

Filipino American Elders

through the decades of the 1900s

Based on information in COHORT ANALYSIS AS A TOOL IN ETHNOGERIATRICS,
Yeo, et.al (1999) , a publication of the Stanford Geriatric Education Center

Used with permission of the SGEN faculty

[return to Cohorts grid](#)

Printer Friendly Version

(Requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

Each Cohort webpage contains the following information:

General Information	Decade of Interest					Related to the Age of Your Patient If the age of your patient is:			
	1900-20	1920-40	1940-60	1960-80	1980-present	55-65 yrs	65-75 yrs	75-85 yrs	85+ yrs

"The first Filipino settlers in the U.S. known as "Manila men" had escaped slave labor from Spanish galleons on their way to Mexico in the 17th and 18th century. A few hundred men established themselves in bayous outside New Orleans building successful fishing and shrimping industries. Joined by a handful of Filipino travelers, their descendants, the Filipino Cajuns are now in their eighth generation. ... The resulting community has little historical link with the majority of Filipino Americans who arrived following the Spanish American War in 1898 when the Philippines became a U.S. protectorate.

- **"Immigration** to the U.S. from the Philippine Islands in large numbers began in the early 1900s. Traveling with U.S. passports and not technically considered "aliens" when they immigrated, individuals were not eligible for U.S. citizenship and were classified instead, as "nationals" until 1935 when the Philippines became semi-independent. Unable to vote or to own real estate or businesses, creating permanent communities was an unlikely prospect....
- **"... the** first large group of Filipinos was the *pensionsados*, including some Islamic Filipinos, who came to the U.S. as students. Supported by the Pensionado Act passed by Congress they matriculated at Harvard, Stanford, Cornell and the University of California, Berkeley; founded Filipino organizations, some of which are still active today; and returned home to take up leadership roles. Their success stories inspired other young Filipinos to seek education in the U.S. but many would-be students ended up destitute eventually working in low paying jobs in the West Coast farms, Hawaii plantations, and Alaska canneries. An estimated 14,000 students attended universities well into the 1930s a few of today's oldest Filipino Americans may have been among these students or may have grown up in their families.
- **"A large** portion of today's oldest living Filipino elders is likely to have been recruited by the Hawaii Sugar Plantation organization to fill the dwindling supply of other ethnic workers and replace striking Japanese and Chinese workers.... Calling themselves "sakadas" or contract laborers, they were paid less than the Chinese and Japanese for doing the same job; had the poorest housing; and lacked the traditional family life. The resulting heavy gender imbalance was later addressed by encouraging Filipino women and families to immigrate, thus forming a stable community in the 1920s for the second generation of Filipino Hawaiians.
- **"Today's** handful of the oldest old Filipino cohort were also called "manong" (old brother) or old timer. On the mainland they competed with white men for jobs and women and experienced blatant discrimination and language barriers. Their physical stature

stereotyped them as fit for "stoop labor". Reacting to racial slurs they rapidly mainstreamed their children, forbidding them to speak any language other than English Despite this self-imposed cultural alienation, values associated with family, filial piety, respect for elders, and interpersonal relations flourished in Filipino households.

- **"This** group of laborers was overwhelmingly male (94% in 1930), and most of the "pinoys" as they called themselves, intended to return to their villages or send enough money back home to pay a mortgage or buy land. ...As the U.S. economy worsened ... discrimination and violence were increasingly directed against Pinoys. Events such as Filipino laborers being driven out of the Yakima Valley (Washington) and Filipino unionizing activities in ... California created tensions....
- **"The** most explosive incident occurred in January 1930, near Watsonville, California Residents complained about Filipino transients who "spent money on flashy clothes and new cars in order to attract white women." White vigilante groups attacked Pinoys.... Filipino teenagers and children trapped in this maelstrom undoubtedly can recall today as members of the young-old cohort, memories or stories of that turbulent period.
- **"... Passage** of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934 abruptly changed the Filipino immigrants status from "nationals" to "aliens"; imposed a 50-people per year limit to immigration; and paved the way for the Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935. ...Filipinos left the U.S. with free transportation under this Act and were subject to the quota system if they intended to re-enter the U.S. family reunification was halted, keeping many Pinoys waiting for years to see family members. A legal change occurred in 1943 allowing Filipinos in the U.S. to lease land, most of which had been owned by Japanese Americans who were in internment camps.
- **"After** the war erupted in the Pacific, the U.S. Army and Navy became very interested in recruiting Filipinos particularly as scouts in the Philippines and as mess stewards in the Navy, where they obtained ranks as high as Petty Officer. As an incentive, Filipino military recruits from the U.S. and the Philippines were promised U.S. citizenship, but the promise was revoked by the 1945 Rescission Act, which also formally devalued their contribution to the war efforts. The present cohort of Filipino males aged 75 and older includes many of the thousands who served in World War II.
- **"Between** 1968 and 1975, 25% of Filipino immigrants admitted to the U.S. were health professionals, engineers, lawyers and accountants. The "brain drain" effect on Philippine society became a serious concern for policy makers. In the U.S., their entry into the Filipino American community may have contributed to the "identity movement" of the 1960s.
- **Debates** on politically correct labels for Filipinos included the use of "P" or "F" as the first letter. Proponents of "P"ilipinos argue that there was a need for a symbolic break from Philippine-Spanish colonial history (the "F" sound representing King Philip of Spain for whom the Philippines was named), and the pre-Hispanic alphabet did not have a letter "F." Sympathizers to the use of "F" state that members of the second and later generations have called themselves Filipinos and this label embodies part of the essence of the Filipino experience in the U.S. before 1965. The debate is far from over. In California, users of "Pilipino" tend to be activists, and users of "Filipinos" tend to be members of the earlier cohorts of immigrants and U.S. born Filipinos, although some of the elders may orally make the "P" sound when speaking the word. This is associated with ethnic accent rather than a statement of preference. The Philippine government, however, officially uses "Pilipino" in reference to national language - Tagalog or Pilipino - and to label the 80 or more ethnic languages in the country as "Pilipino languages".
- **"The** post-1980 immigration also includes Filipino American families who relocated due to closure of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines, and correspondence brides in search of a better life through "mail order bride catalogs" or broker services. Part of the impetus for the latter group has been the economic decline in the Philippines during the martial law regime and continuing lack of opportunity for those in the lower socioeconomic class. With the lifting

of martial law in the Philippines in 1986, new immigrants are a much more diverse group of well-educated, upper class young Filipinos and a mixed age group of less educated lower socioeconomic class.

- "... **the** cohorts of older Filipino Americans are expected to be mostly immigrants well into the 21st century (95% of those aged 65 and over who identified themselves as Filipino in the 1990 census were born outside the U.S.).
- **The** rapidly diminishing number of the less acculturated Pinoys are found in California, Hawaiian inner cities, and some agricultural communities.

Filial piety, respect for elders, and reciprocity (utang loob), i.e. giving back what one has received, may account for the strong familial support for Filipino elders today. However, as second and third generation of Filipino Americans grow old, expectations based on these traditional cultural values may weaken. On the other hand with continued migration between the two countries, cultural ties may continue to remain strong and have significant influence on the physical and mental health care of older Filipino Americans" (Yeo, et al, 1999, pg. 33-38).

[return to Cohorts grid](#)

Years	Historical Events: Filipino American Elders	age 55-65	age 65-75	age 75-85	age 85+
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1992 - closure of U.S. military bases in Philippines. • Immigration of elders following their children. 	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old	Young Old & Old	Old
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1989 - English only in workplace • Court decision denying Veterans benefits. • Older veteran immigration. • Correspondence brides. • 1986 - End of martial law in the Philippines. 	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old	Young Old & Old	Old
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filipino American identity movement. • Followers of children immigration through family reunification program. • U.S. Military personnel intermarriages. • Martial law regime in the Philippines. • Heavy immigration, especially of professionals. 	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old	Young Old & Old
1940 - 1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1965 - Immigration quota abolished. • Immigration of professionals. • U.S. citizenship allowed for the first time • 1948 - California miscegenation law repealed. • 1943 - Land lease available. • Rescission Act revoking promise of citizenship for enlistees in World War 	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> II. Philippine independence. Post World War II war Brides 				
1920 - 1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1937 - Cannery Union. 1935 - Filipino Repatriation Act. 1934 - Tydings McDuffey Act. 1933 - Anti-Miscegenation Laws. 1930 - Watsonville Strike. 1928 - Yakima Valley Incident . Workers (Pinoys) immigrate to West Coast and Alaska ("stoop" labor). Tydings-McDuffey Act sets immigration quota of 50 per year. 	Children	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged
1900 - 1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Spanish-American War Brides. Pensionado Act; immigration of "<i>pensionsados</i>" (students). Workers (Pinoys) to Hawaii and Alaska. 		Children	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults
Pre-1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish Galleon Trade. Louisiana settlement. 			Children	Children & Adolescents

[return to Cohorts grid](#)