

Filipino Americans and US Migration

As early as 1587, the first recorded account of Filipinos on American soil, are of sailors who set foot on present day Morro, California. During the galleon trade era in 1763, Filipino slaves aboard Spanish ships, jumped to escape the brutalities of their masters. These “**Manilamen**” established the first Asian settlements living in stilted houses in the bayous of New Orleans, Louisiana.

In 1903, 500 privileged “**Pensionados**” or government-issued students were sent to American cities to attend school to better help lead the Philippines when they returned. While many of them completed their studies and went back home, others chose to remain in the city. Shortly after, in 1906, the first significant numbers of Filipino immigrants or “**Sakadas**” arrived in Hawaii as “cheap” contract laborers to work on the sugar plantations. For the next 30 years, a consistent wave of migrant laborers, “**Alaskeros**” came to work in the Alaskan Salmon Canneries and **Agricultural Workers** in West Coast farms in Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Based on agricultural crops and seasons, Filipino farm workers later moved to other areas in the U.S. like Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Montana, New York, and North Dakota, as well as, in Vancouver, Canada. Then in 1934, the Tydings McDuffie Act, which made Philippines a commonwealth, limited the number of immigrant Filipinos to America by 50 per year.

World War II was profound in changing American attitudes toward Filipinos. Initially, Filipinos were denied the opportunity to join the armed forces and fight in the war, but in 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt finally allowed Filipinos to be drafted in **Military Service**. Many proudly fought side-by-side with the Americans soldiers in Europe and Asia. It was at this time that 7,000 Filipino soldiers received U.S. citizenship. **Women** were also instrumental in the war selling war bonds. The War Brides Act allowed the Filipino wives of “U.S. Military Personnel” to immigrate and join their husbands in the U.S.

Twenty years later, the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota system, which discriminated against European and non-white nations from immigrating to America. This permitted Filipino professionals, as doctors and engineers, to immigrate to the U.S. to pursue educational and economic opportunities. As a result, these **Post-1965** immigrants brought major changes in gender and class within the Filipino American community in the U.S.

Resources

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