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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

The three articles and one interview in this issue comprise the second part of a collection of papers on Filipino overseas migration, the first part having appeared in the issue immediately preceding this one. The racist violence against Filipino migrants in the United States that became marked from the late 1920s to the late 1930s is well established in the literature, the most celebrated being the death of Fermin Tobera in the Watsonville riot in 1930. The anti-Filipino riots occurred amid attempts to bar Filipinos from entry to the US, who, unlike all other Asians, could not be excluded because of US colonial rule in the Philippines. That the grant of Philippine independence was a roundabout way of effecting Filipino exclusion is also already accepted. What is less known is that these anti-Filipino riots had a complex character, which Taihei Okada illuminates. Okada's transnational history also argues that, despite this complexity and the initial indignation at Tobera's death, Filipino elites in the Philippines focused on the criminality of migrants, rendering Filipinos in the US liable for their fate. Okada argues that, despite official concern for their plight, racism was not confronted, leaving the benevolence of US imperialism in the Philippines unquestioned.

Racial violence against Filipinos in the United States hardly figure in the official history taught in Philippine schools—although, for that matter, overseas migrations hardly ever figure in national history. Not surprisingly, institutionalized history portrays the beneficial aspects of US colonialism. Filipinos who moved to the US in the latter part of the twentieth century brought with them this type of history, which has shown a remarkable tenacity that is seen in its continuing dominance in US schools and Filipino immigrant homes. Consequently, as Faye C. Caronan suggests, the alternative history critical of the official narrative that circulates among Filipino-American

performance poets was not learned at home but in liberal universities. Caronan demonstrates, however, that the history that prevails among Filipinos in the US relies on a different narrative strategy from that found among Puerto Ricans. Filipino immigrants emphasize the country's rescue from Spain and Japan, as well as the US "gift" of democracy. In contrast, Puerto Ricans revel in the narrow confines of cultural nationalism, which has no room for political nationalism and independence.

Evoking imperial power in the contemporary world are the US military installations in Okinawa in southern Japan. Johanna O. Zulueta focuses on a peculiar group of workers in these US bases: the Nisei who are the offspring of unions of Filipino men with Okinawan women, who came together when migrant Filipinos worked on these bases in the period right after the Second World War. Many of these families moved to the Philippines, where their mestizo children were raised with hardly a trace of Okinawan, much less Japanese, culture, as the Okinawan mothers sought to assimilate to Philippine society. The Nisei's move back to Japan since the 1970s has been facilitated by their Japanese citizenship, but the reasons for their migration, except for the element of searching for one's roots, are no different from those that impel members of Philippine middle classes to leave the country for overseas work. Oddly enough, the Nisei include anti-Marcos activists who found solace in Okinawa's US bases. Interestingly the Nisei's sentiments toward the bases echo similar fissures in Okinawan society. Because they lack proficiency in the Japanese language, the best economic options for the Nisei are found inside the bases—heightening their separation from the Okinawan society they wish would accept them. Seen as forever Filipinos, the Nisei remain liminal in the land of their birth.

The image of the Nisei resonates with views such as "Once Chinese, always Chinese" despite birth in the Philippines. This prejudice excluded the ethnic Chinese from Philippine citizenship since the founding of the Philippine republic after the Second World War. This situation persisted until, in 1975, a concatenation of events led Ferdinand Marcos to introduce the acquisition of citizenship by decree, resulting in the mass naturalization of ethnic Chinese and other "aliens" whose homeland, for all intents and purposes, had been the Philippines. The interview with Benito O. Lim sheds light on this historic grant of citizenship that ironically was made by an authoritarian regime. Just as the individual lives of migrants intersect with the macrohistories of empire, Lim's own personal history found him at the critical juncture that enabled his participation in changing a nation's history.