

# FILIPINOS IN HAWAII AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

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*The paper seeks to demonstrate the existence of institutional racism in Hawaii, with Filipinos as victims of systemic discrimination. The paper cites data from the 1980 U.S. census to show that Filipinos are a disadvantaged group in Hawaii: they have lower levels of income and education, lower-paying jobs, and lack political power. In California the picture is much better for Filipinos, so the explanation of Filipinos' lower status in Hawaii must rely on specific conditions in Hawaii rather than on theories about the alleged inferiority of Filipinos or about recency of migration as a basis for socio-economic difficulties. The paper concludes with instances of open racism against Filipinos by specific political leaders in Hawaii state governments. Specific examples of insensitivity are cited.*

*Racism* is the subordination of one race by another. When one group is poorer, is less well educated, and holds lower status occupations, it is in a subordinate position if it lacks the political power to rectify its position in society. *Individual racism* consists of acts and verbalized attitudes of individuals who intentionally hold racial groups back. In the case of *institutional racism* a racial group is kept behind by policies, practices, and procedures of institutions, even when persons who make decisions for these institutions harbor no racial prejudices. Institutional racism has two elements – disadvantaged status and institutional victimization – which can be demonstrated whenever objective factors show (a) that an ethnic group is socioeconomically below average with little political power and (b) that various policies, practices, and procedures of institutions – even when racially neutral in content – serve to perpetuate the lower socioeconomic and political status of the group (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967).

To show that Filipinos are *disadvantaged* in Hawaii, we need to demonstrate that Filipinos have lower levels of income and education, hold a larger share of the lowest paying and least desirable jobs, are in poorer health, and lack political clout in relation to other ethnic groups. If we find that corporations and government agencies not only are unresponsive to the plight of disadvantaged groups but also make

decisions that preserve the racial status quo, then *institutional victimization* exists as well.

## *Filipinos as a Disadvantaged Minority in Hawaii*

The facts are clear on the social position of Filipinos in Hawaii. As a group, Filipinos are far below the average of the other major racial groups (Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiians, Whites). The 1980 United States census has incontrovertible evidence (Table 1).

The average Filipino male aged 15 and over earned \$9,511 in 1979 as compared to the Hawaii average of \$11,505; among the major groups, all but the Hawaiians have higher median incomes. Indeed, comparing 1949 with 1979, the position of Filipinos is slightly worse in relation to the top income group.<sup>1</sup> One out of every 12 Filipino families has an income at or below poverty levels. The proportion of Filipinos on public assistance (welfare) is 37 percent greater than the Hawaii average. Filipino home ownership is also below the Hawaii average.

Filipinos are the least well educated major ethnic group in Hawaii. Nearly one out of every five Filipinos aged 25 and over is illiterate, which is more than three times the Hawaii average. Only one out of every two Filipinos aged 25 and over is a high school graduate; the

Table 1. *Comparisons Between Filipinos in California and Hawaii, 1980.*

Statistical Measure	Hawaii		California	
	Filipinos	All Groups	Filipinos	All Groups
Median income				
Males aged 15 & over	\$9,511	\$11,505	\$10,444	\$12,885
Percent of top group	62.3	75.4	67.4	83.5
Family income				
% at poverty level	8.5	8.2	5.6	8.7
% on welfare	12.7	9.3	11.7	9.6
Home ownership				
% families in owner-occupied residences	49.9	51.7	59.2	55.9
Education (% of persons Aged 25 & over)				
Illiteracy	19.2	5.3	6.1	6.1
High school graduates	51.3	73.8	75.1	73.5
College graduates	10.8	20.3	34.7	19.6
School attendance				
% in private schools (grades 1-12)	8.7	16.5	14.6	10.5
% attending college	3.7	5.6	8.1	6.3
Occupations (% of males Aged 16 & over)				
Unskilled jobs	42.8	24.8	20.4	18.7
Administrative, managerial, professional	8.6	23.8	20.1	25.1
Self-employed	2.3	5.5	2.4	7.6
Unemployed	5.2	4.7	5.0	6.5
Members of Hawaii State legislature/1000 population	3.0	7.9	—	—

Source: Hawaii (1982: 355), U.S. (1983a, b).

average in Hawaii is 74 percent, nearly 1.5 times the attainment of Filipinos. Only 11 percent of Filipinos aged 25 and over are college graduates, whereas the average in Hawaii is 20 percent. Filipino parents are half as likely to send their children to private schools as the average in Hawaii. And Filipino representation among the student body at the University of Hawaii is far below that of the other major ethnic groups in the state (HAAPP 1974:49-52).

Occupationally, Filipinos are concentrated into the lowest status jobs in Hawaii. Nearly half of Filipino males aged 16 and over work at unskilled labor jobs in Hawaii; this is nearly twice the Hawaii average. Only nine percent of Filipinos hold administrative, managerial, or professional jobs, although 24 percent of all jobholders have these upper status positions. Only 2.3 percent of the Filipinos are self-employed; this is less than half the Hawaii

average. The Filipino unemployment rate is almost twice the Hawaii average.

Health statistics also show that Filipinos have a poorer quality of life in relation to other groups (HAAPP 1974: 74, 79; Hawaii 1980: 9, 19, 38, 107; Hawaii 1983: 39). Filipinos have a higher death rate (5.9) and infant mortality rate (11.5) than the average for all groups in Hawaii, where the statewide averages are 5.0 and 8.5, respectively. And they have a higher incidence of tuberculosis (707.8 cases per 100,000 Filipinos) than the Hawaii average (179.5 per 100,000).

In regard to political status, out of 78 members of the Hawaii State Legislature only 4 are Filipinos today. Thus, Filipinos not only are disadvantaged but also are politically unable to change conditions to improve their lot.

One of the explanations often provided in Hawaii for the inferior position of Filipinos is that their own culture holds them back; another theory is that they are a more recently arrived immigrant group and should be patient, prepared to await a better life after a generation or so. The cultural backwardness theory and recency-of-migration theory would be credible only if Filipinos were in the same predicament throughout the United States as a whole. But the facts indicate the Filipinos are doing much better on the United States mainland than in Hawaii.

Let us take California for purposes of comparison. California has received many immigrants in recent years, as has Hawaii, and there are many similarities in historical experience in the two states.

Filipinos are closer to the top ethnic group in income within California than they are in Hawaii. They are three percentage points below the California average in regard to families at or below poverty levels, though two points above the percentage of families on welfare; the Filipino percentages in California are below the levels in Hawaii in both cases. Filipino literacy in California is at the average for all groups, and Filipino illiteracy in California is about one third the figure for Hawaii. A higher percentage

of California Filipinos has graduated from high school than the state average; California Filipinos complete high school at a rate about 50 percent higher than in Hawaii. Filipinos have nearly twice the highest percentage of college degrees as other races in California, and California Filipinos have more than twice the rate of college attendance and completion than they have in Hawaii. Filipino males have about half the percentage of unskilled labor jobs in California as compared to Hawaii, and in California they have twice the percentage of administrative, managerial, and professional jobs as compared to their employment pattern in Hawaii. There is somewhat Filipino entrepreneurship in California than in Hawaii. And Filipino unemployment is below the average in California while above the mean in Hawaii.

In short, the status of Filipinos in Hawaii is not part of a larger pattern for Filipinos in the USA in general; the lower status of Filipinos is a problem in Hawaii but not in California. Since Filipinos in Hawaii come from the same culture and have immigrated in the same eras as Filipinos on the mainland, the vast socioeconomic difference means that something exists in Hawaii that does not exist on the mainland to account for the situation.

The thesis of this essay is that the situation in Hawaii is very different for Filipinos because of racism. The ruling majority in Hawaii has held Filipinos back from the time when the first boatload of Ilocano laborers arrived in Hawaii in the early 1900s. The devices for this racial subordination, originally written into the policies, practices, and procedures of plantation employers and Hawaii's Territorial form of government, have scarcely been changed in the present day. Even though Hawaii is now a state of the United States, and the locus of political power has shifted from White business interests to Japanese-American politicians, the system of control designed to keep Filipinos subordinate has continued, largely because the new ruling majority has preferred not to dismantle the institutional racism established in the early part of the 20th century.

*The Political Subordination of Filipinos  
in Hawaii*

In 1893 the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown and the Republic of Hawaii was established. In 1898 Congress of the United States declared Hawaii to be annexed to the United States. In 1900 Hawaii became subject to the Organic Act, which established the Territorial system of governance in Hawaii until statehood (Abbott 1967; Daws 1968; Fuchs 1961). Many Hawaiians, the most numerous ethnic group at that time, voted for the Home Rule Party in the elections of 1900; the party's leaders wanted to return to the monarchy, and their delegates in the Territorial Legislature insisted on speaking only in Hawaiian. In the same year, as the Constitution of the United States first became applicable to Hawaii, Japanese sugarcane workers went on strike almost everywhere, clamoring for an end to the system of peonage that existed prior to 1900 (and which was probably illegal under the Civil Rights Act of 1867).

The Governor of the Territory of Hawaii, appointed by the President of the United States, was given considerable power. The White economic elite, which ran the sugarcane plantations and most of the large businesses in Honolulu, sought to resolve the crisis of 1900 so that they could continue to rule over the majority of the population. First of all, they persuaded the erstwhile heir to the throne to run as a Republican candidate for Congress; his victory in 1902 spelled the end of the Home Rule Party. As for the power of the Japanese trade unions, the strategy was to make as few concessions as possible in order to discourage future labor unrest, while importing illiterate males from the Philippines to work on the plantations. As illiterates, the Filipinos would be unable to communicate with other workers, and they thus were unable to join Japanese laborers to form a multiethnic bloc vis-a-vis management for several decades.

While the Japanese were being liberated from peonage by moving into the urban areas, Filipinos were being relegated to serfdom; that

is, the Filipino laborer became a member of a "servile feudal class bound to the soil and more or less subject to the will of his lord" (Webster 1965: 791). Living in camps on the property of the sugarcane and pineapple plantation owners, their contracts bound them to specific plantations; they could neither leave the island of their residence nor move elsewhere without permission of the plantation owner. If they failed to report for work, their wages could be withheld without due process of law, since they were noncitizens. They could spend their wages at the company store but hardly anywhere else. They lacked access to Filipinas and to women of almost any other race. They were recruited largely from men whose ages exceeded the age-span for compulsory public education, so they had no way to learn English at school. Social workers who tried to provide instruction in English were summarily evicted from the camps by the plantation owners. Even today, when many of these conditions have been ameliorated, a report funded by Castle & Cooke, a major sugarcane plantation corporation, has characterized one of these surviving Filipino plantation camps as in a state of "feudalism" (Moore 1969: 34).

According to Pablo Manlapit (1933), a Filipino union leader, the early Filipinos were receiving less take-home pay in Hawaii than they had as laborers in the Philippines (cf. Willis 1955: 19). Back home they could grow their own food in a system of paternalistic feudalism, but in Hawaii Filipinos depended upon the company store and its high prices for their survival. Manlapit organized a series of strikes by Filipinos in the 1920s, while conditions were improving for other ethnic groups but seemed to be worsening for Filipinos. These strikes culminated in the Hanapepe Massacre of 1924, in which Castle & Cooke company guards fired upon 16 peaceful Filipino strikers; not a single guard was ever arrested for the crime of homicide or manslaughter. Following an outcry over the incident, an investigative commission, headed by a carefully chosen Philippine official from Manila, came to Hawaii. The resulting report clarified the status of

Filipinos in Hawaii as without rights under U.S. Law: Filipinos were considered neither aliens nor citizens but instead "subjects," that is, a conquered people not unlike American Indians during the wars of the 19th century (Ligot 1924). A University of Hawaii psychologist, writing in a book published the same year as the Hanapepe Massacre had in fact characterized Filipinos as having an "adolescent temperament" that would cause no trouble to the ruling elites as compared with other ethnic groups in Hawaii (Porteus and Babcock 1962: 61). Accordingly, Manlapit was hastily convicted of "subordination of perjury." He then moved to California to organize workers; later on he went back to the Philippines. The Filipino community — again unsuccessful in two strikes held in the next two years — did not take any further collective action until 50 years later. Although the situation began to change somewhat when the Philippines became independent in 1946, the basic structure of institutional subordination remained. Filipinos in the United States were given the choice of either becoming Philippine citizens and returning to the Philippines or of applying for U.S. citizenship. Owing to their illiteracy, many Filipinos had lost touch with home; as the poorest of the major ethnic groups in Hawaii, Filipinos had to consider that they could be expected to return home as beneficiaries of the "milk and honey" of the United States, not in a worse economic condition than when they left the Philippines. Most Filipinos, therefore, stayed on in Hawaii, many becoming citizens. As citizens, they could secure visas for members of their families back home, and an influx of Filipinas occurred at this time. Some Filipino families were reunited, and others were created.<sup>2</sup> Filipinos were born in Hawaii in increasing numbers and became sizable as a group in the public schools. Filipino-Americans could vote, and most supported the party of the new strong labor unions, the Democratic Party, against the White-controlled Republican Party. Filipinos combined with Japanese plantation workers as members of the powerful International Longshoremen's and Warehouse-

men's Union (ILWU), and the Democratic Party was victorious in 1954 in elections to the Territorial Legislature; this coalition has elected majorities in every Legislature since 1954. Since Hawaii's admission as the 50th state of the United States, the Filipino-Japanese voting coalition has elected every Governor to office since 1962.

Have Filipinos benefitted from their voting as loyal Democrats in the last few decades? We have already seen that Filipinos were economically worse off in 1979 than in 1949. Educationally, Filipinos have improved from the days when most were illiterate, but University of Hawaii enrollment figures give no evidence of improvement in recent years. Occupationally, Filipinos are no longer primarily employed as the unskilled plantation workers of Hawaii, but from 1930 to 1980 the percentage of Filipinos in Hawaii holding administration, professional, and managerial jobs rose only from 4 to 9 percent. Although Filipinos have been union stewards for locals where their numbers are predominant, few Filipino trade union executives have risen to prominence. Filipinos have not risen to managerial levels in the large corporations to any extent. And Filipinos rarely have been elected to the Legislature.

Following his election in 1962, Governor John Burns appointed the first Filipino to the State Supreme Court and chose a Filipino to the first Cabinet-level position, the Directorship of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. But today no Filipino sits on the Supreme Court, and there is still only one Filipino in the Cabinet. In 1976 the voters of Kauai County elected Eduardo Malapit to the position of Mayor, the first Filipino ever elected Mayor; he was defeated in 1982, however. But the elevation of a few Filipinos to these high political offices has not changed the situation for the 100,000 or so Filipinos who have not been honored in this manner. Actions of these Filipino officials have done very little to advance the Filipino from a position of disadvantaged minority status in Hawaii.<sup>3</sup>

*Contemporary Institutional Racism in Hawaii*

In the last decade many pineapple and sugarcane plantations have been shut down, as corporations have decided to use the land for real estate speculation and tourism development. In most cases Filipinos have been the principal ethnic group thrown out of work, and indeed plantations with lesser percentages of Filipino workers have often remained in operation.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Filipinos has resettled in communities of urbanized Oahu.<sup>5</sup> During the same period of time the Immigration Act of 1965, which prohibits racial discrimination and equalizes the quota of allowable immigrants from each country in the world, has led to an increase in the population of Filipinos in Hawaii. Many Filipinos have found new employment in the expanding tourist industry, making beds and watering lawns for example, with wages that compare unfavorably with other blue-collar jobs if not with their former work as agricultural laborers. Many Filipinos have had no alternative but to seek welfare benefits to support their families, although to a lesser extent than other ethnic groups, as we shall see below. As the 1970 U.S. census demonstrates, one result of this situation is that Filipino families double and triple up in their homes and thus have the highest density of persons per room among the major ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> The children of the plantation Filipinos, meanwhile, have tried to advance toward better-paying jobs by excelling in the public schools. But those who have managed to survive the institutional racism in the schools have encountered artificial barriers to employment, notably within the public sector.

Institutional racism in Hawaii public schools began in the early part of the 20th century (cf. Steuber 1964; Wist 1940). First of all, Hawaii uses a system of *tracking*; that is, testing to determine which 4th grade students are to attend grades 5 to 12 along with "college-bound," "slow," or "average" students. The "ability groups" or "tracks" were originally established in the 1920s so that White students could get special attention, leaving non-Whites

to languish in sections where they were not expected to do so well. From 1920 to the present more Chinese and Japanese children have come to occupy the upper tracks, as their parents have benefitted from increased economic and political power, bringing them into the mainstream of American life. Since immigrant Filipinos are far less likely to be exposed to middle class English at home than non-immigrant children, they have comparatively lower test scores, and they are treated by schoolteachers as among those who are less likely to get ahead; in each grade the gap between Filipinos and the more affluent ethnic groups widens in the public schools, their performance levels actually declining under the system of tracking (Morton, Stout, Fischer 1976).

A second method of institutional racism is to *segregate* Filipinos into ethnically identifiable schools. One fourth of all public schools in Hawaii are segregated, according to the method of calculation used by Federal courts. One result of racial segregation has been that when segregated elementary or intermediate schools feed into schools with higher grades, the probability of school violence is extremely high,<sup>7</sup> with Filipinos as recurrent victims of violence on school campuses. A parent wishing to send a child out of the district to attend a desegregated school must pay the cost of transportation, and this *restrictive transfer policy* places a heavy financial burden for desegregation on Filipino parents.

Until the mid-1970s Filipinos with limited English ability were largely denied an opportunity to have either bilingual instruction or instruction in their native language. In 1976, 1980, and 1981 the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare found Hawaii's *language discrimination* to constitute a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>8</sup>

Institutional racism also infects various aspects of the programs for servicing students. Textbooks and other *biased curriculum materials* tend to either ignore the role of Filipinos or to stereotype Filipinos in a derogatory

manner.<sup>9</sup> The school system has also been accused of spending lesser amounts of *money* on schools where Filipinos predominate, providing inferior *facilities* at these schools, meting out *disciplinary* measures more readily to Filipinos, and of providing less opportunity for *extracurricular activities* to Filipinos, though the evidence is a bit incomplete on these accusations.

What is of interest to us is that all of these instances of institutional racism, whether the evidence is solid or otherwise, existed in the early part of the century and were part of a conscious design of the White minority to frustrate non-whites in the field of education. Today the school system is controlled largely by Japanese, and the same structure of racial domination continues without any significant modifications; the rationale once used to keep Japanese in a subordinate position is now used to frustrate Filipinos.

The rise of Japanese in Hawaii is, of course, clearly associated with the political victory of the Democratic Party in Hawaii. Since political control passed from the hands of the Republicans to the Democrats not long after statehood, Japanese have become predominant throughout the bureaucracy of Hawaii State Government. At first there was an understandable "affirmative action," in which non-Whites were preferred over Whites with similar qualifications in order to achieve a better racial balance, though this was never officially announced as a policy. But in due course racial imbalances emerged again. Although about 15 percent of the population in Hawaii are Filipinos, only nine percent of the civil servants and school employees are Filipinos.<sup>10</sup> Since the percentages of Filipinos have increased and Japanese have decreased proportionately in the total population from 1960 to the present, it is clear that Hawaii's "affirmative action" was for Japanese but never for Filipinos. Indeed, Hawaii State Government *refused to institute affirmative action plans* for Filipinos and other underrepresented groups until 1979, when the U.S. Office of Revenue Sharing indicated that

they would stop sending revenue-sharing funds to Hawaii until affirmative action became a reality in the Aloha State.

Institutionalism racism also operates in public employment. Public sector jobs are unionized, and there are several collective bargaining units for the various classifications of State Government employees. A *seniority clause* of the union contracts provides that openings are first made available to existing employees; if no persons apply or are eligible, the job is advertised to the public at large. Since Filipinos are already employed in small numbers, the effect of the union contract is to freeze the current situation. The older generation of Filipinos is not on the public payroll because plantation owners isolated them from learning English, so the current younger generation of better-educated Filipinos is being asked to endure fewer employment opportunities because of the discrimination which their parents received. For some of these openings, such as the position of school principal, *in-service training* is a prerequisite; once again, few Filipinos were eligible for this training in the first place. Civil service *tests*, meanwhile, are standardized on middle class English, even though many highly qualified Filipinos born in the Philippines were never exposed to this form of English while obtaining professional degrees. Many civil service jobs also have *experience requirements*, which give the inside track to those who have already been employed in the civil service. For jobs where English-language aspects are minimal, *language requirements* are erected nevertheless. Where *interviews* are involved, Filipinos are seldom used to screen job applicants or to make decisions to hire new employees; interviewers, culturally unfamiliar with Filipino jobseekers, then reject Filipinos for jobs where they are already underrepresented.<sup>11</sup>

A standard explanation by the Hawaii state government is that finances do not permit the hiring of additional employees, but the *pattern of current hiring* refutes this claim. Federally-funded jobs are seldom allocated in such a way that Filipinos can benefit. For example, a large

number of Filipinos have language problems in seeking government services; it would be logical, therefore, to designate a certain number of positions to be filled by *bilingual employees*. One might envisage a solution to two problems (lack of Filipino employees and inferior government services to Filipinos) by one action (hiring Filipino-speaking personnel in positions where they can handle intake of Filipino applicants for services). Instead, the problems are compounded: state government officials neither remedy the public service employment imbalance nor improve the quality of government services for Filipinos.

Hawaii state government also licenses certain professions and thus is in a position to prevent Filipinos from serving as dentists, physicians, or in certain other occupations. Based on regulations that date to the period of the Republic of Hawaii, many applicants for these professional licenses were screened out if they were *non-citizens*. The practice was abolished in 1974 for most licensing. The professional dental and medical associations in Hawaii, however, do not recognize many degrees from Philippine universities; Filipinos practicing their professions in the homeland are thus not even allowed to take the qualifying dental or medical examinations. In 1976 the Hawaii State Legislature prevailed upon the legal profession to abolish such a discriminatory method for denying opportunities to trained Filipino lawyers to prove themselves through a qualifying exam, but the Legislature has not yet acted with regard to other *discriminatory disqualifications* in the dental and medical professions. Despite the health problems of Filipinos in Hawaii and the shortage of Filipinos in the prestigious dental and medical professions, many a trained Filipino must work as a fry cook at a café or suffer other forms of under-employment of their skills in Hawaii today (Hawaii 1975; Melendy 1981: 107).

As mentioned above, institutional racism exists in the services provided directly by Hawaii State Government. We have already demonstrated the plight of Filipinos in the

schools. Similar situations prevail elsewhere. Hawaii State Government has been cited for civil rights violations by the Federal Government in the fields of employment service, health care, and welfare.<sup>12</sup> In 1971 the State Employment Service was cited for violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by the U.S. Department of Labor. Although one aspect of the case, *discriminatory referrals to jobs*, did not involve Filipinos directly, the finding that the State has a *staff unrepresentative* of the population served is still relevant for Filipino jobseekers. Failure to provide a *Filipino-speaking intake staff* doubtless could be a basis for a future complaint.

In 1976 the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare noted civil rights violations of the Hawaii Department of Health, since health services reached a much smaller percentage of Filipinos than those in the population. In addition to *unequal services*, the Federal agency noted that the Health Department had an *inadequate outreach* to the Filipino community, had *insufficient bilingual staff and bilingual informational materials*, located *facilities farther away from Filipino communities* than from most other ethnic communities, and hired staff who are *culturally unfamiliar* with Filipinos. Indeed, until the Federal investigation, the Health Department considered limiting its services only to citizens, thus excluding Filipino immigrants, but the Hawaii agency was informed that this would be a clear violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In 1978 and 1980 the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare cited the Hawaii welfare programs for civil rights violations. In particular, the deficiencies included a failure to have *bilingual staff* to service Filipinos seeking welfare assistance, *insufficient bilingual informational matters*, and a failure to refute the claim that there has been a pattern of *discriminatory denials of welfare benefits* to Filipinos. In fact, the welfare agency had almost drawn up regulations to exclude Filipino immigrants from eligibility. In short, Filipinos unable to secure employment appropriate to their qualifications, often working at two jobs

in order to make sufficient income to support their families, and with medical bills rising beyond their means, have been eligible for health and welfare benefits from the State of Hawaii yet subject to a bureaucracy unsympathetic to their needs.

Although not yet a subject of civil rights complaint investigations, there are two other areas of government services where Filipinos appear to have problems. Filipinos convicted of crime, according to data collected by the State of Hawaii, are more likely to be *sent to jail* than to be given suspended sentences (HAAPP 1974: 14; Hawaii 1973). There is a case of a non-English-speaking inmate in Hawaii State Prison who was *denied parole* because of inadequacy in English, whereas no courses in English are offered in the jails; although this case (Leitu vs. Hawaii Board of Pardons and Paroles 1977) involved a Samoan, the same sort of institutional racism is available to be applied to Filipinos.

Under a Federal law passed in 1975, ballots and other election materials in Hawaii must be printed in the native language of Filipinos, since they comprise more than five percent of the population and are above the national average in illiteracy rates. Some Filipinos have complained that there has been *insufficient implementation* of this law in Hawaii. In 1970, 1972, and 1974 a Filipino running from one of the poorest districts in Honolulu was defeated by narrow margins; he indicated that some of his supporters cast invalid ballots, because they could not read English, thereby accounting for his defeat.<sup>13</sup> In 1976, with the ballots in English as well as Ilocano, he was elected.

To sum up, there is clear evidence of institutional racism in Hawaii. Most forms of institutional racism have existed for several decades and were engineered to disadvantage Japanese as well as Filipinos, such as tracking, school segregation, restrictive transfer policies for schoolchildren, language discrimination, biased curriculum materials, unequal expenditures and facilities for schools, discriminatory disciplinary action, lesser extracurricular oppor-

tunities for Filipino students, culturally biased civil service exams, licensing barriers for non-citizens, discrimination against foreign college degrees in licensing, the location of health facilities close to White communities, unequal governmental services, and inadequate outreach programs by many agencies of government. But the seniority clause in current union contracts, in-service training opportunities, newly instituted experience requirements for civil service jobs, the current pattern of hiring, discriminatory referrals to private sector jobs, resistance to affirmative action to remedy the effects of past discrimination against Filipinos, and the pattern of criminal justice are of more recent vintage.

#### *Open Racism Against Filipinos in Hawaii*

Institutional racism is covert and subtle; it can exist without the victim being aware of how it operates. Insofar as institutional racism victimizes Filipinos in Hawaii today, it could be argued that the practices which disadvantage Filipinos remain because officials in Hawaii are largely unaware of what they are doing. If, on the other hand, the officials know full well what they are doing, then Filipinos are not merely inadvertent victims but instead targets for open and unrelenting racism. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that the latter thesis is consistent with the facts.

Filipinos have pointed out that the practices cited above unfairly disadvantage Filipinos, hoping that justice will emerge by articulating this judgment. The response from Hawaii state government has been largely one of indifference; at times, administrators have even reacted with hostility toward Filipinos.

In 1974, following the death of an immigrant Filipino student in one of the public schools from a fight with a non-immigrant student, a group of Filipinos drew up a carefully worded statement of problems and proposed solutions; their document was presented to the public school system and, ultimately, to the government. Although the response was polite to the Filipinos, no action was taken

whatsoever. In 1975, following the second death of a Filipino under similar circumstances, the same Filipino group obtained some 700 signatures on a petition, asking for an investigation of institutional racism by the Federal government. After communications between the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Hawaii Department of Education, including an on-site visit by one of the Federal officials, there was still no action. The result in 1976 was the temporary suspension of Federal funds to the school system until Hawaii agreed to follow a more orderly method for determining the language needs of Filipino and other students. In 1979, 1980, and 1981 Federal funds were again withheld temporarily from the Hawaii school system because of insufficient progress toward meeting the needs of immigrant students.

In the field of health care the same scenario occurred as well. Evidence of a problem was first collected and presented to the Hawaii Department of Health (HAAPP 1974: 58-82). When no action was taken, a civil rights complaint was filed. The investigating Federal agency in turn found violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Complaints against the Hawaii welfare agency followed the same pattern. And victims of employment discrimination have fared no better in their efforts to be hired on the basis of their qualifications. The only times when Hawaii agencies have listened to Filipino complaints, it appears, have followed Federal investigations, with the threat of termination of Federal funding as an impetus to the abandonment of discriminatory policies.

Further evidence of overt racism can be obtained from statements of officials in Hawaii State Government. The superintendent of the school system at the time of the initial complaints, for example, was particularly abusive in attacks on Filipinos seeking to bring about a better school system. In a press conference on 7 October 1976, he intimated that the problems faced by Filipinos in the schools were a result of calling the Federal government to Hawaii. In a private meeting he told a group of

Filipino immigrant leaders, "If you don't stop complaining to the media and the Federal civil agencies, we'll have to drop bigger bombs on you." He then went on to say that he saw no reason to deal with the group, since it was not "representative" of the Filipino community in general.

During the Health Department investigation of 1976 one official, responding to evidence that Filipinos insufficiently utilize health care facilities, argued that his agency has no "responsibility to change lifestyles and economic patterns in order to make the programs accessible" (Haas 1981: 13). Translated into operational terms, the official was saying that it is the Filipinos' fault whenever they do not know where facilities are located or what services are offered at minimal cost; whenever agencies are too impersonal and bureaucratic, with employees who neither speak a Filipino language nor are culturally sensitive to Filipinos; and whenever the agency fails to contact Filipino physicians to develop better referral links.

In the investigation of the Hawaii welfare office during 1978 the Federal agency noted that Hawaii officials "expressed resentment toward the newly arrived immigrant for seeking and receiving services," a feeling that welfare staff officials admitted "was widespread throughout the Department." The Federal officials concluded that the Hawaii agency "has taken an insensitive view toward the provision of services to its new immigrant population," an inescapable result of the admission by welfare program staff that civil rights problems are "our lowest priority (U.S. 1978: 8)."

During the same welfare office investigation, Federal officials discovered that adoptees have been handled in the context of racist motivations. The form used by prospective adopting parents has a section labelled "Preference regarding racial extraction of child/children." Welfare officials admitted honoring such requests as "Will accept any child but one who is black" and "will take Hawaiian child but not if his skin is too dark." The Federal investigators concluded that "This and many other

impressions revealed the degree of race-consciousness in Hawaii" (U.S. 1978: 8).

In September, 1979, a similar fate befell residents at a boarding care facility operated for Filipino retirees that did not meet the minimum standards for licensing by Hawaii's welfare department. After a fire killed all of the residents, and it became clear that the social workers assigned to service the retirees had failed to report violations of minimum standards, the Director of Social Services and Housing noted that the Filipinos had come to Hawaii during the plantation era and had become accustomed to a "general lifestyle" of living where "facilities and conditions are not consistent with the fire codes, health codes, and so forth," so he felt that it would be an invasion of privacy of the retirees to relocate them elsewhere; such conditions, he asserted, "may be very culturally related" (Altonn 1979: A-2). Two days later, on television, a Filipino group responded by asserting that living in humble conditions was decidedly not a matter of cultural lifestyle but instead one of economic necessity for retirees; they characterized the Director of Social Services and Housing as making a racist statement that it is in the nature of Filipinos to live in shabby conditions in Hawaii when in fact the private and public sectors have kept Filipinos in squalor while blaming the Filipinos for their own mistreatment. Indeed, a Filipino community commentator has noted that many Filipino men "are leaving the dying plantations without money, careers, or identities (Haas 1983: 27)." In other words, the "lifestyles and economic patterns" once imposed by plantation life upon these Filipinos are now used as grounds for doing nothing to make government programs accessible to them. One can hardly conceive of a more unvarnished form of racism.

Agencies of the Aloha State, thus, have little aloha for immigrants, even though Hawaii is almost entirely populated by immigrants and offspring of immigrants. How can this be? Surprising as it may seem, the Governor, George Ariyoshi, is one of the most prominent

opponents of immigration. In his view Hawaii is "overcrowded," a judgment that seems at variance with comparative data, as Honolulu ranks only 61st in population density out of the 167 cities in the U.S. census with more than 100,000 persons (U.S. 1982: 22-24). To keep the population of Hawaii stable, Ariyoshi has advocated measures to restrict immigrants as well as in-migrants from the remaining 49 states, even though the Constitution of the United States clearly gives Congress alone the power to regulate immigration and forbids any agency or branch of government from restricting travel among the states. Census data also indicate that the population increase in Hawaii is primarily due to births of local residents in Hawaii, with in-migrants constituting a much smaller percentage of the increase.<sup>14</sup> Since the Governor of Hawaii publicly expresses hostility to immigrants, many of whom are Filipinos, it should be no surprise that there is so much discrimination against Filipinos throughout the various agencies of Hawaii State Government. If the Governor finds it useful to scapegoat Filipinos as a source of Hawaii's problems, many members of the public can feel free to express their own hostility toward immigrants in various ways, such as through school violence.

Similarly, the principal Honolulu newspapers have demonstrated no special aloha for Filipinos. Just one of the two dailies has employed a Filipino to cover Filipino and other news. Even though much news about the Filipino community appears in bimonthly Filipino-owned publications, there is no evidence that these sources are ever gleaned for coverage in the daily newspapers which enjoy wider circulation throughout Hawaii. The press has instead played up stories in which individuals and groups call for limits on in-migration. The press has also carried stories that report rumors that Filipinos are bringing diseases into Hawaii without noting whether there is evidence to support such claims (Knaefler 1975: E-1). Millions of tourists, many from Japan, might be posing health risks as well, but the press avoids mention of this possibility. The Filipino community in Hawaii is sensitive to these dero-

gatory stories, which comprise yet another form of overt racism with which they must cope.

In sum, Filipinos are victims of institutional

racism in Hawaii. Overt racism is also a problem. They have been singled out for special treatment as contemporary scapegoats for Hawaii's problems.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>In 1949 Filipino males' median income in Hawaii was \$1,995, while the median for the most prosperous group (Chinese) was \$2,964; the average Filipino, thus, earned 67 percent of the average in the top group. The principal ethnic groups in Hawaii (those with more than 5 percent of the statewide population) are as follows: Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Japanese, and Whites.

<sup>2</sup>In 1930 the ratio of Filipinos to Whites was 5:1; in 1940, 3.5:1; 1950, 2.5:1; 1960, 1.8:1; 1970, 1.3:1; 1980, 1.1:1, as reported in the U.S. census.

<sup>3</sup>A Justice on the Supreme Court generally stays out of politics so that he will not be forced to disqualify himself on cases owing to conflict of interest. The current Filipino Director of Labor and Industrial Relations, appointed by Governor Ariyoshi, is neither a politician nor a Filipino group leader, and he has noted that he was not exposed to Filipino culture very much when he grew up in Hawaii. See Haas and Resurrection (1976: 11-13). The former Kauai Mayor informed Filipinos at public meetings that he did not perceive his role to be a special advocate for Filipinos.

<sup>4</sup>On Molokai, for example, the Filipino plantation was shut down in 1975; the pineapple fields worked by Hawaiians were still in operation until 1982.

<sup>5</sup>In 1930 7.6 percent of the Filipinos in Hawaii lived in Honolulu. In 1980 the percentage was 60.2.

<sup>6</sup>Samoans have a higher density, whether living in owner- or renter-occupied residences. Vietnamese renters (but not homeowners) also have a higher room density than Filipinos.

<sup>7</sup>Ethnic enrollment data for Hawaii public schools are currently supplied on a regular basis to the U.S. Department of Education. In *Adams v. Richardson* (480 F.2d. 1159, D.C. Cir. 1973), the Federal Circuit Court of Washington, D.C., accepted a definition of "segregation" based on the percentage of ethnic groups in a school district. According to the formula, if a particular race has X percent of the students in the district, a school is segregated if it has X-20 percent or X+20 percent of that race. The correlation between segregated feeder schools (that is, secondary schools which receive students from segregated elementary or intermediate schools) and school violence is quite substantial (Haas 1976).

<sup>8</sup>The Hawaii Department of Education subsequently agreed to implement a compliance plan, as negotiated with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Failure to implement the plan resulted in further findings of civil rights violations in 1979, 1980, and 1981.

<sup>9</sup>This conclusion is based on a content analysis that I conducted in 1976.

<sup>10</sup>Current data are supplied each year to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

<sup>11</sup>Many charges have been filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, whose Research Director has characterized the employment of Filipinos by Hawaii State Government as "worse than that of Blacks in Mississippi," and as "a page out of the history books" (Haas and Resurrection: 221).

<sup>12</sup>Letters of determination, citing civil rights violations, have been received by the following agencies of the State of Hawaii: Department of Education, June 15, 1976, March 19, 1979, February 29, 1980, and February 28, 1981; Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, October 5, 1971; Department of Personnel Services, November 29, 1974; Department of Health, December 15, 1976; Department of Social Services and Housing, October 26, 1978, and August 29, 1980.

<sup>13</sup>In 1972 Mina lost by 12 votes. In that "year he asked Filipinos to push the lever on the voting machine to the top of ballot, where his name was, and punch their vote. The lever, however, stopped at 'House of Representatives' instead of Mina's name and votes of those who could not read, that presumably would have given him victory, were invalidated (Woo 1976: A-8)."

<sup>14</sup>In 1970 Hawaii's civilian population was 769,913; in 1980 it was 954,691, an increase of 196,778. During 1970-1980 there were 161,831 births; prorating the average number of deaths for infants and children during the decade at approximately 2125, we can infer that approximately 81.2 percent of the increased population in 1970s was due to births of local residents. Between 1970 and 1975, 58.1 percent of the population increase was due to births (Nurdyke 1977: Table 131). The 1970-1980 figures are based on the Federal census; the 1970-1975 figures are based on a sample survey by the State of Hawaii.

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