

## Notable Filipino Americans: Contributions to American Society

For 100 years, from 1906 to 2006, Filipino Americans have made significant contributions to American society, and contends to be an integral force in America's social, economical, political, educational, artistic, literary, scientific, medical, and entertainment communities.

Filipino Americans have made vital contributions in the progression of Science and Technology in America. Fe del Mundo, the first Asian to attend Harvard University's School of Medicine, is credited for her studies that led to the invention of the incubator and jaundice-relieving device. Diosdado Banatao, an electrical engineer, introduced the first single-chip graphical user interface accelerator, which resulted in faster working computers. This "computer chip" played a critical role in the development of the Ethernet controller chip – making the Internet possible.

Filipino Americans also reside among the notable literary writers in America. Author and poet, Carlos Bulosan, used his prolific literary abilities to become the voice of Filipinos who struggled with discrimination and racism in America, as profoundly written in his personal history, America is in the Heart. A novelist, poet, and performance artist, Jessica Hagedorn, emigrated from the Philippines at 14 years old. She gained national attention with the publication of her first novel, Dogeaters, published in 1990, earning her a nomination for the National Book Award.

A growing list of Filipino Americans can be found in the entertainment field, as well. Lou Diamond Philips starred as a 1950's teenage rock singer, Ritchie Valens, in the movie, "*La Bamba*," and narrated the "Untold Triumph," written by Stephanie Castillo and directed by Noel Izon. Lea Salonga, actress, singer, and Tony Award Winner of "Miss Saigon," is also credited for being the singing voice for Disney's animated movies "Mulan" and "Aladdin."

Filipinos Americans have also become more visible in Culture and the Arts, both in the U.S. and internationally. Manuel Rodriguez holds the title as "Father of Philippine Graphic Arts," while Jose Romero is a world-renowned acrylic-impressionistic artist.

On the rise in the sports arena, Brian Villoria, a Filipino American boxer in the light flyweight class, won the U.S. National Title in 1999. Known internationally as the "Hawaiian Punch," he was ranked No. 1 in the world in his class. Benny Agbayani was first drafted to play for the New York Mets in 1999 and was a definite crowd pleaser. He later got drafted to play for the Colorado Rockies in 2002 as a baseball outfielder.

Filipinos also have national representation when it comes to beauty. After her reign as Miss. America 2001, Angela Perez Baraquo-Grey founded the "Angela Perez Baraquo Education Foundation," a non-profit organization, which promotes character education and provides scholarships and grants for teachers and students.

Filipino Americans proved to be effective union labor leaders. Philip Vera Cruz, who worked side by side with United Farm Workers Union leader, Cesar Chavez, as vice-president and highest-ranking Filipino officer, embodied the experiences of the "*Manong*" Generation. This generation comprised of a large wave of Filipino immigrants who came to the U.S. between 1910 and 1930, and experienced racial discrimination, deplorable living conditions, and oppressive labor practices. Larry Itliong, another labor activist, devoted his life to improving the lives of retired Filipino farm workers, as well as, to a wide variety of community and civic projects, many being Filipino related.

Filipino Americans also hold important positions in the medical field. Enriquez M. Ostrea is a famed Pediatrician, Neonilo Tezano, M.D. is a well-known orthopedic surgeon, while Ananias C. Diokno performs as a Urological Surgeon.

In addition, Filipinos have obtained and continue to pursue more political representation in America, with Gene Canque Liddel being the first U.S. Filipino American Mayor. Hawaii's former Governor, Benjamin Cayetano, is also the nation's first Filipino American governor. In 1979, Dolores Sibonga became the first Filipino American to pass the Washington Bar Exam and the first minority woman to serve on Seattle's City Council.

In the masses, Filipino American soldiers proudly serve in the U.S. Military. Edward Soriano was the first

Philippine-Born soldier to become a General in the U.S. Armed Forces, followed second by Antonio Taguba.

Also a Filipino American soldier, particularly in World War II, Domingo Los Banos later became the first Filipino principal and district administrator in Hawaii. A true documentarian, he continues to share the heroic efforts of the Filipino soldiers who fought to free the Philippines from the Japanese during the 1945 war.

As those who came before them, these are only a few of the Filipino Americans who have made momentous contributions to our nation. Their experiences and perspectives continue to be a driving force, helping to build a U.S. society that makes it even more possible for others to live the "American Dream."

## Resources

1. Filipino Americans.net: "Notable Filipino Americans." <http://www.filipinoamericans.net/notables.shtml>
2. Filipino American Resources: "Notable Filipino Americans." [http://www.seattleu.edu/lemlib/web\\_archives/Filipino/biog.html](http://www.seattleu.edu/lemlib/web_archives/Filipino/biog.html)
3. "Filipino Inventors." <http://www.txtmania.com/trivia/inventions.php>
4. "Carlos Bulosan Exhibit." [http://www.bulosan.org/html/bulosan\\_biography.html](http://www.bulosan.org/html/bulosan_biography.html)
5. "Jessica Hagedorn." <http://www.tribo.org/bookshop/hagedorn.html>
6. "Meet the Artist: Lou Diamond Philips." <http://www.2g.org/home/news/meettheartist/currentnews-loudiamondphilips.shtml>
7. "Lea Salonga." <http://www.leasalonga.com/>
8. "Virtual Gallery of All Filipino Artists Around the World." <http://www.philippineartists.com/>
9. "Fil-Ams In The Spotlight." <http://www.epilipinas.com/spotlights.htm>
10. "Angela Baraquio Perez Education Foundation." <http://www.apbef.org/board.html>
11. "Asian American Revolutionary Movement Ezine: Philip Vera Cruz." <http://www.aamovement.net/history/eastwind/11/veracruz.html>
12. "Filipino Achievers in the U.S.A. and Canada." <http://www.bookhaus.com/achieve2.html>
13. "Los Banos." <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/specials/filipino100/losbanos/>
14. "Pinoy Teach." <http://www.pinoyteach.com/Authors/index.htm>