

**Interracial Romances of American Empire:
Migration, Marriage, and Law in Twentieth Century California**

by

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This is dedicated to my parents:

Juan Valencia Esguerra, Jr. and Luz Gutierrez Esguerra

for their endless love and support.

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Abstract

This dissertation begins and ends with migration stories, starting with Filipinos in Hawaii and later, the repatriation of over two thousand men, women and children to the Philippines between 1935-1941. Within these stories, I trace a complex history of migration, sexuality, and white supremacy that spans the Pacific. *Interracial Romances of American Empire* examines Filipino American lives through the lenses of two seemingly separate, but connected themes of migration and marriage. I argue that experiences of migration and miscegenation were central to how Filipino nationals viewed and defined their place in American society.

In California debates about the “Filipino Problem” dominated discussions about unrestricted immigration in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Scholarship on this period has framed this new immigration problem in terms of race and labor. This dissertation shifts that focus and situates the emergence of the “problem” within themes of migration and miscegenation instead. I focus on migration and marriage laws to understand the ways in which federal and state legislation shaped Filipino American lives. That Filipinos were “U.S. nationals” meant that they came not as immigrants, but as U.S. subjects. What did it mean that Filipinos – unlike other Asian ethnics at the time – traveled freely across national borders in the

midst of intense anti-Asian immigration restriction? This dissertation traces the transformation of the Filipino from “colonial subject” to “foreign alien” by looking at changing U.S.-Philippine relations in the interwar period and the repatriation movement of the 1930s.

It also examines the place of interracial marriage in the “Filipino Problem” debate to show how attempts to restrict intermarriage and migration shaped the language of interracial intimacy and citizenship. By looking at the connections between state miscegenation laws and federal immigration policies, this project explores constructions of Filipino sexualities, family, and citizenship. It also pays particular attention to the ways in which Filipinos challenged these constructions through cultural and legal resistance.

Introduction

The Strange Case of Filipinos in the United States

Citizens inhabit the political space of the nation -- a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied. Lisa Lowe¹

In May 1935 Roque Espiritu de la Ysla, a Philippine-born native, appeared before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco to challenge an order that denied his petition for naturalization.² De la Ysla was not the first Filipino citizen to challenge naturalization rights in the United States. In the years between 1912 and 1935 Filipinos like him sought, unsuccessfully, to claim American citizenship through the courts.³ The question of whether Filipinos were eligible for

¹ Lisa Lowe, "The Power of Culture," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998).

² Judge Harry A. Hollzer of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of California (in Los Angeles) had previously denied de la Ysla's petition on the basis that as a person born in the Philippines de la Ysla was not eligible for naturalization. *Roque Espiritu De La Ysla v. United States*, 77 F.2d 988 (9th Cir. 1935).

³ An exemption for Filipino veterans who served under a branch of the U.S. military made possible for the naturalization of a limited number of Filipino U.S. nationals. This benefit, however, reserved only for veterans did extend to native-born Filipino civilians.

citizenship was further complicated by the fact that in the past, the lower courts had naturalized some Filipinos on the basis of a 1918 act passed by Congress (40 Stat. 502), which allowed “any alien” – who served in the Armed Forces during World War I –to apply for citizenship without proof of residency or a declaration of intention.⁴ But this privilege, as de la Ysla soon found out, did not extend to civilian aliens. The naturalization laws governing the United States at the time of his application required that aliens reside in the U.S. for a minimum of 5 years, submit a “declaration of intent,” and a “petition for naturalization” in their local courts. Under these aforementioned requirements, de la Ysla would have qualified. When he petitioned for naturalization in 1935, de la Ysla had lived in the West Coast for almost a decade and had submitted his application to the District Court in Los Angeles as required by the law. But when de la Ysla submitted his petition, the District Court denied his application on the basis that, he “was born in Manila on August 16, 1902, is of the Filipino race, is a citizen of the Philippine Islands, and has not served in the United States Navy or Marine Corps or the Naval Auxiliary Service.”⁵

Although de la Ysla was unsuccessful in his petition, his case highlights the anomalous citizenship and political status that Filipinos like him occupied in the

⁴ Although some Filipinos gained citizenship through this exemption, naturalization was not guaranteed. Lower courts denied Filipino applications despite record of military service.

⁵ 77 F.2d 988; 1935 U.S. App.

United States. Only months before the implementation of the 1935 Filipino Repatriation Act, the circumstances surrounding the decision in *Roque Espiritu de la Ysla v. United States* (1935) pointed to the complicated unraveling of colonial ties between the Philippines and the United States. Roque's petitions for naturalization and his ultimate rejection demonstrate the closing of the proverbial gates for Filipino immigration into the United States and the political transformation of the Filipino migrant from "colonial subject to undesirable alien."

This dissertation explores this political transformation through the lenses of marriage and migration in the period between the 1920s and the 1930s. This period is a fruitful moment to examine the "strange case" of Filipinos in the United States. Neither aliens nor citizens, Filipinos as "U.S. nationals" occupied a status that challenged understandings of traditional U.S. citizenship and national belonging. This unique status triggered the unprecedented immigration of Filipinos into the United States beginning in the 1920s that would lead to their repatriation and ultimately, their exclusion by 1935. Filipino immigration into the United States is a contradiction. In "The Culture of Power," Lisa Lowe writes, "For Filipino immigrants, modes of capitalist incorporation and acculturation into American life begin not at the moment of immigration, but rather in the 'homeland' already deeply affected by United States influences and modes of social organization."⁶ Filipino immigrants, therefore, came to the United States

⁶ Lowe: 11.

under conditions already determined by American colonialism and capitalism.

Building Empire in the Pacific

The U.S. acquisition of the Philippines was tinged with a history rife of violence and contradiction - the result of Filipino resistance against Spain and the United States. In June 12, 1898, after years of armed resistance against Spain, Filipino independence leader Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence, making the Philippines Asia's first democratic government. Despite Filipino assertions of independence, however, the United States acquired Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico as territories under the Treaty of Paris. Upon acquisition of the islands President William McKinley promised U.S. colonialism through "benevolent" means intended to win Filipino support.⁷

What followed was an oft forgotten war in American history.⁸ The Philippine-American War of 1899, also known as the War of Independence led to years of armed conflict between Filipino and American soldiers. The cost of war

⁷ William McKinley, "Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation."

⁸ Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, ed. *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999* (New York: New York University, 2002); Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Cynthia Marasigan, "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea: Ambivalence, Violence and African American Soldiers in the Philippine-American War and Its Aftermath" (University of Michigan, 2011).

for Filipinos was tremendous. Scholars like Philippine historian E. San Juan estimate that the war led to the death of at least a million Filipino soldiers and civilians.⁹ Destruction of cities and towns, especially in the northern province of Luzon, left the Philippines in ruins. Following the war, the U.S. government also invested manpower and money to rebuild the country and its economy, as one of its first acts of imperial benevolence toward its new Filipino subjects.

American victory over the war and the ultimate occupation of the Philippines marked the beginning of a long and complex relationship between the two countries. American government officials established a Philippine government that was a mirror of its colonial ruler. To ensure the loyalty of prominent Filipino families in Manila, American colonizers promised “an elected legislature and consultation in colonial affairs.”¹⁰ In addition to establishing new government and rebuilding infrastructure, the U.S. also introduced an American education system where English was its primary language of instruction. Filipino education under the tutelage of American teachers taught Filipinos a new culture and a way of life that measured modernity and civilization through American eyes.

The impact of American colonialism extended beyond the influence of the

⁹ The exact number of deaths on either side is controversial. Estimates by Filipino scholars suggest Filipino loss at millions while more conservative estimates total at thousands. Also see Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, *Vestiges of War*.

¹⁰ Barbara Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press 1999), 5.

country's politics and its economy. U.S. presence in the Philippines triggered unprecedented Filipino migration to the United States in the 1920s. As U.S. subjects, Filipinos occupied an ambiguous political status as non-citizens and non-alien and they enjoyed the unique privilege of traveling between the Philippines and the United States without restriction. Filipinos like de la Ysla made up what was the majority of pre-WWII Filipino migration.

This dissertation looks at the connections between state miscegenation laws and immigration policies as a way to understand this historical moment. By looking at these connections, this project explores how the formulation of such laws influenced the legal and social construction of Filipino identities and how in turn, Filipinos similarly influenced the design of laws. As both colonial subjects and noncitizen American nationals, for Filipinos particularly, anti-miscegenation laws were deeply entangled within a broader discourse of empire; a discourse that transcended the geographic boundaries of the states that enforced them. If we think about miscegenation laws beyond state boundaries, we can then consider the implications of these laws within a national and transnational context. Doing so allows us to see how miscegenation laws became more than just about state marriage laws as they also became a part of a national campaign targeting Filipino migrants for exclusion in the 1930s. With this broader lens, the regulation of interracial intimacy and restrictive immigration policies become important entry points into discussions about race, sexuality, and nation.

I focus on interracial marriage to understand legal, political, and social debates about Filipinos in 1930s California to demonstrate that attempts to restrict miscegenation and migration not only shaped the language of interracial intimacy and citizenship, but it also defined the boundaries of sexuality, race, and nation. By looking at the connections between state miscegenation laws and federal immigration policies, this project illustrates how empire, sexuality, and race influenced the legal and cultural constructions of Filipino masculinity, family, and national identity. As such, the significance of marriage for Filipino migrants meant more than the simple act of being wed. Because of restrictive immigration policies and because Asian immigrants were “ineligible aliens” for naturalization – a ban that would not be lifted until 1943¹¹ –the benefits of legal and cultural citizenship afforded by the institutions of marriage and family gave the migrant a potential to participate as a citizen, even if it could not be realized according to law. Therefore marriage and the family as social and cultural institutions presented the opportunity for a different form of citizenship, where legal citizenship and naturalization could not be achieved. My dissertation looks at the connections between state miscegenation laws and migration policies as a way to understand these complex intersections.

¹¹ The 1943 Magnuson Act was the first time that the U.S. government allowed for Asian immigrants to apply for and be eligible for naturalization.

In exploring these intersections, I focus on California because I see it as a contested site where debates about immigration law and marriage rights were extensive during these decades. California's long history of anti-Asian nativism sets the stage for the anti-Filipino movement that followed during the 1920s and the 1930s. With the exemption of Hawaii, California had the highest population of Filipino immigrants in the continental U.S. according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Sociologists also determined that Filipino intermarriage was popular in the state even after miscegenation laws prohibited it in 1934. California was also the first state to declare miscegenation laws unconstitutional in the landmark case *Perez v. Sharp* in 1948.¹² It was the first time in the twentieth century that a state court ruled anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional.

Los Angeles is also significant for miscegenation trials during the 1930s. Los Angeles County had a high number of legal cases involving Filipino-white intermarriage. Between 1930-1933 Filipinos challenged county clerk decisions when they were denied marriage licenses prior to the 1934 amendment. We learn from contemporary sociologists in this period that Filipino intermarriage was especially high in the county of Los Angeles. The high number of Filipino intermarriages in this county was so significant that it had the power to influence the overall discourse of miscegenation laws in the state.

¹² *Perez v. Sharp* 32 Cal.2d 711, 198 P.2d 17 (1948).

As a main port of entry for Filipino migrants Los Angeles was also home to a large population of Filipinos between the 1920s and 1930s. Many moved to Los Angeles for employment and education opportunities as the result of changing economic landscapes. During the early twentieth century, Los Angeles experienced an economic and population boom that encouraged the mass movement of new migrants into the city. Western expansion and the growth of California's agricultural industry couple with the rise of urban settlement in cities like Los Angeles created a demand for cheap labor that many immigrant workers filled. Whether Filipinos stayed or migrated elsewhere, Los Angeles – and Little Manila specifically – became a central site for Filipino migrants who would begin, pass through, or end their journeys there.¹³ When the Immigration Naturalization Services launched the Filipino repatriation program in 1935, the first group to sail to Manila departed from the Port of San Pedro in Los Angeles.

This project is guided by the following questions: What kinds of political, cultural, and legal concerns drove debates about Filipino migration and interracial marriage? How has the law functioned as a form of legal and social control to ostracize and limit access rights to marriage and migration and how does it shape immigrant experiences? How might a focus on intimacy and interracial marriage interrogate questions of naturalization and citizenship? These questions, I hope,

¹³ Dawn B. Mabalon, "Life in Little Manila: Filipinas/Os in Stockton, California 1917-1972" (Stanford University 2004).

will lead us to see that marriage and immigration laws were central to how Filipino nationals viewed and defined their place in American society. It also shows the impact of exclusionary immigration and restrictive marriage laws in identity making and community formation.

On Scholarship and Literature

With a focus on immigration and miscegenation laws and its effects on immigrant communities this project benefits from and contributes to the study of Asian American history, immigration studies, and the history of marriage and family in twentieth century U.S. This project benefits from an extensive scholarship on American history and miscegenation and builds on the insights of scholars such as Ariela Gross, Martha Hodes, Rachel Moran, and Peggy Pascoe whose works have explored the history of marriage, race, and law in American society.¹⁴ These scholars trace the history of miscegenation laws in America and

¹⁴ Martha Hodes, *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Charles F. Robinson II, *Dangerous Liaisons; Sex and Love in the Segregated South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2003); Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Werner Sollors, *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Peter Wallenstein, *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law – An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). This list shows a diverse reading of miscegenation and its history. For examples see Jane Hwang Degenhardt, “Situating the Essential Alien: Sui Sin Far’s Depiction of

posit that laws played a significant role in establishing racial boundaries and creating social inequalities. Peggy Pascoe's most recently published work, *What Comes Naturally*, offers the most comprehensive historical overview in which she identifies the three main themes of property, whiteness, and gender/sexuality as central to the laws' long history. Collectively, these scholars demonstrate the diversity of the laws and its execution as well as its power to influence the construction of racial and gender identities. Existing literature excels in analyzing the history of law and race making, but few focus on the impact of miscegenation laws on immigrant communities.

This dissertation contributes by considering how miscegenation laws shaped immigrant understandings of marriage and family as cultural citizenship. In particular, my dissertation is concerned with the place of race mixing, marriage, Chinese-White Marriage and the Exclusionary Logic of Citizenship," *Modern Fiction Studies* 54 (2008); Randall Kennedy, *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption* (New York, 2003); Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2004); Mary Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Rachel F. Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race & Romance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); Dara Orenstein, "Void for Vagueness: Mexicans and the Collapse of Miscegenation Laws in California," *U.C. Davis Law Review* 33 (2000); Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Renee Romano, *Race Mixing: Black- White Marriage in Postwar America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford, 2003); and Leti Volpp, "American Mestizo: Filipinos and Antimiscegenation Laws in California," *U.C. Davis Law Review* 33 (2000).

and family in the context of restrictive laws in California in ways that directly address Asian American history generally and Filipino American studies specifically. Despite a long history of interracial and interethnic marriages of Asians in the United States, scholarship exploring interracialism and Asian American history remains sparse. Karen Isaksen Leonard, Barbara Posadas, Maria Root, and Paul Spickard, for example, have led the way in examining Asian Americans, race mixing, community, and families. Leonard's work on Mexican and Punjabi intermarriage is especially informative here, because she shows us how people of color married outside the restrictive boundaries of miscegenation laws in California. The recent publication of Rudy Guevara's *Becoming Mexipino* on Mexican-Filipino communities in San Diego is also instructive on possible new and exciting directions in the field.¹⁵

Yet despite increasing rates of interracial and interethnic marriages, scholarship that explores this topic has been slow to recognize and acknowledge this significant part of Asian American history. Scholarship in Filipino American studies, for example, has focused primarily on the history of pre-WWII first wave Filipino migration and bachelor societies, which has become quintessentially the foundation of Filipino American Studies. Linda España-Maram's *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila* and Dorothy Fujita-Rony's *American*

¹⁵ ; Rudy P. Guevara Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

Workers, Colonial Power, for example, examine Filipino American life in urban cities through labor, leisure, community, and identity politics through the lens of Filipino single men. Fujita-Rony asserts that in these pre-WWII communities heterosexual nuclear families were “more the exception than the rule.” I suggest that the consideration of mixed families in Filipino American history can offer a lens to examine closely how the institutions of race, marriage, and family shaped early twentieth century Filipino America.¹⁶ I use law as one lens to do this. During a period of increasing anti-Asian sentiment, the law provided contradicting, but sound determinations about who Filipinos were, when they can enter or leave the United States, and whom they married. Because of my dissertation’s interest on the history of law and the impact of restrictive anti-Asian state and federal policies, it is my hope that my work will also make connections with legal historians of Asian America such as Robert S. Chang, Mari J. Matsuda, Mae Ngai, Bill Ong Hing, Nayan Shah, and Leti Volpp.¹⁷

¹⁶ Guevara Jr., 135.

¹⁷ Robert S. Chang, "Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship: Critical Race Theory, Post-Structuralism, and Narrative Space " *California Law Review* 81, no. 1241 (1993); Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941*(Berkeley: University of California Press 2003); Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); Mari J. Matsuda, *Where Is Your Body?: And Other Essays on Race, Gender, and the Law* (Boston: Beacon Press 1996); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton,

In these instances, miscegenation laws shape not only identities and communities, but also notions of citizenship and belonging. Mae Ngai's work on U.S. immigration policy and citizenship is especially significant here because it illustrates how American law and society have profoundly shaped ideas about nation, race, and belonging in twentieth century America.¹⁸ I am interested in exploring similar ideas and want to continue this inquiry by using miscegenation laws as one way to look at the connections between state and national government policies. Doing so can show us the ways that state policies shaped national policies and visa versa. By linking anti – Filipino state miscegenation laws and restrictive immigration policies targeting Filipino migration, we see the ways in which state and national governments worked together in creating these policies, in enforcing and in maintaining them. As historian Nancy Cott states in *Public Vows*, anti-

N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Leti Volpp, "Constructing Latcrit Theory: Diversity, Commonality, and Identity/ American Mestizo: Filipinos and Antimiscegenation Laws in California," *U.C. Davis Law Review* 33, no. Summer (2000); Frank H. Wu, "The Arrival of Asian Americans: An Agenda for Legal Scholarship," *Asian Law Journal* 10, no. 1 (2003).

¹⁸ Other works that look at race and immigration include, but are not limited to: Charles Gordon, "The Racial Barrier to American Citizenship," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 93: 237-258); Hing, Bill Ong. *Making and Remaking Asian America through Policy, 1850–1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) and Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

miscegenation laws prohibiting and/or penalizing interracial marriages were “aimed to keep the white race unmixed – or more exactly, to keep the *legitimate* white race unmixed – and thus only addressed marriages in which one party was white.”¹⁹ Here the state’s investment in protecting the symbolic power of white heterosexual marriage and its privileges become evident as does the perpetual cycle of promiscuity it creates by denying interracial couples the right to marriage.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation begins and ends with migration stories starting with the arrival of Filipinos in Hawaii and later, the repatriation of over 2,000 men, women, and children between 1935 and 1941. Through these stories, I trace a complex history of colonialism, sexuality, and white supremacy across the Pacific. The chapters that follow – arranged in chronological and thematic order – explore the ways in which immigration and intermarriage laws shaped the experiences of California’s Filipinos. Chapter One, “The Filipino Problem of Migration and Miscegenation,” examines the emergence of the Filipino problem in 1920s California by focusing on immigration and intermarriage. The chapter argues that migration and miscegenation were central to the emergence of this new “racial problem” in the state. In this chapter, I explore the following questions: What drove anti-Filipino sentiment in California? How did debates about unrestricted

¹⁹ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley University of California Press, 2001), 132.

immigration and anxieties around Filipino-white intermarriage later lead to state and federal regulations? These questions, I hope, will lead us to reconsider how the Filipino problem can be understood beyond racial and labor relations; as it has been previously examined by other scholars. This chapter suggests a reframing of the problem to show how anxieties around unrestricted immigration and interracial intimacies drove anti-Filipino nativism. In framing the Filipino problem as a matter of protecting national borders and protecting the integrity of white women, this chapter illustrates how law and culture shaped the debates and solutions of the Filipino problem.

“Living in a World of Men,” the second chapter, explores Filipino life and settlement in the city of Los Angeles where a small ethnic enclave called Little Manila emerged. The chapter’s focus on the formation of this community shows how race, gender, and sexuality influenced nativist opinions of Filipino men and women. I use personal memoirs, newspapers, police reports, and oral interviews, to draw narrative threads about Filipino men’s lives and their relationships. As dominant culture prescribed the standards of acceptable American manhood, we also see how the construction of Filipino masculinities and identities also occurred outside their relationship to the state to include aspects of their leisure and work life.²⁰ Amidst legal and cultural debates about migration and miscegenation,

²⁰ This section is shaped and engaged with the following works on race and masculinity: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and*

definitions of Filipino masculinity offered competing images of the subservient “little brown brother” and the hypersexual “native savage.” This chapter explores the roots of these public constructions and pays particular attention to the ways in which it defined the Filipino as a racial and sexual problem. The second half of the chapters focuses on the celebrity marriage of Ellen Wilson McAdoo and Rafael Lopez de Oñate. On October 22, 1934 President Woodrow Wilson’s first granddaughter Ellen Wilson McAdoo and Hollywood actor Rafael de Onate attempted to obtain a marriage license in Riverside, California. The county clerk rejected the application on the basis that de Onate was Filipino and therefore prohibited from marrying a white woman according to California Civil Codes 60 and 69.²¹ In a period of escalating anti-Filipino, the public discussion of their

Race in the United States 1880–1917, (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1995); David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Linda Espana-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila*; Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How gender politics provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early 20th Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Marlon B. Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Martin Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

²¹ The state of California first banned interracial marriages beginning in 1872 with the enactment of the California Civil Codes 60 and 69. The codes stated that, “All marriages of white persons with negroes and mulattoes are illegal and void.” The

engagement highlighted anxieties surrounding marriage and intimate acts across racial lines. Here, the McAdoo – de Onate incident offers a glimpse into a moment where law, race, and sexuality intertwined in public discussions of marriage.

The third chapter, “ ‘You Can’t Marry in California, Not If You Are Filipino,” shows how debates about Filipino- white intermarriage, family, and racialized masculinity came together and played out in the courts. Prior to 1933, Filipinos applying for marriage licenses in California faced little opposition from county clerks who issued them.²² By the 1930s, however, as Filipino intermarriage increased county clerks also began to deny applications more consistently. What changed between the 1920s and the 1930s? While California implemented the state miscegenation law in 1880, why did the state feel compelled to add “Malay” as a category for exclusion in 1933 thereby prohibiting Filipino-white intermarriage? How does the construction of the “Filipino” inform these legal debates? This chapter explores the events that led to the 1933 law by examining the case of Salvador Roldan²³ and other Filipino-white miscegenation cases

state later included “Mongolian” as a racial category (referring primarily to Chinese and Japanese) banned in 1880 and “Malays” (Filipinos) in 1934.

²² There is evidence that Filipinos encountered instances where county clerks refused to issue marriage licenses before 1934, however, I also found that Filipinos employed a number of strategies that either challenged or circumnavigated these restrictions.

²³ The case of *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* (1933) is one of the more popular and controversial cases regarding Filipino – white marriages in California. The court

brought forth to the Superior Court of Los Angeles between 1930-1933. I suggest that by prohibiting miscegenation, the state did two things: (1) it reinforced negative images of men of color as hypersexual and savage, and therefore dangerous to white women's morality, and (2) it drew the boundaries between legitimate marriage and illicit sex. Miscegenation laws prohibiting intermarriage between Filipinos and whites also functioned to restrict and police Filipinos on the state and local level. In this way, miscegenation laws can be viewed as one part of the solution to the Filipino problem in California. In restricting marriage by law, the state also prevented permanent settlement through marriage and family.

The dissertation ends with its final chapter, "Exit the Filipino," which examines the Filipino repatriation movement between 1935-1941. I describe this movement in two parts: (1) the debates leading to the Repatriation Act's passing and (2) its impact on Filipinos and Filipino Americans. The first section of the chapter examines the events and debates surrounding the repatriation movement. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on the experiences of Filipino repatriates and their families. I argue that the repatriation of multicultural Filipino American families during this period blurred the boundaries of racial identity and national

found that Filipinos were "Malay" and issued a marriage license to Roldan and his fiancé Marjorie Rogers. Despite an appeal in the California Supreme Court, which resulted in a 3-3 tie, the lower court's decision remained. This victory was short-lived however, as the state later passed an amendment in 1934 that included "Malays" in the state miscegenation law.

citizenship in a way that challenged concrete notions of race, family, and national belonging. This chapter also shows how the Filipino repatriation program became one of the final solutions to the Filipino problem. This chapter ends with the return of Filipino repatriates and families to the Philippines.

Chapter One
The “Filipino Problem” of Migration & Miscegenation in 1920s California

“For over 90 percent of the population, a ‘Filipino problem’ exists only through hearsay.”
Bruno Lasker

“Today, California and other Western states are confronted by a third Asiatic invasion.”
Paul Scharrenberg

Timothy Yatko wanted this wife back.

Yatko – a recent immigrant from the Philippines – met Lola Butler at a Los Angeles taxi dance hall. He made a living as a waiter while Butler, a young and popular dancer, worked at a dance hall on Main Street. The couple married after a few months of courtship, but they experienced marital problems immediately.

Yatko suspected that Butler was having an affair with Harry Kidder; the pianist at the dance hall where she worked.

One night on February 26, 1925 Yatko went to the police to ask for help. He explained that he wanted a police officer to help him confront Butler and Kidder about the affair. But the police, unable to help, sent him on his way. So Yatko followed his wife and her lover to Kidder’s apartment, where Yatko entered through a window. A scuffle between Yatko and Kidder ensued in the bedroom, where Yatko did the unimaginable – he stabbed Kidder to death with a knife. In

court, Yatko admitted that he killed Kidder in a “jealous rage,” but he also testified that he did so in self-defense.

Butler was the only eyewitness to the crime, but she was unable to testify against her husband in court. In order to allow Butler to take the stand, Deputy District Attorney Costello needed to prove that Butler’s marriage to Yatko was void because of his “Mongolian” ancestry. Costello invoked a nineteenth century miscegenation law – that prohibited marriage between “Mongolians” and whites – to argue that Butler and Yatko had illegally married in California. The presiding judge in the case – based on racial science and evidence put forth before him – ruled in favor of Costello. In his decision, presiding judge Hardy determined that the “Filipino is a Malay and that the Malay is a Mongolian, just as much as the white American is of the Teutonic race, the Teutonic family, or of the Nordic family, carrying it back to the Aryan family.”

Thus, when Butler took the stand she did so not as Yatko’s wife, but as Kidder’s lover. On the stand Butler painted a picture of Yatko as a violent, erratic man. She testified that she did not want to marry him, but that he threatened to kill her if she didn’t. His violent tendencies, she confessed, ultimately forced her to leave him. To support her testimony, Costello pointed to Filipino criminality as a way to understand Yatko’s violent actions. He called attention to the “ ‘homicidal mania’ of Malays, called ‘running amuck,’ which he stated was a neuropathic tendency imbuing them without any reason or motive to kill persons of other

racess.” He also discussed “mongrelization” as one of the “the evil side effects of miscegenation.”²⁴ In so doing, Costello emphasized to the court the Filipino’s natural tendencies towards crime and violence was to be attributed to his race. Butler’s testimony and Costello’s presentation, designed to gain the sympathy of the jury and the court, ultimately determined Yatko’s fate. After three hours of intense deliberation the jury found Yatko guilty of first-degree murder. Yatko would spend the rest of his life in San Quentin State Prison.

The Yatko case tapped into some of the public’s biggest social fears about Filipinos in 1920s California: unrestricted immigration and miscegenation. The questions that followed Yatko’s ruling pointed to emerging problems associated with California’s so-called “third Asiatic invasion”: Would this have happened if Filipinos were restricted from entering the United States like the Chinese and Japanese? Why did miscegenation laws not prevent Yatko from marrying a white woman like Lola Butler in the first place?

This chapter examines and chronicles the emergence of the “Filipino Problem” in California during the 1920s. In this chapter, I explore the emergence of the Filipino as the new “racial problem” in the American West. Scholarship on Filipinos in California has framed this problem in terms of race, labor, and economics. I situate my discussions of this emergence within themes of migration

²⁴ Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

and miscegenation and I argue that for Filipinos in California notions of marriage and migration became intertwined matters. This chapter suggests a reframing of the problem to show how anxieties around unrestricted immigration and interracial intimacies drove anti-Filipino nativism. These anxieties, writes historian Paul Kramer, “animated the rapid growth of state-level anti-Filipino nativism.”²⁵ In framing the Filipino problem as a matter of protecting national borders and protecting the integrity of white women, this chapter illustrates how law and culture shaped the debates and solutions of the Filipino problem, which relied on the language of exclusion, white supremacy, and colonialism.

Filipinos in the United States

American colonialism encouraged the first wave of Filipino migration. The first Filipinos to arrive under the American flag were government-sponsored university students known as *pensionados*. Approved by Governor General William Howard Taft’s administration and funded by the 1903 *Pensionado Act* (Law no. 854), the program recruited men and women from elite Filipino families to study in American universities. According to Noel V. Teodoro, the program was one of the primary instruments used by the colonial government “to promote education as a tool for colonization.”²⁶ The first cohort of 100 students left for U.S.

²⁵ Nellie Foster, "Legal Status of Filipino Intermarriages in California " *Sociology and Social Research* 16, no. 1931-1932 (1931-1932): 408.

²⁶ Kramer, 145.

institutions in 1903, which marked the official beginning of the “*Pensionado* Movement.” Students in the program attended some of the most prestigious universities in America and received degrees in fields such as economics, education, history, law, and politics. As a reward, the colonial government gave *pensionados* some of the country’s top positions in the Philippine government.²⁷ Modeled in the U.S. colonial image, *pensionados* symbolized the potential for Filipino civilization and Americanization. Their return as successful university graduates – highly educated, fluent in English, and well versed in American culture – was celebrated as one of the early successes of American colonialism.

Upon their return, local townspeople welcomed the *pensionados* with homecoming receptions, some of which were elaborate affairs in open public spaces. Filipino author Manuel Buaken recalls the homecoming of a family friend, Dr. Isidro Panlasigui, who had spent years in America as a *pensionado*. In the town plaza of San Lucia in Buaken’s province of Ilocos Sur the townspeople gathered to celebrate the achievements of his friend. Buaken remembered the thundering applause to Panlasigui’s appearance on stage and his inspirational speech that touted America as “the greatest country on earth” and the “American people [as]

²⁷ For a list of prominent Filipino *pensionados* see Noel V. Teodoro, "Pensionados and Workers: The Filipinos in the United States, 1903-1956," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 8, no. 1-2 (1999). Also see Teodoro.

the greatest people.”²⁸ Even in appearance, Panlasigui had changed as he stood on the stage with a double-breasted suit that modernized him and separated him from the throngs of people wearing the “traditional” clothing of his country. As Panlasigui spoke of his experiences in America, many of the men and women in the audience, including Buaken himself, envisioned a new life across the Pacific that followed the footsteps of successful *pensionados*. “And so the lure of America got into our blood, into the old and young, mothers and fathers – and into my heart!” Buaken recalled.²⁹ Years later, Buaken would reflect almost regretfully on how much Panlasigui neglected to tell about his true struggles in America and “how false was ...his [Panlasigui’s] picture of the life of a Filipino seeking knowledge in the United States.”³⁰

In reality, only a small and elite group of Filipino men and women came to the United States as *pensionados*. In its term of existence, the program sponsored approximately 500 students, all of whom returned after the completion of their degrees. By the 1920s certain challenges began to shape the migration experiences of Filipino immigrants in tremendous ways. In the years that followed the migration of the first *pensionados*, changes in U.S. – Philippine relations, challenging

²⁸ Cecilia Bacobo Olivar, “The First Pensionados: An Appraisal of Their Contributions to the National Welfare” (University of the Philippines, 1950), 32.

²⁹ Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People* (Caldwell, Idaho Caxton Printers 1948), 33.

³⁰ Ibid.

political and economic circumstances in the Philippines and the implementation of restrictive U.S. immigration policies against Asian immigrants, set the stage for a vastly different group of Filipino migrants.

The majority of Filipinos who migrated in the early twentieth century came not as *pensionados*, but as laborers and independent students without government support. Existing political and economic challenges in the Philippines as a result of its recent colonization and loss during the Philippine-American War heavily influenced individual decisions to come to the United States in this period. Under U.S. rule, Filipinos experienced dramatic changes to the political and economic structure of the country. “Like other colonial powers in the wake of conquest,” writes Dorothy Fujita-Rony, “the United States restructured the Philippine economy to benefit American capitalist interests, especially through the domination of exports and production and the regulation of labor.”³¹ The effects of this imperial economy created to benefit the metropole rather than the people of the Philippines, had damaging effects on the population thus resulting in Filipino dependency on the United States.

Changes in colonial law that benefited American capitalists trickled down to everyday Filipinos with dramatic effects. Loss of land ownership and displacement were common occurrences amidst the deteriorating economic conditions in the Philippines, especially in the Ilocos and Visayan regions. As

³¹ Ibid.

unemployment persisted Filipino men were unable to secure financial stability to support their families and in suffering under these changes many were forced to seek other opportunities elsewhere. Leonardo Aliwanag, a native of Loboc in the Visayan province of Bohol, recalls the poverty that befell his hometown after U.S. occupation:

How very poor was the Philippines in those days... we have no employment there were many unemployed then lucky if you could get 50 centavos a day. So I thought to myself well, nothing to do here in my town because I was only 16 there was a, I heard in Cebu an agent to go to Hawaii for young people as immigrant to Hawaii to work in the sugar plantation so I applied.³²

If dramatic economic changes in the Philippines closed off opportunities for economic survival, changes in anti-Asian legislation in the United States opened the doors for an unlikely opportunity for Filipinos like Aliwanag. Exclusion laws like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and later, the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement and 1924 Immigration Act that barred Asian immigrant workers from entering the U.S. created a demand for a steady and cheap supply of labor that Filipinos like Aliwanag would fill. To address the issue of a declining labor supply, the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA)³³ – a powerful organization of sugar plantation owners – turned to the Philippines as a source. The unique status of the

³² FIL-KNG 76-50cm, Washington Oral/Aural History Project, 1972-1977, Washington State Archive, Olympia, WAS (hereafter "WSOAHF").

³³ Sister Mary Dorita Clifford, "The Hawaiian Sugar Planter Association and Filipino Exclusion" in ed. J.M. Saniel, *The Filipino Exclusion Movement, 1927-1935*.

Filipino as a “U.S. National” made them an attractive option because their status allowed them to travel freely between the U.S. and the Philippines without restriction.

There was early opposition to the unrestricted migration of Filipino laborers, but especially from Filipino leaders who discouraged their migration. National leaders argued that Filipino manpower was necessary for domestic economic growth. Philippine Governor Manuel Quezon, for example, was especially concerned that “[t]he time will come when it will be necessary to import foreign labor to develop the country because the Filipino laborers will all have left for other places.”³⁴ Efforts to curtail migration, however, were unsuccessful primarily because local officials failed to enact any substantial legislation to prevent further emigration.³⁵ Mixed responses to the issue also meant that there was not a united effort made for its prevention.

At the same time, aggressive recruitment campaigns by the HSPA in Manila as well as in the Ilocos and Visayan regions combined with deteriorating economic conditions in these regions were effective in encouraging young Filipino men to

³⁴ As quoted in Fujita-Rony.H.R. 8708 from the *Commonwealth Bulletin*, p.10.

³⁵ For a more substantial discussion of this topic, see U.S. Congress. House., *Exclusion of Immigration from the Philippine Islands*, 71st Cong., 2d sess., 1930. H.R. 8708, 275-277; Bruno Lasker, ed. *Problems of the Pacific, 1931; Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 275-277.

commit to long-term contracts with Hawaiian plantations.³⁶ Aliwanag, for example, signed a three-year contract with the Hawaiian Plantation Company with a Filipino agent who earned 10 pesos for every worker he recruited.³⁷ The company's use of a local recruiter was successful in enticing potential applicants. Aliwanag was one of many young Filipinos recruited in this manner. According to McWilliams, "From 1907 to 1926, the planters imported upwards of 100,000 Filipinos to Hawaii."³⁸

If new laborers believed in the promise that financial stability and success were the fruits of hard labor, many Filipino laborers in Hawaii were disappointed. As *sakadas*, Filipinos performed backbreaking labor in the sugar cane fields for which they were paid an average of \$20 a month for 20 days of work. Because of the nature of their work, many found that there was little room for upward mobility in labor or in pay and those who wished to continue their studies had limited options. Life in the plantation was difficult and sometimes uncomfortable.

³⁶ Bruno Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii* (Chicago, Ill.: Pub. for the American council. Institute of Pacific relations, by the University of Chicago press, 1931), 347-353. HSPA recruited heavily from the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, and Pangasian as well as the Visayan provinces of Cebu, Bohol and Negro Oriental, see Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920*(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1983), 354-355.

³⁷ FIL-KNG 76-50cm, WSOAHP.

³⁸ Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii* 234. Labor migration to Hawaii peaked at 44,000 in the 1920s, see Carey McWilliams, *Brothers under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 347-353.

Many likened their work to those of poor farmers in the Philippines and the lifestyle not much improved. Sam Figueras, for example, learned from former Filipino *sakadas* who returned to his hometown of Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur “that the life in Hawaii is almost the same in the Philippines.”³⁹ Even when Filipinos returned with stories of their success, the reality was that for many returning to the Philippines was a more attractive option than staying in Hawaii or extending their contracts. Between 1907 and 1929 approximately 30,500 Filipinos returned to the Philippines from Hawaii.⁴⁰

The decline in migration to Hawaii and the increase in migration to the mainland can be attributed to a number of different factors. For one, the HSPA had stopped active recruitment of Filipino laborers by 1926. As a result, the number of arrivals in Hawaii dropped to 20,000; a decline of more than 50% from its peak of 44,000 in the 1920s.⁴¹ Deteriorating working and living conditions were also contributing factors. As laborers organized against labor exploitation,

³⁹ FIL-KNG 75-39cm, WSOHP.

⁴⁰ Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii*

⁴¹ Between 1930 and 1935, the number of arrivals in Hawaii had declined to 20,000; a drop of more than 50% from its peak of 44,000 in the 1920s. See Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne 1991), 347-353; Luis V. Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle: The Filipinos in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1981), 18.

the increasing frequency of strikes in Hawaiian plantations between 1920 and 1924 foretold of growing economic and political instability in the islands.⁴²

By the mid-1920s conditions in Hawaii had deteriorated so much that Filipinos in the state were leaving and discouraging family members in the Philippines from coming. A letter from Felipe Dumlao's older brother in Kauai, Hawaii warned him of the hard life of the Filipino and enjoined him not to come.⁴³ Dumlao's brother later returned to their hometown of Santa Maria, Pangasinan, Philippines "where he stayed there for good" while Dumlao, himself, heeding the warning of his brother migrated from Manila to Seattle in 1930 instead.⁴⁴ The decisions by the Dumlao brothers, of both a departure and a return intersecting across the Pacific, were reflective of emerging patterns of migrations that would shape Filipino migrant experiences in the 1930s. Under these conditions, Filipinos in Hawaii pursued two options: (1) to return to the Philippines⁴⁵ or (2) to extend their migration to the Pacific West coast states.⁴⁶

⁴² Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii*

⁴³ FIL-KNG 75-35cm, WSOAHP.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ According to the California Department of Industrial Relations approximately 84 percent of Filipino men and women who embarked at Honolulu for California between 1927 and 1929 were Philippine-born. Jonathan Okamura notes that between 1907 and 1929 approximately 30,500 Filipinos returned to the Philippines from Hawaii. Louis Bloch, *Facts About Filipino Immigration into California 1930*; Jonathan Y. Okamura, "Filipino American History in Hawai'i: A Young Visayan Woman's

Filipinos in the Philippines in turn, sailed directly to the West coast port cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle; bypassing the port of Honolulu completely.

East to California and the Filipino Problem

This new turn to West Coast states transformed patterns of Filipino migration to the United States and marked an unprecedented number of Filipinos entering California. A report by the California Department of Industrial Relations found that between 1920-1929 approximately 31,902 Filipino migrants were admitted into the ports of San Francisco and Los Angeles.⁴⁷ Filipinos who migrated to California during this period were an interesting mix of former Hawaiian *sakadas* and new immigrants directly from the Philippines that included laborers, independent students, and navy men formerly enlisted with the U.S.

Perspective," in *Tomorrow's Memories: A Diary, 1924-1928*, ed. Rizaline R. Raymundo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2003), 235; Melinda Tria-Kerkvliet *Unbending Cane* (Mānoa: Office of Multicultural Student Services, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa ; Honolulu : Distributed by University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 28-30.

⁴⁶ In 1923, 84.6 percent of the 2,426 Filipinos entering the state of California came from Honolulu. See McWilliams, , 23.

⁴⁷ Bloch. , 11. Filipinos also docked in the ports of Oregon and Washington states during the same time period.

Navy. This group consisted primarily of young Filipino men between the ages of 16-30 years old and composed the majority of Filipino population in the state.⁴⁸

Because Filipinos migrated to California in pursuit of education and employment opportunities, these factors influenced where they lived and worked. They would find, just like many did in Hawaii however, that racial discrimination limited their opportunities.⁴⁹ Upon arrival, Filipinos were, according to Carey McWilliams, “earmarked, so to speak, for certain labor operations” and were relegated to agricultural and service industries.⁵⁰ In California restrictions against Chinese and Japanese immigration made possible the mass employment of Filipinos as migrant laborers in the state’s growing agricultural industry. Farmers praised them as ideal workers because they were cheap, were less likely to suffer from field dust unlike other ethnic groups and because their short stature made them efficient “stoop labor.” In his daily column in the *Los Angeles Times* Lee Shippey wrote of Filipino laborers:

In one area in which great quantities of lettuce now are being raised by Filipinos it is asserted, very little lettuce was raised before Filipino labor was available, as Americans do not like the jobs which require stooping and bending, while those short-legged little fellows take to it readily.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 48-72.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 237-240.

⁵¹ McWilliams.

In addition to their natural capabilities as stoop laborers, Filipinos according to their employers also had a high tolerance for poor work conditions in a manner that white Americans would never tolerate. Wood, in his study of Filipinos in California, found that farmers preferred Filipino workers because they were “considered steadier and more willing to put up with working conditions such as poor board, long hours, and bad lodging facilities...”⁵² These qualities, which enabled Filipinos to be so tolerating of such poor working and living conditions, were often attributed to the Filipino’s race. Shippey’s observation that Filipinos took to stooping and bending “readily” because of their short stature racialized Filipino men as “fit” for such labor.

In larger cities like Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco Filipinos worked in domestic service occupations as bellboys, cooks, dishwashers, janitors, and servants in private homes.⁵³ Wood observed that white proprietors and managers gave the most favorable reviews of Filipino workers in these environments, lauding Filipinos for their subservience. The manager of an El Centro hotel, for example, was especially pleased with his Filipino employees because: “My Filipinos never complain about having to clean toilets and cuspidors or mop up food spilled in the dining room.”⁵⁴ A proprietor of a restaurant in

⁵² As quoted in Folder 12: Earning a Living, James Earl Wood Papers, University of California, Berkeley (microfilm; hereafter “James Woods Papers”).

⁵³ Lee Shippey, "Lee Side 'O L.A. ," *Los Angeles Times* February 7, 1930, 48-56.

⁵⁴ “Earning a Living,” James Woods Papers.

Visalia adds of his Filipino workers: “When anything is accidentally spilled in the dining room one of my Filipino kitchen help will gladly clean it up.”⁵⁵ Seeming to possess both masculine and feminine characteristics required of fieldwork and domestic service, employers believed that Filipinos were naturally suited for service or agricultural labor.

By the late 1920s this “preference” for Filipino labor would fuel staunch opposition from organized labor in ways that mimicked early anti-Asian sentiment towards Chinese and Japanese workers. In 1929 the California legislature passed the Assembly Joint Resolution No. 15, which petitioned Congress to enact legislation for the restriction of Filipino immigration. It states “The present absence of restriction on immigration from the Philippine Islands opens the doors annually to thousands of Filipinos causing unjust and unfair competition to American labor, and nullifying the beneficial results to be expected from a national policy of restrictive immigration.”⁵⁶ Organized labor led the charge with accusations that Filipino presence forced job competition in the state, which resulted to white unemployment. Labor unions like the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) – long hostile to Asian immigration and labor – argued that Filipinos competed for limited state resources and hurt the economy with their cheap labor. Others pushed this argument further going so far as to suggest that

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Bloch. 9.

the problem was more than just job competition, but “race replacement.” House Representative Richard Welch, in a testimony to Congress, expressed alarm at the rates in which he believed Filipinos in California displaced white men – ultimately leading members of Congress to believe that Filipinos were “taking the places of white people.”⁵⁷ It did not help that white employers praised their Filipino laborers and found them suitable replacements for white labor. Phil Riley, manager of St. Claire Hotel, publicly commended his Filipino employees for being “neat, clean, careful with the equipment.” He adds, the Filipino “makes a wonderful servant and is superior to the white.”⁵⁸ All the talk about race replacement seemed to imply that in a battle against foreign immigration and labor, Filipinos were winning the fight.

The reality was that Filipino laborers worked in a concentrated and small part of the labor sphere limited to certain industries and trade. Confined to agricultural labor and domestic work “...the tendency of Filipino wage earners to undercut American wage standards and to create unemployment [was] real but limited.”⁵⁹ Contrary to what most Californian laborers believed, Filipinos demanded wage equality and desired to improve their working and housing conditions. To combat employer abuses and to challenge low wages, for example, Filipinos tried to organize first with established mainstream labor unions such as

⁵⁷ H.R. 8708, 4-5.

⁵⁸ “Earning a Living,” James Woods Papers.

⁵⁹ Bloch.

the A.F.L. then later on their own, but with limited successes. Efforts to organize were met with resistance from unionized workers and often the unions themselves.

Instead of seeing Filipinos as brethren in the fight against unfair wages and poor working conditions, most white California laborers believed “that ethnic labor contractors formed Filipino unions as another means of forcing whites to accept low wages.”⁶⁰ In support of local native labor, trade unions “turned down repeated requests for recognition of Filipino labor.”⁶¹ The A.F.L., for example, rejected Filipino applications for membership “limiting enrollment to persons eligible to citizenship” thereby instantly disqualifying Filipinos because of their citizenship status as U.S. nationals.⁶² The A.F.L.’s response to Filipinos’ appeals for union membership, however, was not surprising considering its long stance against foreign labor in the United States.⁶³ White labor’s refusal to work

⁶⁰ Howard DeWitt, *Violence in the Fields: California Filipino farm labor unionization during the Great Depression* (Saratoga, Calif.: Century Twenty One, 1980), 5.

⁶¹ Dewitt, *Violence in the Fields*, 13.

⁶² Lasker, 47. On Filipino American labor unions see, Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994; Craig Scharlin and Lilia V. Villanueva, *Philip Vera Cruz: A Personal History of Filipino Immigrants and the Farmworkers Movement* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

⁶³ Samuel Gompers, “Imperialism: Its Dangers and Wrongs” Speech delivered at the Chicago Peace Jubilee, Oct. 18, 1898. Ultimately, Filipino workers organized themselves and by the 1930s Filipino leaders could boast of at least six local labor

collaboratively with Filipino workers defined the Filipino as a “race problem,” thus promoting class divisions along racial lines.

The unrestricted migration of Filipinos and the introduction of Filipino workers to California’s labor market fueled white nativist reactions. Anti-Filipino sentiment was most virulent in California’s rural areas, where Filipino and white laborers encountered one another in a competitive labor market. Scholars have theorized that “periods of large-scale immigration and difficult economic situations have often coincided with and helped to produce nativist activity particularly among working-class men seeking to preserve the perceived link between Americanness, manhood, and economic self-sufficiency.”⁶⁴ In California,

organizations with a total membership of 20,000. The Filipino labor organizations included: The Filipino Labor Association of Stockton; the Philippine Labor Chamber of Salinas; the Filipino United Labor Economic Endeavor of Santa Maria Valley, Guadalupe, California; the Filipino United Labor Association of San Joaquin Valley, Delano; the Filipino Unity Labor Association of Dinuba; the Filipino Labor Association of Fresno and the Filipino Labor Union. See Federal Writer’s Project, Monographs prepared for A Documentary history of migratory farm labor, 1938 “Unionization of Filipinos in California Agriculture,” Oakland, California 1937.

[Accessed February 7, 2012]

<http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb88700929&brand=calcultures>

⁶⁴ On the history of American nativism, see Howard DeWitt, *Anti-Filipino Movements in California* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1976); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American*

Filipino presence agitated these tensions and under these conditions, became easy scapegoats and targets of hostile nativism. In *America is in the Heart*, Filipino American writer Carlos Bulosan recounts mob violence through the eyes of the protagonist Allos, who becomes both witness and victim to countless instances of racial violence.⁶⁵ Allos describes how local whites burned bunkhouses to discourage local ranchers from employing Filipino farm hands and how mobs assaulted Filipinos to drive them out of town. His recollections were in part reminiscent of the anti-Asian movement in the nineteenth century.

Racial violence in California emerged out of a long history of anti-Asian sentiment against Chinese and Japanese presence in the American West.⁶⁶ It also occurred as a part of large-scale interracial conflicts that erupted across the United States in the interwar period. In cities like East Saint Louis (1917), Chicago (1919), and Tulsa (1921) instances of rioting were evidence of mounting racial tensions

Working Class(New York: Verso, 1999); David Roediger, *How Race Survived Us History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon* (London and New York: Verso, 2008); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁶⁵ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*(New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 145-146.

⁶⁶ Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart; a Personal History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973); Roger Daniels, ed. *Anti-Chinese Violence in North America* (New York: Arno Press 1978); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Saxton, 89-112.

between whites and people of color.⁶⁷ That race riots in California, Oregon, and Washington occurred simultaneously illustrates that these events were not sporadic and isolated episodes of violence. Rather, they created a chain of events that exemplified the intensity of racial conflict relating to economic and social conditions of the period. Race riots targeting Filipinos occurred as early as 1926 in Stockton, California and spread as far north as Hood River, Oregon and Yakima Valley, Washington where in 1928 a series of disputes between locals and Filipinos attracted national attention.⁶⁸ Following the incidents in Oregon and Washington other instances of race rioting occurred in California; first in 1929 Exeter, then in Watsonville on January 1930.⁶⁹

The events that led to the riots of Watsonville are well documented. In a study of Watsonville sociologist Emory Bogardus found that economic, health, and questions surrounding intermarriage had led to mounting tensions between

⁶⁷ McWilliams.

⁶⁸ "Filipinos Driven out of Wenatchee," *The Three Stars*, October 1, 1929; William M. Tuttle Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*(New York: Atheneum 1970).

⁶⁹ Lasker records 16 different instances of race riots throughout the state in cities like Monterey, Palm Beach, Reedley, San Jose, San Francisco and Turlock. See Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii* ; Associated Negro Press, "Whites Drive out Filipino Laborers," *Light and Heebie Jeebies*, November 19, 1927.. Also see "White Mob Attacks Filipino Workers," *The Three Stars*, November 1, 1929, 2:9, 1, 3; DeWitt. Weeks after the Exeter attack Filipinos reported continued harassment and "razzing" from groups of whites in town, "Filipinos are Ill Treated," *The Three Stars*, November 15, 1929, 2:10, Front Page – 3.

local whites and Filipino laborers in the Watsonville district.⁷⁰ In an attempt to address these issues, the Northern Monterey Chamber of Commerce adopted a resolution “designating the Filipino population of th[e] district with being undesirable and of possessing unhealthy habits and destructive of the wage scale of other nationalities in agricultural and industrial pursuits.”⁷¹ Filipinos responded with a mass meeting that resulted in a half-page paid advertisement addressing the issues raised by the resolution. Although the Watsonville riots did not result directly from the resolution and response, debates surrounding the matter highlighted tensions within the community. In the weeks leading to the riots, the local newspaper the *Evening Pajaronian* reported increased Filipino harassment by police mainly for “reckless driving” and physical confrontations between Filipinos and local whites. Anti-Filipino demonstrations began on January 19th with several street fights and culminating with “Filipino hunting parties” composed of 25 – 50 men. Mob violence against Filipinos in California culminated with the riots in Watsonville, which lasted four days and ended with the death of one Filipino, Fermin Tobera.⁷² In the aftermath of Watsonville, Filipino leaders and community

⁷⁰ Emory S. Bogardus, "Anti-Filipino Race Riots: A Report Made to the Ingram Institute of Social Science ", ed. Frederick F. Ingram Foundation(San Diego Ingram Institute of Social Science 1930).

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.

⁷² In the fall of 2011 the state of California apologized to the descendants of Watsonville Filipinos for the atrocity of the Watsonville riots - , *Evening Pajaronian*, January 10, 1930.

members protested against increasing racial violence and attacks. In a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, Thomas O. Mercado expressed disgust but not surprise at the resulting violence in Watsonville calling it “another blot upon American civilization.” “This trait of barbarity,” he wrote, “this brutal and merciless idea of settling a problem arising out of ruthless race prejudice, moral and economic, is not the first of its kind to be committed by the American people.”⁷³

“Here without his woman:” The Filipino Sex Problem

These violent campaigns demonstrate how anxieties about sexuality and gender animated the anti-Filipino movement. The Filipino problem, although related to issues of unrestricted migration and the resulting labor conflict, was also deeply rooted in discussions about Filipino masculinity and sexuality. While race riots in California became an important measure of labor relations and immigration concerns in the state, it also pinpointed to one of most common grievances against Filipinos – the “sex problem.”

http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/ci_18824721?source=most_viewed [Accessed: April 6, 2012]

⁷³ Donna Jones, "Riots in 1930 Revealed Watsonville Racism: California Apologizes to Filipino Americans" Riots in 1930 revealed Watsonville racism: California apologizes to Filipino Americans (accessed April 6. 2012).

This problem, according to sociologists, was the outcome of a severe gender disparity between Filipino men and women in the United States. In the years between 1920-1929, Bloch reported that of the 31,092 Filipinos who migrated to California only 3 percent were females.⁷⁴ Rates of Filipina migration remained low into the 1930s. Many of the Filipina women who migrated during this period came as spouses or siblings of male Filipino immigrants, although a small number came independently. Marciana Melegrito of Moncada, Tarlac, for example, came to the United States in 1928 as a student.⁷⁵ She settled in Los Angeles where she continued her education at Los Angeles High School, while working as a domestic in a local home. A woman like Melegrito, however, was the exception rather than the rule. One Los Angeles Filipino recalled: "In my early years in America, between 1930 and 1939, I only met three or four, not even a dozen, Filipinas in Los Angeles. One of them was my cousin, one of them was my distant auntie and one was a Filipina who was attending UCLA, Flora Acra."⁷⁶ In other west coast states a similar pattern existed. On her trip to Washington in 1929 Maria Abastilla Beltran remembered traveling with only one other Filipina woman amongst 300 Filipino men.⁷⁷ Financial considerations, labor recruitment practices as well as cultural expectations – that women would stay in the

⁷⁴ "Letters to the Times," *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 1930, 32-37.

⁷⁵ Bloch.

⁷⁶ H.M.B., "The Way to Get What You Want," *Filipino Nation*, December 1928.

⁷⁷ FIL-KNG 75-9ck, WSOAHP.

Philippines to care for their families – discouraged the migration of Filipina women.

Restrictive migration policies and recruitment strategies also shaped what became the Filipino population in California. In light of such circumstances James Earl Wood, a student of Filipinos in America, was prompted to ask: “Has a sex problem arisen as a result of this heavy influx of males?”⁷⁸ In his interviews Wood found that the answer was a resounding yes; there were simply too few Filipinas and too many Filipino men. Contemporary literature on Filipino – white sexual relations suggest that gender disparity within Filipino American communities made it “comparatively easy to mingle with women of other races,” which Filipinos “have done in a legal (sometimes, whenever possible), an illegal, and in a promiscuous way.”⁷⁹ Filipinos courted and had relations with women from communities outside their own, many of whom included African Americans, Mexicans, Europeans, and other Asian ethnics.⁸⁰

But it was the appearance of Filipino penchant for white women that triggered the most opposition. Events surrounding the Watsonville riots, for

⁷⁸ James Wood Papers, Box 2, Folder 3.

⁷⁹ James Wood Papers, Box 2, Folder 3. Filipino Oral History Project, ed. *Voices, a Filipino American Oral History* (Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project, 1984).

⁸⁰ Constantine Panunzio, "Intermarriage in Los Angeles, 1924-1933," *The American Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 5 (1942); Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1989), 695.

example, revealed that the opening of a local dance hall – where Filipino men and white women congregated – amplified anxieties toward Filipino-white social relations. The opening of the hall, amid increasing anti-Filipino sentiment in Watsonville and surrounding areas, aroused a mob of approximately several hundred white men to attack Filipinos at the taxi dance. Similarly, the Yatko murder trial in 1925 also warned the anxious public of the Filipino's natural tendencies for crime and violence. In the absence of women and families Filipino men, unattached and uprooted, were marked as dangerous and promiscuous. Thus Filipinos who mingled freely with women outside their communities, especially with white women, found themselves the target of anti-Filipino hostility. In the midst of increasing anti-Filipino sentiment, racial hostility became a site in which anxieties around sex, race, and class converged.

The sex problem was further complicated by the fact that some white women willingly associated with Filipino men. This was especially true in commercialized spaces and workplaces where Filipino men and white women encountered one another. Taxi dance halls, a popular form of entertainment for Filipinos, were such examples.⁸¹ In these halls Filipino men danced with women

⁸¹ Paul G. Cressey, *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1932); Jennifer Ting, "Bachelor Society: Deviant Heterosexuality and Asian American Historiography," in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Y. Okihiro, Marilyn Alquizola, Dorothy Fujita Rony, K. Scott Wong (Pullman: Washington State UP, 1995).

for ten cents a song, allowing patrons and dancers to socialize with each other. Outside the halls, Filipino-white couples pursued other leisurely activities, but they quickly learned that public intimacies were discouraged. According to Sucheng Chan, “Concern over a new type of ‘hybridization’ became increasingly hysterical in the 1920s as anti-Filipino spokespersons called public attention to the tendency of Filipino men to seek the company of white...women at taxi-dance halls.”⁸² Surveillance was a popular way to discourage social and sexual relations between couples. Police raids of dance halls, gambling dens, hotel rooms, and even private apartments illustrate the extent to which relations were policed. One man recalls, “The law said we could not go out with white women. So you got to sneak. You hide, you sneak because the police will see you. They might put you in jail.”⁸³

This, however, did not stop some couples from pursuing relationships and sometimes, marriage. During his fieldwork John Burma observed that, “...many Filipinos appear to be married to taxi-dancers, fellow women in hotels, restaurants, hospitals and private homes, and relatively few are married to better types of American women.”⁸⁴ These relationships agitated what were already tense

⁸² Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, "'White Trash' Meets the 'Little Brown Monkeys': The Taxi Dance Hall as a Site of Interracial and Gender Alliances between White Working Class Women and Filipino Immigrant Men in the 1920s and 30s," *Amerasia Journal* 24, no. (1998): 60.

⁸³ Filipino Oral History Project, Inc., *Voices, A Filipino American Oral History* (Stockton, CA: Filipino Oral History Project, 1984).

⁸⁴ Chan, 47.

racial and social conditions in California. In Congressional hearings, V.S. McClatchy, Secretary to the California Joint Immigration Committee (CJIC), testified to the severity of sexual anxieties in the state, fueled by increasing interracial relations: "You can realize, with the declared preference of the Filipino for white women and the willingness on the part of some white females to yield to that preference, the situation which arises."⁸⁵ Anxieties toward Filipino-white relations also revealed deep-seated unease about "the permeability of racial boundaries and the difficulty of policing women's sexuality during the economic and social crisis of the Depression."⁸⁶ That white women freely and willingly chose to associate with Filipino men confirmed the need to police and regulate the social and sexual activities of mixed couples. Incidents like that of the Yatko murder also served as a constant reminder of the dangers of such interracial liaisons. When calls to restrict Filipino-white marriage increased in 1930s California advocates of anti-miscegenation laws turned to *Yatko* to stress the need to protect national borders and preserve the integrity of white women.

⁸⁵ As quoted in John H. Burma, "The Background of the Current Situation of Filipino-Americans," *Social Forces* 30, no. 1 (1951): 329.

⁸⁶ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998; reprint, 1998), 14.

Conclusion

The emergence of the Filipino problem can therefore be understood not only through the economic anxieties of the period, but also those of moral and social matters. In California, calls to police Filipinos became “a part of a larger movement to restrict immigration, and especially to prevent the infiltration of non-Caucasian races into the blood stream of the population of the United States.”⁸⁷ In framing the Filipino problem as a matter of protecting national borders from unwanted Filipino migration and protecting white women from the dangers of Filipino men, nativists sought solutions through legislative action in the state and federal levels: (1) Filipino exclusion through restrictive immigration policies and (2) anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting intermarriage between Filipinos and whites. Restricting migration, withholding naturalization, and preventing miscegenation through law, nativists believed, would ensure the successful exclusion of Filipinos from the United States.

The Filipino problem, according to legislators, can best be solved by restrictive legislation. “The first half of the 1920s,” according to historian Edward Hutchinson, “had been a period of great legislative activity during which the restrictionist view had triumphed decisively and the United States had made a

⁸⁷ Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 33.

major change in its immigration policy.”⁸⁸ California’s efforts to restrict immigration through federal law gave proof that federal legislation worked. Implemented in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act – the first of its kind in U.S. legal history – cut Chinese migration to allow only merchants, students, and travelers to enter the country. The subsequent Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone and the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted immigration on the basis of quotas therefore closing off any legal opportunities for Asian immigrants to enter the country. U.S. Representative Richard J. Welch was one of the first from California to appeal for federal restriction. In his appeal Welch reminded members of Congress about the successful partnership between California and Congress in the late nineteenth century:

[i]n times past we came here and laid our case before Congress. Your predecessors listened to the plea of the Pacific Coast and passed the Chinese exclusion act of 1882. Again, you excluded the Japanese; and we are now here, through representatives who have come all the way across the continent, to ask you to exclude this nonassimilable race that is pouring down upon us...⁸⁹

McClatchy similarly urged legislators to consider the restriction of Filipino migration while Paul Scharrenberg, Secretary – Treasurer of the California Federation of Labor and also a member of the CJIC offered the prevailing opinion

⁸⁸ Edward P. Hutchinson, “Immigration Policy since World War I” in *Immigration: An American Dilemma*, ed., Benjamin Munn Ziegler. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1953. Also see *Lasker, Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii*

⁸⁹ H.R. 8708, 4.

that in California, “Filipino immigration has more objectionable features than the former immigration of Chinese and Japanese.”⁹⁰ That Filipinos were U.S. nationals and exempt from restrictive anti-immigration legislation, however, meant that no federal legislation or state appeal could force Congress to pass a law that was unconstitutional. For as long as the Philippines was an unincorporated territory of the United States, Filipinos, were U.S. subjects entitled to certain rights and privileges.

When nativists failed to secure federal legislation restricting Filipino immigration, they turned their attention to antimiscegenation laws instead, in an attempt to discourage permanent settlement by way of marriage and family. California Attorney General Ulysses S. Webb, known for his work on anti-Japanese legislation in the state, had been critical of unrestricted Filipino migration calling it a “a fourth invasion of the state.” Webb was deeply dismayed that because Filipinos were not aliens “the 1924 Immigration Act [did] not reach them.”⁹¹ The “undesirable outcome” of unrestricted migration, according to Webb, was Filipino-white intermarriage. Due to the federal government’s inability to control immigration Webb lamented that, “We are now addressing ourselves to the fundamental problem of the relationship between Filipino males coming into this

⁹⁰ Scharrenberg, 51.

⁹¹ Webb, *Brief Filed by Attorney General of the State of California on Behalf of Said State of California as Amicus Curiae*, *Salvador Roldan v. L.A. County* District Court of Appeal 2d Civil No.8455, 5.

country and white women in this country.”⁹² University of California president, David P. Barrows, warned against the undesirability of Filipino-white intermarriage that has come as a result of Filipino immigration. “The question of his [the Filipino’s] assimilation into our race through intermarriage, I regard as wholly inadvisable and unadmissible,” Barrows told members of the California Commonwealth Club.⁹³ The solution to the Filipino problem therefore – as Webb and Barrows saw it – was to restrict Filipino-white intermarriage by passing state laws that prevented it. In this way, anti-miscegenation law offered a loophole that nativists would take advantage of. If immigration legislation will not provide the necessary vehicle for restriction, perhaps restricting Filipino – white intermarriage could. By drawing connections between migration and miscegenation Barrows and Webb illustrated the seemingly natural links between the two.

By the 1930s these connections would embed the social and moral issue of miscegenation into debates about Filipino exclusion. In his call for the restriction of Filipino immigration, McClatchy revealed how sexual anxieties drove the exclusionist forces: “California in this matter [of exclusionist legislation] is seeking to protect the nation, as well as itself, against the peaceful penetration of another

⁹² Webb, *Brief Filed by Attorney General of the State of California on Behalf of Said State of California as Amicus Curiae*, *Salvador Roldan v. L.A. County* District Court of Appeal 2d Civil No.8455, p. 6.

⁹³ *Commonwealth Bulletin*, November 5, 1929.

colored race.”⁹⁴ In a period of intense immigration restriction and anti-Asian sentiment, anxieties about immigration, race mixing, and amalgamation mobilized support for the anti-Filipino movement that followed. The interrelated threats of migration and miscegenation justified that legal barriers be established in order to protect America’s borders and its citizens.

⁹⁴ As quoted in Jacobson, 329.

Chapter Two
Living in a World of Men:
Filipinos in Los Angeles and the Paradox of the Filipino Bachelor

"All roads to go to California and all travelers wind up in Los Angeles."
Carlos Bulosan, *America Is In The Heart*⁹⁵

Rafael Lopez de Oñate was only 23 years old when he migrated from the Philippines to the United States. Like many other Filipino immigrants who migrated in the early twentieth century, he came to America as a subject of the United States; a U.S. national. Men like de Oñate comprised one of the early waves of migration from the Philippines. His path to Los Angeles – like many Filipinos – is unknown. But by the 1930s de Oñate had secured one of the most coveted kinds of employment for Filipinos in the city. De Oñate was a Hollywood actor. De Oñate's journey to Hollywood is unusual, especially when most Filipinos in California worked in agriculture or service labor during that time. Growing anti-Filipino sentiment and racial discrimination forced many Filipinos into these industries. In search of employment and educational opportunities, many Filipinos found themselves in Los Angeles – a city that was experiencing an unprecedented population boom.

⁹⁵ Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* 112.

This chapter will explore Filipino American life in California and their experiences of migration and settlement in Los Angeles. I focus on the emergence of Little Manila to show how race, gender, and sexuality influenced nativist opinions of Filipino men. As dominant culture prescribed the standards of acceptable American manhood, we also see how the construction of Filipino masculinities also occurred outside their relationship to the state to include aspects of their leisure and work life.⁹⁶ Amidst legal and cultural debates about migration and miscegenation, definitions of Filipino masculinity offered competing images of the subservient “little brown brother” and the hypersexual “native savage.” This chapter explores the roots of these public constructions and pays particular attention to the ways in which it defined the Filipino as a racial and sexual problem. I argue that without their women here, Filipino bachelors threatened

⁹⁶ This section is shaped and engaged with the following works on race and masculinity: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880–1917*, (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1995); David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Linda Espana-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila*; Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How gender politics provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early 20th Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Marlon B. Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Martin Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

established notions of community and family life in the United States. Desiring to marry, however – across racial lines and to raise mixed families – also challenged notions of the American family as nuclear and intraracial. As such, representations of Filipinos as hypersexual and primitive were necessary to maintaining public support for the restriction of Filipino immigration and miscegenation.

Filipino Immigration to Los Angeles

Filipinos first arrived in California in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during a period of U.S. imperial expansion and Asian exclusion. U.S. presence in the Philippines prompted a wave of Filipino immigration from the Philippines as a result of aggressive labor recruitment by American companies. Many of these new migrants went to Hawaii in the early phases of migration, while others headed to American Coast cities such as Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* documents the circuitous paths that led many Filipinos to Los Angeles in search of work and educational opportunities. In California Filipinos joined the more than 2 million new migrants who moved into the state in the same decade – a period that came to be known as the “boom of the ‘twenties.”⁹⁷ Migration from the Midwest, the South, and the East Coast comprised of European immigrants as well as native-born whites and African Americans marked an unprecedented period of migration in the state. As a still-developing region, Southern California absorbed a large percentage of the

⁹⁷ Bulosan, 135.

new population. According to McWilliams 72% of the new migrants settled in Southern California with Los Angeles County recording a gain of 1.2 million new residents.⁹⁸

Filipinos began to settle in Los Angeles beginning in 1924 where a small ethnic enclave emerged in the downtown area.⁹⁹ Patterns of labor migration, demographics, and experiences with racial discrimination influenced the formation of small Filipino communities in California. Ethnic enclaves, like Little Manilas in Los Angeles and Stockton, flourished in cities and towns where Filipinos worked and gathered.¹⁰⁰ In Los Angeles early Filipino migrants to the city settled in an impoverished but diverse part of downtown that was the center of immigrant and African American life.¹⁰¹ This area around First and Main streets was an old bustling downtown neighborhood where African Americans, Jews, Japanese, and Mexicans lived and worked. The rapid development of the city made way for new

⁹⁸ Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley; Los Angeles University of California Press, 1993), 135; Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country, an Island on Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 63-84.

⁹⁹ The group comprised of 721 men and women: 702/97.4% men and 19/2.8% women.

¹⁰⁰ McWilliams, *Southern California Country, an Island on Land*

¹⁰¹ Benicio T. Catapusan, "The Filipino Occupational and Recreational Activities in Los Angeles" (University of Southern California, 1934); Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s*, Popular Cultures, Everyday Lives;(Columbia University Press, 2006); Mabalon.

ethnic groups to settle there, including a small group of Filipinos, most of whom were migratory laborers, students, and service workers.

Located south of Sonoratown and Chinatown, while sharing a border with the Japanese of “Little Tokyo,” Little Manila emerged as a significant immigrant quarter in downtown Los Angeles during the 1920s. The number of Filipinos in the area was negligible at first, but the emergence of Filipino-owned businesses around First, Second, Los Angeles, and Weller streets marked the humble beginnings of Los Angeles’s Little Manila. In 1929 a reporter for the *Filipino Nation* observed the formation of a distinctly Filipino area in the neighborhood:

...one can not help but notice the foreign names printed on window shops. ‘Manit’s, the best Filipino restaurant in the country’ reads a sign on 111 North Los Angeles Street. ‘Filipino-American A-1 Employment Agency, L. Angeles Antony, Proprietor’ is conspicuous on Weller Street. Then there are other native signs which begin with the words ‘P.I.’, ‘Manila’, ‘Filipino’, ‘Luzon’, ‘Philippines’, and ‘Rizal’.¹⁰²

The establishment of businesses rooted Filipino Angelenos to Little Manila, but it also welcomed commercial exchange between different ethnic groups in the area. According to Allison Varzally, “commercial districts tucked inside mixed neighborhoods brought minorities together.”¹⁰³ Businesses in neighboring Little Tokyo and Chinatown catered to Little Manila’s residents. Advertisements for “chop suey restaurants,” dance halls, dry goods and groceries, hotels, tailors, and

¹⁰² Mark Wild, "Red Light Kaleidoscope: Prostitution and Ethnoracial Relations in Los Angeles, 1880-1940 " *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 6 (2002).

¹⁰³ E. C. P., "L.A. Filipinos Forging Ahead in Business," *Filipino Nation* 1929.

photography studios peppered the pages of newspapers like the *Filipino Nation* and *The Philippine Tribune*. During a trip to “Little Nippon” and Chinatown Lee Shippey, a popular columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, observed: “It makes me realize we have two complete little foreign worlds without our own, so close together that their borders touch and yet as strikingly different from each other as they are from ours. And to get to them you must pass through Sonoratown or Filipinotown, which also are strikingly different from each other...”¹⁰⁴ Sonoratown is Los Angeles’ oldest district. According to Mark Wild “...by the 1920s Sonoratown had attracted a broader spectrum of inhabitants: a substantial number of Italians, smaller numbers of Asians, and a smattering of African Americans and Anglos.”¹⁰⁵ The close proximity of these communities to one another illustrates that the boundaries between ethnic communities in the downtown area were often blurred. As Mark Wild has shown, the “larger concentrations of immigrants and African Americans tended to make the central neighborhoods the economic and cultural meeting point for many ethnic groups.”¹⁰⁶

In addition to commercial exchange, this downtown area also provided living quarters for Filipino newcomers. Apartment houses on First between San

¹⁰⁴ Lee Shippey, Lee Side o’ L.A., *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1930, A4; Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley University of California Press, 2005), 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

Pedro Street and Central Avenue offered necessary living spaces, as did hotels around Main Street. Housing conditions in the First Street area, however, as one University of Southern California graduate student observed, were very poor because “small rooms, and fourth-class hotels [we]re about all there [wa]s to be had.” He adds, “...First Street life, [was] despised so by the American, and subjected to bad association and disreputable influences...There is not enough respectable territory there for better social expression.”¹⁰⁷ In its earlier years the largest concentrations of Filipinos in Los Angeles were in this area; the result of a racialized geography that kept many minorities concentrated in certain parts of the city. As with most urban U.S. cities in the interwar period, restrictive racial covenants made it difficult for minorities and non-white foreign borns to live outside segregated communities.¹⁰⁸ As a result, access to housing for Filipinos were limited. Author Manuel Buaken, for example, recounts the day he spent

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁸ Catapusan; Douglas Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). On the history of restrictive covenants in Los Angeles and California, see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London; New York: Verso, 1990); George J. Sanchez, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights Is Good for the Jews': Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside During the 1950s " *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2004): 186-204; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996); Marc Weiss *The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning* (New York: Columbia University Press 1987), 160-173.

searching for a “suitable” place to live in the southwestern section of Los Angeles. At first he tried inquiring about apartments, flats, and houses a few blocks away the Forum Grill Café where he worked, but building managers and landlords informed him that “Orientals are not allowed here.” He then extended his search to apartment houses and rooming houses within a mile radius of his work and was again turned down numerous times. “That was my day off,” Buaken recalled regrettably,

I spent the entire day going from door to door, trying to rent a place to live, but without success. At the end of them I was tired physically, and weary mentally; my personal pride was entirely subdued; I was wounded deeply in heart and in soul...and I learned what calamity and what tragic consequences race prejudice can inflict in a man's life!¹⁰⁹

Buaken's experiences were typical of the majority of Filipinos who found that many neighborhoods in Los Angeles did not welcome them.

That Filipinos and other minorities were confined in the First Street and east of Main Street areas was indicative not only of discrimination in housing practices, but also in the jobs that forced them there. Like many minorities and non-white immigrants were systematically excluded from better employment opportunities, thus relegating them to manual labor and non-skilled jobs.¹¹⁰ Jose Sarmiento recalled that “getting a job was always a problem,” explaining that a racial hierarchy favoring whites meant that Filipinos and other “Orientals” always

¹⁰⁹ Fogelson, 70.

¹¹⁰ Buaken, 48-73.

ended up with menial jobs.¹¹¹ “First come the white people, and what they don’t want they give to the Pinoys and other Orientals. Even if you had a degree...So what could we do? We had to take any work place willing to hire us so we could eat and live on,” he explained.¹¹² Since his arrival in 1926, Sarmiento had worked as a “houseboy” at a private home, a waiter at a boarding house, a cook for a family, and a clerk at a drug store. Although Filipinos in the city were often relegated to domestic work, Leonardo Aliwanag attests that workers exercised some agency in picking and choosing the kind of work they accepted. This began, according to Aliwanag, with the advertisement that he placed in the newspaper. He describes that when he receives responses, he always did his research on the kinds of neighborhoods from which the replies came. Letters from neighborhoods like Hollywood, Huntington, Reno, or Pasadena were “good places” and Aliwanag made sure to visit and look at the houses before he applied. After that, Aliwanag explains that, “I survey which one I want, the next day I go for an interview. And choose which one is a better pay.”¹¹³ Sarmiento and Aliwanag took pride in the work they did, but both lamented the fact that because of race prejudice many Filipinos could not secure better employment.

Many of the Filipinos who lived downtown worked in the hotel, restaurant,

¹¹¹ Bloch. 97.

¹¹² Roberto V. Vallangca, ed. *Pinoy: The First Wave (1898-1941)* (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1977), 113.

¹¹³ FIL-KNG 76-50cm, WSOAHP.

and domestic industries where hourly wages averaged at fifty-five cents. A small population of young students in local high schools and universities also made up the Filipino community in Los Angeles. Although many Filipinos were in the service industry the larger portion of Filipino men in California labored in agriculture. Stockton, then a small rural town known for its farm industry, became a central hub for working Filipinos in the Central Valley and was a witness to the constant comings and goings of the Filipino migrant workers.¹¹⁴ The family of Ben Tsutomu Chikaraishi, Japanese American residents of Stockton during the 1930s, operated a local hotel that catered primarily to the town's migrant workers. Referring to Stockton's general population Chikaraishi recalled that: "They were migrant workers. In other words, you seldom had people that lived there permanently. They come in, and then you rent them a room for a night or two nights or whatever they're going to stay. The people that used the rooms kept changing daily or sometimes every two, three days."¹¹⁵ Chikaraishi estimated that Filipinos comprised 35 percent of the hotel's clientele while the other groups of

¹¹⁴ Vallangca, ed.

¹¹⁵ Interview, Ben Tsutomu Chikaraishi by Mary Doi, March 4, 1948, Chicago, Illinois as a part of the Regenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era, Chicago Region: Volume 1. Edited by: Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Chicago Japanese American Historical Society, Chicago IL/ Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego, CA/ Japanese American Resource Center/Museum, San Jose, CA, p. 72.

laborers were a mix of Japanese, Mexican, and Sikh.¹¹⁶ In the fields of Stockton, these laborers worked alongside each other to harvest beets, celery, grapes, lettuce, peaches and peas. Extremely low wages and irregular work forced Filipinos to follow jobs whenever and wherever they became available.

Little Manila and taxi dance halls as homosocial spaces

It was during the off-months of the harvesting season that Little Manila came to life. Filipinos from all over the state gathered in Little Manila where they participated in its commercial and social culture. According to historian Linda España-Maram, “Filipinos, relegated to working in closely supervised positions and living in ghettos created a vibrant street culture where recreational centers became important gathering places for sharing experiences and cementing bonds through informal networks.”¹¹⁷ B. Cortez, a reporter for the Filipino American newspaper, *Ang Bantay*, observed that First and Main streets – at the heart of Little Manila – became a crowded block with Filipinos mingling and socializing in street corners and sidewalks.¹¹⁸ In the absence of female companionship and family, many Filipino immigrants sought different forms of diversion as a way to escape the monotony of their daily lives. Cockfighting, gambling in Chinatown’s dens and pool halls, as well as prizefighting made up the core of a Filipino masculine

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 72-73.

¹¹⁷ Mabalon, 10.

¹¹⁸ España-Maram.

homosocial culture that emerged.

In addition to these activities Filipinos also patronized Los Angeles' many taxi dance halls. As locations of labor and leisure, the halls provided opportunities for interracial and working class socializing between Filipino men and white women. "We used to call dances in the dime-a-dance halls 'taxi dancing,'" recalls Alfonso Yasonia.¹¹⁹ In *America is in the Heart*, Carlos Bulosan describes the taxi dance hall like this:

I came to a building which brightly dressed white women were entering...I looked up and saw the huge sign: MANILA DANCE HALL. The orchestra upstairs were playing; Filipinos were entering [and] the dance hall was crowded with Filipino cannery workers and domestic servants.¹²⁰

Taxi dancing emerged as a part of expanding commercialized leisure culture that introduced working-class amusements such as nickelodeons, prizefighting, beauty pageants, amusement parks, and social public dancing. Viewed by many as cheap male entertainment, it gained special popularity with Filipino men in urban cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.¹²¹ In Los Angeles, dance halls catering to Filipino men sprouted along the borders of Little Manila thereby providing easy access. Taxi dance halls such as Danceland, the Hippodrome Dance Palace, and the Liberty Dance Hall dotted Main and Third streets while the Red Mill Dance Hall and the Orpheum on Broadway catered to local customers. The proximity of

¹¹⁹ B. Cortez, "A Demoralizing Spectacle " *Ang Bantay*, March 2, 1929, 79.

¹²⁰ Vallangca, ed., 105.

¹²¹ Bulosan; Cressey; Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997).

taxi dance halls to mixed immigrant working class communities shaped the economic, social, and recreational life of those living in the neighborhoods surrounding it. As a result, dime-a-dance joints became important spaces for cultural and social interchanges – spaces that historian Kevin Mumford calls “interzones.”¹²²

Taxi dance halls, however, were also contested sites in which race, class, and gender clashed. Many objected to keeping the halls open because it publicly encouraged race mixing between Filipino men and white women. As such, taxi dance halls became targets of reform campaigns and police raids who were concerned that dance halls – as sites of vice and promiscuity – threatened structures of gender and racial order. Critics were also concerned that taxi dancers – a mix of white native-born Americans and second-generation daughters of European immigrants – were in danger from the sexual advances of men.

While reformers worried about the specter of race mixing, they paid little attention to what dominant accounts of Filipino – white interracial relationships revealed – consensual miscegenation. Taxi dancers who worked at the halls chose to work there and those who entertained relations with Filipino men had consented willingly. In his study of taxi dance halls, sociologist Paul G. Cressey found that many of the women preferred to entertain Filipino over white patrons because the men dressed well, treated the women respectfully, and spent lavishly

¹²² Parrenas.

on them.¹²³ Although the act of “treating” – the exchange of gifts and treats for female companionship – was popular between patrons and dancers, in reality there was little evidence that men and women exchanged money for sex.¹²⁴ In fact, taxi dancers were adamant about making the distinction between treating and prostitution. “My body [isn’t] for sale,” Margie, a taxi-dancer explained, “If I ever went out, I went out for love...I didn’t approve of any girl laying on her back, making dough, and then kicking it in (giving) to some God damned pimp!”¹²⁵ Although reformers and the police linked taxi dancing with prostitution, dancers themselves adamantly made the distinction between hustling in the streets and hustling in the halls. One taxi dancer explained,

A lot of people say that a dance hall isn’t a proper place for a girl. Well it’s a helluva sight better having her here shaking a bit and dancing, than to be out in the streets the way some of them have had to go out and make a living. Well I wouldn’t do a thing like that! I wouldn’t hustle on the street...¹²⁶

Both women argued that while they provided sexualized entertainment, it was simply just that – dancing as entertainment.

¹²³ Mumford.

¹²⁴ Cressey.

¹²⁵ “Kinsie Investigation Class A-7 Report,” July 19, 1933, Juvenile Protective Association Records, Folder 98, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois Chicago.

¹²⁶ “Kinsie Investigation Class A-1 Report,” July 13, 1933, Juvenile Protective Association Records, Folder 98, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois Chicago.

That intimate interracial relationships born out of taxi dance halls became intertwined with prostitution and other illicit sexual behaviors meant that legitimate couples – married or not – became easy targets for police surveillance. During the 1930s the Los Angeles Police Department conducted a series of raids on local dance halls throughout the city that led to the arrest of Filipino patrons. Assuming that the women were prostitutes and the Filipino men were “Johns,” police were quick to suspect mixed couples of illicit behavior. In a letter to the editors of *The Philippine Enterprise* Feliza Antonio Rosario recounted stories of police “searching places where Filipinos are residing, making investigations and asking so many questions.” Instances of police harassment became so intense that Rosario could not help but sympathize with the couples affected: “I don’t blame the white women who are legally married to Filipinos if they carry along their marriage certificates in their purses. This is to protect themselves in case they are picked up by police.”¹²⁷ As Rosario’s statement illustrates these interracial encounters were a part of a developing discourse on whiteness and racialized masculinity that heightened reformers’ fears of miscegenation. Under the pressure of increasing Filipino migration and an economic depression anti-Filipino sentiment became intertwined with social and sexual anxieties about the homosocial spaces that Filipinos inhabited. Thus spaces like taxi dance halls and

¹²⁷ “Abide by the Law,” *The Philippine Enterprise*, February 1, 1936.

social halls in California's Little Manilas played a significant role in the racialization and sexualization of Filipino men.

Constructing Masculinities: The Filipino Bachelor

One of the most significant critiques of Filipino men in this period was born out of their perceived aggressive display of male sexuality often attributed to the Filipino's native and savage tendencies. Anxieties about Filipino bachelorhood rested on two notions: the Filipino's unrestricted male sexuality and his desire to marry across racial lines. Lacking the domesticating influence of a wife and family, Filipino bachelors threatened established notions of community and family life in the United States. By not marrying, they undermined ideals of manhood in a society in which one's masculinity is measured by economic independence and one's ability to marry and protect one's family.¹²⁸ Yet at the same time desiring to intermarry with whites and to raise families also posed challenges to the institution of the American family as nuclear and intraracial. Filipino men's seeming disregard for or ignorance of such expectations was viewed as an affront to existing systems of marriage and family. According to one San Francisco court judge, "This is a deplorable situation....It is a dreadful thing when these Filipinos scarcely more

¹²⁸ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880 to 1920*(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 10-15.

than savages, come to San Francisco, work for practically nothing and obtain the society of these [white] girls.”¹²⁹

In 1930, David Barrows, president of the University of California, testified before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization that the “Filipino’s vice are almost entirely based on *sexual passion*...” He adds,

The evidence is very clear that, having no wholesome society of his own, he is drawn into the lowest and least fortunate association. He usually frequents the poor quarters of our towns and spends the residue of his savings in brothels and dance-halls, which in spite of our laws exist to minister to his lower nature. Everything in our rapid, pleasure-seeking life and the more or less shameless exhibitionism which accompanies it contributes to overwhelm these young men who in most cases, are only a few years removed from the even, placid life of a primitive native barrio.¹³⁰

Barrow’s reference to the “primitive native barrio” serves as a reminder of the Filipino native’s recent (and American-imposed) transformation from the primitive “Negrito”¹³¹ to the modern Filipino.¹³² The portrayal of Filipinos a primitive savage was nurtured in part by the frequent exhibition of Filipino bodies

¹²⁹ Sylvain Lazarus, “Lover’s Departure,” *Time* (April 13, 1936), 17.

¹³⁰ *Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization*, 71st Cong. 35 (1930).

¹³¹ Referring to a group of people from the mountain highlands of the Luzon province.

¹³² Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 61-73.

in American world fairs; the most infamous of which was the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.¹³³

Racialized characterizations of Filipino men also referred back to African Americans. As Cynthia Marasigan has shown, references to Filipinos as “niggers” has deep roots in the Philippine-American War where white soldiers drew racial parallels between Filipino natives and African American soldiers. She writes, “In the Philippines, white soldiers already stationed on the islands spread rumors and negative stereotypes about blacks while degrading Filipinos as ‘niggers.’ White troops applied American racial hierarchies by fostering fears in Filipinos against blacks, simultaneously insulting Filipinos with the same racial epithets commonly reserved for blacks.”¹³⁴ In the United States whites would rely on these familiar racial stereotypes to draw the same racial references. It was, therefore, not uncommon for whites in the U.S. to refer to U.S. Filipinos as “niggers,” an epithet used widely to refer to people of color. The frequency of this practice – the use of racial language – was evident in taxi dance hall culture, where white patrons and

¹³³ Jose D. Fermin, *1904 World's Fair: The Filipino Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2004); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1984); Ruby C. Tapia, "Just Ten Years Removed from a Bolo and a Breech-Cloth' the Sexualization of the Filipino 'Menace' " in *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse*, ed. Anthony T. Tiongson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2006).

¹³⁴ Kramer, 46.

dancers referred to Filipinos in this way. A white dancer who dances with, dates, or marries a Filipino, for example, was often called a “nigger lover,” while white women who refused such interracial relations was viewed as “staying white.”¹³⁵ References to Filipinos in this way, carried with it concrete ideas about white supremacy, racial superiority, and sexual deviance.

These partly borrowed racial parallels between Filipinos and African Americans comingled with understandings of racial hierarchy in the American South. V.S. McClatchy, Secretary to the California Joint Immigration Committee (CJIC) would extend these racial parallels and draw a disturbing image: “What would our southern fellow Americans say if the southern negroes were to open halls with white entertainers saying they preferred white women to negresses? There would not be a riot in the South, there would be a massacre.”¹³⁶ McClatchy goes straight to the heart of the matter. The violence he portrays suggests that Filipinos – when compared to Southern blacks – have had it easy. His statement also tells us about the long and rooted history of anti-miscegenation sentiment in the American South. White men felt so strongly against race mixing that they resulted to violence in order to protect not only their women, but also their manhood.¹³⁷

The characterization of Filipinos as similar to African Americans also

¹³⁵ Cressey, 61; Marasigan, 44.

¹³⁶ As quoted in Mumford, 416.

¹³⁷ Bederman; Kramer, 45-76.

revealed a deep-seated unease about race mixing and “mongrelization.” C.M. Goethe warned against the potential dangers of allowing Filipinos to marry and settle in the United States, a pattern, which he likened to the presence of African Americans:

Even then we must remember the danger to our future generations in case Congress should be asked to grant American citizenship to our Filipino wards. We must ever remember that history, habit-like, tends to repeat itself. It is said that our present continental Negro group of more than 10,000,000 has descended from an original slave nucleus of 750,000. Primitive island folk such as the Filipinos do not hesitate to have nine children, while parents of white stock find educating three a problem of finance.¹³⁸

If left to their own devices, Goethe predicted the inevitable “mongrelization” of the white race.

The fact that many young Filipinos “embraced” these stereotyped notions of masculinity confounded their critics. One of the biggest critiques of Filipino men was their bold display of male sexuality often expressed through their vibrant dress and adornment. Critics condemned the men’s flamboyant style, their custom-made McIntosh suits, and arrogant confidence as garish and ill fitting “for their place.” White men seemed especially offended by the fact that much of this display was intended not only to show off Filipino men’s luxuries (that they did not have), but also because it was performed to attract the attention of the

¹³⁸ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press 1994).

opposite sex. Justice of the Peace D.W. Rohrback did not hold back in his criticism of the “little brown men attired like ‘Solomon in all his glory’ strutting like peacocks and endeavoring to attract the eyes of young Americans and Mexican girls.”¹³⁹ Ignoring the significance of Filipino men’s choices to dress and “strut,” Rohrback assumed that these displays were intended only for the purposes of courting women. But as Robin D.G. Kelley has shown, the significance of dress and its performance demonstrates a sense of agency exercised by working-class men of color.¹⁴⁰ The unique subculture that emerged out of these masculine displays enabled men “to negotiate an identity that resisted the hegemonic culture and its attendant racism and patriotism...”¹⁴¹

In this way Filipino men used dress a way of creating a male culture that was distinctly Filipino American. McIntosh suits with “padded shoulders and wide lapels,” became a style of dress that came to be associated with young Filipino American men. Men patronized custom tailor shops that catered specifically to

¹³⁹ As quoted in Brett H. Melendy, “California’s Discrimination Against Filipinos, 1927-1935,” *Racism in California: A Reader in the History of Oppression*, eds., Roger Daniels and Spencer Olin, Jr. (New York: The Macmillan Company), 1972, 55.

¹⁴⁰ C.M. Goethe, "Filipino Immigration Viewed as a Peril," *Current History* (1931): 161-181. On immigrant youth culture and dress as resistance, also see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International 1994).

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2007): 165.

Filipino patrons that boasted of specializing in “Filipino sizes and style.” The fact that each suit was custom made for every individual also heightened the significance of the dress. Every client regardless of education, work, or class status was able to express a personal image that was unique to him. In this way, the donning of McIntosh suits were claims not only to autonomy, but also to their bodies, which many surrendered to American labor and U.S. capitalism. By embracing these stereotypes Filipinos challenged hyper sexualized and racialized representations that abhorred them.

*Policing Interracial Marriage:
Ellen Wilson McAdoo & Rafael de Oñate [a case study]*

Attention to perceived Filipino sexual deviance and the potential for interracial sexual relations further galvanized public fears of miscegenation when couples legalized their relationships through marriage. Relationships between Filipino men and white women despite being taboo during this period were not uncommon. Overwhelmingly male with a very small population of Filipina women, Filipino immigrant communities often consisted of bachelors, more because of immigration pattern and policies rather than choice. The skewed gender ratio within the Filipino immigrant community had a deep impact on family formation. Unlike other Asian immigrant groups, Filipinos were unable to create a stable nuclear family home-life, depending instead on the formation of bachelor communities. “We would not have led miserable lives, nor drifted from

one shoulder to another, if, in the beginning our women had come with us.... We saw no point in growing roots – in making a home for ourselves,” one Filipino immigrant lamented.¹⁴² It was conditions such as this within the Filipino immigrant community, which fostered and even encouraged interracial relationships between Filipino men and women of other races to develop.

Between the years 1924-1933, sociologist Constantine Panunzio found that Filipinos intermarried at higher rates than any other racial minority group that he examined.¹⁴³ In Los Angeles, 701 out of every 1,000 marriages were intermarriages while only 299 were between Filipino men and Filipina women. Increase in Filipino-white intermarriage during this period did not go unnoticed. According to Wood, “Not only have they [Filipinos] received the disdain of what is evidently the majority of the native American population but legal restrictions to miscegenation – and, eventually, a degree of hybridization – have been thrown up in the attempt to discourage such unions.”¹⁴⁴

Thus when Rafael Lopez de Oñate and his fiancé Ellen Wilson McAdoo appeared at the County Clerk’s office in Riverside, California on October 22, 1934 new anti-miscegenation laws prevented them from obtaining a marriage license. Close on the heels of *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* (1933) and the newly amended California Civil Code 69, which prohibited the authorization of marriage

¹⁴² As quoted in *Filipino Oral History Project*: 340.

¹⁴³ Kelley, 695.

¹⁴⁴ “The Sex Problem: Filipino – White Relationships,” James Wood Papers.

licenses between whites and non-whites, County Clerk D.G. Clayton refused to issue a license and announced, “I am not going to issue the license until I am assured that there is no Filipino blood in the proposed bridegroom.”¹⁴⁵ The events surrounding the public engagement of McAdoo, granddaughter of President Woodrow Wilson, to de Oñate, Hollywood actor, highlighted some of the anxieties about Filipino-white intermarriage in 1930s California. Arguments for restricting intermarriage between Filipinos and whites called attention to the social dangers of Filipino men and the inevitable outcome of sexual relations – “mongrelization” by race mixing. It was therefore not surprising that the Wilson-McAdoo family condemned the engagement and indefinitely postponed the couple’s wedding plans. In a public statement, the family announced that Senator McAdoo, Ellen’s father, “positively will not sanction to the marriage....On the ground that he has reason to believe de Oñate is part Filipino, McAdoo has opposed marriage by the pair.”¹⁴⁶ Due to parental objections and to possible legal complications, the couple postponed their marriage plans. In public, McAdoo and de Oñate maintained their confidence and reassured reporters of their commitment to one another: “We are not going to get married right away...But

¹⁴⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 1934.

¹⁴⁶ *Los Angeles Times* Oct. 27, 1934.

that does not mean that we have given up hope or that either of us is backing out...”¹⁴⁷

Meanwhile rumors of de Oñate’s “questionable race” surfaced in the media and federal immigration officers appeared at the Fox Film Company Studios to investigate.¹⁴⁸ During the interview de Onate explained that he was born in the Philippines to parents of Basque and Castillian – Spanish extraction. “My parents,” he told investigators, “are natives of Spain. When I became of age I was given the choice of being an American or a subject of the King of Spain and I chose the former. I was educated in the United States and consider myself an American citizen.”¹⁴⁹ In a separate interview with the *Washington Post*, de Oñate scoffed at allegations of his being a Filipino: “It’s absurd to believe that because a person is born in the Philippines he is a native Filipino.”¹⁵⁰ De Oñate’s claims to Spanish roots and his rejection of Filipino citizenship by race or by birth illustrate the complex nature of claiming race, citizenship, and nationality. It also shows that in instances when questions of one’s race arise, the legal burden of proof lay not on the state, but on the individual. Focus on de Oñate’s race during a period of escalating anti-Filipino sentiment and on the heels of a newly implemented

¹⁴⁷ *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1934.

¹⁴⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 1934.

¹⁴⁹ *Washington Post*, Oct. 24, 1934.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

miscegenation law, suggest that debates about the “Filipino Question” remained in the purview of many Californians.

But it was not only the question of race that shaped the events surrounding de Oñate and McAdoo’s engagement it was also one of class. Unlike the majority of Filipinos in California during the 1930s, de Oñate occupied a unique socio-economic status as a working actor in Hollywood. Throughout the 1930s, Los Angeles’ surrounding ethnic communities supplied Hollywood with its racial ethnic actors.¹⁵¹ The proximity of communities like Little Manila, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo to Hollywood made its many residents and community members an attractive pool for available temporary work as “background actors” or extras. Few Filipino stars reached stardom. Veteran Filipino actors such as Leo Abbey, Val Duran, Tommy Estrella, Sam Labrador, Leo Lontoc, and Jack Santos appeared in many popular movies including *Lost Horizon* (1937) and *The Real Glory* (1939), which were known to have hired many Filipino extras.¹⁵² Work as a movie extra, according to Leo Aliwanag, paid “good money,” which shows why this kind of work was highly coveted. Because it was rare for racial minorities in this period to be regularly employed in any capacity, de Oñate’s job with the Fox Film

¹⁵¹ Many Asian ethnics found employment in the motion-pictured industry, although mostly as extras in films such as Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* and Frank Capra’s *Lost Horizon* as well as *Tarzan*, *The Ape Man* (1932) and *Viva Villa!* (1934). See Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* 29-31.

¹⁵² See España-Maram; Panunzio.

Company was rare. When de Oñate met McAdoo in 1934, he had already established a five-year acting career with Fox. Despite de Oñate's steady employment and his status racial, class, and social differences between de Onate and McAdoo remained.

We will never learn de Oñate's racial identity. Despite persistent inquiries from immigration officials and McAdoo's family, de Oñate refused, or was unable to provide the proper documents to verify his racial lineage. His inability to prove his Spanish roots and refute claims of his being Filipino, however, meant that the couple was unable to obtain a marriage license in California. Rooted in a long history of social and racial discrimination, California civil codes 60 and 69 reinforced the prejudice and exclusion that many Filipinos already experienced in California. Like other Filipino-white couples de Oñate and McAdoo soon found out that they were not exempt from the law regardless of their celebrity. To the eyes of the media and the Wilson – McAdoo family the match was not only unexpected but also scandalous for it crossed racial and class boundaries.

Amid media frenzy an unexpected twist of events led the Wilson – McAdoo family to lift the parental bar on de Oñate and McAdoo's engagement. Senator McAdoo through his law partner Neblett announced the family's support for their daughter: "Neither I nor Mrs. McAdoo...will interpose any objections to the marriage of our daughter, Ellen, to Mr. de Onate. She is 19 years of age and capable of choosing her own husband. The time of the marriage is for Ellen to

decide.”¹⁵³ Neblett refrained from extrapolating further. Three weeks after the first time they filed for a license, McAdoo and de Oñate returned to the marriage license bureau with parental consent in hand, this time in Los Angeles – a location much closer to both their homes. Unsmiling and refusing to answer any questions from reporters, de Oñate and McAdoo applied for a marriage license for the second time then left immediately. On the application, de Oñate listed his parents as Pablo Lopez de Onate of Spain and Isabel Novarro of the Philippines.¹⁵⁴ Again, just as the Riverside county clerk denied their application, Los Angeles marriage license clerk Rosamond Rice, rejected their request explaining that in order to issue the license, “either De Onate’s birth record or that of his mother would need to be considered sufficient proof [of Caucasian descent] and make it possible for the couple to obtain the license.”¹⁵⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that: “Solemn in manner, despite the unexpected bestowal of parental blessing upon their proposed marriage...the couple repeated their bid for a license...and, in so doing, stumbled upon the same obstacle that confronted them when their filed for an application in Riverside county.”¹⁵⁶ Like Riverside County Clerk Clayton, Rice remained unyielding and unsympathetic to the couple’s circumstances.

¹⁵³ *New York Times*, Nov. 8. 1934.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 9, 1934.

In the end, the couple could not marry in California. The marriage license they applied for both in Riverside and Los Angeles counties were never approved and issued. Frustrated like so many other Filipino – white couples, Rafael and Ellen flew to Albuquerque, New Mexico where they wed on November 11, 1934. No public announcement regarding the wedding was made until after the ceremony was final.

Conclusion

The events surrounding the engagement and marriage of McAdoo and de Oñate spoke to growing anxieties surrounding Filipino-white intermarriage in California. McAdoo and de Oñate's story provides a small window through which to examine Filipino – white intermarriage in California between the 1930s and 1940s. While their particular story is not representative of all interracial marriages, the questions and controversy that surrounded McAdoo and de Oñate spoke to broader issues of immigration, race, and marriage. McAdoo and de Oñate raised complex questions of race, law, identity, immigration, and citizenship in the public realm; and in so doing, made the private the public and visa versa.

The anti-miscegenation law in California that prevented marriage between McAdoo and de Onate was not repealed until the landmark 1948 case *Perez v. Sharp*.¹⁵⁷ It was the first time in the twentieth century that a state court ruled anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. Its victory in the courts also made California

¹⁵⁷ *Perez v. Sharp* 32 Cal.2d 711, 198 P.2d 17 (1948).

the first state to repeal a miscegenation statute since Ohio in 1887. While California's *Perez v. Sharp* "transformed the law of race and marriage in California...it had no immediate effect anywhere else."¹⁵⁸ However it was not long before, one by one, Western states like Nevada, Idaho, and Arizona followed suit and repealed laws restricting interracial marriage.¹⁵⁹ The focus on California and its history with miscegenation law is important because a close examination reveals larger issues of race, gender, class and immigration through interracial intimacy.

As the relationship between the United States and the Philippines began to shift in the 1930s with the enactment of the Tydings – McDuffie Act in 1934, debates surrounding Filipino – white intermarriages also began to take on different meanings. For Filipino immigrants specifically, the meaning of marriage and the right to intermarriage for Filipino immigrants also changed. The enactment of the 1934 Tydings – McDuffie Act, officially known as the Philippine Independence Act, proposed complete Filipino independence from the United States and established a quota of Filipino immigration to fifty persons a year. By granting Filipino independence with the Tydings – McDuffie Act, the U.S. ended the status of Filipinos as "American nationals" therefore stripping them of any rights the U.S. previously bestowed. One of the most immediate effects of the act

¹⁵⁸ España-Maram, 197.

¹⁵⁹ It was not until 1967 with *Loving v. Virginia*, that the United States Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws as racially discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional in all states.

was the restriction of Filipino movement between the Philippines and the territorial U.S. With a quota of a fifty a year, the Philippines had the lowest quota of U.S. immigration allowed in the world. Immediately following the implementation of the Tydings – McDuffie Act, the U.S. also began the process of repatriating Filipino immigrants through the Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935. The Filipino Repatriation Act in conjunction with the Tydings – McDuffie Act established the end of U.S. occupation and marked a shift in imperial relations domestically and abroad.

Chapter Three
**“You Can’t Marry in California, Not If You Are Filipino”:
Interracial Marriage and Miscegenation Laws in 1930s California**

“To deny the Filipinos this sacred divine right to marry is itself a crime of the highest magnitude. To deny them this right is to encourage them to live a life of immorality and its resultant effect of concubinage, bastardy, and other attendant social evils.” D.L. Marcuelo¹⁶⁰

*“The antimiscegenation laws made it difficult for us to raise families. This cruel situation denied us the right to live a normal, respectable life. As men without families in the U.S., it was hard then, and even now, to just get together among ourselves as though we were a family.”*¹⁶¹

When Tony Moreno and his wife Ruby applied for a marriage license in February 1930, they were already married. In California where they lived, that year was rife with a growing social anxiety about Filipino-white intermarriage. Current events spoke to the temper of growing anti-Filipino sentiment in the state. Just a few weeks before their application, the infamous race riots in Watsonville, a small town a few hours north of Los Angeles, had made front page news in practically every local Filipino American newspaper in the state. Despite the labor undertone of the increasing racial attacks, however, Filipinos knew that interracial relations

¹⁶⁰ Carina Monica Montoya, *Filipinos in Hollywood*, Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub., 2007).

¹⁶¹ Peter Wallenstein, *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law: An American History* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 18.

between Filipino men and white women were powerful catalysts. To escape social stigma and avoid harassment Filipino-white couples married. Sometimes, couples crossed state and even national boundaries in order to marry because it had gotten increasingly difficult to obtain a marriage license in the state. Tony and Ruby, for example, drove all the way to Tia Juana, Mexico in 1929 to legitimize their union. Much to the chagrin of their friends and family, however, they confided only to a few friends of their plans. In the mid-1920s anti-Filipino sentiment began to influence opinions on the legal status of Filipino-white intermarriage. The decision in the Yatko case in 1925 had determined Filipino-white marriages as invalid. Likewise, the law disappointed Marino Pill and Emma Lettie Brown, another Filipino-white couple, when in 1926 the Sacramento county clerk refused to issue them a marriage license.¹⁶² In both instances the question of whether Filipinos and whites were eligible to marry had been challenged. Courts and clerks cited California Civil Code 60, an “ancient statute,” which prohibited “All marriages of white persons with negroes, Mongolians, or mulattoes.”¹⁶³ According to these decisions Filipinos were ethnologically “Mongolian” and therefore not eligible to marry under the law. Amid these increasing uncertainties couples like the Morenos

¹⁶² "Law and Passion - Editorial Comment," *The Three Stars* 1931.

¹⁶³ California Civil Code §60 (1905). In this same year, C.C.C. 69 was amended so that “No license must be granted when either of the parties applicants therefore is an imbecile or insane, or who at the time of making application for said license is under the influence of any intoxicating liquor, or narcotic drug.”

feared for the worse. “[B]ecause they were not certain of the validity of the Mexican [marriage] ceremony” in 1929, the Morenos decided to apply for a license in Los Angeles County where the county clerk had been issuing licenses to Filipino-white couples for almost a decade.¹⁶⁴ By the 1930s Los Angeles County Clerk Leon E. Lampton had gained quite a reputation as “the only one in the State where a Filipino man or woman can obtain a license to wed a white.”¹⁶⁵

When Ruby’s mother, Mrs. Stella F. Robinson, found out about the couple’s intentions to marry, she did what most parents in that period did. She tried to dissuade her daughter from marrying across racial lines. Historically, the family “more than other institutions, assumes the responsibility of preventing miscegenation, especially in the form of intermarriage.”¹⁶⁶ Mrs. Robinson was one such example. Her pleas for reconsideration and her parental threats, however, must have proved ineffective because she consulted the legal counsel of James H. Gosling and Harry S. Harper. In her petition to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, Mrs. Robinson demanded that County Clerk Leon E. Lampton “desist

¹⁶⁴ Royal F. Morales, *Makibaka: The Pilipino American Struggle* (Los Angeles: Mountainview Publishers, 1974).

¹⁶⁵ "Wedding Prevented: Marriage License to Filipino and White Woman Denied ", *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1926.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph Golden, “Social Control of Negro – White Intermarriage,” *Social Forces* (195), 268.

from issuing said license” to Moreno and Robinson.¹⁶⁷ Citing California Civil Code 60 Gosling and Harper argued that issuing the license was in violation of the law. Deputy Council C.B. Penn, representing Lampton in the case, tried to shift the focus by suggesting that, “the main question to be settled is whether a Filipino is a Mongolian, as outlined in the State’s miscegenation law.”¹⁶⁸ The proceedings lasted almost three weeks.

No court transcripts survive but the outcome of the case proved telling. In the end Judge Smith, sympathetic to the mother’s request, ruled in favor of the plaintiff:

And the court, on the 24th of day of February, 1930, having tried the issues arising in said action and having adjudged that said defendant is prohibited by law from issuing said marriage license to said parties above named [Tony V. Moreno and Ruby F. Robinson], do command you, L.E. Lampton, defendant, that you absolutely refrain from any further proceedings in said action and that you absolutely refrain from issuing a marriage license to said Tony Moreno, a Filipino, and said Ruby F. Robinson, a white person. Hereof fail not at your peril.¹⁶⁹

Following the court ruling, Lampton refrained from issuing the license to the couple and he ended the decade-long practice of giving licenses to Filipino-white couples in Los Angeles County.

¹⁶⁷ Stella F. Robinson vs. L.E. Lampton, County Clerk of Los Angeles County, No. 296504, Petition for Writ of Prohibition, Superior Court of Los Angeles, 1930.

¹⁶⁸ "Racial Tangle Halts Cupid," *Los Angeles Times* February 25, 1930.

¹⁶⁹ *Stella F. Robinson vs. L.E. Lampton*, County Clerk of Los Angeles County, No. 296504, Writ of Prohibition (Absolute), Superior Court of Los Angeles, March 5, 1930.

The decision in the Robinson case came at a critical moment for members of Filipino communities in California. Talk of immigration, exclusion, and Philippine independence in addition to increasing racial violence remained at the core of debates about Filipino conditions in the state. In the wake of current events, Smith's ruling (undoubtedly) supported California's efforts to permanently restrict Filipino rights in the state. Writers for the *Filipino Nation* – the official organ of the Filipino Federation of America – expressed their disappointment in Judge Smith's ruling: "We consider the recent ruling unjust for it throws an undeserved hardship upon Filipinos and their family residing in California by legally calling them Mongolians."¹⁷⁰

This chapter traces the events that led to the prohibition of Filipino-white intermarriage in California. Amidst ongoing debates about the Filipino problem in the state, intermarriage became a point of convergence where concerns about immigration, race mixing, and citizenship came to a head. By the time of Smith's decision in 1930 anxieties about race mixing between Filipinos and their partners had transcended beyond casual sexual relations and into the institution of marriage – a shift that hinted at new directions in social and moral debates. Incidents such as the Robinson case suggest that the courts became an important space for the unfolding of debates about the social and scientific meanings of "Filipino-ness." Although Deputy Counsel Penn was unsuccessful in making his case, his call to

¹⁷⁰ "We are Malayans," *Filipino Nation* March 1930.

settle “whether a Filipino is a Mongolian” would be central to future disputations of Filipino marriage rights.

In the legal debates about Filipino marriage rights, Los Angeles County would play an important role. Between 1931-1933 four miscegenation cases made its way to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. The cases of *Gavino C. Visco v. Los Angeles County* (1931) and *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* (1933) both addressed the question of whether Filipinos were eligible to marry “whites.” In court, experts and lawyers would determine the ethnological roots of the Filipino “race” by using the most advanced scientific research. Ironically, *Estanislao P. Laddaran v. Emma P. Laddaran* (1931) and *Ilona Murillo v. Tony Murillo, Jr.* (1931) would use the same methods to determine the legitimacy of Filipino-white couples already married. With annulment at the center of these cases, the Laddarans and the Murillos went to court to dissolve legal contracts between husbands and wives.

To Filipinos miscegenation laws were more than just about the restriction of marriage at the state level. Filipinos understood that there was something larger at stake in the act of obtaining a marriage license and marrying. In part, marriage gave the immigrant the potential to participate as a full citizen. It granted citizenship roles to men as husbands, fathers, and heads of households. Women, in turn, gained certain privileges afforded by marriage. Thus, by denying full access to marriage rights, miscegenation laws restricted Filipino political and cultural citizenship as U.S. nationals – a reflection of the existing unequal power

relationship between the United States as the colonizer and the Filipinos as its subjects. In exploring these cases, this chapter examines how state miscegenation laws shaped the broader meanings of marriage, citizenship, and rights for Filipinos and Filipino Americans in 1930s California.

*Inventing the Word and the Law: Miscegenation before the American West*¹⁷¹

During the colonial period early versions of miscegenation laws drew the boundaries between slavery and freedom. The colonies of Maryland and Virginia were the first to enact miscegenation statutes in the seventeenth century, which prohibited sexual relations and marriage between slave and free; blacks and whites. In colonial Maryland, however, early customs did not prohibit interracial marriage between “negro slaves” and female indentured servants. Up until the enactment of the law in 1661, black men and white women intermarried freely, and their children following the custom of the time acquired the status of their free white mothers. This arrangement, however, meant that plantation masters lost their

¹⁷¹ On the early history of miscegenation law in the United States, see Martha Hodes, *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Charles F. Robinson II, *Dangerous Liaisons; Sex and Love in the Segregated South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2003); Werner Sollors, *Interracialism: Black- White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Peter Wallenstein, *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law – An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

laborers when the mother and her children were freed. Maryland passed the 1661 act to prevent the “great damage doth befall the master of such negroes.” The law punished “freeborn English women” who intermarried with “negro slaves” by forcing them into slavery to last until the death of their husband. Their children, in turn, served the sentence alongside their mother. Here, the legendary story of Irish Nell (Eleanor Butler) and her husband “Negro Charles” offers an example of the stringency in Maryland’s law.¹⁷² Nell was born free, but brought as an indentured servant to the colonies by Lord Baltimore in 1681. It is said that Nell and Charles fell in love and got married; a marriage that the community accepted and recognized. After their marriage, however, the Maryland legislature following the 1661 act sentenced Nell to remain a servant for as long as Charles was alive. Likewise, their children and grandchildren lived and worked as slaves in Maryland well into the eighteenth century.¹⁷³

In 1691 Virginia adopted a miscegenation statute. Under its antimiscegenation legislation, the offending white spouse would be exiled; a sentence that banished the individual from communal and familial ties. For over a century Virginia laws evolved and instead of exiling offenders the state began to

¹⁷² Hodes. On this particular point, scholars are not in agreement on whether the marriage was one of consent between Nell and Charles, or one coerced/ forced upon the couple.

¹⁷³ According to some historians, plantation owners encouraged the practice of intermarriage under the new laws – often forcing men and women to marry and procreate – in order to increase the number of their slaves.

incarcerate whites who married “negroes” or mulattoes regardless of whether they married in Virginia or elsewhere.¹⁷⁴ Eventually, surrounding states incorporated similar laws. In the South these laws became instrumental in drawing racial differences between blacks and whites. “The laws prohibiting inter-racial marriage,” historian Elise Lemire writes, “promoted and legally substantiated the idea that blacks are not fit for whites to marry because they are socially and physically inferior to whites.”¹⁷⁵

In the years following Reconstruction the prohibition and criminalization of black-white intermarriage gained further notoriety, where such laws became fundamental in restricting African American civil rights. In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Alabama’s antimiscegenation statute in *Pace v. Alabama*, which prohibited both interracial adultery or fornication and interracial marriage. Tony Pace and Mary Cox, unable to legally wed under the law, maintained their relationship by visiting each other’s homes and spending time together. For “cohabiting” the couple was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to two years in the

¹⁷⁴ This was common practice by the twentieth century. In other states like Kentucky, interracial couples that either cohabited or married outside the state faced severe punishment by incarceration. See “Mismatched Pairs are Convicted: Kentucky Couples Fined for Miscegenation; Must Serve Long Terms” *Los Angeles Times* November 28, 1924.

¹⁷⁵ Elise Lemire, *“Miscegenation”: Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 2.

state penitentiary. Their appeal made it all the way to the Supreme Court. Writing for a unanimous Court, Justice Stephen J. Field adopted Alabama's reasoning:

[Interracial adultery or fornication] cannot be committed without involving the persons of both races in the same punishment. Whatever discrimination is made in the punishment described... is directed against the offence designated and not against the person of any particular color or race. The punishment of each offending person, whether white or black, is the same.¹⁷⁶

The Court's decision in *Pace* was unique for its time not only because it upheld state miscegenation laws as constitutional, but also because it defined the boundaries of "proper" sexual and marital relations – a decision that empowered states until the *Loving v. Virginia* decision in 1967.

As state laws in the South consolidated its power and influence in the Jim Crow Era, "[m]iscegenation laws gained this newfound importance just at the time that they were extended to newly formed western states."¹⁷⁷ In these newly incorporated states, laws mimicked those of the South always prohibiting unions between whites, "Negroes," and "mulattoes" first. As permanent settlement in the West increased, these states extended the law to prohibit intermarriage between

¹⁷⁶ As quoted in Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*, Brief and Argument for Appellee at 2-3, 14, *Pace v. Alabama*, 106 U.S. 583 (1882) (No. 908) (October Term, 1882).

¹⁷⁷ Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender and the Privileges of Property: On the Significance of Miscegenation Law in the U.S. West," in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, ed., Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 216.

whites and people of Asian ancestries and of Native American tribes even though such practices were not prohibited in the early history of the United States.¹⁷⁸

In contrast, states did not prohibit white-Mexican marriage.¹⁷⁹ A special clause in a treaty between Mexico and the United States in 1848 granted Mexicans citizenship status and privileges equal to whites.¹⁸⁰ In the early settlement of the west, Mexican women were sought-after marital partners and intermarriage was a practice that was highly encouraged. In California for example, “Mexicans were the only ethnic population ... during the nineteenth century that Anglos deemed worthy to formally marry.”¹⁸¹ Anglo men were particularly interested in the wealthy, fair-skinned Mexican American daughters of Californio men because marriage into elite families secured their economic and political power. Through these Anglo-Mexican intermarriages men amassed a great deal of fortune through

¹⁷⁸ Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina, and Oregon are all states that banned relationship between whites and Native Americans. Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of Mestizo America,” *Journal of American History* 82 (1995).

¹⁷⁹ See Martha Menchaca, “The Anti-Miscegenation History of the American Southwest, 1837 to 1970” *Cultural Dynamics* 20 (2008); Martha Moran, *Interracial Intimacies*, 50-53.

¹⁸⁰ Officially the “Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits and Settlement between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic,” it ended the Mexican-American War on February 2, 1848.

¹⁸¹ “Racial Tangle Halts Cupid,” 58.

the transfer of Californio land and property. As the economic and political status of Mexican women declined as a result of conquest, however, intermarriages did also.¹⁸² The experiences of Californio women illustrate that intermarriage was a daily part of economic, social, and political arrangements in the settlement of the west. They also show how marriage as an institution became an important site for control in the late nineteenth century as new white settlers sought to solidify their power in the region.

Narratives of miscegenation in the American West tell the evolution of how marriage laws gained particular power and significance by restricting practices of intermarriage between whites and people of color. Beyond policing racial boundaries and social behaviors, however, the restriction of marriage was also a way of controlling access to institutions of racial power and privilege that secured claims to citizenship, land, and property. To protect these institutions legislators in the west “built a labyrinthine system of legal prohibitions on marriages between whites and Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Hindus, and Native

¹⁸² It was this way in California as well as in other parts of the American Southwest. In Texas for example, the growing social divide between wealthy Mexican families and white Texans had resulted in social segregation previously unheard of. See "Filipino-White Unions Barred," *Los Angeles Times* Feb 26 1930, 287.

Americans, as well as on marriages between whites and blacks” – a unique reflection of the region’s diverse racial, cultural, and political landscape.¹⁸³

Miscegenation in California

In California, the enactment of Civil Codes (C.C.) 60 and 69 in 1872 laid the foundation for its first miscegenation laws. Following the precedence set by other western states, C.C. 60 declared “All marriages of white persons with negroes or mulattoes ... illegal and void.”¹⁸⁴ Marriage licensing was an instrumental part of enforcing state miscegenation laws during this period and Civil Code 69 played a supporting role in requiring couples to obtain a marriage license from the Clerk of the County Court. Although designed to confirm the identities and residences of the bride- and groom-to-be, it also required the couples to self-identify their racial background.

For almost a decade, Civil Codes 60 and 69 ensured that racial boundaries between black and white remained intact. Amendments to the codes were nominal, at least until 1880. In that year the California State Legislature made a significant change in the law that prohibited the Clerk of the County Court from issuing “a license authorizing the marriage of a white person with a negro,

¹⁸³ Peggy Pascoe, “Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage,” *Frontier* 12 (1991), 6.

¹⁸⁴ California Civil Code §60 (1872).

mulatto, or Mongolian.”¹⁸⁵ The inclusion of “Mongolian” to C.C. 69 spoke to the temper of the times. The anti-Chinese movement was sweeping across the American West and states like California were using the letter of the law to restrict immigration and settlement.¹⁸⁶ For example, California put into place a variety of legal barriers that taxed the Chinese heavily, restricted their civil rights, and prohibited their access to citizenship through naturalization.¹⁸⁷ These laws collectively reinforced the unassimilability and undesirability of West Coast Chinese and would stand as the state’s dominant model in the treatment of other Asian migrants in the early twentieth century.

Nevada was the first state to include “Chinese” to their miscegenation law in 1861 and it was not long after, until other states passed similar measures. By the time that California implemented new changes to the law three other states

¹⁸⁵ California Civil Code §69 (1880).

¹⁸⁶ See Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Charles McClain Jr., *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Lucy Salyer, *Laws as Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995).

¹⁸⁷ Details: Alien Poll Tax (Every male resident in California who is not a citizen must pay an annual poll tax of ten dollars) and Foreign Miners Tax passed in California State Legislature in 1852 taxed Chinese miners three dollars every month to mine in the state.

(Idaho, Arizona, and Wyoming) also forbade whites from marrying outside their race, citing a long list of unsuitable partners that included people of African and Asian ancestries as well as people of Native American tribes. With new changes to C.C. 69 in place, the State Legislature did not make amendments to C.C. 60 again until 1905 when it made “All marriages of white persons with negroes, Mongolians, or mulattoes” illegal and void.¹⁸⁸ The Chinese, at this point, had been a target of anti-Asian sentiment for nearly half a century. After the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act and with C.C. 69 in place, amendments to C.C. 60 would only be a kind of legal formality that made anti-Chinese legislation concrete. Throughout the early twentieth century, Civil Codes 60 and 69 became important legal barriers to anyone wishing to marry across the racial divide. The state legislature must have found it effective because it made only minor changes to different sections of the codes, but left intact race restrictions for people of African and Asian descent. By the time that Filipinos arrived in California during the 1920s miscegenation laws prohibiting marriages between whites and “Mongolians” had already been in place for over forty years.

The question of whether Filipinos were allowed to marry under California marriage codes did not come up until the end of 1920. Leonardo Antony, a 21-

¹⁸⁸ California Civil Code §60 (1905). In this same year, CCC 69 was amended to so that “No license must be granted when either of the parties applicants therefore is an imbecile or insane, or who at the time of making application for said license is under the influence of any intoxicating liquor, or narcotic drug.”

year-old Filipino disabled veteran and engineering student applied for a license to marry his fiancé Luciana Brovencio, a Spanish girl from New Mexico. Doubt of Antony's eligibility to marry under Civil Codes 60 and 69, however, prompted County Clerk Higgins to deny the application. According to Higgins she believed that Antony, a Filipino, was a "Mongolian" and therefore prohibited to marry Brovencio, who is considered "white" under the law. Antony appealed to Assistant County Counsel Bishop who then determined that "Antony was not of the Mongolian, but of the Malayan race and was entitled to a marriage."¹⁸⁹

At the time, the circumstances surrounding the engagement of Antony and Brovencio were unprecedented. It was one of the earliest instances where the question of Filipino marriage rights in the state arose. Their marriage ultimately shows not only evidence of nascent opposition to Filipino intermarriage, but also the emerging legal confusion on the racial classification of Filipinos. For much of the 1920s Filipino petitions to marry whites were rife with confusion and conflict. Sociologist Nellie Foster attributed this to the lack of legal precedence on the matter: "There are no federal statutory provisions regarding marriage; no written legal decisions exist; and there are no specific references to Filipinos in the

¹⁸⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 16, 1920; Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1998).

marriage laws of any state.”¹⁹⁰ Even the decision in *Yatko* in 1925 and the 1926 opinion of Attorney General U.S. Webb did not result in any definitive changes in state legislation.

Without a definitive and concrete law on the books to determine once and for all, the question of whether the Filipino was “Malay” or “Mongolian,” Filipino-white couples who appeared before county clerks found themselves at the mercy of a racially subjective legal system. In other words, some of the applications were approved and others were not and nobody could explain their arbitrary decisions. Some county clerks tried to prescribe to a more conservative application of the law by individually reviewing applications and deciding on a case-by-case basis. But time and time again clerks could not come to a united conclusion about whether Filipinos were “Malay” or “Mongolian.” Los Angeles County clerk Leon E. Lampton was, perhaps, the only exception. Following Assistant County Counsel Edward T. Bishop’s opinion that paralleled his decision on Antony and Brovencio, Lampton issued licenses to Filipino – white couples consistently until the Robinson case in 1930.

Filipinos go to court in Los Angeles County

¹⁹⁰ Martha Menchaca, "The Anti-Miscegenation History of the American Southwest 1837-1970: Transforming Racial Ideology into Law," *Cultural Dynamics* 20, no. 279 (2008), 441.

By the time that Gavino C. Visco and his fiancé Ruth M. Salas applied for a marriage license on March 28, 1931 Lampton's office – following the ruling in *Robinson* – had become well versed in saying “no” to Filipino – white couples. After reviewing their application, Lampton denied the couple a license citing that Visco, a native of the Philippines, was prohibited from marrying Salas, a Mexican defined “white” by law. Visco, unwilling to accept Lampton's refusal, solicited the help of community leaders in Little Manila. He found an ally in labor activist Pablo Manlapit who at the time was living in Los Angeles as an exile from Hawaii.¹⁹¹ Manlapit, popular for his activist work with Filipino laborers, had continued to work with Filipino communities in California.

Visco's appeal for help must have resonated with Manlapit and other Filipino community leaders who immediately took action. With their help Visco secured the legal counsel of Gladys Towles Root, a young Los Angeles lawyer who had a reputation for representing Filipinos in court. To solicit Filipino support Manlapit made impassioned calls to his countrymen. “It is now a high time for every Malayan-blooded Filipino to come to the front and help defend his nationality that is being gravely insulted,” Manlapit told readers of the Filipino newspaper *The Three Stars*. He continued, “If the Filipino race means anything at all to my countrymen, here is an opportunity for every Filipino, high and low, to

¹⁹¹ After years of organizing Filipino labor in Hawaii's sugar plantations, Manlapit had been arrested and found guilty of conspiracy. On the events leading up to Manlapit's arrest, conviction and exile, see Foster: 31-60.

fight for his right of which he owes his name and honor.”¹⁹² Manlapit’s adjuration for support highlighted what was ultimately at the core of Filipino resistance to miscegenation laws – assertions and claims to equal rights. Thus whether Filipinos supported Visco’s choice for a partner, or not, many Filipinos believed that the case had “a far reaching effect involving marriage relationship, immigration, and all other questions where that of race is a discriminating factor.”¹⁹³

In addition, a circular from the “Filipino Home Club” of Los Angeles, authored by its secretary Antonio C. Fagel, rallied Filipinos to contribute money to Visco’s cause: “NOW, FILIPINOS DO YOU WANT TO BE CALLED MONGOLIAN? IF YOUR ANSWER IS ‘NO’ SUPPORT THE FIGHT OF GAVINO C. VISCO BY SUBSCRIBING TO HIS LEGAL FUND LIBERALLY.”¹⁹⁴ He encouraged sympathizers and supporters to forward their monetary contributions to the Club because “this does not only affect Gavino C. Visco, but affects every Filipino in the state of California.”¹⁹⁵ In their calls to action Manlapit and Fagel was reaching for something beyond just “Filipino-ness.” They claimed a history, culture, and identity rooted in a Malayan past that distinguished them from “Mongolians.”

¹⁹² “Are Filipinos Mongolians?: Los Angeles Judge to Decide Little Brown Brother Color,” *The Three Stars* March 1931.

¹⁹³ Antonio Fagel, as quoted in Foster: 450.

¹⁹⁴ Antonio Fagel as quoted in Tria-Kerkvliet 450.

¹⁹⁵ Foster.

In creating this distance Filipinos engaged in their own race making; a rejection of racial labels and definitions imposed by law and mainstream society. An article in *The Filipino Nation* – the official organ of the Filipino Federation of America (FFA) – illustrates the Filipino community members’ slow embrace of this notion. “We are Malaysans,” the article proclaimed:

Filipinos in California and throughout the United States have been aroused by recent rulings in California in which the Filipino has been classed as belonging to the Mongolian or yellow race. This ruling was made for the purpose of restricting Filipinos to the same racial laws as apply to the Japanese and Chinese. The California law forbids the intermarrying of Mongolians with whites. We do not protest because we are denied the privilege of marrying white girls but because as a distinct race.¹⁹⁶

In this way, Filipino arguments against miscegenation laws differed from other miscegenation cases of the same period.¹⁹⁷ Rather than claiming “whiteness” Filipinos argued that they were neither Mongolian nor Oriental, but Malay. This strategy required that Filipinos embrace their colonial pasts. They tried to distinguish themselves from Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants by emphasizing their Spanish and American ways, thereby highlighting their “Westernization.” For example, Filipinos took exceptional pride in their American-style dress, their English education, and Christian upbringing. Filipino leaders like Manlapit and FFA president Hilario C. Moncado believed that making a clear distinction between Malay and Mongolian was a crucial part of how legal

¹⁹⁶ “We are Malaysans,” *Filipino Nation* March 1930.

¹⁹⁷ Foster; Menchaca; Rachel F. Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race & Romance*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Volpp.

battles would be won in court. If Filipinos could show that they were not Chinese, nor Japanese – on the basis of their physical attributes and by the differences in their language, religion, and culture – then perhaps, that would be enough to demonstrate that they were biologically, culturally, and even scientifically distinct from them.

Thus when Judge Walter Guerin rendered his judgment in favor of the plaintiff and ordered Lampton to issue the license to Visco and Salas, it was a small victory.¹⁹⁸ Visco won his case, but not for reasons many Filipinos had hoped. To some, the result was nothing short of disappointing. His supporters believed that the case would be won by proving Filipinos as Malays, but Root had taken an interesting, if not an unusual approach. Rather than arguing against scientific and popular meanings of race, she argued that Salas, born in Sonora, Mexico – to a Mexican father and a Mexican American mother – was in fact part Indian and therefore was Mexican Indian, not white as Lampton believed. To convince the court, Root persuaded Judge Guerin to look at Salas differently. After all Salas herself claimed in court “that her ancestors were American Indians” thereby contradicting Lampton’s initial assumptions about her racial identity.¹⁹⁹ His decision therefore rested not on whether Filipinos were Malays and could marry whites, but whether Salas was “white” at all. Ultimately, Judge Guerin could

¹⁹⁸ “Judgment,” Gavino C. Visco, vs. Los Angeles County No. 319408

¹⁹⁹ “Filipino and Mexican May Wed, Says Court,” *Los Angeles Times* June 4, 1931.

only come to one conclusion based on the evidence before him: “Ruth M. Salas is not a white person of the Caucasian race.”²⁰⁰ If it had ever been a question in California, the Visco case set an unsolicited precedent on the legitimacy of Filipino-Mexican marriage. Whatever Salas’ true racial identity, we will never know.

The outcome of the case did little to answer the question of whether Filipinos were Malay or Mongolian. Three months passed before the question of Filipino-white intermarriage was raised once again in court, but this time in two separate annulment cases. The presiding judges had an interesting question before them: If California insisted that Filipino-white intermarriages were prohibited, would the court annul such marriages? In the annulment cases of *Ilona Murillo v. Tony Murillo, Jr.* (1931) and *Estanislao Laddaran v. Emma Laddaran* (1931) two Los Angeles Superior Court judges ruled that they would not.²⁰¹

According to Judge Thomas Gould, presiding judge in *Murillo v. Murillo*, “to hold this marriage void it is necessary to hold that, ethnologically, Filipinos are Mongolians, and that the legislature in adopting Section 60 of the Civil Code, had

²⁰⁰ Ruling by Judge Walter Guerin, June 27, 1931.

²⁰¹ *Ilona Murillo v. Tony V. Murillo, Jr.* No. D-97715. Ilona Murillo, a white woman, and Tony Murillo, a Filipino, married in Los Angeles on July 21, 1929 and separated by June 6, 1931. Ilona sought the annulment upon the grounds that Tony was Mongolian therefore voiding their marriage. *Estanislao Laddaran v. Emma P. Laddaran* No. 95459.

in mind the prohibition of marriages between Filipinos and whites.”²⁰² Did state legislators use racial science to make determinations about who were to be considered “Mongolian”? Or did they use popular meanings of race to make such conclusions? Gould found that the disagreement between contemporary race experts proved race science too inconsistent to be used as reliable legal evidence. Recognizing these contradictions, Gould returned to racial common sense arguing instead that if state legislators in 1905 intended to include Filipinos in the law, Section 60 would also “prohibit the marriage of whites with Laplanders, Hawaiians, Esthonians, Huns, Finns, Turks, Eskimos, American Indians, native Peruvians, native Mexicans, and any other peoples of whom are included within the present-day scientist’s classification of ‘mongolian.’”²⁰³ In rejecting present-day racial classifications Gould challenged state legislators that “If such marriages are to be prohibited the legislature should so declare unequivocally by appropriate legislative enactment.”²⁰⁴

In the case of *Laddaran v. Laddaran*²⁰⁵ Judge Myron Westover came to a similar conclusion. Vested with the responsibility of determining the legitimacy of

²⁰² *Ilona Murillo v. Tony V. Murillo, Jr.* No. D-97715. “Memo of Opinion” October 10, 1931.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ The Laddarans married in Los Angeles and had separated after a few years of marriage. Estanislao filed for divorce from his wife Emma on the basis that their

the marriage, Westover looked for proof - in science and in popular knowledge - that Filipinos were in fact Mongolians and did not find it. "Because no proof was offered that a Filipino is of the Mongolian race and due to the fact that the question has not been determined by the higher courts," Judge Westover denied the annulment and concluded that without legal precedence "he felt obliged to hold" his opinion.²⁰⁶ In both cases, Gould and Westover refused to annul the marriages. Unwilling to dissolve marriages already legally sanctioned by the state, their decisions differed drastically from the opinion of the presiding judge in the *Yatko* case only six years earlier. In the years between *Yatko* and the annulment cases, it had become painstakingly clear that the legal decisions on Filipino-white intermarriage had led to more questions than answers, more confusion than clarity. Gould and Westover's reluctance to rule on the matter of annulment illustrates how courts grappled with the same questions about Filipino rights to marry and how dramatically difficult it was to annul a marriage on the same basis. Their decisions give proof to historian Ariela Gross' observation that "twentieth-century courts rarely allowed annulments on the basis of miscegenation."²⁰⁷

marriage was null because the he was of the Filipino race and as such was prohibited from marrying Emma, who was of the Caucasian or white race.

²⁰⁶ "Filipino Vows Ruled Binding," *Los Angeles Times* September 6, 1931.

²⁰⁷ Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies Of "Race" In Twentieth-Century America," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 1 (1996): 250.

By the 1930s the social and moral issue of miscegenation entered debates about Filipino exclusion and repatriation as sexual anxieties peaked with the explosion of race riots in west coast states. Nativists took particular notice of the Watsonville riots in Central Valley California, which had been triggered by white mob violence targeting Filipinos socializing with white women. In their calls for restriction, exclusionists used these instances of race rioting as evidence of why the state must curtail Filipino migration and why miscegenation laws were necessary. In doing so, they married immigration and miscegenation issues together thereby creating a “natural” link between them. Because of unrestricted immigration, they argued, Filipino-white intermarriage in California was on the rise. Nativists worried about what would happen if these issues were left unattended to and they argued that the only way to address them was to pass legislation that would prevent both.²⁰⁸ In Congress V.S. McClatchy, Secretary to the California Joint Immigration Committee, urged legislators to consider the restriction of Filipino migration through exclusion while esteemed men like University of California president, David P. Barrows, warned against the undesirability of Filipino-white intermarriage. “The question of his [the Filipino’s]

²⁰⁸ See Ruby C. Tapia, “‘Just Ten Years Removed from a Bolo and a Breech-cloth’: The Sexualization of the Filipino ‘Menace’” in *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse*, eds. Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr. et al. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

assimilation into our race through intermarriage, I regard as wholly inadvisable and unadmissible,” Barrows told members of the California Commonwealth Club.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile, California Filipinos were becoming more involved in the social and legal battles about antimiscegenation and immigration restriction in the state. They had already begun to take pride in their newfound identity as Malays and as calls for the restriction of their rights increased, a slow but steady kind of resistance emerged. By the mid-1930s Filipinos had turned to California courts for redress on matters of marriage, property ownership, and naturalization.²¹⁰ Legal historian, Rachel Moran, has argued that Filipino experience with miscegenation laws in California was one of “not compliance, but defiance” – a distinctive characteristic of the Filipino community at that time.²¹¹ Although the courts did not always rule in their favor Filipinos believed that despite its seeming inconsistencies the legal system remained the only viable option to secure marriage equality.

Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County (1933)

The case of Salvador Roldan and Marjorie Rogers – both of Pasadena, California – was in many ways reminiscent of the *Visco* case in 1931. Like Visco,

²⁰⁹ *Commonwealth Bulletin*, November 5, 1929.

²¹⁰ On naturalization, see *Roque Espiritu De La Ysla v. United States*, 77 F.2d 988 (9th Cir. 1935).

²¹¹ Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 37.

Roldan had applied for a marriage license to marry his fiancé but Lampton “absolutely refused to issue said license” because Roldan was a Filipino and Rogers was English.²¹² In light of recent Filipino-white cases, Lampton’s decision was not surprising. The Visco case had offered little clarification on the issue while recent court decisions on *Laddaran* and *Murillo* left plenty of room for legal interpretation. But like other Filipino men before him, Roldan challenged Lampton’s decision.

Although individual couples like Roldan and Rogers may have initiated the legal fight on their own, they were not without the support of Filipino leaders and local community members. Pablo Manlapit’s prior involvement in *Visco* made him an invaluable ally for Roldan while Gladys T. Root’s experience with Filipinos in Los Angeles made her a sympathetic legal advisor. A letter from Root to Manlapit revealed one reason why Root had explained the significance of the case for Filipinos: “We believe that the importance of this question as presented in the Roldan case to-wit, whether a Filipino is to be classed as a Mongolian and denied the right to marry a person of the opposite sex who belongs to the white race, has never been fully understood or appreciated. It is the *test case* of maximum

²¹² *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* No. 326484 “Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law,” 2.

importance not only to all Filipinos in the United States but in the Island as well.”²¹³

There was a distinct way that Root approached Roldan’s case, which was dramatically different from her work in *Visco*. Root had creatively won the *Visco* case by focusing on Ruth Salas’ Mexican-Indian roots. In Roldan, Root used the science of race to make a twofold argument: (1) that “a Filipino is not ethnologically, historically, or legally a Mongolian” and (2) that “the legislature when it enacted section 60 and section 69 of the Civil Code of the State of California did not have in mind or intended that the term Mongolian should include Filipino.”²¹⁴ At the crux of her argument was Johann Blumenbach’s *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*. Blumenbach, an eighteenth century German physician and anthropologist, identified 5 branches of human varieties: Caucasian, or white; Mongolian, or yellow; Malayan, or brown; Ethiopian, or black; and American, or red. By the nineteenth century, Blumenbach’s groundbreaking research work would define how his contemporaries understood the science of racial divisions. Thus it was only natural to assume, at least according to Root, that when state legislators in California amended Civil Codes 60 and 69, they understood racial

²¹³ Letter from Root to Manlapit, October 31, 1931 as it appears in *The Three Stars*, November 1931, emphasis mine. Writers for the *Baltimore African American* likewise saw the Roldan case as a “test case,” see article “Test Intermarriage Law in Calif.,” *Baltimore African American*, April 30, 1932.

²¹⁴ Root’s opening brief as printed in “American Jurists and Lawyers Agree That Filipinos are Not Mongolians,” *Three Stars*, December 1931, 37.

classifications in the same way that Blumenbach did. If such was the case, Root concluded that Filipinos belonged to the third group – the Malayan or brown race. In her opening brief she tried to persuade superior court judge Walter S. Gates to come to the same conclusion, “It may be logically presumed as really axiomatic that the legislature when they put the word Mongolian in the law in the first instance did not mean Filipino and has never since then intended that it should mean Filipino or else they would have written it into the law by amendment.”²¹⁵

On this point, Everett W. Mattoon, County Counsel for Los Angeles and S. V. O. Pritchard, Deputy County Counsel, disagreed. Mattoon argued that contemporary ethnologists such as nineteenth century English biologist Thomas H. Huxley had long challenged Blumenbach’s conclusions. Instead of five varieties Huxley determined that there were only three with Malays categorized under the “Mongoloid” group. The proof according to Mattoon is that Filipinos possessed “like characteristics” that made them contiguous to the Chinese. He contended that in ethnological, biological, and scientific terms, Filipinos shared “the same racial characteristics as the Mongolian.”²¹⁶ “The conclusion is inescapable,” Mattoon wrote, “that in 1880 Filipinos were Mongolians when you use that word

²¹⁵ Root’s opening brief as printed in “American Jurists and Lawyers Agree That Filipinos are Not Mongolians,” *Three Stars*, December 1931, 38.

²¹⁶ Mattoon, “Petition for a Hearing by the Supreme Court,” March 8, 1933.

in its *generic* sense, whether they were or were not at the time considered Mongolian in a strictly ethnological sense.”²¹⁷

In the end, Judge Gates ruled in favor of the plaintiff after finding that both Roldan and his fiancé Rogers were neither of the Mongolian, Negro, or Mulatto race.²¹⁸ Citing that Roldan was Malay he approved and issued A *Writ of Mandate*, which granted the couple a license. In some, if not most cases involving Filipino-white intermarriage that would have been enough and it would have ended there. But in the time in which the case moved through the superior court, attention to the Roldan case increased as anti-Filipino sentiment in the state intensified. When Mattoon and Pritchard petitioned for a hearing by the appellate court and again later in the California Supreme Court, they gained the unwavering support of anti-Filipino nativists who saw their legal efforts as crucial to solving California’s “Filipino problem.”

Despite strong support from powerful men and organizations, however, Mattoon and Pritchard did not win their petitions. In the opinion delivered by Justice Thomas Archbald, he wrote:

... in a group that would compare very favorably with the average legislature, there was no thought of applying the name Mongolian to a Malay; that the word used to designate the class of residents whose presence caused the problem at which all the legislation was directed, viz.,

²¹⁷ Mattoon, “Petition for a Hearing by the Supreme Court,” March 8, 1933.

²¹⁸ *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* No. 326484 “Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law,” 3, April 8, 1932; *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County* No. 326484 “Judgment,” April 8, 1932.

the Chinese, and possibly contiguous peoples of like characteristics; that the common classification of the races was Blumenbach's, which made the 'Malay' one of the five grand subdivisions, ie., the 'brown race,' and that such classification persisted until after section 60 of the Civil Code was amended in 1905 to make it consistent with section 69 of the same code...this is not a social question before us as that was decided by the legislature at the time the code was amended; and if the common thought of today is different from what it was at such time, the matter is one that addresses itself to the legislature and not to the courts.²¹⁹

Following the opinion of Judge Gould in *Murillo*, the District Court of Appeal upheld the superior court decision based not on scientific evidence or fact, but solely on racial common sense that was popular in early twentieth century. The California Supreme Court later upheld the decision of the Appellate Court, thereby ending Roldan's fight for equal marriage rights.²²⁰ Almost two years after Roldan's first application for a license, Roldan and Rogers married on April 10, 1933.

The Roldan decision had a significant impact for California Filipinos. Years of legal battles had culminated in a victory for marriage rights. Roldan's win also had far reaching consequences for other communities of color as well, who like Filipinos were banned for intermarrying. In states outside of California – even in states where miscegenation laws were absent – Roldan would find community support. For example, *The Spokesman* - an African American newspaper in Chicago

²¹⁹ Judge Thomas Archbald Opinion, *Salvador Roldan v. Los Angeles County*, District Court of Appeal of the State of California, Civ. No. 8455. [January 27, 1933 –decision upheld]

²²⁰ Tapia.

- noted Roldan's victory in an article: "Holding Filipinos belong to the Malay race, and therefore are colored, the District Court of Appeals ordered the county clerk to issue a marriage license to Marjorie Rogers and Salvador Roldan."²²¹ Root had been right in 1931 about what Roldan when she wrote to Manlapit about the significance of Roldan as a "test case."²²² Roldan's victory against California's racial gatekeepers revealed the possibilities of a promise – that the law held immense possibilities for change.

But in *America is in the Heart*, Filipino novelist Carlos Bulosan described 1933 as "the year of the great hatred: [when] the lives of Filipinos were cheaper than those of dogs." Bulosan, a keen observer of his environs, was dismayed with the state of Filipino American life. The Great Depression had taken a toll on the Filipino and as social and economic conditions worsened, Bulosan observed the violence and harassment that Filipinos endured as they "were forcibly shoved off the streets when they showed resistance." All this, he lamented, "was accelerated by the marriage of a Filipino and a girl of the Caucasian race in Pasadena."²²³

Bulosan's reference to *Roldan* is an important measure of persistent anti-Filipino sentiment in this period that spoke to the disappointing limitations of Roldan's

²²¹ Moran.

²²² Letter from Root to Manlapit, October 31, 1931 as it appears in *The Three Stars*, November 1931, 5. Writers for the *Baltimore Afro-American* likewise saw the Roldan case as a "test case," see article "Test Intermarriage Law in Calif.," *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 30, 1932, 21.

²²³ "Filipino - O'fay Wedding Ok'd," *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 8, 1933.

legal victory. Bulosan's reference to *Roldan* is an important measure of persistent anti-Filipino sentiment, which increased immediately following the court's decision. To Bulosan the deteriorating condition of Filipino life in the United States was a reflection of the disappointing limitations of Roldan's legal victory.

These were the conditions in California, which contributed to the quick unraveling of Roldan's legacy. Days before the Supreme Court decision on Roldan, California Senator H.C. Jones introduced two bills that added the category "Malay" to California's miscegenation laws. Under the terms of the senator's proposed bill the *Los Angeles Times* reported that, "Marriages between white persons and Filipinos would be illegal and void in California..."²²⁴ With the support of nativist organizations such as the California State Federation of Labor, Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, and the American Legion, Governor James Rolph signed the bills into effect two months after the California Supreme Court's decision. By August 1933 the California state legislature had amended Civil Code 69 to reflect the inclusion of "Malay" into legislation stating that, "No license must be issued authorizing the marriage of a white person with a Negro, Mulato, Mongolians and members of the Malay race."²²⁵ In addition to denying the right to apply for a marriage license, the amendments to Civil Codes 60 and 69 also retroactively voided and made illegitimate all previous Filipino –

²²⁴ "Filipino Permitted to Marry American," *The Spokesman*, February 4, 1933.

²²⁵ California Civil Code 69, Stats. 1933, c. 105. P. 561.

white marriages in the state.

Filipino Intermarriage post-Roldan

To combat the implementation of new anti-miscegenation laws Filipinos who wanted to marry across racial lines sought other alternatives: (1) marry outside the state of California (2) marry women of other ethnicities and (3) cohabitation. Filipinos, undeterred by the limitations of the new amendments to the law, pursued these alternatives with abandon. While amendments to the law succeeded in prohibiting the legalization of Filipino-white marriages in California, it did not prevent Filipinos from crossing state lines to marry in other states. Legal historian Rachel F. Moran asserts that Filipinos were unique in their strong resistance to California's anti-miscegenation laws as many Filipinos evaded the law by leaving the state to marry. Couples traveled to neighboring states like New Mexico, Utah, and Washington where Filipino-white marriages were sanctioned and recognized.²²⁶

Proximity to California was one factor that made these states popular for mixed race couples. So many couples had in fact traveled across state lines that the

²²⁶ New Mexico and Washington states were unique in this regard, for while anti-miscegenation laws were once enforced they were repealed before each state reached statehood. In Utah it was not until 1939 that the state legislature amended the law to include "Malays" with much pressure from California. Prior to this amendment, Utah barred whites from marrying Negroes and Mongolians. See "Filipino-and-White Marriages Ruled Legal in Utah," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1937.

California Assembly and Senate began to seek ways to limit couples' rights to marry outside the state. A California court of appeals decision, however, thwarted any plans to do so. The case of *People v. Godines* in 1936 put to rest any questions about the validity of out-of-state marriages in California. The annulment case involved a white woman who married a Filipino man in New Mexico. Early in July 1935 she filed for annulment after finding out that her Filipino husband misrepresented himself as of Spanish Castilian descent. While the appeal focused on marital privilege the ruling by the court held indirectly that Filipino-white marriages sanctioned in New Mexico were valid in California.²²⁷ In the American West, this meant that while California did not sanction interracial marriages, it recognized unions outside the state. This may not have been the intended outcome for *People v. Godines* but it ultimately worked to favor Filipino-white couples seeking to marry in states that allowed miscegenation.

During 1930s, Utah, the nearest one of the three states, was an especially popular destination. In the years immediately following amendments to California civil codes 60 and 69 Filipino-white couples traveled to Utah where miscegenation

²²⁷ *People v. Godines*, 137 6Cal.App.2d 721 (1936). While the marriage was sanctioned in New Mexico where no miscegenation laws were in place during the 1930s, the court determined that in the case of *People v. Godines*, “the marriage in question took place in New Mexico, where it was valid and hence of itself the ethnological status of the parties was not a ground of annulment.”

laws were in place against Mongolians but not Malays.²²⁸ One Filipino Californian recalls, “If you went to another state and got married, California recognized the marriage from another state; but you couldn’t marry here. So we left California and got married in Utah in 1938.”²²⁹ By 1939, however, California had passed a state resolution requesting that Utah prohibit Filipino-white intermarriage. Directed efforts and solicitations to the state legislation were successful as Utah made amendments to existing miscegenation laws that included “Malays” as a category that same year.²³⁰

As Western states slowly made changes to pre-existing laws some couples went as far south as Mexico to marry while others north to Canada in order to evade the laws.²³¹ But according Filipino labor organizer Philip Vera Cruz: “...if a Filipino wanted to marry a white woman, because of anti-miscegenation laws, they would have to either go to Mexico or to another state to get married, and then they when they came back they would face tremendous discrimination not only

²²⁸ Much like California in the 1930s, the Utah Senate debated whether to allow Filipinos to marry. In 1937, after weeks of research and deliberation, State Attorney-General Joseph Chez determined that Filipinos were Malays and therefore were not subject to anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting Mongolian-white intermarriage.

²²⁹ *Voices: a Filipino American Oral History*. Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project Inc, 1984; “Filipino-and-White Marriages Ruled Legal In Utah.” *Los Angeles Times* 11 Jun. 1937: 5.

²³⁰ Bulosan, 39.

²³¹ “Filipino-and-White Marriages Ruled Legal In Utah.” *Los Angeles Times* 11 Jun. 1937: 5; *The Three Stars* July 1, 1929, Vol. 2, No. 1

from the white community but also their own."²³² One Filipino –white couple from Salinas, California sought the help of a Canadian minister who married Filipino-white couples across the border:

We had a very simple wedding because in those days they have some kind of law that Caucasians and Orientals are not to intermarry in California...When we decided to get married, somebody told me that there was a minister in Vancouver who married Filipinos and Caucasians...So I wrote him. He sent me all the papers. We had them notarized in Salinas, mailed them back, then went to get married in Vancouver.²³³

The couple later returned to California as man and wife. Not all couples were so lucky, however, for although this was a viable option for many, the financial costs and time commitment associated with taking the trip and traveling sometimes hindered others from marrying outside the state.

Although miscegenation laws may have discouraged Filipinos from marrying whites, in California Filipino intermarriage remained the norm rather than the exception. The prevalence of intermarriage among Filipinos reflected a skewed sex ratio within the population that persisted in the first half of the 20th

²³² "Filipino-White Marriages Opposed by Senate," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1933, 13.

²³³ *Voices: a Filipino American Oral History*. Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project Inc, 1984. Much like California in the 1930s, the Utah Senate had been debating whether to allow Filipinos to marry. In 1937, after weeks of research and deliberation State Attorney-General Joseph Chez determined that Filipinos were Malays and therefore were not subject to anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting Mongolian-white intermarriage.

century. In the post-Roldan period Filipino men continued to pursue women outside the community just as they had done before 1934, which often meant that they courted, dated, and married non-Filipina women that included African Americans, Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, and Native Americans.²³⁴ Between the 1930s and 1940s California's growing population diversity meant that Filipinos found partners in different communities.

Rural and urban areas offered unique opportunities for Filipino men to meet potential partners. Places of work and leisure where men and women found themselves in close proximity often provided the most likely places for romantic encounters. In rural towns like Modesto, Salinas, and Watsonville Filipinos worked along side a diverse group of women in asparagus, beet, garlic, and lettuce fields, a work environment that encouraged interactions between the groups on and off the fields. Friendly work conversations led to more intimate ones making way for courting and dating between Filipino men and women of color. Larger

²³⁴ John H. Burma, "Racial Intermarriage in Los Angeles," *The Midwest Sociologist* 14, no. 2 (1952); Benicio T. Catapusan, "Filipino Intermarriage Problems in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* 22, no. (1938); Benicio T. Catapusan, "The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States: A Dissertation" (University of Southern California 1940); Moran; Craig and Lilia V. Villanueva Scharlin, *Philip Vera Cruz* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). Outside the state of California, Filipinos also married Canadian, French, Mulatto, Greek, Australian, Jewish, and Native Alaskan women. See John H. Burma, "Marriage in Los Angeles, 1948-1959," *Social Forces* 42, no. 2 (1963).

cities like Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and Stockton offered a variety of social spaces where Filipinos found many opportunities to meet women outside their communities. Locations of leisure such as restaurants, dance halls, movie theaters and workplaces like hotels, and hospitals became unlikely stages for romantic interplay. All converging together in these spaces it is not surprising that Filipinos married women with whom they shared identical socio-economic identities.²³⁵

Indeed Filipinos courted and had relations with women from communities outside their own, but they found that they had the most in common with Mexican women. Because of miscegenation laws, “a Filipino as a poor but hard-working minority usually married another minority, usually a Mexican because they often lived in the same area,” labor organizer Philip Vera Cruz explained.²³⁶ Thus in places where high concentrations of Filipinos and Mexicans encountered one another sociologists found Filipino-Mexican unions to be commonplace.²³⁷ Mutual understandings of cultural and social expectations as well as a shared migrant experience also encouraged unions between Filipino men and Mexican women. “Some of the most successful Filipino marriages are those where the

²³⁵ Panunzio: 79.

²³⁶ Annelia Lynn, *Interracial Marriages in Washington, D.C., 1940-1947* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1953), 12.

²³⁷ Catapusan, “The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States: A Dissertation”, 80.

wives are Mexican,” Bruno Lasker observed, “partly because of similarity of cultural background and language, often also of common membership in the Catholic Church.”²³⁸ In a survey of 250 Filipino students, Catapusan found that almost 30 percent favored Filipino-Mexican marriages.²³⁹

Interviews with Mexican wives of Filipino husbands revealed that in addition to shared cultures and experiences, personal traits and characteristics were instrumental to their choice of a Filipino husband. The women appreciated that their husbands were kind, considerate, hard working, and dutiful - all qualities that they valued in a good husband and father. They also admired that their Filipino husbands were good providers and were willing to share responsibilities in household duties and childrearing. Catapusan concluded that almost 85 percent of the Mexican wives interviewed were of the opinion that Filipino men made better mates than their own race and he was pleasantly surprised to find a “consensus of

²³⁸ Scharlin, 119.

²³⁹ The same study showed that Filipino-Mulatto marriages ranked second in preference with approximately 20 percent of the approval rate. Catapusan attributes Filipino preference for Filipino-Mulatto unions to reduced social discrimination between the groups due to skin color, identical socio-occupational status in the U.S. as well as their abilities to work together through social and economic adversities. Interestingly Filipino students ranked marriage with Americans at only 4.3 percent. Social and cultural differences coupled with economic and racial discrimination complicated relations between the groups.

favorable attitudes toward the adopted husbands.”²⁴⁰ Cultural, religious, and sometimes political similarities were familiar precisely because Filipinos and Mexicans shared history colonialism under Spain. Shared religious beliefs made possible an interracial, but Catholic household, which meant that differences about religions could be resolved. It also meant that there were clear understandings about gender divisions of work, labor, and society that couples often observed, respected and welcomed into their households. As Rudy Guevara has shown in his new work on Mexipinos in San Diego, “cultural exchanges reinforced the bonds of mestizaje between Mexicans and Filipinos” in ways that brought communities together.²⁴¹

Some Filipino – Mexican couples, however, approached the issue of intermarriage creatively. Grace Palacio Arceneaux and Leo Silga were expecting a child and wanted to be properly married, but in California Mexicans were defined as Caucasians and therefore prohibited from marrying non-whites. Silga proposed that they travel north to Vancouver for a civil ceremony but Arceneaux came up with a different plan. At a marriage license bureau in Santa Cruz, Arceneaux stood before a clerk and claimed that she was half-Filipina and half-Mexican. The clerk

²⁴⁰ Catapusan, “The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States: A Dissertation”, 82.

²⁴¹ Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii* 9. Karen Isaksen Leonard’s work on Punjabi- Mexican communities in California’s Imperial Valley is also informative here. See Catapusan, “The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States: A Dissertation”; Guevara Jr.

did not object. “They gave me the license,” Arceneaux said proudly, “So I married that way.”²⁴² Even in her nonchalance Arceneaux understood how to negotiate the boundaries of race to circumnavigate state miscegenation laws. In her claiming of half-Filipino-ness the clerk had enforced a version of the one-drop-rule; a social classification historically applied to African Americans with one drop of black blood. The clerk granted the license under the belief that Arceneaux’s Filipino-ness superseded and perhaps tainted her “whiteness.” The clerk’s action to grant the license also shows a degree of laxity in protecting and policing certain racial boundaries. For while Mexicans were legally defined as Caucasian within the state, many believed that when it came to the law it was not in practice but in name only. In a study of Mexican women who married men from India’s Punjab region Leonard found that clerks in the Imperial Valley routinely issued licenses between Punjabi-Mexican couples despite the laws. In theory, California civil codes 60 and 69 prohibited Mexican women from marrying non-whites, but in practice, “clerks sometimes wrote down ‘brown,’ sometimes ‘black,’ and sometimes ‘white,’ depending on the applicants’ skin coloring...”²⁴³ Left to their own devices, marriage license clerks across California made these decisions inconsistently and at times indifferently; a loophole that many mixed race couples like Arceneaux and

²⁴² Interview, Grace Palacio Arceneaux: Mexican-American farmworker and community organizer, 1920-1977, University of Santa Cruz, Special Collections.

²⁴³ Karen Isaksen Leonard, "California's Punjabi Pioneers: Remembering/Claiming Homelands," *Amerasia Journal* 28, no. 3 (2002): 62-69.

Silga sometimes took advantage of. In many instances mixed race couples claimed to be whatever race the law required in order to manipulate the legal system.

Accounts of minority intermarriage in the broader legal scholarship on miscegenation has often ignored the social, cultural, and political significance of these marriage acts, if for the simple fact that miscegenation laws did not to police relationships between non-whites. According to Nancy Cott, anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting and/or penalizing interracial marriage “aimed to keep the white race unmixed – or more exactly, to keep the *legitimate* white race unmixed – and thus only addressed marriages in which one party was white,” which perhaps explains a part of the reason why the state left the minority interracial marriage institution unquestioned and intact.²⁴⁴ Seen as a non-threat to the institutions of white heterosexual marriage and patriarchy, individual states had little incentive to invest in its regulation. Some sociologists believe that this is one reason why couples more readily married across racial lines.

Although the idea of inter-minority marriage flourished it was not necessarily encouraged. In its own ways, men and women of color marrying each other also posed challenges because many of their community members saw intermarriage as difficult to accept. In an interview, Thomas W. Chinn conveyed the complexities of intermarriage within Chinese American communities:

²⁴⁴ Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*, Asian American History and Culture Series (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 132, emphasis mine.

That is a more personal decision that resides with the individual. I don't believe anything should stand in the way of anybody wanting to marry a person of any other nationality, whatever it is. If they like each other, if they love each other, why should anybody stand in their way? But parents are parents, and they don't like to see their children getting away from them, and that's what's happened in a lot of cases. By the same token, you have a lot of people who are dead set against any intermarriage, particularly between blacks and whites, or any color with any other color. I don't know the answer to that. I wish I did.²⁴⁵

Despite the potential to bring communities together, the union of racial minorities sometimes deepened and made distinct the differences between communities of color. In these settings, mixed couples were sometimes tolerated, but they were not necessarily accepted. Outside factors such as economics, history, politics, and culture magnified differences within these communities thus demonstrating that in instances of intermarriage external factors sometimes determined the success of individual unions. It also showed that individual decisions impacted larger communities, especially for minorities where these relationships were in constant negotiations.

Intermarriage between people of color, like Filipino-white unions, was also seen as controversial and taboo even if miscegenation laws did not police it. When Felisberto Tapia and Alice Chiyoko Saiki married on February 3, 1930, for

²⁴⁵ Interview, Thomas Chinn “A Historian's Reflections on Chinese-American Life in San Francisco, 1919-1991.”

example, it turned into an interethnic conflict that separated the couple.²⁴⁶ That community members on both sides saw their marriage as a threat to community relations, spoke to the pre-existing tensions between Filipinos and Japanese in Stockton, California. When Saiki's family sent Alice to Japan, Filipinos accused the Japanese of racial prejudice and boycotted all Japanese-owned businesses in Stockton in retaliation. The Tapia-Saiki incident in 1931 illustrates how "[n]otwithstanding these principled legal challenges to and expressions of discomfort with antimiscegenation laws, most minorities preferred to pair with, and see their relatives pair with, one of their own."²⁴⁷

For couples without the proper resources to marry outside California, cohabitation – living together without solemnization – became the only option. In a period in which informal marriage was uncommon, many of these couples lived in stigma, for while living together as a lifestyle increased dramatically in the decades following the 1960s, in the early twentieth century legal and social prescriptions required marriage as the only acceptable form of marital sexual behavior.²⁴⁸ Living together offered no recognition of that contract leaving no rituals, no ceremonies, nor a legal document to solemnize the union.

²⁴⁶ On a detailed discussion of the Tapia-Saiki incident see Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*, 201-210.

²⁴⁷ Cott.

²⁴⁸ This meant that mixed race couples unable to marry under the law were forced into such informal marriage arrangements despite a genuine desire to marry.

In some states, living together meant that there was an option to be common law husband and wife. It is sometimes assumed that the coupling of a man and a woman in a committed relationship – who live together, maintain a household, and raise a family – are somehow automatically in a “common law marriage.” While it is true that in some states couples unable to wed sometimes opted for common law marriage as one alternative, not all states sanctioned it. For a common law marriage to be recognized, individual states must recognize its legal validity. In California common law marriage was abolished in 1895 thus requiring that a ceremony be performed according to California statutes.²⁴⁹ This meant that couples who wanted legal recognition through the common law still needed to travel to a different state that would legally grant it to them.

Informal marriage arrangements while hardly desirable meant that in the midst of legal restrictions on interracial marriage, a different form of family living emerged within Filipino immigrant communities, even if temporarily. In an attempt to provide stable home lives for themselves and their families, cohabiting couples espoused and practiced similar patterns of behavior within their households, which looked like “marriage” despite the absence of legal and religious ceremonies. Despite this, couples in such informal marriages made clear

²⁴⁹ Arlene De Vera, "The Tapia-Saiki Incident: Interethnic Conflict and Filipino Responses to the Anti-Filipino Exclusion Movement " in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* ed. Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999), 536.

that their “choice” to live together was no choice at all. Couples living together recognized that while cohabiting offered one alternative, their unions were without legal protection or recognition from the state. As a cohabiting couple this offered little reassurance about what would happen in cases of inheritance, child custody, and family rights.

Contemporary sociologists found that for many couples an informal marriage arrangement like cohabiting was intended to be temporary until a legal marriage could be obtained. Trinidad Rojo observed that legal barriers such as anti-miscegenation laws tended “to encourage a temporary clandestine union *until* a legal marriage is performed.”²⁵⁰ Sam Figueras and Lillian Rose Robinson, for example, lived together for a year in Los Angeles, before making the trip to Vancouver to marry in 1938.²⁵¹ Likewise, Filipino author Manuel Buaken and his wife Iris were among these couples. Unable to afford an out-of-state marriage, the couple lived together as man and wife but “without benefit of the clergy or county.” Iris recalls that with regards to anti-miscegenation laws the Methodist Church to which they belonged, “had nothing to say about this...The church had for us only ineffectual glares, or angry, or embarrassed stares.”²⁵² The couple eventually married with the financial help of the Red Cross under the sponsorship

²⁵⁰ As quoted in Varzally, 79.

²⁵¹ FIL-KNG 76-39cm, WSOAHP.

²⁵² Iris B. Buaken, "You Can't Marry a Filipino, Not If You Live in California," *Commonweal* 1945, 534-535.

of the U.S. Army, of which her husband Manuel was serving. Iris was convinced that they would never have been legally married if it were not for the initiative and the help of the Red Cross.

Conclusion

The factors that led to Filipino intermarriages and its restrictions in California during the early twentieth century shaped the future of Filipino American communities. The implementation of racist anti-miscegenation laws not only limited their mobility, but also prohibited them from establishing permanent and stable communities. Filipinos, however, resisted these discriminatory laws by going to court and continuing to marry women of different ethnicities despite the disapproval of white American society and sometimes their own. That Filipinos married despite restrictions challenged the notion of Filipinos as sojourners incapable of establishing communities in California.

During the years prior to World War II, Filipinos continued to face further discrimination through the implementation of various immigration laws. In 1934, the United States, in an attempt to curb Filipino immigration, passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which freed the Philippines from U.S. colonization, but also sanctioned Filipino immigration at fifty persons a year. The Repatriation Act of 1935, quickly followed and allocated government funds to transport Filipinos who would voluntarily return to the Philippines, followed this. In the next chapter, I

focus on the debates surrounding the Filipino repatriation movement and Filipino American narratives of return.

Chapter Four
**‘Exit the Filipino’: Narratives of Return and the 1935 Filipino
Repatriation Act**

*“A trip to the Philippines, expenses paid and Uncle Samuel as host. Of course there’s a catch.
You have to be Filipino to get it.”*
–Harold M. Finley²⁵³

“This would not be a forced deportation. It would be a voluntary deportation.”
-Dickstein Feb. 5-6, 1935

*“We are not proud of all Filipinos who come here, just as you can not be proud of all your own
people.”*
- Manuel Roxas²⁵⁴

In 1935 U.S. Congress passed the Filipino Repatriation Act, which offered free transportation for Filipino immigrants in the U.S. mainland willing to return to the Philippines. Amidst Filipino decolonization and exclusion, the repatriation of U.S. Filipinos marked an important stage of their transition from colonial subjects to foreign aliens. The passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Bill in 1934 ended the political status of Filipinos as U.S. nationals, thereby restricting the number of Filipinos entering the United States. The bill also made possible the passing of a

²⁵³ Catapusan, “The Social Adjustment of Filipinos in the United States: A Dissertation”.

²⁵⁴ Buaken, "You Can't Marry a Filipino, Not If You Live in California."

unique piece of legislations that would fund the return of Filipinos in the United States back to the Philippines.

The theme of the repatriate is common in Filipino history and society especially within a country in which the presence of a colonial state, like the United States, provokes the return of the Filipino. Scholarship on Filipino migration experiences has focused primarily on their arrival and settlement in the United States. This chapter examines the repatriation of U.S. Filipinos and incorporates repatriation into our understanding of Filipino American migration experiences. During the 1920s the voluntary return of Filipino migrants marked a movement of laborers and their families from Hawaii back to the Philippines. Luis Teodoro estimates that between 1907 and 1929, approximately 30,500 Filipinos returned to the Philippines from Hawai'i alone.²⁵⁵ In the years that followed, repatriation would remain an integral part of Filipino migration patterns although the concept and its meanings would also evolve with increasing anti-Filipino sentiment as campaigns for Philippine independence intensified.

This chapter chronicles the repatriation of Filipinos in the United States in the years between 1935 and 1941 when the Repatriation Act was first enacted and when the last ship bound for Manila sailed from Los Angeles. I examine the Filipino repatriation movement in two parts: (1) the debates leading to the bill's

²⁵⁵ Harold M. Finley, "Free Rides to Homeland for Filipinos," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1937.

passing and (2) its impact on Filipinos in the United States and the Philippines. The first section of the chapter looks at the history of the repatriation movement in California where recruitment was most aggressive. I argue that exclusionists used miscegenation and immigration to agitate repatriation politics. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the experiences of Filipino repatriates and their families. I focus specifically on the repatriation narratives of multicultural families and I argue that the repatriation of Filipinos and their families blurred the boundaries of identity and citizenship in a way that challenged concrete notions of race, family, and national belonging.

In the years between 1935 and 1941 it is estimated that a little over 2,000 individuals repatriated including the American-born family members of the Filipino repatriates. Ninety percent of those who repatriated were young men although twenty-one percent of repatriates were married with children. Approximately one-quarter of these marriages were Filipino American unions. Thus this chapter is also interested in the experiences of multiracial Filipino American families. Unlike other repatriates, multiracial families experienced repatriation differently. For example, what happens when Filipinos return with family members who do not share their identities, their citizenship status, or their background? In this case, what happens when Filipino natives who have spent years in the United States return with their American-born spouses and children? The answers to these questions suggest that repatriation was not just about the

return of the native, but it was also about notions of national belonging and racial belonging. In the process of repatriation, the U.S. government was “returning” its former subjects back to the colony, while also re-drawing both racial and spatial boundaries between the two countries.

Calls for Filipino repatriation began as early as the mid-1920s amidst concerns about rising unemployment and unrestricted migration from the Philippines. Supporters of repatriation legislation framed their arguments around anxieties about miscegenation and unrestricted immigration. These concerns solidified at the onset of the Great Depression and shaped calls for repatriation with supporters lobbying for Filipino repatriation and/or exclusion as a solution to California’s “Filipino Problem.” The movement gained popular support from U.S. farm lobbyists and organized labor first, then later patriotic and fraternal societies. Groups like the American Legion, the Commonwealth Club of California, the Native Sons of the Golden West, and the State Federation of Labor were early supporters along with state officials like U.S. Representative Richard J. Welch and Senators Hiram Johnson and Samuel Shortridge. In the years leading up to the passing of the 1935 Repatriation Act, this coalition grew as anti-Filipino sentiment intensified. These “race-haters in California,” according to Filipino poet

and activist Carlos Bulosan, "... worked as one group to deprive Filipinos of the right to live as free men in a country founded upon this very principle."²⁵⁶

On April 10, 1930 Welch presented his Filipino exclusion bill with the support of patriotic and fraternal organizations of the American Coalition, a Washington, D.C. group that promoted restrictive immigration legislation. As eruptions of anti-Filipino violence spread along the West Coast, California delegates warned Congress of the spreading dangers of unrestricted Filipino migration. In his testimony Welch likened the Filipino problem to that of the turn of the century Chinese and Japanese: "This is really the third Asiatic invasion of our Pacific coast."²⁵⁷ This invasion warned V. S. McClatchy, secretary of the California Joint Immigration Committee, "is more dangerous than any attack of an armed enemy." California, according to McClatchy, was a "border state where the wars against invaders must be fought and where the victory may be won with least loss of life and revenues."²⁵⁸ In using the language of war Welch and McClatchy emphasized the dangers of the unrestricted Filipino. Without legislation to protect Americans, Filipinos remained the enemies from within. To gain national support for the bill, Welch and his advocates appealed to Midwest and East Coast politicians by nationalizing California's "Asiatic racial problem." Welch cautioned that Filipinos were already "colonizing ... in the East." He continued,

²⁵⁶ House.

²⁵⁷ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle: The Filipinos in Hawaii* 3.

²⁵⁸ Bulosan, 29.

It is our problem to-day, but it will be yours tomorrow. The East will see more evidence of the Filipinos here from now on. They are coming by shiploads. They will work their way east. More than 10,000 of them came to the ports of San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles during the last 12 months.²⁵⁹

Whether Welch's predictions were based on facts or not, the looming danger of allowing Filipinos to enter the U.S. and stay without restriction remained central to repatriation and exclusion campaigns. "The impetus behind the exclusion proposal, then," according to Bruno Lasker, "is decidedly national and not limited to any section of the country. It is important to keep this fact in mind because, with the experience of this particular problem in one part of the country – the Pacific Coast – and with a discussion of the problem naturally somewhat colored by the resulting special interest in that section, the erroneous impression may easily gain ground that the demand for Filipino exclusion is localized."²⁶⁰

Despite collective interest and major support attempts at comprehensive legislation proved difficult. One main obstacle to Filipino exclusion was that it was unconstitutional to repatriate Filipino nationals who were subjects of the United States. Separate proposals from Welch and Shortridge in April and May 1930 met criticism for this reason, especially from those sensitive to U.S. – Philippine

²⁵⁹ U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Exclusion of Immigration from the Philippine Islands*, 71st Cong., 2d sess., 1930. H.R. 8708, 7.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

relations.²⁶¹ In his testimony to Congress, Resident Commissioner Camilo Osias criticized the legal practicality of both the Shortridge and Welch bills “because it excludes Filipinos even while we are under the United States flag.”²⁶² In 1933 Representative Samuel Dickstein, chair of the House Immigration and Naturalization, proposed House Joint Resolution 549, which became the first bill that targeted unemployed and indigent Filipinos for government repatriation. Under the bill “unemployed and financially distressed Filipinos” would return voluntarily to the Philippine Islands through means provided by the U.S. government. According to Dickstein, efforts to repatriate Filipinos were humanitarian in its intentions although the words of Representative Martin Dies, Jr. of Texas – long an opponent of immigration – betrayed that motive: “We might just as well recognize it that we have a selfish motive behind this thing, as well as a humanitarian motive... What we are trying to do is get rid of these people who have be taken care of by American charitable organizations, and are trying to eliminate their competition with American labor.”²⁶³ This early version of the Dickstein bill found support amongst members of the Immigration and Naturalization Committee as well as from individuals like U.S. Secretary of Labor

²⁶¹ Laurence M. Benedict, "Filipino Ban Called Up " *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1930; Lasker, *Filipino Immigration to Continental United States and to Hawaii* ; Naturalization.

²⁶² Naturalization.

²⁶³ “Return to the Philippines of Unemployed Filipinos,” January 25, 1935, 72 H.J.Res. 549, 35.

William Doak, Major General John L. Dewitt of the War Department and labor leaders that included American Federation of Labor (AFL) legislative representative William Hushing. The law's inability to prevent Filipinos from returning to the U.S. after repatriation, however, dissuaded members of the resolution committee from voting on it. Dickstein presented the plan again later that year as House Joint Resolution 118 but it was also struck down in February 1934.

Failure to secure legislative support meant that the anti-Filipino movement sought alternative means to achieve their goals, which they found within a growing Philippine independence movement. Led by Filipino nationalists in the Philippines, anti-imperialists and allies in the United States independence campaigns intensified in the first half of the 1930s.²⁶⁴ The roots of this “transnational politics of agitation,” according to Paul Kramer, emerged from the “filipinization” of the colonial government in the early twentieth century.²⁶⁵ As independence politics evolved during the 1920s and 1930s it provided the space in which exclusionists would pursue anti-Filipino legislation under the guise of independence. The irony was not lost on journalist Carey McWilliams who

²⁶⁴ Bernardita Reyes Churchill, “The Philippine Independence Missions to the United States 1919-1934” (The Australian National University, 1981); House.

²⁶⁵ Churchill; Taihei Okada, “Underside of Independence Politics: Filipino American Reactions to Anti-Filipino Riots in the United States,” *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 60, no. 3 (2012).

observed, and not without a hint of sarcasm, that “those who sought to bar Filipino immigration suddenly became partisans for Philippine independence!”²⁶⁶ This unlikely alliance would result in legislation that would restrict Filipino immigration, institute repatriation, and initiate Philippine independence.

Tydings-McDuffie Bill

The passing of the Tydings-McDuffie Bill²⁶⁷ in 1934 set in motion two important steps that altered Philippine-U.S. relations: (1) Philippine independence and (2) Filipino repatriation. The new law granted the Philippines commonwealth status with the promise of its total independence from the United States after ten years. The Tydings-McDuffie Bill also transformed the political status of Filipinos from U.S. national to foreign alien despite the fact that all citizens of the Philippines owed allegiance to the United States. This shift in citizenship status had dramatic effects for Filipinos in the Philippines and the United States. Under the new bill Filipino immigration was restricted to fifty individuals per year; the lowest quota for any immigrant group allowed to enter the United States during this period.²⁶⁸ For Filipinos already in the U.S. the effects would be far more

²⁶⁶ Churchill.

²⁶⁷ Philippine Independence Act, Pub.L. 73- 127, 48 Stat. 456, enacted March 24, 1934.

²⁶⁸ The 1924 Immigration Act limited the minimum annual quota for immigration into the U.S. to 100 people for most countries. The annual quota for the Philippines

immediate as they grappled with their new status as foreign aliens in a now foreign land. If Filipinos as U.S. nationals were previously protected from anti-Asian legislation, the Tydings-McDuffie Bill stripped them of that protection. Victorio Velasco, a long-time resident of Seattle took note of what must have felt like a sudden shift in Filipinos' citizenship status: "With the advent of the Philippine Commonwealth Filipinos in the United States are automatically classed as aliens." He continued, "As aliens we lose those privileges which we enjoyed in our status as nationals of the United States."²⁶⁹

As a result, Filipinos just like any other Asian ethnic group at the time were restricted from migration, became ineligible for naturalization, did not qualify for public assistance and could not vote and own land. The implementation of the 1931 Alien Labor Act in California, for example, prohibited local businesses in partnership with government agencies to employ individuals ineligible for naturalization. When Filipinos lost their status as U.S. nationals, they were immediately removed from government posts from which they were previously accepted.²⁷⁰ Filipinos enrolled in New Deal programs in 1935 also suffered under

as a result of the Tydings-McDuffie Bill was set at 50. On the specific details of the Immigration Act of 1924, see McWilliams, *Brothers under the Skin* Also see Okada, 317.

²⁶⁹ Naturalization.

²⁷⁰ This California law likewise targeted Mexicans and Mexican American workers. "Mexicans and Mexican Americans," accessed November 28, 2012, <http://www.weareca.org/index.php/en/era/WWI-1940s/mexicans.html>.

the same form of job discrimination. As aliens ineligible for citizenship, they were unable to secure positions due to their noncitizen status. Maximo Manzon found the challenges that the Tydings-McDuffie Bill posed for U.S. Filipinos disappointing. The “present drive to employ only American citizens in almost any kind of work has hit the Filipinos tremendously,” he remarked.²⁷¹

In this way the Tydings-McDuffie Act proved an important prerequisite for Filipino repatriation as it paved the way for exclusionary legislation. With the bill in place and immigration halted, Congress was able to pass the Filipino Repatriation Act on July 10, 1935. While Congress saw the bills as practical solutions to the “Filipino Problem,” the Philippine government celebrated them as important steps toward full independence thereby confirming that negotiations over Philippine independence and Filipino repatriation were intertwined matters.

Mexican Repatriation Movement

The Filipino repatriation movement was not unprecedented. In the early 1930s the United States government deported thousands of Mexican and Mexican Americans under President Herbert Hoover’s repatriation program.²⁷² During the

²⁷¹ Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 86, no. 1 (1999).

²⁷² On the Mexican Repatriation Movement, see Camille Guerin - Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-*

early years of the Great Depression Mexicans and Mexican Americans became easy scapegoats especially in Southern California where they constituted the largest minority group. The forced repatriation of Mexican and Mexican Americans during this period was a part of longer history of economic scapegoating in the United States, where U.S. capitalism demanded immigrant labor, but later rejected it when no longer needed.²⁷³

In Los Angeles, city officials like County Superintendent of Charities Earl Jensen expressed concerns about the economic strains imposed by the increasing

1939 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Abraham Hoffman, "Stimulus to Repatriation: The 1931 Federal Deportation Drive and the Los Angeles Mexican Community " *Pacific Historical Review* 42, no. 2 (1973); Maximo C. Manzon, "The Strange Case of the Filipinos in the United States," (American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born 1938); Francisco Balderamma; Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* Revised ed.(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Victorio Velasco, "Views and Reviews," *The Philippine Advocate*, May 1935.

²⁷³ The *Bracero Program* between the 1940s and 1960s is a later example of this economic scapegoating. This program, which unofficially began during WWII because of wartime labor shortage, encouraged the recruitment of Mexican nationals. This would continue on until 1964 when all Mexican nationals working in the U.S. were sent back when the program ended. Ironically, during the duration of the program, the U.S. government launched a deportation program known as "Operation Wetback," in which Mexican Americans and undocumented migrants of Mexican descent were deported without due process between 1953 -1956. The legacies of this contradictory relationship between the U.S. and Mexico are still visible in contemporary U.S. today.

number of unemployed and indigent Mexicans: “The total cost incurred by the presence of these Mexican alien indigents creates a financial burden the county can ill afford to carry at present.”²⁷⁴ Concerns like Jensen’s justified repatriation efforts, but also confirmed what many already believed – that Mexicans and Mexican Americans regardless of citizenship were not only taking jobs away from “deserving” Americans, but also placing an undue economic burden on the cities they lived in.

Collaboration between local, state, and federal officials set into place a repatriation plan, which Secretary of Labor William N. Doak promised would solve the growing unemployment problem. Although it was to be a national campaign officials directed their efforts at Los Angeles targeting Mexicans and Mexican Americans regardless of citizenship status. The U.S. government halted the repatriation program at the federal level in 1932, but deportation programs at the state and local levels continued. Local officials relied on intimidation tactics to scare individuals and families into voluntarily leaving the country. Authorities, for example, publicized deportation drives in popular newspapers to generate an atmosphere of fear that would force Mexicans out. For those who did not heed the warnings the reality of public sweeps and nightly raids ensured that they would. In 1931, for example, federal immigration agents led by Walter E. Carr,

²⁷⁴ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American : Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

District Director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Los Angeles, surrounded the La Placita – in Los Angeles’ central Plaza – then arrested and deported nearly 400 men, women, and children.²⁷⁵ These deportation sweeps often led to the arrest and the unconstitutional deportation of Mexican Angelenos, many of whom were permanent residents and U.S. citizens.

While Mexican community members protested against the unjust treatment of the repatriates, city officials like Coordinator of the Los Angeles Citizen's Relief Committee Charles P. Visel touted the successes of the program based on the high numbers of “voluntary repatriates.” In Los Angeles alone, for example, one third of the Mexican population in the county returned to Mexico within the 1930s.²⁷⁶ These successful results, according to Visel, were due to collaborations between local and state institutions.

The repatriation movement had irrevocable damages to the future of Mexican American communities in Los Angeles. According to historian George Sanchez, in addition to the profound demographic shift that resulted, the “major outcome of repatriation was to silence the Mexican immigrant generation in Los Angeles and make them less visible.”²⁷⁷ The Mexican repatriation movement

²⁷⁵ Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression; Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press 1974), 73-75.

²⁷⁶ Exact numbers on the repatriated are difficult to ascertain. See "Aliens Load Relief Roll," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1934.

²⁷⁷ Rodriguez, 225.

transformed Mexican American lives and communities in 1930s California. It was – as historians Francisco Balderamma and Raymond Rodriguez put it – a “decade of betrayal.”²⁷⁸

1935 Filipino Repatriation Act

Demands for Filipino repatriation in California emerged within this period of intense anti-Mexican sentiment. Therefore it was not surprising that the “‘voluntary’ repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans during the early years of the Depression suggested a method of ridding the country of the remaining Filipino population.”²⁷⁹ The “success” of the Mexican repatriation program proved an invaluable model for the Filipino Repatriation Act, but immigration officials in charge of Filipino repatriation were careful not to draw any likeness between the two movements. Images of massive sweeps and arrests were still fresh in the minds of Californians in 1935 and officials feared that adopting directly similar tactics would discourage and even scare Filipinos from voluntarily leaving the country.

Daniel W. MacCormack, Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Services in Washington, D.C. led the federal program, but in

²⁷⁸ Abraham Hoffman, "Mexican Repatriation Statistics: Some Suggested Alternative to Carey McWilliams " *The Western Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1972).

²⁷⁹ Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American : Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* 120.

California the task of executing the provisions of the bill fell on the shoulders of district directors Edward Cahill in San Francisco and Walter E. Carr in Los Angeles. Concerns about how to treat the repatriation of former U.S. subjects determined the approaches adopted by immigration officials. To gain public support and to avoid offending potential applicants, officials framed support for repatriation around the notion of benevolence. Cahill characterized the program as a “Big Brotherly gesture of help and assistance to the Filipinos who have come to the United States and now find themselves in difficulties”²⁸⁰ while W. H. Wagner, Commissioner of the INS in Washington D.C. described it as “purely humanitarian.”²⁸¹ Framed in these terms, the program was presented to Filipinos as a special government service especially for them. Photographs of Filipino repatriates on board departing ships were published in local papers to further reinforce this notion of “benevolent repatriation.” Images of Filipino men in McIntosh suits waving at the camera would show not only that they were “all returning to their native land of their free will,” but also that they were very happy to do it.²⁸² Immigration officials used these images as a form of propaganda to

²⁸⁰ As quoted in Rodriguez, 291.

²⁸¹ Letter, Wagner to Mission, March 26, 1936, file 55883-412-B, INS.

²⁸² Mae M. Ngai, "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration, Exclusion, and Repatriation 1920-1940," in *Re/Collecting Early Asian America*, ed. Josephine Lee; Imogene L. Kim; Yuko Matsukawa (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

reinforce the voluntary nature of the program and to demonstrate the benevolent work being done by the United States for its former subjects.

Thus instead of aggressive public campaigns designed to instill fear and intimidation – as was previously done during the Mexican repatriation movement – immigration officials instead coaxed Filipinos with positive encouragements and public invitations to apply for the program. The INS issued press releases in local Filipino American newspapers and encouraged editors to publish articles championing the program. To expand the newspapers' reach, to include different Filipino ethnic groups, newspapers featured articles in major Filipino dialects such as Ilokano, Cebuano, and Visayan. Meanwhile mainstream papers like *The Los Angeles Times* enticed potential applicants by highlighting the simplicity of the application process:

Under the Repatriation Act it has been made very simple and very easy for the Filipino who wants to go home. He need pass no examination nor submit to red-tape catechisms. All he need to do is say, 'I want to go home,' and Uncle Sam attends to all the details even transporting him from Los Angeles to San Pedro.²⁸³

The article further romanticized this bittersweet homecoming by adding that:

They [Filipinos] will ride on luxuriant ocean liners with Uncle Sam paying their passage and all expenses and wishing them bon voyage. They will be greeted in Manila by brass bands and songs of welcome. They will disembark on docks above which floats the flag of a free Philippines. They will return to the freedom of their own land...²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁸⁴ "More Filipinos Leave for Home," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 27, 1936.

But for many Filipinos who returned, no brass bands or flags waving welcomed them home. When Laureto Bravo arrived in his hometown in northern Luzon, he was disappointed to find that there was little interest in his homecoming.

Although it appeared that immigration officials were softer in their efforts towards Filipino repatriation, in reality, San Francisco District Director Cahill preferred a more proactive approach. Waiting for Filipinos to apply, according to Cahill, would not be enough: “Instead of waiting to see what the Filipinos, who know nothing about the program, will do, we should take the message of the new law to them.”²⁸⁵ At Cahill’s urging local immigration officials in Los Angeles and San Francisco posted announcements in popular locations frequented by Filipinos such as restaurants, social halls, and employment agencies. He even suggested that immigration inspectors visit local county court houses – in San Jose, Salinas, and Stockton where large groups of Filipinos resided – to explain the provisions of the bill and to answer any questions potential applicants might have.

In addition, the INS also sent letters of solicitation and blank applications to Filipino American community organizations – like The Filipino Associated Clubs in Chicago and the University of Washington Filipino Alumni Association –

²⁸⁵ Letter, Cahill to MacCormack, August 10, 1935, 55883/412, INS.

in hopes that community leaders would encourage their members to apply.²⁸⁶ In Los Angeles, the INS directed their efforts towards religious and fraternal organizations that included the Filipino Christian Fellowship of Los Angeles and the Filipino Federation of America. "May we now request kindly advise Filipino residents of this matter and tell them that full information and necessary forms for making application for repatriation may be secured at our office," Ham B. Blee, Acting Director of the Immigration Service, wrote community leaders.²⁸⁷

But to Cahill's disappointment, these recruitment efforts yielded limited success. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that despite concentrated efforts by local officials, Filipinos were "slow to return home."²⁸⁸ Seattle INS District Director Fred J. Schlotfeldt reported that only 31 Filipinos had applied in his district at the time of inquiry on February 1936, and while interest in the repatriation program seemed high in California only 108 applications had been received by early April of the same year. Application numbers from East Coast states were even smaller. An article in the *Commonwealth Chronicle* reported that instead of embracing the

²⁸⁶ Letter, The University of Washington Filipino Alumni Association to District Director of Seattle INS, January 28, 1936, file 55883/412, INS; Letter, The Filipino Associated Clubs in Chicago to Commissioner of INS, February 26, 1936, file 55883/412, INS.

²⁸⁷ Letter as quoted in "Filipinos Go Back Home," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1936.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

repatriation program, New York Filipinos were actually opposed to it.²⁸⁹ Facing vastly different economic and social circumstances than their Filipino counterparts in California, Filipino New Yorkers felt far removed from debates about repatriation. “In Brooklyn,” the article noted “only one, M.M. Canoc of Mansiloc, Zambales has taken advantage of the free ride to the homeland.”²⁹⁰

Filipino American families and the repatriation bill

Although the program focused on the recruitment of men, many of whom were young and single, married Filipinos and their families also repatriated as a part of the movement. Unlike single repatriates, however, families faced the challenges of repatriation under somewhat different terms. Families composed of mixed nationalities and citizenship status were particularly challenged by the provisions of the repatriation bill, which determined that only Filipino natives qualified for the free program. Their applications for repatriation posed an unexpected dilemma for INS officials who did not anticipate white wives and interracial children to repatriate with their Filipino spouses and parents. Because the Repatriation bill provided transport *only* for Filipino citizens, it left spouses and children with American citizenship without the possibility of accompanying

²⁸⁹ Casiano Pagdilao Coloma, “A Study of the Filipino Repatriation Movement” (University of Southern California 1939).

²⁹⁰ "Repatriation Applicants Scarce; Only Two Filed," *The Philippines Review*, August 31, 1935.

their Filipino family member. In Los Angeles District Director Carr was surprised to find Filipino American families apply. He admitted that the INS had not anticipated that families would take the journey to the Philippines thus posing a challenge especially “in cases where Filipinos have married white women or have had children born in the United States making them citizens...”²⁹¹ In recognizing this challenge, the INS was faced with the task of addressing issues of citizenship and national belonging. In Filipino American families of mixed nationalities and citizenship, to which countries would different members belong?

The answer, according to the Philippine commonwealth, was easy: repatriate Filipinos and leave American-born wives and children in the United States. The government’s opposition to repatriates returning with their American-born wives and children was made evident in a correspondence from Edward Shaughnessy, Deputy Commissioner of the INS, which relayed the Filipino government’s position on the issue:

The Governor of the Philippines has requested that strong protest be made against any proposal to return with Philippine repatriates, under the Act approved July 10, 1935, American born wives or children, because such families immediately become destitute under the most pitiful circumstances and there is no alternative but to return them immediately to the United States.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Diosdado M. Yap, "N.Y. Filipinos Opposed to Repatriation: N.Y. Pinoy Wouldn't Go Home Free," *Commonwealth Chronicle*, November 7 1936.

²⁹² Circular Letter, Shaughnessy, October 26, 1935 NARA 55883/412, INS.

Although the Philippines later softened its stance, its initial refusal to accept the spouses and children of repatriates into Philippine soil set the terms upon which these families were recognized, accepted, and legitimated upon their arrival.

The INS – in collaboration with local agencies – tried to facilitate arrangements for families although the general tone was antipathetic. Despite desperate inquiries from anxious Filipino applicants Carr confirmed that, “no provisions have been made for white wives of Filipinos. They must accompany their husbands on regular steamship tickets.”²⁹³ When state funds for American citizen wife and children were later secured, it was not because of genuine efforts to keep families together, but rather, so that Filipino parents would not leave their children to become wards of the state. To avoid the financial burden of keeping the children, the County Welfare Department and the California State Emergency Relief Association (SERA) opted instead to transport them, “It would be distinctly to the advantage of the Emergency Relief Administration to finance these repatriations as the expense probably would not exceed the cost of carrying them four to six months on the relief rolls and they would be disposed of permanently.”²⁹⁴ According to Cahill, more than one hundred Filipino American children traveled to the Philippines with assistance from these organizations.

²⁹³ Yap.

²⁹⁴ “Memorandum in Repatriation of Filipinos,” July 2, 1935, 55883-412, INS.

Filipino Repatriation, 1935-1941

The first group sailed for Manila on April 18, 1936. On that day the Dollar Liner *S.S. President Coolidge* transported sixty-nine Filipino men, women and children from the port of San Pedro. Following that first trip, ships sailed from three different West Coast ports: Los Angeles (San Pedro), San Francisco (Angel Island), and Seattle. But by the end of 1936 Philippine Commissioner Quintin Paredes worried that the repatriation program was “almost a complete failure” after the INS succeeded in sending back only about 300 of the approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Filipinos the government intended to repatriate.²⁹⁵ Los Angeles District Director Carr tried to remain optimistic about how many more Filipinos would apply before the December 31, 1937 deadline, but the reality was that only 1,000 Filipinos in the entire United States had been sent back under the Repatriation Act in 1936.²⁹⁶ The following year, an aggressive repatriation and recruitment campaign led to the repatriation of 585 more individuals, but it was still far less than the initial estimate that Congress had allotted money for.²⁹⁷ Congress allotted approximately \$100,000 for repatriation and estimated that this would allow for at least 10,000 Filipinos to return.

²⁹⁵ "Filipinos Sail for Islands," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1936; "Paredes Says Repatriation Is a Failure," *Commonwealth Chronicle*, December 12, 1936, 122.

²⁹⁶ "Filipinos Slow to Return Home," *Los Angeles Times* January 2, 1937.

²⁹⁷ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* 122.

Cahill did not hide his disappointment in the negligible number of repatriates and he was quick to blame “the wrong kind of propaganda” for the program’s shortcomings.²⁹⁸ According to Cahill, “The big employers of field laborers want an abundance of cheap labor, available when crops are ready to be harvested... Working under cover, these champions of cheap labor are employing civic bodies and even religious organizations to mislead, confuse, and deceive Filipinos.”²⁹⁹ These whispering campaigns, one newspaper reported, were frightening the Filipinos into believing that “they would be unwelcome and mistreated if they returned to their native land...”³⁰⁰ Carr tried to dispel these concerns with public reassurances that Filipino repatriates would not be considered deported,³⁰¹ but community leaders like C.D. Mensalvas believed otherwise. “If Filipinos are solicited to make their applications,” he informed readers of the *Philippine Enterprise*, “it follows conclusively, that most of our fellow nationals are inveigled through intimidation, and coercion to be repatriated to the homeland; hence it is no longer voluntary but compulsion.”³⁰²

Like the Mexican repatriation movement the Filipino repatriation bill elicited mixed responses. Local Filipino American newspapers provided the space

²⁹⁸ Letter, Cahill to MacCormack, August 10, 1935, 55883/412, INS.

²⁹⁹ "Filipinos Slow to Return Home."

³⁰⁰ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*

³⁰¹ "Plot to Keep Filipinos in State Denied," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 5, 1936.

³⁰² C.D. Mensalvas, “A New Day,” *Philippine Enterprise* May 7, 1936.

upon which supporters and opponents of the bill expressed these diverse opinions. An author, who identified himself only as E.T.R., encouraged Filipinos to go home proudly. "The difficulty of readjustment is only an *imagination*," he informed readers of the *Philippine Enterprise*, "It is better to be at home where freedom and the affections of friends and relatives are enjoyed...They should be proud now to go back to their families and to their people."³⁰³ A perspective like this was not uncommon, although the advice was probably unpopular especially amongst working-class and poor Filipinos. For many Filipino immigrants the shame of repatriation was overwhelming and they feared that returning home as a U.S. government repatriate marked them as failures in America.³⁰⁴ In his interviews with Los Angeles Filipinos University of Southern California sociology student Casiano P. Coloma found that in general Filipinos were reluctant to apply for repatriation because of the stigma associated with the program. One Filipino told a relief officer in Los Angeles, "I would prefer to stay in America. I would rather go hungry and die here than go home with an empty hand."³⁰⁵ While others may have condemned this one Filipino's pride, his statement revealed the dire

³⁰³"Filipinos Willing to Go Back, Fear Repatriation Act," *Philippine Enterprise*, April 2, 1936.

³⁰⁴ In Benicio T. Catapusan's work on "Filipino Repatriates in the Philippines," he makes a strict distinction between voluntary repatriates and Filipinos who repatriated under the repatriation law. His reason for doing so was to avoid the "stigma of unfavorableness" associated with repatriated Filipinos through the federal program.

³⁰⁵ As quoted in "Filipinos Sail for Islands."

economic and social situations that many Filipinos found themselves in while in America. Dr. Hilario C. Moncado, president of the Filipino Federation of American explained it this way: “The boys [Filipino workers] do not want to go back without money or assurance they will earn a living.”³⁰⁶

Limited to agricultural and service work, many Filipinos like other immigrant workers at that time experienced the immediate effects of the economic depression. If employment in the agri-industry was difficult, employment in the city became even more so. Less work available meant that Filipinos competed for employment despite the drastically decreasing wages they received. Having lost the only jobs they could find and without any new employment opportunities available to them, Filipinos were forced to seek assistance from public and private charities for basic necessities like food, clothes, and a bed to sleep on. During the early years of the depression Filipinos were able to apply for assistance from the W.P.A., F.E.R.A. and the C.W.A.³⁰⁷ Sam Figueras recalls that, “You have to go get a ticket for your room, a ticket for your meals, a ticket for your clothing. Three years like that, we had to live off the government...”³⁰⁸ The implementation of new laws, however, limited the availability of these resources to American citizens further displacing immigrant laborers in California, many of whom were ineligible for naturalization.

³⁰⁶ "We Should Be Proud to Go Home," *Philippine Enterprise*, March 3, 1936.

³⁰⁷ Coloma, 44; "Philippine Flop," *TIME*, October 3, 1938.

³⁰⁸ FIL-KNG 76-39cm.

The lukewarm reception of the repatriation program by U.S. Filipinos not only signaled mixed feelings toward the program, but also revealed a tension between U.S. Filipinos and Filipino nationalists. Motivated by its own political interests in independence the Philippine government officials strongly advocated for the repatriation of U.S. Filipinos as a way of maintaining formal relations with the colonial government. Filipino supporters of the repatriation bill saw the program as a “golden opportunity” not only to return for free, but also to “return in the hope of being more able to serve their country and people.”³⁰⁹ During a trip to Los Angeles Resident Commissioner Francisco Delgado advised Filipinos to go home and take advantage of the repatriation program. “Your experiences here,” he told Filipinos in attendance, “will help you much when you go home to help develop the country.”³¹⁰

Filipino repatriates in the Philippines

As repatriates returned, however, they found that they were unprepared for what awaited them in the Philippines. Economic and political conditions – so dependent upon the Philippine transition to commonwealth status – made life in the islands just as uncertain as when they had left it. Despite reassurances from Filipino officials unemployment, as many feared, was still high even after the

³⁰⁹ Burma, "The Background of the Current Situation of Filipino-Americans."

³¹⁰ Benicio T. Catapusan, "Filipino Immigrants and Public Relief in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* XXIII, no. 6 (July - August) (1939).

country's transition into commonwealth status.³¹¹ Government officials had hoped that laborers would return with special skills and training from their experiences as field laborers in American farms, but the repatriates were ill equipped to pursue large-scale agricultural endeavors similar to that of the West Coast and Hawaii. Desperate for work many returned to forms of farm labor that were popular at the turn of the twentieth century, while others moved to larger cities for other opportunities.

In addition, repatriates struggled with social readjustment to Philippine society because their compatriots often rejected them. They had expected to be accepted into their old communities but instead discovered that their own people saw them as outsiders – too Americanized to be Filipinos. In his hometown of Santa Lucia in the northern Luzon province of Ilocos Sur, Laureto Bravo found old friends and family “all fed up with the hocus-pocus news that formerly characterized pomposity of the supposed good we Filipinos had acquired while in the United States.”³¹² Because of these negative associations with U.S. Filipinos, Bravo's old neighbors, friends, and family ostracized him. As he struggled to

³¹¹ In an attempt to encourage Filipino repatriation Resident Commissioner Guevara touted the exceptional employment rates in the Philippines citing that because the Philippines is “an agricultural country, there is unemployment in the cities only.” See Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, “Extending the Time for Voluntary Return of Unemployed Filipinos to the Philippines” Feb. 5-6, 1935.

³¹² Letter, Bravo to Buaken as quoted in “The Philippine Commonwealth and the Filipinos in America,” *The Philippines Review*, November 13, 1935.

adjust to life in Santa Lucia after many years of absence, he admitted that what he thought was home was no longer. Bravo's experiences of return were typical of other Filipino repatriates during this period.

Celebrated Filipino novelist Juan Caberos Laya, who himself spent years of study in America, revisits this trope of the repatriate in his fictional illustration of one Filipino's return in *His Native Soil*.³¹³ In his novel, the protagonist Martin Romero returns to his hometown of Flores after 11 years in America where he worked many different menial jobs to support his schooling at the University of Washington. Upon his return, Romero gains immediate status within his community because of his university degree and his time spent in America. But the circumstances surrounding his return as a government repatriate cast a shadow on what should have been a joyous and proud occasion for him and his family. Romero would find out – as Bravo did – that the townspeople of Flores looked at U.S. government repatriates with skepticism. On his ride from the train station in Dagupan to his hometown, Romero learned of the unfortunate fate of other repatriates who returned before him. Unable to secure stable employment one repatriate sold “New Testament [bibles] to penniless villagers” at a nearby church while another – a convicted criminal in Los Angeles – had turned to a life of local crime. University of Southern California student and sociologist Benicio T.

³¹³ "Delgado Advises Filipinos to Go Home; Mayor Shaw Offers Toast," *The Philippines Review*, October 1, 1935.

Catapusan's research on repatriates confirms the difficulties that many Filipinos faced upon their return.³¹⁴ He found that while a few repatriates adjusted well and were successful, many also struggled in their social and economic adjustments to Filipino society.

Filipinos with families, especially multiracial families, found these conditions challenging. When repatriates returned with their American-born spouses and children they were met with prejudice and discrimination that was reminiscent of their experiences in the United States. Attitudes towards Filipino-white couples and their families played out in the cool reception and sometimes, outright refusal to accept them into local communities. One woman described the tremendous challenge she experienced upon moving to the Philippines:

When I married my husband, I gave up my religion in preference to his. And in spite of it we are devotedly in love. My family likes him very much and raises no objection to his coming from a different country. But here (in the Philippines) his parents, brother, sister behave as if I were hardly human, because I didn't come from this part of this earth.³¹⁵

These experiences were not unique to the wives of government repatriates. A different set of circumstances brought Margaret Duyungan Mislant, the widow of slain labor leader Virgil Duyungan, to her husband's homeland.³¹⁶ When Mislant and her children moved to the Philippines in 1938 she found members of her

³¹⁴ Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*

³¹⁵ Juan Caberos Laya, *His Native Soil* (Quezon City: Kayumanggi Publishers, 1972).

³¹⁶ FIL-KNG 75-12ck, WSOAHP.

husband's community reluctant to welcome them. Her in-laws were polite, Misláng noted, but she understood that it was out of obligation rather than familial acceptance. For Misláng, these experiences were an extension of what she and her late husband had endured in the life they shared in the United States. When asked about the attitudes of friends and family while in America, she replied: "Oh dear. Those were terrible... I couldn't walk with him down the street. I had to walk at least a block either behind or ahead of him. We never dared walk down the street together. The prejudice was so bad..."³¹⁷ In the Philippines, women like Misláng would find that attitudes towards Filipino-white intermarriages were not so different after all.

Racial difference was central to these attitudes; a difference that Laya illustrates in a comical exchange between one couple in *His Native Soil*. He writes,

There's a little runt of a Pinoy³¹⁸ who brought home a ferocious American wife – brought her to a nipa hut to eat salted fish. She could not stand his toothless relatives gaping at her and she refused to eat *saluyot* [a green leafy vegetable that we know as jute.] A few days later she disappeared, ran away to Manila.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ *Pinoy* is a term used by Filipinos to differentiate the experiences of overseas Filipinos (especially those in the United States); now more commonly used to refer to all people of Filipino descent. The feminine "Pinay" is sometimes used to refer to women.

³¹⁹ Benicio T. Catapusan, "Filipino Repatriates in the Philippines," *Sociology and Social Research* 21, no. 1 (1936): 8.

Laya relies on humor to suggest the racial incompatibility of Filipino men and white women. He uses stark images of things “Filipino” to create what seems a natural division between the couple. Laya’s inclusion of Tagalog words further highlights how the American wife stands out in her husband’s environs. At the same time, it can also be observed that Laya’s descriptions of the husband’s family and home illustrates a somewhat backward and uncivilized life that an American housewife simply cannot tolerate. Under these social pressures, Laya hints that a separation was an inevitable outcome.

In addition to what some viewed as an obvious “racial incompatibility” between the Filipino husband and the white American wife; class added another element. Because many of the wives were of working-class and often of European immigrant backgrounds native Filipinos saw the women differently from the American teachers, missionaries, and white wives of American government officials in the Philippines. Using class as a lens from which to interrogate these women, local Filipinos found that the kind of women Filipino men brought back with them did not fit into the model of respectable white womanhood they imagined. That native Filipinos drew a distinction between respectable white women and “white trash” set the terms upon which the wives of repatriates were accepted into local communities.³²⁰ In the United States, Filipino men contemplating repatriation anticipated such responses from their town mates and

³²⁰ Catapusan, "Filipino Intermarriage Problems in the United States."

countrymen. In his interviews with Chicago Filipinos sociologist Paul G. Cressey found men sensitive to such concerns. One man in particular explained why he would not return with a white woman: "If I took an American wife back to the Philippines I'd always be obliged to prove my wife to be a nice educated girl, and to have come from a good family in the United States. We'd have to frame her college diploma and hang it in the parlor."³²¹ Even in Chicago where no miscegenation laws existed and where marriages between Filipino men and European ethnic women were commonplace men were painfully aware of the social stigma of miscegenation in the Philippines.³²²

News of lavish and carefree Filipino lifestyles in America (that most men could ill-afford) also colored opinions about the integrity of mixed couples. In a letter to his friend –author Manuel Buaken – Bravo relayed the "great misunderstanding concerning Filipinos coming home from the United States" especially towards interracial marriages. In his letter, Bravo explained the disappointment expressed by some women from Santa Lucia:

Our girls could never reconcile the idea how we brown men can have the nerve to forsake our unspotted home tradition of the sanctity of the home, the high respect for womanhood, and the eminent position of Christian ideals! How we Filipinos have entirely forsaken the girls back home and

³²¹ Laya; Parrenas. 272. As quoted from *Catapusan, "Filipino Intermarriage Problems in the United States."*

³²² See interview with Analecto Gorospe in *Catapusan, "Filipino Intermarriage Problems in the United States."*

taking other women in their places. How we sold their character by making a mess of our own in the United States!³²³

Bravo's letter was filled with analogies of the clean and the unclean and the tainting of morality and character. From Bravo's perspective, this harsh critique of Filipino men's relations spoke not only to the character of Filipino men in the United States but also extended to the "types" of American women with whom they associated. One of Buaken's cousins similarly critiques Filipino men's choices to marry women outside Filipino American communities. She writes, "You boys have lost your respect for womanhood; by marrying women over there you brought ruin and degradation to your race and country."³²⁴ Such feelings about intermarriage were perhaps extreme, but Buaken's cousin draws links between sexuality and morality in ways that were common to reform campaigns in the United States during the same period.³²⁵ Arguments against intermarriage based on concerns about racial purity, morality, and sexuality must have sounded all too familiar to repatriated Filipino – white couples.

Mislang, for example, saw her experiences in the Philippines as a mere extension of what she and her late husband had endured in the life they shared in the United States. When asked about the attitudes of their friends and family

³²³ Cressey, 134.

³²⁴ Vallangca, ed., 127.

³²⁵ U.S. reformers who discouraged miscegenation between whites and nonwhites were similarly alarmed by the potential for racial degradation and "race suicide."

towards their marriage, she replied: “Oh dear. Those were terrible. Most people wouldn’t...I couldn’t walk with him down the street. I had to walk at least a block either behind or ahead of him. We never dared walk down the street together. The prejudice was so bad...”³²⁶ In the Philippines as it was in the United States, white women like Misleng would find that things were not so different after all.

Conclusion: “Philippine Flop”

In the end, approximately 2,190 Filipinos and family members returned through the repatriation program. It was renewed multiple times until 1941 and the budget readjusted to accommodate new applicants. The government spent a total of \$237,000 but the Department of Labor and the INS viewed it as a failure primarily because it failed to fulfill the objectives of the program.³²⁷ An article on *TIME* magazine dubbed the program a “Philippine Flop.” The reason for the program’s failure according to the article is simple: “Shorn of the wealth they had so earnestly earned and squandered; equipped with experiences they could not utilize in their own country; possessed of education but no place to fit in; would not these facts explain why the Repatriation Act has all the earmarks of a glaring failure?”³²⁸

³²⁶ FIL-KNG 75-12c, WSOAHP.

³²⁷ Buaken, *I Have Lived with the American People*

³²⁸Ibid., 4.

The departure of Filipinos and their families in the years between 1935-1941 had far-reaching consequences for those who remained in the United States. The Filipino repatriation movement transformed Filipino American lives and communities. In the years following Filipino repatriation, U.S. Filipinos would re-imagine and reconstruct a life in a new America that was now foreign to them. Although no longer U.S. subjects, Filipinos as aliens would continue to owe their allegiance to the United States until total independence was achieved in 1946. As U.S. Filipinos wrestled with their new citizenship status as outsiders the gates of Filipino immigration remained slightly ajar. The repatriation of Filipinos – while unsuccessful in the eyes of the U.S. government – offered the “final” solution to the country’s Filipino problem.

Conclusion

The period between the 1920s and the 1940s marked a significant change in American attitudes about Filipinos in the United States. The implementation of state laws prohibiting Filipino-white intermarriage, the repatriation of Filipinos as “foreign aliens” to the Philippines, and the restriction of Filipino immigration to 50 persons a year were the beginnings of shifting relationships between the United States and the Philippines. *Interracial Romances of American Empire* traces these shifting relationships by examining the formulation of state and federal laws that restricted Filipino intermarriage and migration rights. By looking at the connections between state miscegenation laws and federal immigration policies, my project illustrates how law influenced the social constructions of Filipino-ness. All unfolding on a stage of empire, I argue that the problems of migration miscegenation were central to how Filipino nationals viewed and defined their place in American society.

My dissertation contributes to a new perspective in Asian American Studies and immigration history by examining Filipino American lives through the lenses of migration and marriage laws. It demonstrates how state marriage laws and federal immigration policies reinforced one another despite acting at different levels of government. It also intervenes by looking at how miscegenation laws

shaped immigrant understandings of marriage and family as cultural citizenship. In doing so, it places interracial marriage at the center of analysis and shows us that state and federal anti-Filipino legislation in this period were laws that addressed more than just matters of federal migration, but also the more intimate aspects of immigrant life such as marriage and family. Citizenship therefore – whether legal or cultural – is central to Filipino responses and resistances to restriction.

In many ways questions of citizenship – both social and legal – remain with us today. Contemporary law and society continue to grapple with questions of marriage rights and immigration rights and the nation is as divided as it was during the 1920s and 1930s. The question of who can or cannot marry under state law, for example, remains at the center of contemporary marriage debates. When the matter of same-sex marriage was put on the ballot in California in 2008 – in the form of Proposition 8 – it was a reminder that marriage continues to hold legal and cultural significance in our intimate lives. The issue of same-sex marriage in many ways is a fight for equal rights and for the recognition of cultural citizenship. It has been my hope that this project can help put these contemporary issues into historical perspective. While notions of marriage and migration continue to evolve, the past reminds us that these ideas impact how we think about access to citizenship, to legal rights, and national belonging.

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