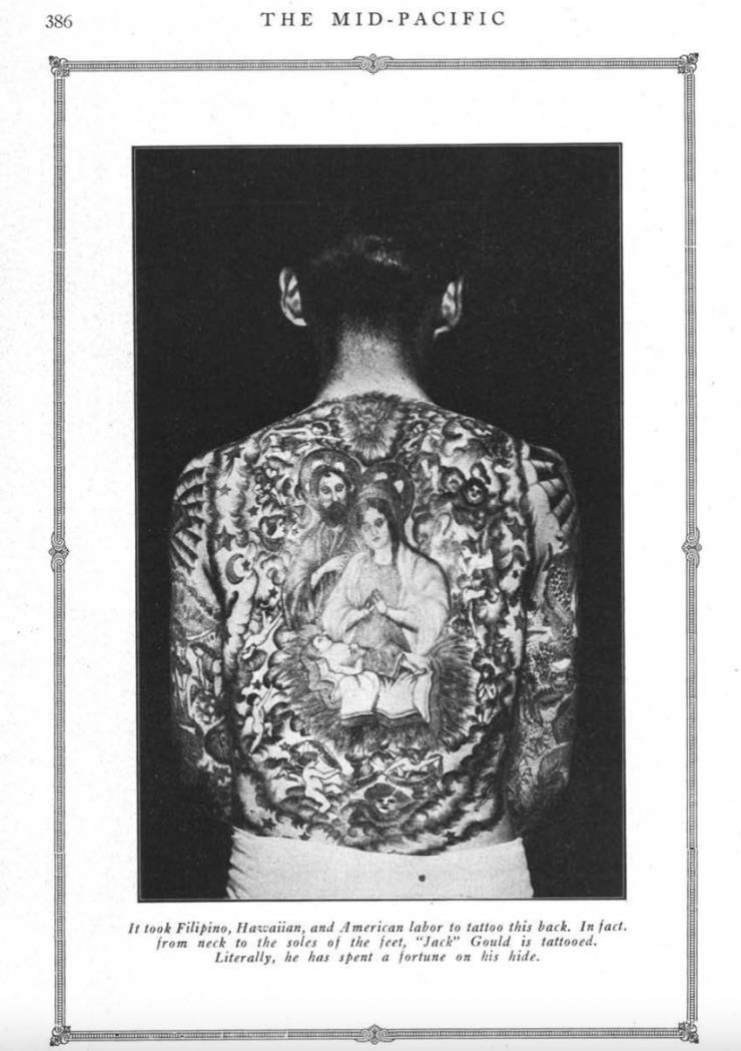


**Fig. 3.1.** Full-page photograph of Jack Gould's Americana back tattoo printed in *The Mid Pacific Magazine* for Charles M. Stanton's article on tattooing, 1918. The last sentence of the caption reads: "Literally, he has spent a fortune on his hide."

Histories of Philippine tattooing generally focus on precolonial tattooing practices as part of urgent attempts to reclaim, preserve, and transmit knowledge of indigenous designs and methods for posterity. Cultural expert and Filipino American tattooer Lane Wilcken's 2010 book, *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern*, describes how Pacific tattoo cultures developed as part of broader lines of material exchange facilitated by migration. Wilcken argues that "tattooing in the Philippines very literally illustrates the people's relationships to other Austronesians throughout the Oceanic region." Aside from discussions of the spiritual significance afforded many

precolonial Filipino tattoo rites, Wilcken emphasizes that, with the Spanish colonization of the archipelago by the mid-sixteenth century, "tattooing came to be thought of as the practice of an uncivilized and less evolved race, and it has nearly faded from memory."[176] This process of historical erasure continued during the period of American occupation, particularly from 1898 to 1941. The immediate postwar period in the United States saw the transpacific restructuring of Pina/oy communities, especially in urban spaces. An immigration surge of Filipinos into the United States followed the abolition of national origins quotas through the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. This demographic shift stoked the diasporic anxieties that created the impetus for a precolonial Filipino tattoo revival by the 1990s.

While some scholars discuss the significance of tattoos during the broader interwar period in the United States, much of that discussion centers (with good reason) on tattooing's relationship to criminal identification. In *Doing Time in the Depression: Everyday Life in Texas and California Prisons*, Ethan Blue argues that tattoos were "bodily capital" in the context of interwar incarceration that simultaneously allowed the state to identify inmates and defied state-sanctioned attempts to regulate inmates' self-expression.[177] Margo DeMello's *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* provides a broad overview of the development of different aesthetic phases of U.S. tattoo culture coalescing around the creation of a distinct folk art style during the "Golden Age of Tattooing" in the interwar period; what would become known

[176] Lane Wilcken, *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2010), 117; a central assertion throughout Wilcken's book is that the criminality or social ostracization associated with the wearing of tattoos was a Western colonial construction (first by the Spanish and then by the U.S. insular government in the 1890s) that "attached stigmas to the people who maintained their traditions" of tattoos as markers of the wearers' achievements and their social standing.

[177] Ethan Blue, *Doing Time in the Depression: Everyday Life in Texas and California Prisons* (New York: University Press, 2012), 40. For more on the construction of criminality through tattooing, see: Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001; Cesare Lombroso, "The Savage Origin of Tattooing," *Appleton's Popular Science Monthly* 48 (1896): 793-803.

as "American Traditional."[178] The emergence of these self-styled traditional American designs reflected attempts by U.S. policy-makers and cultural theorists to articulate a long-history of the nation rooted in exceptionalist discourses. Alongside DeMello's scholarship, sociological work by Michael Atkinson theorizes that the body is a "text of culture" on which a subject's lived experiences are made legible.[179] Michelle Alcina's Master's thesis aligns the emergence of a distinctive American tattoo identity with "the zephyr of jingoistic cultural and racial superiority that swept the U.S." in the early twentieth century.[180] Other works that historicize the careers of individual tattoo artists, like those by tattoo artist and scholar Don Ed Hardy, provide general historical information contextualizing compilations of flash, or ready-made tattoo designs.

One of the few critical historical analyses of Pina/oy tattoo culture focuses on post-1965 Filipino immigrant and Filipino American experiences in relation to postcolonial subjectivities. In "Reinventing the Tribal: Primitive Aestheticization and Filipino Tattooing in Southern California," scholar Todd Honma argues that the revival of traditional Philippine tribal tattoo designs and methods by members of the Filipino diaspora in the United States in the 1990s reflects the "difficulties and tensions that diasporic Filipinos face in the midst of ongoing racial projects, based within a broader U.S. context of colonial amnesia and erasure."[181] Honma's work situates the history of Filipino tattooing as part of broader U.S. colonial discourses coinciding with "the intentional display of the tattooed body and the aestheticization of the primitive during the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis and other international expositions."[182] Honma astutely links this

[178] Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 59-66.
[179] Michael Atkinson, *Tattooed: The Sociogenesis of a Body Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 22.
[180] Michelle Alcina, "Tattoos as Personal Narrative," *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*, 993, December 20, 2009, https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/993.
[181] Todd Honma, "Reinventing the Tribal: Primitive Aestheticization and Filipino Tattooing in Southern California," *Amerasia Journal* (2015), 41:3, 40-66, DOI: 10.17953/0044-7471-41.3, 50.
[182] Honma, "Reinventing the Tribal," 43.

historical othering to contemporary diasporic attempts at decolonizing Filipino tattoos. Because of its emphasis on the tribal aspects of Filipino tattoo cultures throughout the twentieth century, less attention is given to the processes by which Filipino tattoo culture continued to influence popular perceptions of tattoos in the United States outside of tribal tattoo aesthetics from the end of the nineteenth century to the period before World War II. To date, I have not come across any critical historical works focusing discussions of tattoo history on Filipina/o migrant tattooers in the United States during the interwar period.

This chapter addresses this historiographical underemphasis by discussing the concurrent and relational development of American tattooing as a process of cultural transmission, racial capitalism, art in the age of mechanical reproduction, and the mobilization of various migrant social imaginaries with Pina/oys at the heart of the process. This chapter focuses on the transpacific tattoo connections that developed from the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries to understand how these historical processes affected and were influenced by Filipino tattoo artists. It emphasizes that influential role. In the process, it seeks to broaden the scope and nature of Filipina/o American cultural history by highlighting the depth of Pina/oys' aesthetic contributions to a fugitive interwar subculture.

Filipina/o migrant artists heavily influenced the construction of a transpacific tattoo culture from the onset of U.S. colonization in the Philippines to the interwar period. Between 1899 and 1930, the early American tattoo industry was a locus of U.S. cultural empire building that simultaneously fostered countercultural intimacies for Filipinos moving and marking bodies between Honolulu, Manila, and the U.S. Pacific Coast. The cultural history of the work of tattooing provides a platform from which the undercurrents of service, power, and art informing broader politics of empire become visible. Pinoys tattooing in what would become known as the

"traditional Americana" style both reinforced American racial regimes' cultural values and troubled U.S. discourses on empire. By placing themselves in positions of power over the white male bodies they were paid to mark, Pina/oy tattooers claimed their existence through their labor at the intersections of race, space, gender, and aesthetic performance.

**"They Gloried in Their Tattoos":[183] Constructing Transpacific Tattoo Consciousnesses and the Americana Style**

Tattooing as a form of body marking and aesthetic modification has a history that can trace itself back millennia from multiple sites of origin. Evidence of tattooing existed from medieval Europe to the precolonial Pacific. Anthropological studies identify the sixteenth century as a watershed moment in the resurgence of visibility of tattoo practice after Captain James Cook brought back captive Tahitians for display. While this moment of origin is being disputed by other scholars suggesting that tattooing was never "lost" to European consciousness, archival notes indicate that the movement of tattooed bodies as colonial property alongside new modes of enslavement did heighten fascination with non-Western tattoo cultures.[184] This fascination, and the increased violence associated with bringing non-Western bodies to Europe and the Americas by the eighteenth century, altered traditional tattooing practices for the Asian, Pacific Islander, and indigenous North American populations touched by European colonialism.

In 1828, Englishman John Rutherford claimed to have been captured by the Maori of New Zealand in 1816, tattooed, and forced to marry a Maori princess. In W.D. Hambly's 1925 account of Rutherford's ordeal, the captured Englishman was forced to marry "two Maori girls of high rank, and when tired of his domestic responsibilities contrived to escape, and in 1828 was

[183] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 83.
[184] Anna Felicity Friedman, "The Cook Myth: Common Tattoo History Debunked" in *Tattoohistorian.com* (April 5, 2014), Accessed May 16, 2020, https://tattoohistorian.com/2014/04/05/the-cook-myth-common-tattoo-history-debunked/#more-231.

exhibiting himself in London."[185] In an account of his ordeal, Rutherford described being "not only tattooed, but what [the Maori] called tabooed… made sacred, or forbidden to touch any provisions of any kind with our hands."[186] This connection to an exoticized, eroticized, and primitive Pacific tattoo culture that restricted the movements of white prisoners bolstered the mystique of nineteenth century freak shows.

The publication in 1857 of Royal B. Stratton's *Life Among the Indians*, a biography detailing the capture and tattooing of famed pioneer girl Olive Oatman, reinforced these associations with the primitive connected to Indian communities in the U.S. West.[187] Another account describes how an M. Bossu was adopted by Arkansas Indians "who tattooed a mark of roebuck on his thigh. At the completion of the design they all danced and shouted for joy at the event of welcoming into their society one whom they admired."[188] Tales of "native capture" like those of Rutherford's in the South Pacific and Oatman's and Bossum's in the American West electrified popular imaginations. Audiences characterized the tattoo as a mark of savagery that nevertheless titillated them. This voyeuristic fascination made some showmen rich. U.S. audiences' first widespread exposure to the bodies inhabiting the "native villages" of Alaska, Hawaii, or Samoa was during the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. Here, American imaginations were primed to associate nonwhite, non-Western bodies as primitive and subhuman. The presence of tattooed villagers amongst these travelling cohorts reinforced associations between tattooing and savagery.

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[185] Wilfrid Dyson Hambly, *The History of Tattooing* (London: H.F.&G. Witherby, 1925), 177-178.
[186] "The Adventures of John Rutherford" in *The New Zealand Reader*, ed. William Pember Reeves, (Wellington: Samuel Costall, 1895), 252, Accessed 10 July, 2021, http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-ReeNewZ-t1-body-d42.html.
[187] Margot Mifflin, *The Blue Tattoo: The Life of Olive Oatman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 2-4.
[188] Hambly, *The History of Tattooing*, 178.

Showman Phineas T. Barnum "exploited the public interest [in tattooed performers] to the hilt" with his most famous "human picture gallery": the Albanian Greek performer George Constantine in 1873. Keeping with Barnum's reputation for humbuggery, Constantine presented a fantastical story of being forcibly tattooed in a Burmese prison in the 1860s. The 388 designs covering his body from forehead to soles were so intricate that "at first glance it seemed to his observers that [he] was covered from his hair to his toes by a close-fitting and transparent Turkish shawl."[189] In reality, it is likely that Constantine sought out his tattoos willingly with the intent of working as a circus attraction. Whatever the origins of Constantine's tattoos, Barnum's humbug proved an incredibly lucrative venture. Audiences were transfixed by the tattooed man. Barnum was said to have paid "Prince" Constantine one thousand dollars per week, a princely sum by any account.

P.T. Barnum's and George Burr Bunnell's circuses and dime museums facilitated the emergence of a new folk trade in the form of tattooed attractions. In 1876, Barnum endorsed Bunnell's proprietorship of a new American Museum opened in New York's Bowery District – vouching for Bunnell as an "honest, upright, moral man, and a respectable manager… too sensible a man to countenance anything on his premises calculated to offend his respectable patrons."[190] Barnum's own reputation as a showman in his American Museum during the 1840s may have lent his endorsement some credibility. While known for his own brand of humbugerry, Barnum's popular appeal may have given his endorsement of Bunnell's museum enough clout to stand out amidst the increasingly saturated urban market for accessible thrills. "Tattooed freaks, or tattooed

[189] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 59-60.
[190] Barnum Letter to Editor, *New York Daily Tribune* (p.4), December 2, 1876.

humbugs, who were covered in a specially designed 'suit' of tattoo trade' designs expressly for exhibition purposes" coincided with the emergence of human zoos at World's Fairs.[191]

The spectacle around tattooing inspired some onlookers to become "tattoo-addicts" themselves.[192] By the 1880s, women like Irene "La Bell" Woodward and Nora Hildebrandt associated their tattoos with some form of Indian coercion.[193] By the beginning of the twentieth century, tattooed women dominated the circus scene, their "docile and chaste" personas offering "an exciting contrast to the idea of tattoos, which had only been seen on men."[194] W.L. Alden's 1896 novel, *Among the Freaks*, asserted that "every museum was bound to have a Tattooed Girl, with a yarn about her having been captured by the Indians and tattooed when she was a little girl."[195]

By 1893, when the Colombian Exposition in Chicago placed non-Western human zoos along its midways as an alternative to the sterility of the White City, white American audiences normalized these presentations of U.S. political, economic, military, and cultural superiority. When the first full freak show performed at the Pan American Exposition in the 1901 Buffalo World's Fair, the tattooed subjects on display shocked fairgoers and reinforced notions of U.S. technological and moral superiority once again. The Igorot Village in the 1904 World's Fair exposed fairgoers to the tattooed Filipino for public consumption. Audiences stood in awe at the sight of a dark-skinned middle-aged Filipino man adorned with intricately patterned arches running from the front of each of his shoulders to the center of his torso. The bold black lines would have been visible from every angle an audience member looked. When the Filipino villager

[191] Carmen Nyssen, "Barnum & Bunnell's Tattooed Humbugs: Manifesting a Tattoo Trade," *Buzzworthytattoo.com*, March 16, 2015, Accessed November 15, 2020.
[192] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 2.
[193] Woodward claimed her tattoos were needed to escape the sexual attentions of "Red Indians" in the "Wild West of Texas." Hildebrandt claimed that her 365 tattoos were applied under threat of death by Sitting Bull.
[194] Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription*, 58.
[195] W.L. Alden, *Among the Freaks* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 4.

turned around, a flimsy loincloth barely hid the patterns etched into the skin of his back and buttocks. The unbridled sexuality inherent in this visual encounter would have challenged the Victorian sensibilities of chastity and sexual denial that many fairgoers likely operated through.

Historians of the freak show comment on the cultural impact of the World's Fairs to subvert the conservative social norms of its audience's frames of experience. These subverted norms simultaneously incentivized an industry of carnivalesque entertainment reliant on the display of visually shocking spectacles. The tattooed man (and woman by the 1910s) became staples of the circus sideshows and fair midways by 1900. Audience expectations informed associations of tattooed individuals with the margins of respectable society, and tattooed Filipino headhunters on display reinforced civilizationist narratives of Filipino inferiority in a political moment when the Philippines was declared an insular territory of the United States with no sovereign rights and its occupants – especially its indigenous populations – could be exploited within the budding mass entertainment industry of the carnival.

While the Igorot Village at the World's Fairs and the tattooed attractions at carnivals, more generally, were sites of exploitation and cultural manipulation, these spaces also provided opportunities for its performers to move through space in wholly unexpected ways. While many of the Filipino headhunters displayed at the Igorot Village were often paid to strip naked and expose their tattoos to titillated audiences, historians of the World's Fairs in the early twentieth century note that many of the Filipinos put on display were already in Philippine urban spaces like Manila and Olongapo before their recruitment into the expositions. This contradicted the human zoo's hawkers claiming that the villagers were taken directly from the mountains of Luzon in the northern areas of the Philippines; a declaration made to add a layer of authenticity to the civilizationist planning undergirding the World's Fairs.

Tattooed and unmarked Filipina/os in these human zoos were thus semi-autonomous agents that took advantage of a moment to bypass the traditional modes of transpacific movement Filipinos used to migrate to the United States. Other modes of imperial participation influenced the routes of movement available to those traveling between the Philippines and the United States. Their status as foreign nationals made Filipinos legible to different spaces of colonial surveillance compared to other Asian immigrant groups. Even though it was restricted to the Navy, Filipino men were the only foreign nationals in the early twentieth century able to enlist in the U.S. military.[196]

Navy social life heavily influenced, and was heavily influenced by, the social capital accrued through the collection and display of tattoos. Developing lives of work and leisure adjacent to white American sailors gave some Filipinos, particularly those who would go on to become tattoo artists, the insider knowledge required to establish a rapport with potential clients and the frame of reference on which to contribute a particularly Filipino sensibility to the content of the emerging Americana style. For the tattooed, especially, this contingent opportunity brought Filipino tattoo aesthetics to broader audience attention and created a cultural frame of reference by which to identify these tribal designs with nonwhite actors – particularly from the Pacific.

Historian Kristin L. Hoganson asserts that late-19th century "imperialists regarded the Philippines as a greatly needed opportunity to foster the forceful style of male character they considered essential to democratic government."[197] This forceful style of politics manifested in the bold blacks and reds tattooed tied to a burgeoning style of tattooing in the early twentieth century. The form and structure of these images soon became characteristic of the Americana style of

[196] Yen Le Espiritu, *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 28.
[197] Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 141.

tattooing: "strong black lines, typically made with five (or more) needles; heavy black shading; and a dab of color (first black and red, and later, green and blue became available)."[198] Domingo Galang's work on Jack Gould's back is an example of an extensive Americana tattoo. Pina/oys' influence on the modern aesthetics of the Americana style troubled associations of tattooed Filipinos as racially and socially inferior to white American culture. These associations were deliberated curated by agents of U.S. empire sent to the Philippines on anthropological ventures at the end of the nineteenth century.

University of Michigan zoologist Dean Conant Worcester, who in 1899 was appointed by President William McKinley to advise the Schurman Commission regarding the implementation of U.S. imperial policies in the Philippines, circulated hundreds of photographs of Philippine tribal communities in public lectures across the United States. As Secretary of the Interior for the Second Philippine Commission, Worcester staged photographs of dozens of Negritos, "Igorrotes," and Kalinga from the northern island of Luzon. He made men, women, and children pose in loincloths, bare-chested, holding spears and shields to emphasize their savage lifestyles. Worcester often contrasted these photographs with "sequence" prints of indigenous men donning Western clothing and sitting with straighter postures following consecutive years under U.S. martial rule. One pair of prints, respectively titled "A Bontoc Constabulary soldier, without uniform" and "A Bontoc Constabulary soldier in uniform," presented a dark-skinned Bontoc Igorot man standing at attention in front of a hastily constructed white backdrop wearing nothing but a loincloth. The second photograph in the sequence presents the same man fully dressed in the khaki military uniform of a Philippine soldier under U.S. military command; beret, belt, and boots covering much

[198] Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 49-50.

of the previously exposed skin.[199] A notable feature of the man photographed as a constabulary soldier is the tattooed pattern curving up from his right bicep and covering part of his right breast. In hiding their tattoos, Worcester was suggesting that these visible indicators of Filipino savagery had no place in the civilizing project of the United States in the Philippines.

Images of tattooed Kalinga and Ifugao warriors were in the regular rotation of lecture slides Worcester presented to his American audiences in lecture halls across the United States. Worcester published regular articles for *National Geographic Magazine* between 1910 and 1914, each with several photographs of half-clothed headhunters or naked indigenous women displaying their tattoos. Worcester's emphasis on indigenous Philippine nudity as a marker of an inferior civilization supported arguments in the U.S. Congress that the Philippines was not ready for self-government. The blatant curated display of tribal tattoos appeared in several exhibits held by the United States National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution, to which Worcester became a regular archival contributor by 1902. These images undoubtedly encouraged American audiences to associate the tattoos with primitive aesthetic expressions.

In 1900, Igorot, Kalinga, and especially Negrito men, women, and children were described by the Charleston *Sunday News* as "Ape-Men" or "curious black dwarfs… who are the most monkey-like people in the world."[200] On June 23, 1904, a month after the Philippine exhibit was unveiled to an eager public at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs Clarence R. Edwards telegraphed Secretary of War William H. Taft describing how the Negritos at the exhibit "were until recently dressed up like plantation nigger[s], whom they diminutively represent… and put on their native loin cloth" to perform for the

[199] Image descriptions based on reprinted images in Mark Rice, *Dean Worcester's Fantasy Islands: Photography, Film, and the Colonial Philippines* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 76-77.
[200] "Uncle Sam's Ape-Men," *Sunday News* (Charleston, S.C.), June 14, 1900, 11.

audiences.[201] Associating Filipinos with an identifiable blackness connected to subordinated labor mirrored the language used to degrade, demean, and racially mark African Americans as second-class citizens.[202]

These assertions of Philippine primitivity were not confined to these connections to anti-blackness. The occupation of the Philippines provided an opportunity to assuage national anxieties in a moment when the significance of the frontier in U.S. history was under scrutiny. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis attributed the values of Manifest Destiny, rugged individualism, and national progress, in part, to the white American's ability to subjugate Indian lands and peoples. With the closing of the U.S.'s continental frontier, a new frontier safety valve was needed to guard against social unrest and the perceived stagnation of national progress. The Philippines became that frontier.

In this extended frontier, Worcester's photographs continued a tradition of displaying indigenous bodies to justify white American superiority against Native American inferiority; with the headhunting tribes of the Philippine mountain regions playing the role of indigenous dissident against the civilizing impulses of U.S. government agents. The tattoos of these indigenous Filipinos added to these characterizations of inferiority. These were not unprecedented associations, as American readers were captivated by stories of Native Americans tattooing captive settlers as they traveled the Great Plains or the U.S. Southwest.[203] Likewise, tattooed women performing in freak shows in the 1880s claimed to have been tattooed under duress by various Indian tribes. Nora Hildebrandt, one of the great tattooed performers of the nineteenth century,

[201] Correspondences located in Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, General Classified Files, no. 9640 cited by Robert W. Rydell in *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 183-184.
[202] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 16-17.
[203] See Margot Mifflin, *The Blue Tattoo: The Life of Olive Oatman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

claimed that "her 365 tattoos were crafted by her father under the threat of death by his captor, Sitting Bull."[204] The distribution of Worcester's photographs coincided with, and likely invigorated, a national fascination with tattooing – influenced by historical memories of Indian Wars and westward expansion – that "linked U.S. colonialism in the Philippines to the legacy of the American South… [and] also linked colonialism with the American West."[205]

These photographs also undermined efforts by Tagalog elites in the Philippines suing for independence from U.S. colonial control in the early twentieth century; efforts mirrored by Filipino migrant workers in the U.S. during the 1930s suing for their right to gain American citizenship. Exposure to Filipino tattoos through the Filipino zoos at World's Fairs, as well as through Dean Worcester's photographs in his public lectures and *National Geographic* articles, gratified what Albert Parry identified as the white American audience's "feeling for primitive pathos and simple sentimentality."[206] Parry described the "tattoo-sin" as part of an obsession with the primitive, a reflection of the desire to "to put one's self in sympathy with Nature, and to protest against the sickly conventionalities of civilization."[207]

At the same time, in the continental United States, New York tattooer Samuel O'Reilly, an Irish immigrant who had patented the first electric tattoo machine in 1891, was making a name for himself across the United States and Europe as the premier artist for dime museum attractions until his death in 1909.[208] O'Reilly tattooed nautical images, circus scenes, and large backpieces with religious staples like The Last Supper on popular performers like London's Emma DeBurgh in the

[204] Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription*, 58.
[205] Rice, *Dean Worcester's Fantasy Islands*, 45.
[206] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 39.
[207] Parry quotes a *New York Times* article from January 30, 1880 in *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 96-97.
[208] Carmen Forquer Nyssen, "Samuel F. O'Reilly," *Buzzworthy Tattoo History*, Accessed: February 10, 2021, https://buzzworthytattoo.com/tattoo-artists-tattooed-people/samuel-f-oreilly/; Nyssen, "Ever-Evolving Tattoo Machines," in *TTT: Tattoo* eds. Maxime Buschi and Nicholas Schonberger, (Laurence King Publishing, 2018).

vivid reds and deep blacks of the Americana style.[209] New York tattooer Charlie Wagner, who patented an improved version of the electric tattoo machine in 1904 with vertical coils that increased the speed and precision of the process, credited his exposure to Constantine at a dime museum show to his interest in the art. Wagner claimed that he was "so deeply impressed with the spectacle that he got himself tattooed and began to learn in earnest the art of skin-incision."[210] Wagner went on to tattoo dozens of celebrity circus performers by the 1930s out of his Manhattan studio.

Samuel O'Reilly, Wagner's predecessor, was likely mentored by Martin Hildebrandt, a Bowery tattooer recruited by P.T. Barnum and other dime museum curators to mark their live performers for audiences' amusement. Hildebrandt tattooed Union and Confederate soldiers during the U.S. Civil War and helped to establish a tradition of tattooing within the U.S. military.[211] By the time U.S. political tensions with Spain broke out into armed conflict in 1898, newspapers were also identifying a "tattoo mania" sweeping across nearly every level of U.S. society with mounting pressures for people to stay "au courant with society's latest fad."[212]

By 1901, talk of putting on formal tattoo shows for the presentation of body markings as artistic expression started a buzz in Hawaii, California, and New York. Reports of several "well known young men in New York who are indelibly marked with pigments of one design or another," signaled a growing, albeit hushed, acceptance of the practice. "I speak of actual visual knowledge concerning the men," one report stated, "because I have been in the Turkish baths with hundreds whose bodies bear the marks of the needle." Confidence in the popularity of a possible

[209] Gambier Bolton, "Pictures on the Human Skin," *The Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly*, 1897.
[210] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 63.
[211] Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 49-50.
[212] "Tattoo Mania," *New York World*, 1897; Albert Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practised among the Natives of the United States* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1933), 103.

tattoo show abound in the proposed tickets prices and cash prizes to the winners of different categories of artistry: "entrance fee $5; prize for the finest puncture… $100 in gold; daintiest puncture on arm, $50; most fetching puncture on leg, $150, etc. We'll have a crowd."[213]

The new electric tattoo machines made it quicker, cheaper, and less painful to get tattooed, bolstering the art's popularity among all socioeconomic circles. Martin Hildebrandt claimed to have tattooed men and women of American and British high society. Tattooing women's lips or cheeks a permanent shade of red, as well as permanently tattooing eyebrows to maintain a well-groomed appearance, were common tattoo fads since the 1830s. Still, tattoos continued to be associated with deviant subcultures of U.S. society: criminals, sailors, and carnival freaks whose proximity to non-Western savagery was indicated by the markings on their skin. Sailors reinforced and reaffirmed cultural biases about an uncivilized Orient or Pacific when they "concocted elaborate tales of forced tattooing to explain their heavily tattooed bodies" to enthrall audiences and drive up admissions sales at carnival side shows.[214]

Wilfrid Dyson Hambly theorized extensively about the connections between tattooing and nonwhites' primitivity in his ambitiously titled 1925 anthropological work, *The History of Tattooing*. As if to reinforce this relationship between tattooing, racial science, and U.S. settler colonialism in the American West and the Philippines, Hambly identified the vestiges of "primitive, deeply-rooted emotions" in stories about Native capture that motivated people within his lifetime to get tattooed.[215] Another reason for this motivation was the development of new technologies of illustration. By the 1880s, a boom in circulation of magazines such as *The Century*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Scribner's*, *The New York Post*, and *Collier's Weekly* inundated hundreds of

[213] "A Tattoo Exhibit," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu), Jun. 21, 1901.
[214] Michael Atkinson, *Tattooed: The Sociogenesis of a Body Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 34.
[215] Wilfrid Dyson Hambly, *The History of Tattooing* (London: H.F.&G. Witherby, 1925), 179.

thousands of new readers across the United States with a flood of illustrated articles produced through new methods of photomechanical printing.[216]

Copies of these magazines accompanied American sailors and businesses overseas, where expanded reading publics in Philippine urban spaces were also exposed to images of U.S. culture that would inspire some tattoo designs. The expansion of a reading public ready to consume magazines such as *College Humor* magazine, which compiled and reprinted popular interest stories that included articles on the latest tattoo trends between 1920 and 1943, fed the general cultural curiosity for the tattoo as an accessible commercial product rather than one that was confined to the seedier spaces of docks, back alleys, and red-light districts. The commercial popularity of transpacific tattooing partially stemmed from U.S. military interactions at the turn of the century.

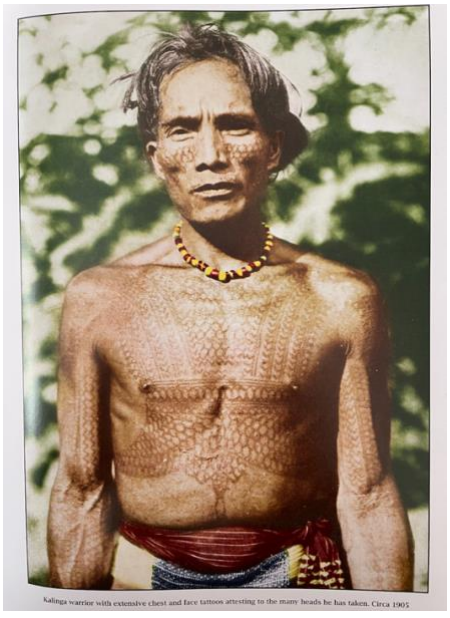


**Fig. 3.2.** "Kalinga warrior with extensive chest and face tattoos attesting to the many heads he has taken. Circa 1905." Photographs like these, taken by Dean Worcester or other photographers working for the Second Philippine Commission under William Howard Taft (1900-1916), would have circulated widely in public lectures and magazine articles describing the indigenous inhabitants of the Philippine Islands.[217]

[216] *History of Illustration*, Susan Doyle, Jaleen Grove, Whitney Sherman, eds., (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).
[217] Photograph colorized and reproduced in Lane Wilcken's *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern*, 41.

**The Philippine Connection: Transpacific Connections to American Tattoo Culture**

In February, 1899, Albert Morton Kurzman became one of thousands of young men who enlisted with the U.S. Army to fight in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. The nineteen-year-old son of Jewish immigrants left New York to support "McKinley's anti-Spanish crusade." According to popular lore, Kurzman "fought the Spaniards bravely and well, and, along with dysentery, contracted the tattoo-craze."[218] By this time, magazines like the *Police Gazette* emphasized common associations between the military and tattooing in articles highlighting the "primitive pathos and simple sentimentality" associated with the practice.[219] Advertisements for mail-order tattoo supplies in magazines like *Billboard* and, by 1902, *Popular Mechanics* reflected the growing ubiquity of tattoos as an American folk practice. The connection to Philippine tattooing also warrants further investigation. What did Kurzman – and other "master-tattooers" like Harry V. Lawson in Los Angeles, Louis Morgan in San Francisco, and Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins in Honolulu – learn of tattooing from the Philippines, and from whom?

Commonly associated with headhunting and jungle savagery because of sustained conflicts during the U.S. colonial occupation of the Philippines since 1898, Filipino tattoo methods were framed as a practice of the primitive. Tabloids and tourist magazines associated Filipino tattooing with "fish-bone points" for needles and "betel-nut color" for ink.[220] Dean Worcester's photographs reinforced these notions of biologically undeniable differences between Filipinos and white agents of U.S. empire in the Pacific. Weighing in on debates concerning the U.S. annexation of the Philippines as an insular territory, anthropologist Daniel G. Brinton observed that "many

[218] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 47; "Lewis Alberts: 'Lew the Jew,'" *Tattoo Archive*, 2016.
[219] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 39.
[220] Stanton, "Tattooing," *Mid-Paciifc* Magazine.

[Filipinos] had never been converted to Christianity and preserve their ancient customs of tattooing their bodies, filing their teeth, and… indulging their ancestral tendency to 'head-hunting.'"[221]

At the same time, the Spanish-American War inspired the creation of the "prototypical white male patriot" whose image circulated in periodicals, magazines, and pamphlets covering the war alongside illustrations of flags, eagles, and the phrase "Remember the *Maine*" in reference to the inexplicable explosion of the U.S.S. *Maine* in Havana harbor that sparked calls for military intervention against Spain in Cuba's war for independence.[222] The jingoistic passion surrounding the Spanish-American War informed the growing appeal of all things patriotic. Both jingoism and the patriotic male fantasy inspired many of the over one hundred thousand young male volunteers to get tattooed. Flags, eagles, daggers, and hearts accompanied images of battleships and full-scale battles commemorating American military victories.

The language of manliness permeated accounts of tattooed American veterans of the Spanish-American War. As the conflict against Spain transitioned into a conflict against Filipino revolutionaries staking their claims to autonomy, Samuel O'Reilly published a pamphlet extolling American male fighting virtues in relation to their tattoos:

> The glory of a man-o'wars (sic) man at Santiago or elsewhere was to be stripped to the waist, his trousers rolled up to his knees, his white skin profusely decorated in tattoo… Brave fellows! Little fear had they of shot and shell, amid the smoke of battle and after the scrub down they gloried in their tattoos.[223]

The erotic undertones in the exhibitionism of the tattooed white male body intersected with the patriotic fervor of military victories in the name of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific. Here,

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[221] Daniel G. Brinton, "The Peoples of the Philippines" in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (Oct. 1898), pp.293-307, 303.
[222] Bonnie M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest: The Visual and Popular Cultures of the Spanish-American War of 1898* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 1; "Dewey Tattooed on Their Left Arm," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, color section, November 27, 1898, 8.
[223] O'Reilly pamphlet caption reprinted in Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 83.

images were variations on limited designs: daggers captioned with "death before dishonor," snakes, skulls, anchors, birds, and horses derived from experiences (lived or imagined) in the American West. After 1898, black and gray images of steam-battleships came into popular demand, "crowding out the sailships (sic) hitherto overwhelmingly popular among the tattoo-fans."[224]

Tattoo imagery from Japan, inspired by nineteenth-century Ukiyo-e prints, also influenced the Americana style. The Americana composition of dragons, Chinamen, and especially women donning kimonos or cheongsams exuded the subtle sexuality that appealed to Orientalized conceptions of Asian women. The confluence of these Asian female archetypes with the raunchy sexuality of American pin-ups demonstrates the attempt by artists to embed sexuality into many of their designs. Tattooer and tattoo historian Jill "Horiyuki" Bonny argues that it was this meeting of aesthetic styles between tattooers like Sailor Jerry and Kazuo "Horikaz" Oguri in the 1930s that articulated these stylistic overlays. Pinky Yun's marketing of the Asian pin-up character of Suzie Wong also contributed to this proliferation of Eastern aesthetics into the Americana style after World War II. In both cases, sex sold and clients voraciously bought in.[225]

The Pacific context also provided tattoo seekers and tattoo artists with more exposure to the practice. In 1913, U.S. Navy surgeon A. Farenholt observed that after ten years surveying 3,575 enlistees out of the port of San Francisco, more than half of the navy corpsmen that had acquired tattoos over the course of their enlistment had been tattooed in the Pacific. Farenholt argued that "in the Orient [the sailor] finds more tattooed men than he ever saw at home, and he also finds more people ready to lend their art to his adornment if the price is forthcoming."[226] By

[224] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art,* 41.
[225] Jill "Horiyuki" Bonny, "The Asiatic Pin-Up," Presented via Instagram Lecture, April 3, 2021.
[226] A. Farenholt, U.S. Naval Medical Bulletin, 1913.

1935, Frank Lloyd's *Mutiny on the Bounty*, starring Clark Gable and Maria Luisa Castaneda, demonstrated that associations between tattoos, South Pacific exoticism, sailors and the U.S. Navy, and a general manliness had entrenched itself in the American mainstream.

Some enlistees took what they learned in the Philippines back to American cities like New York or San Francisco. Upon returning to the Bowery, Albert Kurzman, now tattooing as "Lew the Jew," combined his skills as a wallpaper designer with a newfound knowledge of tattooing from Philippines to develop new tattoo designs presented as "flash."[227] These designs included battleships framed by American flags, side profiles of Uncle Sam or winking pin-up girls framed by ribbons etched with the words "Forget Me Not," as well as the "Rose of Liberty" behind a shield emblazoned with stars and stripes.

Lew the Jew presented these motifs of American liberty and erotic desire in dark blacks, bright reds, and dull greens meant to catch potential clients' attention as they passed by his shop. Reproduced and sold widely across the United States, these flash patterns created an "encyclopedia of designs" that solidified the Americana style in popular imaginations.[228] This popularity would be mobilized by Pina/oy tattooers in the United States by the early twentieth century as they engaged in the labor of tattooing white sailors in port cities. In the process, Pina/oy tattooers also added their own improvisational flourishes to Americana staples like the rose, dagger, and pin-up girl. Pina/oy tattooers contributed to the diversification of Americana flash in this context. Their interactions with white "tattoo-masters" who professed Pina/oy artists' impact as mentors and

[227] "Lew the Jew" Alberts: Early 20th Century Tattoo Drawings, Ed. Don Ed Hardy (San Francisco: Hardy Marks Publications, 2015), 5-6; "Flash" refers to ready-made designs usually consolidated in groups of 4-8 on a single sheet of paper, priced respectively, and hung prominently on a tattoo shop's walls. Potential clients could pick a design from the flash sheets "off the walls" and get them tattooed without the need for extensive customization; In what was perhaps an allusion to the growing demand for flash designs, Albert Parry quoted some "American [tattoo] masters" in their assertion that "the American plebs care not for dainty detail, that the order is for a big splash at a small expense in a jiffy" (Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 41).
[228] Atkinson, *Tattooed: The Sociogenesis of a Body Art*, 37.

peers illustrates their centrality to the history of the Americana style and diversifies the identity of Filipino tattooing beyond their pre-colonial tribal associations.

This makes it even more significant that Pina/oy artists like Domingo Galang, Martina Yagyagan, and Tino "Rosie" Camanga began designing tattoos according to the aesthetics of the Americana style. Their deviation from tribal patterns and designs reoriented perceptions of what Filipino tattooing (and Filipino tattoos) could be. Images ranged from nautical motifs (ships, anchors, stars, and sailors) to sexualized depictions of pin-up girls and geishas to popular cultural icons like Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat. The cultural underpinnings of the Americana style are connected to the experiences of white American soldiers in the Philippines. It was also connected to the experiences of Filipinos immigrating into the United States between 1899 and 1941 as American colonial subjects. Since these designs were not overtly tribal in their expression, Pinoy tattooers were consequently overlooked as influential contributors to this style because broader associations between Filipinos and tattoos did not allow for artists like Galang and Camanga to become legible as working artists with similar technical prowess as the "tattoo-masters" identified by contemporary observers like Albert Parry.

**"I Fly from Honolulu to Eternity"[229]: Pinoy Tattoo Influences in Transpacific Urban Spaces**

Ignacio Felicio's shop was easy to miss. Someone walking near the Oahu Railway & Land Company depot along North King Street would only need to keep their eyes forward to overlook the "Tattooing" sign hanging over the modest doorway to the Pinoy's place of business, his "tattooing sanctum." Felicio, "a genius from the Philippines," displayed hundreds of sheets of flash designs from which potential clients might pick. If an observer was not "tempted to have a sample of this kind of decoration upon himself… and he makes himself agreeable to the little brown

[229] Phrase on Camanga flash, collected in Hardy's book.

brother in charge, he may at least see a demonstration of how the work is done."[230] This description from the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* of Felicio's shop space reveals the intimate social dynamics commonly encountered in the initial exchanges between artist and client.

Following the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, Hawaiian sugar plantations incentivized the migration of Filipino youth to spaces like Oahu, which became one node of migrant labor routes between the Pacific and the western coastal states of the U.S. An increasingly visible population of Pinoy sugar plantation workers stoked unease amongst white and Japanese workers who framed the influx of Filipino workers as a marker of increased economic competition. This led to the organization of militant labor unions throughout Hawaii and the proliferation of radical labor strategies to the mainland in the following decades.[231]

When Wilfrid Dyson Hambly published *The History of Tattooing* in 1925, the author went into copious detail about the practice of body marking with needles and ink, as well as the geographical distribution of the practice from Europe to Africa to Asia and the Pacific. Hambly, whose notes from 1929 ethnological expedition to West Africa informed exhibits at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, was particularly taken by the intricate designs of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander tattooing. Echoing nineteenth-century fascination with face tattooing, in particular, Hambly's widely published work became a reference point for members of the middle class to identify tattooed nonwhites according to the racial scripts of U.S. transpacific interwar empire.

The Americana style developed as a distinctly recognizable folk aesthetic in U.S. tattoo culture by the turn of the twentieth century. The introduction of different colored inks via artist

[230] "Tattoo Artist Has Profitable Clientele Here," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Mon, Aug. 2, 1915.
[231] For a discussion of race making for Asian immigrant groups in Hawaii, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*, Harvard University Press, 2002.

correspondences between Hawaii, the continental United States, Japan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines expanded the expressive range of the Americana style. Deep black outlines likely inspired by the Marquesian or Polynesian applications guaranteed recognizability for a clientele wanting to make statements with their marked bodies. Bright reds created contrasts in ships, roses, anchors, and pin-ups, heightening the eye-catching character of these designs. While less is certain about how Filipinos in port cities like Manila or Olongapo learned to tattoo in the Americana style, at some point in the first decade of the twentieth century, American servicemen enlisted to fight in the Philippine-American War were introduced to tattooing as a practice from Filipinos.

Honolulu, Hawaii functioned as a port of entry for Filipino migrant labor since the 1890s, when the United States government colluded with British corporate interests to displace Queen Liliuokalani. Following the islands' annexation as an insular territory of the United States, U.S.-owned plantations sought a population of cheap workers. Filipinos joined Japanese sakadas in the fields. Employment discrimination jolted Pinoy workers into action and they swiftly mobilized unionization efforts.

The changing face of Honolulu labor stimulated the influx of young Filipino workers coming in from Manila seeking to take advantage of the power of the American dollar. While Pinoys found work on all of the Hawaiian islands, Honolulu became a nexus of labor and sociality for working-class Pinoys. Honolulu's downtown and Chinatown were the densely packed centers of subcultural intimacies that found spaces of expression. Tattooing became an industry of opportunity for folks seeking lives away from the constrictive mainstream of respectable U.S. social living. For white men, tattooing's culture of fugitivity and secrecy appealed to those with sensibilities that intersected lawlessness and artistry. For Pinoy artists attracted to the same culture of fugitivity, tattooing was also a racially hostile space that nevertheless sponsored opportunities

to live alternative lifeways of intimacy, empowerment, and economic advancement not tied to the whims of white bosses.

The area that became Honolulu's Chinatown developed along the Honolulu Harbor southwest of the Nu'uanu Stream in the 1840s to accommodate Chinese contract laborers. Its location adjacent to the harbor made it an easy destination for incoming laborers and sailors looking to settle, socialize, or spend their wages. A fire in 1886 leveled most of the buildings in the area and another fire in 1900 that spread because of botched containment efforts in response to a bubonic plague outbreak displaced thousands of residents. After former residents rebuilt the area, xenophobic associations of Chinese residents with disease and vice stigmatized Honolulu's Chinatown as a disreputable space. This reputation created opportunities for extralegal subcultures to develop in the alleyway entrances and backrooms.

Hawaii's tattoo traditions were connected to the Pacific Islands' deep histories of artistic exchange and storytelling that stretched as far out as Micronesia, Tonga, and the Philippines. Indigenous tribes were marking themselves for purposes of status, storytelling, and war for centuries before Western intervention and influence transformed traditional societies into sites of capitalist extraction. By 1900, when Filipino laborers began arriving en masse to Honolulu plantations and ports for work, tattoo parlors also began establishing themselves on the waterfronts and along the crowded spaces of Hotel Street in downtown and in Chinatown.

By 1900, Hotel Street in Downtown Honolulu was a thoroughfare of business activity for the emerging urban space. Hotel Street simultaneously functioned as a tourist space and center of social activity that brought together businessmen, socialites, and working-class Hawaiians in the common pursuit of leisurely escape from the tropical pressures of the island's climate. Between 1900 and 1920, prominent businesses lined Hotel Street, including nondescript tattoo shops tucked

behind innocuous storefronts. These intimate spaces often doubled as makeshift sites for tattooers to set up shop. In the backrooms and closeted spaces of barber shops, bars, arcades, and groceries, tattooers plied their trades; their clientele mainly referred by word of mouth.

When Sailor Jerry first learned to tattoo from Valentine Galang's shop, he was offered the chance to tattoo in the Philippine city of Olongapo, in the main northern island of the archipelago. The Filipino who offered Sailor Jerry the space to continue his transpacific tattoo career cited how Olongapo held the perfect combination of sailor clientele, booze, nightlife, and women to keep him satisfied and thriving. Tattoo sociality depended on these relational economies of leisure and pleasure in order to sustain its various levels of debauchery and creativity. These lines of informal trade and the intimate exchange of bodies, art, and access to identities tinged with fugitivity were undergirded by the ongoing influences of U.S. transpacific empire that brought jingoistic patriotism to the fore of artistic expression.

When white sailors got their tattoos of bald eagles and battleships in Olongapo from Filipino artists whose designs had clear connections to the layouts of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows and *Puck* Magazine's artwork of Theodore Roosevelt (himself a tattooed individual espousing the ethos of bootstraps ruggedness at the turn of the century Pacific frontier) personifying a U.S. fleet, the fervor of U.S. patriotism bled outside the lines of military control into the everyday imaginations of those in any proximity to the tattoo industry.

From Olongapo, sailors and non-military tattooees would often transition to Hawaii and California cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles as a consequence of their duties or because either city gained notoriety for their collection of skilled tattooers. Duty or the whims of adventure called many to these emerging centers of the U.S. tattoo industry. The Filipino communities in each of these sites created their own distinct lifeways according to the geographical bounds of their

respective urban spaces. Each space, however, was also connected transpacifically through their engagement and fostering of fugitive spaces of tattoo culture mediated and influenced by the presence of Filipino migrant artists.

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Walking along Honolulu's King Street in 1918, a sailor on shore leave had a number of options for places where he might spend some money and time. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino restaurants lined the small avenue from end to end. Between these buildings, the smells from market stalls purveying ripening fruits, candied nuts, and freshly caught fish would have mixed with the wafting aromas of spicy roasted duck, salty soups, and starchy steam from cooking rice. A salon or barber shop may have caught a sailor's eye, not only for the potential to freshen up their visages after months at sea, but also because of what other businesses might have shared the same space. Brothels were commonly found in the backs of these salons. Oahu newspapers were rife with police reports about the seedy character of the Downtown and Chinatown areas of Honolulu. Concerns manifested in political debates concerning the policing of massage parlors and tattoo shops to cut down on vice districts in the city.

In June of 1928, the Palolo Valley Board of Supervisors passed "without a dissenting vote the measure providing for the strict regulation of Honolulu's massage parlors" with Honolulu's Republican mayor Charles N. Arnold signing off.[232] Tattoo shop owners supported the regulation but argued that their places of business should not fall under the same category as massage parlors, which bore reputations as places of sex work. After some deliberation, the board of supervisors passed two ordinances on June 13, 1928 regulating the permitting and working hours of massage parlors and tattoo shops. The massage parlor ordinance, drafted by City Attorney Charles S. Davis,

[232] "Board Awaits Legal Opinion on City Links: Massage Bill Goes to Mayor," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Wed, Jun 20, 1928, *https://staradvertiser.newspapers.com/image/259197768.*

"provides for strict regulation of the parlors and sets the license fee for a parlor at $50 a year and $25 a year for each 'massagist.'" The goal of the massage ordinance was to prevent the seduction of taxi drivers in Honolulu on the recommendation of police committee chairman John Hughes. The tattoo ordinance that passed under the same licensing act "was amended so that that type of parlor may remain open until 10 p.m. at night instead of 8 p.m. as originally proposed. The license fee for a tattoo artist is set at $15 per year by the measure."[233]

Tattooing in Hawaii could be a lucrative business venture for artists that were able to establish a regular stream of clients. "Soldiers and sailors have a craze for tattooing," the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* stated, "and it is from them that the Filipino derives most of his patronage." Once methods for tattoo removal became more refined by the 1920s, tattooers found that they could make just as much, if not more, money taking tattoos off than putting them on. Felicito admitted that "tattooing business sometimes pays very good… but suppose I can take old tattoo marks out, very soon I become rich man." Reports emerged in several newspapers of army deserters and criminals on the run enlisting tattooers to remove incriminating marks "and offer[ing]… handsome renumeration" for services rendered.[234]

Still, the Pinoy tattooer's primary income came from marking their clients. Common designs included "flags, ships, shields, hearts, both male and female heads, stars, five and six-pointed; daggers, Japanese dragons, butterflies, a hand holding a rose, clasped hands with ensign and anchor, eagles, female forms, and, of course, names, mottoes, initials and other items." But custom work allowed many tattooers to meld their artistic interests with those of their clients. Felicito was credited with appropriating "a magnificent copy of September Morn" to tattoo on

[233] "Board Passes License Act for Massage," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Wed, June 13, 1928, *https://www.newspapers.com/image/259195196.*
[234] "Tattoo Artist Has Profitable Clientele Here," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Mon, Aug. 2, 1915.

interested clients. The reference to both the 1911 Paul Émile Chabas oil painting and the 1914 silent comedy film by the Pathé production company inspired by it would not have been lost on Felicito's contemporaries. In fact, it was likely the whole reason for the Pinoy's use of it as a design. Chabas's paining of a young naked woman standing in a shallow lake, which was reproduced in postcards, calendars, and magazines following a censorship controversy in New York, may have appealed to the erotic sensibilities of sailors who often ordered tattoos of naked pin-up girls. Likewise, the popularity of the 1914 two-reel film of a sailor who was forced by his girlfriend to tattoo clothing on the image of a nude woman he received at a local tattoo shop would have made Felicito's choice of design readily identifiable.

Los Angeles became a global cultural destination thanks to vigorous marketing campaigns since the late-nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, a budding film and sport industry shaped Los Angeles as a space of imaginative possibilities and opportunities outside of the cramped urban centers of New York or Chicago. This mythos extended to the budding tattoo industry. By the 1910s, Main Street in Downtown Los Angeles was the site of numerous establishments that catered to tattooing's cultural sensibilities: bars, dance halls, brothels, and gambling dens attracted thrill seekers hoping to make money, get lucky, and leave with some commemorative memorabilia from their visit.

Pinoys were a staple of the Main Street area because many laborers settled in these downtown spaces over a one-mile radius. Adjacent to Little Tokyo and Chinatown, this Little Manila area in Downtown Los Angeles provided essential services to a fluctuating population of Pinoy migrant and service laborers in California. For traveling Pinoy tattooers like Domingo Galang, the presence of Little Manila near Main Street tattoo shops would have cultivated a sense

of familiarity and relative safety from the pressures of exposure as part of an already excludable subcultural group.

Main Street arcades and museums catered to a growing clientele of sailors on shore leave, middle-class thrill-seekers looking for entertainment in the many penny arcades and museums that lined the blocks between 2nd and 5th Streets, and movie industry agents hoping for inspiration from the various circus performers and tattooers in the area.[235] Hurtle Vivian Lawson was an Australian-born tattoo artist who later became one of the most widely interviewed tattooers of the early twentieth century and whose framing of tattooing as a legitimate artistic profession ingratiated the practice to broader audiences. Lawson, who later tattoed under the title "Professor Harry V. Lawson," established a three-room tattoo parlor along South Main Street in Los Angeles around 1922. Lawson capitalized on the growing trends in cosmetic tattooing amongst middle-class white women after World War I. Other tattooers like San Diego's Professor Jack Gavett and New York's Charlie Wagner of the Bowery District similarly made a profit by "fix[ing] a young lady with a nifty pair of cupid's lips that won't come off under any pressure."[236]

Cosmetic tattooing[237] was one of many tattoo fads that gained traction during the interwar period. Sun-tattoos and paint-tattoos attempted to emulate tattoo marks in semi-permanent ways, which "the tattooers frown upon" because of their inherent differences from the practice of having ink inserted into the skin. By 1933, Charlie Wagner purportedly "has begun negotiations with a certain manufacturer of chemicals… a new pigment that can be needled into the skin in the old way but for a limited term… to save [Wagner's] needle craft and at the same time cater to the

[235] Camren Forquer Nyssen and Rich Hardy, "Tattoo Magic on Main Street," *Buzzworthy Tattoo History*, Accessed: August 13, 2020.
[236] Professor Jack Gavett quoted in Albert Parry's *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art*, 10.
[237] While the term "cosmetic" might generally refer to something applied to the skin to improve perceptions of its beauty (a category in which the general practice of tattooing during this period might fall), here the term "cosmetic tattooing" refers to the tattooing of inks as permanent blush, lipstick, eyebrows, or beauty marks to meet contemporary standards of beauty according to popular trends.

frailty of women" desiring smaller, temporary cosmetic alterations. The emergence of a new lip-stick brand named "TATTOO" with the tag line, "only the color stays… it *really* stays," as well as the release by Miss Gwenyph Waugh of decorative beach pajamas with "tattoo motifs of the American sailors" reflects this growing attempt to capitalize on the growing public desire to access tattoo aesthetics. Now famous for his cosmetic tattooing and hoping to profit from this widespread interest, in 1927 Harry V. Lawson began negotiations with plastic surgeons and "beauty-parlor madames (sic)" to establish "a chain of tattoo beauty parlors from Hollywood to Boston and Seattle to Miami" that quickly fizzled at the onset of the Great Depression.[238]

One of Lawson's most significant connections to the history of Pinoy migrant tattooing is that artists like Domingo Galang become visible in the records of Lawson's travels. On October 25, 1925, Galang accompanied Lawson on the *S.S. Calawai* on a journey from Honolulu to Los Angeles.[239] Typically, these trips entailed meeting with other artists to exchange stories, ideas, and artwork. The founding of the Los Angeles Steamship Company (LASSCO) in 1920 created a regular, reliable, and expedient way for people to travel between Honolulu, Los Angeles by way of San Pedro Harbor, and San Francisco. LASSCO offered the "smoothest of all lines of steamship travel on the Pacific" and its two ships, the *S.S. City of Los Angeles* and the *S.S. Calawai,* advertised luxurious accommodations on its "Great Circle Route of Sunshine."[240] Based on their fame and success, Lawson and Galang would have been able to afford the regular trips to and from the mainland their careers required.

[238] Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art,* 10-11.
[239] Carmen Forquer Nyssen, "A Roundtrip Ticket to Tattoo: From So.Cal to Honolulu," *Buzzworthy Tattoo History*, Accessed: June 10, 2021, **http://buzzworthytattoo.com/a-roundtrip-ticket-to-tattoo-from-so-cal-to-honolulu-hawaii/.**
[240] Los Angeles Steamship Company brochure, distributed by C.J. Jones Steamship Agency, 1927-1928.

Since the early 1900s, San Francisco's status as a port city attracted many tattooers to its urban space. The Barbary Coast and Embarcadero areas bustled with sailors, merrymakers, and tourists seeking urban thrills. Tattooers embedded themselves into the fabric of these working-class neighborhoods. Before the rise of Market Street arcades as the city's tattooing epicenters, shops were located in and around ethnic Chinese and Italian neighborhoods and gained a reputation as seedy places of vice. Nevertheless, artists became renowned for their custom work.

C.J. "Pop" Eddy, one of the premiere tattooers and tattoo machine producers in California in the 1930s and 1940s, circulated his business card featuring a photographed image of a man's back tattooed with three horse heads (the Pharaoh's Horses) framed by roses. His arms are tattooed with a woman's portrait on one side and a resting bald eagle on another. Both elbows are marked with spider webs; the spaces between the lines shaded in bold black ink. The text on the card reads: "C.J. Eddy (Tattoo Artist) 'Meet me face to face;' 4 Embarcadero – San Francisco." Eddy also tattooed out of a shop on Market Street; a space he shared with Herb's Barber Shop. This shared business setup was more common in East Coast spaces like New York City, but less common on the West Coast. This made Eddy's shop a unique destination for San Francisco clients.

**"You Ripe, I Eat You": Social and Spatial Negotiations in Pinoy Tattooing**

Domingo Galang was born in Santa Ana, Pampanga Province, Philippines in 1886. By 1917, Galang became one of the most "well known local tattooer[s]" in Hawaii. His travels with Jack Gould and his interactions with other white tattooers in California suggest that his prominence was equally well known on the U.S. Pacific Coast.[241] By the time of his death in 1926, Galang became an icon of early Americana tattooing. Galang's life as a migrant tattooer was characteristic of many other interwar migrant Pina/oys: transient, fugitive, unfixed. The U.S. tattoo industry,

[241] "Domingo Galang" in "Obituaries" section, *The Honolulu Advertiser*, June 5, 1926 (4).

already bearing criminal associations, heightened Pina/oy associations with illicit activity (as discussed in Chapter Two). Galang's position caused increased police surveillance and mass visibility via his clientele. Still, Galang's reputation and influence in the tattoo industry across Hawaii and California placed him in a unique position of power for a Pina/oy migrant during this period.

Bert Grimm, storied artist often regarded as one of the iconic characters in the history of Americana tattooing, credits Domingo Galang with giving him his first machines and artistic "instructions" as a young tattooer in Honolulu sometime before Grimm opened his first tattoo shop in Chicago in 1916. This is one of the few times Galang appears in the historical record but his interaction with Grimm is significant because of how Grimm is remembered as a legend in the historical development of the Americana style.

Grimm opened shops in Chicago, St. Louis, and Long Beach – a geospatial trajectory reflecting the migratory nature of the tattoo industry and the importance of tattooing as a cultural outlet for leisure, pleasure, and sociality. Galang opened his first shop at 272 North King Street in Downtown Honolulu, a prime space to take advantage of the droves of sailors funneled in and out of the Pacific port during World War I. The island's two Army bases, one Naval base, and one Air Force base supplied a steady stream of young men eager to mark their bodies with permanent mementos to their military experience. This placed Galang, and the many Filipino tattooers that reportedly set up shop in Downtown Honolulu and Chinatown, at the heart of a growing industry of subversive subcultural artists at the intersections of jingoism, nationalism, race, and eroticism.

Servicemen, specifically sailors, were the primary customers of tattoo shops in port cities like Hawaii, San Francisco, and San Pedro, California. World War I intimately transformed the relationship Filipinos had with the U.S. military. In 1916, President Wilson signed a Naval Act

that expanded the size of the U.S. Navy to 150 new vessels and required able hands to man them. At the same time, Filipinos became the primary agents of U.S. military control in the Philippines, as the white and black soldiers in the Philippine Constabulary were moved to fight in other imperial conflicts. These Filipinos were conditioned to be "loyal to the colonial government and bound to support U.S. interests as if they were their own. Two decades of colonial counter-insurgency had generated an institution that blurred the line between soldiering and policing."[242] These Filipinos also comprised the population of U.S. servicemen who frequented tattoo shops during shore leave.

The tattoo industry expanded across the Pacific and eventually informed the form and socialities of tattoo destinations like San Francisco's North Beach and Los Angeles's Main Street. Galang was one of the most prominently known, but under-advertised, tattooers on Oahu. Galang's prominence as the premiere tattooer on Honolulu by 1916 gained him access to modes of travel not often accessible to the larger population of Pinoy migrant laborers entering Hawaii and the continental United States during this period. Like the Pinoy agricultural workers hired by white American farmers, Filipino tattooers' work was seasonal and sometimes required travel on inroads made by the U.S. empire. Galang and other Pinoy tattooers occasionally traveled to the U.S. Pacific Coast to find work, socialize and exchange trade secrets with other tattooers, or stay close to clients with whom established artistic friendships formed.

Galang's relationship and proximity to Jack Gould – whose time in the editorial limelight reflected a broader cultural fascination with the tattooed individual – coincides with accounts from tattooers like Bert Grimm, Charles Wagner, Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins, and Artoria Gibbons on the transient character of the industry and its practitioners. It would be reasonable to suggest that other Pinoy tattooers also engaged in similar practices of migration that allowed for them to

[242] Christopher Capozzola, *Bound By War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America's First Pacific Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), 89.

interact with interwar communities in ways that were distinct because of their involvement in their artistic crafts. Furthermore, the realities of a homosocial world of bachelors – both Pinoy and white – encouraged much bonding among men. A discussion of whether these manifested in to queer relationships is a topic for further research.[243] In their travels, Pinoy tattooers changed the geo-social spaces of tattooing by functioning as visible transmitters of a budding cultural style in the Americana aesthetic.

By the 1930s, another Filipino tattooer, Tino "Rosie" Camanga, was rising to fame with his distinct infusion of Filipino immigrant humor into the Americana style. Images of lips eating ripe cherries oozed with more sexual innuendo than the pin-up models that Camanga's white contemporaries were putting out. Carabaos and scorpions, images identifiable as distinctly Filipino, filled the flash sheets of pre-made tattoo designs adorning Camanga's shop walls. In his book of compiled Camanga artwork, San Francisco tattooing icon Don Ed Hardy characterized "Rosie" as "the real thing: immensely prolific, completely sincere, and driven by a passion for drawing that ultimately sought to satisfy only himself."[244]

Camanga began tattooing in Honolulu sometime during the 1930s and used the language of sex and drugs in his flash designs. After World War II, Camanga met Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins and exchanged stories. Camanga was born in the Philippines in 1910. A self-taught artist, Camanga migrated to Honolulu sometime in the 1930s. Around 1944, Camanga gained employment in a Downtown/Chinatown tattoo shop. Apocryphal accounts of Camanga's introduction to the tattoo subculture claim that he walked into a tattoo parlor one day saying that

[243] Queer tattooer, pornographer, and literature professor Samuel Steward, known in tattooing circles as Phil Sparrow, highlighted the subtle queer socialities of tattoo culture in his work, *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos*. Sparrow's revelations regarding the sexual lives of clients and mentors reflected the historically queer relationalities between clients and artists in the American tattoo industry.

[244] Lane Wilcken, *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd.), 98-115; *Folk Art Tattoo Flash: Rosie*, Ed. Don Ed Hardy, San Francisco: Hardy Marks Publications, 2011.

he wanted to learn the trade. Camanga claimed to have sketched his whole life and that he learned to tattoo by watching other Pinoy tattooers plying their trade. Unconvinced, the shop owner told Camanga that if he could prove his merit, he would pay Camanga fifty dollars. Camanga tattooed a piece on his own leg, swayed the shop owner's mind, and was given a spot in the shop.

Despite its probable embellishments, this story highlights several significant dynamics of the interwar tattoo culture in Honolulu. The first is that the tattoo scene in Honolulu continued to uphold its restrictive traditions. Western tattooing's associations with criminality and fugitivity developed by the turn of the nineteenth century as transpacific lines of contact reoriented the forms and styles of tattoo aesthetics in the United States. This attitude permeated the backrooms and alleyway entrances of tattoo shops on Oahu. Los Angeles and San Francisco mirrored these dynamics in California.

The second of these dynamics was the relationship between white and nonwhite artists along the tattooing circuit. The U.S. acquisition of the Philippines at the turn of the century stimulated and continued the movement of Filipino labor to American territories. Hawaii and California arose as sites of contested meaning making for these subcultural members of the fugitive art of skin modification. Pinoys were treated as expendable, excludable labor and their tenuous classification as U.S. nationals made them targets of particularly virulent violence. As laborers organized themselves into ethnic unions to combat workplace inequities and boxers meted out a living in and around the pugilistic circuits, Pinoys also found opportunity in the world of tattooing.

According to accounts by Don Ed Hardy, "Rosie" spent much of the 1940s catering to the demand for tattoos from military personnel stationed or passing through Honolulu. In the city's penny arcades, dance halls, government-sanctioned whorehouses, and tattoo shops emerged a migrant social world populated by Pinoy migrants. The wartime years saw Camanga drawing

hundreds of sheets of flash. This experience gave the artists the track record to open his own shop. Camanga tattooed up and down Hotel Street until the early 1990s. His last shop was run out of a former shoeshine stand on the edge of Chinatown, retiring shortly after demand for tattooing slowed significantly.

The proliferation of flash as a medium through which tattooers could showcase their artistic prowess and advertise the quality of their designs created a new mode by which a tattooer might secure a legacy within these subcultural circles. For artists, widely circulated flash designs reflected other artists' acknowledgement of their skills. Copying flash – albeit with some slight variations on themes or compositions – became commonplace. The longevity of some designs – like the rose, the panther, the dragon, or the pin-up girl – signaled an artist's place within the ad hoc hierarchy of early twentieth century tattooers. This makes it doubly important that some Pina/oy Americana flash survived in the personal archives of contemporary tattooers. Rare as they are, their accessibility creates the conditions of possibility for artists to utilize them in this tradition of deliberate duplication.

Hardy's accounts of Camanga's skills were taken from Sailor Jerry Collins's assessments: "primitive" but sober and industrious. Camanga's shop was, like many tattoo parlors from the early- to mid-twentieth century, small and densely decorated with "layer upon layer" of hand-drawn flash designs characterized by its uniqueness, even amongst the creative individuality of the tattooing community. Hardy characterized Rosie as "the real thing: immensely prolific, completely sincere, and driven by a passion for drawing that ultimately sought to satisfy only himself."

Hardy saw in Camanga a volatile combination of humor and tough-mindedness. Camanga's "sly humor helped keep him afloat" amidst a "volatile honky-tonk environment" of

Honolulu's subcultural underbelly. Camanga eventually shifted from the standard practice of producing the patriotic flash images emblematic of the traditional Americana style to designs that challenged the boundaries of established tattooing conventions. These images were laced with "a wacky mixture of cartoon humor, lofty emotions, menace, and smoldering sexuality" complemented and complicated by the fragmented English phrases of Camanga's second language.


**Fig. 3.3.** Part of a larger flash sheet painted by Tino "Rosie" Camanga, ca. 1930s. The bright colors contrasting the vivid black shading are emblematic of the Americana style. Camanga's drawings are unique because of several idiosyncratic details differentiating his art and wordplay from those of his contemporaries.[245]

[245] Images of these flash paintings are reproduced in *Folk Art Tattoo Flash: Rosie*, Ed. Don Ed Hardy, San Francisco: Hardy Marks Publications, 2011.

**"They Sure Do Holler an Awful Lot": Mobilizing the Legacies of Interwar Pina/oy Tattooers**

On April 9, 1933, Martina Yagyagan, her husband Piabiano Yagyagan, and Valentine Quijano were arrested and charged with selling obscene pictures to Eugene E. Dock, "who recently was arrested on a federal charge of sending such pictures through the mails."[246] The contents of the pictures were not revealed. But Martina was an established tattoo artist in Honolulu, one of the few Pinay tattooers to gain fame in the island from the 1930s to the 1950s. It is not surprising, then, that the Yagyagans were involved in this intersection with the law. Attempts to regulate tattoo work, especially work by Filipinos, reflected a broader orientalist fear of nonwhite Eastern cultures. On September 26, 1929, *Pasadena Post* columnist Estelle Lawton Lindsey published an article relating of "one distressing tragedy in Hong Kong – a young British sailor contracted leprosy while being tattooed." Citing unsanitary practices apparently normalized in Far Eastern tattoo practices, Lindsey continued: "Granting the very remote danger of such eventuality in this country, there are other blood taints that might very readily be conveyed through improperly sterilized needles."[247]

When the *Saturday Evening Post* published its March 4, 1944 issue with Norman Rockwell's *The Tattoo Artist* on its front cover, tattooing came onto full display into the homes and imaginations of Americans entrenched in the wartime culture of World War II. Rockwell's image, of a waistcoat-clad white man tattooing the name, "Betty," onto the arm of a sailor whose previous paramours were stricken out, created a perception of the tattoo industry as it emerged during the wartime years: white, male, military, and impulsive. The faceless artist is hunched over, back to the viewer, fully engrossed in the marking process, a tongue-in-cheek commentary by Rockwell on the whimsy and permanence of the Americana style. In the painting's background,

[246] "Three Face Charges," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Mon, Apr. 10, 1933.
[247] Estelle Lawton Lindsey, "Log of Good Ship Life," *Pasadena Post*, Thurs, Sept. 26, 1929.

numerous flash designs are displayed like wallpaper – or like selectable flash on the walls of a tattoo shop – for potential viewers to observe.

Herein lies the significance of Rockwell's painting: it breaks the walls of secrecy and intimacy that surrounded the subcultural spaces of American tattooing for the previous three decades. This artist's rendering gives the viewer direct access to a world characterized by fugitivity. For the viewer, the tattoo shop is bright, colorful, humorous, and amenable to mainstream acceptance because of its adherence to jingoistic propaganda supporting the U.S. war effort in Europe and the Pacific. According to Rockwell, the tattoo shop and its proprietors were clean, respectable, and professional – different from the seedy reputation of circus freaks, dock-working brutes, or hardened criminals. The racial character of artist and client – both white males engaged in different modes of expressive patriotic labor – would have appealed to middle-class anxieties about integration that became more prominent during World War II.

World War II heightened domestic racial tensions. Despite a 1942 report by the Army's Bureau of Intelligence stating that the vast majority of white Americans were "unaware that there is any such thing as a 'Negro problem' in the United States, signs of racial discontent were readily visible. A. Philip Randolph's 1941 call for a march on Washington for jobs and freedom sought to address employment discrimination, especially in an expanding defense industry that employed less than one percent  African Americans in 1940. Following an attack on the U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Executive Order 9066 initiated the forced relocation of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast into concentration camps in the name of national security. Ironically, persons of Japanese descent living in Hawaii were generally exempt from internment because, at around forty percent of the population, their labor was integral to the Hawaiian economy. When white servicemen and police in Los Angeles attacked young Mexican

American, Filipino American, and African American youth wearing zoot suits in 1943, bitter racial tensions once again erupted into violence. Similar attacks in San Diego, Detroit, New York, and Toronto reflected widespread racial tensions. Mobile, Alabama and Beaumont, Texas also had "hate strikes" and racial violence. These events reflected the undergirding racial and classed tensions in domestic U.S. society during World War II.

This context heightens the significance of Rockwell's *The Tattoo Artist* because of how it attempts to calm the ripples of racial unease under a theme of national unity dependent on whiteness and patriotism. Rockwell, already a prominent popular cultural icon thanks to his illustrations of the *Four Freedoms* stoking national *communitas* and narratives of shared struggle rooted in continued imperial domination in the Pacific and democratic principles worldwide. That even the actors associated with a criminal, fugitive subculture could achieve respectability through its choices of artistic expression, soothes white American anxieties concerning the persistent racial unrest that threatened to actively undermine narratives of national unity and common-good wartime politics.

In August of 1941, the *Honolulu Advertiser* published a feature article titled, "Tattoo Industry in Midst of Defense Boom." Journalist Lee Van Atta interviewed three Honolulu tattoo artists in their studios, some in the middle of applying their work on clients. Japanese tattooer George Yoshino, whose shop was marked by an "artistic tattooing" sign over his Hotel Street location, had been tattooing for twenty-two years after learning to tattoo from his father after a visit from Harry V. Lawson. Leveraging his experience, Yoshino rationalized charging more for the quality of his work: "from a $1 social security number on your arm or chest to a $350 (complete) rendition of the Lord's prayer – which would hold forth on your back in solitary splendor for as long as you drew breath – and perhaps a lot longer than that." Yoshino expressed

appreciation of the defense industry for supplying him with a steady stream of clients "and wishes more civilians would take an interest in tattooing." Diomisio S. Riturban, the owner of a Pauahi Street tattoo shop, commented that the popular designs of the moment were "hula girls, anchors, and sailing ships." The third interviewee was Martina Yagyagan.[248]

Yagyagan's space, described by Van Atta as a "stand" despite it being one of the "'Big Three' parlors – the three open for after-dark work," charged $2.50 for a sword inscribed with "Death Before Dishonor," $4.25 for "nude women in various poses." Yagyagan notably had "the most modern collection of war ships ready for transfer to skin" that undoubtedly appealed to sailors. Yagyagan claimed that she began tattooing in Honolulu "only because the fleet was here" to sustain her twenty-year tattoo career. Attacking sailors' manliness, Yagyagan quipped that sailors "sure do holler an awful lot when they get in that chair."[249] Yagyagan continued the tradition of women staking claims to space and power over the masculine culture of interwar Navy culture. That Yagyagan was a Pinay tattooer of Americana designs occupying and thriving in these hypermasculine spaces while incorporating new flash motifs into the repository of Americana images significantly troubles the notion that white men cornered the industry during the Golden Age of Tattooing.

[248] Lee Van Atta, "Tattoo Industry in Midst of Defense Boom," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Sun, Aug. 24, 1941.
[249] Lee Van Atta, "Tattoo Industry in Midst of Defense Boom," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Sun, Aug. 24, 1941.

CHAPTER FOUR

## Scrapping into a Knot: Pinoy Boxers, Transpacific Fans, and the Troubling of Interwar California's Racial Regimes.

These little Filipinos are fearless warriors. They fight to the very end of the string … with the fanatical courage of their forbears and keep going at a pace that no white man can travel.

- Manning Vaughan, *The Milwaukee Journal*, 1926

Years of degradation came into the Filipino's face. All the fears of his life were here – in the white hand against his face. Was there no place where he could escape?

- Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart*, 1943

### "Splendid Little Boxers of the Philippines:" Pugilists, Fans, and a Life of Fighting

This chapter explores the contingent possibilities and cultural affects generated in the social spaces of boxing by Pinoy fighters and fans in California in the 1920s and 1930s. In response to the growing visibility of Pina/oys in the urban and rural spaces of California, white lawmakers and police viewed gatherings of rowdy Filipino fans as dangers to the social order. Boxers mobilized their experiences as laborers in their pugilistic performances. Ultimately, pugilists and fans made use of the cultures of the sport in ways that were not intended by industry promoters. This relationship between interwar Pinoy boxing and Filipino migration gestures to the long-historical processes of counterscripting that continued well after Spanish colonization, when U.S. imperialism reconfigured collective memories of Pina/oy identity and relationships to power. These dynamics were present during some of the period's most prominent spectacles of pugilistic performance.

On the evening of September 7, 1925, Pinoy pugilistic prospect Inocencio "Clever Sencio" Moldez stepped into the ring to headline his North American flyweight debut against Irishman Mickey Gill in front of a packed house in San Francisco's Recreation Park. The twenty thousand fans in attendance brimmed with enthusiasm for the main event, which was billed as a showcase

for a fighter promoted as the spiritual successor to the late Filipino flyweight champion Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo. This hype grew from the Binang Bullet's (Sencio's other boxing moniker) transpacific reputation as a "lion-hearted" brawler whose aggressive style gained him the begrudging respect of white fans and the adulation of Filipina/os across the diaspora.[250]

Color commentary radio broadcasts of Sencio's quick second-round victory reached eager listeners across California, bolstering the contender's reputation and raising concerns among whites eager to police the Filipino migrant population. Reporter Manning Vaughan interpreted Sencio's performance through the civilizationist logics of benevolent assimilation[251] when he stated that "these little Filipinos… keep going at a pace that no white man can travel."[252] Yet Sencio and his fans understood that Pinoys' fistic dominance in the ring was often checked by white violence beyond it. Pinoy novelist Carlos Bulosan cited the toll that "years of degradation… all of the fears of his life" put onto a migrant's body and spirit, creating a longing for a "place where he could escape."[253] The boxing arena functioned as a place for fighters and fans intent on imagining alternative lifeways to feed their radical imaginations. Clever Sencio's labor in the U.S. professional boxing circuit illustrates the intimate connections between interwar fighters, fans, and

[250] Kay Owe, "Fernandez to Battle Taylor: Filipino Meets Bud Tuesday in Olympic Feature," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Mar 4, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A5; Ed Tolentino, "Villa vs Sencio: the tragic fate that befell boxers in first all-Filipino world title fight," *Spin.Ph*, accessed 8 August 2020, https://www.spin.ph/boxing/villa-vs-sencio-and-the-tragic-fate-of-two-boxers-in-first-all-filipino-world-title-fight.
[251] U.S. President William McKinley's policy of "Benevolent Assimilation," issued on 21 December 1898, outlined the process for establishing military governance over the Philippines that painted the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines as nonviolent and nonthreatening. For histories of this policy implementation in the Philippines, see: Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Frank Hindman Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898 – 1946* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899 – 1902* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007).
[252] Pete Ehrmann, "One of the Fastest and Most Thrilling Fights in Milwaukee Boxing History," *OnMilwaukee*, accessed 10 June 2020, https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/boxingsencio.
[253] Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), 145.

the boxing industry; connections that highlight the precarities and possibilities of Pinoy pugilistic labor and lifeways during Pinoy boxing's golden age.

In the context of a global depression, restrictive Asian immigration policies, memories of Spanish and U.S. colonization, and heightened racial violence toward Filipinos in California, boxing became a fulcrum for Pina/oy cultural meaning-making and transpacific social negotiation. The boxing industry channeled the racial, classed, and gendered pressures of U.S. imperialism onto Pina/oy migrant bodies. Working-class Filipinos expressed their support for their favorite boxers, energizing their daily fights for survival against oppressive structures of labor and law enforcement. Middle-class Pina/oys interpreted boxers' victories over white opponents as proof of the Philippine people's respectability and readiness for political independence.[254]

Fresh from a revolution that upended three centuries of Spanish colonial rule in 1896, a newly independent Philippine republic sought global recognition as a nation state. However, following the U.S. acquisition of the archipelago from Spain in 1898, the lives of Filipinos became more directly intertwined with the interests of U.S. capital.[255] An American system of education driven by exceptionalist discourses ultimately racialized its supposed beneficiaries and continued a trend of U.S. expansionism in the spirit of settler colonialism. Under the pretense of more accessible opportunities for even the most impoverished family alongside the recent experience of revolution from Spanish colonial rule in 1896, this change seemed promising for a fledgling republic. According to Bulosan, the institutionalized education which accompanied U.S. troops

[254] Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 10-11. Molina argues that the practice of producing counterscripts reflects how "oppressed groups voiced their own narratives." These "practices of resistance, claims for dignity, and downright refusal to take it anymore" informed radical imaginations across connected racial groups. While Molina utilizes this framework in an analysis of U.S. immigration structures, the idea of counterscripts can be tentatively used to think about Filipino boxers (as racialized migrant bodies in the eyes of U.S. society and the boxing industry) when considering the cultural affects of their performances in and beyond the ring.
[255] Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014 (1946)), xv.

seemed to suddenly blunt the atrocities of the Philippine-American War in the public's consciousness while creating the structural conditions of economic exploitation that fueled migration out of the Philippines. Bulosan observed how "those who could no longer tolerate existing conditions adventured into the new land, for the opening of the United States to them was one of the gratifying provisions of the peace treaty that culminated the Spanish-American War."[256]

By the 1920s, "Filipinos were in demand as another source of exploitable labor because U.S. exclusionary policies beginning in 1882 had effectively restricted the immigration of other Asians who had worked in California's fields and Alaska's canneries."[257] The U.S. presence in the Pacific introduced a capitalist mode of economic organization that intensified rural poverty and forced many Filipina/os to seek work in the rapidly industrializing Philippine cities or venture abroad with the same purpose.[258] The presence of Pinoy migrant laborers in the continental United States heightened interwar racial tensions, especially in California. Whiteness as a social construction with distinct modes of social capital was under fire from an othered population of laborers imagined as job stealers and insidious agents of chaos during the Depression and New Deal periods.[259] In his memoir, *America is in the Heart*, Bulosan asserts that by the 1910s "the younger generation, influenced by false American ideals and modes of living, had become total strangers to the older generation."[260] This generational tension gestures to the structural inequalities created under the U.S. racial regime in the Pacific. It also provides a glimpse into the socioeconomic and political landscape in which the sporting lives of Filipino pugilism developed. By placing these experiences in the context of a larger history of colored people's exploitation and

[256] Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*, 5.
[257] Day, *Alien Capital*, 16-17.
[258] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 26.
[259] See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 5-12.
[260] Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*, 5.

exclusion, we can examine how the cultural influence of the interwar Pinoy boxing industry informed racial counterscripts for fighters and fans.

Historians of Pinoy boxing highlight the distinctions between fighters and fans, wherein icons of the sport were rallying points for transpacific ethnic unity. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon and Linda España-Maram rightly and convincingly argue that pugilists became symbols of Filipino perseverance within the racial structures of U.S. empire. Apocryphally, Black soldiers introduced the sport of boxing to Filipinos resisting U.S. occupation on the northern island of Luzon during the Philippine-American War in 1899. These convergences of racial subjectivities illustrate how conditions of possibility were created in the interstitial spaces of empire between racialized groups.[261] Boxing in general cultivated militant sensibilities in a "tradition of countercultural exchange between subaltern peoples."[262] These sensibilities were not limited to a one-sided transmission from fighters to fans. Pinoy boxing specifically functioned to "remember and reorder history" for fans living within disenfranchising structures of U.S. capital, teaching Pinoys in California "counterhegemonic maneuvers" that troubled their marginalization by organizing collective memories toward everyday survival.[263] Fans likewise transmitted their counterhegemonic, militant sensibilities to boxers before, during, and after their performances in the ring. While critical to the broader history, existing narratives of Pinoy boxing spend less time

[261] For more on the links between boxing, Black soldiers in the Philippines, and early Filipino boxing see: Theresa Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother: Black American and Filipino Boxers and the 'Rising Tide of Color'" in *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance beyond Harlem*, eds. Davarian L. Baldwin and Minkah Makalani (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 107; See also, Frank Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
[262] Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother," 105.
[263] Linda España-Maram's *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 73-103; Dawn Mabalon's *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 127-129.

discussing this latter dynamic: how fans and fan experiences shaped boxers' performances within the boxing industry.

This chapter highlights the fighters, fans, contested social spaces, and cultural technologies of the transpacific boxing industry in its California context between 1920 and 1941. Working-class Pinoys stubbornly asserted their contingent semi-autonomy through the ostentatious practice of the cultures of boxing and the sporting life.[264] Within this larger working-class population, migrants' actions further contested assumed relationships to state and middle-class power while destabilizing categorical assumptions of the Filipino diaspora in California as a controllable, homogenous, and expendable labor source.

What sensations did fans and pugilists generate, mediate, and perpetuate around a fight? Who were boxing fans and how were they positioned in boxing's political economy? What were fans' roles in the social maneuvering of boxers? How did the physical spaces of the fight and the geographies of spectatorship function as critical junctures of popular cultural socialities? How were fights and fighters remembered? This chapter addresses these thematic questions as it contextualizes the rise of the Great Pinoy Boxing Era.[265]

Pina/oys in California were close followers of boxing's intimacies and radical potential to mobilize fighters and fans around social politics of dignity and militancy within U.S. racial regimes. Pinoy boxers' impressive in-ring gameness from 1920 to 1941 created the conditions of possibility for Pinoy fans in California to articulate their radical desires for freedom against white and Pina/oy middle class notions of respectability. These notions allayed political import to boxers' victories and perpetuated a narrative of "good" Pinoys based in heteronormative

[264] Per George Lipsitz: "autonomy" here is framed via Gustavo Esteva and other intellectuals associated with EZLN as activity grounded in what people do for themselves and that do not demand immediate help from the state.
[265] Corky Pasquil, *The Great Pinoy Boxing Era*, directed by Agrifino Edralin, Jr. (1994, YouTube), online documentary film.

expectations of masculinity and manliness that coincided with the language of U.S. empire in the early twentieth century.[266] Pinoy fighters and fans mutually inspired the cultivation of semi-autonomous lives through work, leisure, and pleasure within the sporting culture of interwar boxing.[267] The space of the boxing venue made possible the creative intimacies that challenged interwar regimes of race invested in surveilling and controlling Pinoy bodies.

**"Knocking Down Opponents… Knocking Down Nickels:" Boxing as Migrant Labor**

Apart from a handful of icons like Pancho Villa and Ceferino Garcia, most of the hundreds of Pinoy boxers could not make a living within the boxing industry alone. While a day of fighting might have yielded ten times more than what they would have been paid as agricultural or service workers, the grueling nature of training and travel were often difficult for journeymen fighters to sustain.[268] The personal and recreational demands of the sporting life also regularly led to fighters needing to refill their coffers. For example, Pinoy contender and featherweight champion of the Orient Pete Sarmiento earned over $150,000 in eight years fighting in the United States and lost most of it through gambling.[269] His manager, Frank Churchill, recalled how "almost everything he made went that way." Significantly higher payouts in the United States motivated the twenty-

[266] See Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, University of Chicago Press, 1996.
[267] For this term, I pull from Louis Althusser's discussions of "relative autonomy" under structures of capitalism as discussed in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," trans. Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press, 1971). Originally published in *La Pensée*, 1970, accessed Dec 26, 2020, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm. I use "semi-autonomy" as a framework because Filipino migrants engaged this culture in sites where the hegemony of racial regimes persisted. Therefore, I do not want to overemphasize autonomy as being an ultimately liberalized state that Filipinos of any class were able to attain during this period or any period.
[268] A journeyman fighter could hope to earn around ten dollars in one night of fighting, while agricultural work often paid about one dollar per day. See Mabalon and España-Maram.
[269] Sarmiento's journalist friend, Damon Runyon, remarked that Sarmiento "fought upwards of 300 battles [over twelve years], made perhaps $300,000, and spent it all." See Mike Casey, "Whirlwind: Pancho Villa Was Dempsey in Miniature," *CyberBoxingZone* (2007), accessed 3 March 2019, http://www.cyberboxingzone.com/boxing/casey/MC_Villa.htm.

seven-year-old Sarmiento to fight Oaklander Al Crisp in San Francisco in September of 1928.[270] Admitting that his fight career was nearing its end, the former longshoreman and streetcar conductor hoped to win enough prize money to finish constructing a house in the Philippines for his American wife and daughter.[271] Sarmiento's experience underscores how Pinoy boxers' constant geographical movement straddled lines of migrant labor and pugilism, frequently troubling the racial scripts deployed to control Pinoy routes of sociality.[272]

Moreover, amateur and journeymen pugilists frequently shifted between their roles as spectated fighters and spectating fans. Fighters were fans at various levels of proximity to the sport. In their time away from the ring, fighters like Sarmiento projected their pugilistic experiences onto traditional forms of Pinoy migrant labor. When they fought, Pinoy boxers pulled from their militant labor experiences to trouble interwar racial logics.

Fans participated in the sporting life through amateur competitions like the "Far Western National Fistic Tourney" held on 1 November 1926 in San Francisco's Dreamland Auditorium that attracted eighty-six Pacific Coast "ringsters."[273] While some fought "unattached," many of these pugilists were affiliated with sports associations across California. Clubs like the Los Angeles Athletic Club (L.A.A.C.) and the Olympic Club in San Francisco registered Filipino agricultural and service workers inspired by the successes of their prizefighting idols. Manilatown sporting clubs across California also provided a space for fans to try their luck in the ring and train

[270] A *Washington Post* article printed a month before the Sarmiento-Crisp fight mentioned that "the most [Sarmiento] got for any one fight [in the Philippines] was about $600, as contrasted to nearly $7000 for fighting Bud Taylor in the U.S.A."
[271] "Boxer Seeks to Recoup Fortune," *The Washington Post (1923-1954);* Oct 15, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post pg. 14.
[272] Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 6-9. Molina defines "racial scripts" as the shared processes of racialization that marginalized groups experience under historically contingent racial projects which also give rise to "counterscripts that offer alternatives or directly challenge dominant racial scripts."
[273] "Amateur Ringmen Clash," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Nov 2, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B3.

alongside fellow Pinoys. Though cash prizes sometimes incentivized participation, most amateur boxing tournaments yielded no prize money. That did not deter boxers from paying to fight for local recognition. "Big-time amateur boxing" held regularly at the Olympic Auditorium and the L.A.A.C. in Los Angeles attracted thousands of "rabid fans." In December of 1934, Filipino George Alcantara (fighting out of the U.S.S. Oklahoma) fought in the main bout against L.A. favorite Herbie Hansford for a "silver trophy [presented by] Doris Roche, New York musical comedy star."[274] While some boxers may have hoped to fight professionally, most amateurs sought *communitas* and visibility in the counterhegemonic spaces constructed through the sporting life.[275]

To afford the sporting life, amateur pugilists worked fields, canneries, and hotels to save enough money to train and travel. This oscillation between multiple sites of labor challenges some historians' arguments that "excepting punching in the ring, many boxers hardly knew anything else… boxing was their job, and if they wouldn't have boxed, they would have struggled in life."[276] Boxing was already an inherently precarious career defined by struggle where success was often fleeting. As Linda España-Maram noted, around one hundred forty-seven men applied for boxing licenses from the California State Athletic Commission in 1935. This group – which included Pinoy, Mexican, and Black fighters – were either unemployed or worked unskilled jobs. Boxing provided a space of interracial exposure that, for Pinoys, stirred up memories of solidarity built with Black boxing soldiers in the Philippines since 1898.[277] For many Pinoys, boxing was another

[274] "Ring Foes Vie Tonight," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Dec 3, 1934; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg.12.
[275] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (1998), trans. Timothy Campbell (Stanford University Press, 2009); Edith Turner, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). I am pulling from Turner and Esposito's anthropological discussions of *communitas* as the shared feelings of togetherness felt by liminal groups within a broader sociocultural structure grounded in experiences of "constitutive alterity." Esposito frames community as obligatory debt, not "property" to be defended against outsiders.
[276] Vlad Roșca, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, "The Political Economy of World Heavyweight Boxing during the Great Depression," *Theoretical and Applied Economics Volume XIX* 1, no. 566 (2012): 134.
[277] Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 91.

form of migrant work – one with high risks and sometimes high rewards. The gym and boxing ring were sites of struggle that gestured to the time, sweat, and blood Filipino migrants were willing to invest into an alternative way to make a living (and live) despite constant threats of erasure.[278]

Many Filipino boxers supplemented their income by working in the fields or in maritime trades – being exposed to and perhaps engaging in militant union organizing in the process. For example, featherweight Pete Sarmiento worked as a streetcar conductor and longshoreman to supplement his boxing income.[279] Even Sarmiento's proximity to stardom did not exempt him from needing employment outside of prizefighting. His membership in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 13 throughout the interwar period would have exposed him to the union's militant activism in Southern California, especially during the 1934 West Coast waterfront strikes. This is significant because it suggests that fighters – especially those who stacked the undercards or just barely broke past local fame – brought these radicalizing experiences to the fight.

Filipino boxers and fans in California between 1920 and 1941 mutually mobilized radical imaginations to creatively express a politics of dissent and liberation from oppressive racial regimes. As the sport of boxing developed into an influential transpacific cultural institution, Filipino fans influenced pugilists' performative politics in and out of the ring. Proximity to fans' migrant labor experiences informed boxers' ring entrances, fighting styles, and conspicuous consumerism. As they worked and performed in interconnected urban and rural spaces, Pinoy

[278] For more on early twentieth century boxing as a form of waged labor, see Louis Moore's *I Fight for a Living: Boxing and the Battle for Black Manhood, 1880-1915*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017; For the cultural and social reach of boxing, see Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.[it might help to reference sources on boxing as a test of white male heroism to inform readers about why the success of Filipino boxers was threatening. It also might help to show that Filipino boxers marketed their ethnic working class difference – Ceferino Garcia advertised his "bolo" punch supposedly learned from cutting sugar cane.]

[279] "Filipino Fighters Entertain Ring Fans," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Apr 21, 1941; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 21.

boxers and their fans destabilized assumptions about race, class, gender, and sexuality while negotiating claims to power, space, and citizenship during this period. The growth of radio technology and fight films added new possibilities for boxers' media promotion along these migrant routes of performance. Broadcasts and shows presented boxing as a manly art, giving Pinoy pugilists and fans opportunities to cultivate sensibilities outside the arena, troubling white social expectations, and counterscripting promoters' economic intentions.[280]

**"Some of the Most Colorful Scrappers in History:" Framing the Sport and Sporting Life**

The sport of boxing was more than consumer leisure. The structures of sport and the sporting life mirrored the racialized power relations of interwar California society.[281] The interwar boxing industry and its popular following reflected and heightened the social, political, and economic tensions of the period. In the case of Filipinos in California, boxing was a locus of violence and possibility. Its rings, gyms, stadiums, theaters, pool halls, and bars were contested terrains wherein Filipino fighters and fans envisioned and witnessed alternative futures in their constant struggles for dignity. These struggles were often centered – though less often contained – in the regulated violence of two men in the squared circle. The context surrounding Clever Sencio's final fight illustrates the fleeting possibilities in the work of boxing and the affects attached to the actions of "some of the most colorful scrappers in ring history – the Little Brown Brothers from the Philippines."[282]

On the morning of 21 April 1926, a window washer in Milwaukee's Plankinton Hotel found Sencio lying dead on a blood-soaked bed. The pugilist succumbed to a post-fight cerebral

[280] See Elliot J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) and Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).
[281] C.L.R. James writes of these dynamics as they applied to cricket in the British West Indies in *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963).
[282] "Filipino Fighters Entertain Ring Fans," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Apr 21, 1941; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 21.

hemorrhage. Authorities rushed to the scene as a frenzy of alarmed phone calls, harried investigations, and a coroner's assessment ensued. After a cursory examination of the evidence, Milwaukee County District Attorney Eugene Wengert promptly dismissed the boxer's death as "just one of those unfortunate things that happen in any sport." But Sencio's transpacific fans were not so callous in mourning one of their rising stars. Boxing was not just any sport. Fan responses gestured to a deeper experience with the sport's disruptive possibilities.[283]

News of Clever Sencio's death quickly spread out of Wisconsin as reports of the "battling mite from the Philippines" dying after a stellar performance reached California and the Philippines within the week. Sencio made a name and garnered his fan base putting on spectacular performances in California arenas. Of his thirteen U.S. fights, nine were in stadiums in Los Angeles, Vernon, San Francisco, or Hollywood, and only one of these contests ended in an official loss. The media lauded Sencio for his "gameness," a term that encapsulated a fighter's manly willingness to put body and record on the line to give the fans a show. This seemingly wanton abandon Sencio displayed through his sheer aggression in the ring regularly made thousands of spectators cheer him on through thirty minutes of fighting.[284] In just over six months from 1925 to 1926, Clever Sencio became an established name in the California boxing scene. Analysts argued that he was the spiritual successor to the late Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo, Sencio's former opponent, who had won the world flyweight championship in 1923. Because of this popular momentum behind him, Sencio's death sent industry promoters and fans reeling.[285]

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[283] A.P. Night Wire, "Sencio Dies After Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1; "Bud Taylor's Fist Kills Sencio: Filipino Second Ring Victim of Terre Haute Boxer," *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post pg. 15.

[284] A.P. Night Wire, "Sencio Dies After Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1.

[285] Kay Owe, "Fernandez to Battle Taylor: Filipino Meets Bud Tuesday in Olympic Feature," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Mar 4, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A5; Ed Tolentino, "Villa vs Sencio: the tragic fate that befell boxers in first all-Filipino world title fight," *Spin.Ph*,

True to his popular perception, Sencio spent the previous night in the Milwaukee Auditorium dazzling spectators over ten rounds of what was dubbed by one sportscaster as "one of the fastest and most thrilling fights in Milwaukee boxing history" against white Terre Haute powerhouse Charles "Bud" Taylor.[286] A reporter from the *Milwaukee Journal* described how, "for nine rounds, furious and torrid from each gong to the other, Sencio held Taylor on even terms… his incessant punches [leaving] red blotches up and down the American's torso." Taylor, the betting favorite, put everything he had into the tenth round. Reporter Sam Levy observed how, "in Bud's last-round rally, there was a spring, an alertness, a snap and a marked ambition to destroy the little man from Manila."[287] That manifested ambition resulted in the Pinoy being unable to walk back to his dressing room after the fight.

That night, Sencio added a loss to his record and unrecoverable damage to his body. But his performance was "cheered by thousands who were sentimentally inclined in favor of the little brown-skinned boxer against his American opponent."[288] *Milwaukee Journal* reporter Manning Vaughan extrapolated Sencio's performance, characterizing Filipinos as a race displaying "fanatical courage" against overwhelming odds. The flyweight contender put on a "marvelous exhibition of gameness… against the taller and harder-hitting Taylor;" a feat that earned him something far more valuable than an official victory: respect.[289] With respect came recognition and opportunities for more fights, as when sportswriters confidently asserted that Pinoy

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https://www.spin.ph/boxing/villa-vs-sencio-and-the-tragic-fate-of-two-boxers-in-first-all-filipino-world-title-fight, Accessed: 8 August 2020.

[286] Pete Ehrmann, "One of the fastest and most thrilling fights in Milwaukee boxing history," *OnMilwaukee*, accessed 10 June 2020, https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/boxingsencio.

[287] Article by Sam Levy in the *Milwaukee Journal* cited in Pete Ehrmann, "One of the fastest and most thrilling fights in Milwaukee boxing history," *OnMilwaukee*, https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/boxingsencio, Accessed: 10 June 2020.

[288] A.P. Night Wire, "Sencio Dies After Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1.

[289] A.P. Night Wire, "Sencio Dies After Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1.

journeyman Angel De la Cruz "displayed enough ability" in his decisive victory over Alkie Akol in 1925 "to insure himself of future battles."[290] More fights meant greater prospects for financial bulwarks against the poverty that typically forced pugilists to seek manual or service jobs under white bosses. Just as important, the respect earned through a game boxing performance gave fighters and fans a means to "be judged as an equal, which every Pinoy craved."[291] The energy gained from satisfying this craving stayed with Pinoys long after fight night and even reached fans who could not physically witness these exciting displays.


ANSWERS FINAL GONG

Here's Clever Sencio Moldez, famous Filipino flyweight, who was found dead early yesterday morning at Milwaukee, Wis., after his ten-round bout with Bud Taylor, Terre Haute fighter, Monday night.

**Fig. 4.1**. Innocencio "Clever Sencio" Moldez depicted in a 1926 *Los Angeles Times* article reporting the fighter's untimely death. The eighteen-year-old Sencio was lauded by fans for his sunny disposition and gameness in and beyond the ring.

[290] "Bud Taylor Whips Sarmiento in Olympic Ring," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Nov 19, 1925; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1; For a reference to De La Cruz and other Asian/Pacific Islanders in sports, see Joel Franks, *Crossing Sidelines, Crossing Cultures: Sport and Asian Pacific American Cultural Citizenship (Second Edition)*, Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2010 (1999): 40, 1-60.
[291] Peter Bacho, *Dark Blue Suit and Other Stories* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 110.

Like most matches after 1921, the play-by-play commentaries for the Sencio-Taylor bout were broadcast over the airwaves to eager listeners gathered around radios in social sites around California.[292] The advent of radio sports broadcasting in 1921 amplified the ability for fans to participate in fight night as spectators (or listeners) who channeled and projected their energies in support of their favorite fighters. A fighter's continued cultural relevance also allowed fans to anchor their militant imaginations to their favorite fighters. In return, Pina/oy fans made militant by the structural regimes of U.S. empire could energize their pugilistic heroes with their support. While it is difficult to clearly identify this in the sources, reading against the archival grain allows us to reasonably speculate that, because Pinoy boxers were responding to their economic precarity by engaging in a career that promised financial security at its highest levels, pugilists were acutely aware of (or at least personally felt) the consequences of broader structures of racial capital actively disenfranchising them. Because fighters and fans often exchanged roles, these sensibilities could not be contained to any industry-mediated space or within any one Pina/oy group. A fighter's willingness to risk life and limb resonated with Pina/oy spectators' desires for the material markers of success within the market structures of U.S. capitalism. Spending money on clothes, dance hall tickets, and cars – especially in the Depression-era economy – reflected a desire for fulfilled leisure time. Pina/oy fans' desires to live boldly in the moment, when access to incremental means of upward mobility were denied, were reflected back at them in Pinoy pugilists' actions in and out of

[292] As Paul A. Rodell emphasizes in *Culture and Customs of the Philippines* (CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), radio was introduced in the Philippines in the 1920s as an American enterprise. There were only a handful of radio stations – mostly in Manila – that played exclusively anglophone content until the 1940s. The format imitated U.S. radio with variety shows, news, and recorded music. It's unclear whether interwar Philippine radio broadcasted U.S. fights in real time, but boxing news quickly updated Philippine media outlets with bout results. The "Filipinization" of Philippine radio occurred in earnest after WWII.

the ring. Boxers' struggles for pugilistic supremacy entwined with boxing fans' active support for fighters in and out of the ring.[293]

Migrant fans who packed arenas on fight night drew energy and inspiration from pugilistic performers. Equally important, fans' continued support helped sustain a fighter's relevance within the boxing industry. Regardless of a boxer's record, if fans clamored hard enough, bookkeepers, venue promoters, and fight managers often conceded for the sake of a profitable show. Boxers giving fans their money's worth generated revenue for venues intent on filling seats every week. In 1928, flyweight Diosdado "Speedy Dado" Posadas was credited with generating "the largest turnout of Filipino fans Los Angeles has ever had" in his Tuesday-night semi-wind-up against Louis Contreras. Over the previous year, Dado was locked into exclusive fighting appearances in San Francisco venues because of his popularity. The city's promoters guaranteed Dado forty percent of house earnings "to hold him as a drawing magnet."[294] News of Dado fighting in Southern California energized his Pinoy fan base in the region and tickets sold out almost instantly. In 1930, over fifteen thousand spectators filled Hurley Stadium in East Hartford, Connecticut to watch Italian American featherweight champion Christopher "Bat Battalino" Battaglia defend his belt against Pinoy challenger Ignacio "Young Fernandez" Ortis. Newspapers announced that "many prominent fight fans from New York and New England will be in the crowd tomorrow night," including East Coast Pinoys who would have made the trip to witness the momentous bout. [295] Even toward the height of the Great Depression, Pinoy fans were eager to invest their energies and support toward Pinoy boxers.

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[293] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire*, New York: New York University Press, 2013.
[294] Kay Owe, "Fernandez to Battle Taylor: Filipino Meets Bud Tuesday in Olympic Feature," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Mar 4, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A5.
[295] "Battalino to Risk His Title Tonight: Featherweight Champion Is to Meet Fernandez, Filipino Boxer, in East Hartford," Special to the New York Times, *New York Times (1923 – Current file*); Jul 14, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 27.

That Pina/oy fans were willing to spend days' wages to purchase tickets in the typical price range of one to three dollars speaks to the significant sociocultural impact boxers had on the people they represented.[296] As Pinoy boxers performed their pugilistic labor in California rings, migrant fans mixed in radical imaginations to cultivate a politics of dissent that staked claims to power, space, and citizenship. These claims energized the efforts for the everyday survival of the Pina/oy diaspora in California during the interwar period. Boxing and the sporting life around it had the potential to "suspend society's norms, those rules that embodied a racial and social order favoring color over ability, class over potential."[297] Despite Pinoys' fistic dominance in the ring, white cultural curators and social gatekeepers often lashed back against these attempts at self-determination.[298]

Racialized perceptions of "native," "ethnic." or otherwise "savage" fighters defined coverage of Filipinos in fights, reinforcing notions of Pinoys' ultimate inferiority for white observers peeved by their fighters' losses and invested in maintaining the sport's color line.[299] Boxers who desired to stay relevant, let alone attain legendary status as icons of the sport or potential hall-of-fame inductees, were required to stay active, regularly subjecting their bodies to violent damage in the name of masculinity, "gameness," and white industry surveillance.[300] This

[296] "Pete Sarmiento, Sensational Fighter, to Tackle Marks in New Olympic Fight Emporium," *San Pedro Daily News*, Volume XXIII, Number 195, 18 September 1925.
[297] Peter Bacho, *Dark Blue Suit and Other Stories*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.
[298] As George Lipsitz explains: "Most strikes never win back what the strikers lose in lost wages. So they are not rational ways for individuals to get ahead, but rather symbolic struggles for power that keep the door open for future workers to make gains. Seen in that light, a fighter willing to go down fighting has an understandable appeal. [Michael Miller] Topp shows how anarchist labor violence stemmed in part from seeing class subordination as a gendered injury to manhood. Given that perception, fighting could be a form of symbolic remasculinization."
[299] See Theresa Runstedtler's *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
[300] A.P. Night Wire, "Sencio Dies After Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Apr 21, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1; Mike Casey, "Whirlwind: Pancho Villa Was Dempsey in Miniature," *CyberBoxingZone* (2007), accessed: 3 March 2019, http://www.cyberboxingzone.com/boxing/casey/MC_Villa.htm; For more on the broader dynamics of manliness and masculinity in boxing, see Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization; A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

necessity to stay centered in, or at least adjacent to, the spotlight made them just as beholden to routes of migrant labor as seasonal agricultural, cannery, and hospitality workers. The image of autonomy in the sporting life was often underlined by a paternalistic industry that claimed the rights to Pinoy boxers' movements and ownership of their bodies. George Parnassus, welterweight champion Ceferino Garcia's manager, often referred to the knockout artist as "his Filipino."[301] Frank Churchill, perhaps the most influential white manager in Manila, paternalistically referred to his fighters as "my boys."[302] Regardless of any actual affection Parnassus or Churchill may have felt toward the fighters they managed, the hierarchies implicit in this language reinforced narratives of Filipino subservience to white colonial projects. Still, boxers were positioned to utilize the resources of the industry to produce racial counterscripts that fans could identify and appropriate.

Boxing was a dangerous sport. For all the talk of fame, glory, and fortune, a fighter's alternative would have been undignified, violent squalor. Pinoy boxers carried memories of this precarity with them in their training camps, their media obligations, and their fights; memories of struggle acutely rooted in personal experiences of racial, class, and gendered oppression in the Philippines and in the United States. Boxers who worked outside of the ring and the gym shared the radical imaginations of their fans; they were fans themselves. Their decision to embark on a pugilistic career was neither uniquely courageous nor altogether radical in and of itself. It was one of the riskier few options available to them. In the transient interstices that defined a career and life in the sport, however, opportunities to destabilize impactfully these regimes of race arose.

**"The Little Fellows Draw a Big Crowd:" Sensing and Selling Transpacific Pinoy Boxing**

[301] "Dutch Boy Eyes Title," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Oct 22, 1934; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 9.
[302] Frank G. Menke, "The Man Who Put the Philippines on the Map," *The Ring,* January 1923.

On 8 May 1936, the Hollywood Legion Stadium in Los Angeles presented a high-stakes welterweight[303] headliner: a rematch between Dutch Irish prospect Jackie "Kid" Burke and Pinoy sensation Ceferino Garcia. In addition to the five thousand people in attendance, the event would have reached several thousands more gathered around radios across the United States. News reports during fight week predicted that "every radio [in Burke's hometown of Ogden, Utah] will be tuned in for the blow-by-blow description." With betting odds at 10 to 8 in favor of "the 'big city' fighter, Garcia, whip[ping] the 'small town' boy," Burke, fans and industry promoters invested heavily into the bout's outcome. Thinking of the future, matchmaker Charley MacDonald offered a guaranteed purse of $10,000 to white fighters Jimmy McLarnin and Tony Canzoneri to fight the headliner's victor.[304] This speculation was common and the betting economies surrounding fights gesture to broader structures of capital exchange in and adjacent to the boxing industry during this period. Moreover, the media's characterization of Garcia as a "big city fighter" in reference to his residence in Los Angeles gestures to the notion that Filipino fighters were not fully foreign workers so long as their status as industry icons served the purposes of promoters; a view that troubled a white social structure invested in excluding Filipinos. The marketing of the Burke-Garcia headliner reveals the intimate connections between the interwar boxing industry and the transpacific lifeways of Pinoy fighters and fans.

The boxing industry in the United States experienced a surge in popular demand by 1920. An increase in Americans' general postwar wealth incentivized spending on leisure activities such as baseball games, jazz concerts, and boxing matches that were steadily taking on the flare of theatrical productions. Major U.S. cities became spaces of boxing promotion that centered public

[303] The New York State Athletic Commission standardized U.S. professional boxing's weight divisions by 1920. The welterweight division's fighters weighed in between 140 and 147 pounds.
[304] "Jackie Burke Underdog in Legion Battle with Garcia," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; May 8, 1936; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A13.

attention on the spectacle of fistic violence. While initially centered in East Coast venues like Madison Square Garden in New York City, the boxing industry's economic success quickly spread west as industry promoters looked to tap into fans' growing enthusiasm for the fight game. The July 1921 National Boxing Association's world heavyweight title fight between Jack Dempsey and Georges Carpentier in Jersey City's Boyle's Thirty Acres arena garnered $1,789,238 in official ticket sales – a gate[305] figure that justified fight promoter George L. "Tex" Rickard's billing of the bout as the "Fight of the Century."[306] Between 1921 and 1929, the number of boxing arena spectators in New York alone numbered around 1.5 million. Several more millions filled California areas throughout the interwar period.[307]

Eighty thousand fans bought tickets to see the Dempsey-Carpentier fight in person and analysts estimated another three hundred thousand people tuned in to the special radio broadcast. The July 1921 edition of *The Wireless Age* claimed that the bout's color commentary would "go hurtling through the air to be instantaneously received in the theaters, halls and auditoriums scattered over cities within an area of more than 125,000 square miles."[308] Rickard guaranteed Dempsey and Carpentier $300,000 and $200,000, respectively, to fight. Each pugilist was also promised 25 percent of the profits from the motion picture produced of the bout.[309] These expenditures added to the $250,000 dollars Rickard spent to build the outdoor venue in New Jersey. With tickets priced between $5.50 and $50, Rickard more than recouped his losses in the coming weeks. Tickets sold so well that Rickard mused how he should have charged fans

[305] In boxing, a gate refers to the total money earned in official ticket sales for any given event.
[306] "Sport: Prizefighting's Million-Dollar Gates," *Time*, March 8, 1971, accessed February 10, 2020, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,904805,00.html.
[307] Vlad Roşca, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, "The Political Economy of World Heavyweight Boxing during the Great Depression," *Theoretical and Applied Economics Volume XIX (2012), No. 1(566), pp. 127-142.*
[308] "July 2nd Fight Described by Radiophone," *The Wireless Age* (Vol. 6, No. 10): July 1921.
[309] Jack Doyle, "Dempsey vs. Carpentier, July 1921," Radio, Sports, Marketing, *PopHistoryDig.com*, September 8, 2008, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/dempsey-vs-carpentier-1921/.

double.[310] Owing to Rickard's vigorous promotional push, the hype around the fight was so big that gamblers had placed approximately $500,000 in official bets through Wall Street brokerage houses between January and July of 1921. Florida's *St. Petersburg Times* predicted that bets would continue "until the hour of the fight" and "probably will run into the millions" internationally.[311] They did. Regardless of which fighter won, the scope, pageantry, and financial speculation surrounding the Dempsey-Carpentier fight made one thing undeniable: the boxing industry was a private economic powerhouse by the beginning of the interwar period. It would maintain this status even through the most intense years of the Great Depression. The economic incentives of boxing followed U.S. empire to the Philippines, enticing young men touched by the violence of rural and urban poverty to fight for their lives.

A decade after Filipinos adopted the formal sport of boxing into their recreational practices, white promoters mobilized racial logics to institutionalize Filipino boxing training. The Philippine-American War brought thousands of U.S. soldiers to the Philippines between 1898 and 1913. Despite President Theodore Roosevelt's 1902 declaration of victory over Filipino insurgents, a consistent U.S. military presence on the islands generated increased rates of desertion, suicide, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, and drunkenness amongst the occupying forces. Boxing was billed as a solution to these derelictions of duty because of the sport's emphasis on discipline and abstinence. In 1902, former White House secretary Major Elijah Halford solicited $200,000 in philanthropic funds to construct a Philippine branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to provide boxing training to U.S. servicemen in Manila. In 1915, the

[310] "Jack Dempsey vs. George Carpentier," *BoxRec*, August 31, 2016, accessed March 19, 2020, https://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Jack_Dempsey_vs._Georges_Carpentier.
[311] "Millions Bet on Big Fight," *St. Petersburg Times* (July 2, 1921): pg. 1, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=888&dat=19210702&id=vwZPAAAAIBAJ&sjid=DU0DAAAAIBAJ&pg=3064,68103.

YMCA opened its doors to Filipino prospects after promoters like YMCA director C.H. Jackson extolled the "Christlike and manly" virtues that boxing instilled in its practitioners.[312] Sensing the earnings potential of Filipino boxers, promoter Frank Churchill recalled in a 1923 interview that he "felt certain that if [Filipinos] got a chance to try conclusions with the truly greats in their particular divisions, they would go on to championships."[313] In 1922, Churchill invested $25,000 of his own savings to make that point. Boxing became part of the civilizing mission of the American government in the Philippines and private interests looked to make a transpacific profit.

Joe Waterman, one of the most prominent white American promoters in Manila, celebrated Filipinos' involvement in boxing as a "triumph of U.S. neocolonial stewardship" when he claimed that "the Filipino as a boxer has done more in two years for Philippine independence and to eradicate the cock fighting evil, than the insurrectos and propaganda politicians have done in twelve times the length of time."[314] The Philippine boxing industry utilized the civilizationist logics of U.S. imperialism to build a popular following for Filipino fighters that played into the racial logics of the period and consequently reinforced notions of white superiority by framing the Filipino's boxing body as perennially linked to characteristics of primitivism and savagery.[315] Regardless of how much they actually believed it, fans bought into the mystique of Pinoy pugilists fighting with "all the primitive savagery and fury of the jungle."[316] Quick to capitalize on these

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[312] Joseph R. Svinth, "The Origins of Philippines Boxing," *Journal of Combative Sport* (July 2001), accessed April 10, 2020, https://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart_svinth_0701.htm; See also, Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 75-84.

[313] Frank G. Menke, "The Man Who Put the Philippines on the Map," *The Ring*, January 1923.

[314] Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother," 114; Joe Waterman, "Boxing Replaces Cock Fighting," quoted in Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother."

[315] In her article on the Australia-Philippines boxing circuit, Rebecca Sheehan defined sport as a nexus that distinguished men from women and "played a role in strengthening, representing, or attempting to win back Anglo-Saxon power." See Sheehan, "'Little Giants of the Ring:' Fighting Race and Making Men on the Australia-Philippines Boxing Circuit, 1919-1923," *Sport in Society*, 15:4, 447-461, accessed 8 July 2018, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2012.672232.

[316] Singer, Jack, "Garcia Stops Blair in Third," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jun 18, 1938; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A7.

images, promoters built a transpacific fight industry around the notion that to watch a Filipino fight other Filipinos would be to glimpse traces of a more savage past; to watch a Filipino fight a white man would be to witness a battle of civilizations.

By 1920, Waterman, alongside promoters Frank Churchill and Bill and Eddie Tait, controlled the fight game in Manila, making the Philippines a staging point of Asian pugilism into the United States. Waterman claimed that "the native [Filipino] is manlier, cleaner and healthier because of his interest in boxing."[317] That interest was coerced by industry promoters taking advantage of the urban and rural poverty generated by American occupation. Columnist Frank G. Menke credited Waterman, Churchill, and the Taits with convincing U.S. colonial officials that training facilities like the YMCA "breed and develop" capable, respectable fighters that would "menace the middleweight, lightweight, and light heavyweight kings of the universe," drawing profitable crowds attracted to the social and cultural politics of pugilism's global color line.[318]

Spaces like the YMCA and Churchill's Olympic Athletic Club in Manila were not the only sites of Filipino pugilistic training and performance. The U.S. Pacific Fleet enlisted Filipinos as cooks and mess stewards after 1902. To pass the time, and perhaps to earn the respect of white servicemen, Filipinos like Eddie Duarte engaged with shipboard boxing. In the breaks between routine cable-laying assignments onboard Army support ships traveling from Manila to the U.S. West Coast, Duarte "made his first public appearance at the Olympic club, of Tacoma, Washington. He fought an American Indian and won the decision in four rounds."[319] Although several dozen Filipino boxers likely fought within the military sporting circuit, their prospects for

[317] Joe Waterman, "Boxing Replaces Cock Fighting," quoted in Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother," 114.
[318] Frank G. Menke, "The Man Who Put the Philippines on the Map," *The Ring*, January 1923.
[319] Carroll Alcott, *The Ring* (October 1928), quoted in Joseph R. Svinth, "The Origins of Philippines Boxing," 2001.

anything outside of local prominence were low because the War Department prohibited soldiers from fighting civilian pugilists until 1923.

Civilian promoters like Churchill circumvented these restrictions by charging admission to unsanctioned fights just outside the Army bases in Corregidor and the Naval bases at Subic Bay. Weekly bouts drew upwards of ten thousand people. Promoters, fans, and fighters gained financial incentives uncommon in military-sanctioned fights.[320] Gambling on the results created informal economies of pleasure and performance on the literal outskirts of U.S. settler-military structures. The growth of the Manila boxing scene and the migratory nature of military boxing exposed some audiences to Filipino boxers as "splendid fighting men" in the Pacific.[321] However, it was the convergence of radio, film, and promoter cartels that established Filipino boxing as a global contender for popular attention and inadvertently created "a forum for countercultural resistance" for Pinoys in California.[322] To echo Linda España-Maram's argument: fighters and fans "embedded their narratives" into the structures of the boxing industry, "defying its assumptions about race and ability."[323] These narratives defied the racial scripts of manliness, civilization, and respectability that military and civilian boosters argued made boxing training desirable according to the frameworks and expectations placed onto the Philippines's sociopolitical development.

The Golden Age of Radio boosted the Golden Age of Pinoy Boxing. The fledgling radio industry was just gaining traction by the beginning of 1920. Soon after the federal government relinquished its private control of wireless radio technology after World War I, General Electric

[320] Joseph R. Svinth, "The Origins of Philippines Boxing," *Journal of Combative Sport* (July 2001), accessed April 10, 2020, https://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart_svinth_0701.htm.
[321] Frank Churchill quoted in Frank G. Menke, "The Man Who Put the Philippines on the Map," *The Ring*, January 1923.
[322] Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother," 107, 121.
[323] Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 92. See also, Kristin L. Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

purchased the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America and renamed it the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) on 20 November 1919.[324] RCA administrator and future company president David Sarnoff claimed to have predicted that the radio industry would yield around $75 million in gross returns by 1920; a figure Sarnoff vastly underestimated. The Dempsey-Carpentier fight in 1921 was broadcasted over RCA radios in bars, restaurants, theaters, and radio clubs, while tens of thousands of people stood outside the *New York Times* Building in Times Square listening to fight updates.

The Dempsey-Carpentier fight strengthened popular demand for radio ownership and RCA's profits soared. By 1923, there were over five hundred radio stations across the United States, a marked increase from the thirty stations opened the year before, and around three million people owned or accessed a radio.[325] Serialized programs like the "Amos n' Andy" show increased radio sales further – from 650,000 sets in 1928 to 824,548 sets in 1929. As writer Tom Lewis points out, "restaurants and movie theaters found they had to broadcast the show over loud speakers if they were to keep customers."[326] Boxing matches became expected programming alongside musical performances, political chats, and news reports. On fight day, public venues broadcasting fights "enabled listeners to experience an event as it happened… people witnessed it with their ears and imaginations."[327] In 1923, over twenty thousand spectators gathered in the Polo Grounds in New York witnessed Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo's spectacular knockout of Jimmy Wilde to become the first Filipino (and Asian) fighter to win a world championship.

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[324] "Attempts to Establish a United States Government Radio Monopoly," *History of Communications-Electronics in the United States Navy* by Captain L. S. Howeth (1963), 313–318.
[325] Jack Doyle, "Dempsey vs. Carpentier, July 1921," Radio, Sports, Marketing, *PopHistoryDig.com*, September 8, 2008, accessed July 8, 2020, https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/dempsey-vs-carpentier-1921/.
[326] Tom Lewis, "'A Godlike Presence': The Impact of Radio on the 1920s and 1930s, *OAH Magazine of History*, Spring, 1992, vol. 6, No. 4. Communication in History: The Key to Understanding (Spring, 1992), pp. 26-33.
[327] Lewis, "A Godlike Presence," 27; See also Tom Lewis, *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Created Radio*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

Hundreds of thousands more listened in. The official gate was over $95,000 – an impressive number for a non-heavyweight fight.[328] Filipino pugilists fighting in California would have increased their reputation-by-proxy as exciting fighters following Villa's victory. After 1923, news of Pinoys on any fight card virtually ensured packed arenas. Filipino fans would have also listened to their countrymen's fistic prowess over radios, visualized their gameness, and projected those fighting experiences onto militant counternarratives to white violence. The act of watching fights generated conditions of opportunity for the cultivation of these counternarratives. Once the structures of the U.S. boxing industry accepted Filipinos as viable fistic contenders, fighters and fans mobilized boxing resources to carve out spaces of opportunity and survival of themselves and their peers.

Frank Churchill recalled investing $25,000 to bring Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo and Elino Flores from Manila to the U.S. boxing circuits to build the general reputation of Pinoy boxing. Churchill paternalistically mused in 1923 – after Villa had beaten Polish-American Johnny Buff to claim the American Flyweight Championship in 1922 – that "when I arrived in the United States no one regarded me or my boys very seriously. They didn't think the Filipinos could fight." Due to industry gatekeepers' initial indifference toward Filipino pugilists, the Pinoys found themselves "into the 'sticks' time and again where they fought tough fights and tougher opponents for about one-twentieth of the money they would have received if they had stayed home and fought in Manila."[329] After a string of newspaper losses,[330] Guilledo and Flores built up undeniable

[328] Ed Tolentino, "Villa vs Sencio: the tragic fate that befell boxers in first all-Filipino world title fight," *Spin.Ph,* accessed 8 August 2020, https://www.spin.ph/boxing/villa-vs-sencio-and-the-tragic-fate-of-two-boxers-in-first-all-filipino-world-title-fight.
[329] Frank G. Menke, "The Man Who Put the Philippines on the Map," *The Ring,* January 1923.
[330] Common during the interwar period, in the event that a bout had no clear winner – such as if neither fighter had been knocked out by the end of the fight or another pre-arranged condition had not been met – an official "no decision" would be declared. In this case, ringside reporters and sportswriters reached a consensus and declared a winner or called the fight a draw. Newspapers would print this decision to inform the public. A newspaper decision (annotated "NWS" on official fight records) could vary regionally, with a fighter's hometown newspaper declaring

winning streaks fighting in East Coast arenas. Radios broadcasted their victories to an international audience. By 1924, Pinoy fighters like Young Nationalista, Speedy Dado, and Flash Sebastian headlined weekly events across California, thrilling crowds and prompting reporters to note that "the little fellows… draw a big crowd" wherever they performed.[331] Pinoy migrant workers in California rallied behind a growing group of Pinoy pugilists whose ring gameness inspired militant strategies of survival and political resistance. At the same time, boxers weaved their sporting lives alongside their own experiences as fans oscillating between work in and out of the ring. These experiences converged onto the most recognizable space of conflict and possibility in the sport: the boxing arena.

**"The Rafters Ring with Their Cheers:" Fight Fans and the Spatial Politics of the Arena**

Diosdado "Speedy Dado" Posadas was not the first Pinoy boxer to be called "the little brown doll of the Philippines" when in 1929 sportswriter Paul Lowry praised the pugilist's ability to pack the 15,000-seat Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles.[332] That moniker was used by white promoters and newsmen to describe controversial flyweight champion Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo until his death in 1925. Historians have argued that these feminized characterizations of boxers whose in-ring performances reinforced masculine stereotypes reflect active attempts by white society's gatekeepers to invalidate Pinoy pugilistic success. In downplaying their manliness, guardians of Pinoy racial scripts dismissed boxers' cultural impact on Filipino migrant populations in an attempt to maintain white hegemony.[333] Fans who witnessed Pinoy fighters' ferocious

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him the winner despite a consensus to the contrary. The widespread adoption of the National Sporting Club of London's rules by the end of the interwar period established a system of round scoring by judges that eliminated the NWS practice. See "Newspaper decision" on *BoxRec*, https://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Newspaper_decision.

[331] "Oh, For Crying Out Loud!" *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jul 29, 1924; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. B1.

[332] Paul Lowry, "Filipino Boxer Cops Decision: Little Brown Doll Displays Worlds of Class," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Sep 11, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A1.

[333] Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart* and España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*

tenacity in the ring saw the structures of these emasculations destabilized in real time. Possibilities for reimagining Pinoy identity opened in the troubling of these racial scripts, even as the physical spaces of the fight focused the boxing industry's economic power. The arenas in which the drama of fight night unfolded were sites of intense meaning-making for Pinoy fans; but fighters also mobilized fans' support to create meaning for their labor within the arena.

The boxing arena was where people across California witnessed "brown-skinned boys who are 50 per cent speed and the other 50 percent heart."[334] Pinoy fighters in the lighter weight divisions offered a different spectacle from the heavyweight icons that filled popular imaginations throughout the interwar period. Heavyweight stars like Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, and Max Schmeling drew audiences for their size and power. In the case of Johnson, he and other "powerful black bodies became the visual portents of racial Armageddon, at once feared and desired by white sporting audiences and celebrated by people of color around the world."[335] At first glance, Pinoy fighters were not as physically intimidating as their heavyweight coworkers. Yet these smaller pugilists became substantial visual portents for white bosses invested in keeping their labor supply docile and for a Pinoy middle class concerned with keeping their countrymen respectable. In the ring, fans looked for a good show and fighters looked to oblige them.

The energy of arenas filled with Pinoy fight fans bolstered the disruptive politics of the ring. Spaces of pugilistic performance in cities like Stockton, San Francisco, and Los Angeles were designed to give even the furthest spectators a chance to feel the action in front of them. For example, the Hollywood American Legion Stadium opened in Los Angeles in 1921 with a capacity of eight thousand people, pitched seats for better viewing, and a ventilation system that recycled

[334] Paul Lowry, "Filipino Boxer Cops Decision: Little Brown Doll Displays Worlds of Class," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Sep 11, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A1.
[335] Theresa Runstedtler, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 33.

air every ten minutes.[336] L.A. fight crowds were notorious for being particularly rowdy at the Hollywood Legion and promoter Tom Gallery frequently owed that to the quality of the fighters he took credit for securing at his venue. In 1929, Gallery boasted that "five Filipinos fighting on the same bill should create plenty of action for the Hollywood American Legion stadium fight fans tomorrow night… some of the best Filipino fighters in the game,"[337] including Speedy Dado. When Dado returned to the Legion in 1933 to soundly defeat Korean pugilist Jo Tei Ken, the "idol of the local Filipino colony… dispelled whatever doubt existed over his superiority over his fellow-oriental."[338] The optics of pugilistic supremacy mattered regardless of opponent, but consistent Pinoy victories over white fighters inflamed racial tensions outside the ring.

When agricultural laborer Fermin Tobera was killed during the Watsonville Riots in January of 1930 and California officials began surveilling establishments where interracial social interactions between whites and Pinoys regularly occurred, authorities concerned with Filipino-led backlash also focused their concerns onto the Pinoy boxing circuit.[339] A story in the *Chicago Tribune* acknowledged the disruptive potential of fighters and fans towards California's racial regimes, noting that State Boxing Commission chairman William H. Hanlon was "particularly fearful" that another Pinoy boxer's victory over a white fighter would instigate a riot in the confined spaces of the arena. Hanlon attested to the power of energized Pina/oy audiences when he admitted that "crowded fight arenas seem ideal places for creating riots."[340] Hanlon issued an

[336] Hollywood Legion Stadium, *BoxRec*, modified 26 May 2019, accessed 12 June 2020, https://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Hollywood_Legion_Stadium.
[337] Kay, Owe, "Filipino Boxers Show on Hollywood Program," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jan 10, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A10.
[338] "Dado Whips Jo Tei Ken in Sensational Battle," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Jul 15, 1933; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 5.
[339] Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, "Empire and the Moving Body: Fermin Tobera, Military California, and Rural Space," in *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, eds. Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 216.
[340] "Bar Filipino Boxers in Fear of Coast Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*; Jan 30, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune pg. 1.

order to California boxing promoters to "clamp down the lid of the Filipinos" as the riots raged.[341] Hanlon's statement coincided with word of a plot to steal arms and ammunition at the Presidio garrison in San Francisco following news that the Filipino Federation of America building in Stockton was firebombed. Pinoy boosters concerned with community safety and intent on maintaining an image of respectability for the benefit of Philippine independence pledged "confidence in local officials to preserve order." Tomasa Selim Maribus, president of the Philippine Women's Association of California, urged Pinoys in San Francisco "to cooperate in the maintenance of the principles of amity and good will."[342] Despite these cautionary statements, calls to ban Pinoy-white bouts were summarily ignored by California promoters and inspectors.

On 1 February 1930, following reports that Hanlon's boxing ban "created a furore (sic)," boxing commissioners in multiple cities converged to make sure that "the attempt of the California boxing moguls to bar Filipino scrappers fell flat." James Woods of Southern California and Charles Traung of San Francisco met with Governor Clement Young and attained official support to defy Hanlon's orders. Boxing inspector Frank Moran relayed the news that promoters could continue to use Pinoy fighters. Reporters characterized the boxing industry's internal dispute as a failure to "draw the color line against Filipino boxers."[343] Despite boxing moguls' objections and growing concern over Filipino-led violence, Tom Gallery succeeded in making Pinoy Luis "Young" Carpentero fight Tommy Gardner for a packed Hollywood Legion on 31 January 1930.[344] Boxing was too important to the entertainment industry's interwar economy and to fans' desire for

[341] "Remove Ban on Filipino Coast Boxers," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967);* Feb 8, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender pg. 8.
[342] "Race Crisis Broadens: Filipinos Draw Nation's Eyes," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 30, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 1.
[343] "Remove Ban on Filipino Coast Boxers," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967);* Feb 8, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender pg. 8.
[344] "Filipino Boxers Are Barred from Coast Rings Following Riots," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1923-2003)*; Feb 1, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis pg. 8.

pleasurable entertainment. In this way, the boxing industry replicated the structures of empire within its curated spaces of visceral physicality by promoting the visual clashing of civilizations that both reinforced and troubled white anxieties over the constantly present Pina/oy bodies in their midst inside and outside of the arena.

When Speedy Dado earned the referee's decision against Chicagoan Ernie Peters at the Olympic Auditorium in 1929, the "gallery packed with every Filipino bus boy, bell hop and roustabout in the city made the rafters ring with their cheers." Once again, Dado reinvigorated Pinoy fans' hopes of seeing one of their fellows win the flyweight (or any) world title. Sports news noted how "the Filipino's countrymen are wild about him. They even rival the Mexican hero worship for Bert Colima. In Dado is seen the reincarnated Pancho Villa."[345] The hopes fans placed onto their favorite fighters were mutually exchanged. When Pancho Villa refused to cancel his Oakland appearance against Canadian Jimmy McLarnin on 4 July 1925 despite an infected tooth, Villa claimed that he did not want to disappoint his fans or have them feel that they invested their time and money to see him fail to perform. Villa lost by decision after a sensational ten rounds. He died from blood poisoning in his wounded jaw two weeks later. Referee Billy Roche recalled sadly that Villa "was too game for his own good."[346] This obligation to demonstrate their gameness motivated Pinoy boxers to keep fighting for their fans. Boxers insisted on fighting partially for the payday. However, some Pinoy boxers' insistence also reflected how a pugilist's disruptive politics – however incidental they may have been – was informed by their relationship to the fandom.

[345] Paul Lowry, "Filipino Boxer Cops Decision: Little Brown Doll Displays Worlds of Class," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995);* Sep 11, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A1.
[346] Mike Casey, "Whirlwind: Pancho Villa Was Dempsey in Miniature," *CyberBoxingZone* (2007), accessed 3 March 2019, http://www.cyberboxingzone.com/boxing/casey/MC_Villa.htm.

In refusing to postpone his fight, Pancho Villa defied every industry promoter's orders to recuperate. After all, between his crowning as the first Filipino world flyweight champion in 1923 and his loss to McLarnin in 1925 Villa had won twenty-three out of twenty-five fights without being knocked out – a stellar record by any account. His manager, Frank Churchill, was wholly invested in keeping him as a popular draw. Strategic withdrawals were common in the sport, and Villa had been suspended for pulling out of a scheduled title defense against Frankie Genaro in New York on 16 September 1924. Villa decided to wait out his suspension in Manila, where in May of 1925 he defeated Clever Sencio to retain his flyweight crown in front of fifty thousand people.[347] Villa was a boon to the interwar boxing industry and letting him fight injured would have been bad for business. But fighting – and winning – against a white fighter on the day of American independence would have held special meaning for Pinoys fully aware of the ongoing debates over Philippine independence and Filipino migrant exclusion at this time; particularly in California where most of his fans lived, worked, and paid to watch him fight. In choosing the feelings of his fans over the economic logics of the boxing industry, Villa's gameness destabilized the industry's plans to promote him as a profitable main eventer. His memories of poverty in the Philippines and his professed love for his fans motivated him and his spiritual successors to literally put their lives on the line.

[347] Ed Tolentino, "Villa vs Sencio: the tragic fate that befell boxers in first all-Filipino world title fight," *Spin.Ph*, accessed 8 August 2020, https://www.spin.ph/boxing/villa-vs-sencio-and-the-tragic-fate-of-two-boxers-in-first-all-filipino-world-title-fight.

**Fig. 4.2.** Photograph of a Pinoy fighter boxing a white opponent in an open-air arena, Pismo Beach, ca.1930. Image courtesy of the Black Gold Digital Collections: "Asian/Pacific – Americans on the Central Coast."

**"The New Filipino Hope:" Boxing, Historical Memory, and Pinoy Identities**

As the borders of the imperial nation-state calcified – first after 1924 and again after 1934 – Filipino print media produced in communities along the U.S. west coast functioned as mouthpieces for militant voices to express resistance to their marginalization. Such obstacles kept Pinoys from citizenship rights they believed they deserved. These dreams were born from a colonial reeducation project initiated even as American forces decimated the Philippine populace since 1899. Filipinos' colonially imbued status as U.S. nationals meant that they were not explicitly affected by the immigration restrictions or quotas prior to the passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. Even after the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 reclassified Filipinos as "aliens" and set strict immigration quotas, Pinoys made use of legal loopholes to continue entering the country. Pinoy boxing moved alongside the national politics surrounding debates over Philippine independence during this period.

After 1924, Filipinos migrating to the United States began to construct identities that compounded and complicated regional allegiances from the Philippines. As laborers in American

fields, canneries, hotels, and homes, Filipinos began to define themselves through their acculturation, these identities – centered on claims to Americanness that reflected their unique status as U.S. nationals – became focal points in middle-class assertions of belonging to the nation state whenever the laws critically shifted to exclude them. Pinoy pugilistic success was used as a marker of Filipinos' readiness for self-governance at the same time as the sporting life was viewed as a facilitator of less respectable habits. Historian Theresa Runstedtler's descriptions of how Pancho Villa "embraced the same urban culture of the dandy… enjoyed the underground nightlife of the city, the art of ostentation, and the company of white women" generated tensions within the Pinoy communities in California and heightened white outrage toward them. [348] Villa's behavior outside of the ring contradicted the racial counterscripts drafted by a Pinoy middle class invested in the transpacific politics of independence. Hearing of Villa's audacity also energized the Pinoy working class besieged by the violent structures of labor and respectability. Much of the Pinoy working class drafted their own racial counterscripts with Villa as their reference. For Pinoy laborers and fans, the boxing arena was an intimate space of leisure and survival that did not need to conform to the scripts of respectability prescribed by Pinoy cultural gatekeepers.[349]

Boxing news participated in this survival attempt. Filipino workers reading about fights actively interpreted these events as "part of a network wherein workers created meaning for their lives." As Linda España-Maram further describes, "for laborers absent from the fight, the coverage served as more than a vicarious experience; it allowed them to participate in the stories of their compatriots who witnessed the event. For participants, reading about an experience once-removed became a tool for the remembering and reordering of that experience."[350] Here, the notion of

[348] Runstedtler, "The New Negro's Brown Brother," 119.

[350] España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 81.

*participation* is key to understanding the significance that fighters like Guilledo – and those following his example – held for the survival of Filipino migrant communities during this period. Fans participated by buying tickets, attending fights, and throwing their support to their favorite fighters. Boxers also participated by mobilizing their positionalities as migrant laborers to channel fan support toward impressive performances (regardless of the outcome) in the ring. One demonstrative example of the role promoted matches played in the lives of Pinoy communities during this period is an article building hype for two superstars who emerged following Guilledo's death.

On Saturday, October 18, 1930, the *Philippines Herald* published an article in its sports section promoting a boxing match between Pablo Daño and Eulogio Tingson at the Olympic Stadium in Manila. The "main tilt" scheduled for that evening was billed as "an interesting battle" with the odds heavily in Daño's favor. At twenty-two years of age and touted as the "hardest hitting flyweight since the days of the late Pancho Villa and considered among the ranking flyweights of the world by American experts," the 112-pound Daño was expected to use his relentless "physical force" to overwhelm his opponent. At eighteen years old, Eulogio "Little Pancho" Tingson was a "ranking contender in the local flyweight division and one of the most popular fighters of the locality." He had the hometown advantage but, according to the article's author, not much else. "Pancho's speed and cleverness will again be put to a test," the article stated, "but if he makes the mistake of trading punches with Daño this evening it will be curtains for him." Little Pancho's status as an underdog was reinforced by the author's conclusion that, barring some major improvement in skill, "his possibility of even holding Pablo to a draw [was] rather remote." Even the article's title reflects the author's confidence in the outcome of the fight: "Seeks Tommy's Scalp" over an image of Daño standing with his gloved hands at his sides.

The *Herald* source offers crucial insights into the cultural impact of Filipino boxers along transpacific color lines, as well as the state of society in the Philippines during a time when political conversations regarding the sovereignty of that Pacific nation-state coincided with narratives of manliness and civilization as they applied to the role of U.S. empire in the region – making the Philippines's history the United States's. The scalping metaphor, the downplaying of the Little Pancho fight, and the general pretentiousness in the author's tone comprise a uniquely bizarre promotional approach suggesting that these seemingly straightforward cultural materials possessed an undergirding political motivation. It also illustrates how the dynamics of Pinoy boxing stardom and recognition in the United States were initiated in the Philippines. Filipino boxing was a transpacific enterprise that relied on the physical labor of pugilists and fans. Boxers trained and performed, fans bought tickets and packed arenas.

Fernando "Young Tommy" Opao, earned a decision victory over Daño on 30 August 1930. Since then, Young Tommy was billed as Daño's national rival. A rematch would have stoked the imaginations of transpacific fans and promoters. That enthusiasm may explain why much of the article dismisses Little Pancho's chances and highlights Daño's supposed thirst for vengeance against Opao. In addition to the grudge-match angle, the article makes a point to highlight the fighters' regional origins: "the Negros [Occidental] flash" versus the flyweight and bantamweight champion "hailing from Cebu." Despite there being no official records of Daño holding titles in two separate weight divisions at this time (although he was the Pacific Coast Flyweight Champion, he would not win the California State "World" Bantamweight Title until 1935), the appeal of the potential fight lay in the inter-regional feelings of competition it produced. This article is one among several published in the Philippines and in the United States reflecting excitement at watching two of the period's most popular fighters engage each other for a second time. The

prospective grudge match – which would not occur until 1935 and ended with Daño knocking Young Tommy out in the eighth round in front of a packed audience in Los Angeles's Olympic Auditorium – diverted much of the conversation away from Daño's imminent contest with Little Pancho. Indeed, the article proceeds to relay Daño's excitement at the prospect of "a return contest with Young Tommy before the end of the year and his chances tonight will determine his chances against the champion if they should ever meet." The characterization of Young Tommy as a champion is a curious editorial choice, as none of Opao's professional records indicate that he became a champion before 1931. But if the readers of this article anticipated a relatively certain Daño victory, the very game Little Pancho, "primed for tonight's contest," would prove that he was not a mere stepping stone.

Later reports of the fight described the "midget fighters" battling for all twelve rounds, with judges scoring the fight to a draw. Living up to the article's claim that the fight card would be a "special event [that would] furnish enough fight and cleverness to satisfy the most rabid stadium supporter," the main tilt was indeed an "interesting battle;" though not in the ways predicted. Daño would never get the better of Little Pancho in their four subsequent meetings. Fighting to two more draws and losing twice to Little Pancho via judges' decisions, Daño would go on to an impressive and storied career while never quite meeting the expectations set forth by the *Herald.* Understanding the publication's origins can furnish further insight into why the Daño article downplayed Little Pancho's chances, inaccurately reported fighter accolades, and promoted a future contest between regional rivals instead of an imminent bout.

The *Herald,* an English-language publication representing pro-Independence Filipinos in the Philippines and abroad, circulated its material throughout the Pacific and the United States. Many articles discussed abuses by the Philippine government and regularly denounced the United

States's imperialist policies in the Pacific. Additionally, articles frequently highlighted developments in the Filipino peasant unrest of the 1930s, women's suffrage, and the threat of Communism in the Pacific. Each monthly issue of the *Herald* in the 1930s consisted of prominent sports and lifestyle pages highlighting major athletic and cultural events in the Philippines and the United States. Several sports sections discussed anticipated boxing matches held in Manila and U.S. cities, identifying the threads of transpacific U.S. imperialism. The article's validation of Daño's credentials based on assessments by "American experts" suggests a dynamic of respectability possibly linked to the *Herald'*s politics.

Given that the United States in the early twentieth century had established itself as a global authority in the sport of professional boxing, linking Daño's qualifications to American standards and evoking the name of a Filipino sports hero (the late Pancho Villa) who dominated white Americans in the ring may have furthered a case for Philippine self-governance during this period. While this article alone cannot be used to support this claim entirely, considering it as part of several publications making similar assertions suggests that the politicization of symbolic cultural figures must be considered alongside discussions of more direct forms of political engagement as mediated through news publications. Filipino workers derived a sense of purpose and inspiration in the continued successes of these icons in the ring. Watching and reading about fights "became a collective experience and, win or lose, the potential of the brown body symbolized by the pugilists became part of the stories Filipinos told themselves about themselves and their experiences."[351] Ideals about Filipino masculinity, tenaciousness, and militancy were reflected in and derived from performances in the ring. At the same time, knowing the stakes inherent in

[351] España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 81.

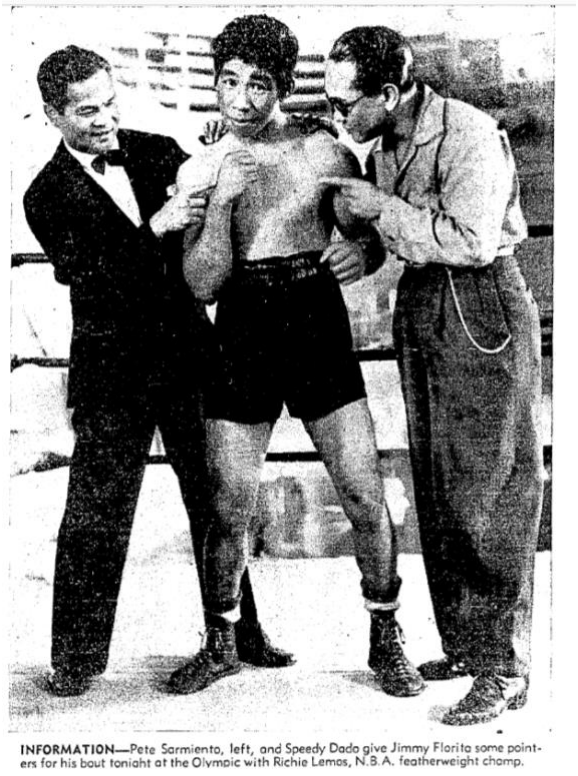
providing a game performance was a collective experience for Pinoy boxers vying for status as the new Filipino hope.

Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilledo – along with his cohort of pugilists – was used by the Filipino diaspora of the 1920s and 1930s as an exemplar; an example of the possibilities and probabilities accessible by living in the United States. We can read Guilledo as an epistemological subject (and boxing as an episteme) by which the dynamics of racialization, gendering, and class conflict previously described can be examined alongside the lenses of politics and economics. Here, boxers and boxing do the work of geopolitics by creating a genre around which narratives of alterity can be constructed. The image of Pancho Villa and his peers represented a form of militant resistance that may not have been intended by the performers, but whose cultural effects were intimately tied to structures of U.S. empire and Pinoy bodies' survival within it. As prizefighters often do, Guilledo fought for money to improve his own individual circumstances. In the process, his actions became one of the identifying markers of resistance for his fans and for the U.S. nation state.

**"Watch the Short, Snappy Blows": Pugilists and Fans as Watchers of U.S. Empire**

On 15 January 1927, U.S. boxing news announced that Pacific Bantamweight Champion Ignacio "Young Fernandez" Ortis "will leave shortly for the United States determined to bring back to the Philippines the world title held by Pancho Villa and almost won by the late Clever Sencio." Touted as "the new Filipino hope," Fernandez – a stablemate of Villa and Sencio under the management of Frank Churchill – ignited the imaginations of his countrymen. That it was Fernandez who sustained fans' "unshakeable conviction that the featherweight championship of the world belongs to the Philippines" in the wake of Villa's and Sencio's deaths was entirely

incidental.[352] Contenders like Speedy Dado and Pete Sarmiento were also characterized as "Filipino hopes" and interwar sports pages were replete with headlines of Filipino boxer "invasions" of the United States.[353] Pinoys in California policed and surveilled by structures of oppressive labor, antimiscegenation law, racial segregation, and mob violence looked to the ring and its performers for inspirational strategies of counterhegemony. This conviction would have been felt just as intensely by fighters pressured to bring victory and dignity to their names and, by proxy, to Pinoys living and working during the interwar period.



INFORMATION—Pete Sarmiento, left, and Speedy Dado give Jimmy Florita some pointers for his bout tonight at the Olympic with Richie Lemos, N.B.A. featherweight champ.

**Fig. 4.3.** 1941 *Los Angeles Times* image showing how Pete Sarmiento (left) and Speedy Dado (right) often mentored younger Pinoy prospects, gesturing to a migrant sociality within the sporting life that transcended regional and linguistic affiliations. Pinoy boxers' fashion choices likewise troubled attempts by U.S. racial regimes to prescribe emasculating narratives to Pinoy bodies.

[352] "New Filipino Boxer After Bantam Crown," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967);* Jan 15, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender pg. 8.
[353] "Four Filipino Boxers to Sail For an Invasion of U.S.," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*; Feb 26, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 26.

In 1921, at the onset of the Great Pinoy Boxing Era, a sportswriter for *The Boxing Blade* magazine unwittingly gestured to the long-historical processes of counterscripting Pinoy fighters and fans engaged with during their convergence around the sporting life of boxing:

> It is by no means a secret that the fellow who lands the first wild haymaker generally wins the bout. Is that boxing? Is that what a majority of fans want? One can hardly blame top-notchers for declaring that some of their best tricks are appreciated only by close followers of the sport. My advice to fans in general, is to banish the thought of a knockout and try to make mental score of the progress of each boxer. Watch the short, snappy blows. Watch how the man who receives them, acts. Time and again, a short clip on the jaw puts a boxer out on his feet and no one realizes it.[354]

Pinoys in California were close followers of boxing's intimacies and radical potential to mobilize fighters and fans around social politics of resistance within U.S. racial regimes. Each bout, each show of gameness and support around the ring, destabilized the racial assumptions of Filipinos as docile expendable labor beyond it. When white social custodians and gatekeepers of Pinoy respectability received these counterhegemonic actions, their push to reinforce the racial scripts demanding that Pinoys be subservient to white social order gestures to the power that fighters and fans deployed in the intimacies of the boxing arena.

These moments of counter-racial scripting were fleeting and needed constant renegotiation. But as fighters and fans moved along routes of pugilistic labor, they constructed a militant sociality – learned in the crucible of the Philippine revolution from Spain and the succeeding struggle against U.S. colonial rule – to stagger racial, classed, and gendered expectations. The short, snappy blows that Pinoy fighters and fans managed to land on the structures of California's racial regimes opened up spaces of opportunity for migrant communities to construct infrastructures of survival that would last them through the interwar period. Boxing was not just a sport. The sporting lives of pugilists and fans gave Pinoys a fighting chance against transpacific settler-colonial oppression.

[354] "Boxer Must Be Showman," *Boxing Blade*, 9 December 1922, 2.

# CONCLUSION

Can you imagine how I felt? I had worked and saved and denied myself for three years only to lose it all in one reckless week. I lost interest in saving after that. I began to live better and to enjoy myself more.

- Filipino bus boy in Los Angeles, 1933

To us, freedom is not an intangible thing. When we have enough to eat, then we are healthy enough to enjoy what we eat. Then we have the time and ability to read and think and discuss things. Then we are not merely living but also becoming a creative part of life. It is only then that we become a growing part of democracy.

- Carlos Bulosan, "Freedom from Want," 1943

On January 1, 1933, Pinay journalist Nena Balasang published an interview she conducted with a Pinoy bus boy in Los Angeles. Balasang's interviewee migrated to California in 1917 "afflicted with an American disease – money madness." The bus boy recalled seeing white Americans flaunting their wealth in the cultural houses of the Philippines. "We wanted to hear the clink of the metal," he said, "to feel the crisp bills and, above all, to obtain the luxuries and power which money could buy."[355]

Balasang described her interviewee in terms that highlighted expectations of Pinoy respectability. "He was dressed immaculately in a well-fitting, tailor-made suit," Balasang wrote. "His hair was black and glossy. In fact, he looked like the picture of what the well-dressed man should wear." Balasang asserted that "he was a typical worker, experienced, steady and yet emotional." The bus boy stated that "quite often we [Pinoys] pretend that we know more than we do. You have seen many of our boys with four or five fountain pens and pencils in their vest pockets and perhaps even wearing eye-glasses (sic)." Citing this performative respectability as a

[355] Nena Balasang, "A Filipino Worker Speaks His Mind," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 1, 1993; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. K11.

survival strategy against the constant threat of racialized violence that defined the interwar period, he asserted that, in reality, "some of [these Pinoys] could hardly read and write, but they try to give the impression that they are educated and wise." In many ways, this bus boy's observations and performance reflected the layered expressions of identity that defined the migrant lives of Pinoys in interwar California. As this dissertation asserts, these identities and the expectations placed onto them, were the tools Pina/oys in California used to navigate the terrains of politics, culture, and sociality during the interwar period.

The dreams of working-class Pina/oys were intimately tied to encounters with U.S. empire in the Philippines. These encounters shaped the Philippine economy into a capitalist, export economy that "so exacerbated the extreme poverty of rural life that leaving home was, for some, the only option" short of starving to death on barren farmland.[356] Exposure to rapidly industrializing port cities like Manila, whose streets were recovering from the destruction of a recent revolution and whose buildings began to house American cultural enterprises, generated desires to join in the rapidly expanding culture of consumption encouraged by U.S. promoters. It created the material conditions of need that compelled thousands of Filipina/os to book passage on commercial steamships or military vessels with the hope of earning enough dollars "to obtain the luxuries and power which money could buy" before returning home "to live a life of ease." [357]

This search for ease reflects a desire for dignified lives unfettered by the constraints of transpacific regimes of racial capitalism. It reflects a sentiment expressed by Carlos Bulosan in 1943 when he published an essay to accompany one of magazine illustrator Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms" paintings. Visually articulating President Franklin D. Roosevelt's delineation

[356] Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 26.
[357] Nena Balasang, "A Filipino Worker Speaks His Mind," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 1, 1993; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. K11.

of the "four essential human freedoms" in his 1941 State of the Union address, Rockwell's paintings toured the country as part of a sixteen-city *Four Freedoms* War Bond Show that raised $133 million to sustain U.S. spending during World War II.[358] Rockwell's work certainly captivated the hearts and minds of the 1.2 million people in audiences from Washington, D.C., to Portland. It certainly seemed to have "accomplished the work that the best illustrated fairy tales attempt, turning abstractions into forms that exorcise demons."[359] However, much of what Rockwell portrayed from Roosevelt's speech occluded the experiences of the most vulnerable minoritized communities within the United States.

In 1943, the *Saturday Evening Post* commissioned Pinoy novelist Carlos Bulosan to pen the accompanying essay to Rockwell's "Freedom from Want." Labeled "number three in a series depicting the four freedoms for which we fight," Rockwell's "Freedom from Want" presented three generations of a smiling white family gathered around a table set for a meal. The grandfather figure stands at the head of the table dressed in a stark black suit. The grandmother, her apron starched and unstained, is painted in the act of placing a roasted bird in front of the eager group. Parents and children occupy seats at the table, their faces brightly anticipating the feast. The scene evokes historical memories (and imaginations) of pre-Depression material excess, when idealized families were rooted in the home and around the dinner table. The cultural lives of Pina/oys in California, whose homes and families were touched by the realities of transience and fugitivity under U.S. regimes of race, stood outside these white-normative boundaries. Bulosan's "Freedom from Want" highlighted the lived realities of Pina/oy otherness embedded in a language of

[358] "FDR and the Four Freedoms Speech," *Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum,* https://www.fdrlibrary.org/four-freedoms.
[359] Laura Claridge, *Norman Rockwell: A Life* (New York: Random House, 2001), 330.

nationalism; a dynamic that highlighted the simultaneity inherent in Pina/oy claims to belonging and autonomy in the context of the profound racial violence of the interwar period.

Bulosan's essay was published opposite a full-page print of Rockwell's painting in the March 6, 1943 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Drawing on his experiences as a working-class Pinoy migrant whose life weaved through the militant politics of labor and the subversive politics of popular culture, Bulosan echoed one of labor's central assertions: "we are not really free unless we use what we produce."[360] Bulosan centered his assertions about what it took to attain freedom from want in the consumption of the fruits of working-class labor. The author also spoke of the infallibility of American ideals; ideals that supposedly made it "a great honor to walk on the American earth."

Bulosan's statements illustrate Pina/oy middle-class optimism toward the possibilities of racial equality. Likely framed to meet the expectations of white American cultural stewards, Bulosan's sentiments reflected his hopes in the ideals supposedly embodied in U.S. approaches to Benevolent Assimilation four decades earlier. It certainly allowed him to be the only nonwhite author to have his words reach 1.2 million people in audiences across the country through the *Four Freedoms* War Bond Show.[361] Certainly, countless more readers – white and nonwhite alike – would have read his essay in the *Post.* In this context, Bulosan boosted the myths of the "American disease" that structured the migration of scores of Filipina/os to Hawaii and the continental United States. As this dissertation argues, Bulosan's words also ring hollow in the context of the experiences of these same working-class Pina/oys living along the Pacific Coast.

[360] Carlos Bulosan, "Freedom from Want," March 6, 1943.
[361] Laura Claridge, *Norman Rockwell: A Life* (New York: Random House, 2001), 332; Indiana novelist Booth Tarkington, Massachusetts philosopher William Durant, and Pennsylvania poet Stephen Vincent Benét wrote the other three essays in the Four Freedoms series.

Speaking on the eve of labor's great upheaval in 1934, Balasang's interviewee shared sentiments that resonated in Bulosan's essay a decade later. "I've worked for and with [white] Americans and ought to know something about them," he stated. "They talk and preach one thing and practice another."[362] Like Bulosan, Balasang's interviewee invested in the promises of American materialism only to be disappointed by the realities of working life in interwar California. "At home we did not earn much, but most of it did not have to go for living expenses as it does here." Balasang's interviewee continued: "We expected to be able to save quite a lot of money with the larger wages here. But since the cost of things was so much higher, we found it couldn't very well be done." While he claims that he "didn't come here for social activities [and] think that Americans should be a little more decent to us," this bus boy nevertheless found comfort and support in the cultural institutions that sustained Pina/oy migrant communities in California and beyond where the political spaces of labor ended.[363]

**Where Do We Go from Here? Deepening Interwar Pina/oy Cultural Histories**

This dissertation discussed some of the multiple valences of Pina/oy cultural meaning-making from 1920 to 1941. It focused on alternative practices of labor and leisure in California. These spaces and actions across and beyond the multiple Pina/oy ethnic enclaves throughout the state underscored the critical role that travel, mobility, and inter-dependent community infrastructures played in sustaining the transpacific lifeways of the Filipina/o diaspora during the interwar period. Each of the four chapters examined Pina/oys' historical negotiations over space, power, and autonomy that occurred on the terrain of several Pina/oy popular cultures. These cultural spaces created the context for alternative modes of work, survival, community-making,

[362] Nena Balasang, "A Filipino Worker Speaks His Mind," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 1, 1993; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. K11.
[363] Nena Balasang, "A Filipino Worker Speaks His Mind," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*; Jan 1, 1993; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. K11.

and freedom to emerge under U.S. racial regimes. It suggests that there is more to Pina/oy history than what is highlighted in labor actions, Little Manila political organizing, and Manilatown activism. But this is dissertation does not put forth an exhaustive narrative of Pino/oy cultural meaning-making. There is still much to research and discuss.

I hope to expand on these narratives of interwar Pina/oy cultural infrastructures by including a history of the social and cultural spaces of Pina/oy restaurants, diners, and bars. These spaces facilitated the convergence and construction of Pina/oy working- and middle-class values, attitudes, and beliefs in response to interwar racial violence and inequality. The labor of making, marketing, and sharing Pina/oy food reflected transpacific dynamics of interwar empire and resistance. It is also part of a broader story of Pina/oy migration seldom directly historicized in connection to the dynamics of cultural fugitivity discussed in this dissertation. These dynamics are present in several archival accounts of Pina/oy foodways.

For example, Artemio Espiritu Basconcillo and his wife Maria De La Cruz Velasco disembarked from the deck of the Dollar Steamship Line at the Port of San Francisco in the early 1920s. The steamship was making its annual stop on a journey that had brought Filipina/o migrants to the mainland United States over the last decade.[364] The couple was one of the nearly 26,000 Filipinos ushered through this Northern California port between 1920 and 1929, composing over 85 percent of the recorded 31,902 migrants from the Philippine Islands entering the state during this period.[365] Basconcillo and De La Cruz were atypical of the Pina/oy migrant demographic of this period, which were predominantly unmarried males under the age of thirty.[366] The couple's

[364] State of California Department of Industrial Relations, "Facts About Filipino Immigration into California," by Will J. French, *Special Bulletin No. 3* (San Francisco: April, 1930), 15.
[365] Ibid., 15.
[366] Since over 42,000 (94%) of these migrants were unmarried males under the age of thirty, Filipinos in the continental United States occupied significantly visible and potentially militant bachelor communities that heightened racialized and gendered class tensions. See: Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los*

arrival – and that of every new member of San Francisco's Pina/oy community – was duly noted in local newspapers.

Sometime in the 1930s, Artemio and Maria purchased a small business on 826 Kearny Street wedged between the stores, banks, and hotels along San Francisco's Jackson and Pacific Streets, downwind from the famous International Hotel in Manilatown. Christened the "New Luneta Café," the establishment appealed to nostalgic Pina/oys longing for a feeling of home.[367] The couple's narrative is another important facet of the lived experiences of migrants building cultural worlds in the United States. The New Luneta Café accompanied the union halls, restaurants, sporting venues, and dance halls providing opportunities for socializing and cultural engagement in the racially contested urban spaces of San Francisco, Stockton, and Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s.

Pina/oy food sites fostered infrapolitical actions by Pina/oy working-class migrants as they navigated the transient interstices of cooperation and debate, and of conflict and conformity. A future project will determine where and how Pina/oy boxers, fugitives, tattooers, fans, and cultural consumers fit into the histories of Pina/oy foodways. It will determine the role of food in articulating transpacific interwar politics of Pina/oy liberation.

**Mobilizing Pina/oy Interwar Cultural Histories toward Present Struggles for Liberation**

Historians are often asked how their research on the past gives insight into the concerns of the present. While one does not necessarily need to draw direct connections between their work and contemporary politics or culture, the state of the world at the time of this dissertation's writing offers these connections more naturally.

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*Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 4-5.

[367] España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila*, 42.

When I completed my coursework at UCLA in the spring of 2019 and moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco, I could not have anticipated how the world would shift less than a year later. Writing during a global pandemic shutdown was not only profoundly challenging, but archival closures made the task seem almost impossible. During that time, I began sharing my research over social media as a practice in making my historical writing more public-facing. The Filipinx response – in likes, comments, and shared posts – surprised me. A common sentiment was one of gratitude for sharing histories otherwise underemphasized or omitted from popular attention.

This response reflected desires to highlight Pina/oy histories amid efforts by various local organizations, artists, historians, and activists to continue decolonizing U.S. history and revitalize historic sites of Pina/oy community in cities like Stockton, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. They were mobilizing historical memories of the Asian American Movement (AAM) of the late 1960s and its broader struggles for liberation within the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). These efforts reinforced the AAM's practice of "recuperating intergenerational knowledge and connections to their past in ways that shaped their own identities and political struggles." Given these attempts to bridge past and present, Asian American scholars Diane C. Fujino and Robyn Magalit Rodriguez also admit that there is "still rather limited knowledge of pre-1960s Asian American activism, especially outside of labor and citizenship struggles."[368] This is where this dissertation may add to these urgent historical conversations.

The enthusiastic support for my and others' attempts to share histories of Pina/oy culture outside of the academy also coincided with the rise in violence toward Asian Americans (especially elders) fueled by hateful connections between China and the COVID-19 pandemic.

[368] *Contemporary Asian American Activism: Building Movements for Liberation*, Diane C. Fujino and Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022), 10-11.

Anti-Asian, coronavirus-related racism and misogyny manifested in physical bullying, psychological torment in persona and over social media, and, in the most tragic cases, the murders of Asian Americans (mostly women and elders) in incidents from Atlanta, Georgia to Glendale, Arizona to the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City. In attempts to combat the brutal and profound violence of the present, people looked to historical actions of survival, resistance, and solidarity. They looked for inspiration in the historical relationships between Yuri Kochiyama and Malcolm X; in the solidarity politics of Richard Aoki in the Black Panther Party; in the militant organizing of Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz in the United Farm Workers alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta; in the efforts to strengthen Los Angeles's Chinese community in the wake of a massacre in 1871. The interwar period was overlooked, and in many of these instances, the important role of popular culture by and for Asian Americans was underemphasized in favor of overtly militant resistance. But resistance manifests in many ways. And culture is politics by other means.[369]

This dissertation is a way to highlight the significance of the interwar period in shaping cultural infrastructures of resistance that might add to how we might respond to the violently racist divisions of the present. Historian Catherine Ceniza Choy argues that, amidst the disruptive processes of transpacific racial regimes, "Filipinos had dreams of their own."[370] These dreams took shape in tangible structures of resistance through leisure and were sustained by emergent cultures of tattoos, cars, and sport that challenged the constructed criminality and targeted fugitivity of Pina/oy migrants navigating the social sites and transient interstices of interwar California.

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[369]Kelley, Robin D.G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2002; Nievera-Lozano, Melissa-Ann and Anthony Abulencia Santa Ana. *Pilipinx Radical Imagination Reader*. Philippine American Writers and Artists, Inc., 2018.

[370]Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Asian American Histories of the United States* (Boston: Beacon University Press, 2022), 147-148.

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