How Filipino American Workers Reached America
From: United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero, By Kent Wong

"When my mother asked me how long I planned to stay away, I told her three years. Well, I've been here in the U.S. over 50 years now and I haven't been back yet…“

-Philip Vera Cruz

1) Philip's life is part of the story of the manong generation, the first wave of Filipino immigrants who came to the United States in the 1920s and the 1930s to seek a better life. Almost all were young, single men. They worked in the fields, in the factories, and in low-wage service jobs.

2) 1920s The large influx of Filipino workers began in 1924, following the passage of a restrictive immigration act that barred immigration from China and Japan. In the West Coast, the demand for low-wage laborers was filled by immigrant Filipinos. Filipinos were exempt from the racially restrictive immigration policies because the Philippines was a U.S. protectorate, and Filipinos were classified as U.S. nationals. By 1930 about one hundred thousand Filipinos were living in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland.

3) 1930s In 1934 U.S. Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act. This act granted the Philippines independence and changed Filipinos' status from U.S. nationals to aliens. As a result, Filipinos were subject to the same Asian exclusion acts previously imposed on other Asian immigrants. The Tydings-McDuffie Act reduced the influx of Filipino immigrants from a steady flow to a slow trickle.

4) Life in America was harsh for the manongs. They found work in the most physically demanding jobs, with substandard pay and working conditions. In addition they were subjected to intense prejudice and discrimination. In the 1930s, anti-Filipino riots perpetrated by white vigilantes were common throughout the state of California.

5) Filipino Americans were also subjected to anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited men from marrying outside their ethnic group. Due to the much lower number of Filipino women than men in the United States and the restrictions prohibiting future Filipino immigration, the manong generation was effectively prevented from marrying or raising families. Most lived their entire lives as single men.

Source: http://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/UCRS%204_Philip_Vera_Cruz_story%20r2.pdf