

ang KATIPUNAN

Special AK Supplement

National Newspaper of the Union of Democratic Filipinos [KDP]

September 1979 • FREE

A History of Filipino Immigration to the U.S. And Current Trends

A Critical Analysis

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The Filipino community is one of the fastest growing minority communities in America today. Filipinos now number over 700,000 throughout the U.S.

The community grows daily; new immigrants, new births. The numbers of Filipinos seeking America as their new home is second only to Mexicans, as shown on the chart of the top five immigrating groups to America for the year 1976.

(See chart on page 2.)

Why a large Filipino community in the United States? Why do Filipinos leave the Philippines for the United States?

The Filipino community of today is fast becoming a community of recent immigrants. Tens of thousands of Filipinos have arrived in this country annually since 1965 when the U.S. liberalized its immigration policies. Between 1965-76, 279,301 Filipinos have immigrated to the U.S.

On the whole, the Filipino community is a blending of three waves of immigration spanning nearly 80 years. The first occurring at around the turn of the century to the mid-30's; the second after World War II to

the mid-60's; and finally, the third occurring from 1965 to the present day.

The Filipino community in America is the largest overseas Filipino community outside of the Philippines. Why is there such a large Filipino community in the United States?

For a clearer understanding of the story behind the existence of this large Filipino community in the U.S., we must turn back the pages of history to the turn of the century. It is during this time that the destinies of the Philippines and the U.S. became closely interwoven into a complex network of socio-economic relations which still exist today.

1899 marks the year when the U.S. launched its war of aggression upon the Filipino people to wrest away Philippine sovereignty, newly-won from their former Spanish masters. Known as the Philippine-American War, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos died as direct casualties or from the ravages of war. Looking back we can now refer to this as the U.S.' "First Vietnam." Superior American firepower triumphed over the outgunned Filipinos, and the Philippines

became a colony of the United States.

The U.S. in making the Philippines a colony wanted a nation and a people which would be subservient to the needs of the U.S. business-industrial sector. This called for the perpetuation in the Philippines of a backward agrarian economy that served as a source of raw materials for the U.S., and at the same time as a market for U.S. manufactured goods. The implications of this system for the common "tao" (common people) was to doom them to the life of toiling the land as peasants under the domination of landlord rule throughout the Philippines. Under U.S. domination, the Philippines has never developed as an industrialized nation but remained dependent on the U.S. The resulting backward Philippine economy cannot provide adequate jobs and opportunities for Filipinos.

It is this social and economic relation of U.S. dependency which threads itself through Philippine American relations. The common factor which "pushes" the waves of Filipino immigration to the U.S. is the lack of opportunities to earn a living in the Philippine economy itself.



UNITE! AND FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS



The First Wave

1903-1934

The first Filipinos to come to this country were not from the peasantry. Most of them were students sent to the U.S. to be trained as future bureaucrats of the U.S. colonial government. They were called "pensionados" because the government paid for their education here in the U.S. These initial immigrants were the sons and daughters of the wealthy elite of the Philippine society.

However, the situation was not as opportunity-laden for most Filipinos during this period. The marked increase of large tracts of single-crop plantations in the countryside was causing the displacement and impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of Filipino peasants.

This stark reality was especially true in the Ilocos region, Central Luzon and parts of the Visayas. In these regions, there were numbers of cases involving land-grabbing and the development of large plantations growing tobacco and sugar for export to America. Debts, mortgaged lands and increased land rents all made life increasingly difficult. Many peasants were forced off their land and moved on to Manila and other big cities to search for a better livelihood. Once arriving in the city, they were unable to find viable jobs and became part of the lower strata of the working class scraping out a bare existence in squatter sections like Tondo.

Meanwhile, events on the other side of the globe in the U.S. were developing into a situation which would bring Filipinos in much closer contact with their "colonial masters." Towards the late 1890's and early 1900's, the agricultural industries of Hawaii and California were undergoing

dynamic changes. In Hawaii, the monopolization of the prime farming lands by a few growers opened the way for capitalist patterns of industrial operations (Castle and Cook; Theo Davies and Co.; Alexandar and Baldwin; Spreckels, etc). While in California, the development of modern methods of irrigation opened up the vast San Joaquin, Sacramento and Imperial Valley areas to large single crop farming.

Concentration of large land tracts in the hands of a few growers made possible large-scale operations. This was a dramatic change from the days of a single farmer tending his own crops. It required large armies of cheap labor to make this venture profitable.

The Chinese and Japanese first filled these labor needs. However, the harsh working conditions and extremely low wages caused the Japanese and Chinese workers to militantly struggle for better wages and working conditions. The growers responded viciously to this resistance by fanning racist, anti-oriental prejudices. Laws were passed which severely restricted any further Chinese and Japanese immigration to this country.

The development of these agri-business industries was given a big boost by the outbreak of World War I. The war created a great need for agricultural goods, causing massive expansion in production. Wartime demands and inflationary prices for agricultural products drove the growers to step-up production and to keep up with the expanding market. All this time, immigration was at a standstill. With their expanding markets, the growers became

frantic in their search for more sources of cheap labor.

The agri-business industry in the West, like the manufacturing industries in the Mid-west and East, have traditionally relied heavily on the sweat and toil of immigrant labor. Largely because of these workers, the U.S. emerged by 1900 as the most powerful industrial country in the world. However, the immigrant workers did not receive benefits corresponding to their real worth. Their experience was one of hardship and exploitation.

In Hawaii, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) needed a reliable cheap labor source to replace the militant Japanese. The HSPA looked to the Philippines to fill the need. From 1907 to 1926, the sugar planters imported upwards of 100,000 Filipinos to Hawaii. Since there were no legal restrictions on Filipino immigration at this time, the Hawaiian planters opened recruitment offices in Manila to facilitate the inflow of Filipino labor. Recruiters scoured the impoverished countryside giving special lectures with motion pictures, distributing leaflets, etc.—all painting an idyllic vision of "America" where money could be made quickly and a man could become prosperous if he worked hard enough. Supplemented by word of mouth tales from former laborers, the promotional campaign was so successful that the planters were able to discontinue the prepayment of transportation expenses in 1926 without affecting the flow of Filipino labor to Hawaii.

The Filipinos who came to this country after 1920 were not students from wealthy

origins, but were poor peasants in search of employment. The great majority of them came from the most underdeveloped and economically depressed provinces, like the Ilocos region and the Visayas. Many of them were without formal education—spoke neither Spanish nor English and lacked special skills. Most were young, a large percentage being under 30, and they came without parents, wives or children.

Very soon after arriving in Hawaii and confronting the harsh working conditions and low pay, the Filipinos in the sugar industry began to organize against the growers. This resulted in the massive strike by Filipinos against the sugar growers in 1924. The growers viciously put down this strike, killing many workers in the infamous "Hanapepe Massacre"

into the multi-billion dollar enterprises they are today. The wages they were paid were 10-15 cents an hour for this "stoop labor"—less than a dollar a day. What is more, 70 cents of that was usually deducted for "room and board!"

The Filipinos in California soon followed the pattern established with the Chinese and Japanese by organizing against these conditions. The growers responded again by fanning racial prejudice against Filipinos as more and more Filipinos continued to arrive from Hawaii and the Philippines. By 1917, two California Legislators introduced a bill in Congress which aimed at excluding Filipinos. The bill fell through when it was established by the Courts that Filipinos were not aliens but "nationals" of the U.S. (due to the Philippines colonial status), and thus could not be excluded.

Filipino was killed. His death sparked massive Filipino anger up and down the West Coast. Word about his death reached the Philippines where 100,000 Filipinos demonstrated against the U.S. in a National Day of Humiliation.

During the high point of the Depression, Filipinos remained the major target of white racist attacks on the West Coast. Places like Reedley, Imperial Valley, Sonoma, Turlock, Modesto, Sun Valley and Stockton in California; Hood River, Oregon and Yakima Valley in Washington were stained with Filipino blood.

The contrast between the conditions and treatment of Filipinos in the U.S. and the conditions and treatment of Americans in the Philippines exposes how the U.S. exploits minority groups at home while oppressing whole nations of people abroad. In 1930, some 8,369 Americans were living in the Philippines, enjoying all the rights and privileges of citizens. At that time also, Americans held investments in the islands amounting to \$258 million, including some 63 million acres of land.

The U.S. insisted on an unlimited right of entry for American business and capital and U.S. citizens into the Philippines. While at the same time, the U.S. decided to exclude Filipinos from immigrating to the U.S. by passing the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 (the so-called "Philippine Independence Act") which limited the annual quota to the miniscule total of 50. This figure amounted to exclusion, the same fate suffered by the Japanese and Chinese. Ironically, Filipinos could now migrate anywhere else in the world with greater ease than to the "land of democracy." This move to cut off the first wave of Filipino immigration simply mirrored the unequal relations between the U.S. and the Philippines. The U.S. takes what it wants from the Philippines and simply closes its doors when cheap labor is no longer required. The same pattern gets repeated in the boom/bust economic cycle.

Throughout the Depression year, Filipinos were able to lead successful strikes against the growers for higher wages and better conditions. One notable one was against the lettuce industry in Salinas. They were successful in staging a strike demanding wage increases for 30 to 40 cents an hour and a 48 hour week. The success of the strike was met by the anger of the growers who led a vigilante mob to the labor camp controlled by the Filipino labor union president and burned it to the ground. Over 800 Filipinos were forced out at gunpoint.

These were the conditions faced by the first wave, a harsh life in the fields and canneries which they responded to by militantly organizing to improve their lot.

1976 — TOP FIVE IMMIGRATING GROUPS TO THE U.S.

Philippines	37,281
Mexico	57,863
Korea	30,803
Cuba	29,233
China/Taiwan	18,823

Source: INS Yearbook

and blacklisted thousands of Filipino workers. Those working were then forced to go to the mainland, mainly California, to seek employment. In looking for employment in the U.S., these young men had basically only three occupational choices available to them: 1) domestics, 2) restaurant workers, or 3) field laborers.

From 1923 to 1929, Filipinos arrived in California at the rate of 4,000 a year. Of this number, 56 percent came by way of Hawaii, 35 percent directly from the Philippines, and the other 9 percent from other oriental ports. In all, about 150,000 Filipinos left their homeland between 1907 and 1930 for the U.S.

These Filipinos constituted a floating reserve army of labor to fill the needs of the Alaskan salmon canneries during the summer months and the agricultural fields of California during the rest of the year. Their labor helped build these industries

Then followed the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 30's which shook the lives of all the working people in the U.S. Factories were closing down left and right, millions of people were out of work, bills were mounting up threatening security and raising the possibility of families being put out in the street or even having to go on charity bread lines. Confusion and panic spread throughout the country. This was a particularly hard time for Filipino workers, newcomers to the U.S. Many Whites vented their anger at losing their jobs, etc. on immigrants with the chauvinist logic that "they're taking jobs from Americans." In California, Washington and Oregon, this was directed particularly against Filipinos. Anti-Filipino riots occurred up and down the West Coast. The most infamous was the Watsonville riot early in 1930 in which a 22-year old

The Second Wave

1946-1965

The advent of World War II posed new demands upon the Filipinos in the U.S. and Hawaii. With the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, the tens of thousands of Filipinos here in America rushed quickly to the military recruitment stations to enlist and fight to free the Philippines.

Initially, they were turned away because of the existing draft act which applied only to U.S. citizens and aliens living in the U.S. The peculiar status given to Filipinos during the "Commonwealth" period was neither citizen nor alien, but "national." After joint discussions among Filipino and U.S. officials, an agreement was reached. The agreement granted that all those who registered for military service would be re-classified as U.S. citizens. Further legal action followed allowing qualified Filipinos to work in government offices, in shipyards, or airplane factories.

Thousands of Filipinos enlisted in the U.S. army. These enlistees were formed into the First and Second Filipino regiments.

While many Filipinos enlisted, others stayed behind to work in the fields and canneries. Wholesale withdrawal of Filipino labor from these industries would have led to their collapse.

Joining the U.S. military did little to reverse the pattern of racial and national discrimination against Filipinos. They

were still barred from marrying Caucasian women, while Filipino soldiers in uniform were denied restaurant service, theaters, haircuts in barber shops, hotel accommodations, etc. They were still subject to verbal insults and physical threats from whites.

Once in the Philippines, these Filipino army regiments fought with the combined forces of the Philippine Army, which was part of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), as well as the Philippine Scouts.

Following the war, those Filipinos who served in the U.S. military plus the Philippine Scouts were granted American citizenship. However, many of the Scouts were not able to benefit from this privilege because the U.S. government did not set up an office in Manila to process them.

After the war, the U.S. Congress passed the War Brides Act which allowed Filipinos who served in the U.S. military and the Philippine Scouts to bring their wives and children from the Philippines. This immigration of Filipinos in the U.S. military and their wives and children is the second wave of Filipino immigration to the U.S.

In addition, a token immigration quota was maintained for Filipinos of 100 per year between 1946-65. Total Filipino immigration amounted to 34,711 between the 1946-65 period, overwhelmingly

military-related people.

After the war, the job status of Filipinos did not alter substantially. The same social job discrimination was still present. Many Filipino servicemen returned to their "traditional" jobs in the hotels, restaurants and fields. In California, agriculture remained the largest employer.

In 1950, nearly 90 percent of Filipinos in the U.S. were engaged in manual work. According to the 1960 census, approximately 15 years after the war, most of the white collar occupations held by Filipinos were in sales and clerical jobs—the lowest paying strata; while 74.4 percent of the 106,406 Filipino workers in America were in manual occupations. Another study done in 1960 analyzes the socio-economic profile of the Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos. It found Filipinos to be the lowest in terms of education, occupation and income.

The second wave settled down mainly on the West Coast and Hawaii. Filipino communities sprang up around the military bases along the West Coast and especially San Diego, San Francisco and Alameda, and Honolulu. During this period, these communities were able to become relatively stable, unlike the previous "Manila towns" of the first wave. By the time the third wave immigration began in 1965, the 1st and 2nd wave had grown to over 250,000.



The Third Wave

1965-Present

The year 1965 was to mark the beginning of a new phase, a new character for the Filipino community in America. In 1965, a new immigration law was enacted. Prior to 1965 the law was highly discriminatory toward "non-white" immigrants. It favored white Europeans over other peoples of "colored" races and national origin. The new law of 1965 removed racial and national barriers for the first time, giving peoples outside of the Americas and Europe an equal footing to compete for the 170,000 immigration slots with a maximum of 20,000 immigrants per country. The basic reason for this "liberalized" policy was to attract professional people from under-developed countries to meet the labor needs of the U.S. economy during a boom period.

Many people have given much weight to the 1965 immigration law for "pulling" Filipinos to immigrate to this country. However, there are factors internal to the Philippines which are still the principal reason for the ever increasing Filipino exodus to America.

The Present-Day Continuing Economic Crisis

Like the previous waves before them, this third wave comes to America at a time when conditions in the Philippines are worsening. The U.S. granted independence to the Philippines in 1946. It was an act heralded by many countries in the world as a positive example of an imperialist power forsaking its former colonial entanglements. While the U.S. "granted" the Philippines its formal independence, it maintained the unequal and exploitative economic ties through the series of treaties signed between the two nations.

These treaties spell out the so-called "special relations" between America and the Philippines which give American citizens equal rights as Philippine citizens to land and establishing business industries in the Philippines, giving huge tracts of land to the U.S. military for bases, etc. These provisions have undermined Philippine sovereignty and tied the destiny of the Philippine nation and people to serving the needs of the U.S. multi-national corporations.

For the masses of Filipino peasants, continued U.S. domination has meant continued bondage to the landlords. Under 50 years of direct American colonial rule the tenancy rate, i.e. the percentage of peasants not owning their land but "share-cropping" with landlords rose from 18 percent in 1903 to 37.4 percent by 1948. After independence (1946) this trend continued until it was 50 percent by 1960. These figures indicate the extreme poverty of the great majority of the Filipino peasantry.

Meanwhile, U.S. big businesses have been allowed a commanding role over key sectors of the Philippine economy — petroleum, rubber, drugs, fertilizers, chemicals, mining, heavy equipment, marketing transportation facilities, finance, and others. The U.S. multi-nationals work through the local ruling elite, thus exacerbating the gap between rich and poor. Sen. Benigno Aquino, commenting on the Philippine economy in 1972, said, "75 percent of the people are poor, 23.5 percent middle class, and only 1.5 percent are privileged rich." In 1972 only 10 percent of the people controlled 85 percent of the wealth.

A 1966 government report showed that the average yearly per capita income in the Philippines was P627 (\$250), one of the lowest in the world. A survey taken the same year reported that 72.2 percent of 5.3 million Philippine households have an annual income below P2,000; 17.1 percent earned from P2,000 to P4,999; while only 4.7 percent earned more than P5,000. With this present distribution of the national income, only 4 percent of Filipino families can provide college education for their children.

Against this backdrop of deteriorating Philippine social and economic conditions,

the professional and skilled sectors sought to escape by immigrating to the U.S. With the 1965 lifting of restrictions, the avenue for their immigration was opened up. This begins the third wave of Filipino immigration to the U.S.

Unlike the first wave, who came from rural and peasant backgrounds, the third wave are urban-based and come largely from middle class, professional backgrounds. To immigrate to America now is a very costly venture, which prevents the masses of workers and peasants from taking advantage of this "escape route." Not only are professionals coming, but their families and relatives are also entering in increasing numbers. In fact, the majority of immigrants entering the U.S. today are the immediate family and relatives.

Unlike the first wave Filipinos who settled largely in the rural areas of California, Hawaii and Washington, these third wave Filipinos are settling in the urban areas. The trend is that most still settle in California and Hawaii. Between 1971-76, nearly 50 percent of the total immigrants for that period went to California and Hawaii. Within this number 38 percent went to California.

At the same time, Filipino communities are growing steadily in the urban centers of the Mid-West and East Coast. These immigrants focus around the major cities and surrounding suburbs for jobs and homes. Cities like Chicago, New York City, Newark, Jersey City, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Norfolk have developed sizable Filipino communities since 1965.

"The Life of a Nation is in its People"

What does this increasing exodus of Filipino professionals and their families mean for the Philippines? The life of a nation is in its people and their skills and labor. There is a great need for people of such knowledge and education in the Philippines to play vital roles in the development and transformation of Philippine society. But because of the subservience to U.S. needs instead of its own people, there is clear distortion of national priorities set by the government. The government does not strive to create the opportunities for these professionals to practice their skills in the Philippines for the benefit of the people, but instead acquiesces to the "brain drain." This results in the loss of the most skilled people to the U.S. at a time when their skills are desperately needed in the Philippines.

The major groups of Filipino professionals immigrating to the U.S. are in the medical sector (nurses, physicians, dentists, med/dental technicians, dieticians); accountants; engineers (electrical, mechanical, civil) and teachers (primary, secondary, college).

The medical sector makes up the largest percentage of the total number of Filipinos who have come to the U.S. since 1965. This grouping has accounted for 36 percent of total immigrants coming between 1965-76. Nurses and doctors are the majority of the medical sector.

Medical professionals of any country are key in maintaining the mental and physical well-being of that nation. There is certainly a dire need for them especially in the Philippine countryside. Diseases like T.B., Cholera, Malaria, Polio and others still cripple and kill many Filipinos. Why is it that these professionals are leaving for the U.S. to practice? The answer is not a simple one, but at the heart of the issue is the distortion of priorities of the national government. In this period, Marcos has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on projects to attract tourists and to get multi-national corporations to invest in the Philippines. Projects like the high-rise hotels and international convention centers are given precedence over basic things like clinics or hospitals in the countryside. As a result many Filipino

professionals are denied the opportunity to practice their skill in the Philippines. As a result they seek immigration to the U.S.

These third wave professionals are drawn like the first wave pioneers to fill the labor needs of the U.S. economy. The U.S. welcomed this influx of foreign labor because it provided highly-skilled and trained workers for U.S. industry. These Filipino professionals are used to fill jobs in the lower strata of white collar workers. Many are employed at beginning-level jobs which are vital in the business process. For example, accountants — there is a high demand for people with accounting skills. Not necessarily as Certified Public Accountants, but as workers who can perform basic and advanced accounting for financial institutions like banks, insurance companies, government administrations, etc. These firms will hire Filipino CPA's or accounting graduates and utilize their skills without having to pay them as CPA's. They can do this because of discriminatory licensure procedures in the U.S. which do not recognize experience or education from the Philippines.

During the sixties and early seventies, the U.S. economy experienced a boom. With the expansion of the big multi-national corporations, there was a growing need to facilitate internal and external communications and transactions. All of this meant writing, recording, typing, filing, duplicating, etc.

In San Francisco, thousands of Filipinos go to work daily in the "Financial District" in big businesses like Bank of America, etc. Here all the paper-work that goes into accounting for the investments of these huge multi-nationals in the entire Pacific Rim area gets done by the cheap labor of Filipino professionals and others.

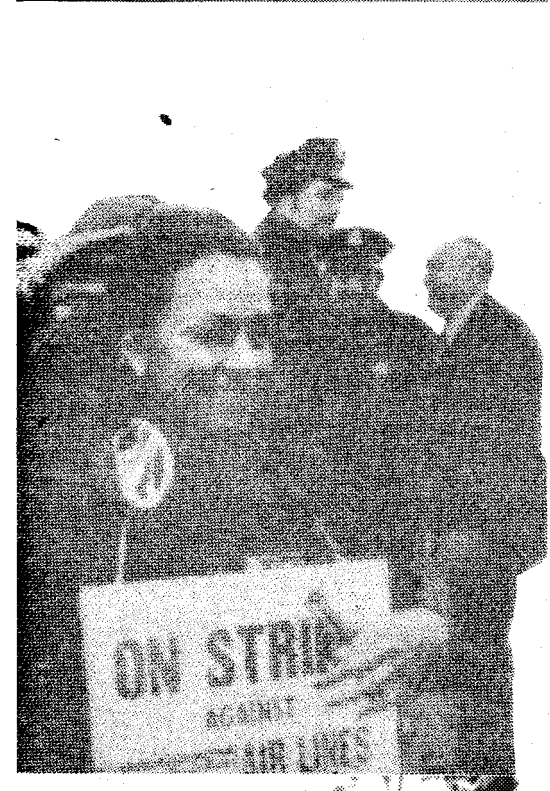
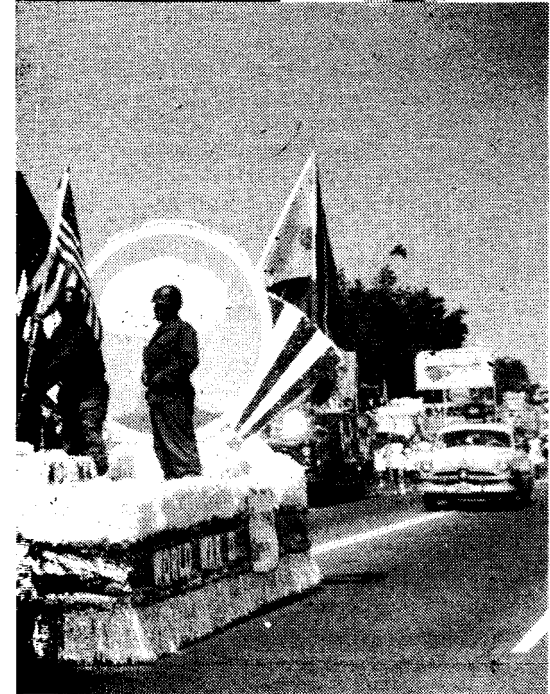
There has always been a shortage of skilled medical professionals in the U.S. This is because of lack of planning and the profit motivation in the U.S. health care system. As of the sixties and early seventies, the manpower shortage was reaching a critical point. To rescue the situation, foreign-trained nurses, doctors, dentists and med/techs were encouraged to immigrate to the U.S. In particular, Filipinos were sought because of their Western-style education. Today, there are concentrations of Filipino medical professionals in New York and New Jersey on the East Coast, and Illinois and Michigan on the West Coast.

Before 1970, when the nursing shortage was filled, foreign nurses were granted reciprocity in the U.S. with the RN status gained in their home country. This meant they did not have to take any special exams to participate in the U.S. However, once the labor shortage became less critical, reciprocity was eliminated. Foreign nurses now have to take difficult exams in the U.S. in order to obtain licensure as an RN, regardless of their experience and education level from their home country.

Once reciprocity was eliminated, the Filipino nurses were faced with the difficult task of taking the U.S. nursing examination. For the Filipino nurses who have to take the test, an insidious pattern has developed in which a large majority (about 80 percent) of them fail each year. How do we explain this? In fact, the nurses themselves are quite competent in handling their jobs. However, the real reason for the high failure rate is the highly discriminatory and biased nature of the examinations themselves. The tests take unfair advantage of people for whom English is not the "first language" by using American idioms and double negatives etc.

Once the foreign-trained nurses fail these tests, they are forced to take lower-paying positions with responsibilities almost exactly similar to those of licensed RN's. In this way, the U.S. medical industry gains extra-profits from the exploitation of Filipino nurses.

H-1 nurses face an even more unstable situation. These are "contract workers" who are recruited to the U.S. for a specific period designated by the contract. Unlike their permanent resident counterparts, they are easily subject to deportation



should they fail their licensure exam. What makes their situation especially difficult is that they must take the licensure exam on the first date that it is available after their arrival in the U.S. An unlucky nurse could enter the U.S. one month or one week before the exam and she would be required to take it. There is no consideration for adjustment to the country, studying for the exam, etc. And even if they had a chance to study, the refresher courses are too expensive to afford. (The government does not provide any such free courses.)

Under the U.S. economic system, there is always a certain percentage of the labor force who are unemployed or underemployed. When there is a boom in the economy, the percentage of unemployed in the labor force is lowered. When the economy is heading towards a recession, the percentage of unemployed among workers rises. At present, the U.S. economy is in a period of recession, with unemployment running high. This is the reverse of the situation in 1965—a boom period—when the third wave immigrants began coming. At present, the U.S. government and big business is no longer interested in recruiting foreign-trained professionals to meet its labor shortage. On the contrary, they are now trying to restrict entry and harass those that are already here.

For the new immigrant professionals, it is not uncommon to be barred from a job because of no local experience; if they are hired, they are placed in entry level positions way below their skill and educational experience. And as newly-hired workers, they are an easy target for lay-offs.

What these third wave professionals are experiencing differs only in degree from what the lessor-skilled first wave immigrants experienced during the depression of the 1930's. The reduced production and heightened unemployment of the recession economy provokes a scramble among the workers for the few available jobs, pitting immigrants versus native-born, white versus minorities, men versus women, and young versus old. Divisions among the working population become acute. Immigrants and minorities become the scapegoats for the system itself which is not able to produce to meet peoples needs. Racist and chauvinist ideology gets promoted to rationalize scapegoating these groups.

Historically, minorities and immigrants have borne the brunt of these attacks because of deeply-ingrained prejudices within the fabric of American society which has developed since the days of black slavery. The defenders of the capitalist system can always appeal to these prejudices during times of crisis to divert attention from the failings of the system itself.

INS—Tool of U.S. Big Business

It is in periods of economic recession that the role of the government becomes most clear in relation to immigration policy. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has the task of controlling entry into the U.S. borders in the interest of the labor needs of the big corporations. In periods of boom when there is a labor shortage, restrictions are lowered and certain sectors of workers are let in. Other restrictions are simply ignored for a time as inspectors "look the other way." However, in periods of recession where there is high unemployment, restrictions are raised and all sorts of regulations that had been forgotten about in the previous period are now paraded forth to harass people with. This essential role of the INS is what explains why certain regulations are ignored at times and strictly enforced at other times. It explains why the INS is now "cracking down" in this period of economic recession, on immigrants.

This INS "crackdown" has big implications on the Filipino community. One example is third preference visas. Third preference is a visa status for professionals who are given permanent resident status in order to practice their profession. Recently the INS has been harassing people with third preference visas who are

not presently practicing their professions. The law regarding their preference states that a person coming under the visa preference must practice his/her profession that they immigrate under. However, the INS knows that because of discriminatory licensure procedures and diminished employment possibilities, it is often impossible for a third preference person to practice their profession. Despite this, they continue to admit third preference people for years, people who were forced to take lower paying positions within their field. A case in point is Leticia Monserate,

a CPA in the Philippines who entered the U.S. as an accountant. However, no employer would hire her as such, so she accepted accounting-related work with Bank of America. Through this position she hoped to eventually work her way to an accountant's job. (Of course, she is essentially already doing work comparable to an accountant, only not getting paid for it). After four years in America and a promotion, she went home for a vacation only to be stopped at the airport upon her return and told that because she was supposedly not practicing her profession,

she was subject to deportation for violation of her visa. Only by generating public support over this outrage was the INS forced to back down and rescind her deportation, after subjecting Leticia to the trauma of harassment, arrest, and anti-Filipino remarks.

Another example of INS harassment is the Supplement Security Income (SSI) case, which is public assistance to the elderly and disabled. There have been numerous cases where elderly non-citizen Filipinos have been stopped on their way back into the U.S. and threatened with deportation because they were receiving SSI payments. The INS laws state an immigrant is subject to deportation of he/she becomes a "public charge," and the INS is now interpreting this to include receiving SSI.

These immigrant regulations and others like them were not strictly enforced during the period of economic boom, but during this present economic crisis they are being rigidly implemented. So law enforcement is subject to the ups and downs of the labor needs of the American economy. Immigrants are treated as nothing but pawns on the economic chessboard, to be played with when needed, but discarded when not.

The INS attacks against the Mexican-American community are much more blatant than the attacks against the Filipino community. These people have toiled in the fields and the clothing sweatshops for decades making billions of dollars of profits for the growers and factory owners. But they are now subject to INS raids in the fields, factories or neighborhoods like East Los Angeles, searching for "illegal" workers. These people are charged with "taking away jobs from Americans." In fact, the jobs they are performing are so undesirable that very few white workers can be found to do them. The INS performs its function as a "safety valve," releasing the economic tension over unemployment by blaming Mexicans and other immigrants as the root cause of the problem.

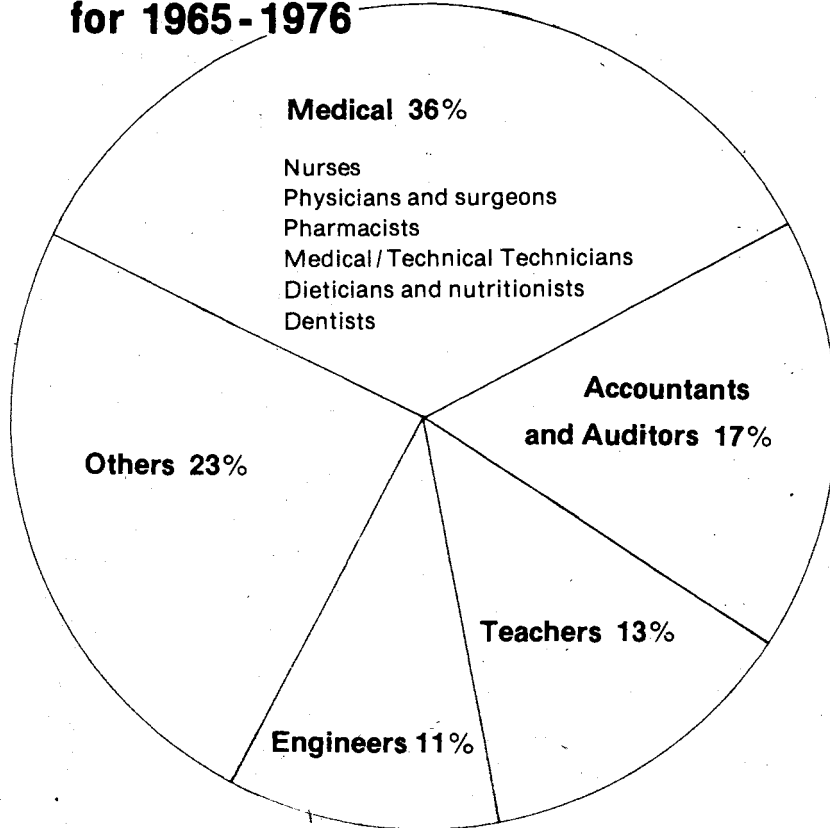
The Filipino community is not immune from the blatant harassment that the Mexican-American community is undergoing. One has only to recall the treatment of the first wave Filipinos with the riots, killings, burnings, etc. The H-1 nurses, third preference, SSI and other cases of harassment against Filipinos are only harbingers of what is to come for the new third wave immigrants as the economic crisis continues to deepen.

The Filipino community in the U.S. is over 70 years old and is a mixture of three waves of Filipino immigration and the generation descending from them. There are complex needs and problems facing our community in this coming period. We have made invaluable contributions to the building of America as farmworkers, clerks, nurses, doctors, and other workers. We stand firm with the other workers of this nation as the life force of the country. As immigrants and minorities in this country, we share a common experience of discrimination.

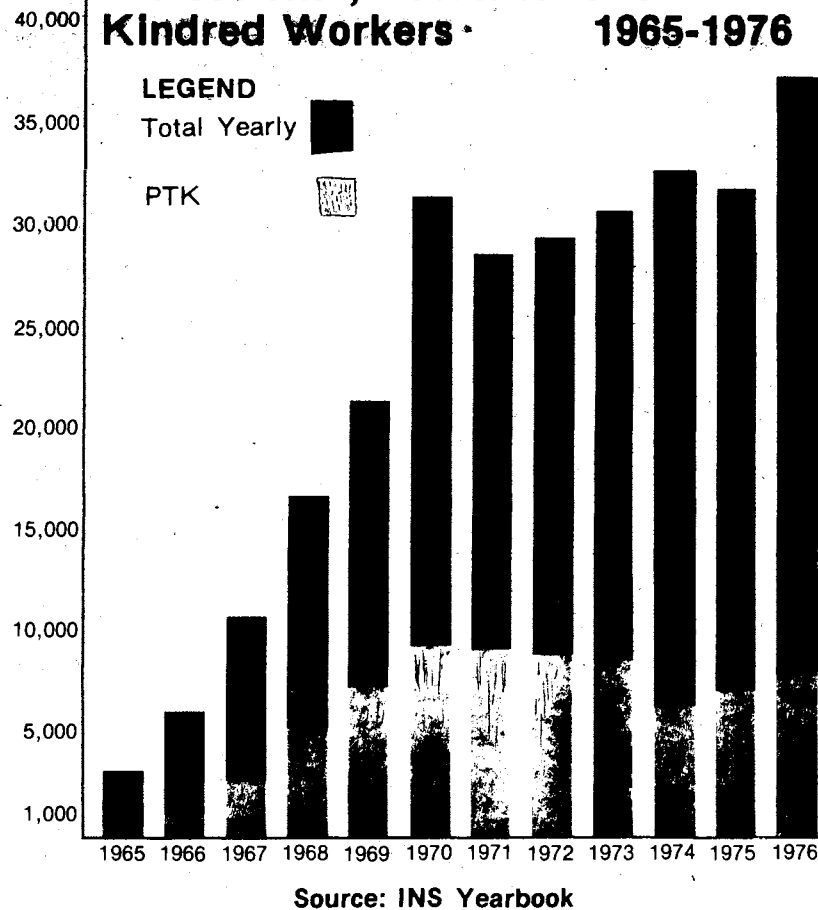
At present, the most unstable sectors of our community are being targeted for harassment by the INS. These are the very people least in a position to defend themselves, the very people who can be most easily intimidated by the INS. If we are to respond effectively to these attacks, the more stable sectors of the community will have to take an active role in countering this harassment. We need the united community, people from all three waves plus our Filipino-American children to stand up for the rights of those currently being singled out for harassment.

What's more, we must understand that this harassment is not an isolated phenomena by individual INS agents, but rather is the result of national policies of the U.S. government to meet the current economic situation. These national INS policies must be changed, for they violate the rights of immigrant workers. What will it take to change these policies? Local responses to injustice is not enough. We must have a nation-wide movement within the Filipino community to generate grass roots pressure on the INS to change these policies. And finally, to be effective in this struggle, we must link up with similar efforts in other immigrant communities, such as the Mexican community, to form one strong united voice against injustice. □

Top Four Filipino Professionals for 1965-1976



Immigrants Admitted as Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers 1965-1976



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